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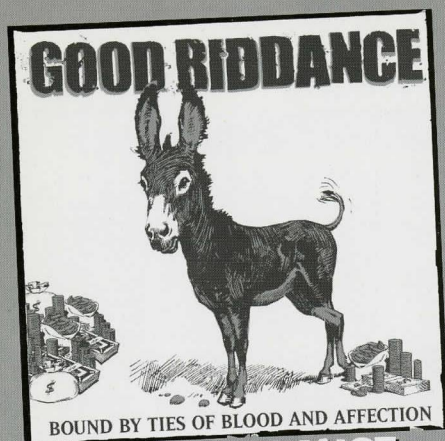
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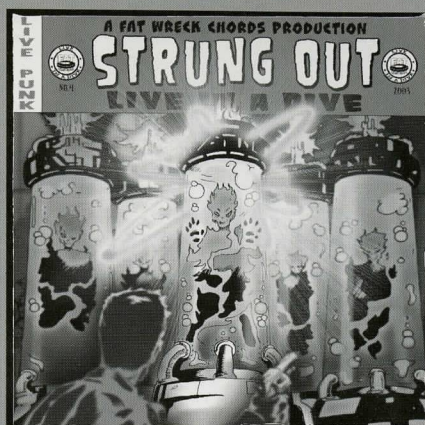
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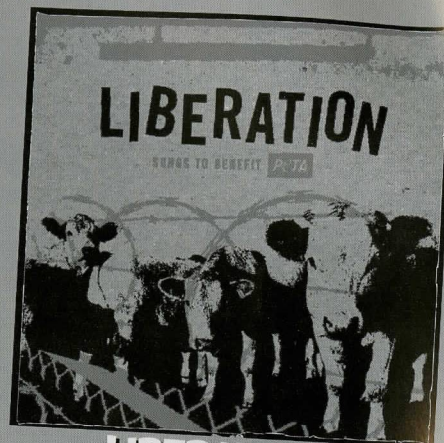
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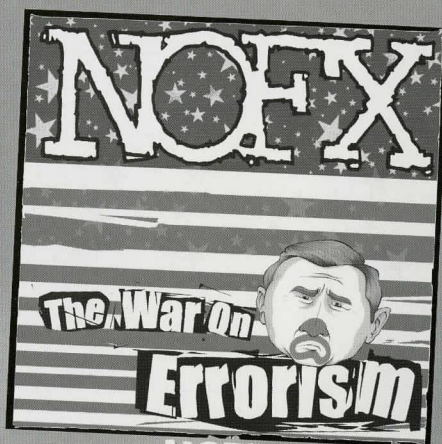
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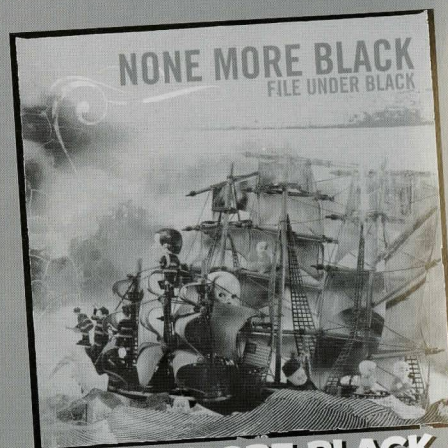
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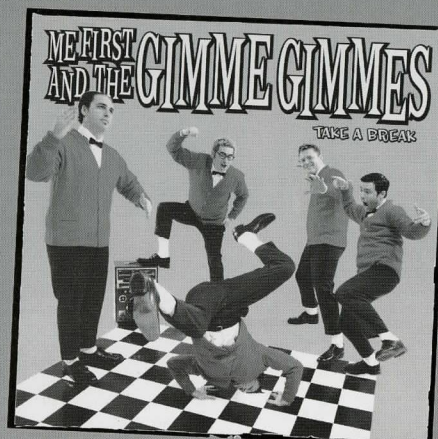
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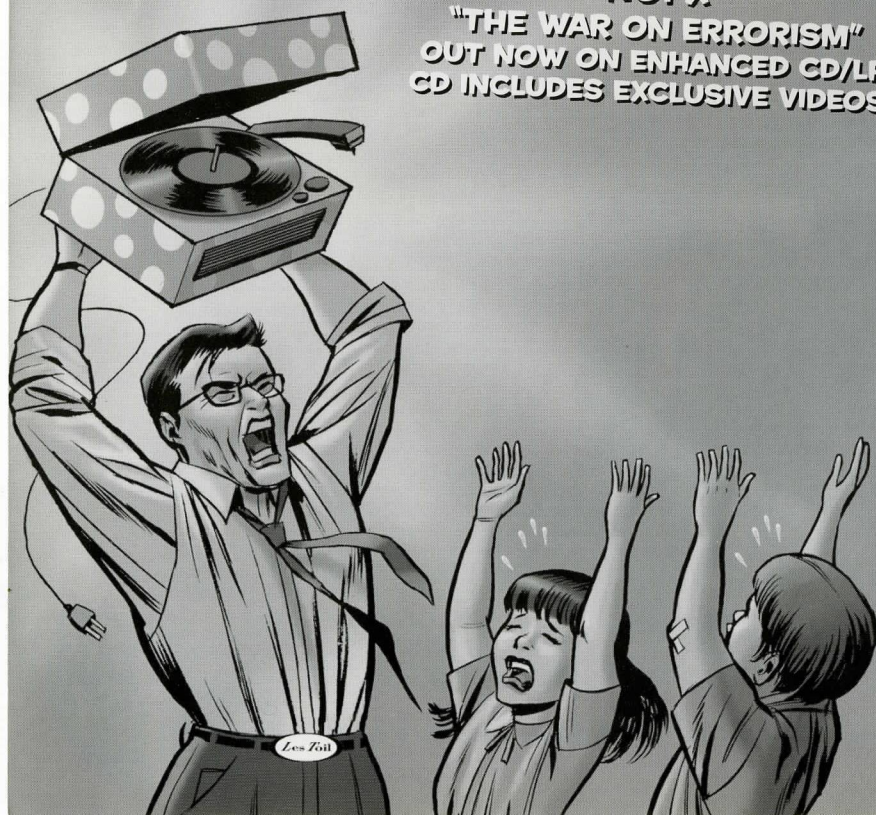
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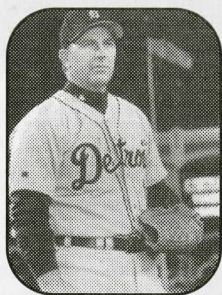


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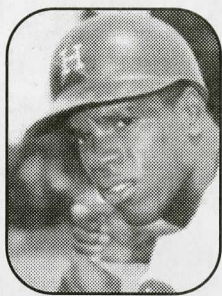


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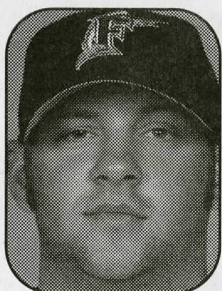




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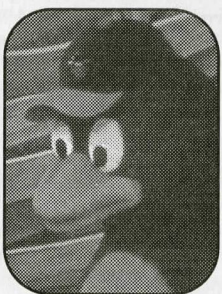
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The Strongest Bench In The Majors:

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Peter Berkley
Bill Boggs: Logomaniac
Delicious Brown
Hap Mansfield/HAP PR
Erin McDermott
Nellis
Ben Weasel
Miles and Fiona: Gods of Printed Fabric

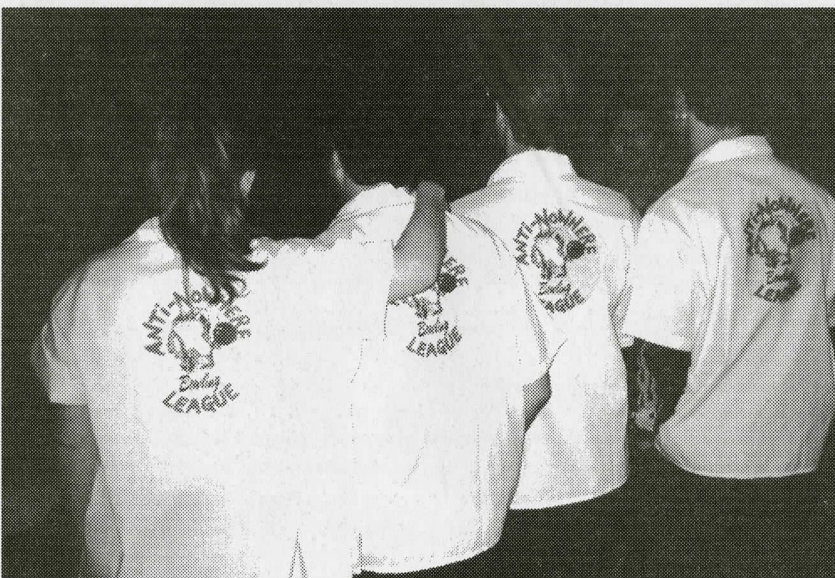
As a 21st century A's fan, I've become accustomed to their post-season inadequacies shining like high beams on a Kenworth. Each October a new goat appears, or a parade of little goats, each chewing away at the tin can of success until it's less than a shard of hope.

Well, in that respect they didn't disappoint in 2003. An ongoing succession of pop-ups, clutch strikeouts, baserunning buffooneries and badly-placed hanging curves dotted the T's and crossed the eyes on yet another promising campaign. In the final summation it was more of the same: Selig is right and the A's are wrong. You can't compete with a small-market team unless you build a new stadium and spend over 100 million on your roster. Yeah, I KNOW that's a load of crap, Selig knows it, the A's and Twins know it, but it will not be disproved until one of these years we can get those damn Yanquis out of the World Series.

Having another few weeks left of the season; the final two series which I have allotted as a decompression period, I was once again relegated to a tiered system of game-watching. It works like this: I'm all about the A's. Zito serves up a fatty to Manny in the 6th, goodbye A's. This is when the justified logic first appears. By default, I'm now on the side of those lovable hothead Red Sox. It's logical at first. My father's family is from New England; Cambridge and Salem and Lowell and elsewhere up there. They have that gentlemanly Damon guy, who took a header from Damian Jackson just to get to the playoffs AND used to be an Oaklander. Mueller, one-time local guy who came back from a wicked bad knee injury to lead the AL in hitting, Theo Epstein is their GM; Theo was very instrumental in the beginnings of this here magazine, as he was the first team employee to get us onto the field to talk to players when he was a lower-level guy for the Padres. So there are some reasons to stump for the Sox. Mostly, they're playing the Yanks, which is good



The ANTI-NOWHERE BOWLING LEAGUE, 2003
L-R: Jeff Fox, The Editor, Sunny Andersen Chanel, Jerry Riddle



enough for me.

They of course, fold like a Don Knotts with distemper in a high stakes poker game.

Having not given too much attention the NL since the Giants runners had so much trouble getting their walkers around the bases, I pull for my perennial favorite team: The Team That Plays The Yankees. The same tiered system of alliance plays out for the senior circuit. Saw the Giants blow it so bad they made my pal Wig hurl all over my bathroom. The Cubs found a new goat to last them well through the next half-century, and now I'm piecing together a Marlins hat out of a dirty angler's pro shop hat and the logo ripped from an old Mariners t-

shirt. Self-respect? Out the window.

As one could imagine, the 2003 Marlins burrowed their way into my heart with their hit-and-run, clutch-pitching redneck theatrics. Funny, you see a cadre of cast-offs and players-to-be-named coalesced on the field, and they look just like a used parts junkyard. A couple of good quarter-panels here, a bumper there...hey, I think this thermostat has some life in it! They perform admirably when the cylinders all fire at once, but damn...no personality. So they hire the central character from that really short Hemingway novel, pump him full of coffee and Cuban cigars and there you have it: Instant ScrappyContender.

Can't complain. They did it right. No one half-expected this "team to watch out for" to take it to the mighty Yanks, but the squad jelled earlier than anyone could've dreamed. McKeon stirred the roux and added Tabasco, while Juan Pierre shoved the old school speedster game down their throats with abandon. And wasn't it great to watch Josh Beckett make them all look like candidates for the short bus? HA! In the end everyone said pert' near the same thing: "They just wanted it more." Ain't that the truth.

For the fourth year of a possible five, The ANTI-NOWHERE BOWLING LEAGUE convened in

Las Vegas for the BYO "D.I.Y Bowling" Tournament. Once again me, Jerry Riddle, Sunny from Girlyhead and Jeff from Barracuda took turns having one tremendously crappy game among five reasonable games. We finished somewhere in the realm of 20th out of one hundred-something. I personally rolled my all-time high of 214, which in no way made up for the abysmal 97 I bowled on the second day. Will we do it again? Feh...dunno. Maybe. I'll be surprised to see myself hanging out in the ultra-depressing Castaways Bowling Emporium, drinking watery bloody marys. Then again, if you're AT the 2004 tournament reading this right now, come over and say hi. We'll be in our usual "as far away from everyone else as possible" spot they always stick us.

Bill James writes scientifically about baseball. I am a scientist, and love baseball. But I don't think that everything about baseball is scientific. Perception and human nature also play a part in how good a baseball player is, how fun he is to watch. Bill James analyzes statistics intensely and in his books writes about who is great and who is not, who belongs in the Hall of Fame and who does not. In a book James wrote, he tries to make a case for or against certain players based on a stat he invented called "win shares", which is also the name of that book. It is a measure of the shares of wins that a player on certain team contributed for that year. It is compelling, and well done work, but I happen to think there is another way to account for greatness.

I am proposing another measure of greatness be considered when choosing Hall of Famers. My measure is called "Badass Points". Badass points are not win shares, may not even necessarily help a team win a game, but they help separate the great from the really good. Greatness implies badass points. But these points are somewhat anecdotal and arbitrary. They are only to be redeemed for HoF admission. They can not be traded for sky miles, or used to help a player get out of a parking ticket or jail. They might be usable as a negotiation tool in getting a player a raise in salary.

Badass Point Breakdown

OK, so who gets badass points?

Players who change the game. Players who do something better than anyone else, play a position better, lead the league in a stat for a season or a decade or a career. Real great players are great in the postseason, so postseason greatness is rewarded more. Certainly most of the players I think should get badass points also score plenty of win shares, but I think the badass points are another way to measure greatness. 100 bad ass points = automatic Hall of Fame admittance.

#1 Badass point owner? Jackie Robinson. 1000 badass points (the most for any 1 accomplishment), for breaking the color barrier. Thus if Jackie's career was ordinary, (and it was better than ordinary) he should STILL be in the HoF strictly based on how much he had to go through breaking the color barrier. Certainly he changed the game. The voters for the Hall agree, he is in the Hall of Fame.

Career leaders in any widely accepted stat get

BADASS POINTS:

A less-statistical measure of baseball greatness

By Mike Ahern

100 points. Thus Rickey Henderson gets 400 badass points for being the career leader in walks, runs, stolen bases and game leadoff homers. I know that "leading off a game with a homer" might seem arbitrary, but that is part of the beauty of badass points. Doubling the next best guy at a stat? 100 points, so if Rickey was able to double the next best stolen base total, he'd get 200 badass points for stolen bases. Single season career leader in any 1 stat, 40 points. So Hack Wilson is already 40% a Hall of Famer just for hitting 190 RBIs in 1930. And McGwire gets to keep his 40 points for hitting 70 homers in '98 even though Bonds hit 73 in 2001.

How about the career leader in getting hit by pitches (HBP)? I believe Don Baylor is the leader in

points right there, automatic bid.

One great game, 1 badass point. One great game in the playoffs or the World Series, 5 badass points. What makes a "great game"? For example:

Pedro Martinez pitching in game 5 vs the Indians in the 1999 ALDS. Pitched 4th -9th inning. No runs, no hits, won the series. 6 innings of no hit ball after the game was already 8-8. 5 badass points. Throwing Zimmer down this year? Not as good as that '99 game but worthy of something, 1 badass point.

During 2003's WS, Josh Beckett's shutout in game 6? 5 points. Being named WS MVP? 3 more points. Saying, "we aren't playing any ghosts, we are just playing those guys over there..." 1 more point. Josh's complete game shutout of the Cubs in the NLCS with the season on the line? 5 more points. So even if Josh Beckett never even wins another regular season game, he could make the Hall of Fame if he could have 7 more postseasons as good as the one he just had. That sounds reasonable. 2 of my examples above were "off the field" events, Josh's brash answer to a reporter and Pedro's throwdown. I don't encourage fighting or trashalking but when a player predicts some kind of domination and then delivers on the promise, it is worth badass points. When a player charges the mound (no badass points) and is smacked down by the pitcher for charging, the pitcher gets 1 badass point.

Based on badass points, guys like Jeter and Pettitte might be getting close to hall of fame numbers already. I think that is perfectly reasonable. Jeter's play to beat the A's? 5 points. 20 plays like that and you make the Hall of Fame. It's that easy, all you have to do is pull off 20 miracles in the postseason.

Single Point Earning Events

I don't give so much credit for leading the league in a category, or winning an MVP, those kinds of numbers are already quantified ad nauseum by James and others and I wanted badass points to be

independent and "orthogonal" to other systems, but let's say 1 badass point for each year leading any 1 stat. Based on my system, Roger Maris led the league in homers once, and was MVP twice and was the single season leader in homers so he gets 43 points. I'd give him another 5 points for dealing with the NY media who liked Mantle better during his record breaking year. 48 badass points is pretty good, but Maris is not in the Hall of Fame.

Career Milestones

Pitching Badass Points

- 1 badass point for a no hitter
- 2 for a perfect game
- 1 for a 20 strikeout game
- 1 for 25 wins in a season
- 1 point for leading the league in any one recognized badass pitching stat for 1 year

Batting Badass Points

- 1 for a 5 hit game
- 2 for a 6 hit game
- 1 for a 4 hr game
- 1 for hitting for the cycle
- 1 for a 50 hr season
- 2 for a 60 hr season
- 1 point for leading the league in any one recognized badass batting stat for 1 year

Fielding Badass Points

- 1 badass point for a gold glove
- 75 badass points for being the best ever fielding your position
- 40 badass points for being the best player of your era for your career

Based on the 2003 season not too many players earned even 1 badass point for any of the accomplishments listed above. There were a few points given out at the end of the year and a few for the postseason. My point is anyone who does any of these things enough times to get to 100 badass points will certainly be a badass.

that stat, but that stat is not an officially recognized badass statistic. Nevertheless, getting hit all those times has gotta hurt, and thus we should award Baylor 20 badass points for getting hit so many times. I don't think he did enough other things greatly to get him to 100 badass points, and he is not in the Hall.

Being the best ever at a certain position is enough to get you into the HoF. Edgar Martinez probably scored a couple of badass points in the 95 playoffs, but he is clearly the best ever DH, 100 badass

I like career milestones. 3000 hits, 500 hrs, 300 wins, each of these earn 75 badass points. Not automatic bids but usually players who reach these milestones will do enough other things well to get in. Also any player who is CLEARLY the best at his position for at least five years should get 75 badass points. I believe Pudge Rodriguez currently has this distinction, Omar Vizquel is questionable, but close. Leading the league in a decade for any one stat: 20 points. For example, Mark Grace earns 20 badass points for getting the most hits in the 90s. There are too many players with 400 homers to give any badass points for a 400-homer career. My system is harsh on players who come in second, but true badasses finish first.

Jackass Points

Jackass points are the evil twin of badass points. 1 jackass point = -1 badass point. When Jose Canseco had a fly ball bounce off his head then over the fence for a homer, that is 1 jackass point. He needs to lead the league in some category for a year to make up for that. Canseco is going to miss the Hall of Fame based on his jackass points. And that makes perfect sense. We want badasses in the Hall of Fame, and should be trying to keep jackasses like Canseco and Dave Kingman out. Certainly Rickey and Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb (Mr. "I beat up a man with no hands") earned some jackass points in their careers, but obviously their baseball careers were so great that the badass points easily overcome the jackass points, making them net-badasses and Hall of Famers.

Getting suspended or arrested, 1 jackass point. Caught with illegal drugs (including steroids), 1 jackass

point. Sorry Sammy, the corked bat incident is going to cost you 1 jackass point. Manny charging the mound on the Rocket, when the pitch was over the plate (in the playoffs), 5 jackass points. Roger keeping the ship on course after that event, and hanging tough, 5 badass points. That game nullifies the jackass points he earned for throwing the bat at Piazza in the 2000 World Series.

Then we get to one of the greatest badasses and saddest jackasses of them all, Pete Rose. He has been banned from baseball for betting on baseball. His 4,256 career hits just scream badass points. He had a statue of Ty Cobb he would keep in his locker, and he bought one of Ty's actual hats and a jersey and put it on the statue and said to it when closing in on Ty's 4,189, "I'm gonna break your record, you m-f-er." Badass points up the wazoo. The head first slides, the collision at the plate to win the All Star game, Rose threatened to kill the Phillie Phanatic if he came near him, this guy could make a case for badass #1. The Ichi-badass. (For those of you who don't know Japanese, "ichi" means "#1", "ro" means "son", Ichiro is the "#1 son". And he is certainly piling up badass points every year) So what do we do about Pete Rose? Well I'd like to see him come clean, tell every sordid detail of his life, admit he had done wrong and ask for forgiveness. Doesn't seem like it's going to happen. I guess badasses don't apologize.

Conclusion

I believe I have outlined a new way to decide who belongs in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Certainly it is biased and subjective, but even Bill James says all statistics do that. I was trying to answer the question "If player A and player B have similar numbers, how

can A be better?" I have the answer now: "Player A earned more badass points." The clearest comparison I can use (and I must give credit to Kevin Chanel for the idea) is Nolan Ryan and Don Sutton. I don't care what the statisticians say about their win shares or their ERA in odd numbered innings, Nolan Ryan was clearly a badass, while Sutton was questionable. Not that I really mind Sutton's inclusion into the Hall of Fame, I am just saying let's not let in anyone else if all he can claim is he was comparable to Don Sutton.

My other conclusion is that baseball is great. Really really great. Baseball history is full of great stories, and each good game is like a valuable gem. Not all games are gems, but lots of them are. A great game could make a baseball fan happy even if his team was 20 games out. There really are still Tigers fans out there. Spring Training, the All Star game, the trading deadline, the pennant race, the playoffs...all great. I know the saddest day each year for me as a baseball fan. It is the day after the last game of the World Series. How in the world can I get through November, December and January? The dark days. Let's see, how many days til pitchers and catchers report?

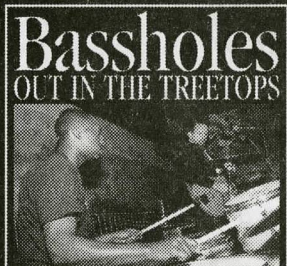
Mike Ahern has lived all over this USA of ours, and has seen the Zephyrs on more than one occasion. He is an accomplished science guy, and even has business cards that say "Scientist." He can name every song on "Highway To Hell" in order, and has a brother named Bob.



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CELLULOID HEROES

A Study Of Baseball Movies

By Johnny Von Passenheim

Today, the major league dugouts are home to jerks, slackers, wife-beaters, malcontents, egomaniacs, greedheads and designated hitters.

Steinbrenner uses the annual telecast of the MLB All-Star game like it was the Home Shopping Network. Barry Bonds' cranium continues to inexplicably expand, just like Ken Griffey, Jr.'s head in the Simpsons episode where Monty Burns buys major league superstars as ringers for the power plant softball team. Teams with distinct and demonstrable personalities, such as The Big Red Machine, The Amazing A's, the We-Are-Family Pirates and the Dobson/Palmer/Cuellar/McNally twenty-game winners Orioles, are all gone and will never return. Bud Selig is still the commissioner, the Dodgers still exist and David Wells is still fat and dumb.

All the aforesaid have helped put a cold compress on my baseball fever ("catch it!") and even led me to less history-rich spectator sports. But I will never seek a finer sport when it comes to its depiction in the movies. Baseball dominates the silver screen. No other sport can muster more than a few satisfactory efforts. Basketball can give us *Hoosiers* and *Hoop Dreams* before it hits the wall with *The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh*, *Like Mike* and *Space Jam*. Hockey has *Slapshot* and maybe *Mystery, Alaska* before it falls upon the hard times of the *Mighty Ducks* series. Golf? Well, *Caddyshack*, without question. Maybe *The Legend of Bagger Vance* or *Happy Gilmore*. Certainly not *Caddyshack II* nor *Tin Cup* nor that one with Randy Quaid. Hell, *Dorf on Golf* has more staying power than those losers. Football has *The Longest Yard*. After that, one might make the argument that *Remember the Titans*, *Brian's Song*, *North Dallas Forty*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *The Paper Lion*, *Varsity Blues* or *The Replacements* are somewhere above the "Mendoza Line." Beyond those, we fall straight into the swill pit that is Goldie Hawn as the head coach of those lovable misfits or the one with the donkey that kicks field goals. As the Mendoza Line for this exercise, we'll use the original *Rollerball*, with James Caan and John Houseman. If a movie is

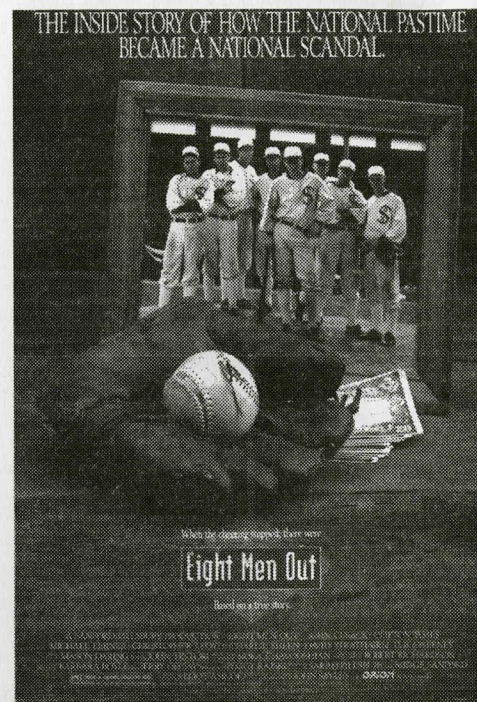
worse than *Rollerball*, or is less accurate to any current and recognizable sport than *Rollerball*, then it falls below the Mendoza Line. By way of example, *On Any Given Sunday* (the "football" movie), starring Al Pacino and Jamie Foxx, falls below the Mendoza Line by either assessment.

Baseball movies that rate above the Mendoza Line are, in arbitrary order:

Pride Of The Yankees (1942) "Today-ay-ay, I consider this-iss-ss, one of the great-ate-te baseball movies in the world-urld-rld." This biographical flick about legendary first baseman Lou Gehrig was made one year after Sweet Lou's death. It's weepy and anachronistic, and Gary Cooper as the Iron Horse isn't even a lefty, but the atmosphere of this black & white classic is true to the nostalgic sentiment of baseball. Furthermore, Babe Ruth is quite convincing as Babe Ruth. As such, I won't even reach for the old gag about the chances of Lou Gehrig dying of Lou Gehrig's disease, and how could he not have seen that one coming? I mean, c'mon.

Fear Strikes Out (1957) Anthony Perkins, of *Psycho* fame, plays Jimmy Piersall, a baseball player who lost his mind while playing for the Red Sox. The re-make this flick will be entitled "The Carl Everett Story." The movie has its unintentional comedy, in that Perkins, how can I say this, runs and throws like a girl. Word has it that the real Jimmy Piersall has refused to be associated with the film based on his life because he found out that Anthony Perkins was actually gay. So, to recap, it's okay to be famously insane, but being portrayed as famously insane by an actor who might be a little light in the spikes is simply unacceptable.

Major League (1989) "Juuuuuuuust a bit outside." Bob Uecker was recently named to the Baseball Hall of Fame. I maintain that this



induction was bestowed upon Uecker for nothing more than his role in this movie and for his Lite Beer commercials ("Must be in the front rooooww," "He missed the tag!" for you younger readers). If this is the case, then bravo. It is a richly deserved honor. This is not a good movie per se, but it has too many great moments for any baseball movie fan not to love it. ("Curve ball. Bats are afraid"). My favorite moment in the flick comes from the effect of the amplifiers-on-eleven version of The Troggs' megaclassic "Wild Thing", as sonically boosted by X, hammering out of mighty movie theater speakers, as Charlie Sheen's character takes the mound in relief. Great baseball movie build-up. Also, that soundtrack performance by X is rivaled only by X's soundtrack performance in the remake of the Jerry Lee Lewis barnburner "Breathless", for the Richard Gere remake of the French movie of same name. Yeah, I said "French movie."

The Natural (1984) An "okay" movie, really. Full of regret and aspiration and civility and "what-might-have-been." It has a sort of Merchant-Ivory approach to the game of baseball. It is one of three movies that 90%+ Americans would name as their favorite baseball movie, based on research that I just made up. The other two movies consistently named as favorites are *Field of Dreams* and *Bull Durham*. Don't let the fact that I made up that ninety percent statistic fool



Just try and find a reference to this film anywhere in this article. There's a good reason you won't. The damn thing just plain sucks. And not in a lame sequel Major League II manner either. Not even in the Disney Little Big League or whatever way. But in a fashion reserved in the annals of cinema history solely for the hit-and-miss trainwreck that is... Kevin Costner. In fact, we won't even fuss up to the title of this trash, lest an idle-minded viewer attempt to assuage a prurient interest or rubbernecked fascination for crap-cultured mistakes to be raised to the John Waters-esque level of "high art." Nope, it's Costner, and it's just that bad.



Let's see, D.B. Sweeney...Ray Liotta...how could a casting agent decide? One is an Italian "intense" righty, the other an educated actor whom just happens to be a southpaw. Personally, it's hard to believe Liotta was even considered for the role of the slackjawed Southern phenom. Was it his vulnerable and intricate portrayal as the jealous hothead in *Something Wild*? Who saw this guy and said: "Hmnnnn...gangster qualities, smoldering visage...hold the phone!...We've found our Shoeless Joe! Sayles? Ha!...what does HE know? Liotta...that's our guy!"



you. It's dead-on accurate.

In *The Natural*, Robert Redford plays Roy Hobbs, who has a bat called "WonderBoy" and who gets shot and who has a couple of dozen unexplained years and who joins the New York Knights and then does some damage to a light tower. Also in the movie are Darren McGavin (man, did I love the TV show *Night Stalker** as a little kid) and the late Richard Farnsworth (go see *The Straight Story* if you have never seen it).

I never have been a huge fan of *The Natural*.

Bull Durham (1988) We might as well cover the other two movies, which along with *The Natural*, comprise the triumvirate of everybody's favorite baseball flicks. This also brings us to the Kevin Costner portion of our program. *Bull Durham* is a chick-flick, masquerading as a baseball movie. There, I said it. The more I think about *Bull Durham*, the less I like it. To be kind, the cinematography is rich and Costner looks like he can actually swing the bat, but when Robert Wuhl is supplying the best moments of your movie, it has problems.

Field Of Dreams (1989) Although made only one year after *Bull Durham* and also starring Kevin Costner, I am a sucker for this flick. It's not the "if you build it, blah, blah, blah" spirituality or need of the ex-hippies to reach out to their former guiding-light author, Terrence Mann (as played by James Earl Jones) that gets to me. D.B. Sweeney as Shoeless Joe in *Eight Men Out* is a superior athlete, and played ball at Tulane. It's not even Jones' basso-profundo soliloquy upon the timeless nature of baseball ("Oh yes, they will come, Rayyyy, people will most definitely commmmme."). I simply love both Burt Lancaster and Frank Whaley as Archie "Moonlight" Graham, the guy who had only one at-bat in The Bigs. Love that guy. Gonna name all my sons "Moonlight," my daughters too. And myself, as well. And, if I wasn't such a tough guy, I might even have gotten a little choked up at the "Hey Dad, do you want to play catch?" scene between the live Kinsella and the dead one. I mean, that is if I wasn't such a tough guy.

Why *Field of Dreams* isn't a chick flick and *Bull Durham* is: Because I said so.

Eight Men Out (1988) This is a serious movie about baseball, done well. It succeeds on every level. John Sayles could have merely made the film *Lone Star* and left it at that and I still would have called it an admirable film career. But then he comes up with this gem. This movie looks at the range of interwoven characters involved in the powerhouse 1919 Chicago White Sox team and its throwing of the World Series, creating the so-called "Black Sox" scandal. It is as gripping as it is subtle. The sets, the costuming, the baseball and its feel for the era are all excellent. The inevitable downfall of the ChiSox players is known to all baseball fans, and in that, it is like a Greek tragedy, except for it not being all boring and overblown and really grisly and kind of creepy, like *Oedipus Rex* or *Antigone* and the like.

Particularly good in this movie is one of those actors you tend to recognize and enjoy, and yet still can't quite place. It is the same category that has previously been occupied by the likes of Bill W. Macy, the late J.T. Walsh or John C. Reilly, among others. In this instance, the actor is David Strathairn, who plays starting pitcher Eddie Cicotte, the one guy that the White Sox position players truly need if the planned tank job is going to work. Strathairn has also been excellent as the president of the league in *A League of Their Own*, as the slick pimp/extortionist Pierce Padgett in *L.A. Confidential* and as a WWII air base officer in *Memphis Belle*.

Also very good in this film are John Cusack and John Mahoney, the winning combo from *Say Anything* ("Lloyd, I'm incarcerated!").

Eight Men Out is superior to every other film about baseball in every way and is yet still not the best baseball film in existence. More on that later.

Bang The Drum Slowly (1973) stars Robert DeNiro in his first big role as a terminally ill catcher. Kind of a downer. Imagine that.

The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings (1976) It's hard to remember that before Lando Calrissian and the Colt .45 ads and the Superfly perm, Billy Dee Williams had mad style. This whole movie has style. In this movie, also starring Richard Pryor and James Earl Jones, Williams plays Bingo Long. Set in 1939, it follows the barnstorming baseball season of a team of Negro League stars. It is a great and almost forgotten baseball movie. There is one point in the action where Bingo Long, a pitcher a la Satchel Paige, clears the field of all of his own players and then asks the other team and the crowd "Who...I say Whooo...gonna hit my IN-VITE pitch?!" I used to try that line on batters from the mound as a kid. And, then I'd get shelled. Put this flick on AMC, ditty-mow.

A League Of Their Own (1992) "There's no crying in baseball" is an institution. That's a given. It will remain part of the common lexicon after the source of the line has been forgotten, just like "no comments from the peanut gallery." For Tom Hanks' rant alone, this movie makes the over/under on the Mendoza Line. What should be remembered is that Hanks, as Jimmie Foxx knock-off Jimmy Dugan, gets his best line right after the no-crying tirade. The home plate ump scolds Hanks for the tone he uses with his player and advises him to treat each lady on the team as he would treat his own mother or sister. Hanks then asks the immortal question "In that outfit, has anyone ever told you that you look like a penis in a little hat?"

Among other things that this flick has going for it is David Strathairn, as mentioned above. Also John Lovitz is strong in a bit role as the bitter scout. The movie features the surprisingly non-grating duo of Madonna and Rosie O'Donnell, as centerfielder and third base, respectively. And of course, there is a young Tea Leoni,

* Rehashed for the new millenium USA Network re-run set as "Kolchak: The Night Stalker," so as not to confuse AC/DC or Richard Ramirez fans.

in a non-speaking role, running the bases in a WWII-era "skort," playing for whatever team plays against the Rockford Peaches. I sure do like this movie.

The Babe (1993) Hereinafter referred to as "The Bubble," because this flick is on the proverbial bubble, at best, when it comes to the Mendoza Line. All I truly remember of this movie is that John Goodman actually had to lose weight to play Babe Ruth. Astounding.

61* (2001) I didn't see it, but I am in favor in anything which puts Billy Crystal on the other side of the camera.

The "Mendoza/Rollerball Line"

Stealing Home (1988) I don't remember much of it, but I seem to recall that there were at least sporadic references to baseball in this movie beyond merely the title. I assume I enjoyed parts of it, because I like everything that Jodie Foster has been in, from *Freaky Friday* on. It also starred Kevin Costner or Mark Harmon, who are the same person, in case you were unaware.

The Scout (1994) In 1985, George Plimpton perpetrated the literary hoax of creating a Mets pitching prospect/phenom named Sidd Finch, who developed his 168 m.p.h. delivery by throwing rocks at snow leopards. A similar hoax was perpetrated years ago in the field of film and comedy. The hoax is Albert Brooks, comic genius. The secret is now out. Sure, granted, Brooks' actual birth name was Albert Einstein, but by no means is he a genius. And, get this, his movies are not funny. *Lost In America*, *Defending Your Life*, *The Muse*. What is that smell?

Then along comes this train wreck, which is part Albert Brooks-is-funny myth and part Sidd Finch-has-been-brought to the Yankees myth. Brooks plays a baseball scout who discovers a headcase pitching and hitting prospect named Steve Nebraska. Brendan Fraser plays the headcase. With the help of Brooks as "The Scout," Steve Nebraska turns it all around, hits home runs in every major league at bat, from either sides of the plate, and pitches a perfect game in his first start, striking out twenty-seven consecutive batters on a total of eighty-one pitches. Feel free, do the math. Yes, I did just ruin the movie for you. You can thank me later. In addition, George Steinbrenner has a large and generally benign role in this movie. I see a pattern developing. Steve Nebraska, Keanu Reeves as Johnny Utah, Kermit Washington. All states as surnames, all things to avoid at all costs. I'll be keeping a watchful eye on that sneaky Joe Montana.

Cobb (1994) This is a tough one to like. The more accurate the portrayal of Ty Cobb, the

more numbingly depressing the film will be. As Cobb, Tommy Lee Jones easily brings enough strength to the role of the retired, yet still despicable, Hall-of-Famer to bum most anyone out. As Liotta's Shoeless Joe says in *Field Of Dreams*, "Cobb wanted to play, too, but none of us could stand the son of a bitch when he was alive, so we told him to stick it, heh-heh-heh!" There is also a depressing amount of Robert Wuhl in this movie

Major League: Back To The Minors (1994) A sequel, starring Scott Bakula. We can leave it at that.

The Rest (various years)

To save time, the remainder of the sub-Mendoza dregs will be filled out with that lamest of all baseball genre movies: The prepubescent kid leads a hapless professional baseball team to the championship against all odds, learning lessons of friendship, respect, loyalty and faith along the way flick (see *Angels in the Outfield*, *Little Big League*, *The Kid from Left Field*, *Rookie of the Year*, etc.) Inexcusable.

Its Own Category:

Bad News Bears (1976) As noted earlier, *Eight Men Out* is superior to all other baseball movies, but *Bad News Bears* is the greatest baseball movie of all time. How does that work? I don't care. *Bad News Bears* rivals *Slap Shot* as the greatest sports movie in the galaxy and perhaps further. I will expound. Walter Matthau not only had his greatest role of his career in this movie as Bears' coach Morris Buttermaker. He became, as Buttermaker, the greatest coach of all time. Lombardi got nothing on Buttermaker. Greatest pitchers? Cy Young, Walter Johnson, Tatum O'Neal as Amanda Whurlitzer, Christy Mathewson, and Brandon Cruz, post-*Courtship of Eddie's Father*, as Vic Morrow's star pitcher son. In that order, exactly. Best position player ever? Jackie Earl Haley as Kelly Leak. The original *Bad News Bears* had such impact as a baseball movie, that even its vastly inferior sequel, *The Bad News Bears in Breaking Training* crept into the collective sub-conscious of the baseball-loving world. As Bud Selig sat at the Major League All-Star game, addled and befuddled as to how to end a baseball game, the crowd chanted the famed imploration, courtesy of said sequel: "Let them play! Let them play! Let them play!"

And that, sports fans, is pure baseball. That said, I'm going to get me a Chico's Bail Bonds

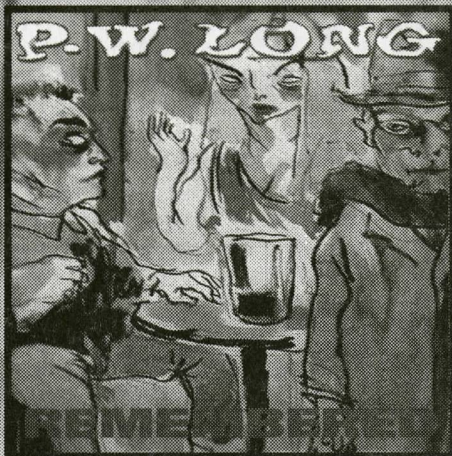


Greatest Baseball Lines from movies:

1. "I heard he threw at his kid at the father/son game." Bob Uecker, *Major League*
2. "Ya booger-eatin' moron!" Chris Barnes, as Tanner Boyle, *Bad News Bears*
3. "They came to play. There's no bout a-doubt it." Bob Uecker, *Major League*
4. "Yup." Richard Farnsworth, *The Natural*
5. "Don't wink at him, kid." Brian E. Frankish, as the Clean-Shaven Umpire, *Field Of Dreams*
6. "Gackgackgackgalalala!" Gaby Hoffman, as Karin Kinsella, choking on the hot dog, *Field Of Dreams*
7. "Lou Lou Lou, Gehrig! Gehrig! Gehrig! Gehrig! Gehrig, Lou Lou Lou!" Lou Gehrig's family, in *Pride Of The Yankees*
8. "Ya gotta take one for the team, Randy." Walter Matthau, as Coach Buttermaker, *Bad News Bears*
9. "Candlesticks make a nice gift. Let's get two." Robert Wuhl, as Coach Hockett, *Bull Durham*
10. "I am a big, fat, pointless jackass, hell-bent on sucking the joy out of baseball in order to serve my own hideously narcissistic sense of self-worth." George Steinbrenner, *The Scout (at least, that's what I heard)*.

baseball jersey, slap "Moonlight" across the back, and it's going to mean bad news for the other team. And you read it here...there are no French baseball movies.

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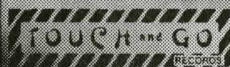


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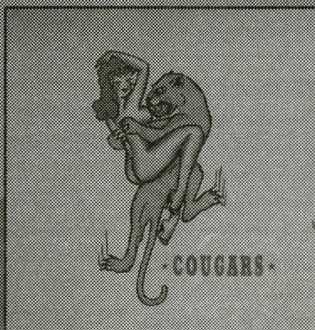
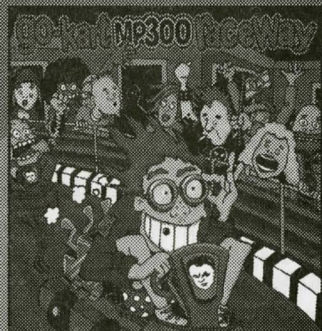


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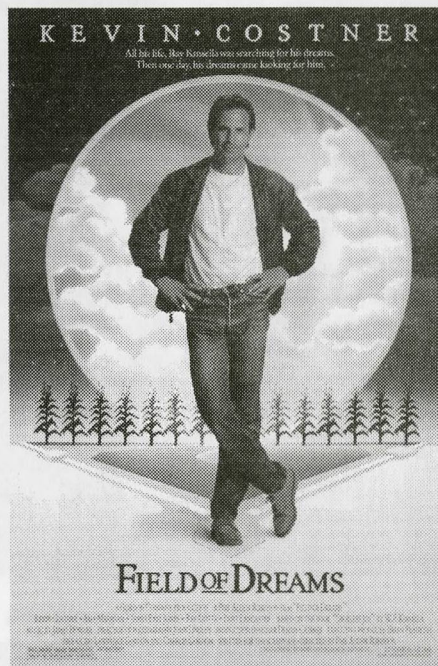
The Torture That Is *Field Of Dreams*

by Ben Weasel

I recently subjected myself to the torture that is *Field Of Dreams*, a film I hadn't seen in so long that I'd relegated it to the "harmless" file in the back of my head. Dusted off and reassessed, I have to put a warning label on it. This movie is not harmless. This movie is representative of everything that is currently wrong, and always has been wrong, with the way we look at baseball. *Field Of Dreams* is not a good movie. That alone is not, of course, offensive; there are very few good baseball movies. In fact there is exactly one: *The Bad News Bears*. Failing in a genre in which failure is the norm is no crime—what makes *Field Of Dreams* an affront to decency is that it is morally corrupt. More precisely, it's pure fucking evil. The reason it's pure fucking evil is because it sells a dangerous lie that is ultimately not only damaging to the sport of baseball, but to art, and to the truth of the human experience.

Field Of Dreams was conceived of and made by Baby Boomers, those overweight, out of touch oafs who are always looking for any excuse to justify their greed and moral weakness while assuring the world that they still carry with them the spirit of their generation — the ragged but proud glory of "The Sixties."

Fuck "The Sixties." Anybody who uses that phrase reverentially is automatically full of shit and can be counted on to have never been a part of anything more radical than perhaps having tacked up a poster of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the wall of their college dorm. These spineless creatures drank, drugged and fucked their way through college and their early twenties, and when they had their kids — my generation — they told us not to do the same. They echoed Abby Hoffman's "Property is shit" line until they realized they wanted a little property themselves. And they wanted a lot of expensive toys, too. So as they grew older and became more and more out of touch with generations that followed — as they turned into their parents — they didn't do what countless generations before them had done. They did not move gracefully into middle age. They went kicking and screaming like the spoiled brats they always were. The Boomers were the first American generation of whiny, narcissistic shitheads, their sense of entitlement only surpassed by their hubris as they grabbed — and



continue to grab — what they want when they want it, and fuck everybody else. The Boomers don't like being reminded that they're out of touch; that they've become everything they always hated; that they've pissed all over the world and that maybe they should be held accountable for it rather than be allowed to make somebody else clean up the mess while they clean up the profits. Nope, they want to have their cake and eat it too. So to justify their miserable existence, they use pop culture to get the word out that they aren't so bad after all; at least part of my seething hatred of the Beatles can be attributed to spending my entire childhood listening to alleged adults quote those corny hippie lyrics as a solution for everything from world peace to how to fix a leaky faucet.

What *Field Of Dreams* is really about is providing Boomers with justification for selling their souls. It's another version of the Boomer lie, the one that tells you that you can be a socially responsible person with the strength of your convictions and you can still make a shitload of money doing it. When push comes to shove in *Field Of Dreams* and the character of Ray Kinsella is going to lose his farm and, thus, his ability to support his family if he sticks to his guns, we are assaulted by one of the last in a long succession of the script's flowery, officious,

smoke-pouring-and-sparks-flying-from-the-bullshit-detector speeches, this time from James Earl Jones's character, who assures Kinsella that his hard work and commitment have not been in vain because people will come to his ball field to watch the magical dead ballplayers play catch. They'll suddenly decide to take a vacation in Iowa without knowing why. They'll get bored with Iowa City and, again, without knowing why, they'll drive to Ray's farm, and they'll want to see the game.

And Ray can charge twenty bucks a head.

That's what this movie is really about: Stand up for what you believe in, even if everybody else thinks you're nuts! Uh, yeah, well... but only if there's a safety net underneath...umm... wait, strike that, you've worked hard, why settle for a safety net? You're an American: you deserve to turn a healthy profit! At its heart, *Field Of Dreams* isn't about standing by your principles while simultaneously dealing with fiscal responsibilities; it's a fairy-tale about social responsibility in which right action is rewarded with a good income, and in which the money that is inevitably a byproduct of organized social action (in this case, presented as a vaguely Quixotic stand against sanity by a moron from Iowa) becomes the end to the means. If it were simply bullshit, it wouldn't offend so much. But it's sneaky, manipulative bullshit that is designed to ease the guilt of those Reagan Democrat yuppies who had spent almost a full decade looting the country by the time this film was released.

Field Of Dreams is a movie based on an inherently dishonest, cynical concept that urges us not to confuse ourselves with the facts. I'm sure I can't be the only one to find the whole ugly thing to be an insult to all human intelligence. Ray Kinsella is clearly an idiot at best, a dangerous sociopath at worst. His wife is almost as culpable — her decision to stand by her man in spite of his reckless idiocy is akin to handing the killer the bullets for the gun.

Besides all that, the movie never explains what the ballplayers' cut of that twenty bucks a head will be. Sure they're dead, but they are, after all, ballplayers so it's only logical to assume that they'd be demanding a fair cut of

the scratch, if only for a little afterlife booze and pussy. All the dimbulb Kinsella did was build a field — who's actually out there putting on the show that people are paying for? In a surely unintended way, the movie effectively takes the side of ownership over players. *Field Of Dreams* continues in the shameful American tradition of romanticizing and simplifying the motivation of professional entertainers, a tradition that has caused and continues to cause serious damage to the level of quality in American entertainment, whether it's sports, movies, music or any other type of talent-based entertainment. By ignoring basic financial realities in favor of portraying "real" artists as people who are only vaguely concerned with money in an eccentric, absent-minded way, this concept stacks the deck against the vast majority of artists, portraying as frauds any of them who consider the facts of life in a society in which money is a necessity; if you're concerned about earning a living, you can't be good at what you do (if you are, it must be in a contrived, calculated way), and you certainly can't have the same love for it as someone who would continue to do it full-time even in the face of poverty. Such thinking benefits only one group of people—those making the bulk of the money. The ballplayers in *Field Of Dreams* are portrayed as being happy to just play ball for the sake of it while Kinsella rakes in the profit. If there were ever a sequel to *Field Of Dreams*, logic would dictate that we would see a tale of dead ballplayers on strike with their ghostly union head administering a spectral ass-kicking to Old Man Kinsella. Ideologically speaking, Kinsella's ball field resembles North Korea's Propaganda Village more than anything else; it is a laughably transparent attempt to continue to sell a lie that we should have shit-canned years ago. Yeah, it is so, kid. Comiskey screwed his players one time too many. It is so, and stop pretending to be so shocked, ya little brat.

On top of everything else, as if cynical, guilt-ridden self-justification disguised as narrative isn't enough, in true George Will fashion, this piece of celluloid fluff abuses a great sport to spread its fertilizer. *Field Of Dreams* is the kind of movie that was made before Jim Bouton wrote *Ball Four*. We know better now. The baseball players in *Field Of Dreams* ought to be completely unbelievable to any viewer over the age of ten because Bouton told us so and he did it almost twenty years before *Field Of Dreams* was filmed. But the Boomers ignored him. To this day we are fed a ludicrous myth about the game of baseball and the men who play it; this in spite of the myth being beaten to a pulp starting with Bouton and continuing with tell-all ballplayers up to today. Even Mickey Mantle—whose fans would've gladly lynched Bouton after the publication of *Ball Four*—eventually wrote his own book that should've killed the ugly baseball lie. But Bouton, even though he tried — now here's a guy from "The

Sixties" who wasn't a phony, and who had the strength of convictions, and who wasn't afraid to admit, publicly, that yeah, he could be a real asshole sometimes, too, and who took a hell of a beating for telling the truth — even though he tried to put the lie to rest, Bouton ultimately failed because the Boomers wouldn't let the myth die. Baseball was a metaphor; it was their Capra-esque connection to a mythologized innocent time — the 1940's and 50's (ah yes, those magical times of segregation, Joe McCarthy, and the censorship of everything from *Catcher In The Rye* to Alfred E. Neuman) and, in the case of the writer of *Field Of Dreams*, it represented a common bond between father and son that had been ripped apart by "The Sixties." Sure, says *Field Of Dreams*, in its patronizing tone, the upheavals of "The Sixties" were necessary, but some things are timeless, like good ol' baseball.

Bullshit. Bullshit, and fuck you and all your friends — not for buying into the lie, but for insisting on selling it to the rest of us. Fuck you, Baby Boomers, for telling your kids not to do drugs or fuck while you snorted coke off of your secretary's tits and your wives back in the suburbs got fucked up on Valium and "experimented" with bisexuality. Fuck you for not even trying to bridge the gap between social responsibility and the realities of life in this country, thus allowing fringe comedians like Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky to take center stage and turn the Left into a colossal joke. And fuck you for romanticizing a game; for turning it into a bullshit symbol to justify your inherent lameness; for writing gooey, poetic nonsense about it being a metaphor for life; for getting all Doug Henning on the rest of us about the magic of baseball. Grow up, you fucking retards. Baseball is eighteen grown men on a field throwing a ball, catching a ball and hitting a ball with a bat. It isn't a metaphor for anything. The men who play it are not heroes. They are just men. Some of them are creeps and some of them are terrific guys and most of them fall somewhere in between.

Art is supposed to speak to the human condition, not lie about it. Let's stop lying. Baseball is a great game, a uniquely American game. But it is just a game. Movies like *Field Of Dreams* tell us seductive lies. They may be pretty, but they're still lies. See this movie for what it is, see its corruption, see its condescension, and at the very bottom of the warped heart of movies like *Field Of Dreams*, see the truth about the men who make them: that there are no depths to which they won't sink to avoid the terrible truth that their generation wasn't and isn't so important after all.

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LOOK MA, NO GLOVE!

During the season I was listening to the A's game in Seattle. It was a tightly contested game that went ten innings, with the Mariners edging out a win on a Mark McLemore bloop single. But, it should have never come down to that. Twice in the game, the M's had an easy opportunity to get the go ahead run. The problem, Edgar Martinez cannot run. Twice, John Olerud doubled deep into the gap at Safeco Field with Edgar Martinez on base. Twice, Edgar chugged around the bases to third, looking a lot like Tony Gwynn, in more ways than one.

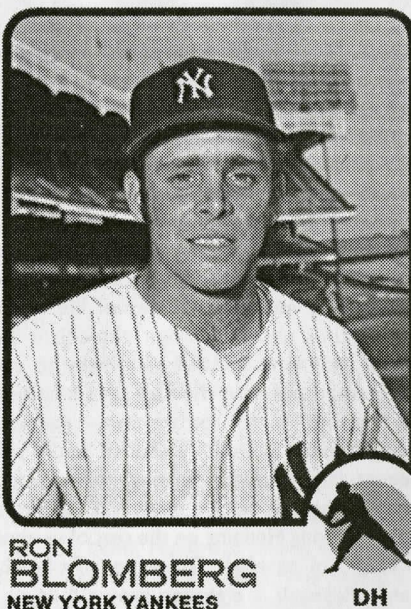
by Glen Murrell

From the baseball's humble beginnings at a field in Hoboken, New Jersey in the mid 1830s until 1972, pitchers had their turn at bat like everybody else. Sure, pitchers spent most of their time perfecting their craft and generally hitting came second. Yet, there have always been a handful of good hitting pitchers in the league, even today. In 1973, with some pressure from American League owners like Charlie Finley, Major League Baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn implemented the designated hitter into the American League rule books. Sorry pitchers, no more hitting.

On Opening Day 1973, Ron Blomberg became the first designated hitter in major league history. Blomberg, a number one pick by the Yankees back in 1967, enjoyed his best season, hitting .329 in 100 games for the Yankees. Unfortunately, Blomberg suffered several injuries during his career, and he retired in 1978. Still, his first bat used as a designated hitter in 1973 sits proudly in the archives of the baseball Hall of Fame. He may have not set the world on fire, but Blomberg was the first of many sluggers to hit without playing in the field.

Didn't that last sentence sound kind of odd? A baseball player who does not play in the field? He has no defensive position? When the players run out onto the field to take their positions, the DH just gets to sit there? The designated hitter is only in the game for half of the time. Actually, if you consider the number of at bats per nine innings, it's maybe more like a third of the time the designated hitter is even in the game. But, he gets to hit and that is what the designated hitter is all about, offense.

Remember, only five years before, 1968, was immortalized as The Year of the Pitcher. The Boston Red Sox' Carl Yastrzemski



won the AL batting crown, hitting .301, the lowest leading average ever. Denny McLain won the AL MVP and Cy Young award, winning 31 games. Bob Gibson, Don Drysdale, Fergie Jenkins and the young Jerry Koosman dominated the hitters of '68. Sure enough, pitchers success continued into the seventies.

The decision to implement a designated hitter was an attempt to create more offense, more runs. American League owners thought an experiment like the designated hitter might help to restore fan interest and mend the dwindling attendance in their parks. At the time, the National League had outlived the American League from 1964 to 1972. But back to 1973, Major League Baseball basically split into two leagues when the designated hitter arrived. Sure, the game is fundamentally played the same, yet different strategies apply to the traditional National League style of baseball with that of the American League game. In theory, National League managers only have to worry about the first seven batters because if the eighth batter

gets up, you can walk him to get to the pitcher, a common situation of the game that is often predictable. In theory, it sounds great, unless the pitcher can hit. Then, the theory goes out the window. In the American League, there may be as many as nine good hitters in the starting line up.

Another difference between leagues is that the pitchers hitting spot becomes part of the overall strategy for a National League manager. A manager must utilize the nine-spot wisely, especially in the later innings of a game. Therefore, pinch hitters are an integral part of the National League strategy, kind of like a mini designated hitter. A pinch hitter comes into the game cold, at any moment and is expected to get on base. Like the designated hitter, the pinch hitter's bat is the most important aspect of his game.

Since the DH began, the American League potentially has more hitters. An extra guy gets to bat who is not a pitcher. It seems simple. Sure, the designated hitter has prolonged some careers like Orlando Cepeda, Dave Winfield, Joe Carter, Edgar Martinez and Rafael Palmeiro. Sure, it has created more hits and more home runs. Sure, the bullpen is more expendable in the American League game. Sure, we are in the midst of an offensive era in baseball. Sure, no one wants to hang it up. But, is the experiment still relevant?

It's 2003, the 30 year anniversary of the designated hitter. But, the real question is: Is baseball's little experiment still good for the game? Yes and no. Former Red Sox pitcher Bill Lee says no. Lee was a guy who enjoyed hitting; it was part of his game. A pitcher likes to be able to help himself out at bat, it's empowering. In Ken Burns' acclaimed PBS documentary series,

Lee told the story of his infamous last at bat in a Red Sox uniform in 1972. He hit a triple, which, according to Lee would have been an inside the park job but he couldn't find the third base coach down the third base line, so Lee went halfway to home and retreated back to third. Lee is pretty proud of that story. He was a pitcher who took pride in his hitting. I am sure there are some pitchers in today's game who take as much pride in their hitting as Lee did.

If you look back through the history of the game, there have been some good hitting pitchers. Warren Spahn hit over thirty home runs in his career. Bob Gibson, Don Drysdale and others could hit as well. And of course, let's not forget the greatest hitting pitcher of all time, the mighty Babe Ruth. Sure, Ruth's legacy has been centered mostly on his powerful hitting, but the Babe was one of the best pitchers of the 1910s, until he was traded to the Yankees in 1920. In today's game, there are some decent hitting pitchers in the National League. Mike Hampton, Livan Hernandez, Greg Maddux, and Woody Williams to name a few. Even today's American League pitchers must pay at least a little attention to their hitting. After all, anyone could be traded to the National League, right? Plus, with the advent of interleague play—

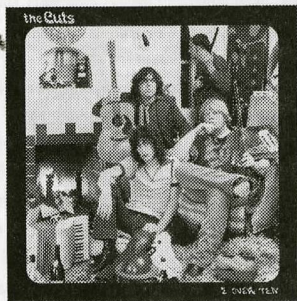
another obvious financial ploy—American League pitchers hit in National League ballparks. While watching the day's baseball highlights, I saw video of Yankees pitcher David Wells chugging around first and heading towards second. It was fun just to watch the guy run at full speed. Imagine him trying to steal a base? I'd get out of the way.

Well, the designated hitter is not going anywhere. It has prolonged the careers of several sluggers, which is great for the fans. After all, no one wants to see their favorite players retire. It allows American League pitchers to sometimes throw deeper into the late innings of the game rather than being yanked for a pinch hitter. A pitcher's best insurance against getting pulled out of a game is the wielding of a competent bat. But, at the same time, as far as the prolonged career concept goes, I have more respect for guys who know when to hang it up. Gwynn could have asked to be traded late in his career, ending up as a designated hitter in the American League. But it was more important for him to retire as a Padre. Ripken and McGwire could have hung around a few more years, picking up some more at bats. Instead, those players, along with many others, decided to move on and leave the game of baseball.

Knowing when to quit has got to be a huge dilemma for any professional athlete.

In many regards, the climate of baseball is similar to the U.S. political structure, it is a slow moving beast and change comes gradually over long periods of time. It is a struggle of opposing sides, mainly between the players and owners. The problems solved by free agency (for the players, at least) created an even bigger mess, which has snowballed and snowed the average American family in their homes, unable to afford tickets to a major league baseball game. Eight work stoppages/strikes have further distanced fans forever from the game. Yet, abolishing the designated hitter still seems appealing, probably because of my National League bias. Baseball might lose a Ron Blomberg or two, but who knows what it might gain.

Glen "Greno" Murrell is a peach of a guy and one of the best drummers on the West Coast. He is a denizen of Santa Rosa, CA, where he records many works of musical genius.



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CESAR CEDENO

THE TIMEBOMB THAT ALWAYS EXPLODED

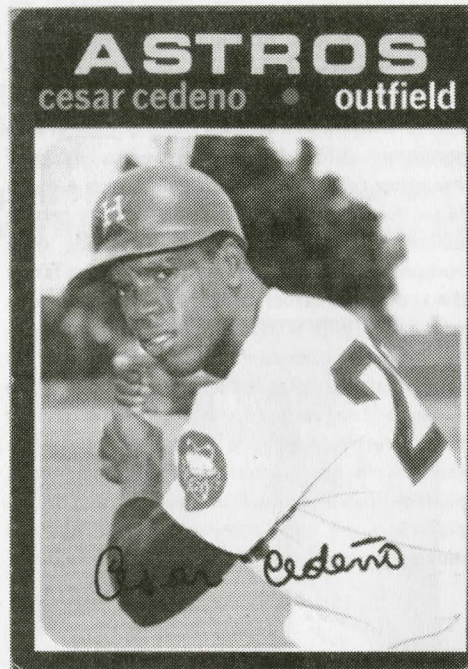
I was never a fan of the Houston Astros but I did think that Cesar Cedeno was cool. I think I liked his name more than anything, oh, and the first baseball card of is that I ever got. I totally remember when I got that card and he looked really like a baseball god on it.

by Tim Hinely

The first year I began buying Topps baseball cards was 1972 (still probably my favorite year ever for cards). I was 8 years old and we would occasionally make trips up to New Britain, Connecticut to visit relatives (that was where my mom was from). Don't get me wrong, I used to buy baseball cards from my local 7-11 in Linwood, New Jersey all the time but for some reason they seemed more special when I bought them out of town. Like when we were in Connecticut visiting relatives.

While in CT, my dads used to wake up early every morning and go down to Jimmy's Smoke Shop and get the paper. Just for the record, Jimmy's is one of the most well stocked magazine stores I have ever been in; at least it was back in those days. I hope it's still there, it has to be. Well-stocked and well-respected magazine/newspaper/tobacco shops usually stay in business for years (for further proof, if you're ever in Santa Rosa, California, check out Sawyer's News on 4th St. One of the best newsstands I have ever been in, if not the best).

On this particular visit in 1972 I bought two packs of cards and in one of them was a Cesar Cedeno card. The Astros uniforms were a cool enough mix of white and sort of an orange-ish red but Cesar's batting stance on the card looked rad as well! I just remember staring at this card for hours thinking of how cool he looked. At that point in my life the Pittsburgh Pirates were germinating in the back of my mind as my favorite team. And no, as a matter of fact I



Cesar Cedeno's 1970 (rookie) card. Worth—roughly—one plugged nickel. From the back of the same card: "Regarded as a 'complete ballplayer,' Cesar has the potential to be a superstar."

have never lived in Pittsburgh but the mix of their rad gold and black uniforms and the fact that my two favorite players, Willie Stargell and Roberto Clemente, played for them sealed it (ironically, Cedeno was touted as "the next Clemente" when he first arrived in this country from the Dominican Republic). So up until this day I am a Pirates fan (even though they suck) but I still cherished that Cesar Cedeno card and up until this day that guy has fascinated me. Here's why:

Forget about Pete Rose's gambling and Steve Garvey's womanizing (though' why on earth would you wanna cheat on your wife if she is Cindy Garvey?! That gal is beautiful! I think she is right, I think Steve Garvey is a sociopath!) Cesar Cedeno actually killed someone and got off scot-free (it was actually voluntary manslaughter). If that's not the sign of the baseball rebel that Rose and Garvey tried to be, I dunno what is.

The guy had oodles of talent and was supposed to be a bigger dick than, oh, I dunno...Barry Bonds? He won Gold Gloves, fans began calling the Houston Astrodome "Cesar's Palace" and old crusty manager Leo Durocher

said that Cedeno was "better than Willie Mays at the same age." Sounds like some pretty impressive info to me. Oh, and he hit .320 in both 1972 and 1973, but after the 1973 season is when the problems began.

As the story goes, Cesar had his share of problems with the ladies. He got married as a teenager to a Puerto Rican woman and they had a child together. They eventually got married and divorced and then he married an American woman named Cora. While married to Cora he apparently patronized prostitutes, who sometimes robbed him of his money and jewelry (hey, I never said the guy was smart, I merely said he was a talented baseball player). For protection he began packing a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson.

In addition to all of this he also had a mistress. She was 19 and her name was Altagracia de la Cruz. On the night of December 11, 1973 they checked into the Keki Motel in the poor section of Santa Domingo while his wife was at their winter home, which was also in Santo Domingo. While in the motel room they had been drinking and the events that happened next are fuzzy. Alta had picked up Cedeno's gun to look at it and he then attempted to get the gun away from her. For some reason she would not give the gun back to him and they began wrestling over it. The gun went off and Altagracia was found slumped on the floor with a bullet in her head.

Then, and remember I never said the guy was smart, Cedeno fled the crime scene in his car and didn't turn himself in until 8 hours later. He insisted that while she was looking at the gun it accidentally went off and killed her. Cedeno was charged with voluntary manslaughter (which in the USA is equal to 2nd degree murder) and since it happened just weeks before Christmas he did not have the greatest holiday season. He spent the holidays in jail with four other men accused of homicide.

After spending 20 days in jail the postmortem paraffin test (I just wanted to use the words "postmortem paraffin" in a sentence together) showed that Cedeno was not lying about the incident. That Altagracia had indeed pulled the trigger. Charges were then reduced to involuntary manslaughter. The maximum sentence in his country for this crime was three years in jail but Cedeno's punishment was to pay a fine of 100 pesos. Cedeno was back in the USA the following March for Spring Training acting as if nothing happened (though the fans didn't let him forget the incident, often shouting things at him from the stands such as "Murderer!" and "Who are you going to kill next?!")

While Cedeno insisted that this incident would not change his career or affect his playing in any way, it, of course, did. I can't think of anyone, especially someone as young as Cedeno, to go through something like that and come out unaffected. In fact, Cedeno would play for 13 more years but he would only hit over

Forget about Pete Rose's gambling and Steve Garvey's womanizing, Cesar Cedeno actually killed someone and got off scot-free.

.300 once and after 1974 he would never hit more than 20 home runs in a season again. He was a good player but his potential for being a great player died that night in the Keki Motel room.

If this had been Cedeno's only brush with the law it could have been said he made one major mistake in life, but violent incidents were a frequent thing for Cedeno. In 1985 he was arguing with his girlfriend (another one) and

ran his Mercedes into a tree in Houston. He then got violent with the police, refusing a breathalyzer and attempted to kick out the windows of the police car. In 1987, his first year out of baseball a man bumped up against him in a bar and Cedeno smashed a glass into his face. He was charged with assault and resisting arrest.

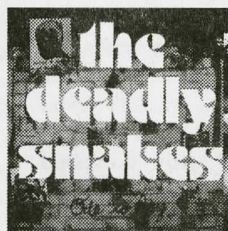
Then, in 1988 he attacked his then girlfriend (another one) in Webster, Texas. The girl ran outside with their 4-month-old baby and Cedeno ran outside, snatched the baby and drove away. He returned shortly thereafter, beat the girl up again. I took 4 policemen to get him into the patrol car. He was charged with assault, causing bodily injury and resisting arrest.

In this day and age of players with ego (Barry Bonds) and temper problems (Jeff Kent destroying the water cooler) it all sounds like small potatoes to the destruction that a true asshole like Cesar Cedeno wreaked. I'll never look at that 1972 baseball card of his the same ever again.

Tim Hinely—a recent transplant to the Pacific Northwest—is responsible for the mighty Dagger zine. Check it out at your favorite zine seller.



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BABY, YOU'RE THE TOPPS!

(or How I Learned It All From Baseball Cards)

"Everything I need to know I learned in kindergarten." It's a cute, popular saying that holds true for a lot of people. You know the drill: Sharing, cooperation, a healthy regard for naps. That's all well and good, but personally I learned everything I need to know from baseball cards.

by Mike Faloon

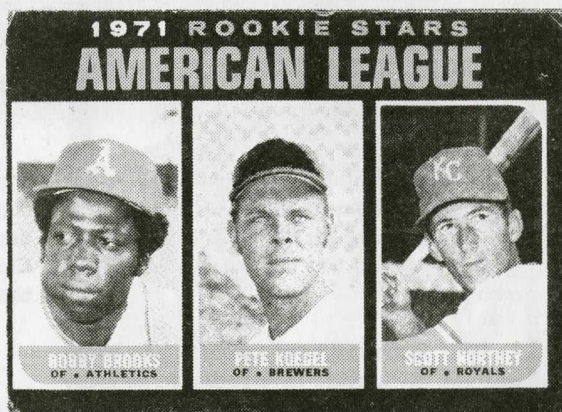
I collected cards in the late '70s and early '80s, the days of 26 teams and players with ridiculously shaggy hair. I bought my first pack in the fall of '77. Endless flipping, shuffling, and rubber-banding eventually led to the demise of those cards (the sole survivor being a ragged Jaime Quirk), but I was hooked.

Early in the '78 season I began spending all of my allowance on cards. The stats hypnotized me and rendered me a hopeless math geek. How else would you describe a kid who wanted to know how many more hits Steve Garvey needed to raise his 1977 batting average of .297 to the coveted .300 mark? (Two more, in case you were wondering). Or a kid who marveled at numbers like 52 (George Foster's homer count) or .388 (Rod Carew's batting average)?

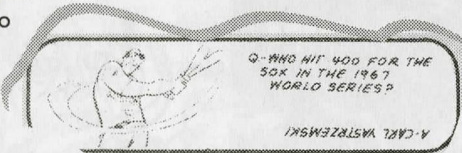


Then there's the trivia. I can't remember my age or my checking account number, but I know that Tippy Martinez and his wife were high school classmates. And I know that Cesar Tovar played all nine positions on 9/22/68, and that Mike Krukow wrote the song for Bruce Sutter's wedding. And no school—public or private—was going to usher those essential nuggets of knowledge into my melon.

"No redeeming social value" you contend? Back off, friend, cards were good for reading and writing skills, too. How else would Pete Jutton, a kid in my 5th grade class, have done entire an oral book report based on Reggie Jackson's '79 card?



Baseball cards could help develop street smarts, too. (Well, at least as street smart as you're going to get growing up in the suburbs of Syracuse). For example, I learned to deal with the Matt Shaws of the world, the straight up, bullshit-free wheelers and dealers. I met Matt in junior high. He was a high-volume trader dedicated to getting the cards he needed. He wasn't out to deceive anyone, nor was he out to make friends. At lunchtime he could trade with four kids simultaneously and never lose track of what he had to offer or what he wanted. And if there was any joy or satisfaction on his part he never let it surface. He was like a blackjack dealer. Matt was popular for two reasons. One, his belief that all cards were created equal, and two, his obsession with getting complete sets. Therefore, having two 1980 Johnny Benchs wasn't as good as having one Johnny Bench and one Bump Wills. (Though, he'd



have drawn the line with that rare '79 Bump Wills, the one that showed him in a Rangers uniform but listed him with the Blue Jays...or maybe it was vice versa). Thanks to Matt I wound up with a dozen 1980 Mike Schmidts and a gross of 1980 Ron Ceys and virtually no scrub players.

I also learned to deal with the Jason Andrews of the world, the weasels. Jason was a corporate

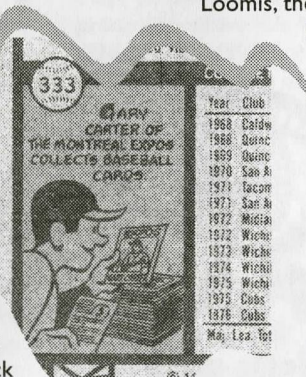
raider before the term had been coined; a 14-year-old Machiavelli. He was also the first person I didn't trust. He'd try to mix up his cards with yours, certain that the Jim Rices, Dave Parkers, and George Bretts were his, while the Johnny Grubbs, U.L. Washingtons, and Joe Zdebs were yours. When you traded at Jason Andrews' house, cards would disappear when you got up to use the bathroom. He said things with such adult-like conviction that I felt bad when I questioned anything. We didn't have drug

dealers on the street corner to be wary of, we had Jason Andrews. Then along came Paul

Loomis, the cool, slightly older

kid who tipped us off to Jason's ways.

We ended up kicking Jason's ass out of the informal club of card traders and last we heard of him he'd been reduced to collecting basketball cards.



Fortunately, I never learned the last lesson of collecting baseball cards: you're supposed to get rid of them at some point. I have still have the twenty-year-old shoeboxes stuffed with stacks of cardboard, and I still schlep them from house to house whenever my wife and I move. In fact, if you'll excuse me, I can't remember what Gorman Thomas preferred to do in the off-season (was he a hunter or a fisherman? Both?), and there's only one place I can find such vital information.

Mike Faloon is a supreme badass and must be feared. That is, after you check out his wonderful and eclectic pair of zines, the mighty Zisk! and Go Metric! Then fear him. Or buy him a drink. It's up to you, really.

RUBBER CITY REBELS

Interview with Buzz Clic

by Kevin Chanel

CM: Are you into the Indians, or like so many, did you guys become Cubs fans?

BC: I have a long history with the Indians, having gone to games as far back as the late '50's-early '60's. I loved some of those players... (Rocky Colavito, Vic Power, Woodie Held) Those were some frustrating years. I live in L.A. now and have season tix to the Dodgers, but I have to admit to still keeping my eye on the Indians' box scores. I wasn't very happy about the dismantling of the team a few years back but I am being patient and watching, hoping the young guys develop.

CM: Good to know you have stuck to your team even that much. Who was the heartbreaker, the guy you hated to see go the most? Also, who looks promising to you?

BC: Joey Belle...ha, just kidding...Bartolo Colon was a heartbreaker for me...no substitute for pitching.

CM: I'd imagine you did time at the old stadium. It is portrayed as a pretty depressing place to have seen a game, especially in the '80s. Was it as bad as all that?

BC: I just remember the place as being huge and far away from the action, with lots of dirty concrete, and there were seats sold as "restricted view," meaning a large pole (holding up the upper deck) would be somehow blocking your view. The hot dogs were pretty good as I recall though.

CM: What do you think of the Reds?

BC: Man, I thought getting Griffey was gonna really start the ball rolling there. He has sure had some hard luck injuries these last few years. The team should be okay once they get everyone back; just hope they don't get too far behind before that happens...I haven't been to the new stadium yet, but if we play nearby it is definitely on my hit list of places to go.

CM: Who do you think was the better shortstop, Dave Concepcion or Omar Vizquel?



Photo: Manny/Teenage Head

BC: Man, I wasn't all that big a fan of the Big Red Machine...but Dave was pretty good...Omar is just so smooth...I'm going with Omar...Go Tribe!

CM: Did any of you play organized ball to any level?

BC: Of course I played years of little league and one season of High School, but since 1972 I have played slow-pitch softball and in fact, I still play summer and winter leagues...my Tuesday night team is currently in first place. Just last week I pitched against former Dodger World Series MVP Steve Yeager (we got him out 3 out four times and double him up one of those!). Sorry Steve...

CM: In your opinion, who was the best band out of Akron, or out of Northern Ohio?

BC: I still think the Dead Boys were the best of what a band is/was supposed to be. They had it all...mayhem, chaos...cool songs, classic frontman, loud guitar player and kick-ass drummer...awesome combination.

CM: Why did you guys bail Ohio?

BC: Life is tough enough, and to have to battle the weather too...it just wore me out. I can't understand why anyone is still there...it's practically tundra in the winter, and the summer, well, shouldn't we just face it and start calling it what it is...the "Rainy Season"?

CM: What brought you guys back to playing together?

BC: We noticed the old LP's were selling for a lot of \$\$\$ on ebay and decided to re-release on cd...Once that happened somebody called

and asked us to play, being true musicians..."You never turn down a gig," so off we went. Luckily no one had died and there weren't any warring factions, so we just started calling ex-members.

CM: Ahhh...the "ebaying of rock and roll." Do you wonder if similar sets of circumstances have brought any other bands back together? Destroy All Monsters maybe?

BC: I'm sure of it. And what the hell, I saw the Stones in L.A. this spring; they hold the record for looking like all time geezers. If they can still go out and kick ass without being a flat out nostalgia rip-off...it just shows, you can't kill a great idea.

CM: Did you ever try to get a drunk Chrissie Hynde to sing the national anthem?

BC: Geezzzz...sometimes you can't get her to shut up with that song...what a party bring-down...always with the National Anthem too...go figure.

CM: Has anyone ever tried to clip her bangs when she was zonked?

BC: Well, there's the "good" Chrissie and the "bad" Chrissie...I kid her about it but there's a line you never want to cross...all I'll say is: "She's a babe."

CM: Okay, one more: Who would you prefer to have on your team, Dan Driessen or Andre Thornton?

BC: Give me Andre "Thunder" Thornton! And let's not forget Don "The Moose" Mossi or "Sudden" Sam McDowell (a team is only as good as the nicknames... right?).

Rubber City Rebels most recent album is called *Pierce My Brain*, on SmogVeil Records. A Big thank you goes to Bret at FlyPR.

TATTOOED GLOVE BOY

Interview with Florida Marlins pitcher Tim Lincecum, by Jon Cooper

Seeing is believing but don't believe everything you've seen or heard about Tim Lincecum. Yes, he is adorned with multiple tattoos and he likes to play guitar and hit the occasional rock club.

No, he's not some reckless anarchist wannabe actively looking to counter-step authority. He's simply a 23-year-old kid from San Diego (he now calls Pensacola, Florida home) who just happens to be living his lifelong dream of pitching in the Major Leagues and picking up a World Series ring.

And while the Atlanta Braves gave up on him as their closer of the future after only two seasons, trading him last November, Lincecum is eager to carve out his own niche as a Florida Marlin.

Happily married to the former Misty Parker, "Spooney" is at peace and even buried the hatchet with Braves pitching coach Leo Mazzone, who was rumored to have greased the skids for his exit from Atlanta.

ChinMusic! caught up with Lincecum following a pre-game All-Star 2003 marathon during his first trip back to Turner Field in April. He talked about everything from playing batters with "the Thing," to playing guitar with teammate A.J. Burnett to hopefully playing with his musical idol, Kid Rock.

ChinMusic!: How's your first year in Florida going?

Lincecum: So far it's going great. I wish the team, obviously, could have gotten off to a little better start, but it's still early. Being in Florida is awesome. The players are awesome, the coaches are awesome, the talent, everything so far has just been really positive for me.

CM: What's the biggest difference between the Florida Marlins and the Atlanta Braves?

TS: Age. Plain and simply. The guys over there, it's a good team, but everybody's a lot older and married and have kids and families and there's a lot of other stuff to do. So it was tough for me really to fit in over there. I come over here and everybody's a lot younger. I just really get along with everybody well here.

We can sit down and talk about anything. Where, over there I kind of had to bite my tongue on some things and wasn't sure where I could speak and not speak. But here, you know, I

can say whatever I want and to whomever I want and be taken for what it's worth instead of taken for something else.

CM: Was it difficult coming back here for the first time?

TS: Yeah, it was. I really wondered how the fans would take me in on this. The first day I talked to tons of guys and went out in the outfield and all kinds of fans were talking to me. Then I run in from the bullpen to pitch the other night and I got some cheers and some boos. A little bit of everything mixed in there. So it was an emotional weekend but it was fun coming back.

CM: You got married this past off-season. How's married life?

TS: It's going real good. [Misty] graduates in April and I'll be able to see a little more of her. I haven't really seen her that much. It's different being married, but it's a good move for me.

She goes to the University of West Florida. [Majoring in biology]. She was going to go to

Emory Medical School here in Atlanta. She'd already been accepted and everything. We kind of thought we had our plans set. She going to medical school and I'd be with the Braves the next couple of years. About a week after we got engaged I got traded. You can't make plans in this game.

CM: You come from a musical family. Did you ever consider a career in music?

TS: Yeah, definitely. I have my guitar here with me right now. Me and A.J. Burnett, we keep joking around that we're gonna have a band, Mad Ink, because we've got all these tattoos and stuff. We think we're gonna start taking our guitars and playing around and see what we can do.

CM: Who's your favorite guitarist?

TS: My favorite guitarist would have to be Jimmy Page.

CM: Do you remember the first concert you went to?

TS: I think the very first one I went to see was Tom Petty in high school.

CM: What's your favorite concert?

TS: The best ever? Kid Rock, hands down.

CM: What's your favorite song by Kid Rock?

TS: I've got a lot of them. Probably my latest one is one of the slower ones, "Only God Knows Why." Actually I've got a saying from that tattooed on my back, "You get what you put in and people get what they deserve." It's a little saying that I think is really true not only in baseball, but in life. You get what you put into it and you're gonna get what you deserve out of it. I like that.

CM: If you could jam with one band which would it be?

TS: Kid Rock, definitely.

CM: Have you ever met him?

TS: No. I got to go to one concert when I was with the Braves. I was in the minor leagues and a lot of the major league guys got to go and hang out with him. I was just in awe. I've always wanted to meet the guy and just hang out and just see what it's like to do his thing. If there was one guy I could meet he would definitely be the one. I've heard he's a big baseball fan.

CM: Explain "The Thing" and how it came about?

TS: (laughs) It was something in the minor leagues. Guy Hansen, my pitching coach, just started calling it "The Thing," because he didn't really know exactly what pitch it was because nobody could hit it at the time. That's what they named it. I don't really like to name pitches because it seems you usually get raked when you start doing that. But that's what they call it and that's cool.

CM: What's your favorite tattoo?

TS: My newest one, "You get what you put in." [It's a mix of Roman and old English]

CM: Do you remember your first one?

TS: Yeah. It was my name on the bottom of my back in Chinese letters. It says "Spooney." I think



that's what it says (laughs). That's what it's supposed to say. It was done by a big, fat, white biker guy. So I don't know if he knew Chinese very well. There's no telling what it says.

CM: Was it done on a dare?

TS: It was just something I wanted to do. My buddy had gotten one. I was 18 and I just really wanted one. It's all downhill from there (laughs). I've got 11 of them now.

CM: Are you sick of getting questions about them?

TS: Not at all. Because a lot of people ask me, what about when I'm 60? What am I gonna think? But every single tattoo I've got, I've been in a special place or a special time and they all have a meaning to them. So I don't think I'll regret them. I'll just look back and remember the times and the places.

CM: Why do you wear number 91?

TS: Dennis Rodman. I love Dennis Rodman. Of course, I'm not gonna wear a dress or makeup or do some of the crazy stuff. But he was a guy who had tattoos everywhere and piercings and different-colored hair, but the bottom line was

when it was time to play, the guy went out and played hard and people respected the way he played. That's my thing. I don't really care so much about how people see me. I just want them to know that when I go out on the field, I'm giving it everything I've got and I'm gonna give it my all.

CM: Who's your favorite team when you're playing All-Star 2003?

TS: Actually I play with the Marlins just because I've never been on a video game in my life. To have myself on a video game and see my name is really a shock. But since A.J. had the Marlins, I'd probably go with Boston. Pedro Martinez is pretty tough to hit anywhere.

CM: Who's the best player in the clubhouse?

TS: I don't know. Probably A.J. He just beat me.

CM: You said it's exciting to see your name in a video game. Is it still exciting to hear your name over a public address system?

TS: Yeah, definitely. I can't imagine playing for 10 or 15 years, but if I do, I can see still getting excited to hear my name announced. It's something I always wanted to do, play baseball. It really sets in when you hear your name and you're in there, the lights are on you. Especially pitching, because you control the game.

CM: When did you decide you wanted to make baseball a career?

TS: That's all I ever wanted to do. Actually, I won a poetry writing contest like in the second grade. I made this poem about being a professional baseball player. My dad still has it. It's in his office at work. I got to high school and I would even tell my teachers, I'd sleep in class, I was like, "I'm playing baseball, sir." Thankfully it worked out. Because if it didn't I don't know what I'd be doing.

CM: Is there a song in the making with that poem some day?

TS: It could be.

CM: Do you have a title?

TS: I don't know. "Lucky." "Lucky" would be a good one.

CM: But you've got to be good to be lucky.

TS: You've got to have a little luck.

IT'S A WEIRD WEIRD WEIRD WEIRD WORLD...

WITH...

The WEIRDOS!

So here's the theory: The punk rock essentially started in New York with The Ramones, whom then took it over to the UK to spawn the Pistols, Clash, The Damned and eventually all of the Northern bands, then The Damned took it to the U.S. West coast after that. Of course, there were myriad other bands thrown into the mix in the meantime (Devo appeared to be quite influential around '76-'77), but the above statement works fine into the "Why did they all dress differently from New York to London to LA?" question.

LA's The Weirdos were among the first of the West coast punk bands, along with The Germs, The Zeros and The Dils. While none of those bands shared the exact same style of music or fashion sense (look at any picture of The Briefs or Epoxies. That look was standard-issue Weirdos, circa '78), they were usually seen on the same bills, either opening for bigger acts or lumped into the same night. At first notable by their non-utilization of a drummer, they soon recruited the dashing Nickey Beat to provide a basis for their growling fast and driving rock n' roll.

Back together in 2003 for a tour and to promote their newest compilation (Weird World Vol. 2), we took a few seconds from the busy day of original guitarist Cliff Roman to answer a handful of questions about the past, present and future.

ChinMusic!: Who is in the band now? If not John, Dix, Dave, Cliff and Nickey, why couldn't they all make it?

Cliff Roman: Current band members are myself, John Denney, and Dix Denney. We are being joined by Sean Antillion on drums and Zander Schloss on bass. Nickey was not available and Dave Trout is MIA.

CM: One of your most beloved songs live was "Do The Dance." Were there no recorded versions available? Why isn't it on either "Weird World" compilation?

CR: Unfortunately "Do the Dance" was never recorded in the studio, as well as many other early Weirdos gems. There are some live versions and they may show up on our next compilation. We may even record a new version of it.

CM: What have you and Dix been doing since the dissolution in the 80s. I

remember Dix was in Twisted Roots for a spell, but what about you?

CR: We have all been involved in other music projects. Dix was also in Lydia Lunch's 1313, Thelonus Monster, and other groups. John and Zander Schloss have a project titled "Contraption" which could see the light of day sometime. I was in the band "Martini Ranch" which I started with Billy Bones of the Skulls.

CM: How big was the influence of the Damned on the L.A. scene back in the day, as they were the first of the UK bands to make it out there?

CR: The Damned were a big influence in that their first LP was one of our first punk albums as well as our first taste of the British brand of punk. They were present at one of our earliest gigs, the night we played at the Orpheum theater with The Zeros and The Germs. Captain Sensible did an encore with us to The Seeds' classic "Pushin' to Hard." A few days later we saw there first LA gig at the Starwood. What really influenced us was there stage show, they moved

around a lot and were one wild act back then.

CM: Are you guys going to continue on as The Weirdos, or is there something else on the horizon?

CR: We're playing dates on the West Coast in a few weeks in support of our new release on Frontier Records, *We Got the Neutron Bomb - Weird World Volume Two*. We are also looking into playing shows on the East Coast, Europe, and Japan. We may even go in the studio and record a new album.

CM: Is it true Dix and John are the sons of Martin Denny? Heard that as a rumor many years ago.

CR: John and Dix are the sons of....Alan Denney!

(editor's note: Their mother, Nora Denney, portrayed Mrs. Teevee in the great *Willy Wonka And The Chocolate Factory*. She has since gone on to roles on screen and tv such as *Ride With The Devil*, *Splash*, and *American Hot Wax*, among others)

Chinmusic

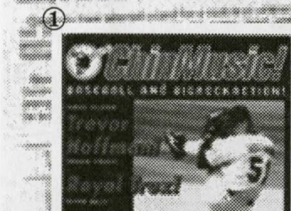
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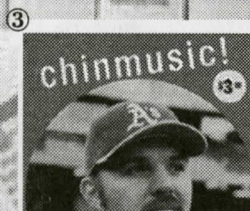
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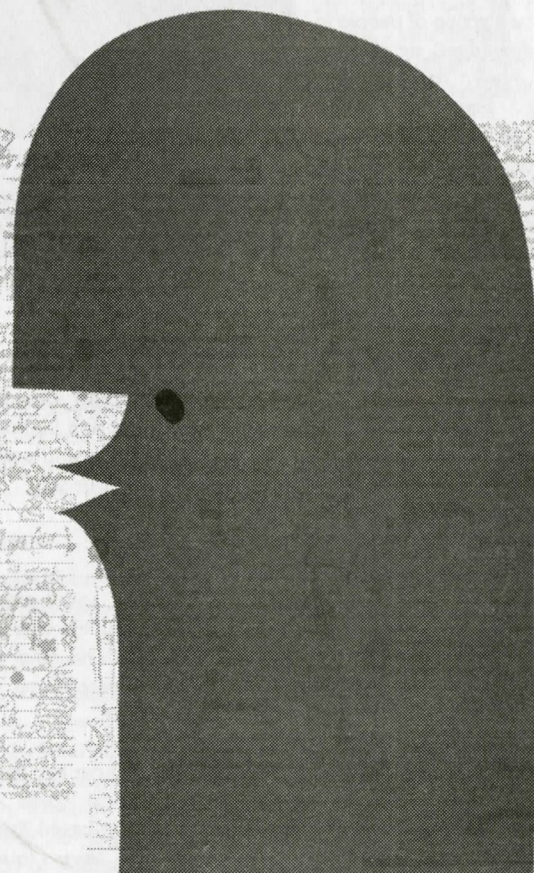


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KAMEHAMEHA MY HOUSE

The Moonlighters have found success in the buried treasure of Hawaiian music and ageless standards.

Interview by Jon Cooper

The word "Hawaii" conjures images of standing on a soft, sandy beach, tropical drink in hand, with a light tropical breeze blowing, looking out at an endless ocean, with a fiery red sun setting against a water-color sky.

Hawaii. Maybe it's the exotic beauty of its surroundings, the friendliness of its people or the peacefulness of *not* being on the U.S. mainland, but undeniably, something draws people there.

That something is captured in the traditional music of the islands, which has proven to be equally alluring. Just how alluring has been demonstrated on a different island — the island of Manhattan.

There may not be a group of people in the world harder-edged or tighter-wound than New Yorkers. Yet, serendipitously, Hawaiian music soothed the savage beast of five of the city's veteran rock musicians — Bliss Blood, Andrew Hall, Carla Murray, Michael Arenella and Bob Hoffnar. Collectively they are known as The Moonlighters.

All five lived on the edge of rock and roll (with varying degrees of success), then backed away, successfully reinventing themselves.

They threw away their weapons of mass decibel destruction, choosing instead the subtler sounds of a ukulele (played by co-vocalist Blood), an acoustic guitar (played by co-vocalist Murray), a steel-guitar (played by Hoffnar), a stand-up bass (played by Hall) and a trombone (played by Arenella).

The Moonlighters were the brainchild of Blood and Henry Bogdan (until recently the band's steel-guitarist). The result of their brainstorm is a unique sound they call "Hawaiian Swing," and features a repertoire heavy on Hawaiian covers and '20s, '30s and '40s standards as well as originals that capture the essence of those time periods.



The idea of making such a drastic change after years of punk rock was something Bogdan kept in the back of his mind even while enjoying a successful eight-year run as bassist for metal cult favorite Helmet.

"I just wanted to play pretty music," he said. "Something beautiful and maybe a little bit sweeter and uplifting. We wanted to play music that we could see ourselves doing when we were in our 50s."

It started in 1996.

"Henry and I met through a friend," Blood recalled. "He was looking for someone to play uke with his steel guitar, and I was also looking for someone to play jazz with, so we got together."

She had cut her rock 'n' roll teeth — and nearly her vocal cords — as lead singer for the Houston-based Pain Teens, which she described as "a very loud experimental/noise/rock

crossover band." Like Bogdan, Blood sought to make music with more substance than volume and welcomed the Moonlighters' idea.

"I could never be heard vocally in [The Pain Teens], my voice was just too delicate to cut through all the loud amps and noise," said Blood. "It was very frustrating for me after a while. I always had a sore throat on tour from screaming every night."

"I had always liked music from the 1920s and '30s and I bought a collection of LPs of old music and really started to immerse myself in it," she continued. "I liked jazz singers like Billie Holiday, Dakota Staton, Chris Connor, Chet Baker, and I wanted to go back and learn the original versions of the songs they covered in the '50s. I also learned dozens of even more obscure songs that I like even better and that are the grounds for Moonlighters' cover and songwriting ideas. It's definitely more enjoyable to perform this kind of music, and very satisfying to write it too."

Blood then brought in bassist Andrew Hall,

who'd been playing in SparkleHorse.

"We needed a bass player, and I knew Andrew, whose active stage presence was a good counterpart to Henry's more, shall we say, reserved demeanor," she said.

Hall's sense of humor and stage presence keeps the band loose, while his bouncing bass lines keeps the music tight. His influence also is profound as a songwriter, contributing to the music of the band's originals (Blood writes all the lyrics) and his skills behind the board have proven valuable.

Blood rounded out the group by recruiting her then-roommate Daria Klotz (God Is My Co-Pilot) to play accompanying ukulele and harmonize on the vocals.

With the personnel set, the band needed a name that would properly reflect their unique sound. The first choice was The Torchlighters — a song title from one of Bogdan's old Hawaiian records.

"That was a great name. But a few months later, a friend of mine, who worked for Sub Pop, said that there was a band coming out called So and so — I forgot his name — and his Torchlighters," he recalled. "We wanted something sort of old-fashioned and kind of romantic. We came up with the Moonlighters. Unfortunately there's about 50 other Moonlighters across the country. So part of me wishes that we hadn't changed our name, but it's a little too late now."

The foursome compiled a set, and started playing around Manhattan and Brooklyn. Aided by a revival of swing music on the college level, they got bookings in small downtown Manhattan clubs like Brownies and Tramps Café, places usually reserved for underground rock bands.

During the summer of 1999 the band caught a break by catching the ear of New York pop icon Marshall Crenshaw, who at the time was musical director for the PBS special "Yogi Berra: Déjà Vu All Over Again."

"We played a show at Maxwell's with Marshall Crenshaw," Blood recalled. "He asked us to play some tunes for the soundtrack. Unfortunately, the songs ("Make a Noise Like a Fan," "The Umpire is a Most Unhappy Man," "My Old Man is Baseball Mad," "Make a Noise" instrumental) have not remained in our repertoire, but they were fun to learn."

Their weekly gig at Tramps eventually ended, but The Moonlighters' dream was just getting started. They put out their first CD, *Dreamland*, in 2000.

While the album features standards like "42nd Street" and the Hawaiian traditional favorite "Honolulu March," the most intriguing songs are their originals, especially "Blue and Black-Eyed," which begins with Hall bowing the haunting bass



line and ends with Bogdan's dreamy steel-guitar rendition of "Aloha Oe."

"I love 'Blue and Black-Eyed,' and I think it's many people's favorite," Blood said. "It's just such an odd, compelling song, musically and lyrically. It summarizes what we are about, the past, the darkness, despair, love, New York, beauty and heartbreak, and drama."

Blood credits her affinity for the history and lore of her adopted hometown as inspiration for the track.

"I had just read Luc Sante's book about the dark history of Lower Manhattan, 'Low Life' and 'Maggie, a Girl of the Streets' by Stephen Crane," she said. "I put those in the blender of my psyche and this despairing, beaten, lovesick, suicidal prostitute sprang out, ready to leap off a tenement roof to the strains of 'Aloha Oe' on steel guitar."

Goodbye to the stars and the jars in the bars/Farewell to Mercury and to Mars Adieu dear Venus, for love's a farce/Although it was mine, I called it ours.

Dreamland had barely been released when Klotz left the band. She was replaced by Murray, a veteran of musical theatre, whose rock exploits included Hoboken, N.J.-based "The Legendary Wild Ensemble," and the parody Europop band Kilopop (as vocalist Trynka Zhenk), both with former Waitresses guitarist Chris Butler.

Blood believes Murray has more than filled the void left by Klotz's exodus.

"The band became more focused and the vocals became leaps better with Carla singing with me," she said.

That focus was crystal clear on the band's second album, the 2002 release *Hello Heartstring*.

The difference Murray's sweeter vocal quality makes is most apparent on "Resophonic Lullaby."

"'Resophonic Lullaby' is one of our earliest compositions that did not make it on to the *Dreamland* CD, because the version we thought we were going to use turned out to be very poorly played," said Blood. "So we re-did it with Carla singing the lead part, and it turned out exquisitely."

Hello Heartstring sees the band expanding its sound by experimenting and interpreting more Americanized sounds.

"Bliss wrote a really great song called 'Twilight in Flight,'" said Bogdan. "It's a great sort of jazz tune that came out really well."

"'Twilight in Flight' is a twenties-style pop tune that starts out as a ballad and speeds up to double time halfway through for a hot, Bix Beiderbecke-style cornet solo from Jon-Erik Kellso," Blood added. "It's a lot like the records that Ruth Etting used to make, where she'd sing one chorus as a ballad and then hotten it up for the second chorus. I always wanted to try that, and we had Matt Munisteri's rock-solid rhythm guitar to anchor the fast part to, and it works really well."

Twilight in flight, smoldering embers sink into starlight/and with each flicker burn my dreams of love once more/just like before/My hopes linger still, wonder if I will always be lonely/or if there's someone with a dream, alone/Waiting there for only me.

Among the obscure Hawaiian standards are "Beyond the Reef" and "Indebted to You," which Blood describes as "just so heartbreakingly beautiful we couldn't let them languish, forgotten." The band really hits home with a stirring, anti-war medley of depression-era songs "Forgotten Man" and "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"

"I saw an old film called 'Gold Diggers of 1933,' a Busby Berkeley-choreographed musical in which 'Forgotten Man' is the big finale of the film and the Broadway show they're working on throughout the film," Blood explained. "I got the idea to merge it with the thematically-similar 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?' to make a powerful humanistic anti-war statement. Both of those songs are about WWI veterans being unemployable human wreckage because of what they were subjected to."

The band's sound was enriched by the addition of Arenella in November 2001 shortly after he and Blood formed the '20s-style brass band Cantonment. An Atlanta, Ga., native, Arenella was the leader of the Williamsburg Chamber Orchestra and has played with the Mingus Big Band, and Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra.

With all the pieces in place, The Moonlighters took to the road, finding a sympathetic ear in

Germany, where they toured for a month last May, playing in several jazz festivals. It was a welcome change.

"We've played in New York, quite frankly, too much," said Bogdan, with a laugh.

He added that The Moonlighters' diverse appeal could help make headway in America.

"We're lucky that we're that type of band that can play just about anywhere," said Bogdan. "We can play your rock clubs — your Mercury Lounge — we play old restaurants, little lounges, played on the QE2 cruise to England last May. Old people in their 80s like us, young kids who wear too much black clothing like us. I know we're a good band and there's not too many people doing this kind of music. Eventually something will happen."

For Bogdan, something happened last May, when he gave in to the lure of Hawaii and announced he was leaving The Moonlighters to pursue his dream of living and studying Hawaiian culture. It didn't exactly catch the band by surprise.

"Henry had been telling me for years that he was going to move to Hawaii," said Blood. "We know the move will make him very happy."

The Moonlighters have continued making music that makes them happy, finding Bogdan's replacement in pedal steel guitarist Bob Hoffnar, who lists the country-rock band Hem as the latest and most successful entry on a full résumé. They're playing a weekly gig at the Manhattan club Otto's Shrunken Head (538 E. 14th, NYC, between Ave. B & C), and have a third album in the works.

"We already have about 15 new songs, covers and originals, that we are ready to record," said Blood.

So the mission of The Moonlighters carries on, as they continue to spread the magical vibe that is pure Hawaii.

For more information on The Moonlighters, visit their website at www.misanthrope.com/moonlighters/band.html

Jon Cooper is a "real" writer, currently based in Atlanta, GA. Among his many respectable gigs, he is a contributor to *Chop Talk*, the Atlanta Braves magazine.

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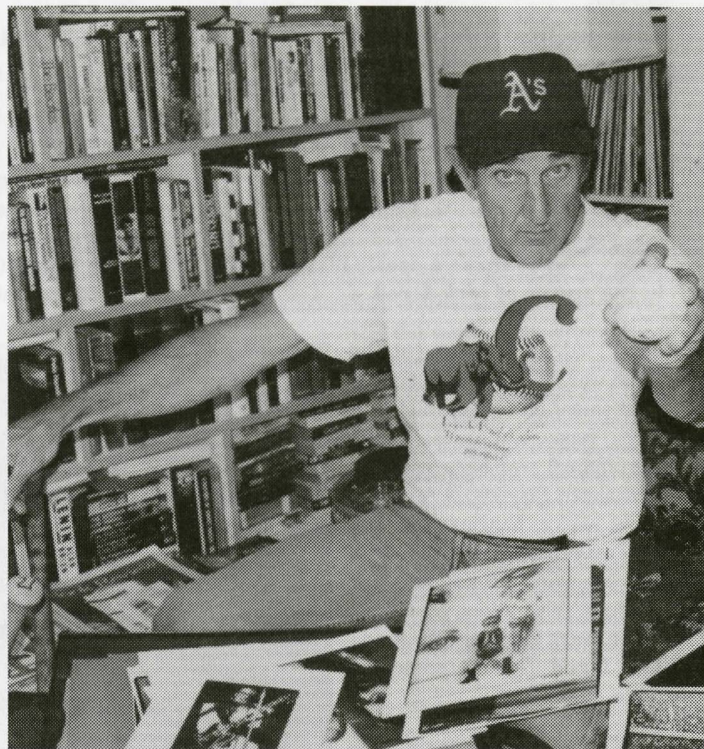


THE Z FILES

Famed Photographer Michael Zagaris Shoots From The Lip About Rock & Jocks

By W.C. Moriarity

Photographer Michael Zagaris is a man after our own heart. Not only is he well known for capturing great shots of all manner of rock & roll stars and classic rock moments, but he also happens to be the official team photographer for the Oakland A's, a franchise with as colorful a history as any rock band. It doesn't seem likely that there are too many other souls in this world who've been fortunate enough to spend time behind the scenes with rock & roll royalty like Eric Clapton, Joe Strummer and the Sex Pistols as well as with legendary baseball characters like Billy Martin, Lou Piniella and Rickey Henderson. (Quick, which bunch would you rather have on your side in a barroom brawl?) But could a guy who makes his living hanging around taking pictures of ballplayers and rock stars have a few good stories to tell? You better believe it.



ChinMusic! Since you're around them everyday, is this current A's team really as much fun to be around as everyone says?

Michael Zagaris: I've been in baseball since 1972, and I've never seen a team like the team we've had the last three years—not just in terms of ability, but in demeanor. It's like the fucking Gashouse Gang. It's like touring with Bad Company or Led Zeppelin. [Erik] Hiljus, who was sent down, even used to have this little Jim Morrison action-figure in his locker. So it's like hanging out with guys you hung out with in high school or you went to the Fillmore with. They like getting after it; they're into rock & roll; they love beautiful women...

CM: So they're into all the same things that people hanging around the music scene are into.

MZ: Yeah, exactly.

CM: I hear it's a different story around the Giants clubhouse.

MZ: It all starts with Barry [Bonds], arguably the best player to ever play, but what a cunt! [Tony] La Russa told me, "I wouldn't take that mother-fucker if you paid his salary!" He's such a cancer in the clubhouse. There's Barry...and then there's the rest of the team.

CM: So how did you get started as a rock & roll photographer?

MZ: I didn't know what I wanted to do; I only knew what I didn't want to do. I had started

hanging out at the Fillmore and I started writing a book on English rock & roll. While I was doing all these interviews, I'd be taking pictures. I remember with [Eric] Clapton's last Cream show, we got fuckin' stoned and did this long interview. And about nine or ten months later, I wanted him to go through the interview and make sure everything was cool. So I had a bunch of proof sheets, and he says, "Man, these are fuckin' great! Can we use these? We'll pay you." And I said, "Sure!" He said, "Look, the writing's alright, but you should be doing this for a gig." And that's how I started out. I'd never gone to school for photography. It just was one of those things I fell into.

CM: Did anybody else help get things going for you?

MZ: Well Peter Frampton was in a group called Humble Pie and he kept saying, "You've got to come over [to England] and stay with us." He had a place in St. John's Wood. So I went over there with my first wife and stayed with him. Then he took off touring the States and I started having an affair with his wife at the time...I think he knows now. And she was taking me all over because she was a big model in London, and I just segued into the whole rock & roll scene. I did "Frampton Comes Alive." Then I started doing some things for the [Grateful] Dead. I did Bad Company. I was also doing some things for "Rolling Stone." I actually went on the 1972 Stones tour for nine days. I just totally bullshitted my way onto that, and you could do that then. So much of how I started out, I was just in the right place at the right time.

CM: Speaking of the Stones, weren't

you at Altamont in '69?

MZ: Yep, I was at Altamont. I was on the stage for a while before the bands even started playing. Somebody had two big plastic jars. One of them was filled with reds and one of them was filled with whites, and [Hell's] Angels were coming by and scooping up a handful of one, a handful of the other. And I remember turning to a friend of mine and saying, "You know what? It's gonna get really fuckin' weird pretty soon." We left the stage and we're walking along and, everywhere you went, everybody was fuckin' stoned. Everybody just wanted to get so high. They wanted it to be bigger and better than Woodstock. And by the time Marty [Balin] got hit, the vibes were getting weird. And then when the beatings started, it got worse. And by the time the Stones went on, it was dark. When [Meredith] Hunter got killed, I saw it. I just thought it was another beating. I didn't realize what was going down.

CM: You were also at the Sex Pistols' final show here in San Francisco in '78, right?

MZ: I got a call from *Rolling Stone*, and they wanted me to cover the Sex Pistols. I got there about two in the afternoon and it was raining pretty hard. I'm at the side door and I could tell when they got off the bus, there was something about these guys, this was gonna be a special night. They had this, "fuck you" attitude, but it went beyond that. A million people can try that, but this was real. It was one of the two or three greatest shows I've ever seen—unbelievable, magic, energy, craziness. And afterwards, we're backstage and [photographer] Neil Preston had

come up from L.A. with Britt Ekland. I'm thinking, "How the fuck did you score Britt Ekland?" She had this mink coat on. The band came out, and Sid [Vicious] was really messed up and saw her and threw up. Part of it's on her shoes and everything. And I thought, "This is perfect!"

CM: Well that's a pretty historic show in the annals of rock & roll.

MZ: I actually thought The Clash was much better overall, as a statement, as a band. You know, it's funny, because Joe [Strummer] was here with the Mescaleros [July 2002]. After the show, we're hanging out and they're getting ready to leave. And Joe says, "Do you have any pockets? What about your coat? Listen, we're nicking all the food." And I said, "It's all come full circle, man."

CM: So how did you get from the rock & roll world into the baseball world?

MZ: A friend of mine was the back-up catcher to Johnny Bench...Bill Plummer.

CM: Oh yeah, I remember Plummer. He used to manage the Mariners before Piniella.

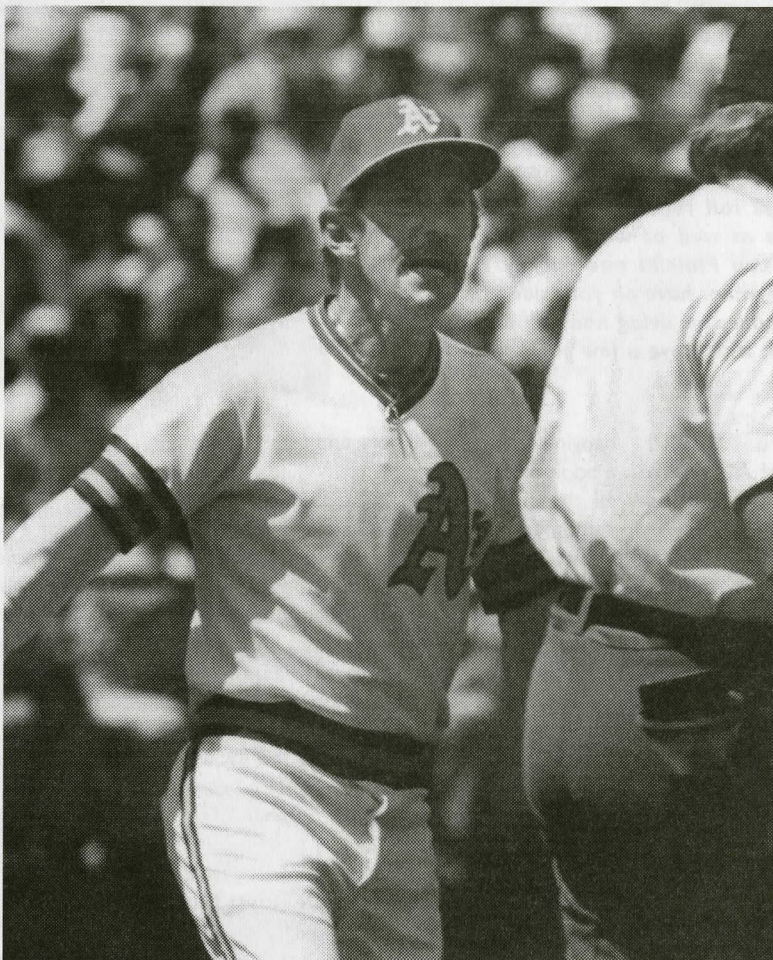
MZ: Yeah. He was in town, so I went to visit him. I just started shooting some bullshit. I told the Giants PR guy that I was representing the Redding Record Searchlight, so they gave me a season pass. I wasn't doing anything for them, but I went down and started taking baseball card shots and sending them to Topps, and they started buying some things. Then I was hanging out with the Giants, and this was starting in 1973-74. In those days, all those guys were getting high and it was great.

CM: So how did you get started with the A's?

MZ: I started with the A's in '81 when Wally Haas Jr.'s father bought the team. Wally used to manage the Sons of Chaplin, so I knew him from when I was doing rock & roll stuff. A friend of mine called about 4:00 in the morning and said, "Hey, listen man, we're looking at your pictures here and Wally really wants you to take pictures of the A's." So I went in and showed him my portfolio and I've been with the A's ever since.

CM: So you started in the Billy Martin era?

MZ: Billy Ball! 1981 was my first season. We started out 13-0. We had a so-so team, but they over-achieved, and then the strike knocked off a month of the season. We were in first place, but after the strike we weren't quite the same team. We beat Kansas City in a little playoff, and then we played the Yankees and they beat us.



CM: The start of an unpleasant tradition. Well you must have some interesting Billy Martin stories anyway.

MZ: Oh yeah, I remember the Yankees had beaten us and we were going to Anaheim. They had four or five home runs. And every time they hit a home run, the organ would start playing over there. So we're flying cross country, and [A's pitcher] Mike Norris and two or three guys are [getting messed up] in the back, and Billy and [pitching coach] Art Fowler had been drinking in front. We're getting close to landing and Billy had come to the back because somebody was making a sound like the organ, imitating it. He could barely walk back and he says, "Whoever's fucking humming that, be a man! Tell me right now and I'll kick the shit out of you!" Nobody admitted it. So we landed and instead of going right to the hotel, we've got to go to the ballpark

to drop the equipment off—he's gonna punish everybody. So we're in the bus, we're heading to the ballpark and it was real warm, and the bus driver is a woman bus driver. She had the air conditioning on and it was really cold. So Norris is in the back going, "Turn off the mother-fucking air conditioning! Turn off the mother-fucking air conditioning!" And Billy goes, "Yeah Bussy, can't you hear my guys? Turn off the mother-fucking air conditioning!" And he kicks the air conditioner and breaks it, and now the heat's on.

So ten minutes later, we're all literally just pouring sweat. We get up to the gate to go to the ballpark so they can drop the stuff off and the bus driver goes, "Well, the gate's locked." So Billy starts going, "Ram it!" And she freaks out and gets off the bus and starts running! [A's traveling secretary] Mickey Morabito's going, "Wait a minute, Billy. We can make a call here. Just let me make a call!" They never could get the gate open. And we had to wait twenty minutes for somebody else to come and drive the bus. That's just one Billy Martin story.

CM: Any others?

MZ: We were playing the Mariners at home and we blew a five or six run lead in the ninth inning. We lose, and Billy's so fuckin' pissed! He grabbed one of those metal folding chairs, threw it against the wall, bent the chair, and goes up the runway screaming and yelling. He went into his office and slammed the door so the whole wall shook. Guys come in and nobody's saying much. Everybody goes into the spread room and they're gonna grab a little food and get out of there. I remember there were two big card tables and there was like chicken, cole slaw or beans, and something else. I was talking to a couple of guys and Cliff Johnson was by me. All of a sudden, there's no talking. And here's Billy, and he looks nuts. He's got a fungo [bat] and he goes, "You mother-fuckers played like pigs!" And he just started going "Bam!" with the fungo and smashing the food. He hit the table about four times and the whole spread thing went over. He started hitting the chicken and pieces are flying all over and guys are ducking. Then he just threw the fungo and put a hole in the wall. Then he goes, "You mother-fuckers played like pigs, now eat like pigs!" And he turned around and walked out. Cliff Johnson's right next to me, and he goes, "I don't know about you, but I'm hungry." And he picked a drumstick up off the floor and took a bite.

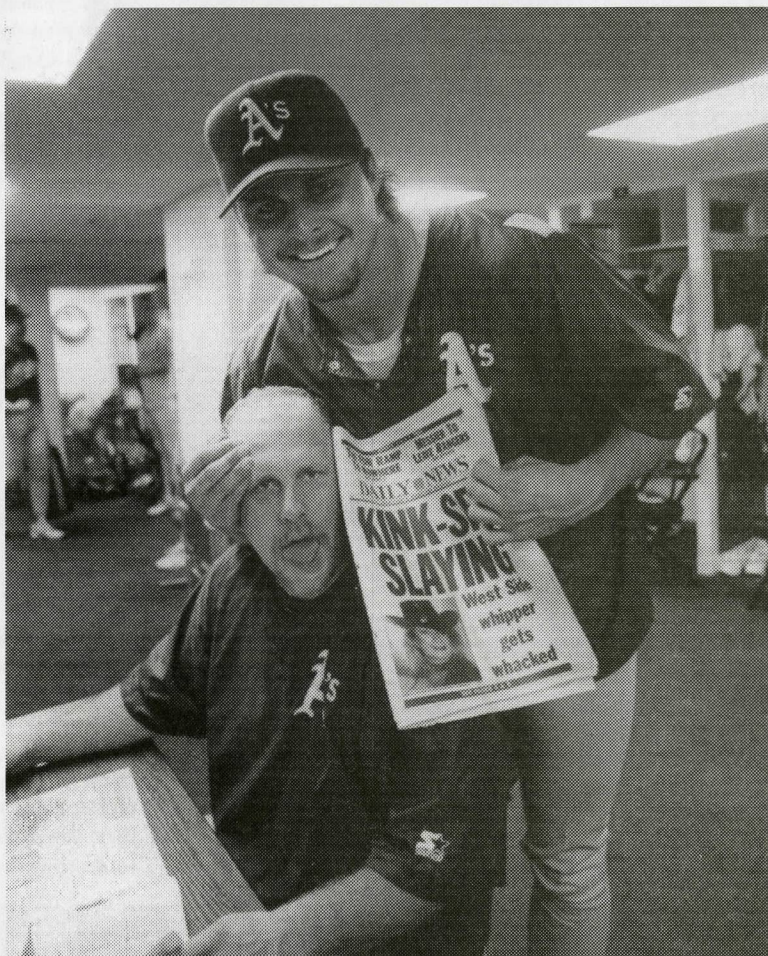
CM: So I guess you don't see managers today doing that kind of thing too often?

MZ: Not too often, although Tony La Russa can get pissed. Tony flipped a spread or two in his day. But Art [Howe] was never like that. Art was real calm. I heard some great Lou Piniella stories from some of the Mariners. I remember [former Mariners pitcher] Chris Bosio was telling me they were at Fenway and he was cruising along. He said, "Eighth inning, I got the first guy but then I walked a guy, a guy got on on an error, and another guy doubled. We had a lead, and Lou came out to get me. I said "Hey, I can get this guy. We'll get out of the inning." He said, "Okay, you'd better. I've got two guys up already. So if you don't get this guy, that's it." The first pitch, the guy hit a fuckin' rocket out of the park—three-run jack. Game's over. Lou was so pissed. At Fenway, you go up this long hallway and they've got these lightbulbs that are sticking out about every ten feet on the wall to illuminate it. He went up and started smashing the light bulbs with his bare hands saying, "Mother-fucker! God damn it!" Just before he gets to the stairs—and by this time his hands are bleeding—he says, "Fuck me!" and he kicks up in the air. But he kicks so high, he kicks his feet out from under himself and he lands on his back. And their bullpen coach, Matt Sinatro, tried to help him. And Lou goes, "Get your fucking hands off me, mother-fucker!" And he goes up and he slams this old metal door so hard that the players can't get in. So the guys have to walk all the way down the left field line, right before you get to the green monster, then through the inside of the stadium just to get to the clubhouse.

CM: It seems like Lou might be the last really hot-tempered manager still left in the game today. So any interesting memories of the Tony La Russa era in Oakland?

MZ: Great team, and some real colorful characters. I was always sorry I never videotaped Rickey Henderson. You could have a two-hour movie, a four-hour movie, of Rickey and it would be better than anything on television—move over Chris Rock. And most of the time, Rickey's not even trying to be funny—Rickey's just being Rickey. I remember Rickey one day wanted to look through my 600 [lens], but he wanted to

look at pussy. He's like, "Let me see it, let me check her out." And I'm going, "Rickey, quick, Tony's looking over here!" He goes, "Hey, fuck Tony!" And I said, "No man, I'm the one who's gonna get fucked by Tony. Give me the lens!" And [Jose] Canseco was really funny in those days. They had great talent, but they had some real personalities too. [Dennis] Eckersley, Eck was a great guy and a real personality, a good-looking guy. He was a rock & roller...



CM: He always looked like one anyway.

MZ: Yeah! Carney Lansford was cool. [Mark] McGwire was a great player, but Mac was pretty quiet, especially considering the other people.

CM: So how good do you think this current A's team is in comparison to some of those past teams?

MZ: You know what's ironic? We haven't really won anything yet. You were talking about the A's of the late '80s and early '90s—like the Atlanta Braves in the '90s—easily the best team in baseball, but they only won one World Series. And this is not sour grapes, this doesn't just go for our team, but so often in life, the best team doesn't always win. How many bands do you see

that really suck? And you're going, "How did these guys even get a fucking contract?"

CM: Let alone sell a million records? So have ballplayers changed in any ways over the years since you've been around the game?

MZ: They're still ballplayers. I'm sure being a musician in the '40s and '50s—even though it was very different than the '60s and '70s—it was still the same. Peter Frampton's manager Dee Anthony and his brother Bill used to manage Tony Bennett. And I remember Bill saying one night, "You kids, you're really having fun and this is a good time. But I kind of miss the old days out with Tony Bennett and Frank, and the beautiful hotels...broad's with class." And you know who was into all that and knew all those people? Joe Zito.

CM: Yeah, Barry's dad.

MZ: Joe and I were talking and he said, "We've worked with some of the same people." And he mentioned Dee Anthony, because Dee was with Tony Bennett when Joe was working with Nat King Cole. And I said, "You know, Dee ripped my friend Peter [Frampton] off for about \$49 million." And Joe goes, "Oh, I heard it was more like 25." And I thought..."Only in the music business." I'll never forget Peter Frampton once telling me, he said, "Well if you want to make it, I mean really make it, you've got to get a Jew manager and a Sicilian booking agent." And I

started laughing and he goes, "What? You think I'm joking?" And this is no rip on Sicilians or on anybody Jewish, but as much of a cliché as it is, you know who booked most of the big English bands from the late '60s through the late '70s? Frank Barcelona, Premiere Talent—he looks like the head of the Jersey Teamsters.

CM: So what was the first concert you ever went to?

MZ: First concert was probably Chuck Berry and Little Richard at the Stockton Civic Auditorium in Stockton, California in 1956.

CM: Name a few of the best concerts you've ever been to.

MZ: I'd say...the Beatles at Forest Hills in August of '64, James Brown at the Howard

anytime in '65, and the Sex Pistols at Winterland in '78.

CM: What's in your CD player right now?

MZ: Probably Oasis, Black Crowes, Dickweed, Paul Okenfeld, the Donnas. I change it all the time.

CM: Who are some of your biggest musical heroes?

MZ: Elvis was my first hero, and I've seen him 10-12 times, maybe more. James Brown, the consummate performer. James Brown was the man! The Stones, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard. The Beatles—when they came, they changed the whole planet.

CM: What about your baseball heroes?

MZ: I loved Mickey Mantle. I loved [Willie] Mays and Stan "The Man" Musial and Jackie Robinson. And then, in my teenage years, [Roberto] Clemente was my idol. My brother and I used to always sit in the right field bleachers at Candlestick. In those days, it was only 90 cents. And in the 1962 season, between us, we got 51 home-run balls.

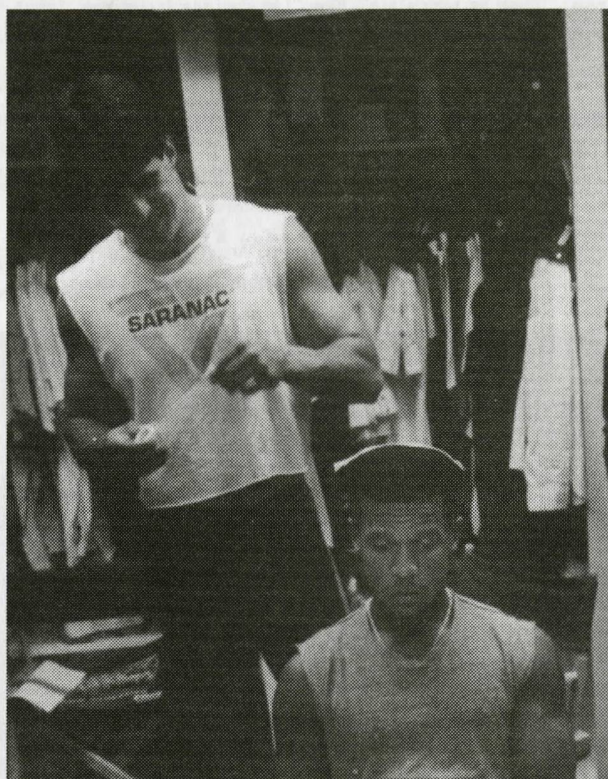
CM: What about the groupies? How are they alike and different in baseball versus rock & roll?

MZ: I think they're the same people. Some people are enamored of fame. Some people are enamored of power. Some women are looking for all those things and a hook-up for life, to be taken care of. Some women are just trying to have fun. You can find as many reasons why the groupies hang out as to why people would want to be with them. But if you're a single girl, and you're 18 or you're in your 20s, why not a ballplayer or why not a drummer or a guitarist, instead of a guy who's an insurance salesman or driving a UPS truck?

CM: Why not be with someone who's got something interesting going on?

MZ: Exactly. And people say, "Well that's not a very stable job," or "They all cheat." Hey, most people cheat!

CM: I was just saying

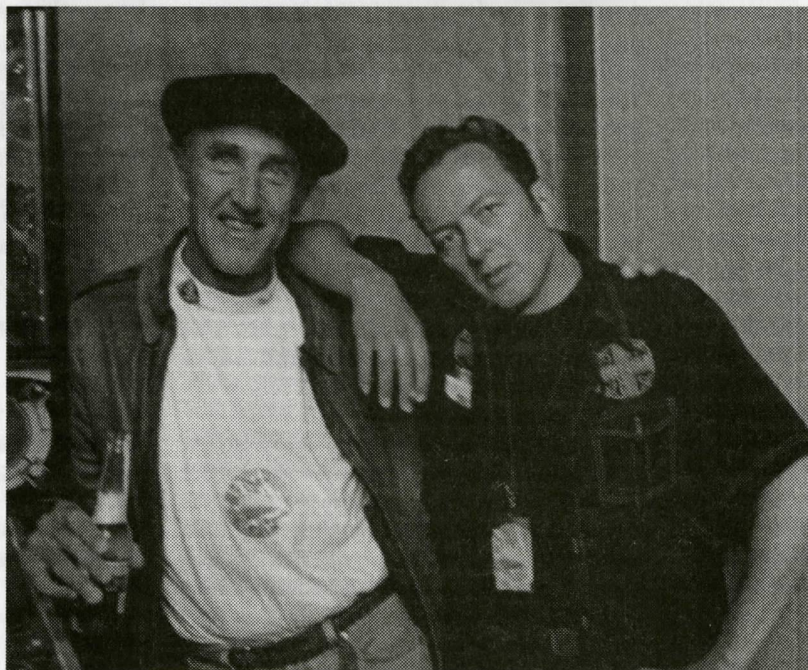


to somebody that it seems like an awful lot of ballplayers tend to get married pretty early.

MZ: Well you know, the funny thing about baseball, most of the players are married, but when they're on the road, you'd never know it. Although it's the same with musicians, anybody who's in the limelight...

CM: And travels a lot too...

MZ: Yeah, travels—and they're good-



looking. And, you know, the people who put them down are always people who have no mobility, economic or otherwise, and are usually one step removed from Quasimodo.

CM: In what other ways do you think rock stars and ballplayers are alike?

MZ: I think they're both very childlike, and I mean that as a compliment, not as a hit. They're like kids. They have a sense of wonderment. They're always joking and they're always looking for fun, not only on the field, but off the field. Everybody's laughing and guys are capping on each other, putting each other down, but usually in a funny way. And so, in those ways, it's almost the same world.

CM: So have you encountered many ballplayers who've been a pain in the ass to deal with?

MZ: No, there aren't a lot, but there are a few. When you think about it, it's no different than in real life.

CM: Same proportion as in real life?

MZ: Well, actually, no. I think there are probably fewer assholes in sports than there are in real life. Now you might get some sportswriters who would want to dispute that. But in reality, I would say no, because most of these guys are living their dream, as opposed to most people in life who are living anything but their dream. But you know what? When you get to do something that you always wanted to do, and something that few people ever get to do, and something where even if you're not paid well, you're still paid better than probably 99% of the other people your age on the planet, you're in pretty good shape. And people look up to you, rightly or wrongly. A lot of guys want to be like you; women want to be with you; you're traveling...

CM: Why wouldn't you be happy? It's just like being a rock star.

MZ: Exactly.

rodger roundy

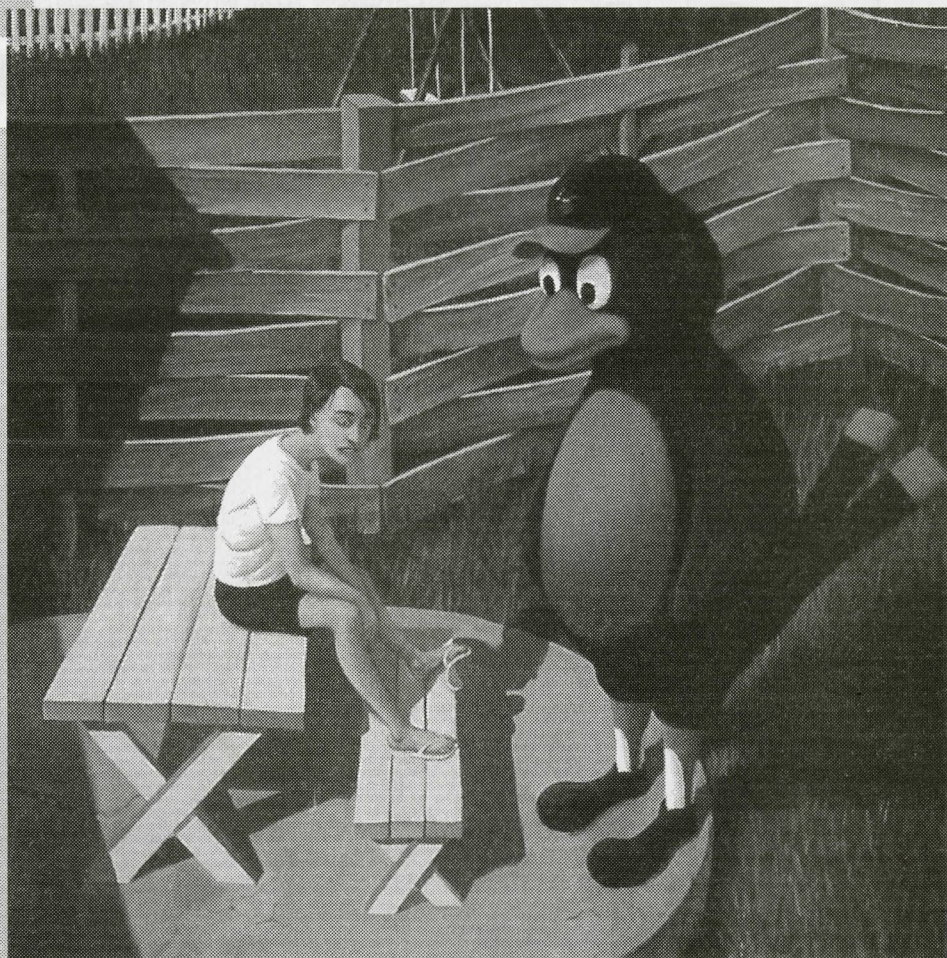
We found Mr. Roundy quite by accident. My sister Michel works for an art gallery in Los Angeles of some repute. It is safe to say she is deluged with portfolios and photos from artists 'round the country, all looking for a place to expose their wares and make a name for themselves. One such artist, a Bay Area-based DC expatriate working for an ad agency in San Francisco, sent in some of his work a long time ago. Michel then compiled a package for me containing Mr. Roundy's work, and that of a couple other artists.

While the images of said other artists compelled and struck various chords of ooh and ahh, it was the image to the right which stood to attention and commanded full concentration. I was at first amused by the juxtaposition of the Oriole mascot against what appeared to be either a park or an East coast backyard. Upon further review—that is to say I left it sitting on my broken scanner for about six months—I was drawn in by the downright eeriness of the supposed dialogue between what I had presumed was Mr. Oriole and his girlfriend. I began to apply all manner of scenarios to the setting, landing on the predominant supposition that this was some sort of relationship impasse with which Mr. Oriole was ill-equipped to address, seeing as he is unable to speak and has but one facial expression. This both amused and intrigued me as to just what the hell was the deal with this painting.

Earlier this year I decided that any image which could grab my attention so strongly for such a long period of time deserved to be the cover of the next issue. Finally deciding on a semi-central theme for the issue, I contacted Mr. Roundy. We met for lunch at a local Pier 23 bar and grill (coincidentally named "Pier 23") and chatted about the painting for a while over tequila and fish tacos. Excellent tacos, by the way.

It was then that the real, substantially more fascinating truth about "The Confrontation" was revealed. Please read the lowdown to the right. Then go to <http://www.rodgerroundy.com/> and take a gander at Rodger's other excellent paintings, all suitable for framing or freaking out and amazing small children.

You'll be glad you did.
—Editor



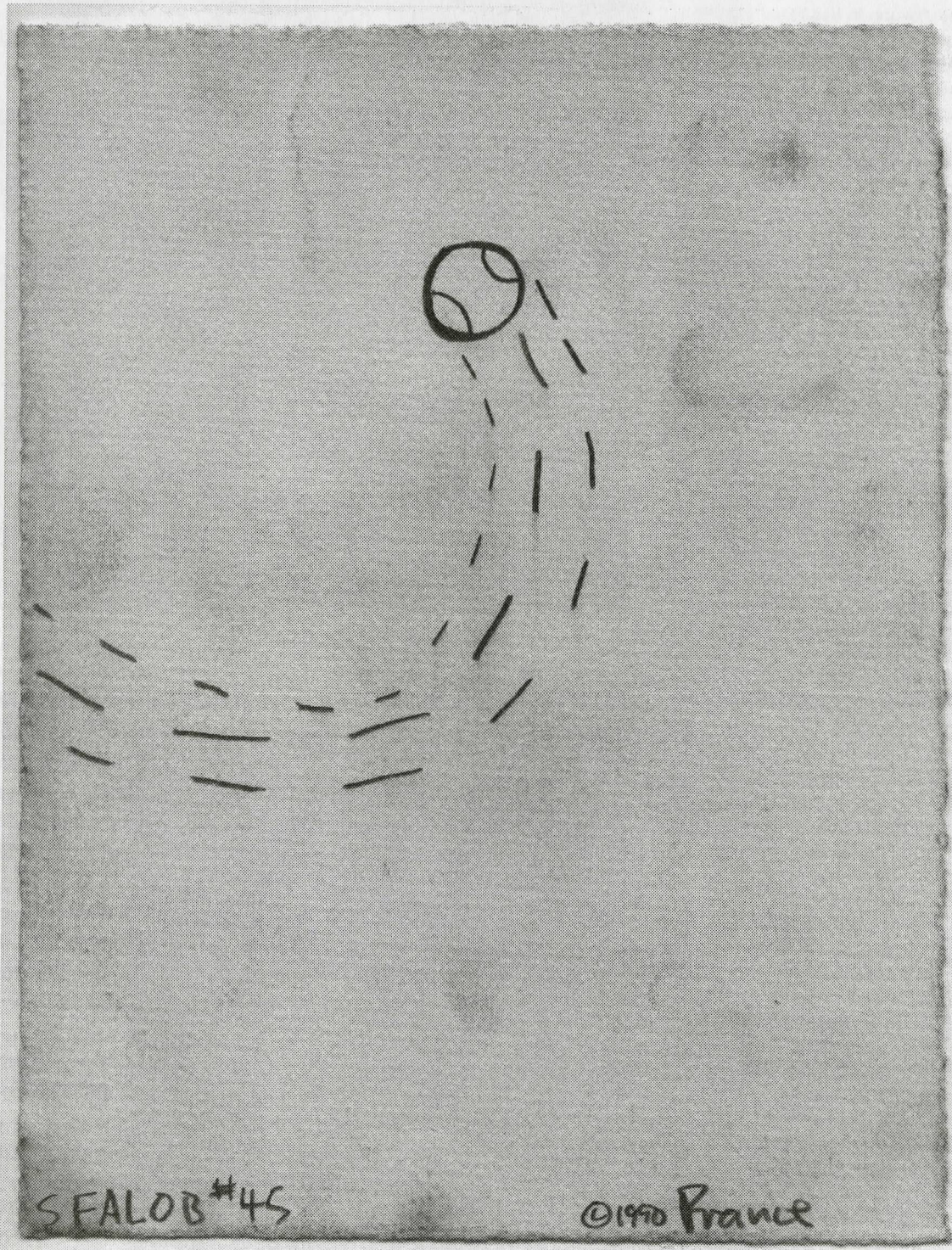
“My brother Bob started showing signs of schizophrenia when he was in his late teens. He would imagine the Baltimore Oriole mascot in our backyard. The mascot would stand over him and intimidate him, though never touch him. The picture is my imagining of the scene. It is the backyard of my parents' house, the same picnic table and bendy-board fence. The same unmown grass. The Oriole is there for reporterly accuracy.

My brother was big into sports. My parents moved to the DC area from Boston. We were a Red Sox family living in the midst of Oriole Country, in Prince George's County, Maryland. 40 minutes from Baltimore. So...we didn't exactly root for the O's. Perhaps that had something to do with the adversarial nature of the Oriole.

The mood I was thinking of was one of understated intimidation. Look at the Oriole itself. It's a huge black bird with some orange on it. Staring black eyes too. One of our scariest mascots, right up there with the San Diego Chicken, who is scary for different reasons.”

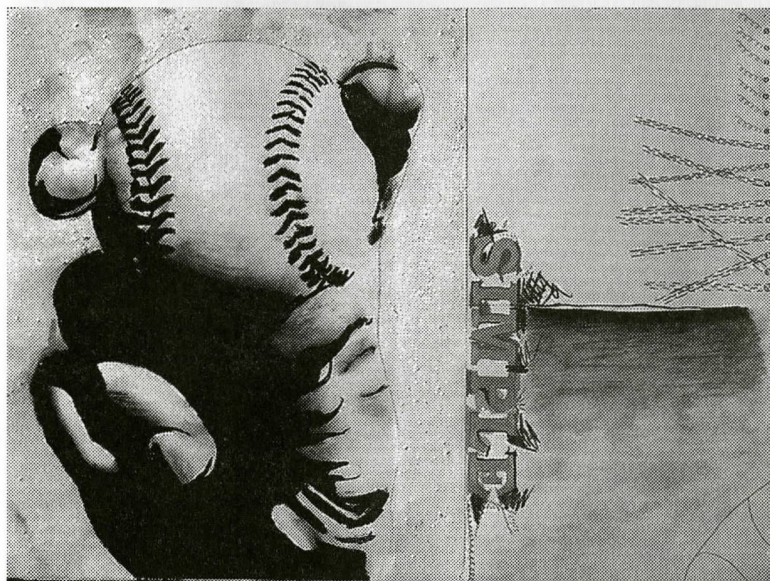
A LOT OF BALLS, by

JOSHUA FRANCE



About Alot of Balls, (ALOB):

I imagine playing a saxophone designed to play only one note. The result, of course, would be different. It is almost always possible to make something beautiful or interesting with very little. This has become the challenge of ALOB for me. While ALOB amounts to a small percentage of the Art I make it is really my only distinct body of work. I find the possibilities of composition to be deeply exiting. ALOB allows me to explore ideas which then become part of how I approach other work. ALOB functions as my Art laboratory.

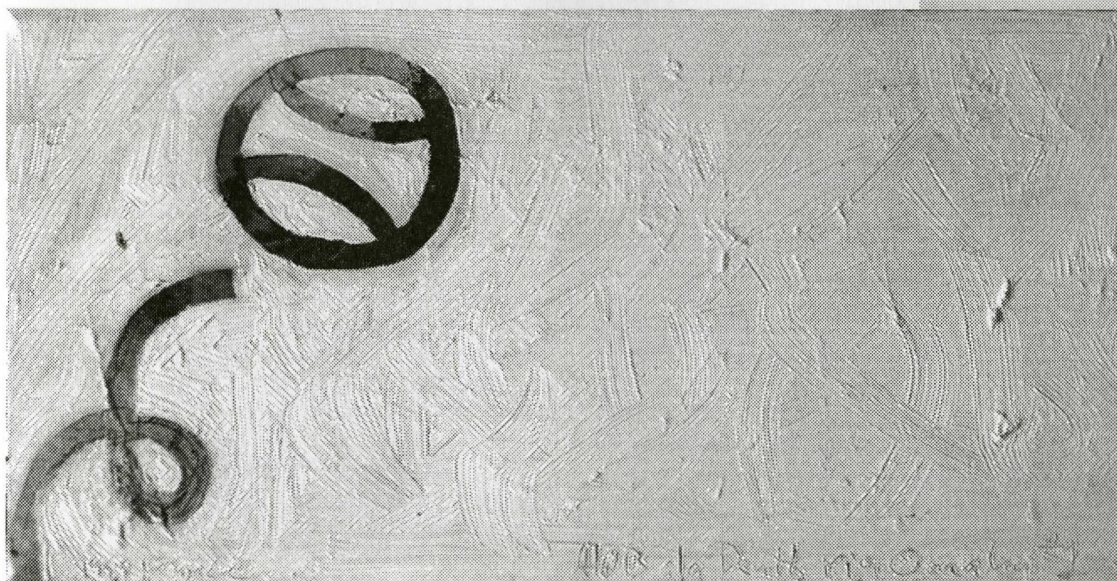


ALOB a la Curveball Via Simple



JOSHUA FRANCE

has been living in Omaha Nebraska for most of his life. Born in 1969 and exhibiting since 1990 in mediums including painting, drawing, photography, printmaking and sculpture he is currently pursuing studies in architecture at the fabulous University of Nebraska.

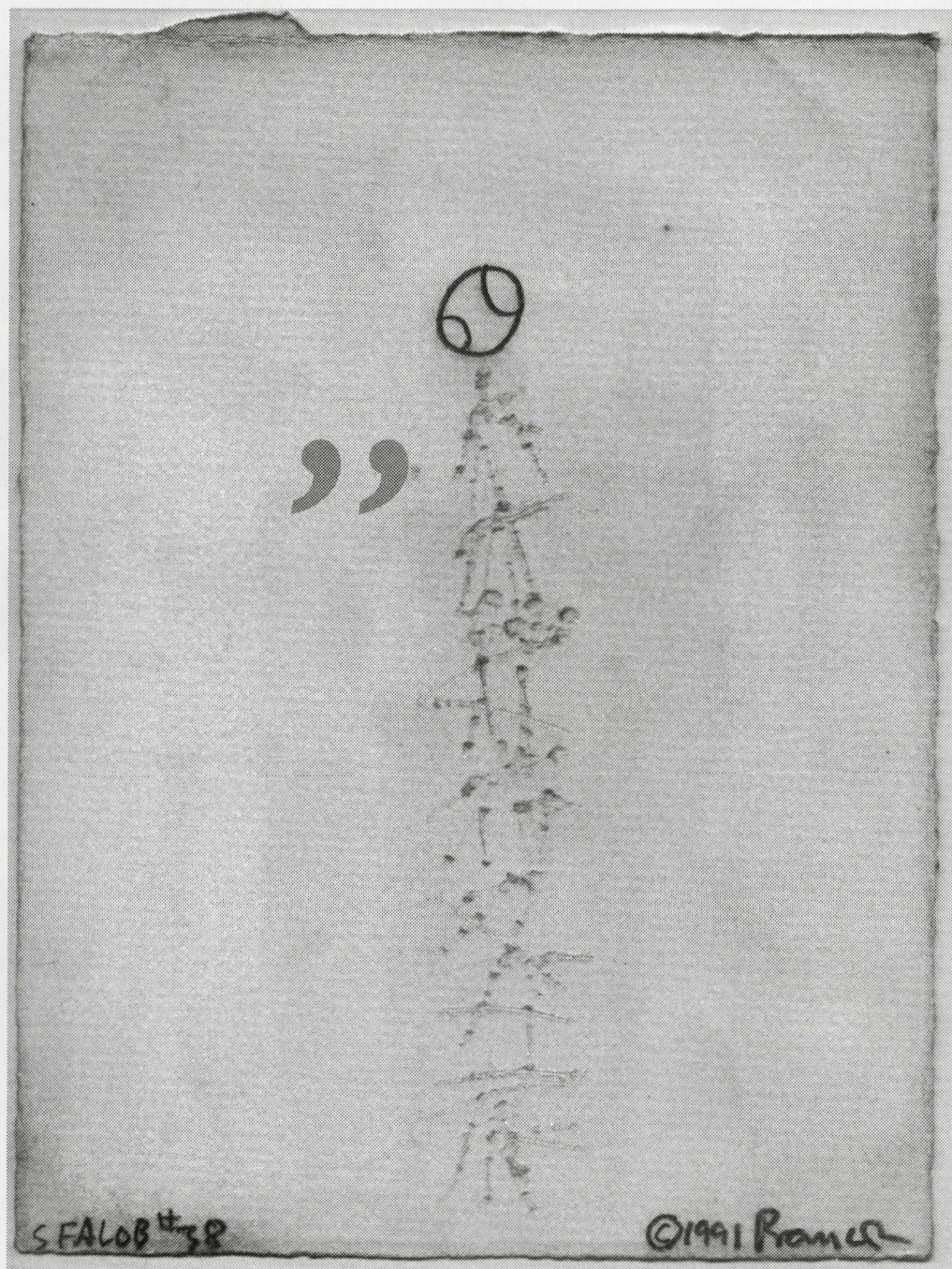


ALOB a la Death Via Omaha

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Many people find it difficult to enjoy a great deal of Modern Art, especially more minimal or conceptual work. This, I believe, is because of a lack of understanding of how it should be approached. The reality is that for various reasons we all react differently to a certain degree, to everything. This reality includes Art and specifically Modern Art. To be able to enjoy the richness, depth and beauty of art, and especially Modern Art, I believe that it is necessary to know as much as possible about the individual artist and the creative processes behind their work. It is evident that one can be excited by a work with no prior knowledge of these things, however, it is almost always

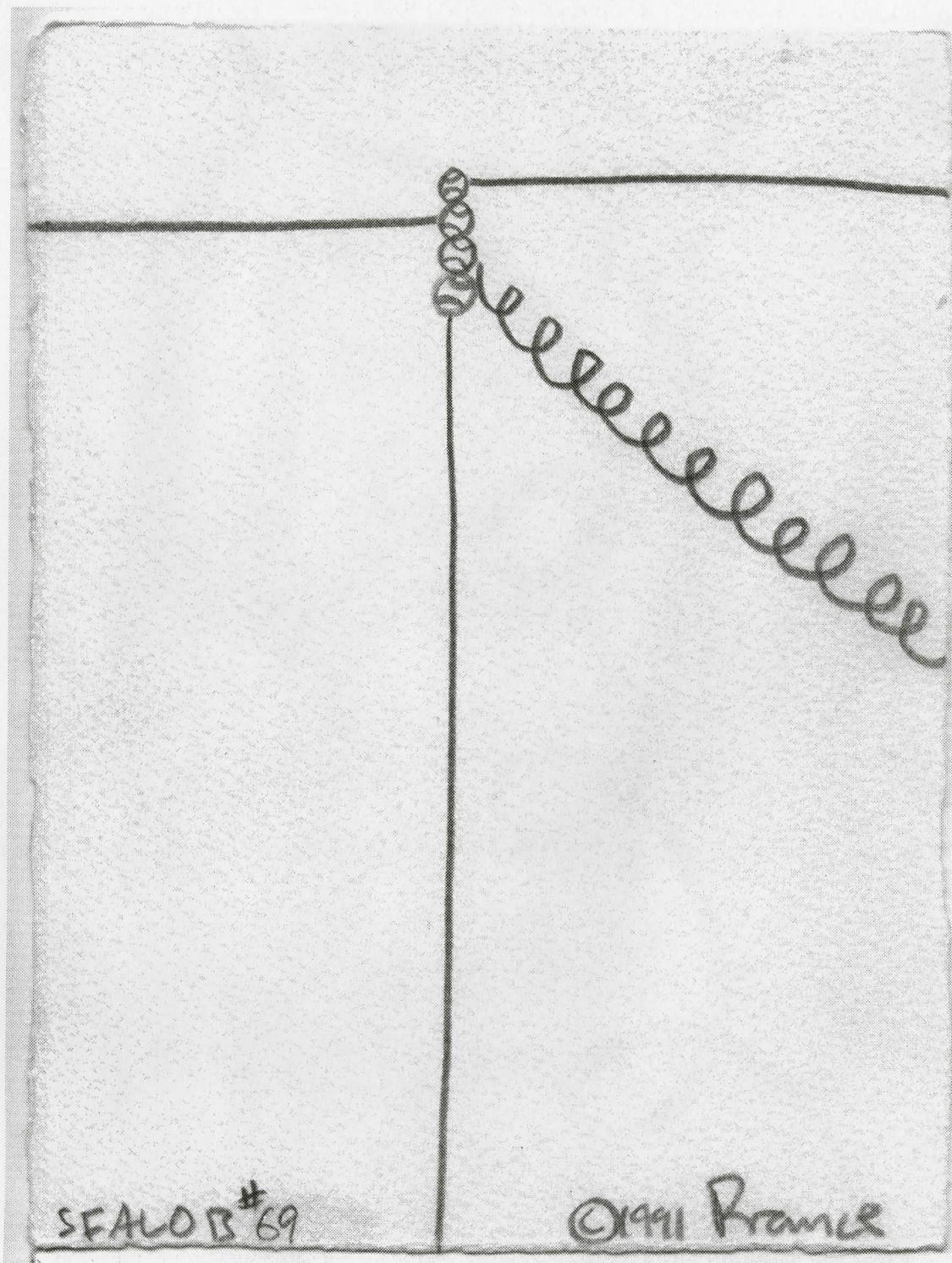
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fruitful to investigate. It is very true that Modern Art and specifically the more conceptual, austere Art will either be exciting or boring depending on the sensibilities of the individual. Different things are exciting to different people. To the artist this is either the blessing or the curse of their experience with others reactions to their work. To the viewer the only consequence is the unfortunate missing out on something that can bring unbounded richness and beauty to life. To both the artist and the viewer there should be no regrets.

”





THE FINE ART OF THE BUI

by Nellis

(Baseball Under The Influence)

I first learned of the joy that is getting hammered at baseball games while living in San Francisco. A group of 6 friends became "The Beck-Heads," in honor of the distinguished closer with a body built by Budweiser. Attending games became a weekly function as long as the Giants were at home. I remember those days fondly; no names have been changed, because none of us were innocent. Take this example, this template, if you will, to find your own path to the "Big Leagues." And keep these words with you: "I don't give a rat's ass, Zimmer! Where's my pancakes?"—Anonymous

Saturday morning begins at Red Jim's house for Bloodys. Red Jim is that odd fan that loves baseball, but truly understands nothing. Whenever we played kegger softball in the park, he would run out to second base and stand on it. With a bloodshot grin, he would announce that he would be the "Second BaseGin!" He would hop up and down on the bag, while drinking dirty martinis mixed in a Pepsi can. He actually had a mitt, but no ball ever found its way to it. But he offers his place for breakfast cocktails prior to games, which is beneficial for the proper pre-funk.

Mark "Tail-Chaser" Harrison and I are the first to arrive. Mark, although a knowledgeable fan, is here to scam on chicks. Despite the fact that he drives a hot-pink Mustang fastback and wears Richard Simmons-style shorts in the summer, he does well. He loves the Giants, and always sneaks a flask of top-shelf bourbon into each game.

Cole and Steve Marquis always bring a bit of brownie fodder; they are originally from Humboldt County. They're pretty funny guys that have the misfortune of looking like the Hanson Brothers from the movie *Slap Shot*. They are musicians, and have been in about 23 bands between them, but have never released an album. Identical twins born 2 years apart.

Shawn Evans completes the squad. Not really a boozehound, Shawn is the perfect Driver. He has a classic late-70's Disco Van he won on a football bet in 1988 and which holds all of us, and a pony keg. Shawn is a very reserved guy; as long as someone manages to score some valiums. He can become a certified sociopath if he is present during a Giants loss to the Dodgers.

Once the team is assembled, it is imperative to force down at least three double-Bloodies,

Bread and butter. Martin and Lewis. Mary-Kate and Ashley. Midgets and Roller-skates. Some things are just meant to go together. Perhaps the most important pairing for any decent, self-respecting, worthwhile human being who can explain the infield-fly rule after consuming 13 Pabst Blue Ribbons and a quart of vodka is a combo we sometimes take for granted. Booze and Baseball.

regardless of the previous night's debauchery. Watching tapes of last week's loss to LA gets everyone in the proper mindset. It triggers a nervous twitch in Red Jim's left eye, and has Shawn claiming that if he had a ballpeen hammer, a funnel, two pigmy goats, and some boric acid, "no-one would ever see that godforsaken Tommy Lasorda again!" And it causes Tail-Chaser to ponder aloud, "When are we gonna go score some 'Seventh Inning Bitch!'" A true cry for action.

Game time is two hours away, so we slug down the remaining breakfast drinks, grab our gear, and pile into the "Beckmobile". It's a fun ride out to the game. The Marquis Brothers are slapping each other in the back of the head and saying, "I'm Will Clark! You're Jack Clark!" And, "Shut up, or I'll Dravecky your arm!" The rest of us wonder if they are actually mildly retarded. Red Jim mixes martinis in his Pepsi Can, and sings Pogues' songs loudly and badly. We arrive at the parking lot and find a spot that will be easy to locate after the game, and that also affords us room to play some whiffle ball while draining the pony. We all take turns reliving our glory days as former "prospects", until the Sun can't even bear to watch Red Jim bat. The drizzle begins, and the Marquis brothers dive into the van so that their smokes don't get wet.

Tail-Chaser, Shawn and I try to find some teenagers in need of free keg beer. We are very much against waste. Just a few rows down, we spot this toddler sitting next to a VW Van, on a hand-made Giants blanket. Naturally, we trade the toddler two cups of beer and a nickel for the blanket. TC starts wondering where its Mom is, so I steer us back to the Beckmobile.

Once confident that we are no longer in possession of unnecessary motor skills, we get Red Jim off the top of the van, make him put his pants back on, and head in. The Marquis Brothers are in need of some peanuts and hot dogs, stat. Our timing is perfect, and we hit the beer stand as the warbling of the Star Spangled Banner by some really fat woman with the voice of a burning hamster is making small children pee themselves. Undeterred, the Beckheads

gather their goods, and take our rightful positions in the Right Field Bleachers.

The Marquis Brothers settle in with a scorecard that will never be filled out. Shawn and Red Jim start scouring the stands for anyone with a Dodgers cap on. (This game is against the Astros.) Tail-Chaser is already planning his assault on the reserved seats on the other side of the foul pole. I just relax. Perhaps, I'll just close my eyes for...

What the hell happens from the second to the seventh inning anyway? A little of this, a little of that, maybe somebody getting his ass kicked in the bleachers. Or Red Jim manages to stay awake. There is always the possibility he gets onto the field in his boxers screaming, "I must have pudding, you Godless Infidels! Pudding now!" This is something that the security guards are always ready for, but it pisses them off just the same. There may be some really sharply hit home run, or a spectacular catch, sure. But the crowd wakes you up for that! When you see the beginning and the end of a game, you're good to go. And the glory of being mind-numbingly beer-soaked in...

The rain seems to be subsiding. The sun is sneaking out between drizzles. The Marquis Brothers are taking turns punching each other in the arm. Tail-Chaser is returning to his seat, remnants of pink popcorn on his shirt. Red Jim and Shawn are walking towards us with "Last call!" in their hands. Refreshed and revitalized, we soak up every ounce of the last three innings. We watch the end of the game, a Giants victory, and celebrate in the stands, yelling and clapping; and, in Red Jim's case, belching approval.

The long exodus back to the van manages to allow us to piece together the details we all missed individually, to form a full recap of the game. Once we're sure Red Jim won't wet himself, we pile into the van and head to Doc's Clock to talk about the afternoon and plan our next outing.

Baseball under the influence. Our National Pastime.

RED SOX NATION

I saw the sweep in Oakland and then on Thursday at the last minute me and my friend Jay Boronski made frenzied attempts to first buy plane tickets that weren't \$500 to Seattle and then to rent a car. We came up empty. In a last ditch effort we made a round of phone calls asking to borrow cars from people. Phone calls that potentially alienated girls we've dated, ex-girlfriends, a number of good friends and acquaintances.

Here is one of the responses I got:

>>Hello:

>>I received your bullshit call. Give me a call today at work so I can tell you (phone) face to (phone) face to fuck off.

>>Regards,

>>Olb

Then like an angel my friend Tara swung some deal at Alaska Airlines and got us on a flight Saturday morning. We arrived in Seattle at 11 AM. Jay's friend Milo picked us up in a 2001 Audi Quattro, black leather interior, exterior made entirely of aluminum, oil-slick button on the dash — the whole nine yards. That is an \$80,000.00 car. On the way into the city Milo said, "This car goes really fast" and punched it up to 120 mph. Then he said "It also has really good brakes" and he slammed them on and I am convinced that for a split second the car actually stopped.

The sox dropped two, the yankees picked up two and the Mariners inched into a half game out of first. But Pedro was worth it. So was Rickey's diving catch to stop the bleeding and the time they nailed Ichiro trying to steal third. I also saw a successful bases loaded bunt, a play that will probably not happen again this year.

Pedro's dominating performance yesterday was like watching the sweet, bloody climax of a well-made revenge flick. Every strike he threw fed me and healed the wounds suffered in the two nights prior. The only way it could have been better would be if he had opened the game with a high heat Ichiro drilling. Then the night would have been perfect.

Safeco is beautiful. Really a great park and the Mariners are without a doubt a technically great team. They truly appear infallible and you can't help but respect them. In fact I like the Mariners a lot but that Safeco place is kind of

I just went to 5 Red Sox games in six days. I haven't slept much so sorry if this goes on a little.

by Mike McGuirk

warped. Boronski called it a utopia of corporate sponsorship. It's a fascist wet dream. I distinctly had the feeling that somewhere underneath the park they were torturing children, first to expiate the sins of those above watching the team turn DP after DP and secondly to grind the kids up and feed the pigs in the stands their kielbasas. The park mercilessly pounds you with theme music, ads, mascots (a moose, a monkey, a superhero who collects the recycling) there is a dot race, a boat race, a keep your eye on the ball three card monte thing, a blooper montage, a trivia question, an attendance question, a who could this be? mystery photo, I looked at the screen in right field at one point and it flashed "Mariners Moose!" — that's it. Just Mariner's Moose! what is that for? I suspect the idea of a child losing interest during a long wait between Ichiro at bats is a frightening proposition for the shadowlords that run that place so I guess there's your motivation.

There's a theme song for when a wild pitch is thrown ("wild thing") a theme song for when there's a walk (three guesses) a theme song for everything. I know everybody does this but the shit was loud and in your face. The fake clapping sound scared the shit out of me when I first heard it. Between the howling trains blaring out of nowhere every 5 minutes and the ceaseless music track I was a jumpy as shit by the end of the game on Sunday. On Saturday night they played closer Kazuhiro Sasaki's thump-house fag theme in between his pitches. The Sox had men on and 2 outs in the ninth, a high-pressure situation and they had this boom boom boom gonna make you sweat shit going full blast. It would stop and start — the players had to wait for it end to get in the batter's box.

There is a pregame show featuring two faceless newscasters down on the field interviewing players and making jokes like "Well Pedro's pretty unhittable, but our Mariners are too — they don't hit the ball till it's pitched!" yuk yuk. There was a looped announcer an hour before the game selling tickets, encouraging charity, laying down the law, introducing children, putridly gushing highlights from the game the night before ("Bases loaded — He wouldn't bunt! Or would he!!"). There is a constant seamless stream of song snippets from when you enter to when you leave. It's all turned up so loud you just get beat down.

At both games the grounds crew did a

choreographed dance in between the 5th and 6th inning to the ecstatic shrieking and apparent surprise of the crowd. In an interview with the crew chief that aired in between the starting lineups and the star spangled banner I learned that they do it every night. What I didn't get was why they don't just do it between every batter. It would work better that way I know it because there was a split second between batters once where my mind actually wandered. Luckily the thought I had was how important it is for one to obey one's thirst.

You can watch the relievers warming in the bullpen from about 6 feet away, separated only by a chain-link fence, which strangely enough makes them seem even less human. It's nice to get close but with all the children everywhere and the fence and the way professional baseball players keep from going insane by pretending it's normal to have people staring at them and ignoring those same people — with all this it really feels like the zoo. I guess the accessibility is something you think you want, everybody wants to see the pitchers warm up, I want to see them too, but I don't want them to feel my eyes upon them, like they're a goddamn polar bear in a bathtub at Southwick Animal Farm. It's fucking creepy.

That first night's game was tough. Not to uphold a stereotype but I heard grown Mariner fans ask, "Are we still winning?" a number of times. Also Spike Owen threw out the first pitch and they had a Spike Owen ceremony before the game and they showed his face on the big screen and said "Spike Owen" maybe fifty times between batting practice and first pitch. Then in the fifth inning they had a "Who's This?" photo on the big screen. A photo of Spike Owen as a 20 yr old. Next to the photo it said "Can you name the Mariner?" and then after a couple seconds I swear it said "Here's a hint: His name is Spike."

It may sound like I'm bitter about the 2 losses but I'm not bitter, honest. That park is freaky. I like the Mariners and am fully aware of my Sox's chances come the end of the year (especially when they do shit like send Manny Ramirez to home from first base). But who cares. This season is fun so far and every fan knows your team doesn't need to win for you to love it. Winning it all is just some kind of gift a small portion of fans get. That doesn't mean I don't want it. What I want is to win it all and for

Pedro to hit as many batters as he can in the process. Head shots, chin music, sore-ass, small of the back. Señor Plunk.

After the loss we ended up in a bar called the Central and we turned it into Red Sox Nation on a rampage — like 20 -30 Sox fans literally took over and went bananas — chanting screaming slamming the tables with our fists. It is with great pride that I tell you our table was the main and initial instigator. Me, Jay, Tara and Jason and Amy — this pair of siblings from Vermont that we met in the bleachers (I knew we were going to drink with them after the game when in the first inning Jason referred to Drew Bledsoe's playoff game heroics in Pittsburgh as being "just like Pele's full rotation kick in Victory") — led the bar in a litany of toasts to our heroes, defiant triumphant chants and x-rated taunts at the top of our lungs — it was euphoric beyond description, there was this atmosphere of victory in defeat that was unbelievable.

It started out with just our party being real loud and pro-Sox and then it just grew and grew. The Sox fans came to us. The brother and sister duo from the bleachers turned out to be the children of a former Bruins goalie named Bob Ring.* The guy played a total of 8 minutes and got lit up for 4 goals in a 1965 loss to the Rangers. But it didn't matter; he was a Bruin. They told us a story about their father rooming with Derek Sanderson in the sixties, when they were both in the Bruins farm system. The Bruins organization had two farm systems, Bobby Orr was coming up in one and Derek Sanderson was coming up in the other, along with Jason and Amy's father Bob Ring. Since the NHL Bruins team had been terrible for years the organization was excited about the talent they were amassing in the farm system. Orr was already a great player with a reputation. To prove to the public that in a few years they would have a contending team the owners decided to have the two farm squads play each other in the Garden. The night before the game Ring was having dinner at Derek Sanderson's house. Sanderson's father offered his son some advice, "Derek, they're gonna remember two guys after tomorrow night and those are the guys that are gonna make the big leagues. There are only two players on that ice that are gonna matter for shit after tomorrow night — Orr ... AND THE GUY WHO FIGHTS ORR!" The next night Sanderson jumped on Orr almost immediately.



We went to where all the Star Wars fans had been waiting outside for the movie for like 3 months and asked people for "back cuts."

Someone stood up and yelled "To the Bruins!" and we all clinked. Then bleacher guy Jason toasted the Sox and then I stood up and yelled "To Oil Can Boyd!" and it was on. The litany went on and on. Denny Doyle, Bruce Hurst, Cam Neely, Marty Barrett, Bill Lee ("The Spaceman!"), Kevin McHale, Izzy Alcantara, Jim Rice (Jim ED!), Adam Vinatieri, Bernard Carbo, Rico Petrocelli, Carl Yazstremski, Bobby Orr, Derek Sanderson, Drew Bledsoe, the New England Patriots, Dwight Evans, Whitey Bulger, Juan Beniquez, John LeClair, Irving Fryar, Jimmy Williams, Paul Pierce, Lawyer Milloy, Spag's is



This is E and Jay in the bleachers at Safeco, high as fucking kites on angel dust.

next to Lizer, Left on Spitbrook, Right on Daniel Webster, Mike Dukakis, Kitty Dukakis, Rubbing Alcohol, Dave Patten, Jim Craig (Jay yelled "He killed somebody while driving a boat! DUI! Boat style-y!") Freddy Lynn, Rick Burleson ("The Rooster!"), Carlton Fisk, Steve Grogan, George

"The Boomer" Scott, Nate "Tiny" Archibald, Peter McNabb, Dave Henderson, Robert Parrish ("The Chief!"), Luis Tiant ("El Tiante!") Tony Conigliaro (a hush for Tony C.), Jerry Remy, Steve Renko, Cedric Maxwell, Bill Russell, Larry Legend, Paul Pierce again, New England Patriots again, Terry O'Reilly, Meadowlark Lemon, the girl in the red shirt over there with the big tits. The Mariners fans had never seen anything like it. During the game, when we raised the old-school "Here we go Red Sox here we go!" cheer in the bleachers people were mystified, freaked out enough and now here in the bar — they looked at us like we were totally insane.

There were people buying double rounds of beers. One of the bartenders was from Lawrence, Massachusetts and he gave us a free round. The bar ran out of Rolling Rock. A guy bought 22 shots of Jameson's and passed them out. "To Red Sox Nation" Then "Here we go Red Sox Here we go!" went up for a long time. It was followed by a Yankees suck cheer and then a bunch of doo-dah cheers, like "Jeter takes it up the ass doo-dah, doo-dah" and "Ichiro is an H. Mo doo-dah, doo-dah" which I didn't understand until I worked out the syllables right but the best one was from our Vermont buddy who was lamenting and praising Bledsoe all night. "Drew Bledsoe came into that Pittsburgh game and I got chills! I got chills! If I could live that moment again I would give anything. He came in like Lazarus! Belicheck rolled away the stone and Drew came out and right away first pass he went long to show his arm was still strong. Then he ran that same play that got him hurt and got hit and his aorta didn't burst! Then he tossed one in the pocket beautiful right to Dave Patton. It was beautiful. It was like Jesu Christo. He did what JC would have done. And you know what? You know what? Mary Magdalene had her money on Pittsburgh!"

He asked if I had read Bledsoe's goodbye letter to the fans:

"If I could be Yaz for you I would.

If I could be Cam Neely I would.

If I could be Larry Legend for you I would. Because I love you.

But I'm not Cam Neely.

I'm not Teddy Ballgame.

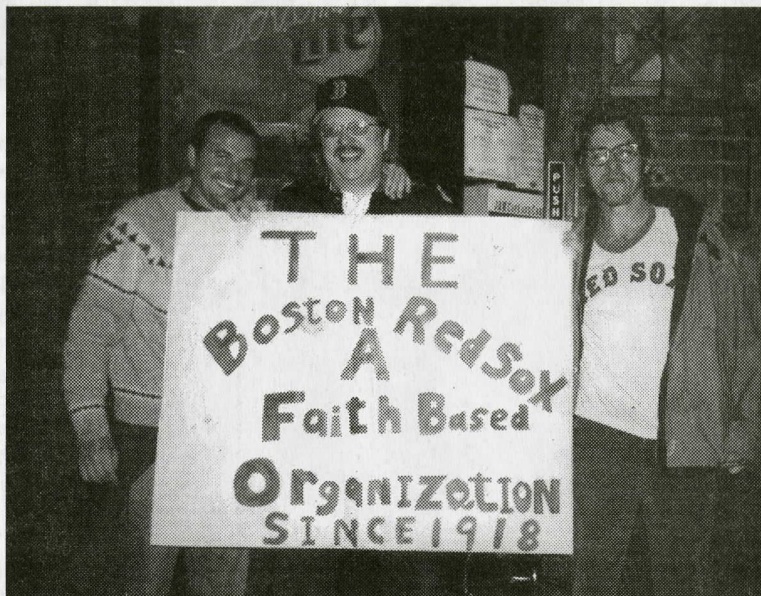
I'm Drew Bledsoe and I love you.

God Loves All."

Then he led us in "Drew Bledsoe he bled for you, doo-dah doo-dah"

*<http://ucsu.colorado.edu/~norrisdt/biol/ring.html>

We started chanting "PE-DRO MAÑ-ANA, PED-RO MAÑ-ANA" because we knew what was going to happen. You could feel it — 9 game winning streak snapped, consecutive losses, he felt great in Oakland, it was gonna be warm. 8-0 and 0.98 ERA in Seattle. Everybody knew what was going to happen. We believed because Pedro is a champion. "PE-DRO MAÑ-ANA, PE-DRO MAÑ-ANA" louder and louder and more insolent as it got louder. I figured we would be killed but fuck it it was pure Boston impossible dream cursed Sox fan defiance. It felt incredible. It was like the end of the Bad News Bears. We lost fuck you we will win tomorrow



my ticket for a minute and said, "These are bleacher seats, you need to go over..." and I said, "Hey buddy how about this — how bout you go fuck yourself. These are OUR seats. Our seats aren't in the bleachers. YOUR seats are in the bleachers. Our seats are right here by third base. I ain't sittin' in the bleachers. So why don't YOU go get the fuck out of here and go sit in the bleachers." The look of shock on his face made me nervous for a minute like we might get thrown out now but he turned meekly and said he was mistaken and sorry to bother you and went and sat in the bleachers. Me and Jay high-fived each other and went back to smoking angel dust.

The next day me and Jay got

We met this real piece of work outside of the bar. What an asshole.

Then Pedro strode out to the hill and just mowed them

"Our seats aren't in the bleachers. YOUR seats are in the bleachers. Our seats are right here by third base. I ain't sittin' in the bleachers. So why don't YOU go get the fuck out of here and go sit in the bleachers." Me and Jay high-fived each other and went back to smoking angel dust."

to the game early so as to catch batting practice. When we got there a slow moving parade of children was circling the perimeter of the field in their little league uniforms. Normally I would have been touched by the kids with their gloves and their team uniforms but I was in a bad frame of mind. I hated those kids. The thing I hated was that some of the kids had regular little league uniforms, with the logo on the shirt and crappy hats. But they were outnumbered by kids in uniforms that were exact replicas of major league teams. For some reason I just thought how much the kids in the crappy uniforms hated playing the kids in bright green and yellow A's uniforms or the full-on Indians get up. That would suck.

We went down to the field and watched the Mariners Moose cavort around with kids as they passed by the visitor's dugout. We were standing right by it and there was a security guard in his 80s looking on passively. I told Jay I would pay him \$10 if he jumped on the field and put the Moose in a headlock. The security guard must have heard me and he apparently thought I was serious because he came over and said, "OK you guys better go find your seats." The game wasn't starting for like 40 minutes. Another asshole. So we took some seats

no one was sitting in right by third base. We decided we would stay there until somebody with tickets came for them since our seats were in the bleachers.

Fifteen minutes later a family came and asked us if maybe we had made a mistake and were in their seats. I hated everything at this point so I said, "No, these are our seats." The husband said, "Really? Are you sure? Because we have this row and these seats. Maybe your tickets are wrong." I said "No our tickets are right. Here take a look." And the guy looked at

down. He was like Billy Jack karate chopping the system. It was the Pedro we needed, the untouchable, god-like Pedro. You can tell how he feels from the bleachers. His body language is a clear signal to the world. I AM EL DURO. He struck out the first four batters. He went ahead 0-2 on practically every batter he faced. After throwing more than a hundred pitches he brought a 97 mile an hour heater down on Ruben Sierra who popped it up to end the 8th and then Sunny Kim finished the 9th ugly style and ruined the 10-1, 3 hit, 12 strikeout final, ending it at 10-4. Anyway Pedro shot them down and we got our one win and stayed in first and I know I know it's May. But it was nice when 2/3 of the stadium left in the 6th inning and there was a line of crabby pissed off little shits outside "Kid's Cove — the Fun Zone Ballpark for Kids!" that wrapped around the centerfield walkway. In the 9th, when the Sox took faceless Seattle reliever J Kay out behind the shed and gave him a good old fashioned pasting, the music stopped and as one batter after another slapped no-out, run-scoring doubles all over the place and Kay was officially being hung out to dry the only sound was the exclamations of Sox fan joy spread around the park, the rest was just dead silence.



We sang all the favorites: "Southie Is My Home Town," "Jeter Sucks and Swallows Too," "I Hate Fucking Immigrants."

Reviews are chosen based on stuff sent to us via normal postal means, that is, the below labels put us in a database, taking notice to address their packages in this manner:

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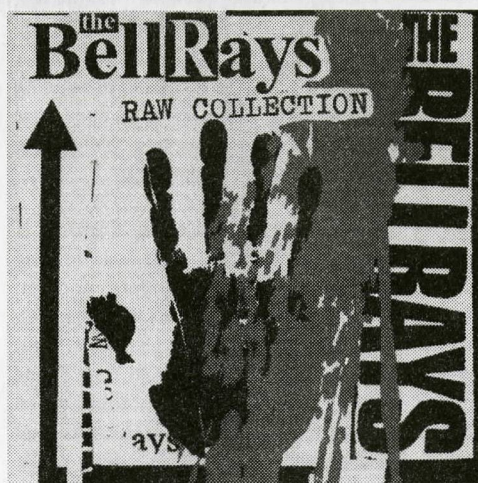
These here reviews were culled from the minds of Delicious Brown, Hack Scribe, Peter Berkley, Greno Murrell, Jorrell Arquillas, Kevin Chanel and Erin McDermott. Dodger Dave has sadly bailed on us to become a farmer. True story.

THE 88 *Kind of Light* (Moontron Records)

The Los Angeles band The 88 are actually named after a French Kicks song, despite the fact that stylistically neither band have much in common. The 88s' debut, *Kind Of Light* relies heavily on melody, classic song structure and arranging. That's not necessarily a bad thing, in fact I find the record's production and radio-friendliness well done. Track 3, "Elbow Blues" conjures up fragments of Bowie's "Aladdin Sane," with its unexpected piano intervals and sweet—but hardly saccharine—harmonies. *Kind Of Light* isn't in the least a rip-off of the band's plethora of rich musical influences (e.g.: The Kinks, The Beatles and David Bowie), but appears to more or less pay homage to those leanings. While strong on craft and instrumentation The 88 are more concerned with building strong songs with easy accessibility as well as creating a foundation that will have them constructing amazing pop songs for a very, very long time. —DB (4872 Topanga Canyon Blvd #302, Woodland Hills, CA 91364)

AMBULANCE LTD. *s/t* (TVT Records)

This ambitious group of minor leaguers met up in a garage in Brooklyn over the past few years, near the ghosts of Ebbets field. This EP is the first ever release from this 5 piece group. The group's stat sheet was exactly what the scouting report had predicted for these boys. According to the band bio, Ambulance Ltd draws influence from '60s psych, '70s rock (isn't that specific?), '80s pop, and '90s shoegazer. Weird, when I think of pop music from the 1980s, I think of stuff like Wham UK, Simple Minds, Tears For Fears, A-Ha!! Sorry, but band bios can be quite entertaining, sometimes more interesting than the music. But, not in this particular case. These guys have a pretty dense sound with a two-guitar assault and big rock keyboard action. Overall, this debut hints at greater things ahead for these boys. Keep an eye



open. —GM (www.tvtrekrecords.com)

THE BELLRAYS *Raw Collection* (Uppercut)

Really good rock n' roll...the best rock n' roll, should be so good as to be uncategorizable. You can't call it "punk" or "metal," "r&b," or any such catch-all. The very best rock should merely move your hips and make your teeth rattle along with every beat. You should have your head on a swivel and your backfield in motion. Most of all, supreme rock and roll should be so good that your brain turns right off and you gotta concentrate real hard to drive correctly.

The BellRays—as you may have surmised—are all that + one case of chips. They are ruffled and crispy, deep-fried and greasy, picante and salty all at once. They just plain bring it and you'd better duck. This compilation of singles and EPs comprises an impressive overview of how the band has progressed into their own brand over the last eight years, from the brilliant soulful grind of "You're Sorry Now," to the retelling of one of the Saints best tunes—"Nights In Venice," up to and through their maturity as the second coming of the MC5.

It is in the latter clichéd comparison that it must be explained that yes, every band with loud guitars and a wailing crooner for the last thirty years has been compared to the 5. But not a one of them (with the exception of the live *At The Drive-In*) comes close to harnessing the total freedom expressed in the wild sound of the mighty mighty BellRays. Live, they know how to stretch tunes sideways to allow tight freakouts and breakdowns without sounding too frayed or disunited. On the later tunes in this comp., the group is shown to have all of those elements intact to the point where you know you're missing something by not seeing

them live. Singer Lisa Kekaula can belt it with the best of them and make you sweat just looking at her. Rock needs more of her. We all need more of her. —KC (4470 Sunset Blvd Ste 195 Los Angeles CA 90027)

BOMBSHELL ROCKS *From Here and On* (Burning Heart)

Melodic street punk. Melodic street punk. It works. It's a tried and true formula. Bombshell Rocks, not as innovative as some of their Swedish brethren, have applied this formula and paid it forward with energy and drive. Driving melodic street punk. However, taking an orthodox punk sound and attempting to modernize it by shaving the mohawks and replacing the safety-pinned rags with black t-shirts and worn jeans comes off more dull than in-your-face. The same metaphor is applied to their music. *From Here and On* is a good listen, but nothing to write home about. —DB (www.burningheart.com)

The BRIEFS *Off The Charts* (Dirtnap)

Admit it, you didn't think they had it in 'em. C'mon, fess up. You loved the first album, heard they'd signed to Interscope, saw them a couple of times and wondered why they didn't do very many new songs, but instead revived a Replacements tune ("I Don't Know"), and figured that since they hadn't released anything in a while that they were toast. The shtick had grown stale. Just like in the original punk/new wave days, the skinny tie/badges/tight wacky-colored slacks look and 'tude had grown tiresome.

So isn't it great to feel wrong sometimes? The Briefs have made it through their first big hurdle intact. They were completely screwed—both career-wise and financially—and came out of it back on Dirtnap and back in the proverbial saddle. While no one can debate that it would be impossible to top their debut, *Off The Charts* is a totally worthy successor; and if you were unfortunate enough to listen to their Interscope EP, well...refer to paragraph one of this review.

All in all, the songs are only slightly evolved from *Hit After Hit*, but the energy is the same, with smart-ass lyrics and titles ("Looking Through Gary Glitter's Eyes") and similar song structures. The shock of their retro-ism has all but worn off, so don't expect to be blown away. But if you dug the first album, there is no reason for you not to dig this as well. —KC (PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111)

CAPTURE THE FLAG *Start From Scratch* (Go Kart)

Picking up the laundry from Die Kreuzen and fumbling through the pockets, Capture The Flag found a wallet stuffed with the money they used to record their first album. Digging through a front pocket they found a playbook. Not an NFL-style "x's and o's" set of diagrams, but chords and shapes and tabs and lyrics. "Eureka! We have material!" Said they. As unfair as that may sound, this is no mere diss. CTFlag have strip-mined the sound of chorus-pedal heavy '80s indie-hair rock, the likes of which Touch And Go can no longer recall. Some nice songs here. The power is intact. One warning: Two more steps in the wuss direction and they're Soul Asylum. —HS (www.gokartrecords.com)

CRITERIA *Engarde* (Initial Records)

Hailing from Omaha, Nebraska, Stephen Pedersen's Criteria play hook-laden, sonically-charged indie rock. Nebraska is seemingly a hotbed of new music, producing bands such as The Faint, Bright Eyes and Pedersen's former band, Cursive (What the fuck are they sipping there anyway?).

Criteria's first release, *Engarde* is made up of ten songs accommodating dissonance and melody, strangely enough. Stephen's vocals are equal parts Doug Martsch balanced by an almost off kilter J. Robbins. "Talk In A Crowded Room" and "Me On Your Front Porch" bring to mind Jawbox in their more tense moments, with the sheer emotional attack of Quicksand. The febrile punch of "It Happens" takes no prisoners with its refrain of:

"Rock/ rock records/re-cord!" "The Life" is whiny white boy, done with ferocious perfection. If you want all the emo without the annoyingness of Chris Carraba, then you may feel that you have discovered something important with this release.—DB (P O Box 17131 Louisville KY 40217)

THE CUTS *2 Over Ten* (Birdman)

Looking on the cover photo, like outcasts from Strawberry Alarm Clock, the Cuts startle you when their album *2 Over Ten* opens with airy keyboards, sharp drums and yelping vocals that recall Richard Hell or Tom Verlaine. The aforementioned opener, "How Can I Get Through," is the definite standout and a song that sounds like it belongs on a "Best of The Cars" album. *2 Over Ten* as a whole plays out like the missing link between the late sixties LA garage psychedelia and the late seventies' NYC art-punk scenes. Swirling melodies and glistening keyboards are punctuated by angular, choppy vocals and jazzy rhythms. Andy Jordan's bitter, lovelorn pleas bunnyhop seamlessly between jangly rhythm guitar and short, edgy solos. The Cuts maintain a consistent "David Byrne and The Attractions" hybrid sound that boogies throughout the album. They manage to harness an assortment of diversities, highlighted by a brief, flowery intermission of a song (that even features a change in lead vocals.) This track, "Paradise," is a dreamy and delicate number that would fit into the Elephant Six collective library. However, they quickly return to their original theme with the follow up "Didn't Live Enough" that sounds, along with a couple other tracks, uncannily identical to Television. I don't care if, while listening to it, I forget I'm not listening to a used copy of Marquee Moon. It's good shit! —PB (P O Box 50777 Los Angeles CA 90050)

THE DAGONS *Teeth For Pearls* (Dead Sea Captain)

Eventually the configuration one guitar/singer, one drummer will become so accepted that reviewers and journalists will not feel the need to point it out, or draw upon obvious comparisons to bands of that ilk which have achieved various levels of notoriety. Until then, it must be noted that The Dagon's are of that family. Karie Jacobson handles the guitar and signing, and Drew Kowalski hits the drums. And while the depth of sound is definitely comparable to other groups employing similar lineups, the playing and production covers a much more swampy territory altogether.

With dreamy songs of broken-teethed pigs with stinking mouths, and other lovely scenery, The Dagon's swirl a heavenly soft serve of sugary sulphur. There is an

SPIN SPUN SPAN

Classic Bar Music with DJ Classic Bar Music

DIRTY POWER *s/t* (Dead Teenager)

This band plays some serious hard rock. Great riffs and lyrics, plus super catchy hooks. Definitely one of the best new bands the Bay Area has to offer. I would even venture to say this band is almost CLASSIC, and if you know me, that's pretty much the ultimate compliment any new band could get. These dudes are ripping on all levels, totally pro, and fully worth checking out live. Anthemic, really.

CAMAROSMITH *s/t* (Dead Teenager)

I know you got mildly stoked when you heard this band name... this Seattle 5-some also plays some serious heavy rock, markedly from Seattle. I hear some southern rock influences in some parts, but they truly do have their own sound. If you like both Black Sabbath and Soundgarden, you'll probably dig this record. They tour alot, so try and catch em live (esp. if you like dudes, denim, and guitars).

MILLIGRAM *This is Class War* (Small Stone Records)

The overall sound on this record is exploding. Like the record's exploding as you're listening to it. Completely distorted and HEAVY. Also, I'd say it's pounding. I'd classify the guitar solos as interesting but only okay, maybe a little too much wah in some parts. Overall, it's pretty good fast and heavy rock that'd be either really good or horribly bad to listen to whilst hungover.

CRIPPLE KID *s/t* (Microcosm Records)

Is this melodic emo? I think that's its attempt, but the vocals drive me nuts. Not my type of music, but from what I can tell, not so well done either.

AMON AMARTH *Versus the World* (Metalblade Records)

This is a well produced new metal record, deathy vocals, and obvious technical skill. About a third of the songs on this record stand out as being pretty good, the rest just sounds like okay new metal. Definitely not as earthshattering as their fellow Swedes At the Gates.

overwhelming minor-key tone to the arrangements, filling the holes inherent in any two-piece pastiche. This, along with the CostCo-sized box of reverb which obscures any openings, plays quite well in creating a mood of hallucinogenic euphoria. It's that feeling you get on a heavy mushroom bender, laying in a warm green field on lush grass with your babe's head in your lap. You're totally lost in the moment and your mind can't stay in one place, but what a great everywhere to be. —KC (4470 Sunset Blvd Ste 163 Los Angeles CA 90027)

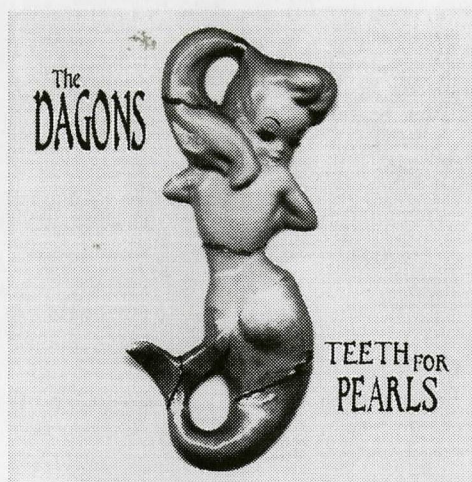
DREXEL *The Inevitable Is Available* (Fork In Hand)

As they claim, the devil himself was forged in Massachusetts. If any of you have been to a UMass frat party, I'm sure you'll understand that this is not far from the truth. So while on this latest release the band drops its brush into the inkwells of emo, hardcore, tape manipulation, and more, the final mix bears out some true involvement with the spiky-tailed red prince. First sign of demonistic intent: All songs are named as unnamed. i.e.- "Drexel 1," "Drexel 2" etc. C'mon guys, be cool. Give us something to hang on to. Mostly what you are left with is a handful of bleeding sinews and random guitar notes, each more perplexing than the last.

Blood, sinew, confusion, the boys from Drexel have that down in spades. If this review appears a tad askew in the dissemination of concrete information, than that perhaps is also a sign of Drexel's bedevilment. There really are no solid fences to lean up against here. If you try to nail them down, they open the gate and watch the listener fall. Drum parts stick out from odd corners, tempos speed up and slow down without regard for precision, songs end in odd frames and begin when they damn well please. Truly the work of our sweet sweet satanic majesty. —HS (P O Box 23123, Boston MA 02123)

THE ESCAPE ENGINE *Celebrity Role Model* (Fidelity Records)

The first line of their accompanying promotional sheet reads: "Only a couple of times a year does a truly great record come around." Yeah...okay. That's true. But let's not set up too many lofty pretensions in the first sentence, hmmmnn?...Further down they claim: "Just as At The Drive-In exponentially increased what the MC5 created in cathartic aggression through music, The Escape Plan now ups the ante." Are you fucking kidding me!!!! Compare yourself to the MC5, then claim to eclipse them?! What fucking audacity! And what do they sound like?...An At The Drive-In rip-off! Geez!...Where do these guys get off? It's one thing to pull up the



hackneyed chestnut that is "comparing yourself to the MC5." Hell, everyone has been doing that since '78. But to do it while completely copping the sound of one of the finest groups of the new millenium? That's plain retarded.

On the good side, if you've never heard ATDI, this could be a good starter band for you. They have a few of the chops, and some of the...oh, forget it. Can this shit and just get yourself a copy of *Kick Out The Jams*. You'll be much better off. —KC (PO Box 152, Hillsdale NJ 07642)

THE EXPLODING HEARTS *Guitar Romantic* (Dirtnap Records)

You'll find nothing new here. No massive bombing campaign. No blood dripping heartache massage pyrotechnic rock. No forced harmonies, hour-long guitar riffs or senseless drum fills. The Exploding Hearts give you good home cooking hop-bopping rock (a sort of beef stew or beer batter meat loaf concoction with no side dish). Sure you could make endless comparisons to the Jam, New York Dolls, Elvis Costello, Buzzcocks, and even Adam Ant, but that's not fair to them or to you, the consumer, the listener, the discerning audiophile, the neo-bourgeoisie bike messenger types. No sir, this band's got pop. My favorite track is "Sleeping Aides & Razorblades" because I can dance to it. I like dancing when nobody's home. It's been a while since I've had that feeling. These guys must make their music in some garage or Winnebago in Portland, Oregon but if you happened to find yourself stumbling past their practice space you might be transported back to the curb in front of CBGB'S circa 1977. —JA (PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111)

(Editor's note:

The above review was written by a ChinMusic staffer in June of 2003. It has been retained over much deliberation, as we wanted to pay proper tribute to the work of the band, while paying proper respects to the families and friends of

the group. We were extremely saddened by the news of 7/20/03 that the morning after playing a date in San Francisco, they were driving to Portland and lost control of their van on the I-5 freeway, just North of Eugene, OR. The accident took three members of the group—Jeremy Gage, Adam Cox and Matthew Fitzgerald. This is a tragic loss for which our sympathies go to their families and close friends.)

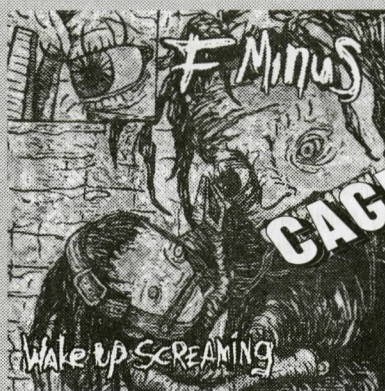
GALLERY OF MITES *Bugs on the Bluefish* (Meteorcity Records)

Even as so many bands these days look to the post-punk scene of turn-of-the-eighties NYC for inspiration, a handful of bands are unready to shift attention from the gritty pre-punk scene of late-seventies Detroit city.

On the first track of their debut album *Bugs On The Bluefish*, Gallery of Mites come off sounding like Nirvana playing covers of The Stooges or a stateside parallel of Sweden's Union Carbide Productions. From the second track on, however, you discover it's excessively more than that. Gallery of Mites is a ten-man supergroup, 50% of which hail from Monster Magnet and 100% of which hail from New Jersey. How many other bands can boast eight guitarists (5 of which are credited as 'lead')? The same griminess that pervades their Jersey stomping grounds pervades the garage metal of *Bugs On The Bluefish*. And sounding like The Stooges becomes a thematic core. Songs like "Chocolate Rabbit" and the title track feature the same underproduced vocals, hyper guitars, and needle-in-the-red mixes as Iggy Pop and The Stooges' *Raw Power*. Added to the recipe is a musically modern and metal-influenced layer of heaviness. While it could be argued that ten members in a rock and roll band could result in the same disaster that too many cooks in the kitchen would, it actually works in GoM's favor. They've managed to restrain themselves by staying just barely on the conservative side of the line between music and noise. Each veteran member brings an element of wisdom and professionalism without sacrificing youthful exuberance or pure, unadulterated rock. In the end, they are a ten-man powerhouse delivering a ten-man power rock. —PB (P O Box 40322 Albuquerque NM 87196)

THE GLORYHOLES *Knock You Up* (EmpTy Records)

These kids are canned heat packed in tight like so many fake snakes. They're about as quintessentially Seattle Punk as you can get. The relentless noise produced by this stylish quintet is whiskey for the ears. Listening to the album, you feel like you drunkenly stumbled into a basement club from the rainy streets of Belltown and are catching a live show before



F-MINUS *Wake Up Screaming*
(HellCat)



V/A Black On Black: A Tribute To Black Flag (INITIAL)

Who doesn't love Black Flag? Honestly, if a band can be as popular and genre-defining as the 'Flag whilst maintaining a posturing media-whore like Hank Rollins as their frontman, that must say quite a lot for the structure of the group. They were the grimy and noisy heart of the So. Cal 1980's punk scene, and they helped blur the solid line between punks, suburban metalheads and heshers to the point where mere pigeonholing cannot be achieved by discerning hair length.

On these two disparate releases—one by Louisville's Initial Records, and the other by Huntington Beach's latest worthy contender to carry forth the punk banner—the spirit of Black Flag is revived and slapped in the face of all that modern, post-Green Day poser crap like an insane butcher swinging a side of beef at a D.A.R. cotillion. What makes these releases so striking is their respective takes on the blueprint. On the Initial comp, an array of groups drag some epic 'Flag hits through the grindcore ringer. If you thought Rollins was over the top silly, with his Sylvester the Cat growl hiked up to pure caricature, these bands take it to Cookie Monster-esque comic extremes. F-Minus—while not actually admitting to being a Black Flag cover band—cut a striking resemblance to the Dez Cadena-era 'Flag. This is not a diss, nor is it a slight on the band's originality. They just plain rip it up old school...and very much like pre-Damaged Black Flag. Case in point: The excellent "Not This Time." This tune completely shreds. Of course, it is also completely reminiscent of the 'Flag's "Room 13." Again, this is not a bad thing. The guitar is straight from the Greg Ginn basement, and the Dez Cadena bark is in effect. Both of these discs are worthy of the mantle from which they derive. Literal or as homage, the ghost of pre-tattoo Black Flag lives just a bit longer. —KC

Young men from Athens Georgia, rock on! Guff should change their name to Huff or Puff because they seem to have no luck with their van as is apparent from the booklet art and from their fan page. They've had to cancel tours a bunch of times as a result, but they are certainly hard working rockers who just can't seem to put enough together to buy a reliable vehicle. But that's how it goes when you're young, punk and indie. Life is hard especially when you rely on living from show to show. These guys have been forced by necessity to work in a laundry room once and even submit their bodies to a medical research project in Austin just to fix their van! So if you see these guys coming down the road after a hard night of rocking, won't you please offer them a place to stay, some warm soup and a hug! The angst in their songs and playing is so thick you wonder what they do to relax? It's like the Clash on too much mocha. The songs are fast and jugular and would make a great soundtrack for a breakup or a Haight Street revolution. —JA (PO Box 20 NYC 10012)

stumbling out of the basement club into the rainy streets again to yell at your reflection in a puddle. I swear I've never actually done this myself. But this is how it makes you feel. The production is loud and messy in exactly the loud, messy way it should be to elicit the aforementioned mind-trip. The guitars pound, the vocals are at a perfectly balanced point between snotty and shouting, the drums are furious and the bass quite prominent.—PB (P O Box 12301 Portland OR 97212)

GRAFTON *Blind Horse Campaign*
(Dead Canary)

Don't you hate when you really get into a new band or certain disc—cranking it up every chance you get, blasting it down the highway on your way home from work, and just grooving on that feeling that although the elements are all familiar, this group is grinding it out in a new and exciting way—and then some jerk-off breaks into your car and steals your stereo, with the new cd in the deck!!! How

fucked up is that?! God, I just hate people. No respect at all for the working man. And it wasn't some \$500 Blaupunkt or Alpine we're talking about either; it was a cheapo, bottom of the line JVC. Cost me \$150 (+\$100 installation from those rip-off bitches at Best Buy). But still, not only am I out \$250, but I also lost this excellent cd of what can only be described as shit-kicking punk rock action.

Above all, this album rocks the house in a way that at once typifies all that is America; beer-swilling, country-twang, hard-hitting, loud guitars...and a singer who knows his way around a Lemmy howl. At times reminiscent of everything you've ever heard and completely original, Grafton buries riffs deep into your psyche and then digs them out with a spork. This is guitar rock the way no one in Guitar Player or Spin can remember how to play it. —KC (P O Box 10276 Columbus OH 43201)

GUFF *The Guff is a Disaster EP* (Go-Kart Records)

HOT HOT HEAT *Make Up The Breakdown* (Sub Pop)

To the initiated I can't imagine this is any surprise assessment, but the obvious comparisons are in effect: If you crammed Robert Smith into the XTC line-up, had him slap Andy Partridge out of the group, and made them really cool, you'd end up with Hot Hot Heat. It's that gaspy-weak and pointed tone of the main Cure guy, with a similar lyrical stab technique ("Says she's got it/I don't wanna be the one to tell her that she don't"), but with severe pop hooks attached in a way that Smith only hit upon when he really needed a hit. This band seems to find the catchy riff with inevitable ease, as though they don't have a choice. Like they couldn't write boring broody tomes if they were strapped to Nick Cave's back, plied with heroin and told their mothers' had died...trying to save their puppies from a house fire. Each song bounces with pep and vinegar, with musical expertise bleeding from all orifices and sophistication beyond their years. These cats

can form a brilliant tune which exceeds on many levels. Steer me Anna! —HS (2514 Fourth Avenue Seattle, WA 98121)

JUNCTION 18 *Heroes From The Future* (Fearless Records)

An EP from Fearless with great harmonies on the borderline between pop punk and a more progressive/alternative sound referred to in some circles as melodicore. Here you'll find traces of Elvis Costello, Bad Religion and Unwritten Law. They hail from Boston and do most of their touring on the east coast and Canada. They've been together since 1996. Their first record: *This Vicious Cycle* won them much critical acclaim and praise. With *Heroes From The Future* you get the feeling that these guys are not your ordinary pop-punk crew that get followed around by young skate boarders and runaways. Their lyrics are beyond "bubblegum" and "girlfriends" and venture into the realm of the ethereal and philosophical: "There'd be an angel high above you but you smashed him long ago" Or take for example some from "Flooding Up the Deep End": "Good evening/I just turned 63/Believe me it's never what it seems". What does all this self-reflection and old age crap mean? Don't worry ladies, these boys are not old and there's a lot of verbiage in this album that calls out to you and your breaking heart. Not only that, Junction 18's got a great sound. There's nothing gratuitous about Junction 18. In fact, their song writing is genuine and their sound is well aged and tight. I wouldn't normally subscribe to a band like this, but I've got to admit, I have a new respect for this brand of punk. —JA (13772 Goldenwest Street #545 Westminster, CA 92683)

THE (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY *Bigger Cages, Longer Chains* (Burning Heart Records)

I think Dennis Lyxzen feared he'd lose his voice. In the short-lived hard core band, The Refused, he scream/screeched out lyrics like an enraged demonstrator. With his new band, soul-punk outfit The (International) Noise Conspiracy, his vocals have mellowed into a mere shouting. This is no loss. The singing is more than augmented by the bombastic, jazzy, frenetic, spiky, garage rock surrounding it. And, of course, being a Swedish soul-punk outfit, T(I)NC has a penchant for socialist manifestos including accusations that capitalism is organized crime that stole their virginity. Marxist/Anarchist quotes abound in their sleeve art, videos and songs. This keeps a healthy seriousness and thoughtfulness behind the sound. They are to The Strokes and The Hives



what The Clash were to the Sex Pistols and The Ramones. They believe that art is aesthetics with a message. On their new six song EP, *Bigger Cages, Longer Chains*, a horn section finds a place on the agenda, giving a dynamite punch of funk tradition to their non-traditional punk. The title track, borrowed from the first of T(I)NC's two LPs, opens up the EP with flavor and soul that persists throughout. Indubitably, the album's standout song is their cover of N.E.R.D.'s "Baby Doll." The uncharacteristic track harkens back to the psychedelia of late sixties activist musicians and the guitar flourishes of post-punkers Television. However, with the last two songs, T(I)NC quickly return to their signature inspiration to dance in the street. The Textbook Example and When Words Are Not Working drive home the point with punchy choruses sandwiched between funky garage stanzas. Ultimately, on this EP, The (International) Noise Conspiracy prove that the band that dresses together stays together. And, damn, they do it in style! —PB (www.burningheart.com)

MANDA AND THE MARBLES *More Seduction* (Go-Kart Records)

Boy, if John Hughes was to make another *Breakfast Club* or *Pretty in Pink*, these guys would surely make the cut for soundtrack. You know the scene: Molly Ringwald bites her lip and turns away after an embarrassing encounter with a boy. She stares blankly ahead, reassessing her bad move. Then she runs [start track 5 "Through"] down a quiet suburban street somewhere in San Diego, faster and faster while flashback scenes of that jerk kissing that no good slut makes her run faster until she smacks straight into Judd Nelson who grabs her and she melts in his arms looking up at him with that signature Ringwald pout, that innocent "can't find the right guy" look of desperation. Forget Ringwald, let's cut that big star budget right away and hire Manda Marble (who in some of the insert photos looks a bit like Gwen

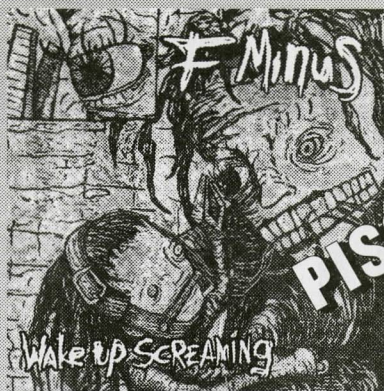
Stefani and Kim Gordon morphed). But seriously folks, Manda's a great pop vocalist and songwriter. The tunes are catchy and well crafted. Rock on with your socks on! —JA (PO Box 20 NYC 10012)

OFFICER MAY *Smoking in A Minor* (Ace Fu Records)

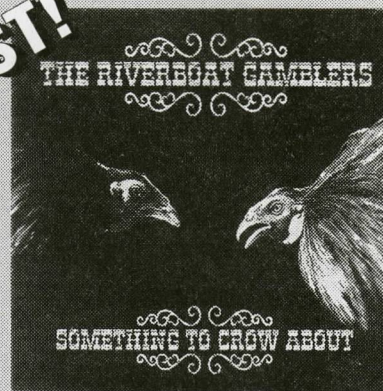
Officer May's second album, *Smoking in A Minor*, revels in a sound that resembles Black Francis fronting Bleach-era Nirvana. Yet, rather than excelling in melody as Nirvana did, Officer May remains awash in a velvet fog of sound. A frozen, rock-hard, velvet fog that cracks here and there with crisp Albini-esque guitar. This is not the sort of album that is carried by a standout track or two. The talent on the sticks results in a consistency of rhythm and pacing throughout—one long, mean-ass song. Despite a seeming lack of focus on production and endless guitar fuzz, Officer May come across as a very economical band. *Smoking in A Minor* has a subtle and determined edge to it. There's an almost preconceived confidence in every beat, riff and word. They are a slow-burn, like the scorch marks on the sleeve art. The title-track ends the white heat with a cool, line of sharp beats on the high-hat that builds into wet, crashing wave after crashing wave of heavy guitar and foot-stomp. The album closes the same way it opened—naked and screaming. —PB (www.acefu.com)

THE PARTY OF HELICOPTERS *Please Believe It* (Velocette)

Now that the whole neo-new wave scene is beginning to really play itself out, I predict the next big movement will be a proto-prog scene. Musicians and fans alike will sport mustaches, album covers will display airbrushed paintings of some fantastical nature, and kids will sit around talking about the genius of the time signature of the third section of the second suite. If this turns out to be the case, then progressive indie-punk rockers The Party of Helicopters will be on the front lines playing art metal to the masses. In the meantime, they give us *Please Believe It*. Impervious to category and anathema to filers, Party of Helicopters has created an album that defines itself solely in the shapes created between the alternating, unpredictable and separate paths woven by guitar, vocals and drums. The guitars being fuzzy chainsaws, the vocals being aerodynamically falsetto and the drums scattering around the place like mathematic ants. This is an original sound that requires and demands listening. It is hardcore music for the sensitive kids or art-rock for the heshers. —PB (83 Walton St, Atlanta GA, 30303)



The KINISON s/t (Fearless)



RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS
Something To Crow About
(Gearhead)

Two bands doing the same thing from completely different directions. One takes fierce punk rock in the straight-ahead three-chord shout it fast vein and plays it neat, with no ice or soda, the other does the same thing from the same grain pit and filters it through equal parts Fugazi, Zeke, At The Drive-In and ginger ale with a twist. You get the same results: Screaming, violent chord-thrashing rock n' roll, with different packaging and fan bases.

The 'Gamblers, a Texas-based set of bbq rockers, bring the serious heat with a relentless barrage of stick-to-your-ribs guitars and a frontman that will soon rival Evel Knievel for hospitalizations if he keeps rocking live as he does. The whole club is his stage, and he is there expressly to remind you why the hell you ever dug the rock in the first place. Gotta love the heartfelt lyrics from "Rattle Me Bones": "Oh yeah, number one number one number one number one!" This is rock and roll. Also notable is the AC/DC-styled shout-along "Hey! Hey! Hey!"

The Kinison front as a more firm-browed version of the same kick n' snare rawk. Leading off the inning with the slaloming shout-along "Hey Hey Hey," they pile on more stops and starts and intricacies, but in the end all the delicacies end up as bigrockaction. Good to see they've not let their influences blind them to the art of writing an excellent punk rock hit, as happens so often with bands that can display expertise in their playing. It'd be great to see a show with both bands, just to watch the two disparate groups of fans' disdain for the other, while both shaking a fist to the same general attitude. —HS

PUNY HUMAN *It's Not the Heart, It's the Humanity* (Small Stone Records)

Nothing puny about these adrenalin-pumped boys that seem to sail down aboard their new CD with outrageously heavy guitar and drum action led by a sweating, bar brawling, heavy drinking frontman. They come across larger than life (but rumor has it they're all about 4 foot 2 combined). *It's Not the Heart, It's the Humanity* took me back to my seedy NYC dark East Village, Avenue B days, when drinking beer from the bar mat was in-vogue as was smoking butts found in Tompkins Square Park. The entire album will keep you tense while at times occasional guitar solos will soothe you. Track ten, "B.I.B.L.E." has got serious bass and guitar unity ala Black Sabbath with some spoken word action. This song sounds like a reference to the Heaven's Gate cult. Album graphics have this Dukes of Hazzard/psycho-delic-Sandinista-Harley Davidson anime chic with lots of girls, guns and whips (probably the types of girls that could make any man feel puny). —JA (PO Box 02007 Detroit, MI 48202)

RADIO REELERS *Rockin' Sound* (Radio Blast)

Well god-damn, dontcha' just love the real rock and roll. The one that's so damn good and real that you have to say god-damn? Sure you do. Show me a goth that can't dig "Slow Ride," or an ur-punk that can't appreciate "La Grange." Anyone who can deny a good classic riff deserves to be slapped for being both a pretentious jerk and a liar. Most importantly, you gotta love a band that can just *perform*.

Regardless of the sub-genre, it's these groups that embody the thread that links one era of rock to the next; that has feet in more than one mode or style, and plays correctly and powerfully in both, so much that they are not just a mock-act or revision, but the real thing.

San Fran's Radio Reelers are of that cloth. At first you may try to play "spot the reference," or grab at the straws of influence a but too hard, cuz yes, you've heard this...you just can't say where. In most cases that would be grounds to write off a group for lacking originality, or copping the hits or some such reactive nonsense. In the case of the Reelers,

the Ouija may float and wane over the board of influence, leaning toward the '77 punk or mid-'70s Australian, listing toward the Stooges and then back to the British pubs. But make a solid landing, it will never do. Glave, Caine and the boys (including that dashing ex-Lovemaker of Weird-ness Hector) have soaked in the flavor of that with which they dig, removed the bones, and built a new machine of steel and wood, capable of welding the 1969-okay and all across the USA to the Brinsley Schwarzed hot rods to the Radio Birdmen and Damned Damned Damned. Songs such as "Bad Whiskey," "See You Tonight" and a smokin' cover of the Nipple Erectors' "King Of The Bop" take that which seemed done and done again and do it again right, straight up, no bullshit.

It's just a shame that it took a German label to jump to the opportunity of getting this slab to the people. Maybe someday the US labels will hep to the rock and give these guys some decent staeside distro', until then we gotta thank them for presenting us a taste of our own backyard. —KC
(www.radioblastrecordings.de)

ROY Tacomatose (Initial)

Sparsely produced, with vocals dry and low in the mix. Very immediate, without coming off as too unprofessional or half-assed. "The Bolivian Army Lays Waste To Seattle" both epitomizes the feeling of Seattle in the post-Nirvana era in both subject matter and that Seattle post-Nirvana sound. You know...almost acoustic, picked-and-then-hammered single-note lead guitar lines, light and undistinguished vocals. Obvious that songs were written by one guy on an acoustic, and the more it goes on you can weed out the main influence: The Pixies. The melodies, both guitar and vocal. That being said, this is some basic, okay stuff that doesn't seem to try too hard to be bigger than it is. You can tell that as soon as they really get it together with the overall feel of the band—more so than the songs in particular—they could be quite impressive. —KC (P O Box 17131 Louisville KY 40217)

STARLIGHT MINTS *Built on Squares* (Pias America Records)

When I was a kid my parents used to set me down on the living room carpet and play a surreal kiddy record with religious overtones. It was called The Music Machine. I believe that the Starlight Mints, as alluded to in the cover art of *Built on Squares*, have built their own music machine complete with springs, gears, cranks, bells and whistles. What comes out is a beautiful noise of lush instrumentations, hook-laden melodies and Bowie-esque vocals. This album is near the top of my best of 2003 list and has rarely left my discman. Standout tracks include "Brass Digger" about some strange breed of rat and "Pages" about someone whose "name is a crucifier." "Brass Digger" finds Bacharach horn sections, Dylan harmonicas and dreamy flutes in the basket of an ornate hot-air balloon that floats upwards into the "satellite sky." "Pages" is a hypnotic piece layered atop a repeating keyboard riff—earnest singing, poetic lyrics, precision drumming and haunting, staccato backing vocals. Pieced together as a whole, *Built on Squares* is a beautiful mosaic of sound. —PB (59 W 19th St Ste B, New York NY 10011)

THE STREETS *We All Got Our Runnins* (Vice Recordings)

Oh, the dreaded sophomore jinx. You try scrubbing it out, try soaking it out, but you still get jinx, jinx, jinx. Many have tried to evade this phenomena to varying degrees of good/bad, but the beast is one all artists must inevitably face. Our pasty-pal Mike Skinner has chosen to follow up the exemplary *Original Pirate Material* with a bookmark of sorts; an online-available-only placeholder of mixes to keep us all at bay

while he either finds a suitable new gear to drive in, or busts out a masterpiece which doesn't bank on previous successes.

Some cool stuff here, with new mixes of "It's Come To This," and "Let's Push Things Forward," as well as a couple of scrappy new ditties like the live favorite "Give Me Back My Lighter" and the title cut. Of course he takes it too far, with a "what's the point" redux of the great "Don't Mug Yourself," but this a minor kvetch. These new tunes are truly the best of the batch, and worth digging through the box of Cap'n Crunch to get to them. —HS (75 N 4th St Brooklyn NY 11211, available online at such outlets at iTunes or other onlineries, such as Zia Records, Gallery Of Sound, and elsewhere)

THE SUNTANAMA *Another* (Drag City Records)

Perhaps living for the last year and a half in the Wine Country (accent on country) has affected me in ways I can't yet conceive of consciously. In fact, the wife and I are going to see The Doobie Brothers play live at a vineyard later this year because we missed them at the county fair earlier this year. I suppose this state of mind allowed for the pleasure I felt at hearing the opening licks of The Suntanama's "Welcome My Friends" off their new album *Another*. The pining electric guitars and the gritty lead vocals truck through the bluesy and spacious song and segue into hobo-blues harmonica and acoustic guitar for the second track. However, as "into the groove" I might have been at the beginning, my attention begins to wane and I start to suspect that lead vocalist Darren Zotowski lost his ability to enunciate in a large, and now empty, XXX jug. While harkening back to the early 70s, post-hippy blues explosion of bands like, well, The Band, they fail to capture the energy and soul of said movement. There is, in fact, almost no movement to their boogie. They've taken a risk, as hipsters go, but it hasn't paid off. —PB (P O Box 476867 Chicago IL 60647)

TUMMLER *Early Man* (Small Stone Records)

Heavy metal novocaine. Narcoleptic Black Sabbath. These are the phrases that describe Tummler and their album *Early Man*. According to Tummler, early man is something like an Easter Island monolith or an elephantine alien astronaut; an ogre wielding a motorcycle in its arms as a guitar. Guitar with fuzz so large you can see the grain. Bottomless pit vocals that carve out a deep, dark cavern in the mountain of music. And yet, somehow, they manage to find time to throw in the random loungy organ or pseudo-psychedelic guitar at certain crucial

moments. This is arena rock on steroids. And they will crush you like an avalanche. —PB (P O Box 02007 Detroit MI 48202)

TIJUANA HERCULES vs. THE SONS OF HERCULES (Black Pisces Recordings vs. Suprema 005)

Who deserves the title of Hercules? Who dares utilize the name of the great warrior, son of Zeus and Alcmene? In one corner, The Sons of Hercules (out of Texas, is the name a reference to the 1957 homoerotic film by the same name?) come out looking haggard and hacking non-filtered cigarette smoke. Their opponents, Tijuana Hercules out of Chicago, have an even more well-worn vocal presence ala Howlin' Wolf but could find a home in a seedy rock venue or trendy cafe. Both Herculean wannabes come to the match with a bit of raunchy rock. It's clear the Sons have been at this a bit longer, as is evidenced by the Joey Ramone-burn out look sported by front man Frank Puglise, whose slurred singing style makes it hard to understand lyrics that sound like "where you get those Adidas, yeah I've had my eye on you". The Sons' Detroit barroom rock is predictable and heavy and certainly better appreciated in smoke filled bedrooms. In the other corner, Tijuana Hercules is a power trio of guitar, drums and percussion. Wait! No bass! That's like Hercules without balls! But somehow the Tijuana boys pull off a good hard rockin', bluesy, semi-psychobilly 17 minute EP. I think the best way to solve this match is on stage. Yes sir, I propose a live show in Kansas or Nebraska (midway point) where these two bands from opposite extremes of middle America battle it out Gladiator-style, song by song until the real Hercules stays on rockin'! —JA (Black Pisces Recordings—4935 N. Mozart Chicago, IL 60625 Suprema 005—you try to find their address...we couldn't)

ULTIMATE FAKEBOOK *Before We Spark* (Initial Records)

Right off the bat, no pun intended, these guys get extra credit for penning a metallic, ass-kickin instrumental for their friend—a baseball pitcher—to walk out on the mound to. You gotta love that when you're reviewing for a baseball mag. This Kansas trio has been kicking around since Halloween, 1996. The *Before We Spark* EP follows up full-length *Open Up and Say Awesome*. This particular release is an interesting mix of contrast/textured pop tunes and bits of electronic experimentation thrown into the stew for flavor. If you like bands like Weezer, Sloan, Cheap Trick and other power pop gods, you'll probably dig this stony gem. —JA (PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217 USA)

random reviewed

a sort of clearing house/safe house for reviews of non-rock, non-baseball, non-current and/or non-music-related products and whatnot. We pretty much review anything we think the public should know about, or at least know not to know about. Your emcees for tonight's cavalcade of commercialismo are your humbled editor (Chanel) and the great W.C. Moriarity. Enjoy.

"Moneyball: The Art Of Winning An Unfair Game"

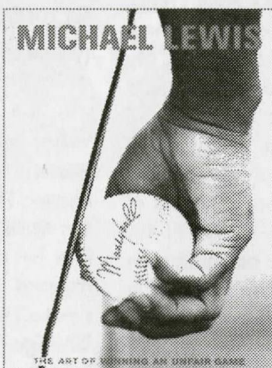
by Michael Lewis
(W.W. Norton & Company)

They say it ain't easy being green. But if the lime-colored Muppet who made that line famous thought he had it rough, he ought to try taking a look at one of major league baseball's most under-appreciated teams, the green-and-gold-hued Oakland A's. Despite the color of their uniforms, the problem with the A's is that they are sadly lacking in green (a.k.a. the almighty "CASH"). Located on the poorer side of the San Francisco Bay in a crowded two-team market, the A's have had to make due with a payroll that, in recent times, has been lower than all but a handful of their competitors—and just a bit higher than your local McDonald's franchise.

This year, for example, the A's are fielding a team at about one-third the cost of the mighty Yankees. That said, it would seem likely that A's fans would be consigned to a hopeless void in a remote corner of the baseball universe, forced to pointlessly cheer on a bottom-dwelling team while checking the standings everyday hoping to take some satisfaction from staying a leg up on perennial dregs like Detroit, Tampa Bay and the commissioner's team in Milwaukee. But oddly enough, despite their team's severe cash crunch, A's fans have actually seen their team make it into the post-season three times in the last three seasons and have found themselves cheering on one of the most entertaining and dynamic teams in the game.

So what accounts for this strange and fortunate anomaly? Well as it turns out, in baseball, cash doesn't always call the tune. And that's what "Moneyball," by Michael Lewis is really all about. By taking an inside look at how the low-budget A's have managed to win, it demonstrates that sometimes there actually can be a few things that are even more important than money—things like intelligence, vision, and a willingness to look at the old rules in a new way.

Fortunately for the A's, those qualities are pretty much personified by the team's driven-to-win general manager—the primary subject of the book—Billy Beane, whose intensity level seems to rival that of your typical Ramones song. Beane understands all too well that when you are forced to compete with less, you've got to be smarter, shrewder, leaner,



meaner and more aggressive than everyone else. When you find yourself in that position, you simply can't afford to make many (if any) mistakes—and Beane seems to relish that challenge. Rather than resent the financial constraints that he's forced to operate under, the hyper-competitive Beane almost seems to view them as an opportunity to test his own personal effectiveness

and to re-evaluate the way we think about the game. The path that he and the A's have used to outsmart their competitors can be found in the ways that baseball talent, both professional and amateur, is evaluated.

The book shows us that in baseball, like in many musty old institutions (Sting, Phil Collins), the old ways of doing business just seem to keep rolling on no matter how useless or irrelevant they may have proven themselves to be. In that kind of environment, it's always very difficult to try to bring a fresh, modern perspective to the table. But if you can, then you're bound to hold a real advantage over the competition. And if you're broke and you want to win, you don't have much of a choice. Necessity is indeed the mother of invention. So what Beane and the A's did—which is so revolutionary in a tradition-bound game like baseball—was to actually look at what worked and what didn't. They determined that there were many qualities that were often undervalued in a player's statistical repertoire (bases on balls, on-base percentage) and many qualities that were often overvalued (batting average, stolen bases). They then set about getting their hands on those under-valued players—usually at a discount rate.

They also took a hard-nosed look at baseball's amateur draft and quickly came to the conclusion that drafting big, strong, athletic-looking high school players—whom the scouts usually tended to prefer—was a very risky proposition, and that drafting experienced college players who had a history of putting up solid numbers was a much better bet. This may not sound revolutionary but, in baseball, it's tantamount to Galileo pointing out that the Sun did not revolve around the Earth. And based on some of the reaction to this book in the baseball world, you might expect baseball's own version of the Spanish Inquisition to be popping up at any moment to stamp out this dangerous

heresy.

For years, professional scouts earned their stripes by spending their time trolling high school baseball fields, where they would hyperventilate over every talented young boy who cut a dashing figure in his baseball uniform and left them with visions of Ted Williams or Mickey Mantle dancing in their heads. The problem was that this kind of evaluation was primarily based on potential, not performance. It was based on what a kid looked like he might be capable of doing one day, not on anything he had actually done. This might be a satisfying way to evaluate talent if you can afford to be a dreamer. But Billy Beane, with his limited resources, knew that he couldn't afford to be a dreamer. He had to be a realist. And his fact-based analysis showed him that the A's would have to draft college stars based on performance, not high school studs based on promise.

This is something that the baseball flat-earthers continue to have a hard time wrapping their heads around. When debating promising young players who look good in a uniform but don't have the stats to back it up, Beane frequently has to remind his own recalcitrant scouts, "We're not selling jeans here!" There still seems to be this unshakeable notion afoot that ballplayers should somehow resemble Adonis in cleats. It's obviously a good thing that these guys never had to scout the bloated personage of baseball god Babe Ruth, who looked like he had about as much athletic prowess as my ol' grandpa after a long weekend bender.

The book not only does a great job of exposing the inner logic (or illogic) that dominates baseball decision-making, but it also provides a great inside look at just how a shrewd operator like Beane really operates. He's not only something of a baseball visionary who can talk like Einstein about his own innovative theories on the game, but he's also a real hustler who truly enjoys the art the of the deal. He knows how to get things done and is willing to do whatever it takes to make things happen—whether that means cajoling an opposing general manager, reassuring a reluctant player, intimidating a wary manager, or charming a helpful secretary. Whatever it is he's after, if he's in hot pursuit, don't get in his way.

But perhaps the most interesting point about "Moneyball" is that it proves that, contrary to popular opinion, money isn't the only thing that matters in baseball. There's more

than one way to skin a cat, and the success of the low-budget A's is proof positive that a team without unlimited resources can win through smart management, intelligent decision-making, a willingness to think outside the box, and a disciplined adherence to proven—rather than unproven—principles.

Here's an idea. Instead of spending his time running down the viability of the Oakland A's franchise, as he often seems eager to do, maybe baseball commissioner Bud Selig ought to pick up a copy of this book and learn a thing or two. Then, rather than dismissing this small-market team's amazing success as some kind of a fluke, he might instead hold it up as an example of how other teams, like his own lowly Brewers, might want to go about conducting business in the future. Many inside the game look at baseball's current financial situation and competitive imbalance and moan "No Future!" But this book screams back, "Never Mind The Bollocks, just get with the program guys, and keep your eye on the ball." —WCM

THE POP GROUP *We Are Time* (bootleg reissue, originally on Rough Trade)

What I at first assumed to be either the worst or the most crafty and sly method for promotion of a reissue has more than likely turned out to be nothing more than a quick-buck knock-off by a half-assed slimy entrepreneur. For years I have been looking (without wanting to blow serious wad on the privilege) for a copy of this elusive album by punk-funk progenitors The Pop Group. Information on its whereabouts was near impossible to find until the complete saturation of the internet age. No one seemed to know who they were, and if they had heard them, they usually ran in horror from the cacophonous din of harsh beats and even harsher vocals, produced to ward off all but the most daring vinyl enthusiast.

Then it happened...my pal Bad Penne told me he found a few copies of the vinyl in our local record store. Not a beat up used copy, not a slickly reissued cd, with stunning graphics and dazzling literary retrospective liner notes...just a bunch of copies with no artwork on the cover or even a sticker. Yup, just like the immortal "Smell The Glove" lp by Spinal Tap...none more black. In fact, how BP ever found this album is completely beyond me. Why would anyone bother to pick up a stark black sealed lp in a record store the size of Wyoming? Made me wonder what the hell he was looking for.

When I rushed to the store to claim my prize I searched high and low; no Pop Group section or other demarcating "here it is!"-type

sign for my shopping pleasure. Thinking I was s.o.l for sure, I checked the "New Rock" section on a lark. It was there among the tons of crappy slabs of bigrockaction and other bands I'd never heard of that I saw the 12" x 12" monolith, staring back like a void. Not seeing any signage whatsoever, I figured if this wasn't it, perhaps I could ask the counter guy to scan it and perhaps solve the riddle. As this was the last one left, I wasn't taking any chances. I carried this thing around the store for half an hour, as I picked through the used bins and made my final decisions: The new Outkast, the Spits album, and THE MYSTERY ALBUM...

Long story not-so-long, I used my brain and looked at the album's spine. Duh. Of course it was what I was looking for; said so right there. Excitedly I got it home safely, blasting the brilliant "Hey Ya" all the way home. When I opened it up I realized "Hey, didn't this album get released in a plain black jacket with a hole in the center, a la the 12" single? Yup, really using the ol' brain today."

Anyway, I put the thing on, and dang me if I wasn't shocked and agape. Having heard everything else but this album, I had a pretty strong sense of what the band was about; shrill political rants astride a loose and violent three-piece funk outfit. Kinda like what the Minutemen used to do in the early days, or what you might see the Red Hots pull off in the heated jams of their earliest gigs. Intense, to be certain. But this was not the Pop Group I thought I knew. Having known their reputation and sound I was knocked sideways to hear actual POP songs, with melodies and subdued emotions among the usual confrontational dogma of their signature "Amnesty Report"-type clang-und-slam. Was the same band that screamed "A guy had to have his balls removed/after getting kicked by the SPG!" also capable of the line "Searching for love/in the library of a ghost town"? Is it possible that I never knew this band at all, but had merely formed a structural opinion based on 2/3rds of the material available? Wacky.

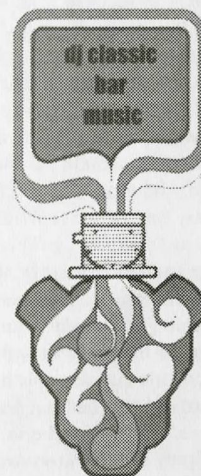
Upon searching through the many sites devoted to the group, I finally found a couple that weren't in Japanese or German. Turns out *We Are Time* was more of an odds vs. sods collection of live material and demos that were not necessarily meant for public consumption. Tunes like the afore-referenced "Kiss The

Book," and "Colour Blind" stand out from the live versions of their more noted numbers "We Are Time" and the tremendously kick-ass "Thief Of Fire." But whereas the incendiary debut *Y* (with the original versions the two previously-mentioned songs) was a very calculated studio effort, overlorded by the incredible production of dub legend Dennis Bovell, and the follow-up *For How Much Longer* was a straight-forward mix of the two dominant sides of the Pop Group die (read: lively topical funk with avant-garde meanderings and dub workouts), *We Are Time* stands as a huge sore thumb to any preconceived "Pop Group ethos," or any such nonsense. Sure, all the same elements are there; on "Springer" it's just some guy mumbling Beefheart-like about something or other (there really is a story behind this thing, but I know nothing more than that there was a guy in an earlier incarnation of the group named Mark Springer), "Sense Of Purpose" bleeds outward from "Springer" as a clunky piano part which leads to a clunky pop number. But again, that word came to mind: POP! This is from 1980, okay. But I never saw The Pop Group as being in any way contemporaries of the UK pop scene of the day, with their Echo & The Bunnymens and Spandau Ballets and Teardrop Explodes. In short, I never knew Pop Group could play...POP.

So once again, twenty years after first hearing the mind-altering grooves of *For How Much Longer*, they blind-sided me yet again. As a cantankerous record-snob git, I had it coming. — KC

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CHEATING AS METAPHOR

by Hap Mansfield

I told the editor of ChinMusic that I wanted to write about fabric softener, Jon Spencer, Led Zeppelin and how Hubble telescope readings now figure that the universe is about 12 to 13 Billion years old. He said, sure, but (and here he paused delicately) make sure it fits the theme (i.e. punk rock and/or baseball.) I said I could throw in Sammy Sosa's corked bat and cheating in baseball. He said, sure, but (and here he laughed raucously) I don't know how you're gonna do that. He, however had not figured on the Judd Nelson factor or the Baseball Epiphany (a common error).

So I was watching *The Breakfast Club* on the Oxygen Network or one of the other chicks-on-fire channels...I was sort of half-watching it, half reading a blurb in the New Yorker about the American Folk Art Museum's new exhibition of baseball relics, "The Perfect Game; America Looks At Baseball" (it sounds like a cool thing to go see if you're in New York this summer- they've got amazing baseball folk art; from India-ink sketched baseballs done by a talented umpire to convict-embroidered player portraits). I'm musing on how really cute Judd Nelson was back in the day as he crawled through the vents in the ceiling of some upper-middle-class High School outside of Chicago and it reminded me of Jason Grimsley painfully wedging himself through the vents at Comiskey Park to replace the corked bat of Albert Belle with the innocent (although, stupidly enough, signed) all-wood bat of Paul Sorrento. The only funny part, I believe, that exists in *The Breakfast Club* is this relationship to the Belle story, one of the funniest stories of cheating in baseball (believe it or not, I have never seen this film all the way through. I was still wearing black lipstick, a ripped and safety-pinned Cubs T-shirt and an old army jacket that said "You Must Change Your Life" penned on to the back of it with a Sharpie when the movie first came out and I guess I never got around to sitting through the whole movie. And yeah, that is a Rilke quotation, and yeah, I was one of those irritating "intellectual punks" and fuck you) The Grimsley/Belle story is as good as that story about Rick Honeycutt who had the thumbtack taped to his finger to scuff the ball, got ousted from the game and wiped the sweat off his forehead with the tacked hand, leaving a nice little cut along his brow. Oh, wait, the Graig Nettles Superball bat has to figure somewhere in there. That's a good one, too. The Nettles story is so Brady-Bunch-Peter-invents-a-way-to-cheat. Can't you just see Florence Henderson's surprised motherly expression as all those superballs tumble out of the bat as it's sawed in half? It's funny, evil and wholesomely boyish all at the same time, sort of like a big scoop of twisted-fuck fudge ice cream. Where was I? Oh, yeah, Sosa. Chicago. The Breakfast Club.



So while I'm ruminating on the whole corked bat thing, watching Judd Nelson, this commercial for Snuggle fabric softener comes on. Snuggle looks really, really rough nowadays, have you noticed? It almost appears that he's got a stuffed animal five-o'clock shadow goin' on. He looks like he just got out of Hazelden. He's tapped, pal, I'm just sayin'. You know why that skunk character and that porcupine character are in those Snuggle commercials, don't you? Snuggle met them in rehab. They needed the work. No shit. So now Snuggle is sitting on a deck chair, handing a towel to some hot model (her name is Sandra Fockink, I kid you not) who has just swum the length of a swimming pool (which looks as though it's in the courtyard of the Hotel California) and has emerged from the water in a sexy black maillot. It doesn't look half-sexy though, it looks like the G-rated version of a Furies porn movie (if you don't know what a Furry is, just let it go. I like you too much to tell you). The New York Times had a piece on the "new" Snuggle. Apparently the old Snuggle, who has been around since 1983, is "too cute" for the times. People hate cute now. People want sexy. This is what some genius ad agency figured out. We can laugh about this obvious revelation but they got 30 million dollars to launch the new "more smooth and suave" Snuggle. Cute, huh?

Segue back to Sammy. Who is clearly cute and not sexy. Who was just not thinking when he took up that corked bat and swung. I believe it was his practice bat. I believe that when Jose Cardenal was making all those corked bats for the Reds (according to Pete Rose) he was just making them for practice batting. I believe that the pressure was too much for Bucky Dent back in the 1978 All-Star game (ah, Bucky Dent. Great name. Good ball player) when he got ejected from the game for a corked bat. I don't think the corked bat or the scuffed ball is a big issue in baseball. Some professor of Mechanical and Aeronautical engineering at U.C Davis says the lift of a corked bat is negligible. A regular bat will give you three hundred feet as opposed to the three hundred and six feet you'll get with a corked version. Now, the aluminum bat will give you three hundred and thirty feet. If I were gonna cheat with a bat, I'd get somebody to paint up an aluminum bat to look as though it were wood. That's cheating, pal. The cork is just so much Vaseline in a pitcher's pocket. If Whitey Ford or

Gaylord Perry did use a little KY Jelly once in a while it was: 1) A tragic misuse of a fine lubricant (although not nearly as fine as Astro-glide....and by the way, does that name have anything to do with Houston?) and: 2) Hardly something that gave them real pitching talent. They already had that. All this ball-spitting is hair-splitting (Awww! I worked hard on that sentence, leave me alone).

After the disturbing Snuggle thing I watched that Cadillac commercial with the Led Zeppelin song. Which is almost as disturbing as the Nick Drake Volkswagen ad, which is almost as weird as the Jon Spencer automobile ad which is almost as saddening as the Iggy and The Stooges ad for Nikes. I glance down again at the folk art show description, I look at Judd Nelson's ratty coat as he walks across the football field at the end of the movie and I suddenly have one of those epiphanies that are brought about by baseball. I suppose it's the kind of thing George Will has or Mike Royko had. But I had it so it's not going to be as brilliantly expounded upon. Sorry. But it's still an epiphany and it's the thread that ties up all this stuff. Ready? Everybody, but everybody, wants to be a part of something that is grand and good and soul stirring. Oh, and cool. And while there are those that think this can be bought and sold like so much fabric softener or so many Cadillacs, it ain't gonna happen. Because what you get when you watch a baseball game isn't what you bought but what you brought with you in your head when you came. Stuff you think and feel. Stuff advertisers want to get at and High Schools want to mold. Everybody is trying to turn your soul into Jell-O and sell it back to you. But somewhere, as you're reading this, there's a guy making a picture of Sammy Sosa out of dried beans and glue, there's a punk band playing real music without the benefit of marketing, there's a kid practicing his pitches to the side of the garage (we won't, at this point, expound upon the ire of the mom watching the new siding get dented). Baseball, like music, like art, lives in the appreciator and not in the dessert cart at some fancy new baseball stadium where yuppie season ticket holders eat roasted goat cheese off of spears of rosemary at the new ballpark restaurant and then leave in the fifth inning. (Look, I'm a Cubs fan. We don't give up until the bottom of the ninth, last out.)

Am I saying this right? Whether Don Sutton scuffed the ball or George Brett got a little too generous with the pine tar or Norm Cash or Gates Brown or Albert Belle or Sammy Sosa used corked bats, they all just wanted to be a memorable part of something that is both good and cool. Everybody really just wants to be good. And cool. But if they can't be good, they'll settle for cool. Good takes work but if you just want to be cool you can buy accoutrements that will make you at least appear cool. Unfortunately spending money is easier than being good. And that's why the world is going to hell in a hatbox and has been for the last 12 to 13 billion years. Or maybe it's just why Judd Nelson's career is on the down slope now.

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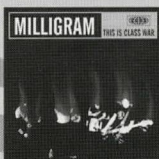


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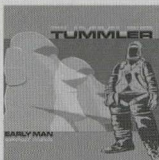


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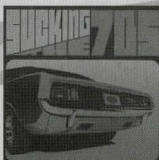


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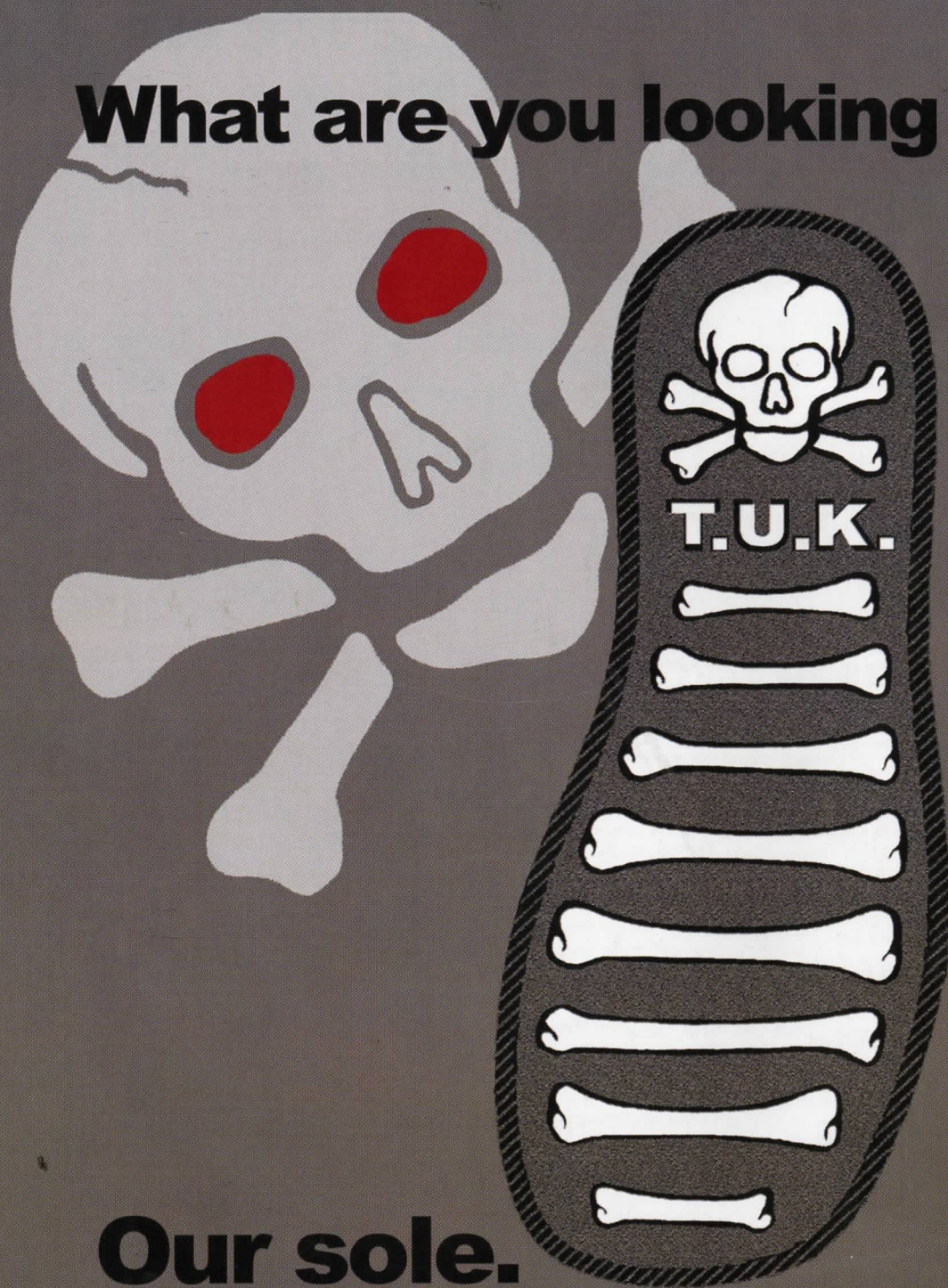
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