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clamor

July/August 2002

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to kids

tribal style
in Kenya

american
sweatshops

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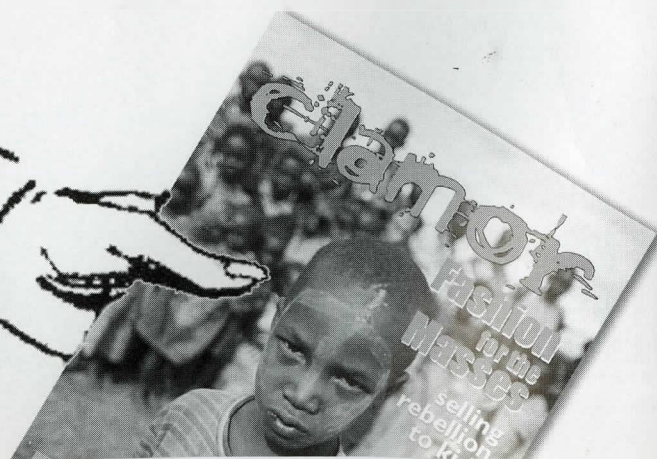
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Where do you get Clamor?

- ☐ Subscription
- ☐ Newsstand/Bookstore
- name: _____
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Other: _____

What's the first thing you read?

- ☐ Cover story
- ☐ Other Feature
- ☐ Letters
- ☐ Last page
- ☐ Other

Do you think the advertising we have is helpful?

- ☐ I would never buy any of those stinkin' products!
- ☐ Yeah, some of that stuff sounds cool.
- ☐ I've bought things I have seen advertised or reviewed in Clamor.

Do you think that the layout is easy to read and appealing?

- ☐ You should fire your designer immediately.
- ☐ It's easy to read but boring as all get-out. You need more pictures of cute boys.
- ☐ I have difficulty reading the small type/weird layout/etc.
- ☐ I like the layout the way it is most of the time.

What would you like to see more of in Clamor?

- ☐ Interviews.
- ☐ Music Content (band interviews, reviews of CDs, etc)
- ☐ Feature stories
- ☐ News/Current Events
- ☐ Reviews of books, music, etc
- ☐ Dry academic-sounding articles

What would you like to see less of in Clamor?

- ☐ Interviews.
- ☐ Music Content (band interviews, reviews of CDs, etc)
- ☐ Feature stories
- ☐ News/Current Events
- ☐ Reviews of books, music, etc
- ☐ Dry academic-sounding articles

Anything else we didn't cover?

Do you think that the articles in Clamor are too long?

- ☐ Yes, frequently.
- ☐ No, they're about right.
- ☐ Occasionally you get some wind-bag in there, but usually it's okay.

One year subscriptions to Clamor are \$18 for 6 issues. Do you think that this is too much or too little?

- ☐ It's a steal compared to other mags, like Ms. or Modern Bride.
- ☐ It's a rip-off compared to Jane and YM.
- ☐ It's pretty affordable.

The past few issues of Clamor have had a cover story, or theme... Do you like this approach?

- ☐ I think it's confusing.
- ☐ I like it!
- ☐ There were themes?

Have you ever been to the Clamor Web site?

- ☐ I've never been on the Internet and people think I'm a Luddite.
- ☐ I didn't know you had a Web site!
- ☐ Yes, but I think it sucks.
- ☐ Yes, but I think you need to have more content.
- ☐ Yes, I think it's great!

Have you ever been to our on-line store?

- ☐ No, remember, I've never been to your Web site.
- ☐ Yes, I think it is easy to use.
- ☐ Yes, I think that it's difficult to find my way around in.
- ☐ You need to carry a better variety of stuff.

What other magazines do you read?

If you are a regular Clamor reader, what would you say are some highlights from the last year?

How old are you?

- ☐ younger than 18
- ☐ 18 - 24
- ☐ 25 - 34
- ☐ 35 - 44
- ☐ 45 - 54
- ☐ 55 or older

Are you:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

What kind of music do you listen to? (Circle all that apply)

- ☐ Country
- ☐ Hip Hop
- ☐ Metal
- ☐ Punk/Hardcore
- ☐ Mainstream Alternative
- ☐ Electronic
- ☐ Folk
- ☐ Jazz/Blues

Other: _____

Are you a:

- ☐ Meat-eater
- ☐ Vegetarian
- ☐ Vegan
- ☐ Other: _____

(Optional) What ethnicity are you?

- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Black/African-American
- ☐ Latino/a
- ☐ Other: _____

Is this the first time you have ever read Clamor?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No way!

Please give us your contact information. We have to know where to contact you if you win, right?

Name: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____

- ☐ Yes! I would like to receive occasional updates via e-mail!

From The Editors

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Hello Everyone!

You don't know how many times we have introduced ourselves to hear someone say, "Oh, you're from GLAMOUR?" Um, no. But, it did get us thinking. As you can see by the parody on the back cover, there's a lot of discussion to take place about the world portrayed by Glamour and the lives that we represent here in Clamor.

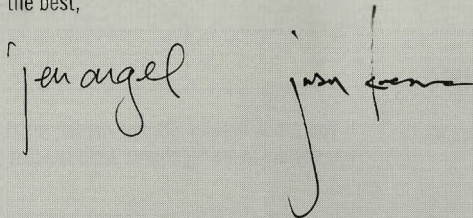
On a most basic level, the contrast is between how mainstream media works and how we want it to work. Mainstream magazines like Glamour simply tell you how it is. They hire people who go out and tell us, the readers, what is cool and hip or what is newsworthy, as in the case of Time or Newsweek. What Clamor does, and what we want more media to do, is allow each of us to influence the media that we will later consume. By becoming the producers of stories and photographs and interviews, we, as individuals, will help describe our own lives, and define what is important, newsworthy, and cool — instead of having it all sold to us.

What does this have to do with fashion? Everything! As Scott Puckett details in his essay on the commodification of coolness, media (both mainstream and "alternative") is intimately involved with selling images and identities. The WERISE fashion show and the photo essay from Ailecia Ruscin and Chantel Guidry give us a firsthand look at how culture, style, AND media can become something we create for ourselves if given the opportunities. Greg Fuch's photos (p. 42-43) and Casey Boland's essay detailing the fashion industry's relationship with domestic sweatshop labor are also crucial pieces to understanding the big picture of culture commodification, and they add more fuel to a growing movement to outlaw sweatshop labor in the world. This is why magazines like Clamor need to talk about fashion.

We're always encouraging you to subscribe because like other independents, Clamor depends on subscriptions, and not newsstand sales, to survive. Clamor's diversity is a problem for an industry that relies on packaging ideas into sellable goods and then packaging people into sellable target markets for those goods. When the two packages collide... well, marketing experts might call it "synergy" or some bullshit like that, but we tend to think people don't fall into nice little categories. Which is why Clamor can be all over the place sometimes and difficult to market. We like it that way because we think it more accurately reflects our everyday lives. Face it, sometimes you're all over the place too, right? If you agree and haven't done so yet, please check out the inside front and back covers of this issue to see how you can make your subscription count in keeping Clamor going strong. We can't do it without you.

It feels like we say this every issue, but we really are lucky to be able to rely on so many amazing people to make this magazine come together every other month. Please use the contributor section like a directory. Get in touch with each other. Share ideas and resources, and make real connections. And if you support our advertisers, please let them know you appreciate their involvement with Clamor. It'll go a long way in keeping them involved. Thanks again for your support. Enjoy the issue!!

All the best,



CLAMOR's mission is to provide a media outlet that reflects the reality of alternative politics and culture in a format that is accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. CLAMOR exists to fill the voids left by mainstream media. We recognize and celebrate the fact that each of us can and should participate in media, politics, and culture. We publish writing and art that exemplifies the value we place on autonomy, creativity, exploration, and cooperation. CLAMOR is an advocate of progressive social change through active creation of political and cultural alternatives.



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I wanted to drop a small amount of constructive criticism if that's cool. I was pretty taken aback by the cover of the latest issue (March/April 2002). It was really strange to pick it up and see one "cute" and young white woman in hip clothes representing "what it means to be active." I doubt it was intended, but unfortunately I think the cover translates as "cool white individuals that look like they could be straight out of a J. Crew catalog are the definition of activist." I've discussed this with a handful of other folks and they all agree that it's weird and a number of them pointed out that a lot of Clamor covers use a photograph of one white woman centered on the page. If Clamor is going to claim to be independent, radical, and an alternative to the mainstream media, I think it's way out of line to continually represent yourselves and the movement you wish to be a part of as singular good looking "activists." The world I wish to build and live in demands the work of thousands of groups of young, old, black, brown, yellow, white, queer, straight, women, men, and everything in-between. No individual of any combination of identity factors can or should represent our movement, never mind only ones that are young and white...anyway, maybe white girls sell magazines and that's the point. If so, I wish you would be more honest about it and stop selling these images as "activism" cuz that's bullshit. Given your circulation, thousands and thousands of people probably see the cover of Clamor at the newsstand, maybe it is possible to use that exposure to better represent what you believe in.

Solidarity,
Josh MacPhee
Chicago, IL

I feel a need to respond to a couple of comments made by Joseph Smith in his article on the congressional eco-terrorism hearing ("The Hearing That Wasn't," May/June 2002). I would like to point out that while one in Craig Rosenbraugh's position may be tempted to answer a congressman's questions with a response of "fuck you and your questions," it would prove to be a major tactical error. Using any tactic available to avoid prosecution — aside from ratting people out — is the most intelligent way for a revolutionary to stay outside of prison, which is a far more effective position to revolt from. Sticking to some strict ideology is not a natural way to survive nor succeed. In watching our animal relations one can see an instinct to do whatever it takes to cope with a situation, which in Craig's case was to plead the Fifth to nearly every question asked

of him, regardless of whether or not he chooses to "believe in the Constitution."

Smith poses the question, "Is it not hypocritical for self-proclaimed revolutionaries to rely on a state-given protection?" I counter with the question: Would it not be more hypocritical for one fighting for the liberation of all lifeforms not to use whatever tactic is necessary to resist one's own imprisonment? I am tempted to assume I know Smith's answer to this one, considering his obvious pacifist leanings, but I won't. However, I'd like to say Smith and others with rigid ideologies are "their own worst enemy," as well as the enemy of those who realize that a diversity of tactics is what has won every war this planet has ever seen. Do not be fooled, this is a war — how else can you describe what is being waged against this planet's life forms? I am not meaning to slam pacifists, if a person thinks asking a bully to stop beating them up will work, by all means go for it — but don't condemn those of us who choose to smash the fucker in the head when he isn't looking. People need to use their heads and use whatever tactic is going to be most effective at the time. Sometimes that means mass protests, sometimes that means burning a place to the ground, and yes, sometimes that means pleading the Fifth even when you have no reason to believe in the Constitution. No one tactic will stop all environmental destruction nor political persecution, the sooner we realize this the sooner we will put an end to this consumer culture that is killing everything.

In total Resistance,
Crittter / Craig Marshall #13797662
Snake River Correctional Institution
777 Stanton Blvd
Ontario, OR 97914

I read the "From The Editor" (May/June 2002) and I would like to tell you that I will be 50 this year and haven't "grown up." Seven years ago I left a suburban life (married 16 years — no children) and ceased distracting myself through entertainment (TV, movies, mainstream media), which for the most part is an insult to my intelligence, and began re-educating myself — not easy at first but the only satisfying solution to unhappiness. In reality if you're open to things anything can happen and you might find yourself anywhere. Giving up one's freedoms means you're playing into the rottenness that is being sold to you.

Susan Brychey
Lynbrook, NY

I really appreciate Matthew Williams's suggestions for finding some middle ground between social progressives and radicals ("A Radical Failure to Communicate," March/April 2002). I am "on the road" to being an anarchist — I come from a very centrist background, but as years go by and I am exposed to the corruption of the corporate state, my views are gradually shifting to social progressive/activism and from there to anarchism. Williams hit it right on the head when he offered the example of the Rally for Direct Democracy in Boston. The message of radicals who want to destroy capitalism has to take root in the average person — gradually so it can be digested and not dismissed at once — and let's face it, this country is conservative as hell! Getting in people's faces only alienates them, or worse, makes them disregard the message coming from the lunatic fringe.

Steve P. Lull
Cleveland, OH

Scott Puckett ("What the Fuck Are You Saying?" March/April 2002) has hit the nail on the head! As one who only recently checked back into the alternative zine scene, my first gripe about activism was the unintelligible nature of activist jargon. I'm so glad that Puckett got his article published in your mag. A follow-up story should focus on simple, short phrased slogans for T-shirts, stickers, etc. For example: instead of a banner against clear cut logging saying, "you're killing your children..." or other vague, esoteric crap, simply write, "STOP LOGGING IN OLD GROWTH FORESTS NOW!"

I'm a college dropout who has worked in the blue collar world for so long, I lost any feeling of comradeship with academic types years ago. Simple is not just a bright idea — it is THE indication of superior writing. Just as universality is the mark of true genius. (These claims become more apparent as you get older.)

Listen to Bush's speeches. Like it or not, they are brilliantly written, and that SOB is getting better at spewing it out. Take notes and do the same but omit the dishonesty.

TP, union construction worker, public access producer, Clamor reader
via e-mail

I wanted to address some points that I came across in an essay entitled "Middle Class Dominance and the Negation of Class Struggle" by Joe Levasseur

(March/April 2002).

First of all, let me say that I completely agree with Levasseur's general message in the article, which is to say, that activism and so-called radical politics have been co-opted and watered down by a privileged class that has become the judge of what is revolutionary action or even acceptable revolutionary behavior. He repeatedly criticizes the Crimethinc Collective, basically saying that they are part of this group of people who don't understand class politics.

I think that Levasseur's essay would have been more effective had he told us a little more about his own positionality: what positions of privilege does he personally occupy and which is he far removed from? Also, I think that it's important to look at other ways that the Crimethinc Collective's statements can be interpreted.

For example (and I'm not really that familiar with Crimethinc), could a quote saying that someone not enjoying poverty is someone who's not being poor properly be seen as encouragement to stop trying to attain capital success, in the form of employment or economic security, and start living one's life without these dependencies? Ultimately, I believe that the final equation for most of us, including those who don't consider themselves anarchists or anti-poverty activists or whatever, is survival over idealism. We would all enjoy lives free of depressing jobs and horrendous living conditions, but can we support our families by being in punk rock bands or writing for independent media? Also, who has these families to support? Activism, and the world in general, is not just dominated by the middle class, but also by men, white people, heterosexuals, and, in the case of activism, educated youth with lots of spare time. The politics of domination are so far reaching that I understand why Levasseur decided to only cover one issue in his article.

Another Crimethinc quote that he dismissed was one about the revolution already existing in an alternate dimension. He said it was new age theory based in no sort of reality. However, Emma Goldman herself said that the main thing needed for revolution was the awareness of the masses: lower and

working class people. The basis of class struggle is that the many support the few, therefore, is it not true that should The Many suddenly decide, all at once, to switch into a frame of being where they act as if revolution has already taken place, that it will, in fact, create the revolution? Crimethinc's assertion may not be true for the individual, but surely for the collectively minded it could be. Do we not sometimes experience situations with our friends, families, and lovers, that feel like the freedom we strive for everyday?

So, while I do see where Levasseur is coming from and tend to agree with him on many things, I don't think that it's fair to dismiss one group's work because of their differing perspective. It reminds me too much of the whole Bookchin vs. Bey, choosing sides, divisive sort of thing, and I think that it's much better to take what one can of all the theory out there, make good use of it, and never forget to be introspective and challenge everyone, including yourself, to see the short-comings of different ideas.

*Sarah
Calgary, AB, Canada*

I wanted to thank Tennessee Jones and Clamor for the emotional tribute to Sera Bilezikyan ("In Memoriam," May/June 2002). I never knew her, but I do know the spot on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and those raised graves in New Orleans that Tennessee uses to convey a sense of what she shared with Sera. I also know what it means to lose someone close. Most of all, I know how hard it can be to stay inspired when you begin to feel like you're fighting against the sorrow and tragedies that come simply from being alive in addition to fighting against the devious workings of the enemy. In the end, it's all about finding a community to share the burden. So thank you Tennessee for sharing your inspiration, and thank you Clamor for being that community.

*Workhorse
via e-mail*

classifieds

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At the Clamor Web site, we have posted a picture of our favorite furry friend, La Raza, who guards the Clamor offices and provides much-needed stress relief with all that playing and walking. Occasionally, he even gets his own e-mail from kind readers, such as this recent note:

*If we had been descended from dogs like you, we wouldn't be in this godawful mess.
Bark On!
Oliver Williams*

Please, don't encourage the barking! You too can write La Raza directly at laraza@clamormagazine.org. If you'd prefer to reach a human, please use one of these methods:

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CORRECTION

The cover photo for the May/June 2002 issue was taken by Andrew Stern, whose work also graces the cover of this edition. He says, "[This] picture was taken of this young Piquetera on one day where all 7 of the major highways in and out of Buenos Aires were blockaded by Piqueteros." See more of his work starting on page 9.

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Scott Puckett (p. 13) digs on Hakim Bey, Raoul Vaneigem and Jeanette Winterson. He thinks CrimethInc is pretty damn cool. He also works too much. E-mail him at puckett@crash.cts.com.

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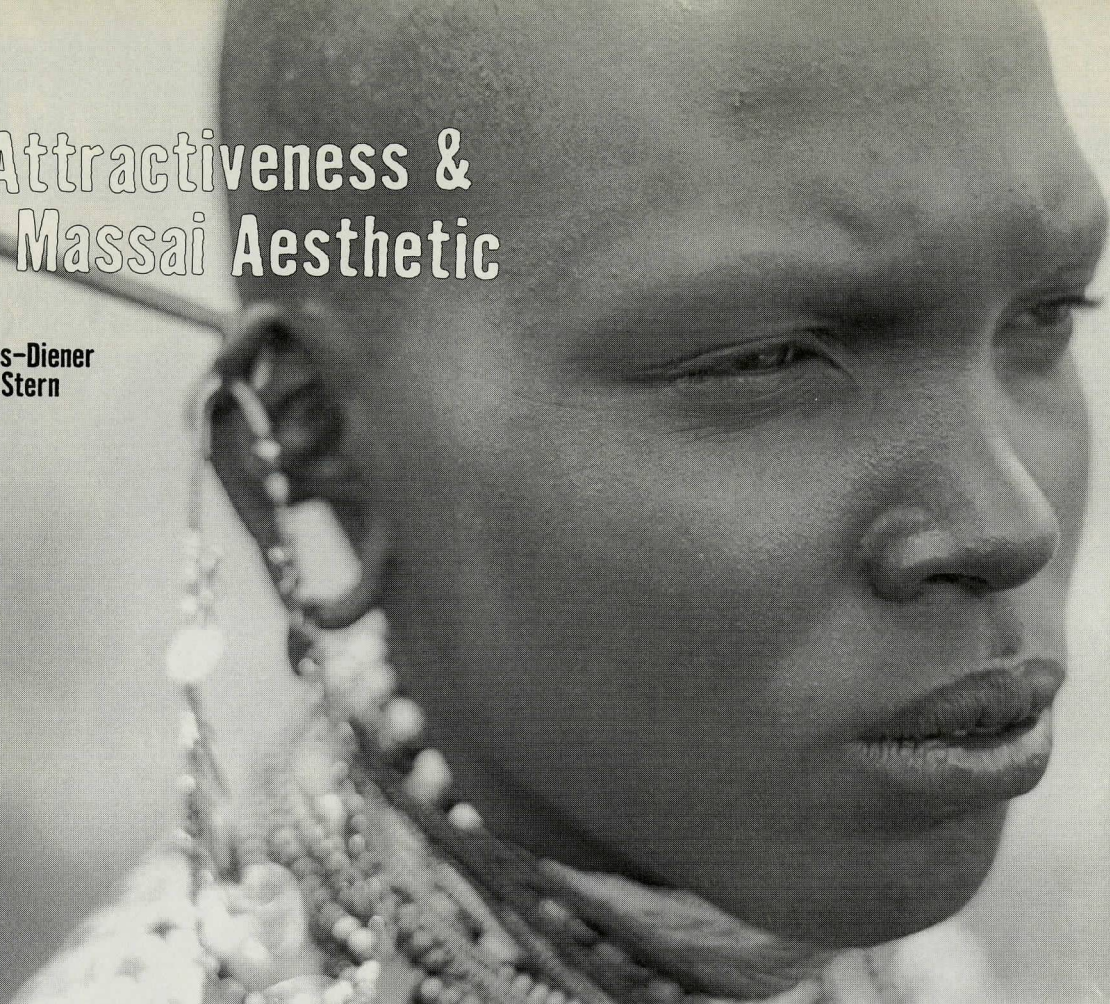
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Be Beautiful
and carry a big stick

Physical Attractiveness & The Maasai Aesthetic

by Robert Biswas-Diener
photos Andrew Stern



When I asked Nataana to describe a “perfectly good-looking man,” I was surprised by her answer. Instead of the usual stuff about muscles and pretty eyes, she told me that Mr. Perfect would “have white teeth, be well-dressed, be a respected member of the community, be friendly, and carry a club.” The bit about the club may not be as strange as it sounds since Nataana is a member of the Maasai, a traditional society living in South Western Kenya and Northern Tanzania. Last year, I traveled to Kenya to conduct research with the Maasai on physical attractiveness.

Because of their proximity to the Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya’s most visited game park, the visually striking Maasai have become poster children for Kenyan tribal society, and a major tourist attraction. The women wear their hair short, stretch their ear lobes, and cover themselves in an almost impossible amount of brightly patterned, beaded jewelry. The men wrap themselves in distinctive red cloths and carry heavy wooden clubs, both for herding cattle and defending themselves against wild animals. They live in short, windowless houses made of sticks, mud, and cow dung. In terms of aesthetics, the Maasai truly do seem a world away from the skyscrapers, wristwatches, and Gore-Tex of Western culture.

I was fascinated by these cultural differences six years ago, when I first

traveled to Kenya. Unable to contain my curiosity, I decided to interview some Maasai living in a “commercial village,” one catering to tourists. I wanted to know what a people who were completely free of the influences of television, magazines, and other mass media, thought about fashion and beauty. What might their attitudes be, for example, toward footwear, gaining weight, and diet? One of the questions I asked, through a translator, was “How satisfied are you with your physical appearance?” To my surprise, everyone in the village regardless of age, number of teeth, or quality of dress, told me that they were completely satisfied with the way they look. They did not always think the other people in the village were perfectly good looking, but they always had a high opinion of their own appearance.

Many Americans I spoke with after I returned to the States were not at all surprised by my findings. To these friends, it seemed obvious that people living in a society where no one has ever heard of Catherine Zeta Jones or Brad Pitt would be satisfied with their appearance. They implied that “social comparison,” comparing one’s self to others, is the major factor in deciding what is beautiful. Although common sense, this often articulated argument doesn’t hold much water. People mistakenly believe

comparisons need to be made upward, such as comparing your wealth to that of Bill Gates. But it is possible to make comparisons in the other direction. Compared to Dick Cheney, for example, I look like George Clooney. Also, social comparison arguments rarely take local standards into consideration. Using the example of fashion, it seems likely that the Maasai, blissfully unaware of Hollywood images, would still have their own standards for what’s “in.” Individual Maasai, such as Naatana, would still compare themselves against other Maasai, and perhaps other neighboring tribal groups. Why then, would there be a consistent tendency among the Maasai to rate oneself highly?

I tried to think of other theories that might explain the Maasai’s extraordinarily high satisfaction. It could be that the Maasai simply do not know how they look since they have very few mirrors in their culture. Or might the secret to their satisfaction lie in the fact that while they were considering their appearance they were looking at me, a pale-skinned man who was both short and fat by their standards, and therefore thought themselves remarkably good looking by comparison? Four years later, with these questions still nagging, I decided to return to Kenya to explore Maasai standards of beauty in depth.

Was Darwin Good Looking?

Socio-biologists and evolutionary psychologists (scientists dedicated to parsing out how much of us is human, and how much animal) tell us that beauty is not simply subjective, as the adage “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” suggests. While we might prefer red or black hair on our partners, these researchers argue that much of what we consider good looking is the product of subtle evolutionary mating practices. The prevailing theory holds that certain characteristics are more desirable for mating, producing offspring, and extending our individual genetic lines. Young women, according to scholars of evolutionary theory, are better candidates for coupling than older women because they are better able to bear healthy children. Men in their 30s and early 40s, on the other hand, ought to be more attractive than their counterparts in their 20s because, presumably, they are more secure and better able to provide for a family. Many researchers in this field study such bodily minutia as the “hip to waist” ratio and “facial symmetry,” reporting that physical proportions act as a kind of romantic magic lamp, the correct combinations freeing the genie of lust.

If being reduced to animal mating behaviors and anatomical ratios doesn't sit well, it may be heartening to learn there is more to attractiveness. Even socio-biologists admit there is more to attraction than simply pheromones and symmetry. Why, for example, do some people like a hairy chest while others would rather eat soap than even look at a hairy arm? If everything had a clear biological explanation, we wouldn't see such wild variation in what is considered good looking. Fashion, for example, seems to exist outside the domain of evolutionary theory, as evidenced by little backpacks and high heels, both of which seem to actually work against survival. After evolution has been accounted for, the other half of the beauty equation is the part we learn through our culture. Hairstyles, dress, make-up, jewelry, and, to some degree, hair color and body type are all physical features that are influenced by the time and place into which we are born. Whether your idea of “sexy” includes a mini-skirt, ritual scarification, or tightly bound feet is surely a product of cultural learning.

As I discovered in Kenya, the Maasai offer a fascinating look into these cultural differences in standards of beauty. By design or accident, the Maasai appear to have a uniquely healthy outlook on physical attractiveness. They have simple standards for beauty; they focus mostly on those aspects of appearance they can control, and take

character traits into account when deciding what is good looking.

Brawing a Bead on Good Looks

While many Maasai mentioned standards of beauty related to evolution (youth, for example), every single person I interviewed mentioned jewelry as being a necessary prerequisite for attractiveness. Intricately beaded necklaces, anklets, headdresses, bracelets, and chokers are a major identifying mark for the Maasai, and are often considered a part of the body. In the most extreme example, one young Maasai told me that jewelry, especially the long beadwork worn around the earlobes, is sometimes fondled during sexual foreplay. Various beadwork patterns signify tribal membership, and certain high-end items, such as metal clubs and digital watches encased in beads, also hint at social status. Because jewelry, unlike that impish hip-to-waist ratio, is something they can control, the Maasai wisely focus on adornment rather than the body itself when trying to appear attractive. Despite person-to-person differences in the quality of jewelry worn, beads are common, easy to acquire, and provide a standard for beauty that does not discriminate against Maasai of lower social status.

The Skinny on Fat

Beyond simple adornments, there are major differences between the way Americans and the Maasai view the actual body. Of the more than 120 Maasai I interviewed, only a single person, western educated, mentioned breast size when asked to describe a perfectly good-looking woman. The physical traits the Maasai tended to focus on were cleanliness, white teeth, short hair, height (tall is good), and elongated ear lobes. Compare this with American college students who typically mention thinness, breast size, hairstyle, eye color, strong facial features, height, and musculature. One of the most important differences between these ideal images of beauty is that many of the characteristics mentioned by the Maasai are those that can be changed. Cleanliness is a matter of washing, short hair a matter of cutting, white teeth of brushing, and long ear lobes of stretching. For the Maasai, these hallmarks of beauty are attainable because they are aspects of our bodies we have easy control over. On the other hand, thinness, breast size, eye color, and strong facial features are largely the result of a genetic crapshoot. The Maasai, for whom eating disorders are unknown, have

chosen to value a group of physical traits over which they have power.

Americans, on the other hand, seem hell bent on obsessing about the aspects of our body over which we have limited control. Plastic surgery, fad diets, liposuctions, facial tucks, exercise programs, and breast implants are part of a culture that desperately wants to control fundamental aspects of physical appearance. But, for good or ill, breast implants actually do make breasts larger, contact lenses change eye color, and liposuction removes fat. Americans believe they have more control over how their bodies look than the Maasai do, precisely because technology gives us more control.

In the end, have these marvels of medicine, technology, and cosmetics translated to more happiness? Indeed, they have not. Straight across the board the Maasai report being both happy and more satisfied with the way they look than Americans. What many Westerners fail to realize is that many of our standards for attractiveness are symptoms of underlying values. Large breasts and a tight stomach are benchmarks of youth, health, and fitness, all three of which are prized in American culture. But, while breast enhancement and tummy tucks change the contours of the body, they do not, in fact, bring youth, health, or fitness. Another downside to the widespread belief that we have personal control over our bodies is that when our bodies are less than perfect, as is usually the case, there is a tendency to feel we are personally to blame.

Tall, Honest, and Handsome

Perhaps the most striking difference between our culture and the Maasai, in terms of the way we think about appearance, is the very definition of attractiveness itself. In the Maasai language, the word for physical appearance (which roughly translates as a person's “goodness”) can also be used to describe their morality. In fact, so closely related are these two concepts that the Maasai typically think about attractiveness in terms of both physical attributes and character traits alike, suggesting that beauty is not only skin deep. When I asked the Maasai about what constitutes a perfectly good-looking person, their answers frequently included friendly, well respected, disciplined, and brave. They consider morality and behavior as much a part of attractiveness as skin tone and height. For the Maasai, social status and a good personality do not enhance physical appearance so much as define it. In short, the Maasai give more than lip service to the qualities that almost all of us agree “really matter.”

While Americans certainly value good character traits, we have a way of separating personality and appearance. We rarely want to “judge a book by its cover,” and are painfully aware of the way physical appearance, especially skin color, has historically been used as the basis of bigotry. However, our language is also full of quirky little phrases that expose a connection between appearance and character. A person can be “handy,” “nosy,” or “big headed.” We don’t like people to be “cheeky” or “lippy,” but encourage each other to “keep that chin up.”

In fact, we often do judge people’s character by their body, hairstyle, and clothing. Doc Martens boots suggest one type of person, a 10-gallon hat another. For Westerners, many accessories, such as watches, jackets, and shoes, are part of social identity, indicating education, income, ethnicity, and occupation. The truth is physical appearance often provides a wealth of information about strangers. But, because it is not always politically savvy to admit that the guy with glasses looks smart, the cop looks like an asshole, or the black guy looks scary, we do our best to suppress and deny this natural tendency.

Although it is often through the purest intentions that we separate character from appearance, it is an act that leaves us vulnerable to manipulation. The fashion industry expertly exploits the Western inclination to divorce character from attractiveness. Advertisements, such as Victoria’s Secret’s “Angel” television commercials, overtly market apparel as character defining, rather than character reflecting. Victoria’s Secret underwear is sold to make women sexy, implying they are not inherently so. The fashion industry works under the impression that life is a costume party, and it is the outfit that dictates who we are. The misguided notion that “clothes make the man” keeps us striving to acquire material goods and distracts us from developing important personal virtues like compassion, sexiness, leadership, and honesty. In Maasai culture, by contrast, it is the person, their behavior and status, that defines what they wear. Nineteen-year-old Lankasana has braided hair and a metal spear because he is a warrior, not the other way around. Ole Empiroroi is not chief because he has a digital watch and expensive ceremonial club; he has these things because he is chief.

Unfortunately, in our socially fluid society, there is

an element of truth to the “costume” approach to fashion. People tend to wear different outfits for specific occasions, operating under the impression that the clothes define the person. Depending on whether they are going to a job interview or a protest, for example, people wear a certain set of clothes that denote their social role, for instance, “prospective employee,” or “political activist.” This type of role-specific clothing cubbyholes and disenfranchises with the implication being, returning to our example, that one cannot be both prospective employee and political activist.

Putting Together the Whole Outfit

The Maasai tend to focus more on adornment than physical attributes when deciding what is good looking. When they do evaluate bodily characteristics they tend to focus on those they can easily change. And the Maasai seriously consider behavior and character when thinking about attractiveness. How do these three tendencies work together?

This was illustrated one rainy afternoon when I asked a group of Maasai to look at photographs of American college students. The pictures included the best and worst looking people out of 400 photos used in a previous study of attractiveness at a large Midwestern University. The photos included men and women, as well as Caucasian and African American people. The Maasai generally agreed with the U.S. college students, both groups rating the same photos as good looking. The fascinating thing occurred when I presented the photos of the extremely unattractive people. In one photo, for instance, an unfortunate young woman is afflicted by a horrible case of acne. Although some Maasai wrinkled their noses at the picture, many of them rated this woman as among the most beautiful. How could they overlook such an obvious physical flaw? It was as if they had never read the socio-

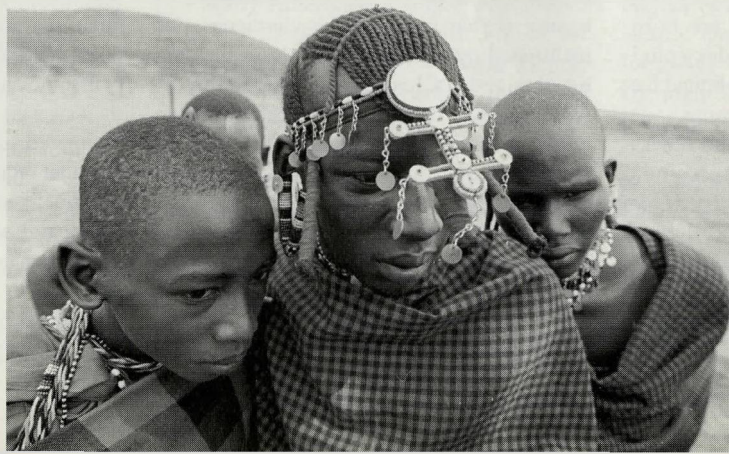
biologists before! When I asked the follow-up question, “Which elements of the photo did you use to arrive at your conclusion?” few of the Maasai mentioned the face. Sure, they had noticed the acne. Some even asked what it was. But the majority considered the woman’s beautiful long hair and bright red sweater.

Many of the Maasai were willing to overlook the young woman’s acne, dismissing it as a superfluous trait, beyond her control. Instead, they looked at her combed, washed, and styled long hair as a sign of her dedication to good hygiene and commitment to taking care of herself. Further, they focused on her clean and expensive clothing, correctly guessing it reflected her social status. But the Maasai are not Pollyanna-ish, blindly rating everyone as good looking. On average, the hundred plus Maasai rated the American woman as slightly unattractive, most likely tapping in to evolutionary requirements for beauty.

The high rate of satisfaction among the Maasai reflects a very healthy approach to fashion and beauty. By using simple standards for beauty, the Maasai have created an ideal look that is widely attainable. By focusing on aspects of appearance they can control and largely ignoring those they cannot, the Maasai make being good looking easy and avoid needless guilt. And by taking character traits into account when deciding what is good looking, the Maasai successfully imbue attractiveness with an importance that runs more than skin deep. What’s more, this combination of attitudes acts as a kind of inoculation, giving the Maasai immunity to corporate marketing strategies and excessive materialism.

For American society, where norms for beauty and standards for the fashionable may not be as healthy as those of the Maasai, the woman with acne is consistently rated as extremely unattractive, regardless of hairstyle, fashion sense, or personal virtues. It is reasonable to assume she has struggled with self-esteem, and is vulnerable to temptations of advertisers who promise to make her sexier,

healthier, and generally more attractive. Although she might be a remarkably intelligent, compassionate, and honest individual, it is likely that this unfortunate young woman has been teased, avoided, and pitied for her appearance. Which is why, from time to time, as Nataana suggested, it might not be a bad idea to carry a club. ★



How Much Did You Pay For Your Identity?

The Big Business of Selling Individuality to Kids

by Scott Puckett

illustrations Jerry Business

There's a magazine that you can find at any Barnes & Noble, Borders, or similar bookstore. It's called *The Fader*.¹ It looks cool. It's a member of the Independent Press Association, an organization that, according to their Web site, "... promotes and supports independent publications committed to social justice and a free press."² Recent issues of *The Fader* featured the White Stripes and the Strokes on the cover. Past issues featured Beck, Roni Size, Outkast, Finley Quaye, Björk, and Bob Marley. The magazine has published pieces on cool things – extreme bike construction and an article titled "The Commodification of Xicano Culture." It seems socially conscious. Recent articles focused on the Zapatistas, AIDS in Africa, and environmental racism. That's good, right? It's diverse. It's progressive. And it's published by a marketing firm called Cornerstone Promotion,³ which just so happens to represent Roni Size, Outkast, Finley Quaye, and the Strokes.

It's easy to find this out. Compare *The Fader*'s masthead to Cornerstone's staff. The names are all the same. The contact addresses and phone numbers are identical. And Anthony Holland, assistant publisher of *The Fader* and vice president of Cornerstone, is the administrative, technical, and billing contact for both domain names.⁴ Cornerstone's site lists *The Fader* as one of its lifestyle clients and as one of Cornerstone's friends.

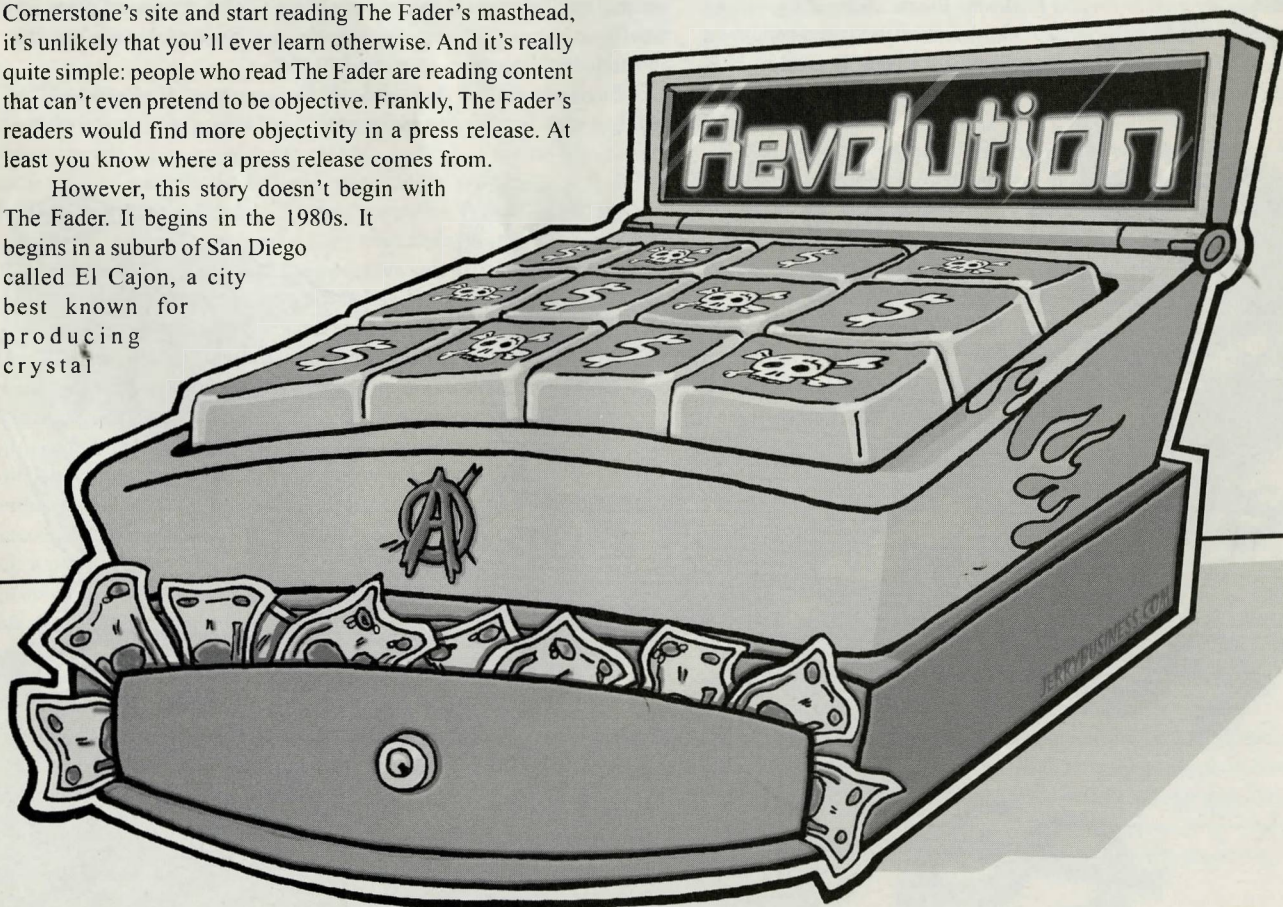
It's really quite a brilliant strategy. Cornerstone bills its promotions clients for publicity. It sells ad space in what amounts to a catalog for its clients and then sells the product to consumers who think they're buying a magazine. Unless you poke around Cornerstone's site and start reading *The Fader*'s masthead, it's unlikely that you'll ever learn otherwise. And it's really quite simple: people who read *The Fader* are reading content that can't even pretend to be objective. Frankly, *The Fader*'s readers would find more objectivity in a press release. At least you know where a press release comes from.

However, this story doesn't begin with *The Fader*. It begins in the 1980s. It begins in a suburb of San Diego called El Cajon, a city best known for producing crystal

meth and Lester Bangs, and it begins, for lack of a better place to start, with a store called Gamma Gamma.

Gamma Gamma is all but forgotten now. It has been gone for so many years that I don't remember when it closed. It occupied a storefront on Main Street that now houses a kid's furniture store. It was part of a small regional chain that sold things to goths and punks: Manic Panic hair dye, fishnets, studded belts, Doc Martens. You get the idea. It had a small but loyal clientele. It was a place where people could buy unique clothes and know that they weren't likely to see the same garment on someone else. It reflected the local flavor and the style of the smaller communities where the stores were located. Most greater metropolitan regions had a store like Gamma Gamma; perhaps you shopped at yours. Maybe yours still exists. Mine doesn't. Many have been gone for years and replaced by national chains in malls that offer no regional variety. They offer the same mass-marketed styles for consumption across the country with no individuality and nothing to reflect the local character. And *that* is where this story begins.

In 1979, Dick Hebdige published a book called *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, a detailed and insightful study of what fashion means to subcultures and how style communicates. In 1979, it was far too early for Hebdige to write authoritatively about punk, a style that had only recently come to attention, but he was able to observe the common characteristics of other subcultures (most notably mods, skins, and teds) and the role fashion played. Fashion communicated the



differences between the wearer and the viewer visually; it provided a system of signs that told a story; it revealed, at a fundamental level, who the wearer was.⁵

More than 20 years ago, Hebdige observed that subcultural style could be incorporated into the larger culture, noting that the fashion pages may publicize the clothes while editorials may attack the movement. Hebdige further argued that the media plays a key role in rehabilitating these styles; that the dominant culture (that is, the mainstream, whatever it may be) is able to incorporate the subculture by converting the subculture's style to a mass-produced object (say, a tee shirt), among other methods.⁶ Hebdige put it most clearly when he noted that "The creation and diffusion of new styles is inextricably bound up with the process of production, publicity and packing which must inevitably lead to the diffusion of the subculture's subversive power."⁷ Loosely translated, you can invent all the new styles you like, no matter how offensive they may be. Those styles will eventually be mass-produced and sold back to you at a tidy profit. And this is where Hot Topic comes in.

Apocalypse Mall

*"Hot Topic, Inc. is a mall-based specialty retailer of music-licensed and music-influenced apparel, accessories and gift items for young men and women, principally between the ages of 12 and 22. Music-licensed merchandise includes T-shirts, hats, posters, stickers, patches, postcards, books, CDs, videos and other items. Music-influenced merchandise includes woven and knit tops, skirts, pants, shorts, jackets, shoes, costume jewelry, body jewelry, sunglasses, cosmetics and gift items. ... Hot Topic also maintains a Web site, www.hottopic.com, through which it markets its Hot Topic stores, store concept and sells certain of its merchandise."*⁸

There is a shopping mall in El Cajon called Parkway Plaza. Rather, its proper name is Westfield Shoppingtown Parkway Plaza. It used to be a regional mall. Now it's owned

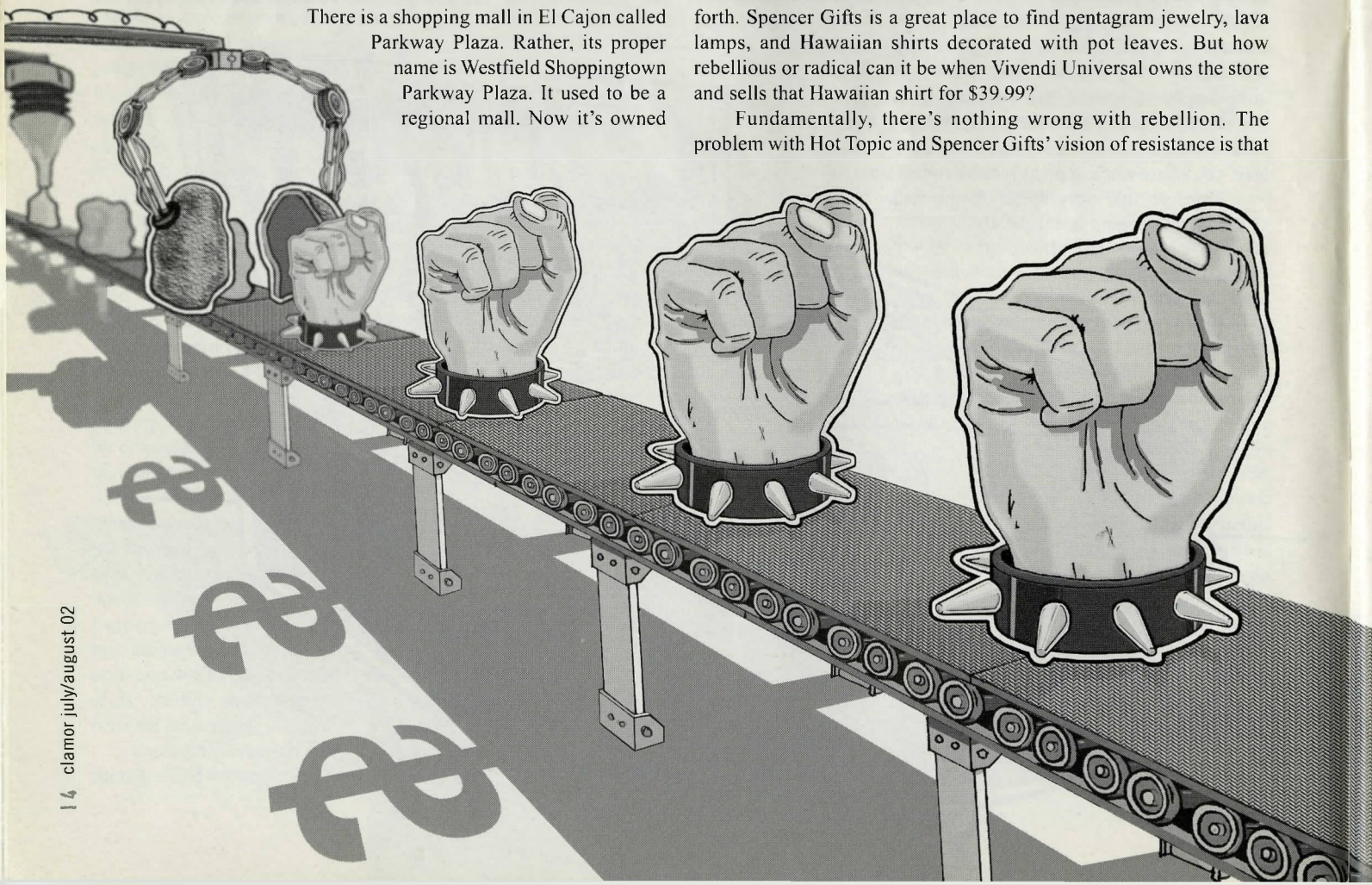
by a multinational corporation that develops, builds and manages a \$12.4 billion portfolio of malls.⁹ Of course, Westfield's corporate site prattles on about a distinctive branding strategy that results in tarding malls up as "shoppingtowns," but maybe I don't want to experience a cohesive shopping environment manufactured by a company with a global reputation for quality service. At any rate, several Westfield properties in San Diego provide a home to Hot Topic and Parkway Plaza is one of them.

Hot Topic shouldn't be new to anyone. These stores have been around for several years. The Market Guide description (the italicized passage above) provides a better description of these stores than I ever could. It's clear — investors don't have time to read fluff. They need to know the bare bones details. Hot Topic's 10-K filing does quite a nice job of summarizing those details. As of February 3, 2001, Hot Topic operated 274 stores in 45 states,¹⁰ and business at those stores is booming. Year-end revenue for the fiscal year ending February 2, 2002, was \$336.1 million. The average projection for FY 2003 revenue is \$430 million (with average sales growth of about 27 percent per quarter for this year). Reputable securities firms such as Robertson Stephens, Bank of America Securities, and Bear Stearns all recommend taking a position in the stock. Eleven brokers cover HOTT; of those, five consider it a strong buy and five others consider it to be merely a buy.¹¹

These numbers point to only one conclusion — there's money to be made in selling rebellion (especially if it's packaged and marketed in a consistent way).

And then there's Spencer Gifts,¹² a Universal Studios company, which also finds a home at Parkway Plaza. Spencer Gifts has been around forever, selling novelty items of various flavors — clothes, gag gifts, shot glasses. Spencer's Web site intelligently approaches its target markets. It groups inexpensive furniture and clocks under "Dorm Room." It gathers wizard and dragon statues, among other medieval-themed knick-knacks, under "Enchanted Forest." And so forth. Spencer Gifts is a great place to find pentagram jewelry, lava lamps, and Hawaiian shirts decorated with pot leaves. But how rebellious or radical can it be when Vivendi Universal owns the store and sells that Hawaiian shirt for \$39.99?

Fundamentally, there's nothing wrong with rebellion. The problem with Hot Topic and Spencer Gifts' vision of resistance is that



it's sanctioned by corporations which in turn profit from that resistance. In addition, while regional stores (such as Gamma Gamma) emphasize diversity of expression, Hot Topic and Spencer Gifts depends on a lack of diversity. They depend on offering the same products everywhere. So let's think of rebellion like an ecosystem. Any biologist can tell you what happens to an ecosystem that lacks diversity, regardless of why it lacks diversity — that ecosystem dies.

There's really no difference between one Hot Topic and another, no difference between one Spencer's and another, and there isn't much difference between Hot Topic and Spencer Gifts. If you wander into any Hot Topic, you'll see the same types of tattoos and piercings on the employees and the same merchandise on the walls. The Slipknot shirt is the same shirt that the Hot Topic across town sells. Hot Topic sells Clash and CBGB tee shirts for some reason but I'm not sure that their average customer is old enough to remember the Clash or know why CBGB is important.¹⁴

I realize as I'm sitting in one of Parkway Plaza's courtyards that the stores have all blurred together and the indistinguishable malls have all been branded so effectively that I can't tell them apart either. This is merely consumption in a vacuum with no sense of place. I feel like I'm underwater here; I hear a hollow, echoing voice ask me if I need assistance. I ask the person in the Westfield Red¹⁵ blazer where I might be able to find something that isn't contrived or fabricated to seem outrageous to bored suburban teenagers who affect their carefully constructed rebellious pose. I ask them where, for lack of a better term, I might be able to find something real.

Manufacturing Desire

*"Anyway, I completely digress. The point is, I went to UCLA to hear and meet Michael Moore, which I did. I got there nice and early, to ensure that I had a seat, and sat in line reading 'Trust Us, We're Experts.' I felt so subversive, standing there in my OBEY tee shirt, wearing a backpack filled with controversial books, waiting to hear this guy who so many überconservatives hate."*¹⁶

Wil Wheaton, who you might know better as Wesley Crusher from *Star Trek* fame, has a Web log.¹⁷ He writes in it nearly every day. He wrote the above passage some months ago.¹⁸ Wil seems like a very nice guy; he leans to the left and seems fairly politically active, but these lines from his Web log illustrate part of the problem with modern rebellion: it's about wearing the right shirt and reading the right book. It's really no different than getting past the velvet rope because you're sporting Manolo Blahniks or a Prada bag.¹⁹

Welcome to the culture industry.

It's possible to think of culture as art, literature, and music. It's more realistic to think of culture as the commercial messages that surround us. It's more accurate to think of culture as the machinery hidden behind the gleaming façade of commerce. It's more honest to think of culture as the process that makes you desire things. The culture industry is, simply put, every commercial message you've ever received, whether it's an ad, an alligator on a polo shirt, or a signature on a pair of jeans. And until you recognize its symptoms — such as people buying a tee shirt with a logo on it, effectively paying to become an advertisement — you can't get out of it.

This may be hard to swallow. After all, you're different, right? Maybe you ignore marketing or don't believe ads. Maybe you think you're beyond the reach of commercial messages. Maybe you keep your mental environment pure. And maybe that doesn't even matter anymore. After all, the culture industry provides something for everyone.²⁰ It not only provides for how different you are, it emphasizes and encourages that difference. The culture industry wants you to know that you're an individual, that you are unique, that you are a snowflake.²¹ It will create products that speak to who you are, that will accentuate your differences, and it will make sure that those objects fall within your price range.

There is a profound difference between culture and the culture industry. The culture industry segments and divides people into groups for easier marketing and sales; culture struggles against this process. As Theodor Adorno notes, "Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived."²² What are these relations? Class distinctions. Cliques. Popularity. Anything based on a label, a brand, or a commodity — in short, anything produced (whether directly or as a byproduct) by the culture industry — is a petrified relation that strangles everyone it touches. And the culture industry enforces these petrified relations with an iron will. It depends on their continued existence.

Perhaps Kalle Lasn expressed this more clearly when he wrote, "Our stories, once passed from one generation to the next by parents, neighbors and teachers, are now told by distant corporations with 'something to sell as well as to tell.' Brands, products, fashions, celebrities, entertainments' — the spectacles that surround the production of culture — are our culture now. Our role is mostly to listen and watch — and then, based on what we have heard and seen, to buy."²³

Yet in the early 1990s, thousands of young women realized that the culture industry wasn't speaking to them or their concerns and they reacted by making their own music and their own zines. Rather than accepting the culture industry's products, they created culture. It was a spontaneous outburst of creativity that occurred outside the culture industry's systems; because the women refused to talk about it, the culture industry could only accommodate the most superficial ideas.

So, riot grrrl morphed into girl power which in turn gave birth to the Spice Girls which then became glittering slogans on baby tees at J.C. Penney. The culture industry appropriated the rebellion of bands such as Bikini Kill and Bratmobile, wrapped it up in a cute, easily marketable package, and sold it to the masses in the young teens department without ever explaining where it came from or what it meant to the people who most needed to know. While the cultural revolution that bands such as Fifth Column and Huggy Bear advanced still exists and is every bit as relevant today, the culture industry pushed it aside — in favor of printed shirts.

Whither Rebel Culture? Or, the Closing of the Frontier

*"Rebellion makes no sense without repression; we must remain forever convinced of capitalism's fundamental hostility to pleasure in order to consume capitalism's rebel products as avidly as we do."*²⁴

By now, it should be obvious that the culture industry recognizes no limits or boundaries and that profit is its only guide. Stores owned by major corporations can sell whatever makes money with impunity — nothing threatens the system.²⁵ No amount of Rage Against the Machine albums will bring the culture industry down; instead, the

culture industry profits from Rage Against the Machine and grows stronger.²⁶

It's hard to imagine a rebellion that can't be marketed or that the culture industry won't pander to. In fact, the culture industry is able to absorb trends more quickly and the time it needs to assimilate a trend is decreasing. Styles that were radical only a year or two ago — such as piercings and tribal tattoos — are now seen in ads. And so we move on, breaking new ground and setting out for new frontiers only to find that there are no frontiers left to explore. We rebel in different ways and the culture industry always follows, documenting our ink, scars, and clothing.

Our revolution has been branded. It will not be televised. It will be marketed by street teams. We will feel cool because the people who sell it to us seem hip. We are unlikely to notice the inflated price because we will feel edgy or alternative. We will feel as though our consumption somehow confers outsider status, that it makes us somehow different from people who shop at The Gap or Abercrombie & Fitch. We will feel that we — *are* snowflakes. And we will be wrong.

I am not treading new ground. These observations are not revolutionary. In fact, by now they should be common sense. It's quite clear at this point that revolution lies in the ability to accessorize. And I'm just waiting for Tommy Hilfiger to come out with a Black Bloc line of clothing.

How do I know this? Because I was a ghost writer for a recent edition of the leading advertising textbook, a book which tells enterprising, earnest, and greedy young college students how to sell things to you. Because I've done marketing work for companies that want to turn you into a lifelong customer who can't live without their brand. Because I've written ads and designed images that pollute your mental environment.

And because I'm not that different from you.

Soul Rebel Sound²⁷

So here I am at the end of the story. I want to bring things back to Gamma Gamma somehow, to complete the circle, but Gamma Gamma is long gone. I'm left standing here, staring at a kid's furniture store and wondering what it means to rebel when the method of rebellion that a large number of kids choose merely lines the pockets of major corporations. I'm left wondering what significance, if any, such a rebellion has.

I can't shake the sneaking suspicion that rebelling in these common ways — buying a Dead Kennedy's tee shirt at Hot Topic, for example²⁸ — is meaningless, that the only meaningful rebellion occurs between the ears, not between the changing rooms and cash register. Then I think about some of the kids I know. I just got email from Henry today; he's talking about taking his principal to court so that he can wear his mohawk up. Jen is still fighting with her school district over the curriculum; she's graduating early to get to college that much sooner. And suddenly, things don't seem so bad.

After all, maybe Tommy Hilfiger will put his name on a designer brick. So what if he does? It will still be going through a window, and maybe, if justice smiles that day, through the window of the store that sold it.

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Footnotes

- ¹ <http://www.thefader.com>
- ² <http://www.indyexpress.org/programs/index.html>
- ³ <http://www.cornerstonedigital.com>
- ⁴ The easiest way to get registrant information for a domain name — and this is something that anyone can do — is to visit any Web site that will let you do a “whois” lookup (I used <http://www.networksolutions.com>). For thefader.com, Mr. Holland listed his company as Cornerstone. For Cornerstone, he listed it as Tangerine Music.
- ⁵ “The tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture — in the styles made up of mundane objects which have a double meaning. On the one hand, they warn the ‘straight’ world in advance of a sinister presence — the presence of difference — and draw down upon themselves vague suspicions, uneasy laughter, ‘white and dumb rages.’ On the other hand, for those who erect them into icons, who use them as words or curses, these objects become signs of forbidden identity, sources of value.” (Hebdige 3)
- ⁶ Hebdige also identifies labeling and redefining as methods to bring the subculture back into the dominant culture. If the mainstream chooses to transform a subculture into a spectacle — Hebdige uses the example of soccer hooligans — then labeling applies as commentators call football fans “animals.” By so doing, the mainstream effectively ostracizes the subculture permanently. By redefining the subculture, the mainstream can then bring it back into the fold — and profit from it.
- ⁷ Hebdige 95
- ⁸ http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Shopping_and_Services/General_Merchandise/Hot_Topic_Inc/
- ⁹ Westfield has announced the acquisition of 22 more malls, representing an increase of their portfolio value to \$15.3 billion. It is also worth noting that almost all of Westfield's malls in San Diego were acquired from TrizecHahn, a company divesting retail centers to focus on office space. TrizecHahn was originally founded by the principals behind Barrick Corporation, one of the world's leading gold producers, who then purchased Clark, the fourth largest independent oil refining company, in 1988.
- ¹⁰ This is nearly double the number of stores that Hot Topic was operating at the end of 1998.
- ¹¹ Information current as of 4/21/2002.
- ¹² <http://www.spencergifts.com/>
- ¹³ As a member of the Universal Studios family, this means that Spencer Gifts is a part of the Vivendi Universal conglomerate, which also includes DGC, Canal+, Decca Records, MP3.com, and Universal Studios. Vivendi is also active in utilities, construction, and communications ventures — specifically music (Limp Bizkit, Nine Inch Nails, U2), film (*E.T.*, *A Beautiful Mind*), pay-TV, telecommunications, and Internet properties. Taking it further down the rabbit hole, Vivendi Environnement is a 63 percent effectively owned subsidiary of Vivendi Universal and is the world leader in environmental services with operations in over 100 countries and a focus on water, waste management, energy, and transportation.
- ¹⁴ In this example, the signs (i.e. the Clash, CBGB) are effectively divorced from meaning; people wear them because they signify an abstract concept called “punk,” not because they have any personal connection to the band or the club.
- ¹⁵ If this isn't a color yet, it probably will be. Look for it in the new Pantone swatch book.
- ¹⁶ Wil Wheaton, http://www.wilwheaton.net/mt/archives/2002_03.php
- ¹⁷ <http://www.wilwheaton.net/>
- ¹⁸ Oddly enough, Moore was in San Diego around the same time. Moore claims that he was nearly arrested because some police officers asked him, at 11 PM, to leave the premises of the school where he was appearing. The story behind that request is that a couple of custodians had to clean the building and didn't want to work all night. This somehow became a near arrest.
- ¹⁹ Please keep in mind that I'm not attacking Wil or anyone else mentioned in this article. I'm merely noting that a Shepard Fairey shirt and a copy of *Trust Us, We're Experts* do not a rebellion make.
- ²⁰ “Marked differentiations such as those of A and B films, or of stories in magazines in different price ranges, depend not so much on subject matter as on classifying, organizing, and labeling consumers. Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended.” (Horkheimer and Adorno 123)
- ²¹ Cf. Tyler Durden, “Fight Club.”
- ²² Adorno 100.
- ²³ Lasn xiii.
- ²⁴ Frank and Weiland 35.
- ²⁵ Frank and Weiland 36.
- ²⁶ It's worth noting that the participation of bands such as Rage Against the Machine effectively legitimizes the culture industry; by releasing records via this system, the band essentially supports the culture industry while helping to build still more barricades to protect it from attack, regardless of their political intent. Intent, in this case, is irrelevant. The effects only make the culture industry stronger in tangible (monetary) and intangible (the perception of being radical, street credibility) ways.
- ²⁷ “We were born to do much more than sit around and feed the doom / With one hand clutching dollars / And the other clutching wounds.” — One Time Angels
- ²⁸ If it weren't questionable to buy a tee shirt of a band that hasn't existed in more than 15 years, it's certainly questionable to wear a DKs shirt in light of the recent events between Jello Biafra and the other band members — what, pray tell, is the message that the shirt's wearer is trying to send? That they support greed?



STRUMMER

Passion is a Fashion

words and photos
Antonino D'Ambrosio

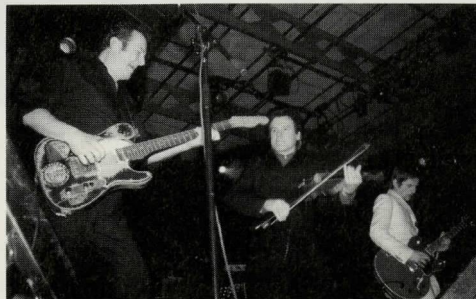
Joe Strummer, aka Woody Mellor, aka the guy from the Clash, recently performed a stint of shows at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn. Five nights with the former front man from "the only band that mattered" was interesting on many levels. Since the days when musicians were more interested in creating a community than consumers have faded into history, this set of concerts showcases a performer reaching out in a spirit of creative activism, not ego-seeking adoration. But the decision to play in Brooklyn, by a man who fronted a band that famously played 10 nights on Broadway, led me to wonder how aesthetics can enhance or undermine a socially conscious performer's message.

You see, the DUMBA section of Brooklyn, as most of Manhattan and other areas of New York City, has undergone what some like to call economic revitalization. This area went from a thriving waterfront-industrial neighborhood to a now trendy, hipster hangout. As the Brooklyn waterfront and the surrounding industry became less vital to the city economy, this community became gutted, ignored, and eventually, abandoned. Many of the workers forced out of this area would better describe this process as "community sterilization." As Neil Smith discussed in his book *Urban Frontiers*, an area like DUMBA reverses the effects of urban blight by first bringing in artists, mainly white

artists with some capital, to grease the wheels and make it safe for the process known as gentrification to take root. So, here we have one glaring contradiction. A performer comes to Brooklyn interested in playing music that, in his words, "shows his commitment to human rights is stronger than ever" and plugs in at a community-arts based venue. But the venue sits in an area where the rights of people working people have been discarded.

This paradox did not escape Strummer. He said, "We are so very happy to be here in Brooklyn and look forward to coming back if we can...I hear that all of this will be condos soon." Strummer and his band, the Mescaleros, then launched into a set, which lasted close to one and half hours, filled with a mix of new music, interesting covers, and of course, Clash songs. Strummer's new music is sophisticated, intelligent, and stylish to the point that it can best be described as "anti-genre." From Strummer's opening remarks, to a ferocious set which included his now trademark cover of Jimmy Cliff's song of resistance "The Harder They Come," it is clear that music is his movement and we are all participants. Playing with some musicians half his age but with half his energy, Strummer continues to combine the best of the punk rock aesthetic he helped craft: music infused with passion, innovation, culture, and history.

So, what about the contradictions I mentioned earlier? Where do they fit in to this discussion? Well, for me the difficult thing to balance is the use of fashion or unique visual aesthetics with the creation of socially consciousness, engaging, challenging art without compromising or minimizing the message. Using Joe Strummer and his history as a framework, it is important to look back in an effort to better understand the present and to gauge where we, creative activists using cultural expression as a weapon against injustice, are headed in the future. Anyone familiar with the Clash and with the history of punk rock understands that fashion, cultural aesthetics (films, books, etc.), and radical historical movements play a huge role in shaping what became for some a



countercultural insurrection and others a subculture secession. For an old punker like me, it was the bands that positioned themselves as counterculture that I responded to the Clash, Bad Brains, Minor Threat, Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, even Gang of Four, and afterwards Tijuana No, Bad Religion, and Public Enemy. It's this music, infused with vitality and a sense of history, which resonates so deeply among those who listen to it, grabbing you on many levels, viscerally hooking you in.

Strummer and the Mescaleros obviously enjoy playing music and looking cool doing it. Style and fashion, a defining element of the early punk rock days, are still very much a part of Strummer's anti-genre music. But Joe Strummer has always had the ability to make it work and work well without compromising the message, the cause, or the statement. While Strummer has traded in the Mohawk (influenced by his love of Taxi Driver and the character Travis Bickle), the Red Brigade T-shirt, and the boiler suit for neatly trimmed hair and a classic black outfit, his music retains the essence of the slogans he used to stencil onto his Clash clothing, PASSION IS A FASHION. The core of the music is and has always been infused with a diverse set of influences that pay homage to not only those that came before him but those that are his contemporaries. The late '70s punk scene, and Strummer and the Clash in particular, effectively blended elements from various social movements like the Lettrists' use of slogans in France during May '68, the action painting of Jackson Pollock and the pop-art of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, reggae/dub/ska beats, spoken

word, and DIY ethos to craft a style all their own.

Most musicians who now call themselves (or are classified as) punk produce music that is vacuous, vapid, devoid of history, and ultimately advances the pernicious elements of capitalism (consumerism) over community. Accordingly, this contradicts their disingenuous claims that the Clash and bands like them influenced the music they record. Perhaps after many listens of "Rock the Casbah" they feel as if they got the essence of the Clash down. As a result, many of these bands are long on style and short on what Strummer still retains as central: vitality and relevance. If anything, it has been hip-hop over the past 20 years that can best be defined as 'punk' in both its aesthetic and its approach.

Interestingly, Strummer played a rousing rendition of "White Man in Hammersmith Palais," a song he wrote after he attended a reggae all-nighter with the hopes of hearing some radical, meaningful reggae. Instead, he left the show with a deep sense of disillusionment about the hope for black-white youth unity. Even bleaker still, he surmised, was the possibility for solidarity among such widely diverse cultures when their respective followers appeared unwilling to live up to their ideals. In the song, Strummer articulates his frustration about the lack of the unity he believed was fostered by a focus on style or "posing" rather than proactively addressing social change. He sings,

*White youth, black youth
Better find another solution
Why not phone up Robin Hood
And ask him for some wealth distribution*

*Punk rockers in the UK
They won't notice anyway
They're all too busy fighting
For a good place under the lighting*

The last line always struck a chord with me because it essentially predicts what we now see as standard in music and other mediums: the creation of something benign, whether it be a song, film, book, rooted in banality, devoid of vision and ideas while avoiding a leftist critique of the break down of society. Moreover, the following excerpt from the same song captures Strummer's disdain and opposition to the co-optation of counterculture expression into pop culture commodities as

people exchange integrity for power and wealth.

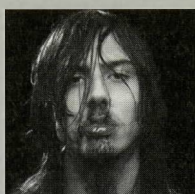
*The new groups are not concerned
With what there is to be learned
They got Burton suits, ha you think it's funny
Turning rebellion into money*

*All over people changing their votes
Along with their overcoats
If Adolf Hitler flew in today
They'd send a limousine anyway*

These lyrics refer to groups such as The Jam who, at the time, began reacting against music with a message. The Jam's antagonism to the Clash, in particular, was evident not only in their music and attitudes but also in their fashion aesthetic. Choosing to dress more conservatively in Burton suits, their fashion choices mirrored their political sensibilities. Paul Weller, lead singer/guitarist of The Jam, even went on to declare it better for musicians to adopt a conservative political stance, stating that he would vote for Margaret Thatcher in the upcoming elections for Prime Minister. And finally, while emerging bands who called themselves new wave began to dress and act more conservatively, the lyric about Adolph Hitler was a direct criticism of pop culture's image-makers' chronic flirtation with Nazi iconography and ideology.

All of this adds up to the fact that the contradictions related to utilizing fashion and a specific aesthetic to convey a political message creatively is, now more than any time before, nearly impossible to negotiate. Particularly with the onslaught of globalized capitalism, community is wiped away and the lifeblood of humanity and culture is dripped dry. All that remains are consumers numb to anything substantial, reactive only to something stylized. It was a struggle in the days of the Clash, whereby they were heralded by supporters and criticized by detractors for their attempt to use fashion and specific cultural aesthetics to make political statements. It is something Strummer has been able to balance while still creating relevant, political music throughout his entire career. For me and others out there who look to the past for useful models to challenge the present and change the future, I will take "Career Opportunities" over "No Future," or "Positive Force" over "Apocalypse Now" any day. ★

Andrew W.K.
I Get Wet
Island Records



Ok, it's been a while since I've been on either coast, so I may be a minute behind the latest machinations of the fashion world, but I suspect that Andrew WK is at the vanguard of a new style. With the big new ave revival gathering steam, it seems that the yang to new wave's ying can't be far behind. We've revisited so much of our fashion and musical past in the last decade (hey, remember "retro"?), that it was only a matter of time before the most reviled and disparaged style of the late seventies/ eighties became the vogue. I'm talking Springer worship, mullet chic, you read it here first: White Trashion(TM). Andrew W.K. is rock's answer to Bubba Sparxxx's anti-bling: no flossing (of any sort) permitted.

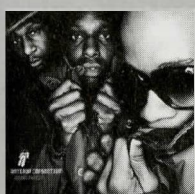
Listening to "I Get Wet" is like driving to a high school party in the woods behind the wheel of a rusted out '72 Camaro with the radio blaring non-stop beer commercials. Yeah, that's how it plays at first listen. It's completely over the top, over produced, overdone party music (the word 'party' appears in 3 of 12 song titles). Not since the Beastie Boys' "Licensed to Ill" has underage drinking had such an epic and well produced soundtrack.

But listen carefully — there's more here than the mindless, largely forgettable riffing of the countless "nu metal" bands that have ruled MTV and rock radio of late. Andrew WK echoes both British glam-pop, and American arena rock. Think Sweet meets Boston in a state-of-the-art digital studio. The giant riffs, the big pianos, the monster choruses, the epic leads. It's all here baby. There's some damn fine songwriting on display as well that shouldn't be dismissed just because dude wore filthy jeans to his photo shoot.

I defy anyone to listen to "I Get Wet" twice through and not find themselves singing at least the odd chorus in the shower. The shame of it all is that this record will probably be relegated to providing the sonic backdrop to countless wet-t-shirt contests, frat parties, and 'sorority girls gone wild' videos. Guilty pleasure? Maybe. But if rocking out this hard is wrong...dude, I don't wanna be right.

Additional note: There are rumors circulating around the Detroit area (WK's purported hometown) that Andrew WK is actually an art-prank gone horribly right. So get your rock on Poindexter, it's fucking "ironic."
-David Stokamer

Anti-pop Consortium
Arrhythmia
Warp Records
www.warprecords.com



Today, most of the hip hop that is being released is not as innovative as it once was in the '80s. The music has become stagnant and way too clichéd for it's own good. With rhymes about the bling bling, booty, and keeping it real, artists are beginning to all sound the same. Artists that once had talent are signing with major labels. They're mostly lured by the promise good money in exchange for their integrity.

Fortunately, all is not lost. Today's underground hip hop scene is flourishing with plenty of talent. Among the groups is New York's Anti-Pop Consortium, an art school collective that have been tearing up New

York's underground spoken-word scene for years before forming the Anti-Pop Consortium. Their style is a unique blending of free form rapping with abstract electronic underpinnings.

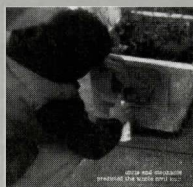
This is the type of album to sit back and enjoy for the sheer beauty of it. The album begins with "Congestion," which consists of a slow, creeping electronic beeping melody which builds up into a wall of reverberation. The tension in the music continues forward to the second track, "Bubbles," and temporarily disappears and then returns again in "Ping Pong," which creatively uses a sample of a bouncing ping pong ball as the backdrop.

Unfortunately, the album is not without its faults. Although tracks like "Minna Street," and "We Kill Soap Scum" have solid rhymes and lyrics, the electronic backdrops for these tracks seem to be too sparse and do not complement the lyrics very well.

Those used to listening to standard hip hop may dismiss this album as being too avant-garde and unlistenable. However, for those that are willing to take the time, they will be rewarded something new and innovative. This album is highly recommended as it has restored my faith in the hip hop genre.

-Terence Lo

Chris and Stephanie
Predicted the Whole Civil War
Mountain Collective for
Independent Artists
www.mtnclia.com



This duo offers simple, rustic folk rooted in Appalachian traditions. Their arrangements on mostly acoustic guitars (some electric) feature Chris and/or Stephanie on vocals, which vary the material. (Their harmonies are quaint and honest.) Stephanie also plays violin answering the vocals or stating the melody line in interspersed passages. Basic and somewhat melancholy, there is an intimacy of form to the rugged and uncomplicated presentation. At a time when Americana styles are being reinvented with contemporary infusions, Chris and Stephanie go beyond technique, returning to the tried and true with this mountain music romance. This album, limited to 1000 copies in its first edition, includes a version of "My Favorite Housing Project" by Born Against.

-Thomas Schulte

Dan The Automator
Wanna Buy A Monkey?
Sequence



Gorillaz, Deltron 3030, Lovage, Dr. Octagon, Handsome Boy Modelling School, they all have one thing in common: Dan Nakamura, aka Dan The Automator. Here we have a kick-ass party tape from the golden boy producer of the moment, just as his career hits critical mass.

And Automator comes correct with a capital C, bringing hype hip-hop, laid back lounge and dope-ass scratch tracks together on one single compact disc for your convenient consumption.

There ain't a bum track on this master mixer and the pacing is perfect too. Danny boy moves us along from the bounce of Brand Nubian, Black Rob, and Deltron 3030 into the down tempo lounge "Le Soleil

Est Pres De Moi" from francophonic chillers Air (Dan The Automator Remix, natch).

Once he's got you on the couch, Automator keeps it cool with the blissful Zero 7 track "Destiny." Tortoise picks the pace up a bit and then Lovage moves along with the nicenice "Stroker Ace."

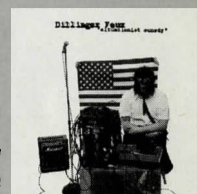
Next up is a bit of Latin flava from Bobby Digital ("The Rumba") and Gorillaz ("Latin Simone") into the old-school De La Soul number "Bionix." Following De La are (in my opinion) the two weakest tracks here: Masta Ace's "Don't Understand" (feat. Greg Nice) and Jigmastas' "Don't get It Twisted" (feat. Sadat X). Not really bad cuts, but not quite on par with the excellence presented everywhere else on this mix.

Automator finishes strong though, hittin' us off with the brilliant X-ecutioners scratch-fest "X-ecutioners Theme" (feat. Dan the Automator) and the powerful "Clockwork" from Dilated Peoples.

Overall a top notch mix from a top notch producer/songwriter who actually lives up to his (somewhat subdued) hype. The party record of the year is here. Nice. Nicer. Nicest.

-David Stokamer

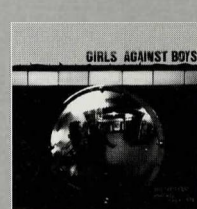
Dillinger 4
Situationist Comedy
Fat Wreck Chords
www.fatwreck.com



Dillinger Four, or D4 as they are known to family, have consistently raised the bar for my expectations of punk rock. Not only do they write powerful pop songs that can move an entire room with the first verse, but the insight and humor of the lyrics are seriously unparalleled at this particular moment in punk history. It may seem like I'm painting them with a broad stroke, but I think choruses like "This isn't what we want, this isn't what we need, this is what we can afford" are worthy of such praise. This effort from D4 consists of 13 working class anthems that rail against the bullshit that keeps people from self actualization (religious dogma, shitty jobs, shitty bosses, consumer culture, and war mongers...to name a few), and they do it all with a healthy amount of sarcasm that allows us to laugh a little without ignoring the issues. This will sit well with anyone who considers themselves a worker, thinker, lover, laughter or dancer. If you're none of the above, I'm curious how you came upon this magazine.

-Jason Kucsma

Girls Against Boys
You Can't Fight What You
Can't See
Jade Tree Records, 2002
www.jadeTree.com



Take roughly equal parts of *Braniac*, "Daydream Nation"-era Sonic Youth, and The Stooges, mix well with a liberal dosing of sex and a grain of salt or two, and after a 12-year incubation period, you have the raw animal rutting that is Girls Against Boys' latest offering. This is ROCK, ladies and gentlemen, as it was meant to be. There are no pretenses, no high and mighty political preaching, no emo-tastic whining, and no cock-posturing solos anywhere on this album.

These 11 tracks drive along with a primal feel, with drums and bass lines perfectly lulling the listener into a mental state that evokes late night driving down

the proverbial Route 66 at speeds well in excess of locally posted limits. The growling, laid back vocals evoke a cool, collected guy that you KNOW wears his sunglasses, yes, at night, on the stage, in the shower, and in the bedroom. This isn't a Keanu-Reaves-as-Neo-in-the-Matrix kind of cool; it's that utter cool that you see on John Wayne's face as he faces certain death from the thousands of stereotyped screaming and whooping Indians cresting the ridge in front of the sunset.

The largest blessing and curse of this album is its continuity; while every song flows perfectly into the next, creating a seamless musical work of art, they also tend to not be too distinguishable from each other on the first couple of listens. Nuances and subtleties tend to come out more after a few times through.

I had never listened to Girls Against Boys before this (other than seeing them live once, years ago), but I have a weird feeling that my CD collection is going to have to grow in the "G" section.

-Jeremy Mahler

Miss Kittin and the Hacker
Self Titled
Emperor Norton Records
www.emperornorton.com



*Lets go to the rendez vous,
of the past, me and you.
Dj plays deja-vu,
as we were in '82.
from "1982"*

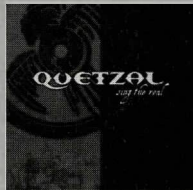
Miss Kittin and the Hacker's self titled debut harkens back to a simpler time. Reagan was in the white house, vodka and cocaine ruled the VIP room, and the Concord had a perfect service record. Ah those were the days...

Like US lablemates Ladytron, MKaH revisit the electro/new wave scene of the early eighties, albeit with a more stripped down and trashy sound. Think robot funk ala Bambaata/Kraftwerk.

The Hacker provides somewhat sparse and simple tracks for Miss Kittin's deadpan (and largely monotone) vocal delivery, and what she lacks in vocal ability is more than compensated by her clever (and sometimes hilarious) lyrics. Tracks like "Frank Sinatra" and "1982" are both standouts and establish both musically and lyrically a perfect esthetic. It's simple, catchy, cold and funky. A gem of a record that will bring back memories from a time long before it was recorded. Recommended.

-David Stokamer

Quetzal
Sing The Real
Vanguard, 2001
www.vanguardrecords.com



Back in the day, "old school" Latino artist-activists, confronting waves of political ferment, made a choice to explore the artistic possibilities in the culture of their communities, and to forge a new political self-awareness through art, both traditional and contemporary, using the artistic venacular to touch upon lives and issues ignored otherwise by mainstream culture.

Quetzal, an Afro-Chicano band that emerged from another generation's annealing experience of art and

politics, has released their second album, "Sing The Real," on Vanguard. On it Quetzal has put together a soundtrack for life in the barrios of the mind that exist in communities all around this hemisphere, and maybe even in yours.

Not some urban jazz-inflected Latin sound, such as was the soundtrack of daily life in the New York of my youth, a life that in a July daze hip-bopped down the broilers that passed for sidewalks to cowbells and timbales, this music is more a product of some ex-pat Cubano rural memory translated into some transplant Tejano urban reality

Anything but mere pastiche of styles, or evidence against some bored archivist's approach to populist musings, "Sing the Real" kicks off with "The Social Relevance of Public Art," featuring jazzy violin riffs; a chorus that gives the CD a title; and vocals reflecting a variety of contemporary influences. Quetzal comes clean on its hip-hop influences in "20 Pesos," where the rhythm and beats would not be alien to old school hip-hop artistes like Soul II Soul.

The full range of Latin influences comes out in tracks like "Mia," "Pesadilla," and "Vagabundo," each tune a primer in dance rhythms and compositional structures. The ever-so-sweet balance to the vocals on "Vagabundo" alone merits some attention to this track. And maybe to this CD?

-Bruce M. Foster

Swayzak
Groovetechnology v1.3
!K7
www.k7.com



London-based duo James Taylor and Dave Brown, collectively known as Swayzak deliver a double disc of chilly grooves on this third installment of the Groovetechnology compilation series. Now signed to !K7, this is the precursor to a full length Swayzak LP due out later this year. Swayzak's first two long players combined deep house, minimal techno and electro, with dub techniques providing the constant throughout. Here we get a sampling of Swayzak's influences and favourites, flawlessly mixed by a couple of blokes who don't even consider themselves DJs.

Both discs of this mix are packed with stellar tracks, so it's really hard to pick the standouts, definitely a "sum of the parts..." situation. However, highlights do include: Ellen Alien ("Funkflug Der Trame") from Berlin, minimal techno pioneers Basic Channel ("Q1.1 [1A]"), Monolake ("Fragile"), Bergheim 34 ("Take My Soul") who are funky as hell, and Bitstream ("Monolith") from the UK mate.

Overall a great mix throughout, a good introduction to some obscure tracks and just the thing to whet the appetite for the next Swayzak LP. Way to mix chaps.

-David Stokamer

Trial By Fire
Ringing in the Dawn
Jade Tree Records
www.jadetree.com

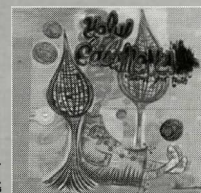


This CD is exciting for a number of reasons. First, Trial by Fire are from DC and inherit a tradition of fast and furious politically-charged

hardcore — which I believe they dutifully uphold. Second, while Trial by Fire can be compared accurately to early Avail and Hot Water Music, they are also in good company with the likes of Anti-Flag and Strike Anywhere. Trial by Fire are one of a number of punk/hardcore acts that are breathing a little life back into an energetic scene that seems to have had nothing to say for a couple years now. While there has certainly been a dearth of new labels and bands in the last five years, a lot have had nothing worthwhile to say — meanwhile hip hop labels and acts have been blowing up with conscious art that critiques oppression and celebrates creativity. I'm happy to see more punk bands returning to this fundamental approach. The final reason this is exciting is that I've never seen or heard of Trial By Fire before. I'm always ecstatic when an unknown underdog manages to climb to the top of the promo pile and earn countless spins in the office. You should afford them the same opportunity.

-Jason Kucsma

Ugly Casanova
Sharpen Your Teeth
Sub Pop Records
www.subpop.com



Before I begin an in-depth, yet heartfelt review of this album, I'm going to tell you a story about a guy named Edgar. This is important because Edgar Graham is also known as Ugly Casanova. The album is written by Edgar and titled under his name, but he is nowhere to be found in the performance of any of the thirteen tracks. Where is this man? Better yet, who is this man? It seems not too many people know.

In the summer of 1998, Edgar introduced himself as Ugly Casanova to indie-rock group Modest Mouse. They took kindly to his mental instability and he began traveling with them. During this time, he started to show some of his songs to the group. Soon after this, our boy Edgar started performing in front of the few fans who showed early at shows. When the tour was over, he recorded a few songs and disappeared. Since then, only rare letters with cryptic messages have turned up. The songs on Sharpen Your Teeth are what were taken from Edgar's letters.

The album is actually performed by Modest Mouse front man Isaac Brock and friends. Think of this album as a weird tribute to a man who, as of yet, has not stepped forward to take credit for anything. Edgar, if you are out there and reading this, please step forward. "Sharpen Your Teeth" is a brilliant album that keeps yours ears pinned to your CD player until the last track finishes. Every song brings a different feel and just as it peaks, disappears into the next track.

Taking the emotion and musical talent of Modest Mouse and adding an image heavy set of lyrics, "Sharpen Your Teeth" is a beautiful compilation worth looking into.

-Paul Street

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Dillinger Four

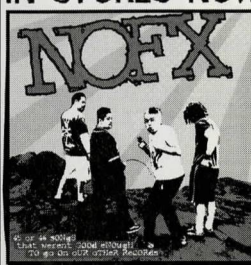
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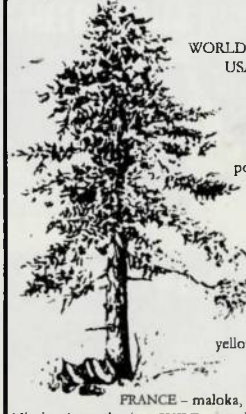
★manner farm★

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Troy Malish ★ Box 1168 ★ Elkford, BC ★ V0B 1H0 ★ CANADA
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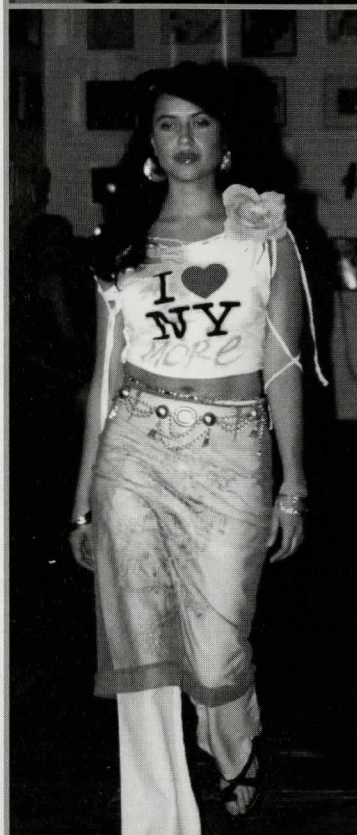
EMPOWERED

through
REVOLUTIONARY

IDEAS

SUPPORTING

ENTERPRISE



CLAMOR talks with Julie Shah about the first WERISE Fashion/Art show

Can you tell us about WERISE – what it is and what you all are working toward?

WERISE (Women Empowered Through Revolutionary Ideas Supporting Enterprise) was co-founded by Tomasia Kastner, Rozz Nash and Imani Uzuri. It is a women's arts organization with a collective component. Multi-cultural and multi-generational. WERISE seeks to empower and support women artists from a diversity of artistic backgrounds including visual artists, dancers, spoken word artists, singers, and photographers by coordinating and producing events to highlight the work of women within the collective as well as workshops, forums and retreats. We meet biweekly to organize various events throughout the city, as well as provide an opportunity for artists to network and learn from one another. We are most currently working on our International Women Artists Conference (the first annual) for women artists to be held at Barnard College in September 2002. By and far the group is talented, powerful, rejuvenating, and spiritual. We seek to support every member of the collective to fulfill their dreams in the art world...whatever they might be. Economic empowerment is critical to the work we support.

This past spring, you had your first fashion show. How did the idea to do a fashion show come about? How does it fit into the work of WERISE?

The fashion show idea came about last summer during our first board retreat in Ithaca. We were all sitting around a bonfire dreaming up our future as a collective. Myself and Imani Uzuri started talking about producing a fashion show for young women artists, called Individual Style. It made so much sense, as we are both interested in fashion and both are activists. We wanted to highlight the work of young women who are designing with depth, reflective of their communities both in New York City and their native homelands. The show was not your typical vapid-like (a bit of a harsh word) fashion show. We were all excited to produce a show that highlighted both the individual style of each artist, yet at the same time exemplified how powerful it is to bring together seemingly separate ideas/experiences into a sexy and powerful program.

Who was responsible for the show and how was it organized?

Imani and I immediately started prepping for the show in January. We started spreading the word among our communities and through the WERISE collective that we were looking for designers. It went amazingly smooth. At our first planning meeting each designer showed pieces of their work and spoke about what vision they had for the show. The production of the show was quite collective (in terms of vision, staging etc). Imani and I coordinated most of the logistics, such as lights, music, and a DJ. It was a diverse group of designers — Black, Asian, South Asian, Latina...and the beauty of it was that we used our friends, friends of friends, and colleagues to model for us. Each individual selected their own music and a musician friend of mine put it all together.

I'm assuming this might have been the first time some of these women worked together collectively. Was this a conscious decision on your part as organizers? Given the short amount of time to plan the event

and the sometimes time-intensive collective decision-making processes, what kind of obstacles did you all encounter and how did you overcome them?

Interesting question. In my day to day life, I co-direct the Third Wave Foundation (a feminist activist foundation www.thirdwavefoundation.org). Within this organization and within other young women-led organizations, I find that it is quite typical to make collective decisions. I see it as part of the larger social justice movement happening across the country. The women I interact with, both at work and within groups such as WERISE, are not comfortable with the power dynamic associated with one or a small group of people making all of the decisions. In essence, we are challenging many of the traditional feminist organizations that structure themselves in a hierarchy. Of course, collective/consensus-building doesn't come without its obstacles, as you so poignantly ask. It is difficult at times to be mindful of deadlines when making decisions collectively. It is common to ignore and miss deadlines, truthfully. It is important to assign each individual with specific roles and responsibilities. Everyone is accountable to each other and to the larger cause. This group was amazing to work with, as everyone respected the deadlines and most importantly believed strongly in what we were trying to produce. This is the ideal. Those of us doing activist work on a daily basis know that at times this is not the reality. On the bright side, when you have a group of people sitting around the table, a table where everyone is heard and respected equally, your vision is stronger because of all the diverse opinions, ideas, and input. That is why the fashion show was a success.

Could you tell us a little about the logistics? How much time did you have to set it up? How did you publicize it? What kind of turn out was it (i.e. who showed up, how many). Was there any press there? If so, how was it reported?

We all met about four times prior to the show and e-mailed weekly about invites and other logistics. The lighting and music was donated. The week before the show we met to coordinate the runway, figure out the order of appearances and what we would say about each piece. We never had a dress rehearsal! The day of the show was bustling with 30 models and last minute design preparations. The DJ spun music and Imani hosted the event. About 120 people showed up and we had to turn people away! Unfortunately, we didn't do any formal public relations or media work. In retrospect, we should have. Because the event turned out so well. People were jazzed.

Are there plans to work on more shows? What are some of the lessons you learned from this show that you'll take with you to future shows?

Given the success of the last show, we met a few weeks ago and are planning a larger show in the fall (early October). We are all working to secure a space either in downtown Manhattan or Williamsburg. I am trying to plan well in advance, as we are going to invite fashion folks, clothing store owners etc. I am going to put together press kits with photos of each designers pieces, as well as bios. I think this should and could go somewhere. Plus, I am quite interested in producing shows such as this, so I want to commit the time and energy it takes to make it a must see and experience kind of thing.

For more information or to get involved, contact W.E.R.I.S.E c/o SisterFund, 116 East 16th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10003, e-mail: werise@hotmail.com, Phone: (212) 894-3723 x12, web: www.werise.org.



5 DESIGNERS YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NAME

We Asked WERISE designers
the following:

- [1] Name/Designer name
- [2] Age
- [3] Where do you live?
- [4] How long have you been designing?
- [5] What is your specialty/focus/favorite work?
- [6] How did you get into designing?
- [7] Are you able to support yourself with your art/work?
- [8] Where is the best place for people to see your work



- [1] Kerrigan Kessler
- [2] 30
- [3] I live in Brooklyn, NY
- [4] I've been designing bags for 3 years
- [5] Specialty - bags right now
- [6] I started designing bags and some clothes when I would either need something or just get an idea in my head that I couldn't get out.
- [7] Support myself? No - not yet. I have a generous boyfriend.
- [8] My website: <http://home.earthlink.net/~kerrigan1/>



- [1] Julie Shah
- [2] 27
- [3] New York City
- [4] This was my first time designing
- [5] My focus is blending NYC streetwear with Indian fabrics.
- [6] I have always been interested in design and consider myself a creative dresser.
- [7] I am not able to support myself. I work at the Third Wave Foundation full-time. That is where all my energy goes (and is well-deserved).
- [8] I am now most interested in producing events such as fashion shows, performances, film etc. Particularly if it has a political/social-edge to the work. I hope to continue to design in my free-time and learn more about the industry from friends in the fashion business.



- [1] AESTADISTA/Yumi
- [2] 23
- [3] NYC
- [4] 5 to 6 years
- [5] Clothing within the nature/textile and color/ all
- [6] My Mom
- [7] I haven't tried yet but I hope so
- [8] Visit my web site
<http://www.sitemonster.net/sitemonster/sites/aestadista/>



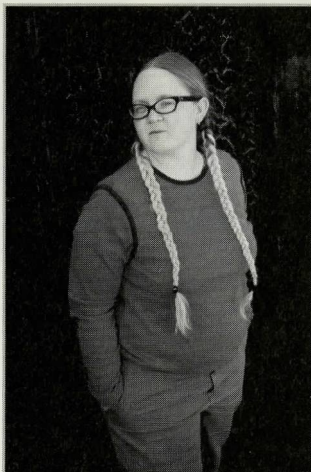
- [1] Soraya
- [2] 21
- [3] Washington Heights, New York City
- [4] I've been designing all my life...but actually doing something about it for 1 year.
- [5] Fashion Design, Graphic Design, photography
- [6] I have all been into design, i love visual arts, when I met my friend TOOFly and she taught me how to make your own t-shirt using acrylic paint...it was like "oh, wow I can actually make things myself!" and once my friend Anna taught me how to sew it took me to the next level — constructing my ideas on fabric, that is the hard and fun part.
- [7] Actually right now I am not able to support myself with my artwork because it is not for sale yet. My first collection means a lot to me. But in the future hopefully it will be able to support me and I will be able to support it. So right now I keep my regular job to pay my bills and invest in my art.
- [8] In collaboration with the WERISE organization we will be having our next show in the fall 2003. But also I will be working along other designers to come up with a venue for the summertime. Stay tuned for Soraya ad campaigns, stickers, buttons, t-shirts, etc,... all available in the upcoming Look Book 2003 and website (soon to be launched)...



- [1] Maria Castillo/TOOFly
- [2] 24
- [3] Sunnyside, Queens
- [4] 2 years
- [5] Female illustrations, and graffiti inspired graphics/Art ... Design/Street Art.
- [6] By working for other designers.
- [7] Yes
- [8] Art Shows, Fashion Shows, Street Fairs, patriacollection.com, and TOOFlyDESIGN.COM coming soon!

What's Your Relationship to Fashion?

By Chantel C. Guidry and Ailecia Ruscin



Ailecia, age 25. "I wear clothes that make me feel invisible, while simultaneously wearing my hair in a way that calls attention to it. When I decide on a certain 'look', I stick with it for years and years because I like not having to think about what I'm going to wear in the morning."



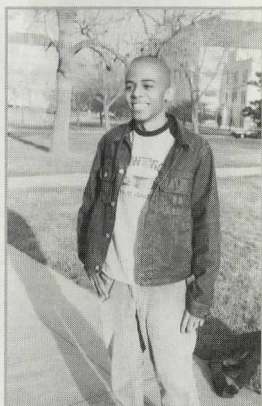
Chantel, age 31. "I love these overalls because my sister dumpstered them for me. They're roomy and I want to wear them everyday."

Open up most fashion magazines and you'll see unnaturally thin models with impossible hair and airbrushed beauty wearing unreasonably expensive, impractically styled clothes. Who creates these outfits, and why do so many people think they should aspire to dress this way? Shouldn't clothes be comfortably sturdy and make a unique statement about the individual who wears them? Why are we constantly told that we need to buy new clothes and add fresh pieces to our wardrobes?

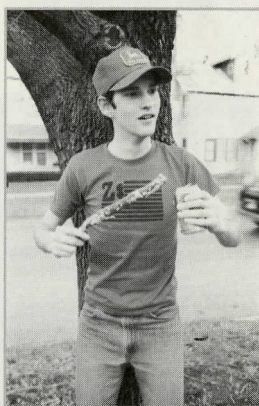
Fashions change year after year so lots of people can make piles of money. The fashion industry is intimately linked to capitalism and its minion: advertising. If folks are convinced that they need a different look each season, that this year's skirt length and shoe style are important, they can be persuaded to buy buy buy. The fashion industry would have you ignore what looks good on you and makes you feel sexy and happy. The fashion industry wants you to "fit in" and look like everyone else instead of creating a distinct you. The fashion industry wants you to be embarrassed to get your clothes from a thrift store or a dumpster or your sister's reject pile. The fashion industry tries to convince you that you really need an expensive item made from dry-clean-only fabric, an item that might look ridiculous on you and restrain your movements. The fashion industry tells you that if you don't look like the model in the ad when you put on the clothes, it's because something is wrong with you. The fashion industry perpetuates these lies so they can get the money you're working so hard to earn.

We reject the fashion industry, and we're not the only ones. Lots of people chose their own style, pick their clothes according to their own whims and desires, and disregard what the fashion industry is trying to sell. Some folks have a new look everyday, while others pick signature pieces they stick with for years. Others dumpster a piece of clothing and alter it into something completely new and wear it as their own artistic creation. Some people have glamour as their top priority, while others are more concerned with comfort or durability, but everyone who rejects the fashion industry has chosen to think for her or himself, to make his or her own decisions based on personal criteria.

The following pages of fashion, show real people with real bodies in their real clothes in real settings in Lawrence. None of the people in these pictures have been airbrushed in order to adhere to any sort of ideal, and none of them pay much mind to the fashion industry. These people, many living out a portion of their lives in Lawrence, KS, are not concerned with fitting into some kind of mold or looking like fashion clones. Each person's relationship to fashion is distinctive, but based on personal style and individual choice rather than on industry indoctrination.



Curtis, age 20. "Fashion to me is about looking good and being comfortable. In my closet you'll find: baseball shirts, jeans, nice shoes... I'm always on the run because of college. I'm not into dressing up but also I'm not into dressing down."



Kurt, age 22. "'I find one outfit a year and I wear that."



Angie, age 25. "I stick to what is useful: what can I pray in, work in, or relax in. Most of my clothes are hand me downs and a good bit of fashion wisdom is taken from my 5 year old God-sister: that wearing pants under your skirt keeps you warm and that's important."



Kelly, Kathleen, and Tamie



Kathleen, age 24. "Clothes are like cobwebs; they're pretty until they're on you."



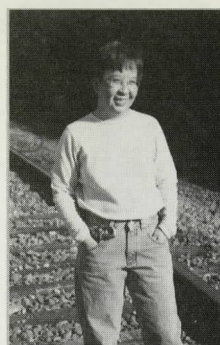
Lizzie, age 19. "For me, what I wear has to do with comfort and convenience. I need clothes that are durable."



Tamie, age 24. "Fashion isn't about expressing yourself... it's about looking good, so you can get laid."



Kelly, age 33. "My inspiration in fashion are photographs of my biological grandmother prior to her untimely death in 1948 and Kate Pierson from the B-52s — and people who walk down the street mumbling to themselves."



Candy, age 44. "Cheap and comfortable and good shoes that can go anywhere: that's what's important to me. There is no fashion to me... it's what works."



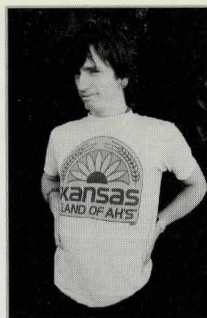
Mike, age 22. "My mom once told me recently that my fashion is an accident. I just try to look as Las Vegas as possible."

Candy, Lizzie, and Mike





Llowell, age 20. "I try to dress in a way so that the average person will take me seriously."



Chris, age 19. "I try real hard to not look like an indie rocker, but I keep looking like one more and more everyday."

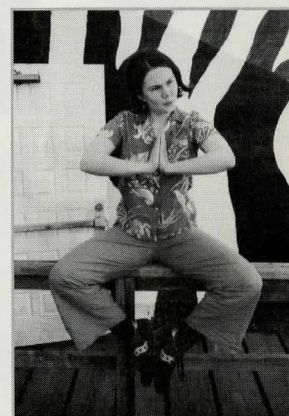


Ellen and Kathleen

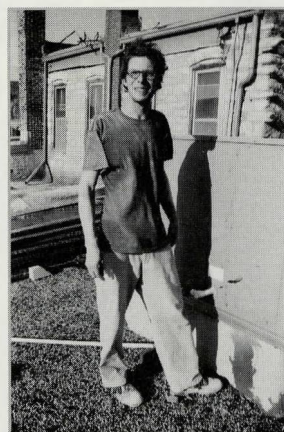
Llowell and Chris



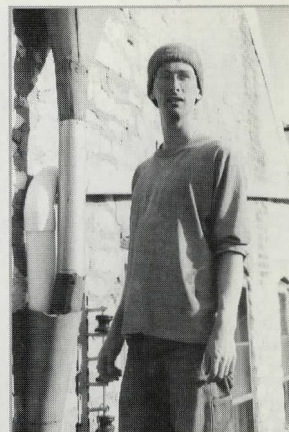
Ellen, age 24. "I don't see fashion as a uniform; I see it as a costume. I try to wear something that makes me laugh everyday."



Kathleen, age 24. "I wear clothes to keep me out of jail."



Ryan, age 26. "I don't like advertising for anybody. I like a lot of plain clothes."



David, age 25. "What color do I feel like today? Sometimes I wear the same thing over and over all week. I don't stop wearing something when it's dirty, more like when it needs to be changed."



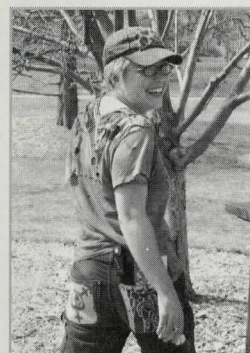
The Bot, Rath, and Yareak

age 32. "Garage chic."

age 28. "Leg warmers are sexy."

age 26. "My jeans will last forever."

"Androgyny is sexy, but that goes without saying."



Amanda, age 22. "I wear it until it falls off."



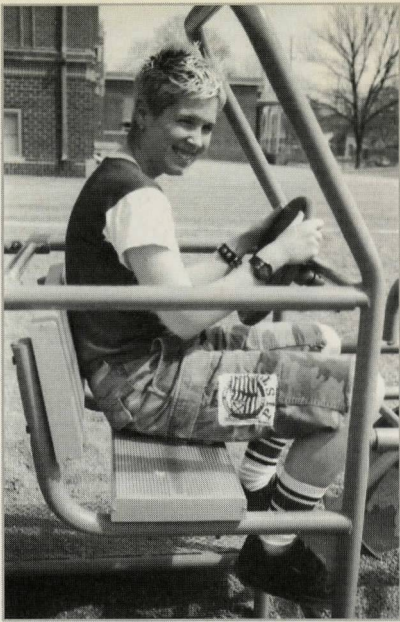
Ethyl, age 44. "I'm prepared for all occasions, right now, that's Passover."



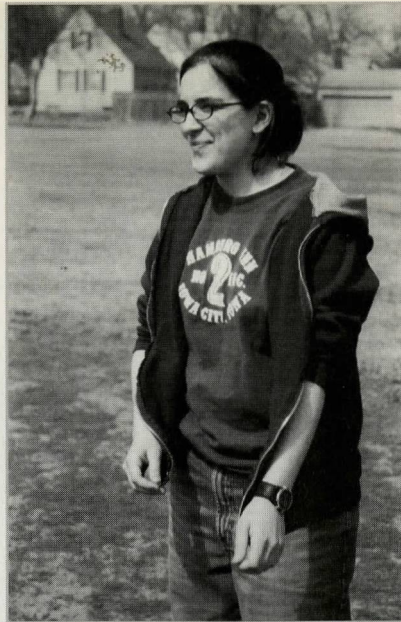
Angel, age 24. "I wouldn't hop a train in this... I'd rip my tights."



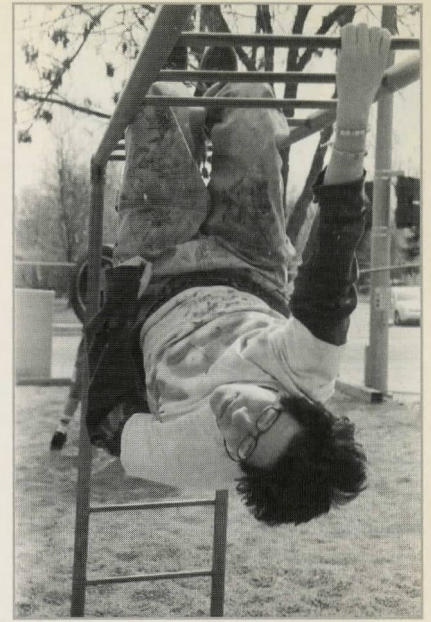
Rod, age 13. "It's all about action."



Caitlin, age 23. "I like to bike in these shorts because they're comfortable and have lots of pockets."



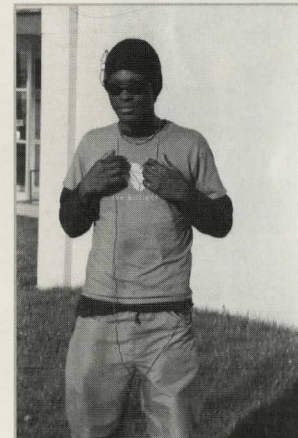
Joanne, age 22. "I wear whatever is comfortable and I don't know if I put any more thought into fashion than that."



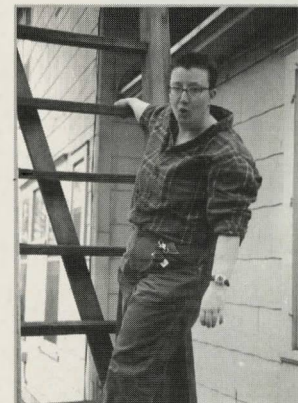
Mark, age 21. "I wear things that are comfortable and cheap. I think clothes can be like artwork."



Mark, Caitlin, and Joanne



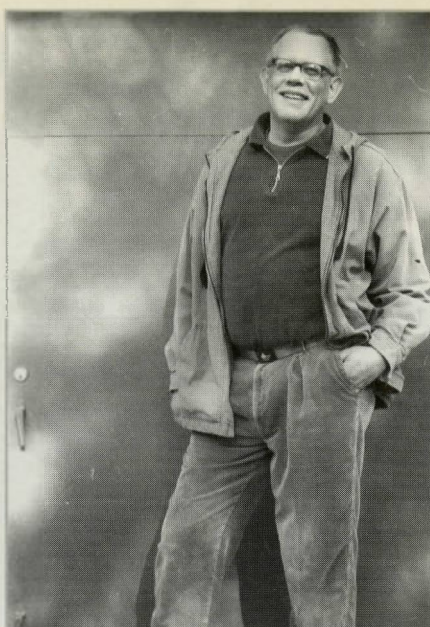
DJ Solidus, age 21. "My fashion matches my mood, if I'm in a good mood - I'm swinging... like this."



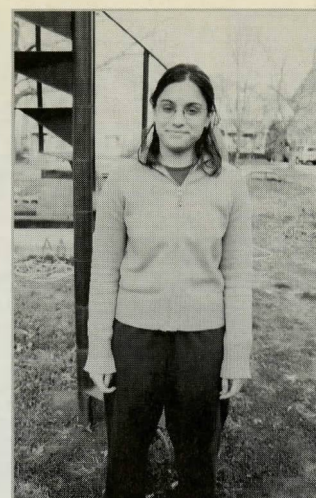
Tami, age 32. "I buy men's clothes because they're cheaper, they fit better, and I think I look good in them."



Phoebe, age 17. "Fashion] should be fun... I like things that are free more than things that I pay for."



James, age 49. "I've never been fashionable. When everyone else was a hippy, I was a beatnik and beatniks can dress however they want. I really wish I could have been a skateboarder, but it wasn't meant to be. I think my fashion sense could be called: Conservative skater chic. I think of clothing more as a disguise than as a statement."



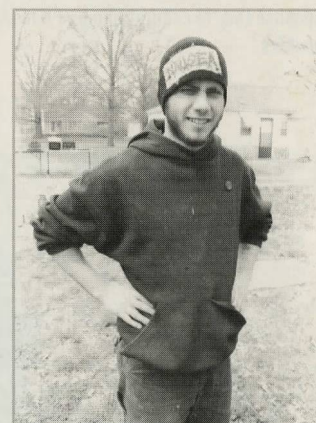
Almas, age 23. "My relationship to fashion is dynamic — sometimes it matters and sometimes it doesn't."



Tara, age 23. "I'm trying to get rid of the majority of my clothes. Shoes are a particular problem. So, I'm currently downsizing my fashion."



Justin, age 21. "I don't think about fashion on Sundays."



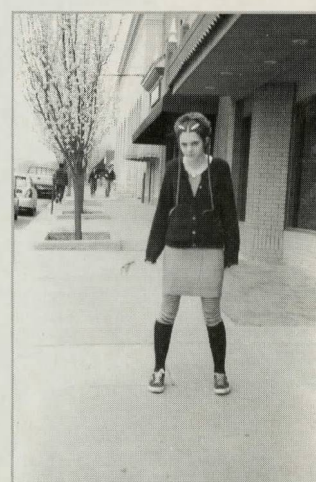
Dave, age 20. "I wear what's comfortable and what makes me happy. I like black."



Ophra, "I wear clothes that I've had for ten years because I can't afford new clothes. In high school I dressed 'alternative', but now I dress more conventionally. It's interesting that I dress more conventionally the more radical I get."



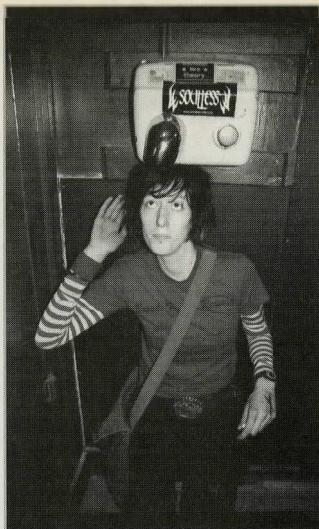
Staceyann Chin, age 29. "I think a woman is most fashionable when she is most comfortable"— then she's really sexy."



Lauren, age 16. "I like clothes, but I like them as art objects, so I think about what I wear but I don't think about how they'll make me look, but just how they'll look together."



Amanda, age 16. "Fashion... it's an unnecessary pain in the ass."



Brooke, age 19. "Thrift store junkie."

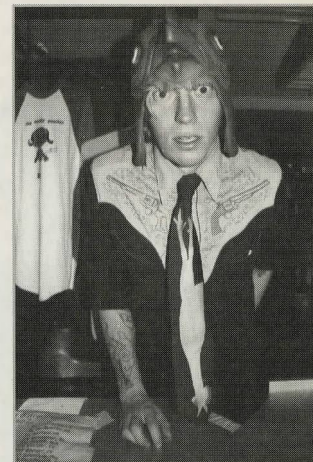


Rita, age 21. "I'm a costume femme, eat my fashion dust."

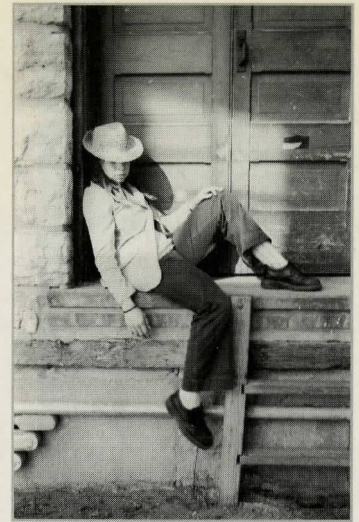
Brooke, Amanda, and Rita



Kimya, age 29. "I'm a 1987 graduate of Barbazon school of modeling, and um, that should sum it up."



Jest, age 26. "Oh man... Geez, I was born and raised in fashion, I swim in it. I'm a swimmer."



Monica, age 23. "When I was born, my mom said I came out fist first and all the doctors yelled, 'It's a boy.' It's important to me to hold womanly essence and a warrior spirit in the same seat."



Bengal, age 18. "I used to want to be naked all the time so people could see who I am, but then I decided if it's free, I'll wear it."



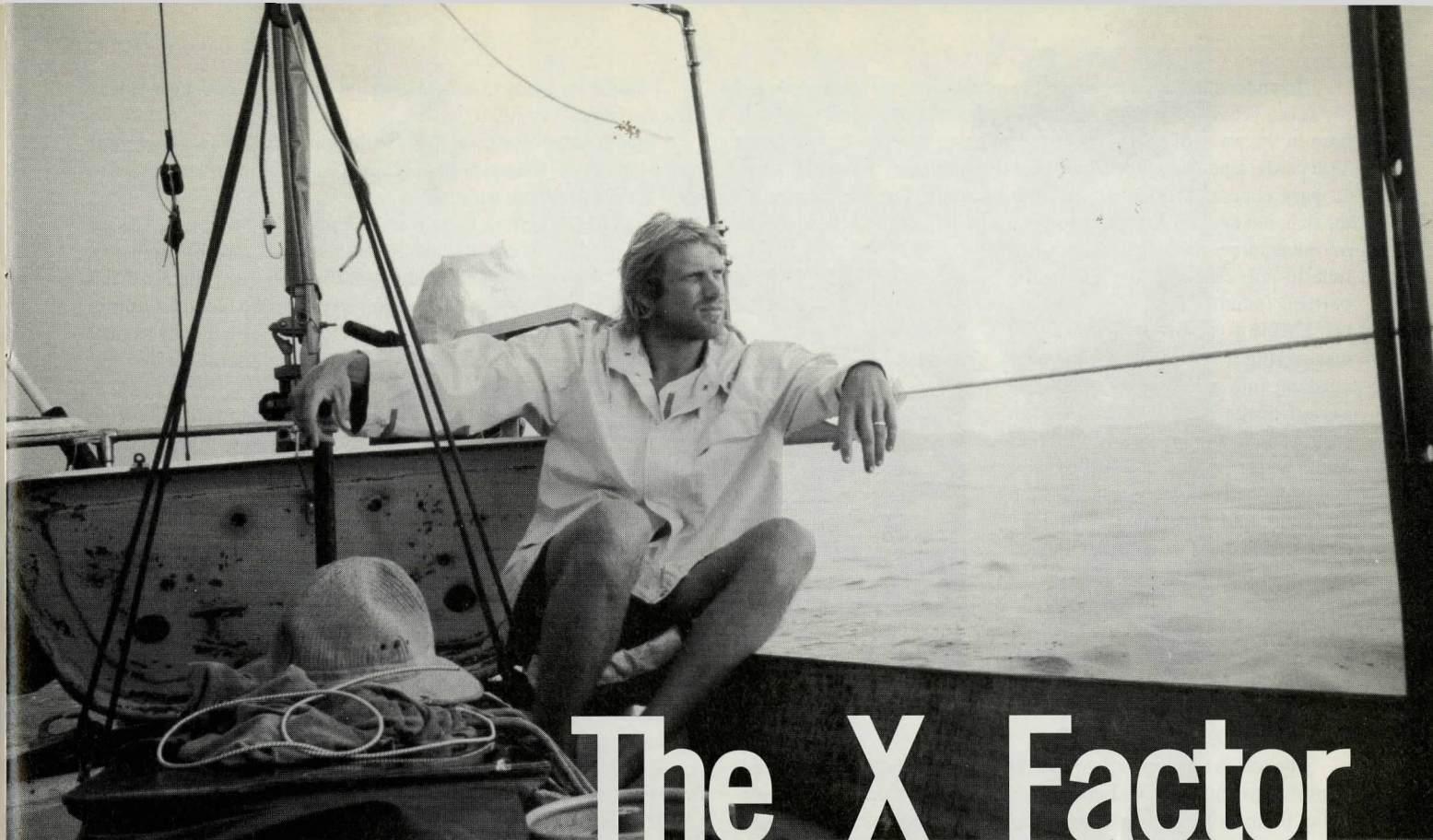
Claven, Bengal, Bri, and Monica



Bri, age 19. "Fashion is definitely part of my identity, but I don't worry about it too much."



Claven, age 23. "Clothing is my armor, I only wear what I need to feel appropriately guarded in any given situation."



The X Factor

A Pirate Attack off Yemen

by Zoltan Gyurko

3:30 AM. Pitch black. My yacht eight miles off the coast of Yemen.

"What do you want?! What do you want?!"

Four men. No faces — masks. Their speedboat racing towards me.

"What do you want?! Money?! Dollars?!"

Pirates. Pointing AK 47s. Ramming my boat. Boarding.

"No, please! Stay off! I'll give you anything!"

The barrel of a machine gun. Five inches from my face. An Arab fingering the trigger.

"Please don't shoot! I can give you money, American dollars!" Frantic, shaking, my hands above my head.

"Cut! Cut! Cut! It's not working guys, it's just not working," the director interrupted, shouting. "Zoltan, you have to wave your hands and show more emotion or something, and Billy, you got to get that camera at a better angle. We're not filming the pirates' backs here. And driver, you need to bring the boat in from the west more, so that all the pirates can get their guns close to Zoltan's head. Now come on guys, let's take it from the top again. I don't want to be out here all night."



Two hundred yards off Venice Beach, Adrenaline Productions, contracted by the

Travel Channel, recreated a pirate attack that my girlfriend and I survived last year. On an early January morning, Jennifer and I met up with the 20-person production crew in Marina Del Ray. All the usual Hollywood gusto was present: cameramen screeching up in Suburbans; directors crumpling scripts; producers sporting Ray-Bans; actors carrying props; sandwich boys to handle lunch. I sat down on the docks and answered interview questions about my experience, a Betacam the size of a Great Dane rolling in front of me. But throughout the day, as different scenes and interviews were shot, finally culminating with the pirate attack, I kept returning to one thought: though the recreation for television may look accurate and realistic, there is no way to capture, no way to demonstrate, no way to relive what was the heaviest 10 minutes of my life.

In 1994, when I had just turned 21, I began my sailing journey solo on my 25-foot Pearson Commander sloop, *The Way*. I left Los Angeles and crossed 2,400 miles to Hawaii, spending years in the South and North Pacific before sailing to Southeast Asia. In Singapore, Jennifer came aboard and we worked our way through the Straights of Mallaca into the Sea of Bengal. Our first landfall after crossing the Indian Ocean was Salalah, Oman. From there, we followed the Yemeni coastline for 500 miles to Aden.

To understand the intensity of the pirate incident is to understand my seven years of traveling before it. I wasn't your typical tourist — born to the wave of neatly packaged vacation tours — carrying two Visa cards, a pocket guide to the best restaurants in the world, and a 12-pack condom set. I don't call that traveling. For me, this wasn't the first, not even the second time a gun was pointed at my head during my adventures — which have included time in jail; crossing five civil wars; battling malaria in the Solomons; hitchhiking through Nicaragua; discovering a bush tribe in Vanuatu; crashing into a four-story tree while paragliding; barely surviving an emergency ascent from 70 feet underwater when my dive tank malfunctioned on a treasure hunting job off Guam. And these things are nothing compared to the storms I've weathered alone — 1,000 miles from land on my 25-foot boat.

In short, I was anything but your typical bourgeoisie traveler. Still, nothing could prepare me for the enormity of the pirate experience. Unlike my other close calls, this one involved the X factor: Jennifer.

She was as much the all-American ideal as I wasn't. Young, blond, beautiful, graduated Cum Laude from UCLA. Walk into her parents' living room in Irvine, California, and you see two pictures. One of her as homecoming queen, one of Bill Clinton with his arm around her, holding a diet Coke — she used to work in the White House Press Office. That's the kind of girl I mean. So Jennifer met me in Singapore, selling her furniture and quitting her desk job as a researcher for National Geographic. She wanted to experience what she had been reading about for three years. Fine, I thought. We set off across the Indian Ocean; *The Way* chasing the sun, slicing through an electric blue sea.

Next we fell in love. The kind of love when you're in your late 20s, your genes are kicking in, you're dreaming about building a jungle hut together in Africa, saving the rhinoceros from extinction, and home schooling your future child. That kind of love.

Then came the pirates. Now you see why two months later off the coast of Yemen I had such a harrowing experience. It wasn't just me anymore, but her. To make matters worse — standing the late night watch through rough weather — my first thought when I saw four masked men approaching was of Jennifer's father. He's the VP of a high profile real estate company in Los Angeles.

"Yes, sir, I promise I'll take care of your daughter. With my life if I have to," I explained on a phone from a marina in Singapore.

"Good. Well, Jennifer's mom and I feel safe then with her in your hands. She's our only child, you know — all we got."



"What do you want?! What do you want?!"

Their speedboat was approaching fast, but they were still too far away to hear me with their engine on.

"Jennifer! Jennifer, wake up!"

She woke up, asking from the bed what was wrong.

"Don't come outside! Hide yourself under the sheets and pillows!"

Four men in camouflage with machine guns are coming! I think they're pirates!"

"Pirates?"

"Yes, goddamn pirates! They got masks on!"

I threw my loaded flare gun behind me into the cockpit; it was useless against four AK 47s.

"Just hide yourself Jen! Throw the guitar and books over you! And keep silent! Whatever happens, we can't let them know you're here! If they find you, we're done for!"

The image of being tied up and gagged while watching her get gangraped flashed before my mind. My whole goal was to keep them off the boat. Not let them see a blond California girl. Give them as much money as they wanted. See if they'd settle for that and go away.

The pirates sped towards *The Way*, preparing to ram it. A spotlight attached to the their wheel house blinded me. When they struck, a deafening noise erupting from my hull. I was knocked of balance, falling into to the cockpit. I stood back up with my hands above my head; their AK 47s were pointed at me. The leader shouted out in Arabic to his man on the bow to get on my yacht. He tried to grab hold of my rigging, but the

swells were violent, forcing him to be careful so his hands didn't get crushed between the boats.

I called out, "What do you want?! I have money! Dollars! Dollars!"

If I could get the leader's attention away from his man boarding me, maybe he would call him off. But the leader only glanced at me, then turned to the man on the bow and began yelling at him. I can't be sure what he said, but I'd bet it was something about being an imbecile and *why the hell couldn't he get on the yacht?* The leader called to another pirate and told him to board too. The man threw his machine gun around his shoulder and ran to the bow of the boat. Just as they tried together to grab the rigging and jump on, *The Way* lurched sharply to its side, sliding down a 10-foot breaking swell that crept up in the night. Everybody was knocked of balance. I crashed into the cockpit again. When I stood back up, the pirates' boat was eight feet from mine. The leader yelled at the driver to pull along side again.

"Dollars! I can give you dollars!" I started shouting frantically, making hand gestures that nobody had to board — that I could get it for him myself.

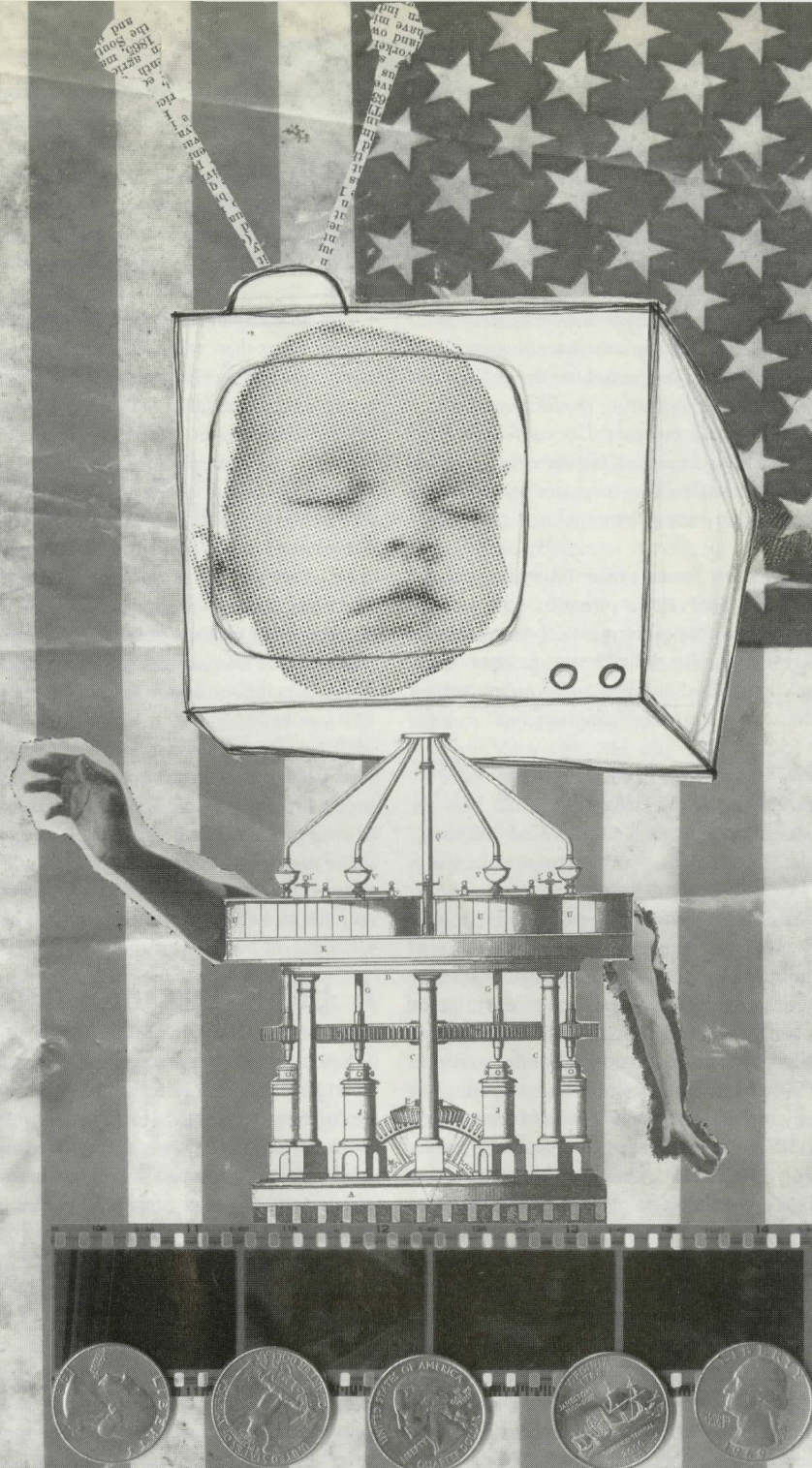
It took them 30 seconds to turn the boat around and pull alongside. I continued shouting to the leader that I could get him money. I doubt he understood English, but after another wave broke over their transom, he reluctantly pointed with the barrel of his gun for me to go inside, saying, "Moonny! Moonny!"

I ran into the cabin and grabbed what was in my wallet. "Shit!" I cursed. All I had was a \$50 bill. The rest was in Travelers Checks. I thought about it for a second, then grabbed a carton of Marlboros and a bottle of Sri Lankan whiskey. I dashed out and precariously leaned over my guardrail, handing the leader everything. He let his gun fall to his side and took the items from me. Before he even looked at how much money I'd given, he curiously examined the bottle of whiskey. Another set of swells came, pushing the pirates' boat further away from me. Twenty seconds later, the leader, satisfied, pointed for the driver to head for shore.

I ran down to hold Jennifer, collapsing on the bed — my future still intact. The next day she reminded me that alcohol was banned in Yemen. A thought that brought the first smile to my face since the attack. But there would be many more smiles on our journey together after the pirates, especially at her parents' home in Irvine watching the Travel Channel premiere our documentary. ★



Jennifer Hile interviewing at the Travel Channel shoot in Marina Del Ray. Photo by the author.



GANGBANGING

My town was no exception, although I credit the proliferation of gangbanging to the vehicles of media and entertainment and them not realizing that the commercialization of gang lifestyle was going to cause deep impressions on our young minds.

This is a case study of the gangbang phenomenon in my town.

by RJ Castillo

Before sending this, I had two older gentlemen read it who were there during this time and were actual participants and witnesses to the formation of what is termed "gangbanging." They are no longer active members and were able to look at this piece objectively. They corroborate the material and say that the piece describes well the "generals" of the ingredients of this phenomenon. I did not think it wise to get into specifics of who, what, and where, so I only stuck with generalizations of how and why.

Please understand that some of the contents are sensitive towards racial issues. It is not my intent to arouse tensions or suspicions towards any ethnicity. I simply told it as innocuously as I could, without offense, however at the same time not relegating the facts and issues. I'm not prejudiced at all, especially because I myself look more European and was raised in a biracial family. However, racial issues encompass and have their origins in this gangbang phenomenon and it cannot be addressed without referencing them.

Through my 13 years in the penal system I have had the misfortune to experience and observe the phenomenon we call "gangbanging." As a former gangbanger myself, I have certain knowledge that gives me an insider's point of view, as opposed to someone on the outside looking in, making inaccurate judgements.

I first came into contact with the term "gangbanging" in 1989 when I was in a desert boot camp in Nevada. The term was foreign to me when these two vatos with tacks, locs, and all choloed down hit me up asking if I gangbang. I didn't know what they meant. You see, in San Francisco, back in those days, we used terms like "funkin'," "ridin'," and "breakin' fools." Gangbanging was a term that the gangs from down south used.

I started hanging out when the Mission (District in San Francisco) was turning over to taggers. The raza gangs were losing their ground because gente were getting locked up. Samoans and taggers were the force in the Mission. However, in Juvenile Hall, turf wars were jumping off between the blacks from different projects in the city. Crack played a big role in those wars. When crack was introduced to the streets of San Francisco, money was to be made and one-time homeboys became rival enemies. Feuding really broke out in the turf wars of the projects when gangster rap took its flight in our minds and shaped how we perceive things (NWA, Too Short, etc). Then the brothas in San Francisco started getting into the rapping game and that justified the conflicts. So I grew up in this era, where you consider yourself a hustler, not no gangbanger.

Nevertheless, I entered the system and found that the game was segregated into racial factions. The ethnic mix in San Francisco wasn't happening; however, the conflicts in San Francisco were happening on a larger scale across California in the identification of gangbanging. At first, San Francisco resisted that red and blue stuff. There was a little bit here and there, but that thing was considered a thing for side bustas and was mostly isolated to the gangs down south. Nevertheless, a significant occurrence took place that developed into a trend in San Francisco. Two movies were introduced into our entertainment world. These movies were *Colors* and *American Me* and soon to follow was *Bound by Honor*. Each movie chronicled prison and street gang life. Now, what we were hearing in tones became live action on the silver screen and as a result the raza and black gangs started sagging and wearing colors. The gangbanging phenomenon reached my town in full force.

I stepped out of prison in 1993, having an understanding of what time it was with the red and blue. It became apparent that the color feud took deeper root within La Raza in the Mission than it did with the blacks in the projects. Homies I grew up with were now fully representing. The older gente were getting out of prison and many Mexicano immigrants were coming from down south in large waves, every one of them bringing their ideas and colors.

It was inevitable that gangbanging was going to hit my town since it was sweeping across the country like a black plague. My town was no exception, although I credit the proliferation of gangbanging to the vehicles of media and entertainment and them not realizing that the commercialization of gang lifestyle was going to cause deep impressions on our young minds. Consequently, because of their irresponsibility, a new subculture was born with disastrous and deadly results.

The commercialization of gangster and thug lifestyle has much deeper roots than what the glamorization of gangster rappers and the entertainment world project it for project. Check it out. Let me put you up on some game so that you can understand the gangbanging phenomenon in your town.

Analyzing the Phenomenon: A Song for the Prelude

Gangbang! Is that what you want to do?

Well let me step aside to let you through:

The door into a life of guns, numbers, colors and crime.

Wasting long periods of your life doing time.

Once you in, no letting out.

You pledged your honor for your gang's fight.

Too late to pout.

That was a verse of a rap song I wrote sitting in San Quentin's hole when I was riding hard. At that point in my life, I never conceived of no longer fighting for what I pledged my honor to fight for, but some nine years later I realized it's not too late. You can change any time you want. All you have to do is humble your pride and strive for something better in life. But that's what I thought gangbanging was all about, at least its origins: the fight for a better life.

A Bitter Life of Conflicts

From the dawn of mankind, man has conflicted with fellow man. Whether it be over ideology, religious beliefs, demarcation of territorial boundaries, or the richness of natural resources for survival, there have been conflicts. However, as man supposedly advanced in civilization, conflicts were reduced to diplomatic negotiations to settle issues and to produce strategic stability. Whereas force was the last alternative, this was supposed to be the civilized way. After the two major wars of World War I and II, international peace had to be sought. An international peace coalition was formed to supposedly bring solutions. However, conflicts continue to rage on at an even higher velocity.

Meanwhile, America, being the leader of the civilized world, is baffled as to why violent and hostile conflicts exist on her streets. The thought was that a country as prosperous (technologically and economically) and a country that people all around the world look up to as their leader and as a utopia of freedom, would at least have a moral and civil aptitude amongst its citizens. However, behind the glittering lights, tall skyscrapers, and technological prowess of America lurks a growing epidemic of uncivilized barbarism of violence and crime in the urban and rural streets by disadvantaged citizens. This epidemic is caused by gangsterism.

Gangsterism: A Growing Ideology

Gangsterism has become a pervasive ideology within a society that is socially and economically unequal. Those that feel the sting of disadvantage and unfairness are seeking alternative methods to outwit the governing system. Subterfuge, stratagem, ruse, and intimidation have become an explosive concoction that has been rightly termed gangsterism. Gangsterism is not new to the world of America. However, it is usually expected in third world countries where modern development is slow, or in places with collapsing governments where

food and money become scarce and thugs strive to profit off of others' misfortune. Nevertheless, gangsterism has found its place in many Americans' idealistic thinking as an alternative ideology to capitalism. Gangsterism's original tenet is consistent with the "Robin Hood theory": steal from the rich and give to the poor. However, its complexities try to figure ways to manipulate the rules of the political and economic systems and get wealthy on the hard work of the rich.

To many disadvantaged people, gangsterism is the only alternative to the frustrating dilemma of a lack of education, being poor, underprivileged, and not having the connections or resources to make it in the competing world of free market capitalism. Not everyone has the ability or attention span to learn specialized skills and knowledge, nor is everyone creative with entrepreneurial potential. Such unskilled and non-inventive people find themselves on the back burner of America's capitalist machine. In addition, many believe the rules of capitalism only apply to the race and ethnicity that developed it. All others are secondary and only relevant when seen fit. This kind of thinking leads to feelings of unfairness, oppression, and hopelessness which eventually leads to the embracing of gangsterism.

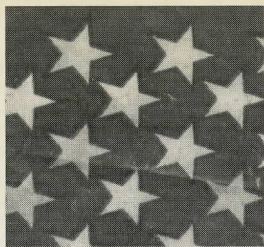
Gangsterism is formally known as organized crime. The sophisticated concepts of organized crime are comprised of the methods of prior ruling religions and government regimes that used clandestine methods to exploit their subjects and enemies. For example, the Nazi regime of Adolph Hitler and its religious and national allies formed a sophisticated and barbaric exploitation of the Jews. They utilized the profits of their exploitation to manipulate the economics of supposedly neutral but rich countries, such as Switzerland and America, to build a military that would have conquered the world.

The trend of organized crime in the US took root through the Italian Mafia which originated from the influx of Italian immigrants who brought their own tactics of bribery, intimidation, murder, and family business. These tactics, although unconventional to the New World of America, were very conventional to the world of the underground black market. This proved very profitable to those mafioso immigrants fleeing from their own tyrannical governments and coming to the country of the Anglo-Saxon.

America's Dirty History: The Cause for Resistance

America, in its early days, was very isolated from the rest of the world and its European counterparts, giving it much latitude to do what it wanted domestically without being scrutinized by the international community. The colonial Americans found a new identity away from the empire of England they originated from. So Anglo-Americans had a new spirit of nationalism, and anything other than Anglo-American culture had to be suppressed so that no other race of Americans could consume the resources or surpass the Anglo founders of the new country. Entitlement was their reasoning; hence, Anglo traditions of segregation and slavery were continued as solutions. Consequently, much abuse, lynching, and oppression became acceptable practices. They even became profitable to radical Anglo-conservatives who received funding and charitable contributions for their efforts. It was inevitable that people being pushed so far by unjustified and tyrannical abuse would eventually resist.

By the '60s, a new morality was taking root in America. Western scientists were introducing a supposed enlightenment to do away with the repressive conservative traditions and to do away with God from the populace as well. Communism was infiltrating American idealism — the ideology of government, democracy, and capitalism. It must be understood that most Americans, white and non-white, were



I stepped out of prison in 1993, having an understanding of what time it was with the red and blue. It became apparent that the color feud took deeper root within La Raza in the Mission than it did with the blacks in the projects.

Christians. The atheistic and radical liberalism of the new morality and communism threatened the Christian fabric of this country, putting tremendous threatening pressure on Anglo-Americans domestically and internationally.

Nevertheless, a strong and determined generation rose up out of this era and resisted the Anglo trends and traditions of prejudice and segregation. Young activists of many ethnicities and black clergymen formed movements and conducted peaceful marches, protests, and boycotts to challenge America's faulty policies and acquire equal justice and equal rights for all. However, the Anglo-Americans felt too much of a threat from the new morality and communism to allow a colored people's uprising. To Anglo-Americans, their future was at stake and communism was thought to be the conspiratorial agent behind the colored people's uprising. Thus, every harsh tactic was used to suppress the colored people's movement.

The Spirit of Revolutionary Resistance and a Religion of Force

After World Wars I and II, and to this day, a serious revolutionary spirit has permeated the world. A shift in thinking has provoked the minds of subjects under foreign rule. This started when the imperial colonization of England, who ruled one quarter of the world's land and people, was losing its zest and financing. After the German blitz in England during World War II, England was left in shambles and rebuilding the country meant withdrawing from many of the colonies she ruled. As a result, governments were turned over to the various colonies' national people and consequently, revolutions broke out. Like the domino effect, many other colonies wanted freedom from foreign rule. An example is South Africa, who won a significant victory over Apartheid (a blatant form of racism and segregation) and eventually succeeded in the withdrawal of British rule. This gave hope to many subjects of oppression: that unity, force, and persistence can break the hand of conquerors. However, once foreign rule was withdrawn, the people of their own country had to succeed in ruling and governing. The transition didn't go well; puppet rulers were given power by withdrawing forces and rich tyrants would succeed the government to oppress the people once again. Many people would not tolerate being oppressed by their own people. Once they succeeded in getting the foreign rulers out, revolutions broke out all across the world, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

America was no exception. The liberty America affords allowed many to see what was happening in the world and the spirit of revolution caught fire. A new religion was introduced to the oppressed black community called The Nation of Islam. A black Muslim named Elijah Mohammed introduced Islam to the hearts of black men and women, who were typically Christian. He taught them strict moral codes, the theology of the Muslim Bible (Koran), and justified jihad (holy war) against the enemies of Islam. Therefore, the Nation of Islam found it highly necessary to organize military style uniformity to resist the white suppressors and create a social structure for their adherents. The famous Malcolm X was a charismatic leader within the Nation of Islam who propelled the black community to resist with the fist instead of the peaceful pacifist movement of Martin Luther King and his Christian supporters. The Civil Rights movement took on a new dimension that consisted of force: a fist for a fist, a stick for a stick, and a bullet for a bullet. Anglo-white America had to consider

rethinking their policies toward colored people or suffer a potential second civil war. Violent and forceful resistance and defense were becoming more popular within the Civil Rights struggle. Hence, militia-style defense groups sprung up all across America to resist the white suppressors: groups such as the Black Panthers and the Chicano Black Berets.

What Happened to the Civil Movement of the '60s

Several Anglo-Americans rose to power with sympathy for the colored people's cause. When white sentiment expressed the need to end the conflicts, elected officials promised to find solutions. Thus a change in policy was brought about. However, a rush to pacify colored Americans came about when a string of assassinations took place, killing key figures and powerful sympathizers of the movement. Eventually, the Civil Rights movement of the colored people's cause dwindled to several activist groups and many civil liberty and civil rights watchdog organizations. However, the Civil Rights movement of the '60s established a precedent that many other struggles found inspiration from, such as women's rights and gay rights.

The peaceful movement of the 1960s nevertheless found its place in the favor of America; many of the participants in the protests and struggle are now reaping the benefits of opportunities that now exist. They have become wealthy, productive, and successful by integrating into the white community. But many members of movements that were deemed paramilitaries of resistance to government found their place in America's prison system. These people are truly political prisoners, because in hindsight, both peaceful and forceful movements were needed at the time to seriously wake America up about its unconstitutional practices towards non-whites. Despite the power of the fists' good intentions, Americans, white and non-white, would not embrace violence or social instability as a perpetual solution for domestic civil liberties. Thus, harsh consequences were imposed upon those movement leaders and participants who perpetuated the forceful cause. Prison became their home. It is at this point in time when "Gangbanging" as we know it today started to take form.

Internal Conflicts: The Formation of Gangbanging

As a result of America's early trends of slavery and segregation, group segments began to form in relation to race and culture and group fragments emerged within each race. For example, there was the house Negro and the field Negro. Within the Hispanic race there was the mestizo and the fair-skinned European featured Hispanic. The fair-skinned integrated smoothly and were more readily accepted into the white south than the darker mestizo. The conflicts between these group fragments arose because one group had advantage over another. The group that had the advantage looked down on the other with mistreatment and scorn. Consequently, deep bitterness and hostilities formed. Those on the disadvantaged side suggested that it was

understandable, even somewhat expected, to be mistreated by another race, but to be mistreated by your own people was downright intolerable.

These inner conflicts are continued today amongst most ethnicities. However, the dynamics are different since there are opportunities for all, no matter what line of group fragment you descend from. What is troubling in today's inner conflicts is that the disadvantaged peoples are fighting and killing the disadvantaged — like pigs, they are fighting for the slop.

Internal Confrontations in Prison: The Grounds of Gangbanging

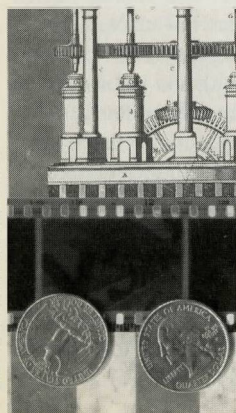
It is here in prison that the forceful resistant ideologies of the Civil Rights struggle met the ideologies of gangsterism. Gangsterism was thought to be the solution to finance the resistance movement from inside the prison walls. The prison system proved to be a ripe environment and atmosphere to recruit individuals that were already bitter, angry, disadvantaged, and ready to accept some kind of cause — a cause that facilitated their hostilities, gave them hope and structure, and guided the resistant. Gangster ideologies seemed to be the perfect solution to find fulfillment and purpose. However, gangsterism today has polluted the original cause — the fight for equal rights and equal justice. Gangsterism has turned good intentions into a sinister epidemic.

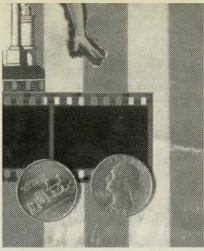
At one time, group segments in prison, although separated into their respective ethnicities, were united amongst each other; there weren't lines of blue or red, north or south separating them. For the people of color, the fight for equality in America was the unifying factor. However, when gangsterism was embraced, the unity was substituted with greed and eventually deteriorated into rivaling and feuding group fragments and schisms. One group segment and fragment sought to have the advantage over the other, which set off a struggle to dominate their own people and eventually turned their aspiration towards having preeminence over the whole of America's prison system.

The ideology of gangsterism was profitable for these groups of prisoners, although sacrificing unity for the mighty dollars proved deadly and bloody. However, unlike the Italian and Chinese mafias who had centuries of tradition and practice to perfect the art of gangsterism, the American Latino and black groups are babes in this practice. Although they know how to be two-bit thugs, gangsterism is like refined thuggery; it deals with sophisticated manipulations of economic rules and policies and borders on criminal and legit. Nonetheless, it surpasses the financial acquisition of any bank robbery or two-bit nickel-and-dime drug deal. However, the established mafias refused to associate with the Latino and black crime organization in prison because they proved to be reckless and uncompromising. Latino and black crime organizations in prison were left with minimal methods and resources of gangsterism. They had a disadvantage in the lucrative free markets of America and couldn't profit off of white-collar crime like the established mafias were doing. Instead, prison crime organizations chose to elevate basic thuggery to new levels by incorporating drug cartel methods and resources. Hence, every street corner of the barrio or 'hood became swamped with drugs and addiction.

To accomplish this new level of crime organization, manpower and influence in the 'hood was imperative. To achieve this objective, propaganda was used to shape the minds of convicts and inmates and bring the ideas into the 'hood. The rhetoric of the Civil Rights movement and ethnic identification were used to appeal to revolutionary minds, thus fabricating purpose behind crime, murder, and internal conflict. It is by this propaganda that the symbols of red and blue, north and south, and other gang identifications get their life in our young minds. Intense and deadly warfare ensued between the

Gangsterism was thought to be the solution to finance the resistance movement from inside the prison walls. The prison system proved to be a ripe environment and atmosphere to recruit individuals that were already bitter, angry, disadvantaged, and ready to accept some kind of cause...





... the objective was to organize the straggling, strained, and feuding barrios and 'hoods, and to mobilize the prisoner crime organization's power and extension. By doing this, all money making schemes could be taxed by the dominating forces in prison. This meant any independent pimp, playa, hustler, or baller had to cough up a percent of their profit to do business in the 'hood or turf where the prison group had its influence and control.

prison groups and their competing ethnic fragments to win the minds, hearts, and honor of gullible convicts, inmates, and youngsters in the 'hood who were looking for purpose in life — purpose away from school displacement and the hopelessness of being colored, poor, bored, and a felon.

Property Protection: Not the Same as a Gang Defending its 'Hood

Due to America's segregation laws, non-whites were not allowed to live and raise their families in white, modernized neighborhoods. So Hispanics, blacks, and other non-whites had their own sections of neighborhoods and were usually forced into ghettos. However, as America started to prosper and modernize, the ghetto enclaves of non-whites became prime real estate for transportation and metropolitan development, road pavement, and merchant commercialization. Many non-whites who owned their land were forced off of it through hardball, violent, and even deadly methods. To protect their land and possessions, many non-white landowners and their families unified in resistance to the white takeovers of property. Such development usually didn't profit non-whites, since most development was for white use only. It is recorded that such merchant development in Hispanic barrios proved detrimental when white sailors docked for free time and used their liberty to rape Hispanic women. As a result, Pachuco gangs were formed to protect Hispanic women from being raped. Hence, zoot-suit gangland warfare ensued against white sailors.

There was much justification for groups' organization to protect their land and property from unlawful takeovers in those days of deep racial prejudice and abuse. The same justification doesn't stand today: turf and barrio wars today consist mostly of drug and other criminal exploitation protection, in the interest of gangs and at the expense of hard working, legitimate people. Today, there's no abusive and tyrannical takeovers from the white-American or raping of Hispanic women by white sailors. Gangs today make their own people sell their land and move out the 'hood. Now the white authority has the justification to go into the 'hood with hardball methods to clean those streets. And our own people are so scared of their supposed protectors of the 'hood that they themselves call for the white authority to protect them. Isn't that ironic, that only some 50 years ago did non-whites unite together to protect their land from whites? Now, non-whites are calling for whites to protect them from their own people — what a shame.

Exploitation, Taxation and Control by Gangs in the Hood

By the early and mid '80s, the prison groups' ideas and propaganda took full root in many of the 'hoods on the West Coast. Such ideas became hope for a lot of disadvantaged peoples.

For the growing-in-power groups in prison, the objective was to organize the straggling, strained, and feuding barrios and 'hoods, and to mobilize the prisoner crime organization's power and extension. By doing this, all money making schemes could be taxed by the dominating forces in prison. This meant any independent pimp, playa, hustler, or baller had to cough up a percent of their profit to do business in the 'hood or turf where the prison group had its influence and control. They either paid for their protection or renounced their independence and joined the group's organization. Such taxation would

put any defiant individual in the environment of the dominating force of the county jail, reception center, or prison in a position to be handled — you either comply, PC up, get a new profession, and get out of the 'hood or get dealt with, plain as that.

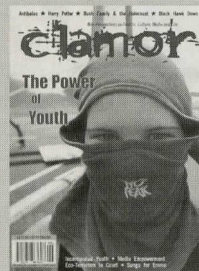
It became apparent that these criminal organizations thrive on the extortion, fear, intimidation, and murder of their own people to acquire financing, control, and power. The most dominating force in prison can secure all those things. That's why there is continued conflict and war between prison group factions to achieve this dominance — to get a piece of the pie. Today's gangbanger is an extension of the criminal organization. However, the gangbanger's only use is to defend the criminal organization's interest, perpetuate the feuding and rivaling, and become potential members of the crime family. Otherwise, the typical gangbanger's stakes in the objective of the criminal organization are expendable.

Conclusions

Today, young homies, if you consider yourself a gangbanger, you wear and represent the symbols of the feuds, conflicts, internal confrontation, and mayhem. Yeah, the origins of what you represent were originally a needed thing. But now what our predecessors fought against back in those days is exactly what today's gangbangers have become: exploiters of our own people; selling drugs to our own people; raping, prostituting and abusing our own people for profit, power, and respect from fear.

I determined that I wasn't no Robin Hood representing that stuff. As a matter of fact, I was a sell-out to my people who strive hard to be recognized legitimately in this now good county. Because I robbed from the poor and gave to the rich, I sit in this prison in isolation, where each day some rich people profit off my misery and mistake. What will be your fate?

Young homies, the conflict and feuding of the gangbang phenomenon will continue as long as you let it. Don't think one person can't change anything, because you can. If you decided to disassociate from your gang and drop your colors, that would be one less intelligent pawn the gangs have to use, and one less person that exploits and sheds the blood of his or her own people. You have the will power to do this. You have the will power to do this. So at this time, my town, your town, is infested with the poison of gangs and their papa organizations. After hearing the information in this study, I challenge you to help find solutions and no longer be apart of the problem. ★



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Ruby Chaton: Stand-Out D.I.Y. Design

by Mollie Wells



The fashion world is a strange place to live. It's an elite, tight-knit circle where designers reign supreme, models share the throne, and fashion magazines are simply vehicles for providing the public (read: the outsiders) with the latest fashion do's and don't's. Designers dictate our entire wardrobes right down to the socks, and the hippest, most beautiful models grace the covers of countless magazines, clad in layers and layers of expensive clothing with eyes that seem to say "See? Look how fabulous this bright pink hyper mini skirt is. You should go buy one." How frustrating is that? We know, first of all, that they skirt probably costs somewhere near our monthly rent, and most likely doesn't even come in our size. It's that fact that makes a large majority of us say, "Fuck fashion," and head out to the local K-Mart for a refreshing change of pace.

Jessica Bordas, owner and operator of Ruby Chaton Designs, doesn't want the public to feel so alienated by the fashion world. "Designer clothing can be so extremely expensive," she explains. "I want to be able to offer clothing that people can actually afford. My goal is to consistently create and provide well-crafted clothing that is always ahead of its time, without being too trendy or pretentious." A quick flip through her website (www.rubychaton.com) confirms that statement. Not only are her designs innovative and very fashion-forward, but they are also fairly affordable, at least as far as designer clothing goes. Her clothing ranges from \$30 to \$85, but most of the designs fall somewhere between \$45 and \$60. Sure, it isn't *cheap*, but it's better than paying 60 bucks for a mass-produced pair of jeans that end up falling apart within two months. Besides, her designs are worth every penny; she's created a line of Asian-inspired clothing that is strikingly subtle in its uniqueness. Her clothing features simple lines, mandarin collars, and lots of pieces that appear to be straight out of space, and although they are very artful and creative, they are in no way too haute couture for daily life; "I want to create artfully simple designs that serve as an accessory to the uniqueness of the individual," Bordas says. "It's all about striking a balance between creativity and wearability."

While Ruby Chaton offers designer clothing, Bordas does nothing to perpetuate that elitist nature that is inherent in the fashion world. If anything, Ruby Chaton seems to be completely bucking that system by trying to create a little online world where prospective buyers of her clothing aren't held at arm's

length. She affords her customers the option of participating in the design process by offering a "Create Your Own Design" feature. If you love one of her designs but hate the color or fabric, just email her and she'll alter it. She also custom makes designs to fit any body shape or size and offers free shipping to her customers. That'll come to be a pretty large comfort to the alienated ex-fashionistas.

Although these aspects already make Ruby Chaton stand out from most design companies, its most remarkable trait is its ownership: Bordas operates Ruby Chaton completely on her own. The designing, the marketing, the business, and all of the actual production come straight from her and no one else. "I have chosen to run the business on my own because it is still small enough to do so," she says. "When it gets bigger and more established, I'll have to hire some help." Of course, the prospects of a bigger business won't change the community feeling that Ruby Chaton works so hard to achieve. "I still plan on doing the designing myself. I would just like to find someone else to work on the business side of things, which is what I least enjoy."

So is Ruby Chaton starting a fashion revolution? Is the elite fashion circle about to be broken? No one can really answer that question with complete certainty but it sure seems like Ruby Chaton is paving the way for a whole new set of designers who are centered on creating a community out of fashion, instead of a social barrier. "There will always be new generations who change everything with their ideas," Bordas says. "These ideas will create inspiration for new art and fashion. Like most artists, I knew absolutely nothing about business when I started. I believed in my ideas and everything else I learned along the way. My business is still somewhat small, but it keeps growing. I know if I keep at it, it will be as big as I want it to be." ★

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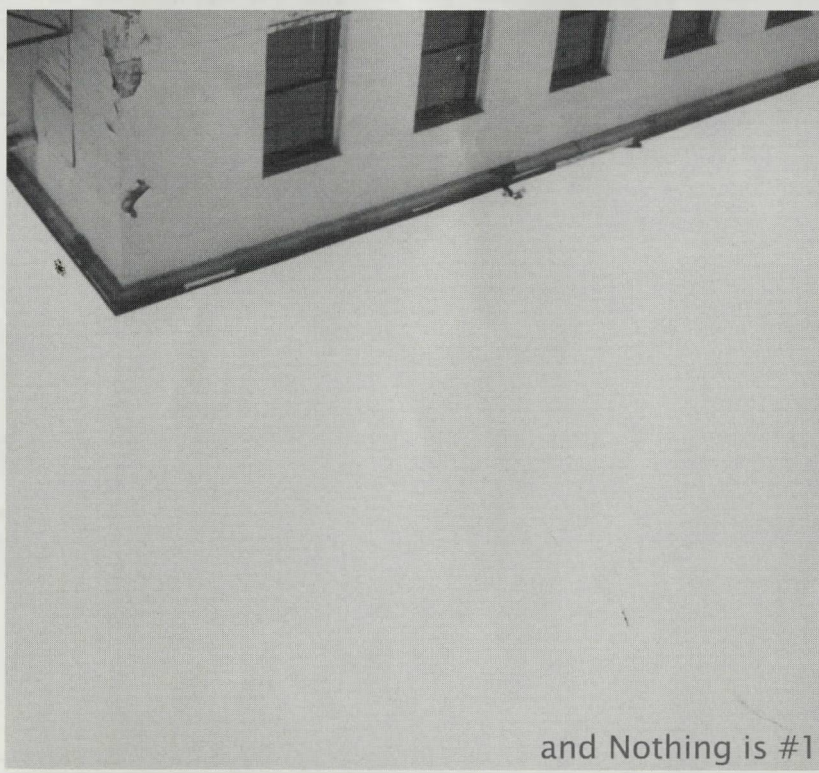


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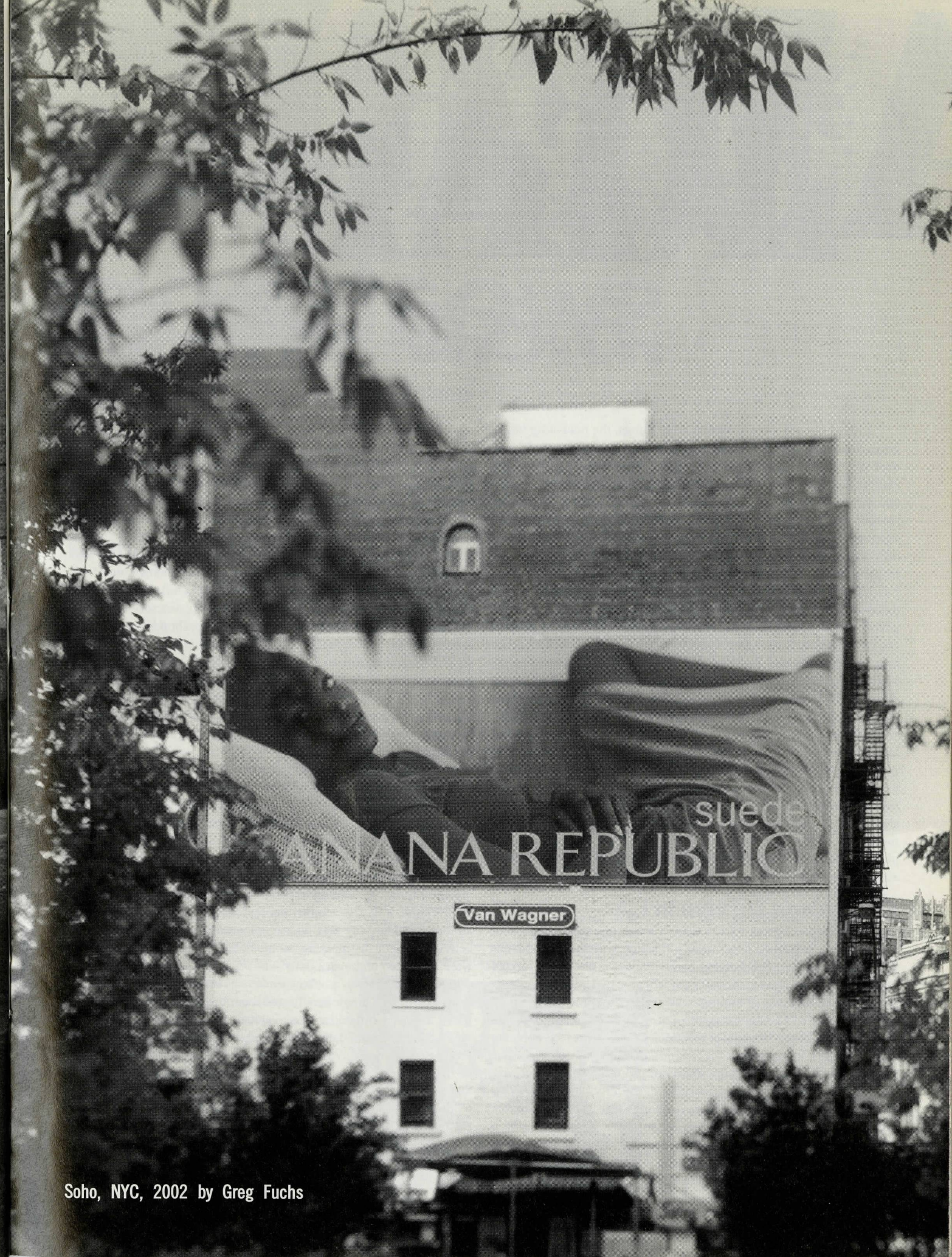
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Bushwick, Brooklyn, 2002 by Greg Fuchs



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sweatshops

I loved my old job for, among other things, the hour-long lunch break. It seemed an absurd amount of time for consumption, so I spent most of it wandering the narrow South Philly streets. Sometimes I'd explore the maze of crammed blocks south of Washington Avenue and east of Broad Street. Little did I know what went on in those old, cracked-wall buildings humming with activity. The noise of the streets and the blizzard of people never hinted at what occurred inside those different though somehow similar buildings. I only had to look up: many of those buildings concealed sweatshops on their upper floors. Few Americans realize such labor practices still affect tens of thousands of people in their own country.

According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, a sweatshop can be defined as "an employer that violates more than one federal or state labor, industrial homework, occupational safety and health, workers' compensation, or industry regulation law." That could describe the workplace for hundreds of thousands of Americans. In regards to the garment industry, such a description is typical of nearly all workplaces. In and of itself, a "sweatshop" is not illegal. Still, the Department of Labor states that over half of garment shops (22,000 in the U.S.) violate minimum wage and overtime regulations. This is a key element found in cases of sweatshop abuses. According to Sweatshop Watch, government studies reveal that 75 percent of sewing shops are in violation of health and safety laws. Combine sub-minimum wages and inhuman working conditions with relentless physical and verbal abuse, and you have a situation not expected on American shores.

To Live and Survive in L.A.

"We worked 10 to 12 hours a day for sub-minimum wages and no overtime," explained Esperanza Hernandez, a garment worker for the women's clothing line Forever 21. Hernandez is one of 19 workers who brought a suit against the company, alleging that it owes hundreds of thousands of dollars in minimum wage and overtime pay. Though the workers tried to negotiate with Forever 21's management, the company denied any attempts at a settlement and refuses to cooperate with the state's investigation.

Forever 21 is a sweatshop proprietor in Los Angeles. There are as many as 160,000 garment workers in the city, and over 5,000 garment shops (most said to be sweatshops). The garment laborers often work 12-hour days in hazardous conditions for as low as \$1 a day, despite (or because of) the piles of profit reaped by the retailers and manufacturers of garments: California manufacturers sell about \$18 billion of clothing a year, while retailers in the state rake in \$30 billion from clothing per year.

According to the United States Department of Labor, 61 percent of garment shops in Los Angeles violate wage and hour regulations. In addition, 96 percent were determined to be in violation of health and safety regulations. Los Angeles is not an anomaly, in California or elsewhere. San Francisco-based apparel giant J. Crew, among others, is also accused of wage infractions.

While Do Won Chang, CEO of Forever 21, takes home \$400 million in revenue, "Ninety-eight percent of Los Angeles garment factories have workplace health and safety problems serious enough to lead to severe injuries or death," states Sweatshop Watch.

They also report that in 1999, California governor Gray Davis signed Assembly Bill 633 into law, aimed at harnessing abuses of garment labor such as in the Forever 21 case. The bill implores manufacturers and retailers to pay minimum wage and overtime. Nevertheless, it is estimated that companies owe \$81 million a year in unpaid wages. Since the passage of Assembly Bill 633, \$17,274 has been collected.

Seventy-two illegal Thai immigrants worked in what could truly be described as slave-like conditions in a secret compound in El Monte, California. On August 2, 1995, police raided and closed the sweatshop, exposing to the world the existence of one of the more lurid examples of capitalism gone awry in recent decades.

From outside, the El Monte compound looked like any other apartment complex surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by gun-wielding thugs. According to Sweatshop Watch, the workers slaved for 18 hours a day — another source claims 22 hours per day. The employers made sure that their employees couldn't do the simplest activity without the most meticulous of monitoring: all phone calls were evaluated and every letter was read. The workers lived within this house of horrors, as many as ten squeezed into a two-bedroom apartment. Their employers forced them to purchase all goods from them, at vastly inflated prices. Typical of sweatshops, the workers faced constant intimidation and threats to both themselves and their families in Thailand. Within the razor-wire fences and dimly lit rooms of the El Monte complex, the workers sewed clothing for retailers and manufacturers such as B.U.M., Tomato, Cheetah, Airtime, and Clio. These products sold in such chain stores as Target, Sears, and Nordstrom.

Due to the efforts of organizations such as Sweatshop Watch, the Thai workers found new homes and new jobs. Yet they faced further persecution at the hands of the INS (Immigration Naturalization Service). All were detained by the INS and were held on \$5,000 bail.

MADE

in the u.s.a.

by Casey Boland

Essentially, the Thai workers were transported from one prison to another. Such practice discourages sweatshop workers from exposing the exploitation and oppression they endure. The Thai workers, along with Latino workers from Los Angeles sweatshops, have filed lawsuits and won several significant gains.

Relationship of Command

The garment industry operates as a "subcontracting system." Within this structure, businesses contract out all production operations. In the United States, almost none of the garment retail and manufacture companies create their commodity in their own factories. The entire market of apparel goods waiting to be bought on shelves across America is manufactured in facilities owned and operated by contractors and subcontractors who are not affiliated with the retailers and manufacturers.

As previously stated, the retailers and manufacturers are the top dogs in the industry. They purchase clothing from the manufacturer. They sell the clothing to consumers. In keeping with the true spirit of competition firmly embedded in the American Way, manufacturers engage in a struggle to outbid one another for orders from the retailers. Like a ferocious illegal dogfight, some manufacturers walk away triumphant, others crawl from the battle beaten, weary, or worse. Given the climate, it is not a surprise that manufacturers want to maintain the lowest production costs possible to appeal to the retailers.

Retailers are a rare breed. Since they are few in number, they can dictate prices. This in turn determines the pace and cost of production. Powerful mergers over the past decade consolidated the might and influence of the minority of mega-retailers. Sweatshop Watch explains, "The 10 largest retailers account for nearly two-thirds of all apparel sales in the U.S. This consolidated buying power vastly increases retailers' ability to put more pressure on the manufacturers in terms of price and speed."

Current labor regulations stipulate that retailers are not responsible for the labor conditions existing in the factories far below them. The subcontracting system fragments the workforce in the garment industry. The major retailers, including Federated Department Stores (Macys and Bloomingdales), Wal-Mart, and K-Mart,

benefit most. They account for 50 to 80 percent of all apparel sales. By imposing prices for work done by the subcontractors, they effectively dictate maximum exploitation of the garment workers — to produce the highest quantity for the lowest cost.

The manufacturer's job is to design and register new lines of clothing. They collect the materials to fill the orders of the retailers. Acting as somewhat of a middleman, the manufacturer works with the retailer and the contractors and subcontractors. Hence, the retailer has no direct contact with the contractors or garment workers.

The contractor works directly with the manufacturer. The responsibility of the contractor is to produce and ship products to the manufacturer. The subcontractor works with the contractor. Subcontractors make specific parts of garments. Each process can then be performed in a different factory, such as sewing, dying and cutting. The different factories send the unfinished portions to the contractor for completion. Both the contractors and subcontractors are by proximity responsible for the conditions in which their employees work. Given their relative anonymity, subcontractors and contractors can easily close up shop and relocate under a different name but with the same roster of clients and employees. It is estimated that there are over 22,000 contractors and subcontractors just in the U.S. There are about 1,000 manufacturers.

The Big Apple of Apparel

Few cities boast as large a network of garment production as New York City. Raking in some \$20 billion a year, few can hold a candle to the raging inferno of commerce that is the NYC garment industry. (It should be noted that September 11 had a devastating effect on many garment shops. Though the consequences remain unclear, it is certain that many sweatshop workers from NYC fled to other cities, such as Philadelphia, in search of work). According to the Center for Social and Economic Rights, New York City produces 18 percent of all women's outerwear in the U.S., and 25 percent of all dresses. Including all sectors of the garment industry, nearly

The Department of Labor states that over half of garment shops (22,000 in the U.S.) violate minimum wage and overtime regulations.



235,000 people work within it. The Department of Labor suggests that more than 60 percent of the city's 7,000 or more garment factories could be classified as sweatshops, while as much as 90 percent of garment shops in Chinatown are sweatshops.

The sweatshops of New York City can be found within the Garment District and Chinatown in Manhattan; Bushwick, Williamsburg, and Sunset Park in Brooklyn; Long Island City, Flushing, and Ridgewood in Queens. Not coincidentally, these areas also feature large Asian and Latino populations, many of whom are immigrants. Manufacturers in the city have classically utilized the immigrant population to create one of the most profitable industries. More and more, they rely on newly arrived immigrants for obvious reasons: they will work cheaper than anyone else and raise little objection to reprehensible working conditions.

In 1986, the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). The intent of the act was ostensibly to prevent the employment of illegal immigrants by making the employers responsible for ascertaining the citizenship status of the employee. The Center for Economic and Social Rights argues that it had the opposite effect: "IRCA has increased employment of and the resulting flow of undocumented workers to NYC. The employer sanctions law has helped employers to create a larger army of surplus labor and forced the immigrants to work for whatever rates they can find while pushing down wages and lowering conditions for all workers."

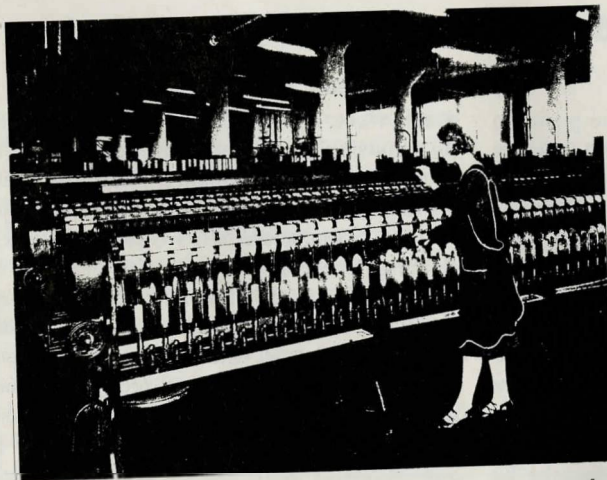
An agreement between the U.S. Department of Labor and the INS has facilitated the deportation of undocumented sweatshop workers. As seen in the case of El Monte, workers face possible punishment and the withholding of owed wages if they choose to voice the violations of their basic rights. It can be argued then that the government aids the sweatshop employers in keeping their employees docile and quiet. "The government is enforcing employer sanctions in ways that undermine U.S. labor standards," says Peter Kwong, author of *Forbidden Workers* and *The New Chinatown*.

The Chinese Staff and Workers Association (CSWA) regularly takes on sweatshop proprietors and violators of workers' rights. One of their major victories was against Jian Wen Liang. Liang ran garment factories in Brooklyn. He made employees work 100-hour weeks with no overtime pay and also pocketed a small percentage off of each employee's paycheck. Thanks to the efforts of CSWA, Liang was imprisoned for 90 days and forced to pay a \$10,000 fine.

The Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) has commenced a battle against elite retail label Donna Karan. They issued a report based on interviews with former employees of a Donna Karan International Manhattan factory, alleging human rights violations under sweatshop conditions. According to the report, the

workers (mostly Latina and Chinese) earned \$4 an hour, received no overtime pay, labored for an average of 11 hours a day, six days a week, and were subjected to a variety of abuses and depredations. Latina workers in the factories were paid less than the Chinese workers for similar work. The CESR report states: "The oppressive working conditions, including long hours, constant verbal harassment, inability to take time off without losing one's job and losing pay for being late, created conditions of forced labor."

New York City is routinely called the fashion capital of the United States. Donna Karan rests comfortably in the top five women's apparel companies in the nation. Not many companies loom larger than DK when it comes to trend-setting, hip clothes for image-conscious female and male consumers. Revenues for DK brand merchandise were over \$600 million. The CESR report adds, "Donna Karan's high-end garments are worn by celebrities such as Susan Sarandon, Barbara Streisand, and Hillary Clinton." Only 20 percent of DK's production is contracted to U.S. facilities.



The sweatshops of New York City can be found within the Garment District and Chinatown in Manhattan; Bushwick, Williamsburg, and Sunset Park in Brooklyn; Long Island City, Flushing, and Ridgewood in Queens.

Made in the U.S.A.

Though the case being pursued against DK and one of its manufacturers, Choe, remains to be closed, DK settled a suit brought by workers in its factories in Saipan.

Never heard of Saipan? Don't worry, neither have most Americans. Located in the Pacific Ocean, Saipan is one of 14 islands known as the U.S. Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and is the home to a \$1 billion garment industry. Most of the garment workers on the Mariana Islands are "guest workers," from China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Thailand. Each pays a recruitment fee of as much as \$7,000 and usually signs contracts forgoing their rights to join unions, attend religious services, marry, or quit the job. In other words, indentured servitude. As Coop America explains, the immigrants seek gainful employment, the American Dream (Saipan is a U.S. territory), and "instead they find nightmarish working conditions including debt bondage, organized crime, corrupt officials and sexual slavery." The organization

describes conditions similar to those found in El Monte: "They (garment workers) live in guarded dormitories surrounded by barbed wire, facing inward, and work from 12 to 18 hours a day without overtime." All clothing manufactured in Saipan bears the label "Made in the U.S.A."

Contractors in Saipan haven't gone without some attention. The U.S. government bestowed upon them over 1,000 citations for violating U.S. OSHA standards over the past five years. Sweatshop Watch points out why more government scrutiny has been avoided. The Marianas government has flown over 90 members of the U.S. House of Representatives for "inspection visits which have included stays at resort hotels and visits to golf courses and coral reefs." Following such visits, the House members (and their families) normally find conditions in the Marianas quite acceptable.

In January 1999, advocates for the Saipan workers filed two federal class action lawsuits, one targeting the garment factories for not paying overtime and maintaining deplorable living and working conditions, the other aimed at 18 major retailers and manufacturers for a racketeering conspiracy to create clothing in sweatshop conditions. Several companies agreed to settle, including Sears, Gymboree, Ralph Lauren, Liz Claiborne, and Calvin Klein, yet they do not admit to any malfeasance. Gap, J.C. Penny, Target, and Lane Bryant refuse to settle. Gap has allegedly attempted to encourage other companies to not settle. Representatives of Gap argue that the

suit is the fault of unions and that the company has been wrongfully accused and misrepresented. They also point out that Saipan is exempt from most U.S. labor laws, despite being classified as an U.S. territory. At least one company, Levi Strauss, has moved its factories out of Saipan. It also refuses to settle.

The case could serve as a major precedent for the garment industry. U.S. District Court Judge Alex R. Munson stated that if the allegations were proven in trial, it could make culpable both factories and retailers "for engaging in a 'conspiracy' to use peonage labor in violation or racketeering laws." Such a finding would make retailers directly accountable for conditions in the factories that manufacture their products.

Many, such as economist Paul Krugman, argue that sweatshops may indeed be deplorable, but are a necessary corollary to global economic development. Apologists for sweatshop labor contend primarily that the wages paid to sweatshop workers is appropriate to their nation and that a job is better than no job. Polemics over the sweatshop issue often reveal the underlying causes for sweatshops. As Global Exchange's Kevin Danahar asserts, "To say a miserable job is better than no job at all is hardly ringing proof of the benefits of so-called 'free trade.' Free-traders like to say that their system offers opportunity. But a job that does not pay a living wage and does not guarantee workers the right to form unions is no real opportunity. Sweatshops are not a sign of progress." Ultimately, the use of sweatshop labor, in the United States and abroad, goes hand in hand with the increasingly global economy and the concurrent drive for profits at unhindered costs. International economic policies such as IMF stipulations and WTO-induced relaxed trade barriers foster the ease with which capital can globetrot from nation to nation. The residual effects are evident in the U.S.: most companies manufacture all goods overseas. And those still operating in the mainland strive to suppress wages. The existence of sweatshops here in our urban centers and rural regions has everything to do with this nebulous buzzword globalization oft spoken in recent times. Yet because of it, sweatshops join the rest of U.S. manufacturing and industry moving south of the border in search of more lax regulations and cheaper labor. The National Mobilization Against Sweatshops states, "The real cause of the spread of sweatshop conditions and sweating structures is the employers' drive to cut labor costs so that they can maintain or raise their profits."

Despite some efforts on the part of the U.S. government to fight sweatshop conditions, they continue to flourish. The

White House Apparel Industry Partnership, founded in 1997, established a Workplace Code of Conduct. Its stipulations reflect those of most who crusade to end sweatshops. Garment companies must disclose who makes their products and where, a living wage must be guaranteed, employees must be free to form unions and bargain collectively, and independent monitoring must be permitted. Many companies currently claim that their factories are monitored, yet most of this work is done by auditors paid for by the company. Critics argue that such monitoring can hardly be thorough or impartial.

Also important in the maintenance and perpetuation of sweatshop conditions is the fact that no stores, brand names, or retailers have committed themselves to adopting anti-sweatshop precepts. With few complaints against them and customers rushing to buy more commodities created under the harshest of conditions, they clearly see no need to fix what they feel isn't broken. Unless they see a serious threat to their profits, such companies will continue to use sweatshop labor. As noted earlier, retailers are not legally responsible for what occurs in the production process. As Sweatshop Watch states, "Sweatshops will be cleaned up only when manufacturers and retailers with private labels are legally responsible with their sewing shops for wages due to employees."

On a day when the clouds assaulted the city in a volley of thundershowers, I walked the streets of Chinatown aware for the first time that sweatshops weren't something that existed tens of thousands of miles away; they were a few feet above me. An elementary school teacher explained to me that she grew up, as everyone in Chinatown did, knowing like the sky above their heads that sweatshops were an intrinsic way of life, a common means of employment. Andrew Ross, author of *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade and the Rights of Garment Workers*, remarked: "Sweatshop conditions flourish when they are well hidden." With revelations of sweatshops in places such as Kentucky and Louisiana, it is clear that much more remains to be revealed about the tens of thousands of people working in sweatshops across America. ★

Resources on buying sweatshop free clothes and more information:
www.behindthelabel.org
www.coopamerica.org
www.sweatshopwatch.org
www.sweatshops.org
www.uniteunion.org
www.corpwatch.org
www.cesr.org
www.cswa.org
www.aaldef.org
www.nmass.org

\$ Abercrombie & Fitch

In addition to being among the hippest outfitters of U.S. youth and young adults, Abercrombie & Fitch are among the crew of companies using sweatshop labor in Saipan. Thanks to boy bands donning their wares and singing their praises, the garment company nets a profit of \$1.2 billion. CEO Michael S. Jeffries earns an annual compensation of \$4 million. Workers on Saipan earn \$3.05 or less an hour.

\$ Calvin Klein

Though the company experienced a slew of controversies during the '90s (such as allegations that some of their ad campaigns were on par with child porn), Calvin Klein remains wildly successful. Calvin himself made the Forbes Top 100 in 2000 with a cool earnings of \$21.5 million. The company is owned by the Warnaco Group, which uses sweatshop labor in Saipan.

\$ Gap, Inc.

Gap, Inc. maintains a cornucopia of sweatshops across the world, it also utilizes Saipan workers in the construction of its popular garments. Gap leads a struggle to eliminate a suit brought against companies accused of using sweatshops in Saipan. Gap has suffered falling profits recently, yet saw annual sales of \$13.7 billion. CEO Millard "Mickey" Drexler boasts an annual compensation of \$8 million.

\$ J. Crew

J. Crew is yet another company exploiting "guest workers" in Saipan for all of their physical worth. Though the company was at press time considering settling in the case against it, J. Crew also reportedly used factories of reputed sweatshop status in California. Annual J. Crew sales hovered around \$826 million. Chairperson Emily Woods' rakes in \$2 million.

\$ Levi Strauss & Company

Although they adopted "Global Sourcing and Operating Guidelines" in March 1992. Yet a critic demurred: "Documented visits to Levi's production sites present evidence that repeatedly shows that the company's code has not been implemented." Their "guidelines" exhibit flaws such as not providing wage guarantees, stipulating a 60-hour workweek, and not using independent monitors. Levi Strauss saw 2001 net sales of \$4.3 billion. It has pulled manufacturing out of Saipan.

\$ The Limited

The Limited owns many of the popular women's retail outlets (Express, Lerner NY, New York & Company, The Limited, as well as Victoria's Secret). With 2001 earnings soaring near \$8.8 billion, one may think that the company could splurge on a couple bucks extra per day for their employees. Yet The Limited is among the few who refuse to settle the suit in Saipan. The Limited also faced suits for wage violations in sweatshops in New York City during the '90s.

\$ Wal-Mart

Wal-Mart is the largest retailer in the world. It reported annual sales of \$137.6 billion, which is more than the GDP (gross domestic product) of 155 nations. It is also one of the most oppressive yet furtive in dealing with those who makes their products. Wal-Mart does not disclose who makes their commodities and where they are made. One known location is Saipan, from which the company imported 7.3 million pounds of garments between 1994 and 1998. The retail value was approximately \$88 million. Wal-Mart claims to have a code of conduct, yet the National Labor Committee states: "Young women (are) fired and deported for becoming pregnant, refusing to work overtime without pay, or complaining about working or living conditions."

Animal-Free Fashion

A Field Guide to Veganwear

by Mickey Z.

"I admit to having worn suede and leather myself for a while, but you just never felt clean, and it's degenerate anyway to use animal skins."

—Andy Warhol

Vegans love to say that they make a difference three times a day — at each meal. But choosing to wear clothes that are not derived from animal products offers the compassionate, aware consumer the opportunity to lead by example all day long. That jacket is a mobile billboard. Those shoes are one continuous commercial. You've voted with your fashion dollar and said NO to fur, leather, wool, silk, and down. Perhaps you've also chosen union-made garments, maybe even organic or recycled fibers. Best of all, you've opted out of the endless manufacturing-consuming-disposing cycle by buying used (or is that "pre-worn"?). "Fur, down, silk, wool, and leather all cause suffering for animals. Why would I want to be a part of that when I can be cruelty-free, given the countless alternatives to all of these things?" asks vegan activist Pamela Rice.

But what happens when someone asks you why? As Rice demonstrates in her popular pamphlet, "101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian" (www.vivavegie.org) rocking foundations and changing minds requires facts—facts you won't find in the corporate media (and rarely even in the alternative media). Though arguments against fur and leather are more obvious and easier to come by—what about wool, down, or silk? Here's some info to get you started.

Down

Beyond fur, leather, and wool, there are less obvious forms of animal-derived clothing. They may be less obvious, but are no less cruel. The soft under-feathering plucked out of live geese destined for slaughter is called "down." Upon reaching adulthood, geese are divided by color. Gray geese are destined to become p'té de foie gras. To produce this alleged delicacy, gray geese are force-fed 6 to 7 pounds of grain three times a day with an air-driven feeder tube for 28 days. At that point, their livers, from which the pate is made, will have bloated to 6 to 12 times their normal size. About 10 percent don't make it to slaughter. "They die when their stomachs burst," says Pamela Rice. It is the white geese that undergo the painful plucking process to supply filling for comforters, pillows, and ski parkas. "Typically, ducks and geese are lifted by their necks, their legs tied, and their feathers are ripped out, explains Carla Bennett. "The struggling birds often sustain injuries during plucking. They are then returned to their cage until they are ready to be plucked again. This process begins when the animals are 8 weeks old and is repeated at eight-week intervals until the birds are slaughtered."

Silk

"Silk is not vegan," says Joanne Stepaniak. "It is a viscous protein substance secreted from the glands of silkworms which hardens into silk on contact with air." To grasp the cruelty of silk—the fiber silkworms weave to make cocoons—one must first recognize that worms are sensate. They demonstrate a clear physical response to pain: the production of endorphins. Next comes a rough understanding of how silk is produced. Thanks to centuries of cultivation, the most common species of the moth larvae known as the silkworm only exists on the mulberry trees owned by commercial silk producers. Silk is obtained from the cocoon of the silkworm. "In order to retain a single, unbroken filament, the silkworm is killed before it can emerge from the cocoon and break the thread," Stepaniak explains. "Slaughtering silkworms for their silk is done by boiling, baking, or steaming the live worm directly in its cocoon. When the worm is in this chrysalis stage it is not dead; it is transforming." Through selective breeding, the moths that emerge from the cocoon have lost their ability to fly. "Certain chrysalis are kept aside to allow the moths to emerge and mate," continues Stepaniak. "After the female lays her eggs, she is crushed and inspected for diseases. If she appears diseased, her eggs are immediately destroyed. After mating, the males are dumped into a basket and discarded as refuse."

When used in clothing, silk is sometimes called pure chiffon, pure georgette, organza, pure crepe, or pure satin.



Wool

"On the surface, it appears that wool is a benign product because, at least theoretically, it can be obtained without harming the sheep," states author Joanne Stepaniak. "However, upon closer inspection, we find that the wool industry is actually very similar to the egg and dairy industries. While animals such as laying hens, dairy cows, and wool-bearing sheep are not immediately killed to procure their salable products, they suffer tremendously for years prior to their ultimate and unavoidable slaughter."

The wool industry has benefited from a myth. Many Americans believe that shearing sheep helps them from being burdened with too much wool. But, without human-enforced breeding methods, sheep would grow just enough wool to protect themselves from temperature extremes. The heavy, wool-bearing sheep that we see today are products of selective breeding over many generations. These "mutants" produce far more wool than they were designed to produce. Then, when this unnatural coat is shorn, the denuded sheep suffer from the cold. "Sometimes on the big runs of Australia," says Freya Dinshah of the American Vegan Society, "thousands of newly-shorn sheep die in one night when the weather turns unexpectedly cold."

"Horrors abound on sheep farms, including mutilating, painful surgical procedures that are performed without anesthesia," says Stepaniak. "These entail mulesing, the cutting of large strips of flesh off the hind legs to reduce fly problems, and tail docking, designed to preserve the salable condition of wool surrounding a sheep's anus, among others."

Roughly 148 million Australian sheep produce 80 percent of the world's wool. According to Australian Law Reform Chairman, M.D. Kirby:

- 20-40 percent of lambs die at birth or before the age of eight weeks from cold or starvation.
- Eight million mature sheep die every year from disease, lack of shelter, and neglect.
- One million of these die within 30 days of shearing.

There is a secondary manner in which the wool industry kills. Since coyotes prey upon domestic sheep, farmers rely on poisoned bait to kill the predators. Coyotes are poisoned, shot, and burned alive by the hundreds of thousands every year by ranchers and the U.S. government for merely being coyotes. Countless other animals die from consuming the bait, including those who feed on poisoned carcasses. "These victims include golden eagles, bluebirds, hawks, falcons, badgers, bobcats, weasels, skunks, mink, martens, wild and domestic dogs, and bears," says Dinshah. The wool industry comes full circle back to the slaughterhouse because the huge profit made from wool encourages further domestic breeding, which ultimately results in the butchery of animals for food. As far back as 4000 BC, sheep used to provide humans with wool were eventually slaughtered for meat. "Thus," declares Dinshah, "from early times there existed moral complicity in the slaughter inherent in the use of wool."

As a final component to this distasteful equation, the sizeable herds of sheep bred by the wool industry eventually make the land they graze on unfit for cultivation.

So there you are: You're attending a protest or working at a non-profit; you got there on foot, by bicycle, or by public transportation; you've packed your vegan lunch; and you're wearing animal-free clothing. You're a walking advertisement for compassionate, aware living and you've got the facts to back up your decisions. In other words, the motivating power example is in full effect and ready to challenge the corporate-dominated norms. ★

Urban Wilds: Gardeners' Stories of the Struggle for Land and Justice

Edited by clea

Water/under/ground publications, 2001

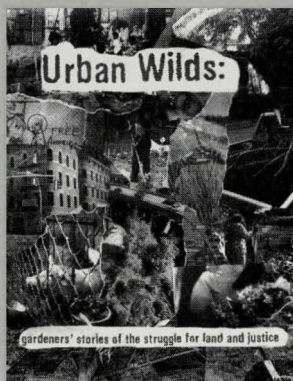
"Under pavement. Under a shimmering crust of broken glass and weeds, the dark earth endures. We are dispossessed of our most basic human right — to cultivate the land. But in cities across North America, people are taking back this right and resisting corporate control of food and livelihood."

So says the back cover of *Urban Wilds: gardeners' stories of the struggle for land and justice*, a poetic, spunky book/ zine published last summer by clea on water/under/ground publications.

Urban Wilds is an inspiring and practical anarchist handbook and scrapbook about environmental and ecological politics and urban gardening around the world. There are lengthy, well-researched articles on biotechnology and genetic engineering, environmental justice and other topics along with a slew of profiles of successful community garden projects and narratives about organizing campaigns around garden and environmental issues.

The stories offer hopeful paradigms for community organizing and self-sufficient anarchist communities along with being full of practical details and advice about gardening and gardens.

These include "Out of the Rubble" about community gardening and tangentially the complex political situation in Havana; Avant Gardening For Fun



and Nutrition out of Eugene, Oregon; the development of community gardens in public housing complexes in Washington, and the racial and class issues the project brought to the surface; and "Down on the Canadian Industrial Farm," Andrea del Moral's first-hand journalistic account of the effect of Monsanto and globalization on farming in Canada.

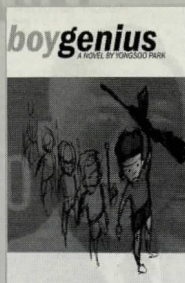
The book is also visually diverse and beautiful in a collage/ zine style, with photos of gardens and murals, drawings, stencils and textbook graphics.

At the heart of the book is the simple theme of reconnection with the organic, with the very earth that feeds us and gives us life, both on a tangible and symbolic level. Most of the stories touch on the fact that the earth and plants are so central to our being that gardening should be seen not only as a way to produce food and have fun, but as a model for communities and lifestyles in general. For example the definition of permaculture: "More than a collection of gardening techniques, permaculture design models the complex interactions of sun, wind, water, plants and animals that give natural systems their productivity. This concept of 'patterning' applies equally to a patio garden or an entire city."

-Kari Lydersen

THIS REVIEW

Boy Genius
Yongsoo Park
Akashic Books, 2002
www.akashicbooks.com



When I read the PR for Yongsoo Park's novel, *Boy Genius*, I was intrigued. How does one write a novel with a political agenda? Many novels critical of politics have been published in the past. George Orwell's *1984* is a prime example. But how does one write a political novel?

In *Boy Genius*, Park has given us the answer.

The novel follows the exploits of Boy Genius, a television personality in his native South Korea, who is lied to by his government and leaves for America, where he is stepped on by the system and forced to submit to a brutal elementary school teacher and eventually conform to the American system. Boy Genius is haunted by the betrayal of President Park of Korea and the death of his parents. Throughout the book he is given clues to his mysterious exile and meets with ghosts from his past.

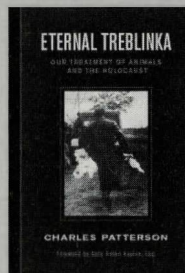
Park's satirical approach is rivaled only by Moliere's *Tartuffe* in style. But where Moliere pointed out the hypocrisy of 16th Century clergy, Park takes aim at the hypocrisies in 20th century, US-style democracy. President Park is always referred to as a religious figure. "His voice was strong and commanding," Park writes. "He swiveled slowly around in His chair and peered at me through the large mirror-faced aviator glasses that had been surgically attached to His face."

Throughout his story, Boy Genius meets a pack of wild dogs who can turn themselves into children, a doctor who can change skin color and bone structure to make people look more American (read: normal) and an elementary school principal who keeps Boy Genius locked away in solitary confinement to make him conform.

Park's superb skills as an author only enhance the power of this book and provide an open window to the reasoning of today's political and social revolution. The book's one drawback is that at times it is so farfetched it is unbelievable. But then again, so is its subject.

-Danny McCaslin

Eternal Treblinka:
Our Treatment of Animals
and the Holocaust
Charles Patterson
Lantern Books, 2002
www.powerfulbook.com



Human mistreatment of animals rests on the same utilitarian ethics that were used to justify the Holocaust—some must suffer for the good of the rest.

And with that assertion, Charles Patterson has his work cut out for him in just a 200+ page book. In *Eternal Treblinka*, Patterson claims that mistreating and domesticating animals made human beings capable of mistreating and enslaving other human beings; cruelty and violence brought about cruelty and violence. Causality, especially in matters of behavior, is an extremely difficult argument to support.

Patterson fails to support his causal argument, but he succeeds in drawing useful connections.

Patterson successfully connects animal oppression with human oppression; selective breeding with genocide; animal laboratory experiments with concentration camp experiments; livestock castration with eugenic sterilization; the total experience of slaughterhouses with the total experience concentration camps, from the mental states of workers to the transport of the soon-to-be slaughtered; German eugenic sterilization law with American eugenic sterilization law

Will this book turn carnivores to vegans? Quite possibly, as Patterson takes pains to remind us of the horrors of castration, slaughter, and concentration camps. Will this book reach the people who would most benefit from reading it? The book, or singular chapters of it, could easily be used as class reading assignments. And it offers enough details and commentary to interest fans of Holocaust history, including an entertaining disabuse of the "Hitler was a vegetarian" myth.

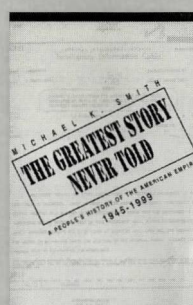
In addition, Patterson critiques humans' use of animal names to maintain hierarchy among human groups and profiles several people affected by the Holocaust who later became animal advocates, specifically dwelling on the vegetarian writer Isaac Bashevis Singer. *Eternal Treblinka's* sections are not well tied together, though fascinating when examined separately.

Patterson wants us to understand that human oppression will not cease until animal oppression ceases, and vice versa. These evils must be destroyed together. It's a daunting message.

-Jill Wesolowski

The Greatest Story Never Told:
A People's History
of the American Empire,
1945-1999

Michael K. Smith
Xlibris Corporation



I've owned a copy of Howard Zinn's *People's History* for a while now, but have yet to read it. I'm sorry, but there's just something a little intimidating about 700 solid pages of well-researched and documented American history lying in wait, poised to completely take apart your memories of K-12 dogma piece by piece.

Now, considering that I've torn through Michael K. Smith's *The Greatest Story Never Told: A People's History of the American Empire, 1945-1999* in about two, three days, I have an idea of what I've been missing, and I figure I should probably stop being such a wuss and get a move on.

Smith manages to frame his goal from the very beginning — separate the lore of American mythology from the annals of American history. To do so, what follows are approximately 600 short prose snapshots, starting from "postwar" Dresden and ending in Seattle, 1999. Although this often results in each subject running anywhere from one paragraph to a whole page, the ultimate sense is that each tale is still complete in its own right. Smith makes a fine point early on, when he says early on that many of the events he details are, in fact, familiar to the average reader — they just seem unfamiliar, once deprived of

the media-fueled, patriotic clambake that is the manicured, "official" version.

Smith focuses especially on events and perspectives which, if they did hit the American media, they did so less with a bang and more of a bound and gagged whimper. Smith relies on everything from firsthand accounts to revealing quotes to declassified government documents to vividly portray the events of everything up to and including nuclear testing, US-sponsored coups, the Communist witch hunt, and governmental SNAFUs.

Each individual expose is written like a short story in itself, allowing for such images such as Kuwait, 1991: "...fuel air explosives suck the lung tissue out of Iraqi conscripts on the ground." Although only a portion of these stories are that graphic, many more of them are, in fact, that vivid. I feel that this style of writing is much more appropriate to the genre of "history" than are the norms. The norms, of course, are the depersonalized, zombie-prose textbooks and tomes full of "facts" and figures that make a lesson about WWII about as memorable as Dubya's latest kegger. Also greatly appreciated is that each and every entry is referenced with an amazingly extensive works cited. Smith also includes many of the little details that really lend authenticity to a moment or story. From New York, 1953: "Embarked on the journey to nuclear paradise, Eisenhower requests that the word thermonuclear be omitted from AEC press releases and the public be kept 'confused as to fission and fusion.'" Or from Vietnam, 1966: "The Pentagon...is paying families an average of \$34 in condolence money for each Vietnamese accidentally killed by U.S. air strikes. Reports from Saigon indicate that the U.S. Air Force is paying \$87 for each rubber tree mistakenly destroyed by bombs." Such images are both relevant, and difficult to forget.

One of my few qualms about this book is about the semi-regular tone of sarcasm which, if you're not careful, can ultimately leave you backtracking once or twice to figure out what Smith just said. Although I see the need to acknowledge the rosy portrayal of the media while contrasting it with firsthand accounts and suppressed perspectives, Smith would sometimes do well to tone down the cynicism, however well-deserved, for the sake of communication. For those people who lack a firm grounding in recent American history — most students, for example, who generally know next to nothing, if that, of things like Iran-Contra and Grenada — stark realism may serve as a substantially better medium than well-informed sarcasm. It is also this same sarcasm that can come across as almost militant at times in its fervor to illustrate the repressed perspective, and is often in danger of promoting a polarized — "Us against America" sort of mentality.

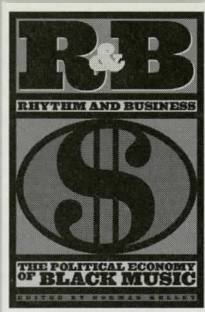
Gladly, Smith still makes sure to include tales of the truly subversive, history-shaping characters who arose at the same time — many of whom are just as unacknowledged as the numerous governmental plots themselves. He writes appreciably of Che, DuBois, Cesar Chavez and others, as well as those of more widespread influence such as Dr. King and the antiwar movement as a whole.

Easily accessible, from the uninitiated lay person to the accomplished Zinnophile, this book is a fine antidote to the droning tales of American mythology. Although *The Greatest Story* doesn't allow for intensive study on any one event, it is still highly recommended as a reliable and enjoyable introduction, reference, or refresher to the stories less told.

-Jonathan Feakins

**Rhythm and Business:
The Political Economy of
Black Music**

Norman Kelley, ed.
Akashic Books, New York
www.akashicbooks.com



This book originated with an article written by its editor, Norman Kelley, on the subject of Black American music and its domination by the mostly-white mega-corporations that run the entertainment world. Originally, Kelley, the author of the Nina Halligan private detective series and a former producer at WBAI-FM in New York City, intended on writing the entire book himself, but ultimately opted for a collection of articles by various musicians, critics and others in the world of African-American music. This was a good move. The pieces that appear are well-written and arranged so that they segue one into the other as smoothly as a well-crafted radio show. From Kelley's original article to pieces by the NAACP and former Public Enemy lyricist Chuck D, this book makes a resoundingly convincing critique of the role of Black music in the history of the United States. Furthermore, it shifts the metaphor of the exploited musician as worker into the very real realm of musician-as-worker, metaphor aside.

Most astute music listeners know, at least in a general way, that musicians, and Black musicians especially, have been routinely exploited by record producers. In the popular telling, this exploitation has most often taken the form of the blues singer being paid for a song and recording with a bottle of wine or a couple of bucks. As this book makes clear, this example is but the least sophisticated of the record industry's abuse of those who create its product. As the book also makes clear, the exploitation of the artists by the industry is not a historical fact, it is a present-day reality. The two features on rap music that include the thoughts of Rap Coalition head Wendy Day illustrate how little has changed in the way the major producers perceive African-American artists. Courtney Love's manifesto that closes the work makes it clear that the industry has little respect for other artists, either.

Rhythm & Business: The Political Economy of Black Music is more than an economic critique of the globalized music industry. It is also a history of African-American music in the twentieth century. From the early days when the blues were recorded on 78 rpm records to the most recent controversy over Napster and music transmission on the internet, the reader is provided with a rich and non-industry version of what really went down in the world of Black-created popular music. Stax Records or Motown, Ma Rainey or Diana Ross — the importance of so-called "race" record labels and their stars is portrayed here from a viewpoint one would never find in *Billboard*, *Rolling Stone*, or even the hip-hop journal *Source*.

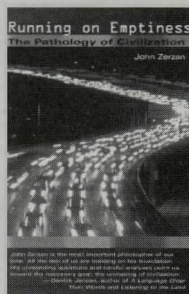
This book combines the story of racism in the record industry with an economic analysis of how art is abused in a capitalist society. In so doing, Kelley has provided the scholar and the music listener with a history, an economic and cultural critique, and some proposals for a more hopeful future for the music created by Black Americans. As the writers remind us throughout the text, this is an important endeavor with consequences for our

culture, since virtually all American musical forms have their roots in the music of Black America.

-Ron Jacobs

**Running on Emptiness:
The Pathology of Civilization**

John Zerzan
Feral House Books
www.feralhouse.com



In this advanced age of global satellite feeds, fiber-optics, and genetic engineering, the triumph of technology seems undeniable. Nevertheless, Anarcho-Primitivism (AP) remains one of the more vocal sub-currents within the North American anarchist milieu. By rejecting the materialism which tends to dominate the Marxist critique of society, adherents of this unique political philosophy employ a more radical approach that questions the very nature of civilization itself. An essential component of the primitive position entails the belief that pre-civilized man enjoyed ample food, worked less, and was both healthier and happier than his contemporary counterpart. Unfortunately, this simple way of life was allegedly shattered by the advent of agriculture — an ominous development that has permanently estranged us from the nature world.

This enduring alienation is a recurring theme in a new collection of writings by prominent AP theorist John Zerzan. Largely culled from his contributions to *Anarchy* and other publications, the 58-year-old Oregon native uses his formidable intellect and renowned critical prowess to explore the allegedly coercive nature of time, memory, language, and other (presumably) benign concepts.

For example, "Time and Its Discontents," inveighs against our obsession with time and conjures up a bygone era when the ever-ticking clock didn't dominate our collective consciousness. "Running on Emptiness," describes how language, aesthetics, and other manifestations of "symbolic culture" have diminished the sense of meaning in our lives by dragging us into an "ever-worsening realm of synthetic, isolating, impoverished estrangement." "That Thing We Do," is a fascinating discussion of "reification" or the naming of things which Zerzan considers symptomatic of our exploitative relationship with the natural world.

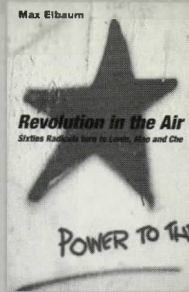
While these lengthy academic studies offer a wide array of glittering insights, Zerzan's shorter, more polemical pieces are no less provocative. My personal favorite is "Why I Hate Star Trek" which assails the legendary television drama for its "high-tech, anti-nature foundation," "anti-sensual spirit," and egregious "worship of authority." A host of additional editorials discuss a variety of topics ranging from the 1993 Waco siege to Zerzan's controversial critique of dissident scholar Noam Chomsky whom he considers a "downright reactionary" unwilling to "confront the enveloping crisis on all levels." As an added plus, the book contains a highly-engaging autobiographical essay entitled "So... How Did You Become An Anarchist" which recounts Zerzan's trajectory from hippie activist to anarchist icon.

While it is left to the discerning reader to decide the merits of the Anarcho-primitive position, Zerzan's profound and engaging observations have much to offer anti-authoritarian thinkers. Highly recommended.

-Cletus Nelson

**Something in the Air:
A Review of Revolution
in the Air: Sixties Radicals
turn to Lenin, Mao and
Che**

Max Elbaum
Verso, 2002
www.versobooks.com



I can remember the moment as if it were yesterday. I was at a 1973 Impeach Nixon rally in NYC when some rather loud young people marched into the park where the rally was being held. I took a leaflet proffered by one of the folks in the group and looked for their name, something I almost always do when handed a piece of propaganda. On the bottom of the second side it read "Attica Brigades." This group was the youth-student wing of the Revolutionary Union, which was one of many Marxist-Leninist groups in existence at the time. That was my introduction to the Seventies Left in the United States. Max Elbaum's new book, *Revolution in the Air*, introduces today's reader to the milieu. In addition, it explains many of the nuances I missed during my involvement — something that was easy to do since my perspective was colored by my involvement with the Attica Brigades successor — the Revolutionary Student Brigades.

Elbaum's text traces the history of what many called the New Communist Movement in the United States. This movement, which was made up of several groups espousing variations of Marxist-Leninist (usually with a good deal of Mao thrown in) thought, was born out of the disintegration of various organizations in the antiracist/antiwar struggle, especially the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Another trend that rose from this disintegration was that of armed struggle/terrorism — a trend best exemplified by the Weatherman/Weather Underground Organization and the Eldridge Cleaver wing of the Black Panther Party (which eventually gave birth to the Black Liberation Army). *Revolution in the Air*, like much of the Sixties literature, pinpoints 1968 as the year that forced a realization among many US left activists that revolution was the solution to the systemic racism and war they were opposing. Likewise, Elbaum also discards the so-called "good sixties/bad sixties" dynamic favored by many Sixties commentators whose politics since that period have moved to the right. This dynamic assumes that the early days of SDS and SNCC — before the takeover of Columbia in Spring 1968 and Black Power — were the best days of the Movement and the days post-1968 were "bad" because that's when the Marxist-Leninists and crazy anarchists bent on revolution took over. When one operates from this context, s/he is likely to present an incomplete and ultimately unlikely history.

For one who was there, *Revolution in the Air* is like a flashback without the rhetoric. Elbaum details the New Communist Movement's attempts to educate itself in the Marxist-Leninist canon and apply it to the events of the early 1970s in the United States. He identifies the key players: the groups from which the activists came — organizations organized along revolutionary nationalism representing African-American, Latinos and Asian-Americans, mostly white radical youth and student groups, revolutionary worker's organizations, and the independent socialist weekly *The Guardian*. In addition, he tells how and

why the young activists of the anti-racist and antiwar movement moved towards party-building and away from the spontaneity of the popular extra-parliamentary movements of the Sixties decade. Primary to his analysis is the belief held by many of the New Communist Movement's adherents that the events of 1968 were tantamount to the events of 1905 in Czarist Russia. If one accepted this consciously or otherwise, then the next step was to build a party that could make certain that the mistakes made in the failed rebellions of 1968 would be corrected and America would see a Seventies' version of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

On the other hand, if one is new to the anti-capitalist movement and/or the Left, then reading this book requires a short history lesson on the Sixties movement against war and racism and the role of the Left in that movement. The first chapter and the introduction are a good beginning to that lesson, but today's young activists most likely will want to read more. Even more fundamentally, today's young activists might wonder what was the attraction of the Leninist model in the first place, given today's almost religious insistence on decentralization and non-vanguardism prevalent in most sectors of the current popular left and anarchist movements. *Revolution in the Air* takes this question seriously and answers it accurately and effectively.

This is done via a brief but workable history of the development of Marxist-Leninist thought and its application since the 1917 October revolution. The reader is told how that development was affected by the application of the theory and interpreted, or misinterpreted. For example, how Lenin's firm belief in the necessity for dissenting opinions within the revolutionary party while maintaining a unity of action became Stalin's insistence on total allegiance to the party. Unfortunately, many formations in the New Communist Movement eventually echoed this intolerance, at least in their reaction to other leftist organizations. Elbaum writes of the positives of this movement — the energy, commitment and solidarity — and cautions activists of the new century that "the fact that no movement organization could sustain such positive features over the long haul indicates that a better way of political organization than Stalinist hierarchy needs to be found."

To prove his point, Elbaum relates the next phase of the movement's history, writing about the turmoil in the movement caused by the attempts by Boston government officials to bus working-class and poor Black students from the Roxbury section of Boston to the mostly white Southie and Charlestown working-class sections. RU's dramatic turnabout regarding the existence of a separate Black nation in the U.S. caused it to see busing in Boston not as anti-racist but as an attempt by the rulers to split the working-class along racial lines. Although a couple other Marxist-Leninist groups (some composed primarily of people of color) shared this analysis, only the Revolutionary Union (RU) aligned itself with some of the more racist elements of the anti-busing movement. Meanwhile, RU was distancing itself from many of its youthful supporters by opposing the counterculture, homosexuality, and calling for those unmarried couples living together to get married. Of course, RU was not alone in its odd twists and turns. The shrinking base of support combined with a fundamentalist adherence to the texts of Lenin, Stalin and Mao caused many groups in the movement to make similar mistakes. It was only because of RU's larger size and early leadership that

their mutations had a greater effect. After the busing battle was over, RU's leadership in the movement was gone. What followed was a series of struggles for leadership by other sects, a virtual collapse and rebirth with different organizations at the helm in the 1980s, and the eventual disintegration of the movement after the fall of the Stalinist bureaucracies in Europe and China's total embrace of capitalism. In a similar manner, Elbaum describes the other issue that was even more decisive in splitting the New Communist Movement. This was when China shifted its foreign policy by identifying the Soviet Union, and not U.S. imperialism, as the biggest enemy of the world's working people. For a movement that had come out of one of the greatest anti-imperialist struggles in the history of the United States—the movement against America's war in Vietnam—this shift was like an earthquake.

In short, the entire movement suffered from ultraleftism throughout most of its history. This was not merely because of its members' attraction to this type of communism. It was also related to their belief that the best way to build a large party was to begin by building a small, revolutionarily "pure" party. This insistence on purity was bound to foment sectarianism and infighting, especially as the movement's potential base of support — the US working class — turned rightward while US capitalism went through recession after recession and took it out on the workers. Despite its many faults, however, the New Communist Movement honestly attempted to address every aspect of US capitalist society. Furthermore, it took seriously the task of organizing a revolutionary challenge to US imperialism. Nothing was immune from its members' critical eye. Max Elbaum does a more than credible job at documenting the movement's development, its mistakes, its effects on the radical movement in the United States, and its relation to the world. As histories of the Sixties and their aftermath go, *Revolution in the Air* is one that stands with the best, not only in regards to its approach and style, but especially in the lessons both historians and activist can learn from it. Like Elbaum comments in the text: "hindsight should not be used to smugly dismiss [the New Communist Movement], but to analytically disentangle its positive from its negative side." This book is an essential part of that analysis.

—Ron Jacobs

Voting with Dollars:

A New Paradigm for Campaign Finance

Bruce Ackerman and Ian Ayres
Yale University Press, 2002
www.yalebooks.com

Just over half the voting age population turns out for U.S. Presidential elections. As seen in the 2000 Presidential election, the occasion that brings the largest number of the citizens to the polls, that supposedly momentous day for Americans to exercise their democratic right, has been largely reduced to a flag-waving gesture. When big money rules campaigns, Enron, Lockheed Martin, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Philip Morris, and Walt Disney put politicians into office. Regular citizens who submit a ballot and those that decidedly refuse are left feeling powerless to a democratic charade, to a system stripped of meaning. How can

Americans reclaim their right to democracy and insert themselves back into the political process?

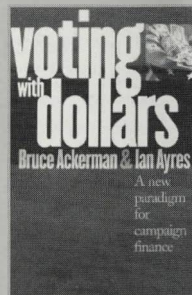
In *Voting with Dollars: A New Paradigm for Campaign Finance*, authors Bruce Ackerman and Ian Ayres present a comprehensive proposal for reform that would diminish corporate influence on candidates, reinvigorate civic participation in the democratic process, and potentially introduce more competition into the "duocracy" that has dominated politics for too long. Ackerman and Ayres begin by giving credit to Senators John McCain and Russell Feingold for causing a stir in the reform movement. But the authors find fault with the McCain-Feingold model, arguing that contribution limits and increased transparency are part of the problem, not the solution. When limitations are imposed, big givers and crafty legislators find ways around the restrictions resulting in an endless cycle of new limits and new loopholes. Full publicity of private contributions benefits the candidate more than voter, giving him or her a clear idea of who to pay back once in office.

Ackerman and Ayres propose a campaign finance system that, most importantly, amplifies the voices of citizens throughout each campaign. Instead of continuing general election funding (publicly financed campaign subsidies that mostly fill major party coffers), the new paradigm envisions putting that money into a "Patriot Account," where each citizen has 50 Patriot dollars to put toward the candidates or parties of their choice. The authors show how effective the Patriot account could be: "If the 100 million Americans who came to the polls in 2000 had 'voted' with their patriot cards during the campaign, their combined contributions would have amounted to \$5 billion, overwhelming the \$3 billion provided by private donors."

The next finance predicament — candidates selling access or influence for private money — would be countered by instituting the "secret donation both." Pointing out the success of the secret ballot in discouraging the market of votes, the authors say anonymous donations deposited into a blind trust would make it nearly impossible for winning candidates to reciprocate donors for handsome contributions. Ackerman and Ayres concede private funding will decrease due to the anonymity regulations, but this is just their point. Devising a formula where Patriot dollars always account for two-thirds of total funding, the authors created a finance system that will make politicians more accountable to their constituency, rich and poor alike.

Ackerman and Ayres acknowledge there is a long way to go before the new paradigm is realized. There will be unanticipated problems with their formulas, opposition from politicians dependent on big money, and the task of winning popular support. But their mission was to offer an alternative to the old reform paradigm and introduce a solution to the accelerating drift toward oligarchy. Underlining the potential success of Patriot as dependent on millions of people asserting their role as citizens, Ackerman and Ayres state, "The aim, famously, is to design structures that set ambition against ambition so as to bring the temptations of political power within tolerable limits — to economize on virtue, and thereby encourage all of us to make the most of the little we possess."

—Catherine Komp





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SEX OR SWEATSHOPS

photo Layne Winkleback

THE SCARLET HARLOT TALKS ABOUT GLOBALIZATION AND THE RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS

INTERVIEW BY MARY CHRISTMAS

Carol Leigh and I met when she was in Philadelphia this past winter. By some stroke of miracle, she received word of my newly formed organization, SWAT (Sex Workers Action Team). Naturally, this founder of the sex workers' rights movement contacted us (currently the only union in town), to ask if we would join her at the debate she was taping for National Public Radio. In turn, SWAT invited Carol to our biweekly meeting, where we were graced with photographs of her trips around the world and a miniature lesson in movement herstory.

Reinventing herself under the title "Scarlet Harlot," Carol Leigh has appeared in films and performances for years, as well as on the steps of many City Halls, with the intent of using her experiences in prostitution to empower others. As a writer and organizer, Carol gives voice and presence to the millions of people in the sex industry who can't afford to "come out of the dressing room." By coining "sex work," now a widely used term encompassing all sex industry fields, Carol Leigh gave us a collective identity, and, for the first time, a hope of unity.

Instead of preparing specific interview questions for Carol, we shared an informal conversation over margaritas in West Philly.

Clamor: So, Carol, you started talking about how your sex work was more nerve-racking and frustrating when you were doing it, and how now, in retrospect, it seems more rosy and glorified. Do you think that has to do with the fact that when you're in it, there's the threat of something bad happening, some danger — even if there's no apparent physical danger?

Carol Leigh: That's interesting. Right, yeah, that's true . . . the sense of danger. And even my regular client — I could imagine that maybe he'd turn dangerous. In some ways, if I'd seen somebody for a few years, I pretty much felt safe — as safe as I could. I mean, I feel nervous when I get on an airplane. There are a lot of risks in my life. When I drive a car, I feel unsafe. But something about prostitution dates when I didn't know a guy, or one of those first-time

dates, I was alone in the apartment with them so there was a lot of fear. The compromise I made was to see regulars and to see men that I knew, but it was in my apartment, so I had a little vulnerability there. It was unpleasant, not necessarily because of the danger, but because of the compromises I had to make trying to avoid the danger. I always felt like the next trick I didn't know could be the police, it could be a rapist, so I was better off trying to make sure that my regulars kept coming back. I put so much energy into so many compromises, giving them a little more time or a little more of this or a little more of that, and negotiating around condoms was very stressful (at the cusp of the AIDS crisis) so it was a constant frustration for me. I was frustrated that I had to take these risks because I couldn't easily accrue other clients.

It's rosy in retrospect because I think that when we look back at our lives anyway we kind of eliminate the worst parts. I'm definitely in touch with the fact that, in retrospect, it all looks good, and I remember the sweet times and the gentle times, and the rituals with flattery that we have with clients. It's very interesting. I remember the times that I was just so proud. I was just happy that I had made someone so happy. I definitely get off on that. And just the wisdom that I've gotten from this, from seeing men when they're at their most vulnerable and understanding the hypocrisies that punish women for being involved in prostitution. So in retrospect, I've gotten so much out of this work and learned so much, and that's almost funny to say because there's sort of a taboo about being too positive about it. And in being one of the lucky ones — the way it came into my life, as an artist, and being able to work with activists who were becoming involved in the prostitutes' rights movement — it was really very special.

Speaking of the movement, I wonder about the possibility, in the future, of prostitution and all sex work being normalized, less in the dark, less dangerous, and more out in the open. I wonder if that would make it less appealing for so many people. I wonder, myself, how much of the appeal is about the secret of it, the underground — because repression really turns people on! Religious repression, legal repression, all kinds of repression can be exciting. What do you think?

Well, I think that a lot is changing, in terms of strippers being out and people working at Hooters, and there are so many young college women stripping, so I think normalization has happened to a large extent. Sex workers are coming out and in some ways are more integrated in the community. But still it's funny how in the closet some young women

who strip are. Some people really are still in the closet, but it's out a lot more than it was. It may be integrated in some other way into their lives instead of having such separate lives, instead of leading double lives. But really, we're talking about a different society. If it was so accepted that it wouldn't be shameful, then it would be a totally different culture than ours where sex is a source of shame. And it's about sexual fantasies. I mean, that's like the realm of science fiction I think!

Can you talk about some of the connections between globalization, or global capitalism, and sex workers rights?

Well, you know, capital can move freely across borders but people can't. So that means that there are more people working in the informal labor sector, and of course prostitution is a big part of that sector. Countries all over Europe now report that the immigrant population has doubled, tripled, even quadrupled in some countries! This has seriously affected sex workers. And also, this disturbs the balance there was in these communities before immigration. There are sex workers from these cities who are antagonistic towards the migrant workers, and a lot of the response from European countries is, again, to regulate more. Sometimes legalize and sometimes create regulations to guarantee more rights, but only for the legal workers. If you're in the European Union, you actually have the right to work as a prostitute in other countries in the Union. I'm not quite sure if that's true in every single country, but it is for some. There was a recent decision in the Netherlands about the right to work as a prostitute if you come from a European Union country. But there are huge populations of people from outside the European Union; when prostitution is legalized and more severely regulated, migrants from Latin America and Southeast Asia, are left out in the cold. So there's kind of a rift between migrant and native sex workers. And the reality is that only two percent of people on the globe are actually working outside their country of origin. It is a small population. But in the sex industry it's a larger population, again, because it's part of the informal economy.

And because we can assume that there are no statistics to reflect migrant sex workers.

One of the problematic parts of this regulation system is that, in Holland although there are some very advanced laws guaranteeing health benefits for sex workers, bringing the business above ground, and ensuring workers rights, the flip side is that prostitution is the only business where you actually have to carry ID with you to prove who you are. They're so afraid of protecting people from the immigrants and so many people want to close the borders. They're scared to death about the changes that are happening.

This is interesting because of the whole visa thing. I know that people can apply for work visas with mainstream jobs. Is there any kind of work visa in countries where prostitution is legal?

That's what I'm saying. You're not afforded a work visa unless you're coming from a specific European Union country, for example. You can't apply for a work visa to work as a sex worker if you're coming, say, from Thailand. But, there are other rubrics; people apply for entertainment licenses, as entertainers, as dancers, and you can get certain licensing. I know that people are supporting a UN resolution that hasn't yet been ratified by too many countries. It's about the protection of the rights of immigrant workers. It basically sets up a structure so that migrant workers are guaranteed their rights, and some want sex



workers to be guaranteed rights under that too, but nobody's ratified it.

Who wants that inclusion?

The sex workers' rights advocates, migrant advocates. At this point there's a huge movement of organizations working for the rights of migrant women workers.

So that could be one of the places where the anti-globalization movement is intersecting with the sex workers movement. Because people who are out to ensure the human rights of sweatshop workers are also working for this UN treaty, right?

There's a lot of collaboration in terms of supporting it. But it's very far off. This is a big pie in the sky, just because it's one of the least ratified proposals. Also, Anti-Slavery International is an organization that basically addresses issues of slavery and exploitation in various work contexts, and they've been brave enough to address issues for sex workers, so there's some crossover in that context. But quite often, people organizing against globalization may draw the line when it comes to sex work, and are hesitant to advocate for sex work as work. They're hesitant sometimes

to define it as work and to promote unionization and workers' rights.

I'm coming from an anti-globalization community that really doesn't address sex work on the global scale. To me, and probably to you, it's really obvious that US imperialism and globalization, the way that the global economy is changing, really affects women; it affects sex workers and populations of people who would do sex work. There are a lot of changes going on right now. How can we bring these movements together?

I think there's that simple idea, that capital can move but workers can't. Why is it that a white man from America can go to any country he wants, but if you're a young woman from Thailand, you can't go anywhere and you can't get a visa? Basically these are laws that prohibit women in general from traveling just on the suspicion that they might be prostitutes, because they're at the age of being prostitutes. So laws that affect women and migration, laws that prevent women from getting visas, are laws that are directly related to prostitution. That affects all women's migration in general.

It's interesting that you bring up the ways that non-prostitute and non-sex worker women can

also be hurt by laws that criminalize sex workers. Do you have more examples of that?

That's the one I'm most familiar with. There's also a movement that is anti-globalization which sees all migration for prostitution as trafficking and slavery and doesn't believe there are any issues in terms of labor rights. They see prostitution across borders always as slavery, and so they're asking countries to further criminalize. This is problematic especially because it means that police are conducting surveillance activities around prostitution businesses, ostensibly for the reason that they want to find immigrants. But the reality is that the industry is criminalized anyway, so that the women they're dealing with are now criminals and particularly vulnerable. The way that the approaches to globalization have affected prostitution have been very, very hard on the prostitutes.

There was recently legislation, a bill by Senator Paul Wellstone that prescribed penalties and redress for victims of trafficking and forced prostitution. But somehow, in that bill, they managed to stigmatize prostitution in general, and encouraged certain expenditures by the police and the department of justice that would, again, place the police in the position of overseeing businesses where

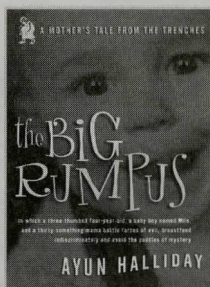
REVIEW PRINT

The Big Rumpus

Ayun Halliday
Seal Press, 2002
www.sealpress.com

I am wary of personal zines. It's really hard to be compelled by the endless stories of people doing the same things, over and over again—there's only so much I can read about riding bikes, the end of romantic relationships between people I've never met, and interviews with bands that have nothing interesting to say. If you read a lot of zines, you can usually tell by the third sentence if you want to throw the thing out of the window. People who write about their own lives have an incredible challenge — to write engagingly about something that is usually pretty mundane. This is one of the things that impresses me about the east village inky, Ayun Halliday's quarterly zine. Her new book, *The Big Rumpus*, is essentially a long-form version of the zine. Inky began as an East Village restaurant review zine, and morphed into Ayun's chronicle of her life with her two kids, India and (later) Milo. The book goes into detail about the births of both of her kids (and the subsequent birth of the zine), and is shot through with remembrances of her childhood, discussions of holidays, rants about breastfeeding, and the wonders of living in New York City. Her frazzled illustrations of herself are spot-on portraits of everyone who I know who has kids. Of course, the more you are interested in motherhood, kids, New York City, zine writing, and the other things Ayun cares about, the more you're going to be pre-disposed to like the book. But, I promise, her prose style is snarky enough, reflective enough, and funny enough that the book is totally worth checking out. The book is perfect to read when you've been up way too long, your hair is sticking out all over the place, and you'd like to think about something else besides whatever it is you're supposed to be doing.

-Laura Mintz



Orgasms of History: 3000 Years of Spontaneous Insurrection

Fremion and Volny
AK Press, 2002
www.akpress.org

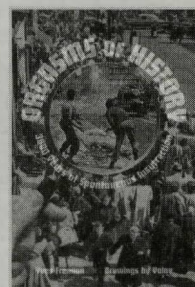
Orgasms are nice, aren't they? Yves Fremion describes them for you: "Slow, exponential growth of pleasure, right up to the point of abrupt, uncontrolled explosion, followed by the final, rather rapid release... and the onset of relaxation."

Sounds good. Feels good too, but does the orgasm stand up as a vision of history and the new society that revolutionaries are trying to create? Fremion, author of the new AK Press book *Orgasms of History*, would like to think so, and hey, wouldn't we all? Or would we? "Let's not kid ourselves," he writes, "a book is no substitute for a rifle... A book can never be a substitute for an orgasm. But it can help to while away the time between attacks, be they political, social, or amorous."

Why do sentences like these seem so very masculine? Is it the conflation of sex with violence? The pursuit of the orgasm as an end in itself? The childish impatience with building a human relationship that can last beyond a series of fleeting orgasms?

Orgasms of History purports to document the lessons and good examples of three millennia of insurrection, from the Cynics of ancient Greece to the peasants of Le Larzac, but there is little to be learned here. For Fremion, history is a series of masturbatory fantasies, in which spontaneity and violence replace the arduous work and thoughtful discussion that will build a new society. Orgasms are nice, but there's more to life and revolution than abrupt, uncontrolled explosions.

-Jeremy Smith



immigrant prostitutes often work. That kind of surveillance has been bad for the communities and the anti-prostitution feminist perspectives have been encouraging these sorts "interventions:" when the police are given huge budgets to go into the massage parlors and make sure that there's no prostitution. It's quite a conflict and very problematic for immigrant women.

Of course, the US exports the legislation; we export the priorities; we tell other countries that unless you go along with our emphasis against trafficking and prostitution, we're not going to give you any money. We pressure countries around the world to adopt our stand on prostitution and we export the increased criminalization. There's been a huge movement amongst women for years trying to influence the agenda at the UN to define all prostitution as a violation of women's rights, and basically encouraging all countries to criminalize aspects of the business like clients and services as opposed to the prostitutes themselves. So criminalization is escalating and this is attached to a movement that is concerned about the effects of globalization.

I think that people in the anti-capitalist movement right now have a limited view of

what the effects of globalization are. It's seen as sweatshops moving to other countries, US corporations going to other countries and lowering the economy there so much that women are economically forced to do work like sex work. It's either sex or sweatshops, which there is some truth to!

I would go along with that analysis. The problem is that people think that the new economy is leading to more forced prostitution and that most of the prostitution you see is forced, not just by economic coercion, but by kidnapping and other kinds of force. This is the portrait of the prostitution phenomenon in regard to globalization, as opposed to recognizing that globalization has created many migrant sex workers who are especially deprived of their rights. For example, in many countries you can't enter as a refugee or an immigrant if you've worked for the past several years as a prostitute, even if you worked legally. If you're a young woman, you can't migrate because you're suspected of being a prostitute and if you are a prostitute, you basically have to say that you were forced in order to get by the police. So that also makes the issue confusing in terms of how much force there is, and what's really going on in the industry. People are forced to

say they're forced in order to be redeemed or excused in any way!


And then you have statistics that don't add up.

The statistics don't reflect the realities. Huge numbers of women certainly are in most abusive conditions. But it ranges from trafficking arrangements that are exploitative to actual slavery — there's a big range. And I don't know any other way to migrate to a country; you have to depend on traffickers, you can't get a working visa, so there's no other way. So the progressive arm of the movement has come up with a new definition of trafficking: they're saying trafficking means forced labor.

The original criminalization of prostitution was born out of the white slavery scare. That contributed vastly to the anti-prostitution fervor! In retrospect, I think it's been shown that some of the statistics around white slavery were not at all correct and that everyone would have had to be a slave for them to be true. And now we see somewhat of a rebirth of that. It's focused only on the forced aspect — stereotyping all prostitution as slavery, only talking about trafficking, and not talking about sex work migration. So we talk about all of it: forced prostitution, services for victims, and also the rights of migrant sex workers. ★

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In 1996, the New York Times Magazine sent an uncompromising message about the pitfalls of the fashion world. Or did it?

JAMES KING is convenient

by Martin Schneider

On February 4, 1996, the New York Times Magazine (NYT Magazine) ran a cover story about (then) 16-year-old fashion model James King. The cover featured a photo of Ms. King lying on the ground facing the camera, a cigarette in her hands, caught looking wary and fatigued. Underneath the photo, the blurb read, "She has a look that's earned her runway jobs, magazine covers, tens of thousands of dollars and a shot at celebrity. All she's lost is her youth. **At 16, A Model's Life.**"

The story was exceedingly well written by Jennifer Egan (who has since become a very respected novelist), and contained no fewer than 14 photographs by acclaimed artist-photographer Nan Goldin. The photo montage was commissioned and expertly laid out by NYT Magazine photo editor Kathy Ryan. The point of the article was contained in the cover blurb: The fashion world is a tough place, and for better or for worse James King is caught in that world. She may succeed in it, she may become rich and famous, but it will cost her. The story cast the fashion world in the role of exploiters, and James King in the role of willing exploitee. If the story was about the debased values of the fashion world, it was also about the debased values of James King: her hunger for money and fame, and her willingness to sell her soul for it.

The article, actually titled "James is a Girl," tracked King during late 1995, in Paris for the John Galiano and Karl Lagerfeld shows, and in New York for Fashion Week. We learn that she started modeling at 14. That she is from Omaha, Nebraska. That she smokes, drinks, and went through a period where she was using drugs (curiously left unspecified; more on this later). That King has a horrible cough and, from stress, shingles on her back. That she has a sister in college, who works for minimum wage. That King would make approximately \$150,000 in 1996, a huge percentage of which would go to pay for expenses. We watch her talk gangsta rap to a Parisian limo driver, and meet her amiably pragmatic mother Nancy. We learn that Egan herself was "briefly" a model during the 1980s.

If both King and the fashion world were symptomatic of some widespread social problem, then in tackling it, it was clear that the NYT Magazine was at best crusading against this problem, at worst immune from it. It is the kind of story that publishing people love: vivid, insidious, shocking, virtuous. One imagines the impressed murmurs at cocktail parties in New York: *Did you see that New*

York Mag piece last Sunday? The one about the teenage model? They really got ahold of something, there.

For the NYT Mag, it was all upside. Impress the insiders, shock the outsiders. What could be better?

However, maybe it's not as simple as that. Wasn't the NYT Magazine buying into the same value system of the fashion world they seemed to castigate? After all, a cover story in the New York Times Magazine was as much a feather in King's cap as a Cosmo cover would be. And even if one grants that running "James is a Girl" wasn't self-evidently contradictory, then why on earth did it run a fashion spread with James King five years later?

The story describes the process by which a girl like James King comes to the attention of fashion designers, but the article is really about King herself. (It has to be, because the NYT Magazine is more interested in "star presence" — and the anecdotal form of the celebrity profile — than in the actual mechanics of fame.) King is the product of a nationwide search for "talent" that involves a bewildering number of young aspirants. For every James King, there are thousands of girls who are summarily rejected. The NYT in effect contented itself by showing the pitfalls of *succeeding* as a 16-year-old model — after all, King might someday wield enough power and wealth to carve out some honest-to-goodness freedom for herself.

For a better look at this process, one has to look elsewhere. In February 2001, PBS ran an episode of Frontline called "The Merchants of Cool," which addressed the corporate systems that manipulate youth. The show was at times excessively alarmist, but some of the footage they collected was undeniably compelling. Consider the following:

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: [voice-over] The media machine has spit out a . . . caricature. Perhaps we can call this stereotype "the midriff." . . . The midriff is really just a collection of the same old sexual clichés, but repackaged as a new kind of female empowerment. "I am midriff, hear me roar. I am a sexual object, but I'm proud of it." . . . We met Barbara and her friends at the New York Hilton, where they were preparing for the opportunity to step into the roles of midriffs themselves.

BARBARA: I want to be a model. I want to be an actor. I want people to notice me and just be, like, "Oh, wow, she is pretty." I have to look good for people. I need to look good. Like, if I don't look good for people, I'll be really upset, and it'll, like, ruin my

day. So whenever I go out with friends, like, even just over to their house, I need to look good.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Barbara and hundreds of other girls have come here to the International Model and Talent Association's annual convention. These girls have paid up to 4,000 bucks a pop for the chance to be paraded before hundreds of agents and talent scouts on the lookout for new blood. There have always been starry-eyed girls like this, but what's new is their sophistication. They've learned how a midriff should talk, move, and sell herself.

ASPIRING MODEL: Hello, my number is 7996. Fruit of the Loom. I bet you thought they were just for men. Well, now there's new Fruit of the Loom feminine style because girls know a good thing when they see one. Thank you.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Now it's time for 13-year-old Barbara to prove she has what it takes.

1st TALENT SCOUT: Very good head shot.

BARBARA: Thank you.

1st TALENT SCOUT: Barbara, what do you feel that your age range is?

BARBARA: A lot of people say I look 17.

1st TALENT SCOUT: What do you think it is?

BARBARA: I am originally 13. I think I can range to 16 or 17.

2nd TALENT SCOUT: You are 13?

BARBARA: Yeah.

1st TALENT SCOUT: You're 13 years old?

BARBARA: Yeah.

1st TALENT SCOUT: Whoa!

2nd TALENT SCOUT: What do you want to really do? What are you interested in?

BARBARA: I would like to become successful.

2nd TALENT SCOUT: Good girl! Good girl!

This dialogue is the dark underbelly of the privileged form of exploitation that James King experiences every day. She is acutely aware of the intense competition for her position in life, and that accounts for much of the pressure she must withstand. Of course, to argue that a 16-year-old shouldn't be exposed to such pressures is so much howling in the wind. After all, here's what King herself thinks about the entire project: "Michael Flutie, who runs a modeling agency and was closely involved in King's career at the time] asked me a question. He's like, 'Why do you want to do this?' And I said, 'Because I want to be a star.' It didn't mean that I want to be famous. It didn't mean that I wanted everyone to know me, it just meant that I want to be a star to myself. That I wanted to be successful to myself, that I wanted to go somewhere with my life and I wanted it then, I wanted it now."

I could only find one piece of prose criticizing the NYT Magazine for its uneasy combination of righteousness and prurience. In its March 1996 issue, *American Prospect* ran a piece taking the NYT Magazine to task: "The February 4th cover of the New York Times Magazine featured a large, full-color, kittenish photo of 16-year-old model James King (a girl). Inside, there were several more photographs, 14 to be exact, accompanying an article bemoaning James's lost childhood and a society that exploits young girls. . . . 'All she's lost is her youth,' bemoans the cover line. The article neglects to suggest a solution to the beauty obsession behind the multibillion-dollar modeling industry. Perhaps they were too busy choosing the perfect cover shot? . . . We hereby suggest a new word to New York Times language maven William Safire: **pruritanism**—a hypocritical blend of puritanical clucking and prurient appeal. One might define it as exploiting a trend in the course of condemning it."

The story's thesis—that King was in for a hard life—was amply borne out in the next few years. The story emphasizes that drug use was firmly in her past, something that turned out not to be true.

According to Internet searches, King was both a heroin addict and an alcoholic when the story was written, and her fashion photographer boyfriend Davide Sorrenti died of a heroin overdose in 1997. It must have been a tough time for her, and for all I know traumatic enough an experience for her to kick drugs for good. A curious thing about her addiction, though. Today, she is routinely praised for her "openness" about her addiction, but a reasonably vigorous Internet search produced not a single article in which she was quoted at any length about her addiction. Indeed, no stories at all about her newfound "clean" status. The universal editorial tactic was to pronounce her clean and praise her "openness."

She has had a great deal of success. She has been on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* and *Details*, and has modeled in shows for such designers as Chanel, Christian Dior and Marithe & Francois Girbaud. She has made a decent transition to the big screen, appearing in small parts in *Blow* and *Pearl Harbor*, and was the female lead in the ensemble comedy *Slackers*.

Although the NYT Magazine story was positioned as an expose, it shared many characteristics with any other fashion shoot. King was picked by NYT Magazine as much for her perceived hotness (in both senses, hype and sex) as for her perceived poignance. They felt she would be the next big thing, and they wanted to benefit from her buzz. If the NYT Magazine truly bemoaned the state of affairs King found herself in, they would be unlikely to commission her for a fashion spread, would they not?

That is exactly what the NYT Magazine proceeded to do. On April 2, 2001, the NYT Magazine ran a small piece in the back of the book, called "James at 21." Written by Joyce Chang, the piece accompanied an eight-page fashion spread. The emphasis was on the five difficult years that had passed for James since the first article, and the text of the article consisted of a series of statements contrasting facts from the first piece. The goal of the piece was to establish that King had become mature beyond her years ("At 16, James thought that after modeling she'd like to be a writer. At 21, she thinks about being a mother."). The unmistakable intended subtext was that the NYT Magazine played a role in this maturation process. The most interesting fact about this piece is that it fails to mention the death of Sorrenti, almost certainly the single most significant event in young King's life. The final line of "James at 21" is "At 16, James was in free-fall. At 21 — 22 tomorrow! — she's flying." The insistence that King is on her feet again, commingled with the NYT Mag's own guilt and complicity over King's fate — it's all palpable. Once again, the assertion that she's clean and together.

I have very mixed feelings about "James is a Girl." On the one hand, it's probably the most thoughtful piece of prose about King that will ever appear. (Despite her understandable mood swings and confusion, she is presented as thoughtful and inquisitive, a reader of Murakami's fiction and an obsessive diarist.) On the other hand, it feels like King is merely being exploited by a more highbrow class of people. King has since moved on to the fame and fortune predicted of her, but she may never have been better presented than in that article. The pictures of her are smashing, and she comes off as more conflicted and intelligent than the reader has any right to expect. She's also a mess emotionally, a fact that can only play as touching.

With apologies to Egan, the photos are clearly the *raison d'être* for the story, and not vice versa. Looking at them, it is easy to see why she was/is so often touted as the next major supermodel. There are two photos, the cover shot and the picture on page 31, which are certainly among the most appealing pictures ever taken of King. In most pictures, alluring though she may be, she comes off looking angular and gaunt. Only these two pictures accentuate her rounded forehead, lips, and eyes.

Let's turn our attentions to Goldin for a moment. Goldin abandoned a privileged Boston upbringing early in life (in an interview, she refers to her family as consisting of Harvard graduates). She is

perhaps the most famous photographer in contemporary art circles, and her work has generally been about people close to Goldin herself. Her subjects include addicts and transvestites, mostly caught in moments of intimacy. In

the 1980s, she developed a slideshow called *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, which documented the travails of Goldin's coterie of friends. The show both documented and glamorized the hardships of this life: beatings, AIDS, desolate sexual encounters. Regardless of anything else, there's little doubt that Goldin is very good — her photos have a fundamental humanity, and she has a knack for getting otherwise closed-off people to unburden themselves to her camera. Many of her photos are little more than unusually interesting snapshots — it's not that they aren't good, but their main characteristic is a muddy, blurry immediacy, usually in dark interiors illuminated by natural light. The prototypical Goldin shot would be of a weary transvestite smearing make-up onto his brow.

But what's the meaning of her work, and what do her photos of James King tell us about that meaning? Goldin herself would almost certainly desist from claiming that her photos constituted a critique of her subject matter, but any photographer of Goldin's stature has to claim something more complex than mere documentation. In 1998, *American Photo* magazine ran a feature titled "The 100 Most Important People in Photography," in which it ranked her as the third most important figure in photography (up from 88 four years earlier), behind only Princess Diana and Annie Liebovitz. They ascribe her importance thus: "While there is laughter and fun in her images, there is also an aura of melancholic loneliness and disconnection." This sense of "disconnection," I think, adequately captures why Goldin has been such a hot property — and also accurately states the nature of her "critique."

But then Goldin's pictures of King present a problem: Insofar as Goldin's work has value precisely because it effectively critiques the society she photographs, then doesn't her acceptance of the values of the fashion world nullify whatever value her work can be said to have? It seems to me irresponsible to say, on the one hand, that Goldin's photos are an effective critique, and then to let her off the hook for her own complicity in King's "success" within the set of values of the system that provides that success. In effect, her photos of King are on



Did you see that New York Mag piece last Sunday? The one about the teenage model? They really got ahold of something, there.

scrutiny for contradiction, presumably played a major role in *American Photo* boosting her standing so much (she also had a retrospective of her work at the Whitney Museum). While King was battling drug addiction, Goldin was off teaching at Yale and Harvard.

In "James is a Girl," Egan describes King as fragile, prone to fits of coughing and pinkeye. She is frequently bleary-eyed from crying. Heroin addiction, a boyfriend dead to heroin, poor diet. King is a fragile creature, and has had to trade her adolescence for Jerry Stahl's late 20s (*Permanent Midnight*). I don't know if it's diet or drug use, but in recent photos she looks bony and tired — I'd even argue that photos tell the story of her rough half-decade better than any words could. What's striking about King's recent career is that the hype over her future prospects continues, this despite the fact that you can hardly find a flattering recent photo of her. Teen People and the NY Post have both relatively recently touted her as an up and comer. To be blunt: She keeps getting hyped, but she may end up being to be the modeling equivalent of Darryl Strawberry, whose production was perpetually ahead of him. No one notices that she looks awful in almost every photo.

The NYT Magazine wasn't immoral, or even unethical. It was merely hypocritical, it tried to have it both ways. It's clear that it has been playing a very uncomfortable game with King. In two pieces, it manipulated her image in order to benefit nobody but itself, and dressed it in honorable motives. It sharply criticized the world of fashion shoots (or appeared to), and then set up a fashion shoot of its own. It portrayed her as a virtuous victim of drug culture, but only because that's what hype demanded at that moment. It's not true to say that the NYT Magazine vaulted King into her current predicament; she was already there. But it didn't help any.

When *Slackers* came out, Alliance Atlantis issued a press release which contained the following statement: "King, who has appeared on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Details* and *Mademoiselle*, walked the runway for *Victoria's Secret* and hosted MTV's *House of Style*." Well, of course: the NYT Magazine is simply another prestige gig. ★

more focus on fashion: venus zine

About the same time we decided to do a fashion issue of *Clamor*, we found out that *Venus Zine* would be doing a DIY fashion issue scheduled to be released in August. In case you haven't come across it, *Venus* is a Chicago-based magazine that covers women who make music and other cool stuff. We couldn't pass up the opportunity to get the scoop on the upcoming *Venus* fashion issue from our fellow midwestern independent publishing maven and *Venus* editor, Amy Schroeder.

What was the impetus for doing a fashion issue of Venus? *Venus* has always focused on women who make music and we will continue to do so, but we are also expanding our coverage to cover women involved in other artistic mediums such as film, literature, photography, spoken word, visual art, etc. We also focus on D.I.Y. culture, and we've discovered so many women who are involved in making their own clothing, and we want to start cover-

ing it. There are so many women who are making their own clothes and it's difficult for them to "break into the fashion world" because of all the big-time corporate companies that control the fashion industry. "Venus Does Fashion" provides an outlet for women who deserve more recognition for their work.

How will it be different from what we see in the mainstream magazines?

We are going to start covering fashion on a regular basis in *Venus*, and our "models" for the first fashion shoot in *Venus* (*Venus* no. 13; summer/fall 2002; available August 1) are the *Venus* staff. We're all regular folks ranging from size 2 to 14. The first fashion shoot will be photographed at different locations in Chicago. All the clothing we are wearing is designed by women designers. Some of the designers are well-known designers such as Betsey Johnson and Built By Wendy, but the majority

are women who make their own clothes in their bedrooms or are smaller D.I.Y. designers. We posted a call for clothing in the Spring issue of *Venus* and also hung up fliers at the Art Institute of Chicago and asked for women to submit photos of their designs. We got a wonderful response.

What are some of the features are working on for the issue?

Besides the actual fashion shoot, we're doing profiles of some of the designers and there are also D.I.Y. how-to stories on, for instance, how to make a tool belt out of an old pair of pants. We're also doing stories on "fixemup" clothing — basically taking your own clothes and fixing them up a bit, or recycling.

Visit *Venus* online at www.venuszine.com and subscribe to get 4 issues for \$12.

After The Last Merger

by Jeffrey Yamaguchi

It was the third time this year that I was having to throw out all my letterhead. The publishing company I worked for had closed on yet another merger, and our name was being changed to "The Publishing Corporation."

Just as I had filled up my recycling bin (we're a pro environment company), a clean-cut young man poked his head into my office.

"Are you Mike V., the vice president of marketing?"

"No, I'm Jim D. the vice president of marketing strategy."

"Glad to meet you. I'm Bob C., the vice president of the marketing groups."

We shook hands. He had a firm grip.

"Well, it looks like we'll be working together, along with the other vice presidents. I didn't see you at the meeting earlier today."

"What meeting?"

The corners of Bob C.'s mouth slumped. "Dammit. The inter-office communications department promised me they'd be fully functional once the merger went through. I'll have to set up a meeting with the vice-president of inter-office communications."

Bob C. started to leave, but pulled on the door jamb and swung himself back into my office. "I almost forgot something," said Bob C., pulling out an electronic organizer and efficiently tapping on it with the half-sized plastic pencil. After a moment of squinting his eyes relaxed and he said firmly, "You've got to move quickly and get the new Fall books to the market."

I knew Bob C. was a vice president, but since I had missed the meeting earlier that morning - through no fault of my own - I ventured a few questions.

"Will I be working closely with the PR department?"

"We don't have a PR department anymore."

"We don't?"

"Well, we do, but it's now called the Editorial department. Just tell them what they need to write, and they'll run stories and interviews and reviews in all of The Corporation's magazines and newspapers."

"What about advertising?"

"Again, just call the Editorial department," said Bob C.

"Will the regional sales reps be coming to The Corporation's headquarters for a meeting to discuss the launch of the Fall books any time soon?"

"We got rid of our sales reps," said Bob C. "We don't need them to call on accounts anymore, because we aren't dealing with accounts. We've decided to sell direct through our web portal."

"I thought our web portal was mainly a search engine?"

"Of course it is. But whatever someone is searching for, our books come up at the top of the list."

Bob C. was back to tapping at his electronic organizer. He was now half-way out the door, just his head peeking in. I knew he probably had an important meeting with a vice president, but I had to ask him one more very important question.

"Who are the authors of the new books?"

"The who?" Bob C. seemed perplexed.

"The authors... the people who will be writing the books..."

"Oh, you're absolutely right. Thanks for reminding me," said Bob C. "Call the Casting

department at The Film Corporation - which is now part of our corporate family, thanks to the last merger - and have them send over a few edgy looking sexpots."

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah, and make sure they look around 20 to 24. The vice president of focus groups says that people are more willing to buy a book if the author is a young woman who appears to have 'lived or is living a rough life.'"

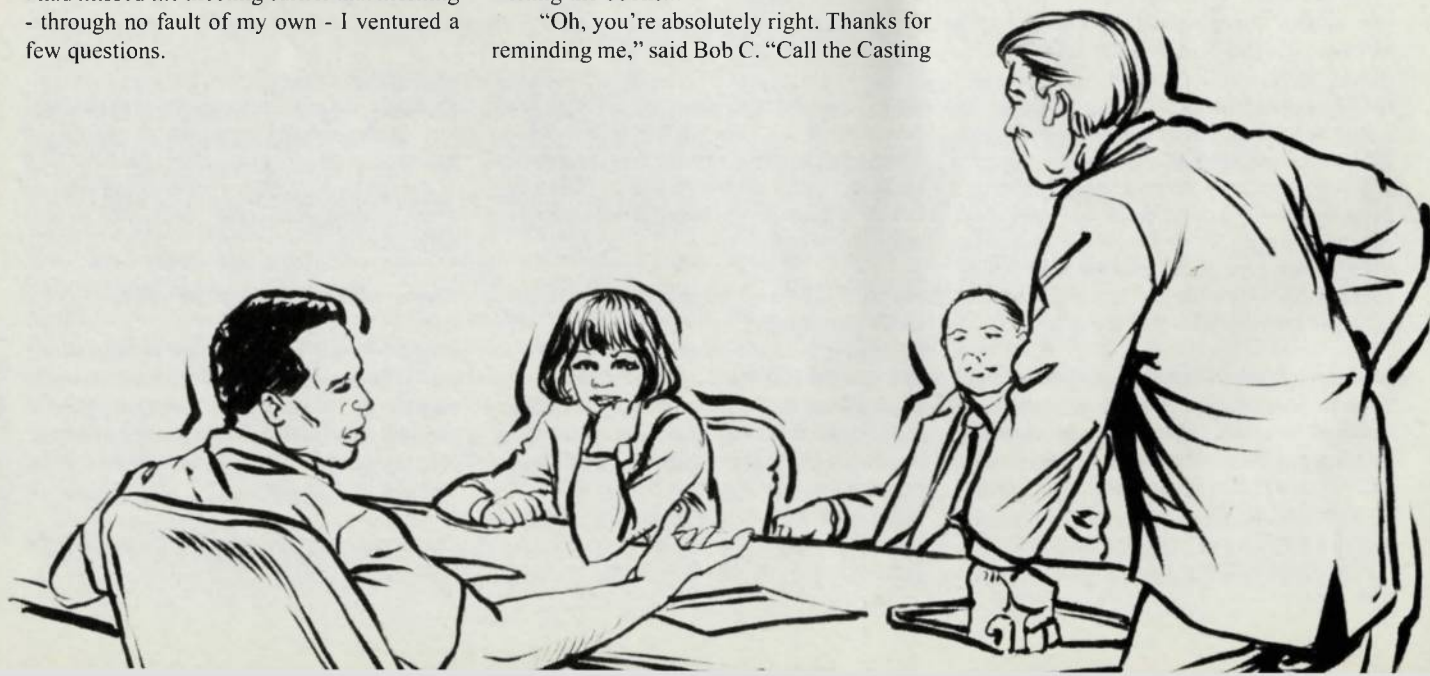
"Have the books even been written? Who's going to write the books?"

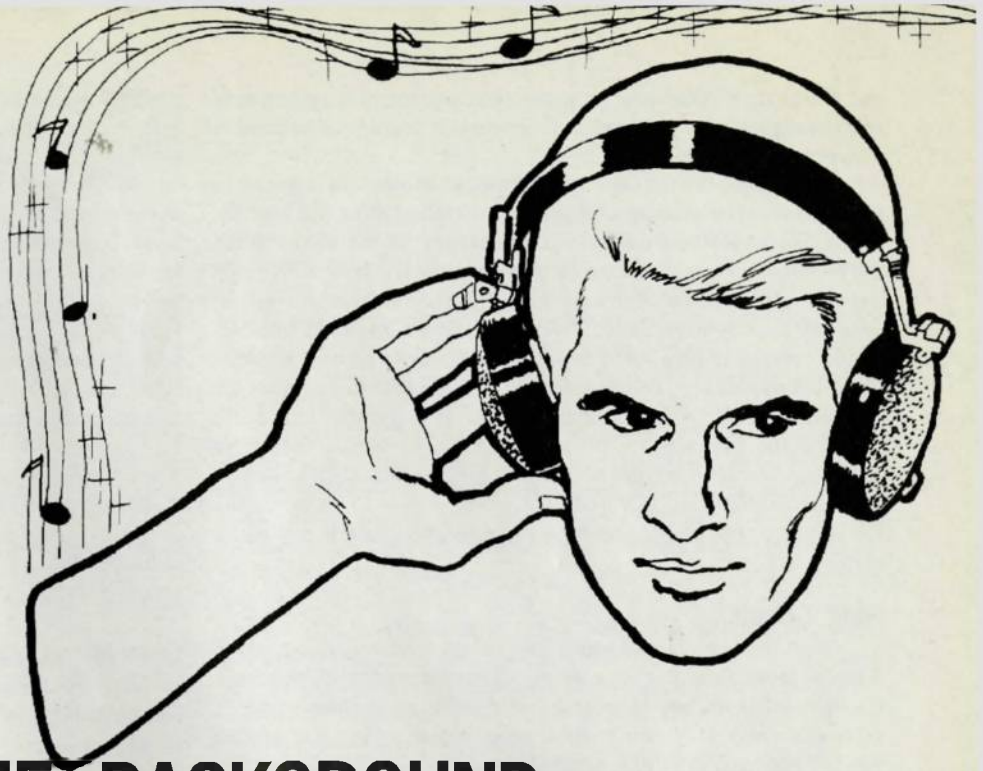
Bob C. seemed irritated. "I really wish you had made the meeting this morning. The vice president of finance and his team of vice presidents explained that by eliminating the costs associated with both the acquisition of manuscripts and the overall editorial process, The Corporation's bottom line will be improved significantly."

"But who is going to write the books?" I asked, aghast.

"Well, we're outsourcing the actual book writing, and currently getting bids from several companies based in the Philippines... I've got to run to another meeting, but we should definitely have a meeting to get you up to speed."

As Bob C. made his way down the hall, he yelled, "Call my secretary — the vice president of scheduling — and schedule a lunch." ★





SOUNDS IN THE BACKGROUND

muzak, background music, and unlikely song choices

by Boone Stigall

One of the more inescapable aspects of our culture is the prominence of background music in business establishments. From restaurants to retail to health care providers, the use of music as a backdrop to an activity is a common, almost expected, part of life in our society. The most commonly known use of music in a business setting involves the use of instrumental versions (or covers) of popular songs to provide ambience. Not intended to be unnoticed, many people have nonetheless had the experience of recognizing a song done in said manner. While many have an opinion on this topic, a look at both the companies behind it and how what is often called "elevator music" or "muzak" is used can provide some insight.

A Personal Revelation

My interest in this topic came about after such a discovery. One night last year, a friend and I went out for a couple of drinks. Afterwards, he needed to go to the grocery store so I drove him out to get what he needed. As we arrived, my friend went about shopping while I went over to the magazine section out of boredom. While I was looking around, I noticed the intercom was playing an eerily familiar song. It was so quiet that it was almost unheard, but there was something there that gnawed at me. After about a minute, it dawned on me that I knew the song all along. The song was "Skyway," the ballad off the Replacements 1987 album *Pleased to Meet Me*.

At first I have to admit I was kind of shocked to hear the song in such a manner, it was an unexpected choice for such treatment. Once it sunk in, the feeling inside was one of strangeness, a moment when you realize that a song that was rather obscure (even by a critically acclaimed band at the time) can be turned into background music for people to shop or work to without being aware of it. While much can be written about people discovering unlikely choices in muzak, the transforming of songs into what is commonly called "muzak" has a deeper history than many realize.

A History Of Background Music

A popular misconception is that muzak is a musical genre onto itself; a term denoting easy listening instrumentals of known songs done in a schmaltzy, sometimes even annoying manner. In fact, Muzak is a company in a multi-million-dollar market that offers background music services to businesses along with companies such as DMX/AEI, 3M Music Products, and others. Started in 1934 by Gen. George Owen Squier of the US Army Signal Corps, Muzak's original intention was to provide a subscriber listening service for the home. However, it wasn't until they changed their focus to concentrate on businesses that Muzak became successful. Their string-laden arrangements of well-known songs had an adverse effect on listeners, drawing love-hate reactions among many people and turning Muzak from a company

name to a term encompassing a whole sub-genre of easy listening music ranging from the works of Mantovani to various orchestral versions of pop songs.

Since then, the business of background music has changed in many ways. The growth in demand for original artist material for businesses would be a main factor in changes for the field. In the 1980s, Muzak would enter into an agreement with Yesco to provide not only re-recorded background music, but also foreground music of songs by the original artists. The fare normally considered "muzak" would eventually be offered on the service's Environment Channel along with a number of other channels of music in various genres for a business' needs. Also among the changes is in presentation. More recently, the companies evolved from the over-orchestrated easy listening to currently trying to create an instrumental version largely like the original song, while still using music to enhance the marketplace. For a song to receive this treatment, criteria have to be met.

Song Criteria

With the growth in channels and services offered, the question arises as to what makes a song worthy of being re-recorded for Muzak (as opposed to the use of songs by original artist on the company's other channels). The first criteria, according to a Muzak employee interviewed in an article on Feedmag.com, is "a hummable melody" with an emphasis on vocal lines over loud guitars (though, in the late 1990s, some Muzak employees were wanting to get Nirvana's music on the channel). The companies also try to avoid using familiar rock anthems (though more melodic contemporary pop and R&B hits can be as likely to appear as Steely Dan or Celine Dion songs). In addition, Muzak holds licensing agreements (usually with ASCAP) that open up a passageway for many potential remakes. Once a song is approved, a recording is made and the formula of stimulus progression is used to decide its appropriate placement intended to create a familiarity in the air of a business. For this to succeed, Muzak and its competition have to cater to a wide variety of tastes without offending either listeners or clients. Selections are recorded with re-arrangements that de-emphasize any dissonant elements. Dark chords are sweetened and lead lines and hooks are inferred rather than highlighted. The clients are not supposed to listen, but to do the task at hand. Background or business music is designed for function, not art.

The Purpose Of Background Music.

The songs used for background music (or as Muzak calls it "audio architecture") serve a distinct purpose. They should be familiar to the listener yet appear non-descript in the shopping or business environment. A formula is in place to create the right atmosphere for a business' needs. According to Muzak, audio architecture "captures the emotional power of music" to "enhance a client's brand image." A main staple, for Muzak at least, is the formula of "stimulus progression," where programmers build intensity in 15-minute increments to create a desired effect for a client. The intentions are to keep employee productivity up and shoppers shopping. In the process, the songs used serve a purpose similar to wallpaper; to be noticed on occasion but not to draw your attention. Staggered feeds are used to guarantee the same program schedule to all time zones. While efforts are made to have the Muzak version of a song sound like the original, a chosen song must be made to bring attention to a business need, not to divert customers or employees from it.

It is on this point that the inclusion of "Skyway" makes some sense. While not a chart or radio hit upon its 1987 release, it does have a hummable melody, thus meeting the first criteria for Muzak. As a ballad, it also lacked the loud guitars and other elements that make other songs ineligible by Muzak programmers. With the right recording it could be wallpaper, blending into a background of a supermarket as ambience. While I was able to come across it, many people either not paying attention or unfamiliar with the song probably

wouldn't even notice. Thus, it became an added element for a shopping environment instead of an obscure song from a band whose acclaim far outweighed their record sales during their existence.

We currently live in a society where music is in the background of much of our lives. From the CD player or jukebox at a bar to a barely noticeable muzak at the doctor's office, it is a fact of life that we will have to be around it in one form or another. Intended as an addition to business atmosphere, business/background music is heard but not listened to. It is meant to keep workers focused and shoppers buying, not to distract them with a kick-ass guitar lick or vocal effect. Here, Led Zeppelin and Style Council co-exist together not on their musical merits, but as tools to enhance a possible work or shopping experience for a client. The audience is captive in a way; forced to listen but expected to tune it out to focus on the tasks at hand until that particular experience ends for them. As a result songs that were originally calls for freedom become, in this environment, a tool for social control. A fairly benign tool for control, but a method of control nonetheless.

Conclusion

The future of background music for use by businesses is, admittedly, open-ended. There are still questions to ask and songs to be programmed. Some of the choices have been, and will be, unexpected. Others, like past and current chart and radio hits, will make their way in quite easily. And while the shopper or employee is not supposed to pay attention to the sounds in the background, occasionally it becomes inevitable that a song from your past will sink into your brain during the task at hand. If you pay close attention, the results might be surprising, if not shocking.

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The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization

Edited by Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaficas and Daniel Burton Rose
Soft Skull Press, 2002
www.softskull.com



Decidedly for the initiated, *The Battle of Seattle* is "an attempt to bring together under one cover some of the most interesting debates and commentaries from within the antiglobalization movement." From movement background, to tactics, to strategy, this amazing anthology tackles the tricky issues that movement people are struggling to work out — and it does so with both depth and a surprising degree of newness.

Let's start with what the book is not. While it does provide important history — perhaps more meaningfully described as context for the movement — this anthology is not the story of Seattle. Nor is it a collection of reasons to oppose the WTO, the IMF, World Bank or global capitalism in general. Rather, *The Battle of Seattle* presents readers with the information they need to strategize about and avoid the many pitfalls the movement currently faces.

Issues surrounding movement leadership and authority, white supremacy and racism, reliance on media coverage, and overall sustainability are all masterfully explored by some of the most learned and thoughtful theorists from within the current movement and without. The editors' willingness to explore movements past and movements abroad enable the book to draw some invaluable connections that American activists need to understand and act upon.

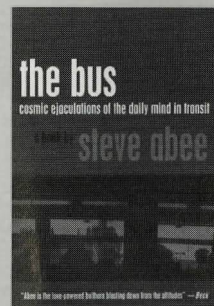
Must-read pieces like "The Showdown Before Seattle," "A Place for Rage," "Liberals Rewrite History," "This Is What Bureaucracy Looks Like," "From Seattle to South Central" and "The Vision Thing," as well as some brilliant graphics and photos, all aid in creating an atmosphere that makes their insights even more indispensable. *The Battle of Seattle* is not only the best anthology on the movement against capitalist globalization, but one of the best political anthologies on *any* subject to come out in years.

-Arthur Stamoulis

The Bus:

Cosmic Ejaculations of the Daily Mind in Transit

Steve Abee
Phony Lid Books, 2001



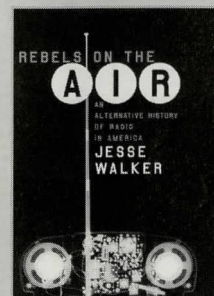
The Bus is a collection of the author's thoughts, memories, notions, and ideas. This lyrical work is an amalgamation of narrative and poetry, peppered with melodic language and iconoclastic ideas. As he watches the people and things around him that make up the city of Los Angeles, Abee recalls past experiences, ponders life and culture, and beautifully divulges his thoughts to the reader on each page of the book. Each new chapter is based on a street in the city and contains the thoughts and experiences that the author associates with that street. *The Bus* is a terrific literary work that stirs up almost every possible emotion in the reader. A refreshingly creative and original piece of modern literature, *The Bus* is, without a doubt, worth reading.

-Jonathan Bruno

Rebels on the Air:

An Alternative History of Radio in America

Jesse Walker
New York University Press, 2001



Chances are if you're reading this magazine you are already a passionate supporter of alternative radio. But why? And alternative to what? In *Rebels on the Air*, Jesse Walker shows how Americans have challenged the limits to free expression imposed on radio ever since the Radio Act of 1912. In addition to a history of alternative radio, Walker also offers an alternative history of radio, one that tosses out the apolitical celebrity fodder of

Rolling Stone and VH-1 and challenges readers to think through the political principles that will have to underlie any serious commitment to changing the media landscape.

Rebels on the Air is a sweeping history, taking readers from the radio hams of the early twentieth century all the way up to present-day innovations in internet broadcasting. Walker's research covers all the bases: he tells familiar stories about the emergence of the FCC as a regulatory body, explores the failed promise of freeform, public radio, and CB, and even delves into that bloody fracas of alternative media politics called Pacifica. His research is also groundbreaking: through dozens of interviews, Walker documents contemporary radio activists who are unknown outside alternative broadcasting circles and recovers early pioneers forgotten even within the world of radio rebels.

Walker is particularly concerned with how government regulation has shaped — and stifled — radio broadcasting. The rebels on the air of the book's title are heroes battling against "a larger series of policies that have decimated the radio dial" thanks to Washington's limits on access to broadcast media by both producers and consumers. This is a straightup libertarian argument — although you don't have to be much of a libertarian to see Walker's point. "A freer media landscape, shorn of such tight controls, is possible — one that would allow us greater freedom to choose, to create, and to escape," he writes. Who could disagree with that? And alternative radio itself, as Walker demonstrates, has long offered space for fruitful collaborations between free-market libertarian conservatives and the anti-authoritarian left. His politics often provide a refreshing and provocative jolt to sloppy thinking.

But no matter how much *Rebels on the Air* gets me in touch with my inner Ayn Rand, I'm not ready to enlist in Jesse Walker's rebel army. "Market forces have already produced much media diversity, and were it not for the barriers erected by the FCC (among others), those forces would produce much more," he tells us at the outset. But later, when he examines the transformation of freeform FM radio into Album-Oriented Rock (which he rightly calls "one of the most restrictive, conservative, and boring formats ever"), he places blame for this shift on marketing consultants and the "financial speculation" that ensued once investors realized that money could be made on the FM dial. He'll tell you this was "artificial scarcity imposed by the FCC." But would his market alternative really have led to alternative outcomes? I'm left wondering whether the forces of international media conglomerates would and have done just as much to crush his vision of freedom as any government bureaucrat. Bureaucracy is stifling, sure. But if the throttle hold is released and the fresh breezes of the free market pour in, won't I just end up choking on the hot air of Bertelsmann and Rupert Murdoch? Who's the real enemy here?

Some readers will be irritated by a prolonged reading of *Rebels on the Air*. At times, Walker's material gets out of his control and he subjects us to pages of mindnumbing detail about one failed radio station after another without any illumination of his larger point. And while he's sensible enough to admit that creative license does not always (or often) guarantee quality broadcasting, he hasn't found a way to convey in writing which dj's were any good and which are fondly remembered by his interviewers through smoky decades of cannabis-scented haze.

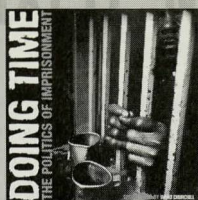
Debates over the relative perils posed by state power and media capitalism are not mere quibbles. In the 1990s, pirate radio stations and microradio exploded in the context of a global convergence of corporate media. Today's rebels on the air are creating what alternative broadcast pioneer Lorenzo Milam called "a center for informality and reason and thought and ideas and ideals which so far, because of artifice, or fear, or greed, or pettiness — have eluded the air, and thus our ears." If all the energy of today's radio rebels is going to be turned into a movement to restore to Americans the freedom to choose, to create, or to escape, then a concentrated and coherent mobilization of alternative media producers and consumers is desperately necessary. The strength of Jesse Walker's book is that whatever you believe to be the real enemy of radio freedom, you can't help coming away from *Rebels on the Air* with a reinvigorated commitment to restore creativity to the broadcast media, ten watts at a time.

-Christopher Capozzola

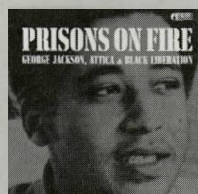
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Doing Time: The Politics of Imprisonment
Ward Churchill
G-7 Welcoming Committee
Records, 2001
www.g7welcomingcommittee.com



Prisons On Fire: George Jackson, Attica, & Black Liberation
AK Press and Alternative
Tentacles Records, 2002
www.akpress.org



I've been somewhat skeptical about the usefulness of releasing radical academics' speeches on CD since the time about a year ago when, nearly comatose behind the wheel, I almost died trying to make it through a Chomsky lecture during a road trip. Thankfully, though, that shouldn't be an issue with Ward Churchill's presentation.

In *Doing Time: The Politics of Imprisonment*, released recently by G-7 Welcoming Committee Records, Churchill speaks passionately and sardonically to what sounds like an intimate crowd, weaving a dosage of theory into a series of historical examples, ably demonstrating the roles of police, courts, and prisons in repressing dissent in the modern democratic state. Churchill's recounting of the brutal and illegal measures taken against the Black Panthers and other radicals of the 1960's period will surely prove interesting to those not familiar with his written works *Agents of Repression*, *The COINTELPRO Papers*, and *Cages of Steel*. However, activists with some background on these matters might be disappointed that Churchill spends only about fifteen of the seventy minutes he speaks discussing the issues behind the astronomical rise over the last two decades of prison construction and rates of incarceration for prisoners not directly involved in social justice movements. Despite the CD's title, Churchill also gives listeners little insight into the actual daily conditions of "doing time." G-7 seems to recognize the limitations of the medium, however, and provides a bibliography for further study as well of a glossary of people and organizations Churchill touches on during his speech. Wrapping this information in brilliant packaging that evokes both the despair of prison and the corrupt secrecy of COINTELPRO, they have created a useful and appealing educational recording.

Prisons On Fire: George Jackson, Attica, and Black Liberation, AK Press and Alternative Tentacles' latest contribution to the growing body of prison-related spoken word recordings, recounts the life and death of imprisoned Panther and political theorist George Jackson as well as the 1971 inmate revolt at Attica prison sparked by Jackson's murder. Composed of two related half-hour segments created by the Prison Radio Project and Freedom Archives, *Prisons On Fire* proves how powerful the radio documentary can be when content isn't impinged upon by corporate underwriting. Producers Anita Johnson and Claude Marks smoothly weave archival

recordings of the participants in the events together with music, new interviews of prison activists, and the voices of able narrators to present a fascinating history of the radical prison movement of the '60s and '70s. Angela Davis, James Baldwin, William Kunstler, and half a dozen other noted activists and intellectuals weigh in throughout, making for an even more compelling listen.

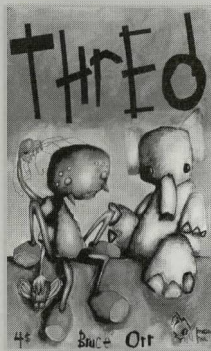
Doing Time and *Prisons on Fire* are both worth the time and money of present-day prison activists, progressives, and historians, as both recordings provide critical insight into the repressive machinations of the U.S. government and the thinking of strong individuals, past and present, engaged in resisting its unjust institutions. If one's budget can accommodate only one of the two, however, *Prisons On Fire* is probably the better choice, owing to the fact that its layers of voices and sound draws the audience more fully into the events, keeps it attentive, and makes listening to the disk multiple times a much more enticing proposition.

-Andy Cornell

Thred

Bruce Orr
Immersion Press, 2001
www.immersionpress.com

A brief history of comics: The highest award ever given to a comic book was the Pulitzer Prize, given to Art Spiegelman for his independent comic *Maus*, which retells his father's Holocaust survival story.



The second highest award to a comic was the World Fantasy Award, given to an issue of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*. *Sandman* was published by DC Comics, but was so indie that it might as well have been printed at Office Max.

When comics first started out, there were four companies of note. Timely (which later became Marvel), National (which became DC), EC (which printed mostly horror titles and went out of business after the Senate Hearings of the early '50s and the Comics Code came into being) and Fawcett (which published Captain Marvel and other titles now owned by DC. Thank you Time-Warner)

It should, however, be noted that Spirit creator and general comics God Will Eisner never worked for any of these companies. He did newspaper strips and seven-page inserts for Sunday papers all on his own. He later created the graphic novel and pretty much wrote the rulebook on such things as panel movement, layout and timing. (There are a lot of people who will claim that Jack Kirby, co-creator of X-Men, The Hulk, Iron Man, and a host of other Marvel favorites, was the greatest of the old-school comic writers. These people are dumb. They have either never read Eisner or are too stupid to understand what's going on in an Eisner book.)

The point of this seemingly pointless exercise is to show that unlike other fields, indie comics often get as much, if not more, recognition than mainstream publishers. Unlike music (where indie acts like Wilco and Bad Religion are ignored annually) or film (How is it that *A Beautiful Mind* won the best picture Oscar yet *The Man Who Wasn't There* or *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* weren't even nominated?), independent comics often take home the gold. (However, it should be noted that after *Sandman* won the World Fantasy Award, the award panel met and decided that no comics shall be eligible for the award ever again. Bastards.)

Thred is Bruce Orr's foray into independent comics. Orr, a Philadelphia native, spent five years weaving a tale of anarchy and corporate/government greed that rivals Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*.

Thred tells the story of Stanislav, a toy maker who works every day on Market Island and spends his nights in the slums of New Philadelphia. When the Mergecom Corporation, which governs New Philly, decides that Market Island doesn't make the corporation enough money and needs to be shut down. Stanislav, angered by the decision, feeds off an ancient legend and gains the power to fight the corporation.

Thred is eerily prophetic. "Once business and government worked together," Orr states once in his book. "Under Mergecom, there was no difference."

The book is not a superhero comic on the surface, but when you dig deeper you start to see themes starting to form, not of the Superman-type who fights for the government regardless what they do, but of the more anarchistic type — Miller's anarchistic *Batman*, Mark Grunwald-era *Captain America* and *The Punisher*. These heroes aren't assisting the shadow governments that supposedly keeps the peace, but standing up for a greater human good.

The characters in *Thred* are brief but fairly well-rounded for a comic of its size. Sometimes the printing isn't top quality and the lettering, which takes a while to get used to, is a bit faded. But these are technical details. Once you finish reading *Thred*, you will appreciate independence more.

Because of the monopolies that control the comic industry (Diamond Distribution is the only real distribution house out there) you will not find *Thred* in your local comic store. You can order *Thred* through Orr's website, www.immersionpress.com. And for feedback and some extra cash, he'll send you some stickers and (beautiful) original artwork.

Orr finishes his book with perhaps the most prolific statement he has made yet. "Seeya next time kids. And don't stop asking questions!"

-Danny McCaslin

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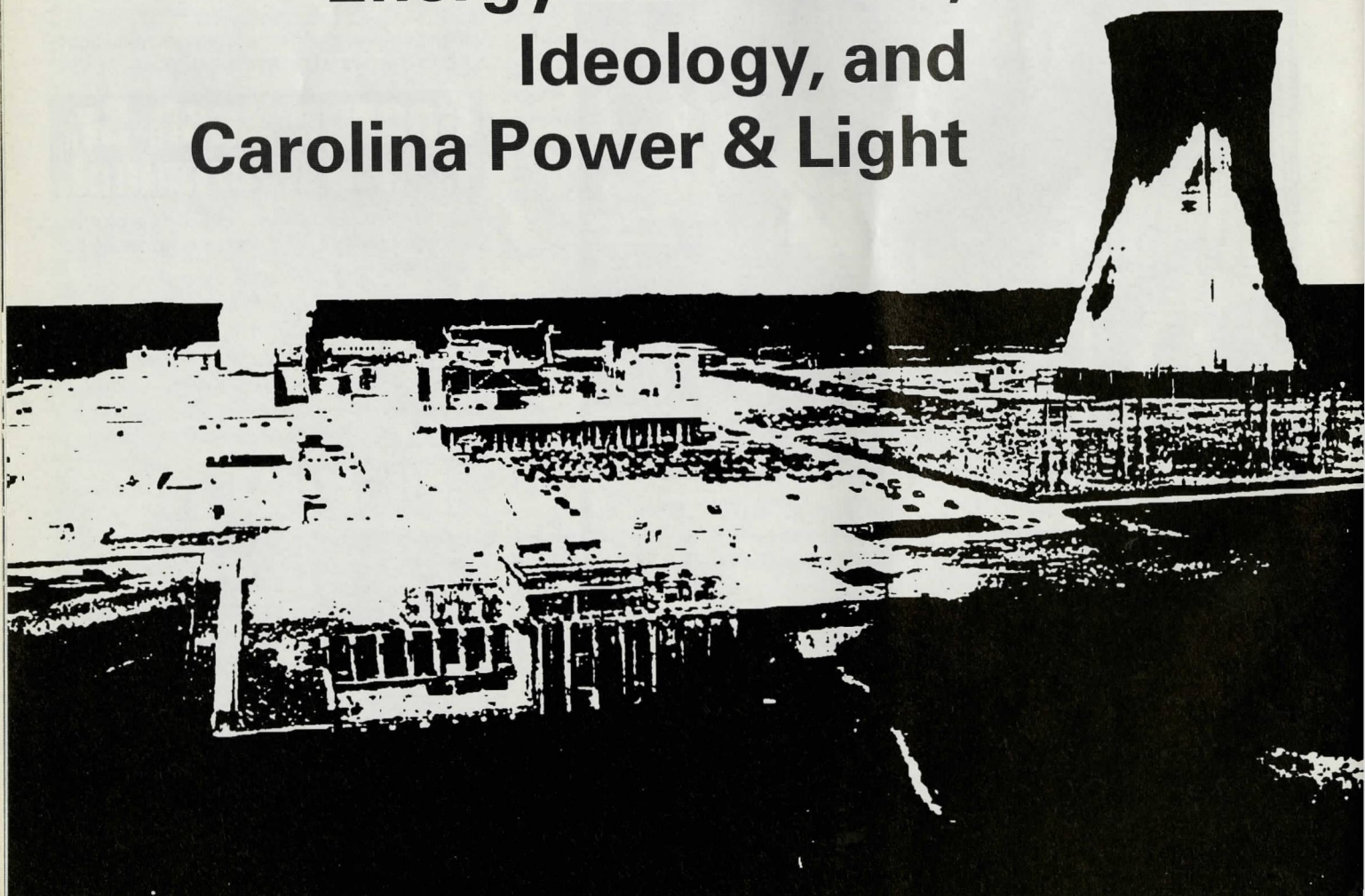
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UNMITIGATED

**Energy Production,
Ideology, and
Carolina Power & Light**



POWER

by Jordan Green

In North Carolina, citizens groups and local governments have been in a desperate fight to stop the expansion of Carolina Power & Light's nuclear stockpile at the Shearon-Harris plant in southwest Wake County. Inflaming passions even more, the company continues to transport irradiated spent fuel rods by train to the site from its Brunswick plant near Wilmington and its Robinson plant in Hartsville, South Carolina, despite the imminent threat of terrorist attack.

Opponents of the nuclear waste dump have been arrested trying to meet with CEO William Cavanaugh. Three county commissions and half a dozen neighboring towns have officially stated their opposition to the expansion of Shearon-Harris nuclear waste dump. The requests by the local governments of neighboring Orange and Chatham counties to have open public hearings with scientific debate have been repeatedly rejected by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Congressman David Price, representative of North Carolina's 4th district, has maintained a complacent silence about Shearon-Harris thanks to Carolina Power & Light's status as his number-one corporate patron.

All appeals for regulator redress have fallen upon deaf ears under a system where people are supposed to have a say in these kind of decisions. The situation is much the same in communities adjacent to nuclear facilities like Millstone in Connecticut and Indian Point near New York City. In North Carolina, I've been working with an alliance of non-profit groups to weigh on the state attorney general, Roy Cooper, to issue an injunction against Carolina Power & Light's transport of nuclear waste to protect the public

from the clear and present danger of nuclear sabotage.

So how did power companies get to be so powerful? The answer lies behind an ideology of rapacious resource exploitation and an aggressive strategy to assert legitimacy and authority.

Carolina Power & Light: The name suggests a kind of patriotic blackmail infused with divine omnipotence and retribution. *Patria*. Land. *Our* North Carolina, to which we're beholden and in whose name all manner of depredations and plunders are carried out. And then *power*: the raw substance and begetter of the capitalist system. Power is the signifier of dominion, authority, and control. And *light*, then is the signifier of illumination and vision. Carolina Power & Light is our sham god. Our good Christian representatives' consistent service at the bidding of this corporate behemoth is nothing short of idolatry before Mammon.

In 2000, Carolina Power & Light won the right through a decision by the North Carolina Utilities Commission to morph into a holding company, clearing the way for its acquisition of Florida Energy and launch of Progress Ventures to expand into energy trading and marketing. The new parent company, Progress Energy, has a board of directors representing real estate, banking, and timber. If Carolina Power & Light signifies God and country, then Progress Energy denotes a more scientific, modern empire, "progress" being the inexorable movement from cronyism, corruption, and vice toward "market efficiency."

The religion of gross energy consumption and land development, with its feeding frenzy of capital speculation, is so

fixed in the polity that the planets may as well revolve around companies like Progress Energy. But this company and its ilk are closer in character to criminal rackets, like warlords carving up the bounty, than to benevolent overseers. Their violations are reckless endangerment by the threat of nuclear holocaust, rapacious destruction of the earth's limited resources, and the greater theft of the full range of possibilities for a slowed, more deeply experienced life.

It takes will power to fight off a nearly instinctual sycophancy towards these cartels, to resist the colonization of consciousness that compels deference to the power company. The cohort of racketeers in the boardroom of Progress Energy is the most venal, shortsighted, and amoral among us. We've only been worn down by an unrelenting public relations campaign that cloaks Progress Energy in divine light.

When George W. Bush, the high chief of the global security state, visited South Korea on February 20, he rhetorically placed energy in its rightful place as the anointing epoxy of the free market regime in the clash of civilizations. "When satellites take pictures of the Korean peninsula at night the South is awash in light," said Bush. "The North is almost completely dark." He was undoubtedly referring to both energy and ideology.

"All our experience, every page of our history," writes North Carolina critic Hal Crowther, "tells us that capitalists without cops devolve into bullies and thieves, even monsters ... Capitalism is a calculated bargain with the devil. We invite moral vertigo - and contempt - when we mistake this compromise with our darkness for the source of our light."

Progress Energy's aura of light is stripped away when considered in the context of its corporate energy antecedents. Take the American Association of London, as an example. The British-owned coal extraction company stormed into Bell County in eastern Kentucky in the late 19th century, gained control of the lucrative mineral wealth, coerced the population into employment, and by the 1950s had exhausted the county's coal reserves, and for all practical purposes laid waste to the people and land. The American Association won the rights to the coal under Bell County by trickery, threats of violence, and manipulation of the legal system. Gradually, it established its legitimacy. But, for a sense of how ephemeral and fleeting the energy corporation is, consider the change in rhetoric from the start of the first coal boom to the final stage of deindustrialization.

American Association founder Alexander Arthur rhapsodized at the outset of its foray into the Cumberland plateau: "We have the sinews of body and of money and stand ready, clean-cut and vigorous, for a generation of progress and success in manufacture, arts, and sciences."

By the 1970s, American Association's general manager, Alvarado E. Funk, had announced a policy of depopulation: "The people would be better off, and we would be better off, if they would be off our lands."

Such is any energy company's attitude towards land and people. Progress Energy proposes a new \$80 million tower and office complex in downtown Raleigh as an expression of its preeminence. Its executives

belong to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the N.C. Citizens for Business & Industry, the Board of Visitors at the University of North Carolina Kenan Flagler School of Business, and the President's Council of Tulane University in New Orleans. The company insinuates itself into the commonwealth of higher education with its CP&L Management Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It spreads its corporate wealth around to recipients ranging from United Way to the Exploris science museum in Raleigh, making it appear that it is the great social benefactor of North Carolina.

Like any other corporation that inserts itself into the life of a people and depends on their consent for its profit, Progress Energy's rhetoric is cloaked in the ideology of progress, civilization, and social improvement. We are given to believe that our lives, businesses, and society itself would shudder to a stop without the benevolent stewardship of the power company. But it is quite to the contrary: Carolina Power & Light would wither on the vine without our ratepayer money.

Progress Energy's CEO William Cavanaugh reassures the people who live nearby the Shearon-Harris nuclear plant that "I have been struck by the dedication, professionalism and commitment of all our emergency, law enforcement and security personnel at our company and in the community. Everyone involved, including our emergency management partners at the state and local level, take their responsibility very seriously." His message to the public is that Carolina Power & Light nuclear plants remain

on high alert; they "are among the most secure industrial facilities in the world;" they have sophisticated "layers of safety systems and structures;" and the plants have contingency plans in the event of a nuclear terrorist attack.

But none of this can hide the fact that Carolina Power & Light's nuclear operations are a desperate gamble which invite a catastrophe of unimagined proportions. The reactor walls, a target nearly as broad as the World Trade Center, would easily be shattered by the impact of a terrorist's hijacked airplane. Nuclear facilities around the country have repeatedly failed to protect themselves against mock terrorist attacks by groups of three men, not the 19 who carried out the September 11 attacks. Despite assurances of secrecy, the threat of a plane slamming into one of Carolina Power & Light's radioactive waste trains en route to Shearon-Harris remains a distinct possibility, as evidenced by the fact that three escaped convicts successfully boarded a CP&L waste train in April.

Energy companies are the defenders of our way of life: of free markets and economic growth. But none of these corporate usurpers ever asked us if we wanted their civilizing influence. Their presence on the earth is fleeting and ephemeral, but they arrogantly suppose that they have the right to impose on us the horror of the nuclear holocaust that would accompany their departure.

As Clean Water for North Carolina has so elegantly surmised, "Democracy has been corroded, distorted and warped by huge aggregates of wealth accumulated through the corporate form. Corporations have been granted legal status as 'persons' while natural persons and resources are treated as objects in making profits ... through Enron-like distribution of money, global corporations have usurped the function of representative government."

Challenging corporate power has never been easy. But we have to ask ourselves if we have been so dulled by Carolina Power & Light's self-legitimizing barrage of public relations that we can no longer conceive of a country without its rapacious influence. If ever there was a good fight against illegitimate privilege, this is it. And if we have any regard for our dignity and self-worth, then we should assert our sovereignty and rise to the challenge. ★

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The Panther Insurgency

Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy
by Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas eds.
Routledge, 2001

All Power to the People!: The Black Panther Party and Beyond
directed by Lee Lew-Lee
Electronic Film Group, 1996

review by Paul Glavin

The movement against capitalist globalization has revived a spirit of resistance not experienced since the 1960s. Anarchists have played a central role in this movement, not only by forming Black Blocs for actions, but also by advocating direct democracy, propagating the use of affinity groups, and emphasizing a movement from below, not dependent on vanguard parties or established liberal groups. Anarchists also qualify the globalization process as a dynamic of capital, while contributing a broad critique of hierarchy and domination.¹ The integral role played by anarchists has not been lost on those in power. Recently departed FBI Chief Louis Freeh testified that "Anarchists ... have an international presence and, at times, also represent a potential threat in the United States."²

With this new movement — in many ways a revival of the movements of the 1960s and 70s — it is crucial to look at historical predecessors. One of the most prominent, well organized, and controversial organizations of that period was The Black Panther Party (BPP). In the 1960s, Freeh's predecessor, J. Edgar Hoover, identified the BPP as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country."³

Continuing the Spirit of the Panthers

Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas's book, *Imagination, Liberation, and the Black Panther Party*, widens the information available with great detail and analysis, while continuing the spirit of the Panthers. It is a collection of essays, organized into four sections, plus an introduction and appendix of documents.

The first section, "Revisiting the Liberation Struggle," contains a very good essay on the Black Liberation Army (BLA) by Akinyele Omowale Umoja; one concerning the Panthers in the international arena; a look at life in the Party from Mumia Abu-Jamal; and an essay on organizing for Mumia in France by Cleaver. The second section, "Understanding the Fight for Freedom," goes into depth with several contributions on the daily activities and politics of the Panthers and an assessment of "Black Fighting Formations," by Russell Shoats, a captured member of the BLA. "Envisioning the Imagination of the Movement" contains an essay by Katsiaficas on the little known but essential story of the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention of 1970; Ruth Reitan on the relation of the Black Liberation struggle in the United States to Cuba; as well as articles on Panther influences in the Bahamas; Emory Douglas's artwork for the Panther newspaper; and relations between white radicals and Panthers, plus others. The final section, "Continuing the Resistance," includes a critique of Hugh Pearson's reactionary *Shadow of a Panther*; a short essay called "Remembering King's Assassination," plus, among

others, an excellent piece on the Angola 3 who have spent twenty-nine years in solitary confinement due to their political work in prison.

The book also addresses the role of women in the BPP, Panther theory, and the FBI war against the Panthers. This book supplements the recent outpouring of Panther literature, mostly autobiographical, filling a niche similar to *The Black Panther Party: Reconsidered*, edited by Charles E. Jones.

The BPP survived severe government repression to become a player in municipal politics and community development, but whereas recent books such as Elaine Brown's *A Taste of Power* and David Hilliard's *This Side of Glory* concentrate on this aspect of the BPP, *Imagination, Liberation, and The Black Panther Party* deals more with the post-BPP activity of the Black Liberation Army (Both the Party and the Army lasted into the early 1980s). Unfortunately information on the BLA is still rare, but essays by Umoja and Shoats help fill the gap.

Authoritarian or Communitarian?

Anarchists seem to have one of two responses to the Panthers: they will either denounce them for their authoritarianism or celebrate them for their insurgency. In fact, the Panthers were a mix of both communitarian and authoritarian elements, which need untangling, and this book can help us here.

As this book makes clear, the Panthers emerged organically out of the North American social context and developed a distinct form of radicalism in response to it. Today's anti-authoritarians should study the Panther's militancy and organizational cohesion, and learn how they grew from a handful of folks to a mass-based group with tremendous social influence.

Certainly the Panthers emphasis on organization is preferable to tendencies within contemporary anarchism which disdain any kind of structure. For the majority of revolutionary anarchists involved in social movements today this is not an issue, nor was it amongst social anarchists in the 1960s. The question is: what kind of organization?

As communalist Murray Bookchin argued in a 1969 open letter to Huey Newton: "If a revolutionary organization('s) ... forms are not similar to the libertarian society it seeks to create ... then the organization becomes a vehicle for carrying the forms of the past into the revolution. It becomes a self-perpetuating organism, a state machine that, far from 'withering away,' perpetuates all the archaic conditions for its own existence."⁴



The authoritarian, top-down structure of the Panthers, combined with their reliance on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, is objectionable from an anti-authoritarian perspective. The Panthers saw themselves as a vanguard Marxist-Leninist style Party with hierarchical ranks and they were influenced by Mao. For example, Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones's essay, "Global Solidarity," points out that fifty percent of BPP political education classes were devoted to Mao's Little Red Book. Key members were given State titles, such as Minister of Information and Minister of Defense.

In this collection, Mumia argues it is hard to generalize about the BPP because it had many offices and a diverse membership reflecting regional and cultural differences. Yet by the 1970s the BPP did become increasingly authoritarian and centralized. It has been argued that the move toward centralization in Oakland, and the top-down command structure originating with Newton, ultimately led to the Panther's demise, after the destruction caused by government repression and the split in the Party.⁵ This makes sense: increased internal democracy would have produced a stronger, more resilient base within the party. This would have made it harder for the government to stop the Panthers by taking out key leaders and would have helped morale and the strength of the Party as Newton became isolated and erratic.

Yet the authoritarianism of the Panthers was combined with communal elements, such as the free breakfast programs and community health clinics, as well as an uncompromising emphasis on freedom. They were as influenced by Malcolm X — although X's revolutionary nationalism might be objectionable to some anarchists — and by the daily conditions in the Black community, as they were by Marxism.

The Panthers were not strictly Marxist-Leninists. Beyond classic Marxist-Leninist literature, the Panthers were also influenced by Bakunin's *The Catechism of the Revolutionary*⁶ and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The Panthers, and later the BLA, also produced anarchists such as Kuwasi Balagoon.⁷

In addition to Panther ideas, the Panthers developed mass community participation and mobilization largely on a liberatory, communal level. For example, the Panther's free breakfast program fed between 10,000 and 50,000 kids daily, their street patrols are the antecedent to today's Copwatch (monitoring the police activities in neighborhoods where cops are prone to brutality and harassment) and set the basis for the movement for independent civilian police review boards. Every day Panthers were out selling their paper, which had a circulation of 100,000 to 250,000, they lent support and advice to Native peoples, aided in the creation of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and inspired The Young Lords Party (Puerto Rican activists based primarily in New York and Chicago) and the Brown Berets (Chicano/a activists in California), not to mention international organizations that sprung up from India to England (the essay by Clemons and Jones on international groups inspired by the Panthers is very interesting).

The Panthers constituted the beginnings of a dual power to capital, racism, and the State. They demonstrated that it takes more than ideas to create change. Certainly their ideas resonated with millions in the Black community, internationally, and amongst the white revolutionary Left, as this book amply demonstrates. But it was their practice which made a difference in the daily lives of tens of thousands of people. If it is true that one can gauge the effectiveness of an oppositional organization by the level of repression it receives at the hands of the state, then the Panthers were effective indeed.

State Repression

Ward Churchill's article tells the grim story of killings, frame-ups, and disruption against the Panthers as part of the government's counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO). Churchill lists twenty-nine "police induced fatalities" of Panthers and reports "that the police were very nearly as busy coming up with pretexts upon which to kill Panthers as they were finding excuses to arrest them."⁸

From reporting on today's protest movement, we know the press to be hostile to oppositional ideas and actions. We should pay attention to Churchill's documentation of how the FBI worked through various reporters to paint derogatory pictures of Panthers through planted newspaper and TV news reports. This domestic propaganda effort cost the Panthers some support amongst liberals and its effects can still be felt today in many people's skewed perception of the Panthers.

Donald Cox's contribution laments the tragic loss of life with instances of Panther killing Panther, in part precipitated by COINTELPRO. COINTELPRO helped set Newton and Chief of Staff David Hilliard against East Coast Panthers and Eldridge Cleaver's international section in Algeria, and divided Panthers on the West Coast against each other, as in the case of Geronimo Pratt. This ultimately led to a permanent split in the BPP.

The book describes the split between Newton and Cleaver as resulting in reformist and revolutionary directions, but also chronicles the existence of a Black Liberation Army before the BPP and running parallel to it. Ultimately many Panthers went underground in response to government repression and initiated offensive guerrilla-style action. Although Newton always advocated armed self-defense — this is how the BPP first attracted public attention — he publicly opposed developments which led to the organization of the BLA. Essays in this collection shed more light on underground armed action: Shoats critiques the loss of connections to an above-ground movement but shows the mass support the BLA enjoyed when they liberated Assata Shakur from jail in 1979.

Idealism and Downfall

Perhaps the highlight of 1960s aspirations occurred in response to a call by the Panthers for a Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in 1970 in Philadelphia. Against the backdrop of police terror, 10,000 to 15,000 turned out to democratically draft a new Constitution. This diverse and multi-cultural group "generated documents that offer a compelling vision of a more just and free society than has ever existed."⁹ Katsiaficas, who attended the event, reports, "The twin aspirations of the global movement of 1968 — internationalism and self-management — were embodied throughout the documents."¹⁰ This little-known moment in U.S. history countered the conservative myth that "people never change": "Within the constraints of the existing system, it takes moments of exhilarating confrontation with the established powers to lift the veil concerning people's capacities."¹¹ Katsiaficas offers an excellent account of this momentous event and the documents produced are included in an appendix.

The authoritarian and liberatory elements in and around the Panthers came to a head in Philadelphia: the convention was the ultimate expression of 1960s idealism followed by downfall. As Katsiaficas points out, the Philadelphia conference "became the pivot around which mutual synergy, celebration of difference, and most importantly, unity in struggle turned into their opposites: mutual self-destruction, internecine warfare, and standardization in the ranks."¹²

An internal democratic structure may have mediated liberatory and authoritarian tendencies in the Panthers, offering more room for internal debate and directly democratic means of charting future strategy and politics. Instead Newton perceived the Convention as a plot by Cleaver to seize control of the organization and responded by shutting down all the Panther offices across the country in order to centralize power in Oakland. Katsiaficas reports that the results of the convention were never followed up on by the Panthers. Although an historic opportunity was missed, the politics democratically articulated in 1970 laid the basis for social movements for years to come.

It is important to maintain a critical perspective about the Panthers. But it would be a mistake to simply see the Panthers as Marxist-Leninists with nothing to offer today's anti-authoritarians. One has to look at how Panther thinking developed over time — for instance, Newton advocated what he called inter-communalism by the late 1960s and promoted the

rights of women and gays, whom he suggested may be the most oppressed in society. Also, the mass of people mobilized and inspired initially by the Panther's Ten Point Program eventually transcended the thinking of their leaders, as articulated in 1970 at the People's Revolutionary Convention, lending credence to the view that the so-called masses are always smarter than the intellectuals and activists.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Lee Lew-Lee's film is also an excellent introduction to the history of the BPP. Unlike 1994's *Panther* by Mario and Melvin Van Peebles, this film is a documentary.

Lew-Lee, a former Panther, was a network camera man during the LA rebellion following the acquittal of the police charged with brutally beating Rodney King in 1992. His coverage of the rebellion inspired him to do this film. It sets the Panthers's emergence within the historic context of racial domination in the United States and as a reaction to the assassination of Malcolm X. He creates a whirlwind of events and personalities, concentrating mostly on key figures rather than rank and file members. The film addresses the central role played by women in the Party, but ignores struggles over sexism. A section covers the efforts of Chicago Panther Fred Hampton to create a Rainbow Coalition (he was the first to use the phrase) with street gangs, poor whites, and organizations like the Young Lords Party.

Also included is information on the work of Mutulu Shakur, a Panther, BLA member and acupuncturist, to force the City of New York to include experimental acupuncture for detox and general health in low-income, underserved areas. The film includes footage of police attacking just such a program in the Bronx, which was, although not stated in the film, probably Lincoln Hospital. Lincoln Hospital was taken over by the Young Lords. Mutulu and the Panthers helped out in part by establishing an acupuncture clinic there. Today, acupuncture is a cornerstone of any street level detox program. The Panthers are largely to thank for this, and for initiating screenings for sickle cell anemia — a disease particularly affecting people of African descent.

The film documents the role of U.S. intelligence agencies in destabilizing and disrupting Panther operations, especially New York's Panther 21 case (in which Panthers spent two years in jail only to be found not guilty) and, in 1969, coordinating attacks on every Panther office in the United States. It also documents the U.S. government/Chicago Police Department assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, and the role of FBI informants in framing and killing Panthers. Lew-Lee relies on reputable intelligence agency defectors as well as government documents.

Unfortunately the film's coverage of the Panthers largely ends with the 1970s, only mentioning the electoral activity of the period and not really getting into much BLA history. It does however show the Panthers' link to AIM and covers the U.S. government siege at Wounded Knee in 1973 and the subsequent frame-up of Leonard Peltier.

All Power to the People shows that despite the Church Committee Congressional investigation into COINTELPRO — and subsequent vows of reform — the same old tactics continue to be deployed. It covers covert operations up to the CIA-Contra-Cocaine connection and the existence of hundreds of U.S. political prisoners and prisoners of war. The film ends with a call for love and forgiveness. In the context of the bloodshed chronicled, this call has an authentic ring to it, although forgiveness is difficult given the continued imprisonment of captured BPP/BLA members and unchanged U.S. government practices.

The main problem with the film is its reliance more on the repressive apparatus of the state in discussing the Panthers rather than on politics. Certainly repression was a major part of Panther history, but the film advances arguable theories in place of political analysis. For instance, the film claims provocatively that Newton was the victim of psychological warfare, with the CIA playing off his weaknesses to turn him towards drug abuse, paranoia, and brutality. It also suggests that Elaine Brown, who led the Party in the 1970s, was a police agent.

It would have been interesting to see Panthers address various strategic and political discussions that took place, or to examine the responses to repression that sent Oakland-based Panthers in a reformist direction and East Coast Panthers towards armed struggle. Also interesting would be debates over the alliances Panthers formed with other left groups and the tension in BPP politics between revolutionary nationalism and multi-cultural coalition. But as an introduction, this film is a must see.

Conclusion

Perhaps more important than whatever aspects of the BPP/BLA anarchists feel most comfortable with, is the fact that the BPP stood up to state power and mobilized tens of thousands in an effort to bring about improved conditions and self-determination for Blacks in America and people around the world experiencing the brunt of U.S. foreign policy.

Both this book and the film demonstrate how the Panthers combined militant activism with community organizing; they both confronted the state and created changes in people's daily lives. They also show the way those in power react to this potent combination; like this summer against anti-G8 protesters in Genoa, Italy, the government both demonized and brutally repressed them.

In talking of a Panther legacy, it would have improved these contributions to include more about post-Panther work in community organizing, new social movements, and feminism. Also interesting would be more on anarchists and anti-authoritarians that came out of the BPP/BLA, looking perhaps at Kuwasi Balagoon, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, or others. In balance, though, the book more than the film really looks at both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Panthers.

The struggles of Blacks in America, for civil rights in the 1950s and early 1960s, then Black Power, served as inspiration to white 1960s activists. In a similar fashion people in the Southern Hemisphere, once called the Third World, first rebelled against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Riots and large scale mobilizations against "austerity measures" imposed by these institutions predated "the battle of Seattle" by years. It is essential that white activists keep this in mind and understand that predominantly white movements and organizations did not emerge out of a vacuum. Capitalist globalization not only has its most brutal and dehumanizing impact on people of color, but they have led the way through their critique, resistance, and rebellion.

A successful movement against capital and the state must keep the struggle against white racism at the forefront of its theory and action. As part of this, today's revolutionaries should study groups such as the BPP. The BPP not only opposed racism at home, but also developed an analysis of the related phenomenon of neo-colonialism and U.S. imperialism which has laid the basis for what is today commonly called globalization. This is why the Black Panthers were a threat to those in power and why today's movement, if it embraces their lessons, may be even more so. ★

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An Anti-Authoritarian Review of Books

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Capital has always sought to expand, pursuing profit in all corners of the globe. This dynamic of capitalism was already apparent to Marx in the mid-1800s. What is unique today is the attempt by capitalists to consolidate a hegemonic global bloc as well as the truly international nature of resistance to this process. Although communists and socialist groups play a part in today's movement, anarchists have been the most centrally involved, visible, and militantly anti-capitalist. The result is that anti-capitalism has become a core identity and protesters are routinely identified as anti-capitalists by the corporate press.

² "Threats of Terrorism to the United States." May 10, 2001 statement before the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services and Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. Congress.

³ Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, p. 8.

⁴ "Anarchy and Organization: A Letter to the Left," *New Left Notes*, January 15, 1969.

⁵ See Ollie A. Johnson, III in *The Black Panther Party: Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones, Black Classic Press (Baltimore: 1998).

⁶ Eldridge Cleaver, BPP Minister of Information, wrote an introduction to this book in 1969.

⁷ Solidarity Publishing has recently produced a 120 page pamphlet containing essays by and about Balagoon. *Kuwasi Balagoon. A Soldier's Story: Writings by a Revolutionary New Afrikan Anarchist* is available from Kersplebedeb, CP 63560, CCCP Van Horne, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3W 3H8.

⁸ Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, p. 108.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 153.



In a Chinese Joint

by Oscar Tuazon

When Jacob Riis photographed the slums of Manhattan's Lower East Side over century ago, the photographs were instrumental in passing the Tenement Housing Act of 1882, the first in a series of legal actions that provided the basis of modern tenant protections. The tenement buildings of Riis's Lower east Side remain, but the galleries, boutiques, and clubs o today of gradually replaced the crowded slums of the nineteenth century.

Riis's seminal work, *How The Other Half Lives*, is often cited as the first social documentary project, and its influence can be seen in the work of countless contemporary photographers. But Riis's pictures of the poor have played an equally important role in creating the contemporary marketing of the Lower East Side as a fashionable residential neighborhood. Long since vacated of their incendiary activist potential, the images have come to represent an important legacy for the glamorization of poverty by the fashion industry.

In a Chinese Joint is from a series of recreations of photographs from *How The Other Half Lives*. Staged in a tenement building preserved by The Lower East Side Tenement Museum as a historic artifact of a slum of the past, *In a Chinese Joint* reminds us of the inextricable bonds between real estate speculation and the images that make speculation and development possible.

In a Chinese Joint was produced for "the Programmable City," an exhibition organized by the Center for Urban Pedagogy at the Storefront for Art and Architecture.



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