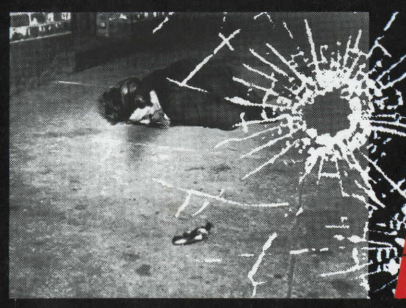

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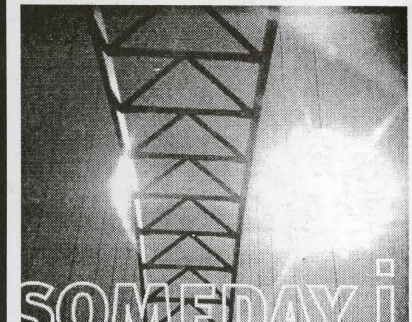

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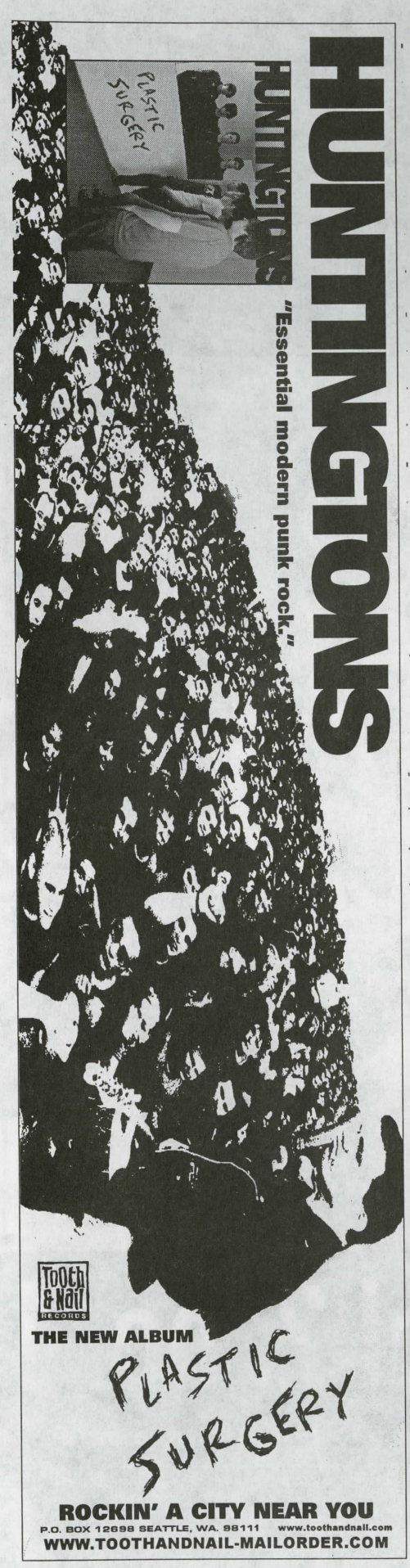
photo: sita rupe

HIT LIST vol 2. no. 1

a p r i l / m a y f o r t h e y e a r t w o t h o u s a n d

cover photos: *supersuckers: lisa johnson, american steel: dave johnson, libertine: mark lomery, kid dynamite: dave johnson*

Corrections: In issue #6, the topless woman in the Dwarves article is *not* Sharon Needles — we received faulty a faulty I.D. on that picture. In that same issue, through nobody's stupidity but his own, Dave Johnson inadvertently left out the vital fact that the Chesterfield Kings article was written by none other than *Here 'Tis* magazine honcho Jeff Jarema. Sorry Jeff. You'll be happy to know that Dave is currently being forced to wear his jockey shorts in the fairly unpopular "wedgie" fashion for the remainder of the week.



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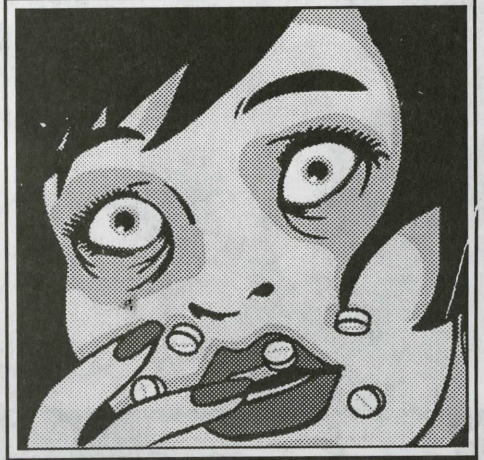

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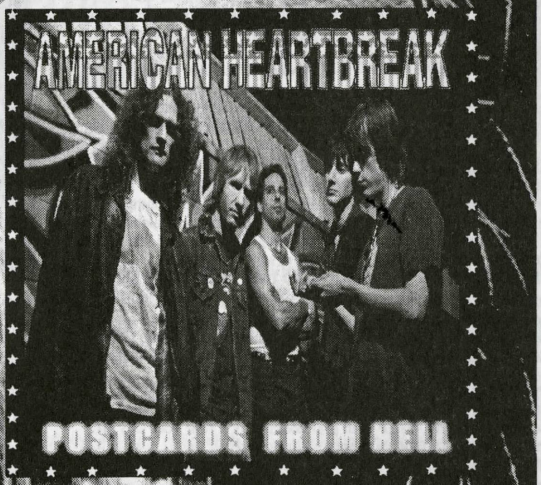

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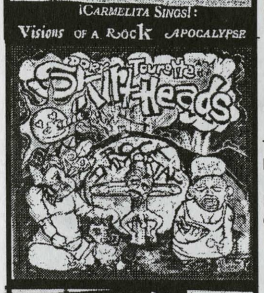

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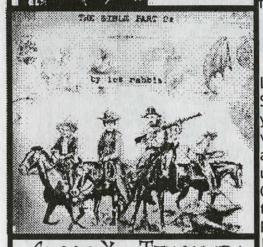

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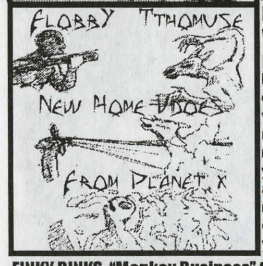

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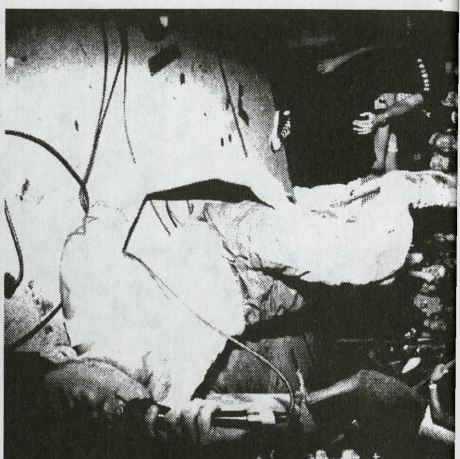

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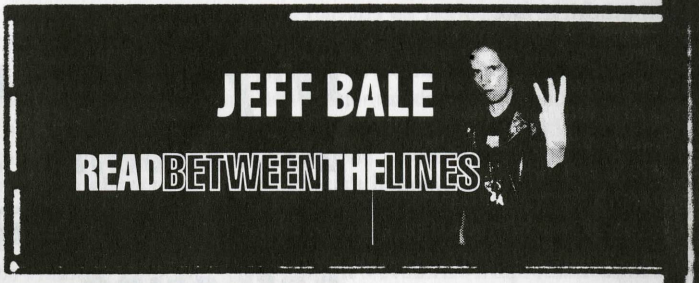
THE "BATTLE OF SEATTLE"? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

A few months ago a variegated assortment of troglodytes, reactionaries, Luddites, simpletons, and well-meaning ignoramuses threw a big temper tantrum in Seattle, the site of the annual World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting. As broad-based activist coalitions go, this one contained far more "strange bedfellows" than most. Marching alongside that pathetic cadre of activist losers and wackos that nowadays passes for the left - you know, the "fuck shit up" pseudo-anarchists, the Marxist-Leninist fundamentalists, the "deep ecology" loonies, the tofu-sucking neo-hippies, the "gutter punk" bums-in-training, the self-obsessed and mutually antagonistic "identity politics" racists, the "Free Mumia" true believers, the dykes on bikes, and assorted "solidarity organizations" that suck up to and apologize for every autocratic and genocidal Third World regime (as long as those regimes are sufficiently anti-Western) - were blatantly self-interested economic lobbies, protectionist unions, chauvinistic isolationists of the Pat Buchanan stripe, New World Order paranoics linked to the militias, religious millenarians, "third position" fascists, plain and simple looters, and members of virtually every other blinkered group that has come to view the WTO as the quintessentail embodiment of the imagined "evil conspirators" who are said to be running the world. Frankly, I'm surprised that delusional "alien abductees", pedophiles from the Man-Boy Love Association, and oh-so-transgressive Satanists were not represented as well. No doubt they will be the next time the WTO attempts to hold a public meeting.

Having said that, this does not mean that I wish to defend the corrupt economic status quo, promote the agenda of the WTO and other organizations advocating "free trade" at the expense of almost everything else, or apologize for the documented abuses and excesses of global corporate capitalism. Nor do I wish to justify the sometimes brutal behavior of the Seattle riot police or the National Guard. But the truth is that, not being an economist, much less a soothsayer or an astrologer, I don't really know precisely what effects - whether wholly negative, wholly positive, or, as seems far more likely, some complex combination of negative and positive - the policies of the WTO will end up having on the world's economy, environment, human rights, and overall standard of living. Nor, I would argue, did the overwhelming majority of the protesters in Seattle, although that certainly didn't dampen their sense of moral self-righteousness or deter them from carrying out mindless acts of violence against Starbucks and other supposed embodiments of metaphysical capitalist Evil. (Lest anyone think that I'm a fan of Starbucks, I should point out that 1) I detest coffee and consequently never drink it, and 2) I'm dreading the day when a Starbucks franchise will be conveniently located in every single domicile, which according to Mel Cheplowitz is a likely prospect given the company's phenomenal rate of growth.) The main difference between myself and so many of the protesters is that I'm sensible enough to recognize the limitations of my own knowledge about these issues and therefore wouldn't presume to try and compel everyone else, by means both fair (dissent) and foul (violence), to accept my ill-informed prognostications concerning the implications of the WTO's agenda. And even if that particular organization's agenda turned out to be every bit as "evil" and "oppressive" as it is nowadays being portrayed by the "sky is falling" radicals, which is scarcely believable, only imbeciles could manage to convince themselves that trashing Starbucks and looting other retail stores - however exhilarating this may seem at the time, as Frank Discussion can no doubt confirm - are the best ways to respond to, much less resolve, the "threat" posed by the WTO. Nor can such actions be legitimately characterized as a "battle", except in the most hopelessly romanticized and blinkered sense of that term. There certainly are times when "direct action" or the use of violence may be appropriate or perhaps even necessary, but one may legitimately question whether this was really one of them.



Before actually writing this column, I went to the university library on my campus and read up a little on international economics and the WTO. It soon became apparent that the literature was sharply divided into two main camps. On the one hand, there were a number of relatively dull social science works written by mainstream economists that portrayed the WTO in a relatively positive if banal light, only a few of which were written by uncritical proponents of the vulgar libertarian view that "free trade" is the solution to all human economic and social problems. On the other, there were several alarmist books written primarily by left-wing academics or political activists that portrayed unfettered global trade, and international capitalism in general, in the most gruesome and sordid light imaginable. (Gee, that's a surprise!) These latter works raised a number of serious and valid objections regarding the potentially harmful impact of agendas like those of the WTO, and provided some historical evidence suggesting that such policies have in certain instances had an inimical impact on economic justice, human rights, and environmentalism in the past. This cannot be doubted, although it is surely only one side of a far more complex and nuanced historical record. Moreover, the critics can scarcely be said to have been objective in the sense that they gave due consideration to evidence that might have undermined their presuppositions or that they dealt honestly with legitimate counterarguments.

As broad-based activist coalitions go, this one contained far more "strange bedfellows" than most.

The nub of the problem is that mainstream international economists and anti-capitalist radicals make very little effort to even communicate with, much less honestly debate, each other. I could not find a single scholarly work that presented intelligent arguments on *both* sides of the issue, that honestly sought to determine what the precise impact of the WTO's varied policies would be, or that attempted to reconcile differing interpretations so as to actually solve current international economic problems. Apparently, most so-called experts prefer either to ignore the controversy altogether or to single-mindedly

promote their own narrow political agendas regardless of the truth. However this may be, the basic facts about the WTO are not in dispute, although their significance surely is. One of the provisions agreed upon at the December 1993 "Uruguay Round" of Multilateral Trade Negotiations was the replacement of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) administrative office in Geneva with the WTO, which was officially established in January 1995. Unlike GATT, which was basically an international agreement - i.e., a set of rules with no real insitutional foundation - dating back to 1944 that was designed to facilitate the regulation of international trade, the WTO is a permanent organization with a staff of 500 that has some degree of legal authority, not only to regulate the trade in industrial products between its 135 member nations (which GATT was also responsible for), but also their agricultural products, transnational service industries, and trade-related intellectual property issues. According to one mainstream source, trade disputes between members can now be settled by a vote of 2/3 or 3/4 of these 135 nations' representatives, instead of requiring unaninimity, which in theory makes the dispute settlement process much faster and thereby facilitates the implementation of the decisions taken. However, according to the WTO's own website (www.wto.org), "consensus" is still required to prevent the "tyranny of the majority" or the "bullying of the powerful".

Why do so many "punks" uncritically support every act of protest without even bothering to inform themselves about the actual issues?

Does this mean that the WTO actually has the power to compel national governments to adopt certain trade policies? In theory, once its members' representatives reach a general consensus about such policies in particular instances, certain economic sanctions can be imposed by the organization on recalcitrant members involved in trade disputes. But does anyone honestly believe that individual members of the WTO, especially the immensely powerful and influential states that played a key role in its creation, are going to humbly accede to particular WTO decisions that might severely limit their own national sovreignty or tangibly endanger their own national security? I certainly don't. Obviously, the ability of poorer and weaker member nations to resist WTO pressure will necessarily be more circumscribed, but in the final analysis no state is going to be willing to abandon its most fundamental national interests or its most cherished cultural values, regardless of what the WTO decides. In this context one should recall the frequent inability of other supranational organizations, most notably the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the European Community, to compel reluctant nations to conform to their policy decisions. Similar problems regularly confront the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, although these latter organizations seem to be able to exert more leverage over individual nations by virtue of administratively managing a significant portion of the world's financial pursestrings.

Perhaps the most noteworthy characteristic of the existing literature on the WTO is the utter disjuncture between the apocalyptic views of its harshest critics and the striking lack of attention paid to it by academic specialists on international trade, who generally devote only a few paltry paragraphs (at most) to the organization in their often large and turgid textbooks and monographs. How, for example, can Ralph Nader and Lori Wallach's claim that the WTO represents a "landmark formalization, strengthening, and politicization" of the process of global capitalism, one which undermines national sovreignty by "establish[ing] supranational limitations on any nation's legal and practical ability to subordinate commercial activity to the nation's goals", in the process "overrul[ing] democratic decision-making" ("GATT, NAFTA, and the Subversion of the Democratic Process", in *The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn Toward the Local*, ed. by Jerry Mander & Edward Goldsmith [San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1996], p. 94) be reconciled with Giancarlo Gandolfo's bland conclusion that the aim of the WTO is to "secure open, fair, and undistorted competition in international trade" by promoting non-discrimination rules and providing an international forum for negotiating tariff reductions and solving trade disputes (*International Trade Theory and Policy* [Berlin: Springer, 1998], pp. 148-9)? And since when has the left, most currents of which have for decades been actively promoting internationalist perspectives, whether of the Marxist "proletarian internationalism" or the peaceful "one worldist" social democratic varieties, been so concerned about defending and preserving "national sovreignty" (other than, perhaps, in the "exploited" Third World), which they generally characterized as a "reactionary" obstacle to the creation of a brave new utopian world order? Now, suddenly, they've become the self-proclaimed champions of "national interests" and "national sovreignty". Talk about hypocrisy!

Indeed, Nader and Wallach's hysterical claim cannot even explain the fact, noted by their own editor and co-author, that "the world's political leadership"[- the very group of national leaders whose sovreignty is supposedly threatened by it] - celebrated the WTO's creation and believed that it would usher in a "global messianic rebirth" which would "produce a $250 billion expansion of world economic activity in a very short time, with the benefits 'trickling down' to us all." (Jerry Mander, "Facing the Rising Tide", in *The Case Against the Global Economy*, p. 4). Any rational person should have serious doubts about the extent to which the benefits of this predicted upsurge in trade will "trickle down" to everyone, but in the existing literature it almost seems as if the professional economists and political activists are talking about entirely different organizations. This makes it very difficult for non-specialists to understand and accurately assess the broader issues involved.

That is why I myself remain somewhat perplexed, not only by the actual substance of the (non-)debate, but even more so by the rancorous, emotionally overwrought reaction of the protesters to the WTO meeting. It seems clear that many of the people present were not really protesting against the WTO per se, much less against specific WTO policies, about which widespread ignorance undoubtedly

prevailed - what, after all, does the WTO, a Swiss-based international organization, have to do with the Mumia Abu-Jamal case or homophobia? Instead, the WTO was irrationally portrayed as the embodiment of everything that a motley array of narrowly self-interested activist groups abhor, and the meeting in Seattle simply served to provide them with an ideal pretext for renewing their symbolic Manichean struggle against "international capitalist exploitation" and all the other "evils", real or imagined, which they simplistically associate with modern Western civilization. There may well be very good reasons to protest against particular aspects of the WTO's agenda, but based on the course of events in Seattle, one would be hard-pressed to actually discern what those reasons might be.

Whether the protesters' assessment - if "assessment" is the proper term to describe their penchant for teeth-gnashing and simplistic sloganeering - of the WTO's policies ultimately proves to be realistic or accurate remains to be seen. What is certain, however, is that in the meantime every single pseudo-political punkzine will no doubt be uncritically romanticizing, idealizing, glorifying, exaggerating, distorting, and mythologizing the so-called "Battle of Seattle". This process has already begun, and it's only a matter of time before the more serious underground music zines like *Punk Planet* and *10 Things*, which at least display a modicum of genuine intelligence and real literacy, weigh in with their contributions. Before this process goes too far, it seemed like a good idea to "throw some water on the dog" by at least questioning the real relevance and legitimacy of the entire spectacle, without necessarily coming to any definitive conclusions about it. That task is for historians to undertake in the future, although at this particular moment the recent confrontations in Seattle appear to constitute little more than a tempest in a teapot, despite the extravagant claims already being made by many of the protesters and their political allies.

This does, however, raise a larger issue. Why do so many "punks" uncritically support every act of protest without even bothering to inform themselves about the actual issues? Strangely enough, this seems to be as true of certain seemingly rational and intelligent punks as it is for the much larger number of ignorant and foolish ones. For example, Tim Stegall forwarded me a copy of Michael Moore's (the maker of "Roger and Me", *not* the new Director-General of the WTO, New Zealander Mike Moore!) predictably florid assessment of the "battle of Seattle", and when I suggested that Moore viewed the events through decidedly rose-colored spectacles if not a blindfold, Stiggy replied that I had been the *only* person he'd been in contact with that hadn't been fully supportive of the protesters. At first glance, this would appear to signify only one of two things - either everyone else is right and I'm wrong, or there are a lot of punks out there who are mindlessly following "party lines" instead of thinking for themselves. In actual fact, however, these seemingly contradictory possibilities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, even though I presently have a skeptical and somewhat critical but essentially agnostic attitude about the WTO itself, I'm perfectly willing to concede that the most well-informed groups of protesters might turn out to be right about the deleterious future impact of certain of that organization's central policies. I just don't know for sure. But even if we grant for the sake of argument that the WTO's agenda is essentially harmful, that doesn't necessarily justify uncritically supporting the anti-WTO protesters, many of whom were protesting against the organization for largely unjustified or predominantly irrational reasons and some of whom enthusiastically turned to violence and intimidation in an effort to force others to accede to their demands or, at least, allow them to loot in peace.

Irrespective of the merits of the case for or against the WTO, one thing that really bugs me is the fact that so many people seem willing to adopt particular viewpoints without even bothering to examine them. Punks often ostentatiously display contempt for "squares" because, by definition, squares uncritically imbibe and accept mainstream values. Such contempt would indeed be entirely justified - *if* so many of the punks themselves did not uncritically imbibe and accept ostensibly "radical" values that have long been fashionable, if not wholly orthodox, within the underground. As I see it, the problem lies far more in "uncritically" accepting or rejecting things than in the actual substance of the things that are accepted or rejected. I myself have always had a lot more respect for people with whom I fundamentally disagree, right, left, or centrist, so long as they've actually thought at length about particular issues, are intelligent enough to recognize the value of competing interpretations, are open to honest debate, and are able to articulate a coherent argument, than I do for people whose views I basically share but who either hold those views for all the wrong reasons or, perhaps even worse, have no clear idea why they even hold such views.

Another thing that really bugs me is that so many people become fanatically devoted to and self-righteously moralistic about the views they carelessly adopt, including (and perhaps especially) those which they themselves barely comprehend or haven't even bothered to make an effort to think through. It's bad enough that so many ignoramuses adopt views for no logical or discernable reason, or simply because all their friends do, or because they're desperately trying to be "radical" or "avant-garde", but it's even more reprehensible when these same fools then seek to impose their ill-conceived views on everyone else, at times by having recourse to violence. This is especially the case with the "true belivers" of the radical left, the radical right, and the religiously righteous, who can always be counted on to whine and complain till the cows come home when others are intolerant of their views and lifestyles, but who then turn around and display no tolerance whatsoever toward anyone who promotes viewpoints or lifestyles that differ from their own. In order to justify their profoundly authoritarian impulses and anti-democratic behavior, such fanatics typically portray all those who are opposed to or not fully supportive of their respective agendas as the living embodiment of the "forces of evil", however these are defined (e.g., as "racist", "sexist", "homophobic", "capitalist pigs", "race-traitors", "one-worlders", "godless", "satanic", "perverted", "sick", and the list goes on and on).

Listen up, assholes. If you're going to wrap yourself in the mantle of the First Amendment every time someone who hates your views tries to restrict your own freedom of expression, which is entirely appropriate, you'd better not reverse course a minute later and try to restrict the First Amendment rights of others whose views *you* consider intolerable. If you do, the rest of us will recognize you for that which you truly are - hypocritical moralists with totalitarian pretensions. As long as *Hit List* exists, we're going to take every opportunity we can to expose such blatantly hypocritical double standards when they're crassly displayed by so-called "punks" and, should it become necessary, we're going to do everything in our power to resist their attempts to suppress the First Amendment rights of others, both within and outside of the punk scene. Get used to it.

YOUTH FASHIONS REDUX

Last time I forgot to highlight a few countercultural youth fashions that I think are pretty damn sharp, hip, or cool. Among these are the dreadlocked Rastafarian look, the trashed-out "crusty punk" look, and certain variants of the Mod look. Hence I thought I'd take the opportunity to mention them in this issue, if only for the sake of completeness. As far as my utterly subjective opinions are concerned, the entire subject of fashion has now been exhausted.

HIT SQUAD

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO PUNK OUT, I SALUTE YOU



This time the big news on the "old school" punk rock record front is that all of the CLASH LPs have been reissued on new, digitally remastered CDs. For some, this development is no doubt perceived as a veritable manna from heaven. Alas, my own reaction is enthusiastic but much more restrained, since in truth I didn't really like any of the CLASH albums after the first two. But it sure is great to be able to buy remastered versions of those.

Two factors make this reissue process especially noteworthy. The first is that the remastered versions of these classic records sound better than the originals, although no doubt there will be some debate about this. To my ears, they have a fuller, clearer sound with somewhat louder and punchier guitars, which can only be a good thing. The second is that Epic has wisely reissued both versions of the band's self-titled debut album, i.e., the English and the American versions. Therefore, the listener can again enjoy the four great songs missing from the US release - "Deny", "Cheat", "Protex Blue", and best of all, "48 Hours" - whilst benefitting from all the fabulous singles added on to the US version, such as "Complete Control" (my all-time favorite CLASH song), "Clash City Rockers", and "Jail Guitar Doors". My first thought was that there was no valid reason not to add those four songs (plus some early bonus tracks, above all "1977", my second all-time favorite CLASH song) to the US version, which would have provided more bang for the buck and not made it necessary to buy two separate CDs. Although I still wish that "1977" would have been added to one of the two versions, there is something sort of charming about having the two debut LPs with their original track sequences undisturbed. On the other hand, I wasn't at all happy to have to obtain the "Super Black Market Clash" CD just to obtain "1977". Although it contains several other good songs, most of it is eminently expendable.



And speaking of expendable, most of the material on all the CLASH LPs after "Give 'Em Enough Rope" sadly falls into that category. There are a few excellent songs on "London Calling" and a couple apiece on "Sandinista" and "Combat Rock", but otherwise the rapid decline in the quality of the band's music is very pronounced. In one sense, such a decline was probably inevitable, if only because "The Clash" is undoubtedly one of the greatest albums in the entire history of rock 'n' roll. (If I had to crib together a list of my favorite ten LPs of all time off the top of my head, this first CLASH LP would have to be right up there alongside - in no particular order - the PISTOLS' "Never Mind the Bollocks", the DEAD BOYS' "Young, Loud, and Snotty", the UNDERTONES' debut, the STOOGES' "Raw Power", the first VELVET UNDERGROUND LP, the KINKS' "Face to Face", the [studio side of the] YARDBIRDS' "Having a Rave Up", the STONES' "Aftermath", NIRVANA's "Nevermind", and the RAMONES' "Rocket to Russia".) After producing a sublime record of such an exaltéd stature, the likelihood that the band would be able to reproduce it was slim if not impossible. Hope springs eternal, however, and I recall awaiting the release of the second CLASH album with bated breath. It turned out to be a damn fine record that was worth the wait, but after the unrealistically high expectations generated by their debut LP and intervening singles, I couldn't help but feel a tad disappointed. Still, my hopes that their third LP would match the absurdly high standards set by their debut turned out to be misplaced, and thereafter I never looked forward to new CLASH releases. How the mighty fall!

Since we've just entered a new decade, I thought it might be appropriate to list what I consider to be the top five punk albums of the 1990s. Here they are:

1) SNAIR - "Leave Home" LP (1990)
2) LOLI & THE CHONES - "P.S., We Hate You" LP/CD (1997)
3) HUMPERS - "Positively Sick on 4th Street" LP/CD (1993)
4) TURBONEGRO - "Apocalypse Dudes" LP/CD (1998)
5) BLACK HALOS - "Shooting Star" LP/CD (1999)

[Honorable mentions: the HUMPERS' "Journey to the Centre of Your Wallet" LP/CD; LOLI & THE CHONES' "Total Fucking Genocide" LP; AEROBITCH's "Time to Start Kicking Ass" LP/CD; and, I'm sure, a few others that are escaping me at the moment.]

There you have it. There were lots of other great punk releases during the 1990s, and obviously it's not easy to single out only a handful for top honors, but for better or worse these are my personal faves. The bottom line is that all these records totally rock out - *without* neglecting the tuneage, lyrical irony, snottiness, and general bad attitude. What more needs to be said?

OOPS! NEWS

One last thing I wanted to mention this issue is that WE NEGLECTED TO CREDIT JEFF JAREMA AS THE AUTHOR OF THE WAY COOL CHESTERFIELD KINGS INTERVIEW THAT APPEARED IN *HIT LIST* #6. IN THAT VERY SAME ISSUE WE ALSO FORGOT TO ADD HIS NAME TO OUR ROSTER OF RECORD REVIEWERS - NOTE THAT EVERY REVIEW ATTRIBUTED TO (JJ) WAS IN FACT WRITTEN BY JEFF JAREMA. WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE ERROR.

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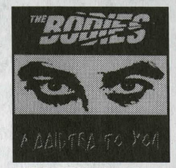

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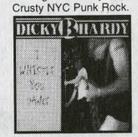

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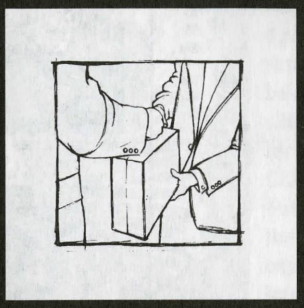

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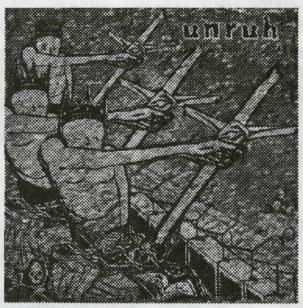

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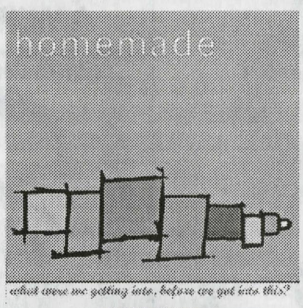

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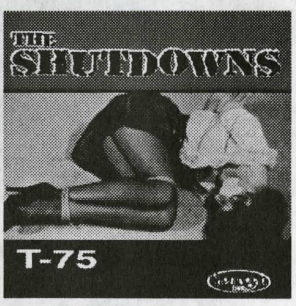

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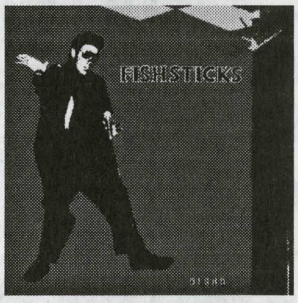

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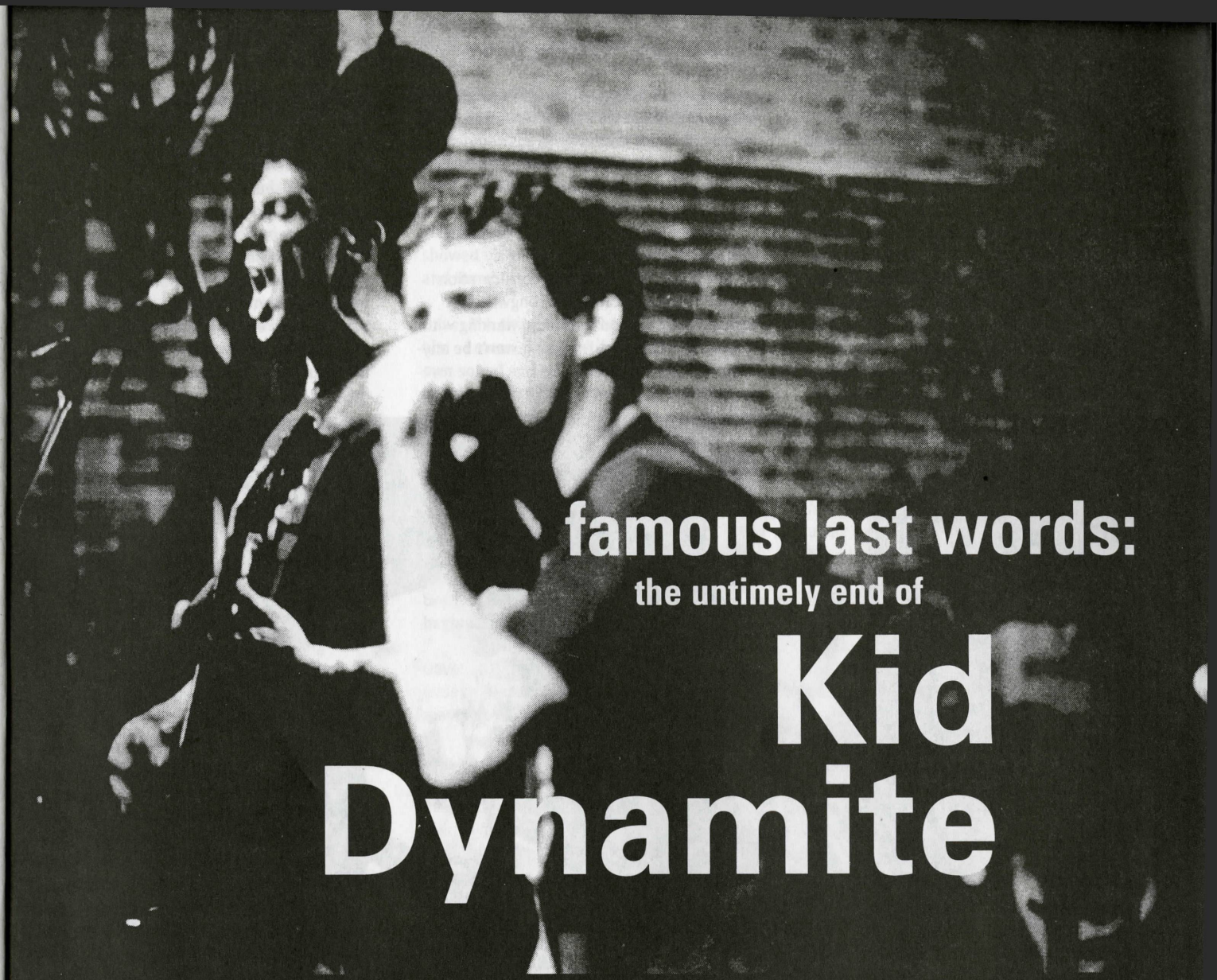
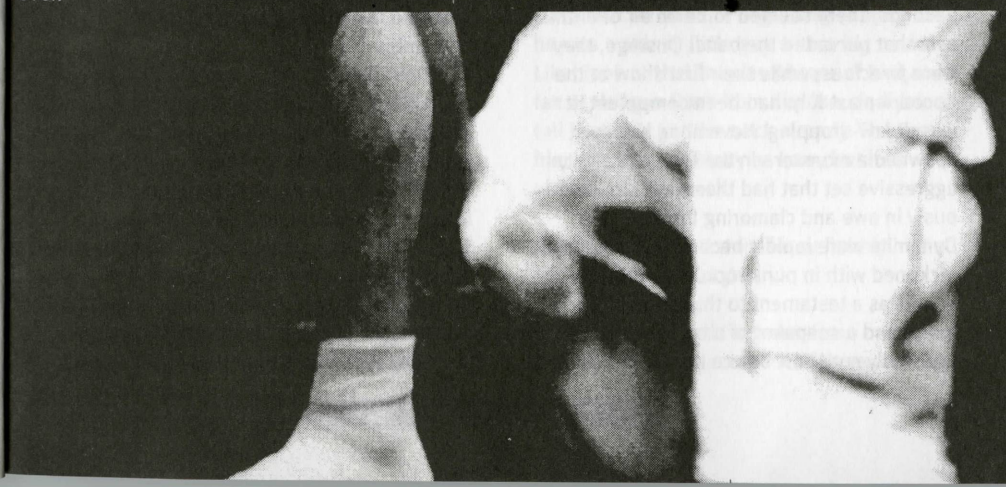


famous last words:
the untimely end of
Kid Dynamite

I remember being at Brett's house one spring afternoon. We were sitting around listening to records when he pulled out *Hello Bastards* by Lifetime, a band I hadn't heard but had heard quite a bit about. Within two minutes, they were one of my new favorite bands. He said that they'd played Gilman a few months before but had since broken up. I went out and bought all of their stuff I could get my hands on, figuring that since there wouldn't be any more, I may as well get everything I could to satisfy my jones for their pop-riddled hardcore. A few months later, I heard about a band in Philly featuring Lifetime guitarist Dr. Dan Yemin. I immediately wanted to hear it. Kid Dynamite's debut full-length on Jade Tree was one of my favorite records of 1998 - and with the possible exception of Avail, (who for some reason I don't usually think of as hardcore) I probably haven't ever *really* liked a *hardcore* band that existed much past 1988.

In a genre filled with generic, tough-guy posturing and mindless repetition of chugging, tired riffs and tuneless screaming, KD was a breath of fresh air - a short, sharp scream from the East Coast that seemed to say, "There's *still* a reason this music needs to be made!" While they don't always release records that appeal to me, Tim Owen and Darren Walters of Jade Tree *do* tend to put out discs that are the cream of their respective crops, and continuing their association with Dan (and former Lifetime drummer) Dave Wagenschultz, they proved their ears are as finely tuned as ever.



interview by Brett Mathews and Dave Johnson
photos by Dave Johnson

Unfortunately, history had the gall to repeat itself this year - on the verge of the release of *Shorter, Faster, Louder*, KD's second full-length and third release overall (a split with 88 Fingers Louie featuring the instant-classic "Heart A Tact" and the be-all-end-all of Black Flag covers ("Rise Above") came out last year on the Hopeless Records subsidiary Sub City), vocalist Jason Shevchuk decided that he couldn't commit to the constant touring that fronting Kid Dynamite demanded, choosing instead to concentrate on his film career (he's currently shopping a documentary on Philly punk club Stalag 13 to various film festivals) and spend time with his girlfriend; eerily similar to the demise of Lifetime on the eve of their penultimate statement, *Jersey's Best Dancers*.

When I spoke to Dan over the phone recently, he was palpably depressed about the demise of a band he'd worked so hard to get where they were. By the time this magazine hits the newstands, Kid Dynamite will have played their last two sold-out 800-capacity shows in their hometown. Dan already has another project in mind, but at thirty-one, he's decided that he no longer wants to do a touring band. Instead, he's putting together a loosely-knit group of musicians to explore punk rock. He says it's going to be the Wu-Tang Clan of punk, in the sense that there are going to be multiple vocalists and musicians working over tracks laid down by a small two-or-three member core unit. When asked about the personalities involved, he answered succinctly, "Well, it's going to involve people I've worked with over the last ten years."

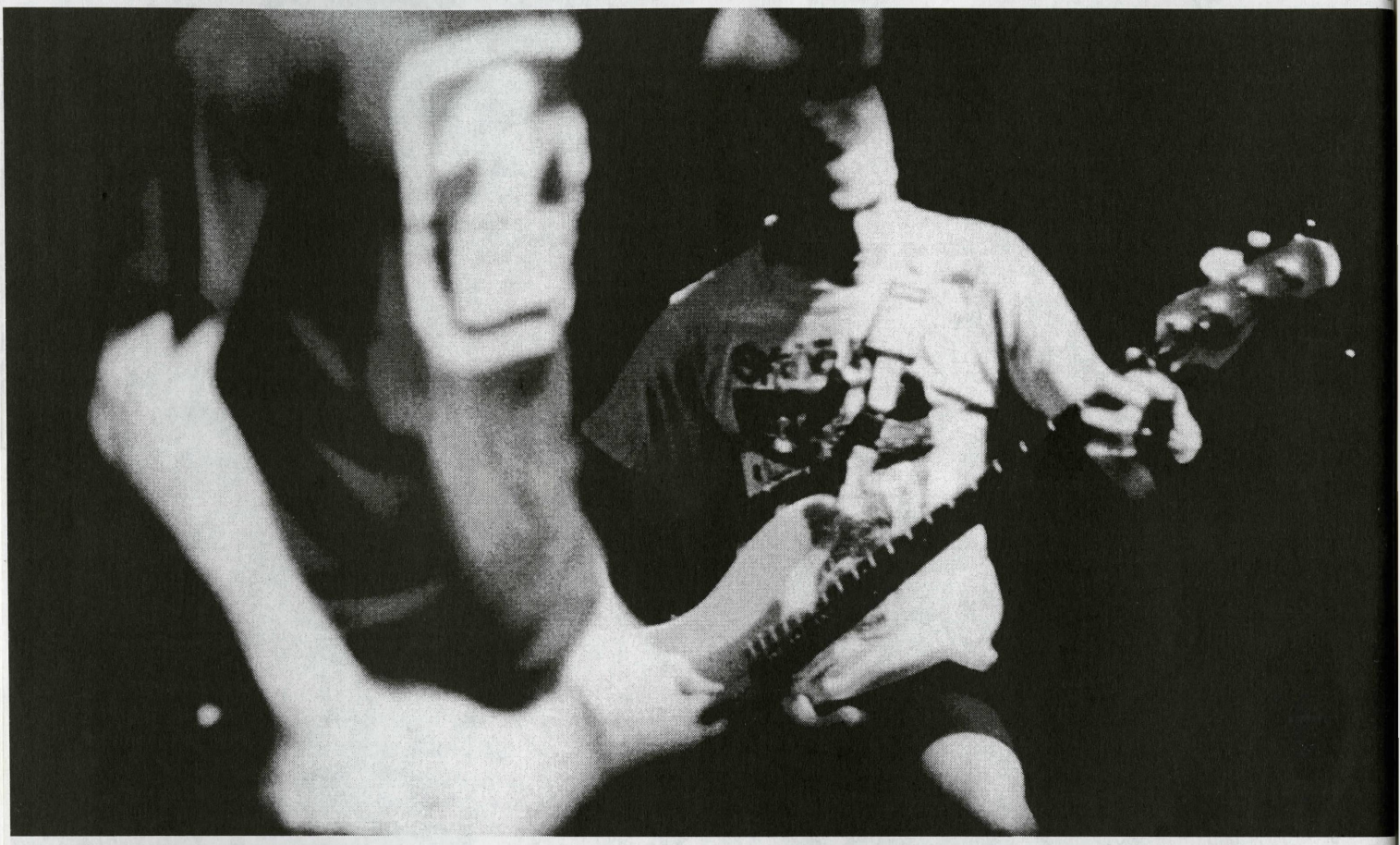
"Any former members of Lifetime?"

"It's going to involve people I've worked with over the last ten years."

Whatever it is, taking into consideration the caliber of musicians and songwriters Yemin's had the good fortune of working with over the past decade, I'm sure it won't be anything less than mind-blowing.

This interview doesn't strike me as a portrait of a band that was about to implode. When Brett and I spoke to Dan and bassist Mike, along with Jade Tree co-honcho Darren, last November at SF's Cocodrie (where they played with Fastbreak, Snapcase and 7 Seconds) there seemed to be an air of enthusiasm that pervaded the band. Onstage, they were *ferocious*; while their first show at the Cocodrie, last July, had been competent, it wasn't jaw-dropping. November, however, spawned a monster - in the form of a tight, aggressive set that had the crowd simultaneously in awe and clamoring for more. Kid Dynamite were rapidly becoming a force to be reckoned with in punk rock. This interview stands as a testament to their passion for music and a snapshot of a band whose life was sadly cut short before they had a chance to turn hardcore completely on its head. Dan and Mike struck me as people with an incredible passion for the music they play, and it certainly comes through both on the records and in their live set. For those of us who had the good fortune to witness them live, at least we have the memories. They also left an incredibly solid recorded legacy - those of you who hear the band for the first time after the release of *Shorter, Faster, Louder* at least still have an inspired sonic document; an echo of the past with a *now* sensiblity that, for a short time, burned as hardcore's best and brightest hope to transcend defined boundaries and revitalize an oft-considered moribund, generic art form.

-Dave Johnson



Brett: So let's just start with a layman's question and talk about the inception of Kid Dynamite.

Dan: Lifetime broke up and I was pretty much terrified of starting over because I'd labored so hard on that for so many years. On that last [Lifetime] tour I realized that I really didn't know how to *not* be in a band. My life had been stable for so long that I'd forgotten how much emotional turmoil stimulates creativity. I'd been in the same relationship for years, the same band for years, the same graduate program for years - everything had been stable. I

wrote a lot of songs, but suddenly everything was falling apart. My whole identity was wrapped around being in a band. I got home and was writing constantly. That's all I did. I didn't have a job. I think I wrote half of our first record in that stormy period before I even had any members. Then I hooked up with a few people and we practiced as bass, drum and guitar - as a three piece - for like a year. From spring '97 to spring '98, we practiced three times a week. Then we auditioned singers, like 12 different singers. Then we found Jay, who we just kind of found a sound with.

Dave: So what would you say your influences are?

Dan: All good punk from 1976 to 1982.

Brett: How much did the way this band ended up sounding have to do with your mental or emotional state at the time?

Dan: Well, I wanted to go for something that had a little more of an edge. There were definitely places I wanted to go songwriting-wise in Lifetime that I'm free to go in this band. I think the influences are coming from the same place, but I think there was a certain priority on melody in that band that doesn't have to be there for every song in this band. Melody has a priority here - but I really couldn't pick. I couldn't say I wanted to be in a full-on "scream-our-heads-off" thrash band or a pop band.

Dave: Lyrically speaking, do you write most of the words or is it mostly Jason?

Dan: Mostly Jason.

Dave: Are you into writing lyrics that much? Or is it more a case of throwing stuff out there and Jason refines stuff and/or comes up with better stuff?

Dan: It's just that it's harder for me to write lyrics and it comes really easily for him.

Brett: So you found your singer, what was your next step?

Dan: Well, he showed up for the audition and he had stuff written. We had done a demo - it was getting frustrating - we'd gone a year with so singer and no shows. We had people calling up asking when we'd be ready because they wanted us to play shows. I felt like we needed a goal, so I said "We're gonna record a demo." "A demo? We don't have a singer?" I said, "Fuck it, we're gonna record a demo. We've got eleven songs right now; we're gonna put them to tape. It'll be good for us; something to aspire toward, and it'll be a lot easier to attract singers because we can give them the tape instead of some crappy practice tape."

Jay showed up and he had written vocal parts to all the songs. I mean, people would show up with vocals to like *three* of the songs. We tried out a lot of good people, but Jay showed up and that was pretty much *it*, then and there.

Dave: The thing that blows me away about him - I mean, you guys definitely have your *own* sound and everything, but I was listening to that cover of "Rise Above" on the split with 88 Fingers Louie, and he totally sounds like a young Henry. It didn't sound like he was trying to *be* Henry, but the vibe was definitely there.

Dan: Wow...that's neat. I'd put him more in the Dez camp though. But hey, whatever works...

Brett: So was there Jade Tree interest from the beginning?...

Dave: ...Or did you not give a shit because *Jersey's Best Dancers* was one of the worst records of the decade? [laughter]

Darren: Of course we were interested. I mean, Dave and Dan and us have been friends for years, and obviously you're interested when friends form a new band. I mean, I think especially with Dan, it's like, "Wow! Somebody *I* can relate to is starting a band." I even auditioned for the band.

Dan: He was a finalist.

Dave: Your neck isn't big enough...well, Jason doesn't have a big neck...

Dan: *I* don't have a big neck...

Dave: But you're not a singer...you've gotta have a big neck if you're a singer in a hardcore band.

Dan: But when Henry started out with Black Flag he was a skinny little twerp.

Dave: But he had the beginning of a big neck - he was a skinny little guy with a big neck! Like, look at that famous picture of him and Ian at Haägen Dazs from like '80, and you can tell that he's got the *neck* already. The rest of him was like as skinny as I am, but he's already *got* the neck.

Dan: He had a *neck*start. He definitely had a neck headstart. [laughter]

Brett: So the sound from the demo from the sound to the first record - was there a change in it?

Dan: The overall sound? I mean...the demo was done without vocals, so it's kind of hard to say. I mean, I sent it to a lot of people I respected for feedback...and since then, we've played a lot of shows and Michael joined...

Brett: So what were you doing before you joined the band, Mike?

Mike: I went to the University of Maryland in College Park, which is right outside Washington, DC. I had a band called The Savage Boys and Girls Club.

Dan: They were *awesome*...

Mike: We had a lot of fun. It was kind of falling apart near the beginning of this year, because our drummer wanted to do something that he felt was more hardcore. We had a friend filling in for awhile. He's a good friend and a good drummer, but he didn't want to play quite as fast as we wanted to. I saw Kid Dynamite for the first time in January and I felt like I understood immediately. It was *exactly* what I had been trying to do in my other band. I was definitely jealous of their bass player. When I heard they were auditioning, I was hesitant to get in contact 'cuz I thought, "There's no way that would ever work out." But I sent 'em an e-mail, and it worked out!

Dan: His e-mail alone was pretty influential. None of his influences were after 1984, so I was like, "Wooo! This guy gets it!" So many younger musicians - especially in hardcore - just don't get it. They don't get where the roots of what we're trying to do are coming from. People that hear like "melodic hardcore" and go, "Oh, you mean like NOFX?" I'll be like, "Well, I like NOFX, but it's not my reference point at all. It's very *far* from my reference point.

Dave: Well, you guys sound a *lot* like *Ribbed*-era NOFX to me...[laughter]

Brett: So did you write the majority of the stuff on the new record *Shorter, Faster, Louder*, as well?

Dan: Yes, but it was written within the context of the band. Half the first record, musically, was written by me, sitting alone in my room. The new one, we wrote all together.

Dave: How did "Heart A Tact" - which is my favorite song you guys ever did - come together?

Dan: The songs that spring fully formed out of my ass like *that* [snaps], I always end up liking

more than songs I've spent *ages* on. The first song on our new album is like that. I wrote it on tour. Like, the first part occurred to me, second part occurred to me, in a day of messing around behind the van with my guitar not plugged in while we're waiting for someone to unlock the club. It ended up being my favorite song on the record. The second song - which I think is great, too - probably took me two years. "Heart A Tact" is one of those songs that just popped out, fully-formed. We were doing this split, and originally it was a 7". I was like, "Okay, good. Two songs. No problem." And then 88 Fingers recorded and said their stuff wouldn't fit on one side of a 7" and they wanted to do a 12". Dave, our drummer, was the one who was talking to them and figured since we had like eight new songs written we had plenty of stuff to throw on one side of a 12". By the time it got back to me, I was like, "Nononono...you don't understand. Most of these eight songs comprise a body of work that I envision as being part of our next record." They're a chunk of songs that came from the same place attitude-wise, and also lyrically, it turned out. As a batch of songs, it was the embryo that was gonna become the new record. So I just wasn't gonna take those songs and put 'em on a split. But then the other side of it is that people always put their junky, throw-away songs on splits, and I didn't want to do that either. So we had this dillemma where Dave hadn't understood that these songs weren't to be plundered for something else, y'know? We had one song that that our former bass player had written, but we didn't see putting it on the record, because by the time we put out the album, he would've been out of the band for like eight months. But we liked the song, so when we were hashing out what we were gonna do, I said, "Well, I'll write a song specifically for the split." I showed it to everybody and Jay came up with the words. Boom-boom-boom, it just fell out.

Dave: When it comes out of the fast part and drops into that palm muting and Jay's going "Just how many are there on my side?!" It's like, "Fuck *Yes*!" I'm totally not trying to kiss your ass, but I think that's one of the best hardcore songs of the last ten years.

Mike: We have fun playing it.

Dave: And we have fun listening to it.

Brett: We *definitely* have fun listening to it.

Dan: Wait 'till you hear the new album.

Dave: Yeah, I'm really anxious to hear it. Where'd you guys do it?

Dan: At Trax East in New Jersey with Steve Evetts.

Brett: So what about the lyrics on the record? Are they more political than on the last one?

To me, the last thing I would *ever* want this band to be considered is suffused with "emo".
.Dan.

Dan: Well, they're political in a nebulous sense. They're sort of like "Fuck You" anthems. I think of a lot of songs on the first record were like generic - and I don't mean "generic" in the *lame* sense of the word - but general anthems of rebellion.

Dave: Like Black Flag, kinda.

Dan: Yeah, exactly. I don't want to put ourselves in that country. That'd be kind of pretentious. I mean *no one's* the Flag. But in the same vein, yeah.

Brett: So what's it like to come out with something as strong as your first record and then have to follow it up? I mean, I've seen so many bands, Sloppy Seconds for example - not that you guys are anything like Sloppy Seconds - but they put out *Destroyed* and then were essentially fucked after that because it was *so* good.

Dan: I think Mike is probably better-suited to answer this question. I mean, I *could* answer it, but Mike was a fan of the band before he joined. [To Mike] I don't know if you can speak objectively about this new record because you were a part of it, but...

Mike: I think it's got better bass. [laughter] You know what? I wouldn't want to compare them.

Brett: What does the *label* think of the two records?

Darren: The first record is exactly a product of what Dan described. I mean, I heard the demo way before they had a singer. The first record to me...I mean, I love it, but it doesn't sound to me so much as the product of a *band*, whereas this new record sounds like a band that's been together. Four guys who've put their hearts into something and have been on tour. It's a much more cohesive record. I mean I *love* the first record, but the second I think is a more together record.

Dave: Is it shorter?

Dan, Mike and Darren: It's shorter, faster *and* louder. [laughter]

Brett: If you were at a record store and a kid with ten bucks was holding a Minor Threat record and your first record, which would you recommend?

Dan: Minor Threat!

Brett: Would you be bummed if someone was like, "Kid Dynamite fucking rules! Who's Minor Threat?"

Dan: I would be bummed about that. But you can do something about being bummed - you can explain. You can say, "Well, that's wonderful, I'm flattered, but Kid Dynamite *would not* exist if it weren't for this Minor Threat record." It just wouldn't. It couldn't.

Dave: I don't think you can understate the importance of that band.

Dan: We've had kids on this tour go, "We came to see Snapcase. What do you guys sound like?"
"Well, like Minor Threat, 7Seconds..."
"We don't really know any of those bands..."
The first feeling to rise up is disgust, but I feel like I have to play the role of the nuturer and teacher and not the cynical old bastard and be like, "Fuck you! What do you know?"

Dave: How's playing with 7Seconds?

Dan: It's been great. A lot of people are cynical about them still playing after all these years, but they're nice guys, they're sincere and they're amazing musically. I'm just so happy to play with them?

Dave: Are they still doing "If The Kids Are United"?

Dan: Oh yeah...they still play like half of *The Crew* and half of *Walk Together*...

Brett: Which takes about ten minutes. [laughter]

Dave: I hate to ask you this, but what do you think of the whole *emo* thing?

Dan: I don't like it.

Brett: In parentheses, "No reference to the Promise Ring." [laughter]

Dan: I don't think the Promise Ring are an emo band. That's exactly why I like them.

Brett: Jets to Brazil?

Dan: Jets to Brazil are like a *weird* band. I mean, there's a lot of Beatles in there...

Brett: A whole lotta Blake.

Dan: Yeah. They're great! I don't know. I don't really look at either of those bands as *emo* bands.

Dan: I'm not gonna name names, but a lot of these so-called "emo" bands...

Mike: Rites of Spring, Gray Matter, Embrace...*that's* emo.

Dave: Yeah, that's exactly where I come from on that whole thing as well. But it's become this big joke...especially since the *Spin* article...

Dan: Actually, I took umbrage to something one of you guys wrote. Now that you bring this up, I'm gonna be honest here. There was a review where it said something like, "This band is attempting to do the whole hardcore/emo/whatever thing that bands like Lifetime, Kid Dynamite and Saves the Day perfect, but this band doesn't measure up."

Brett: Sounds like something I wrote.

Dan: To me, the last thing I would *ever* want this band to be considered is suffused with "emo".

Brett: To me, "emo" means it appeals to someone's emotional senses. By that line of reasoning, Avail is an emo band, Hot Water Music is an emo band. To me, like you guys, Avail is an emo band. They're up there, they're in your face, they're *so* into what they're doing and they *mean* 100 percent of what they're up there doing; you guys mean 100 percent of what you're up there doing...





Dave: ...And it's *personal* music.

Mike: "Emo" is a problematic term. I mean, "emotional hardcore"....all hardcore is emotional.

Dave: J. Robbins said to me, "Well, the funny thing about the 'emo conversation' is that it *always* comes back to etymology." I've been thinking about it ever since he said it, and yeah it *does*. Because for me, when I'd think about it, I'd think of Rites of Spring, Embrace, Gray Matter. And now it's this whole blanket term that's been extended to these *quiet* bands.

Dan: All *sincere* punk and hardcore is emotional.

Dave: Well, I think one of the most emotionally rich and passionate bands on the hardcore scene today is Jud Jud.

Brett: So where do you think of this new record taking Kid Dynamite?

Mike: Through the roof!

Dan: God...that's a loaded gun. Of course, I want it to be liked. I want people to get off on it, I want it to get people excited. All I want to do is make records that make people as excited as the records I bought when I was younger. That's a lofty aspiration, but if you're not gonna shoot for that, just go home. Don't make music!

Dave: What lately has changed your life? Like, what records have you bought recently that took you where the Clash and Black Flag took you growing up. I mean, *if* any current bands can measure up to the Clash and Black Flag - what's currently rocking your Casbah?

Mike: You have to evaluate that stuff in the context in which it was made.

Dan: It's hard to make a record that shakes people up like that now. I mean, if you want to stay with in the punk form, which I do. I wanna honor the form that raised me. I don't have any pretensions that we're doing anything particularly original. I'm not the same person as I was when punk rock waltzed in and radically changed my life, y'know? Things don't move me now the way they used to move me.

Dave: Is that a product of getting older?

Dan: Yeah I mean, I'm not one of those people who comes in and gets all jaded like, "Well music now...kids just don't understand. The music's not as good; it's not as sincere." That's bullshit. Because to the fifteen and sixteen-year-olds who are coming up now and buying records, it's just as intense for them as it was for me at fifteen or sixteen. You asked about what records have kicked my ass. You know what kicked my ass? I mean, I don't spend as much time researching hard-to-find stuff, because ten years ago, that's all I did. I spent like 60 dollars a month mail-ordering stuff from *Maximum*. I don't have the time to hunt that much any more. So a lot of the music that has impacted me recently has been very visible stuff. Like, the first Dropkick Murphys record kicked my *ass*, I listened to it over and over again for months. The new Good Riddance, same thing. But the What Happens Next 7"; they're from the Bay Area, I believe. Have you guys heard them? *That* record kicked my ass. It's the singer and guitarist from All You Can Eat, the bass player from Fuckface and the drummer from Spazz. It's totally like D.R.I. It's like a 10 song 7". It's not quite as blurred as Spazz. It's like a full-on tribute to '82-'83, but the production's good enough that you can hear what the instruments are doing.

Brett: How long do you forsee staying together?

Dan: I wanna do it as long as it's still fun and viable.

Brett: But hardcore's very limited. I mean, the all-time great hardcore bands like Minor Threat and Gorilla Biscuits all made one or two records. Or else you're gonna be like the Cro-Mags, who went the way of the Metal.

Dan: Well, as long as we can still write records and have it be fun and exciting and not bullshit, then we'll be doing it. I mean, this band's not gonna be doing records if they're not hardcore/punk records. We're not gonna lay down like a midtempo record. That's just not gonna happen. I might be wrong, but at 31, this seems like the only music I have the motivation to do in a full-time band. I'll always be doing something musical, but it requires a lot of time, energy and attention to do music well, and do it with sincerity.

Dave: I mean, a lot of bands slow down as they go along, because I mean, how long can you just play fast - unless you're Slayer.

Mike: That's where coffee comes in!

Dave: Some of my favorite Kid Dynamite songs are the ones that have a mid-tempo break in them. I mean, something like "Bookworm" or again, "Heart A Tact." One criticism I remember reading of the band was that *everything* on the record was fast, except for a few breakdown parts. I mean, are tempo variations something you're more interested in exploring?

Dan: Was he saying that it was formulaic?

Dave: He wasn't saying that it was formulaic so much, but that he said he'd be scared of you guys if you laid back a little more. I mean, could you see yourselves laying back in the pocket more, or is it always gonna be full speed ahead?

Dan: Well, there're plenty of parts that aren't *thrash*, but I find those parts exciting in contrast to the full-bore thrash parts. I love using the word "thrash" because no one uses calls hardcore "thrash" anymore. It's got such great connotations to it. It's got such a nasty 1982 feel to it, too.

Mike: Well, somewhere along the line, the Metal people stole it.

Dan: Yeah, but fuck *that*! [laughter]

Dave: How was playing with Hot Water Music and Leatherface?

Dan: Awesome.

Dave: I would've been shitting my pants.

Mike: I *did* shit my pants, man.

Dan: Yeah, it was *messy*! We're doing a full U.S. Tour with Hot Water Music in March.

Dave: I can't wait, because the last two times Hot Water Music has played here, they'd come through on a magazine deadline and I wouldn't be able to go see 'em. I'd just be sitting there laying shit out, listening to my Hot

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Dan: That's a band, that for some reason - and we've only played two or three shows with them - but I can already tell that every night we're gonna drive each other to play our hardest. I played with them a lot with my former band. I think they're amazing. One of the most intense live bands I've ever seen, and they don't even have fast parts! Just knowing that we were playing with them, we played twice as hard, and they said they played twice as hard just because they were going on after us.

Brett: You guys are gonna kill yourselves!

Dave: Remind me to bring an extra pair of undies to that gig.

Dan: Yeah, I'm gonna have to start jogging again, just to prepare for playing with them. There's like a 7 month tour in the spring and summer. This tour's like a month. We take it easy in the winter 'cuz no one wants to die in an icy van crash. We're supposed to go to Japan early next year.

Dave: Who're you going to Japan with?

Dan: Jade Tree licensed the record to a company in Japan. I mean, it was available as an import through Mordam prior to that, but it was released on a Japanese label in October.

Dave: [to Darren] What Japanese label do you license stuff to? Is it one label specifically?

Darren: There's actually a couple. The Kid Dynamite stuff is licensed to Avex. What label it's on *exactly* I don't know, but it's licensed through Avex.



Dave: I saw a Japanese import of the new Sleater-Kinney album, and it was on Bandai, which I thought was weird because Bandai is like a really big Japanese toy company. It was just weird seeing a Kill Rock Stars record released through a major Japanese company.

Darren: That's because all the companies are serious major companies. The record label's like a division of some huge company. But Avex has done H2O, AFI - they're actually doing Promise Ring, too.

Dan: So supposedly, they're gonna bring us over for a week. Then we'll be back in March with Hot Water, then we're gonna go to Europe.

Dave: Who would you love to tour with that you haven't yet?

Dan: Black Flag. Bad Brains, circa 1982-83. The Clash. But I don't think we're gonna get offers from those bands.

Brett: Well, we touched on this earlier but never really answered it, but where is this all going? I mean, it's getting bigger and bigger with every show, I'm sure the records are gonna sell more with each release...

Mike: ...To hell and back!

Brett: Is that where you *are* going or where you want it to go?

Dan: Wherever it's going, I think it's inevitably going to hell. Whether or not we make it back remains to be seen. [laughter]

Dave: Well, as long as you go *straight* to hell...

Dan: *Oh* boy... Well, before we get lost in bad puns and self-congratulatory inside jokes...We just wanna keep doing records, play hard and get people excited.

Brett: If your band went to where you wanted it to be, how big would your ideal venue be?

Dan: It's hard to say. Because obviously we

want to be *successful*. We're already successful. I mean, there're like ten million different versions of success. Putting out records you're happy with is success. Putting out music people like is like *amazing* success. Being able to eke out a living while playing your music is a miracle. All of those things, we'd like to do.

Brett: So if Matt Pinfield calls you tomorrow and says, "This record's fucking amazing, make us a video," are you guys there?

Dan: That's a tough one.

Mike: I don't know if I'd be into that.

Dave: So what if Warner comes calling with a five million dollar, two-record deal?

Dan: Now *that*, I could tell you right now I'd rather not do.

Brett: Pat on the back from Darren there. [laughter]

Dan: So many people have said that and then undone themselves a year later, but ideologically I think it's wrong, economically, it's a crapshoot with your musical career. How many bands are gonna survive the jump to a major label? And the underground doesn't want you back once you've gone there.

Mike: I think a good underground label can support a band for the duration of its natural life and everyone will profit more all around.

Dan: But you get into unnatural life when you start talking about six-record contracts. And to be honest with you, I take independent music pretty seriously. I don't buy anything but independent releases.

Dave: What about your Clash records?

Dan: Well, my Clash records I've had since I was like fifteen. I've thought about getting them on CD...I don't have any Clash on CD. I'm not saying that *everybody* should do what I've done, but to me, independent music is to a large degree, a part of who I am today. As equally influential as my parents, and I want to reinvest my money in that industry. And it *is* an industry. I think it's important to avoid that puppetmaster influence in music and art.

Dave: Just to play Devil's Advocate, although I'm pretty much on the same wavelength as you on this subject, your record is licensed to a major corporation in Japan.

Dan: Yeah, that's problematic.

Brett: Yeah Darren! What's *up* with this?

Dave: Does Ruth [Schwartz, famously DIY head of Mordam Records, Jade Tree's (and *Hit List*'s) distributor] know about this? [laughter]

Darren: I'm not gonna deny that there are ethical conundrums involved in it.

Dave: Well, doing the magazine, we go through it too. Again, it's trying to figure out trying to get what you're doing to the largest amount of people with the least amount of compromises. I don't begrudge you that, I'm just tossing out an ethical consideration.

Dan: I'd rather do a punk band on an independent label. It doesn't make sense to sign to a major as a punk band. I'm not saying I wouldn't do it in another kind of band, but I've never really had the motivation to *do* any other kind of band. If there's a record on a major that I want, I either tape it or steal it. Having lived by that for like the last five years, I can't imagine having any level of comfort working with a major label. But then, there's that whole Japan thing, where it's nebulous what's independent and what has ties with some huge toy company or some huge anime company or something like that.

Dave: Any last words?

Mike: See you in the pit! [laughter]

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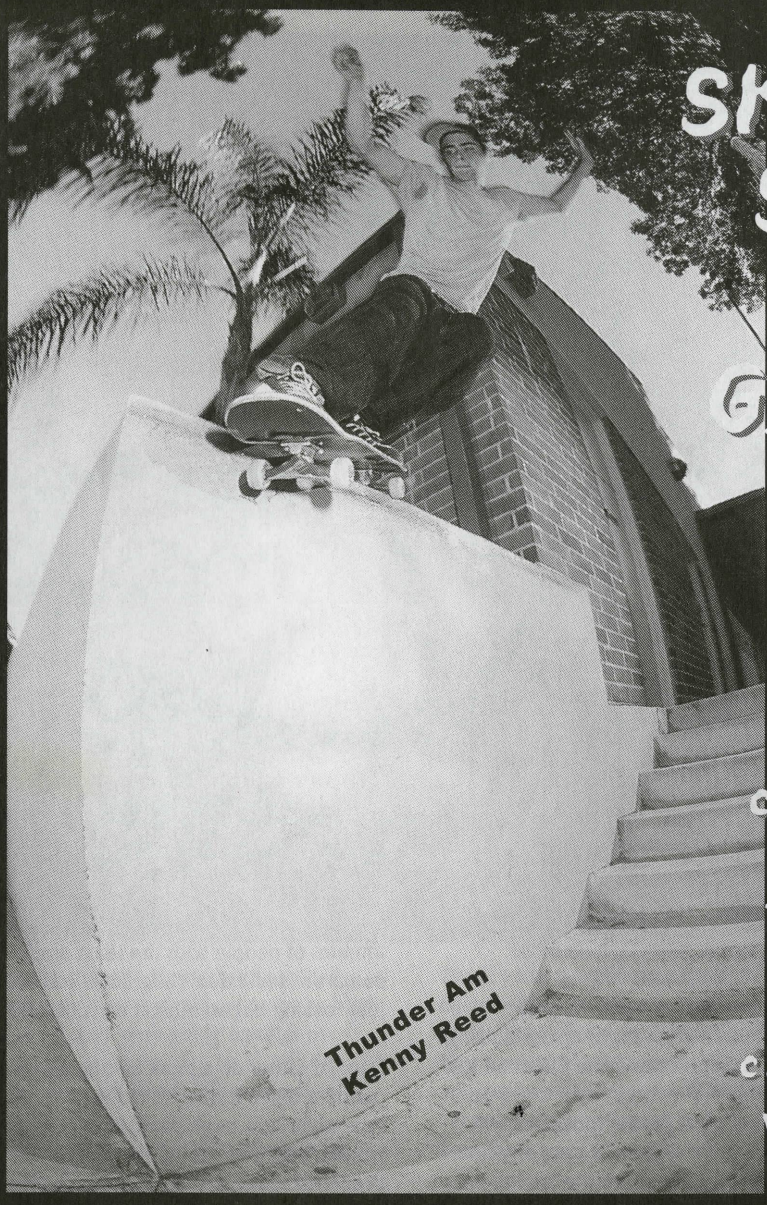

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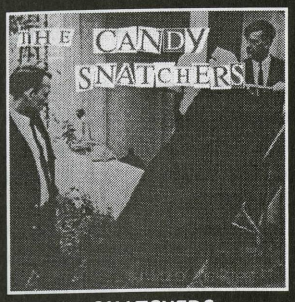

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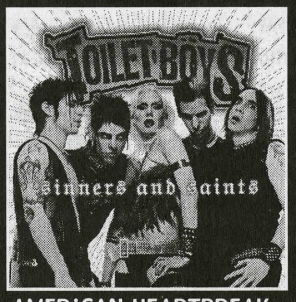

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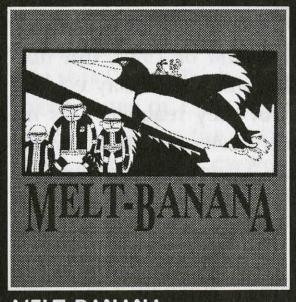

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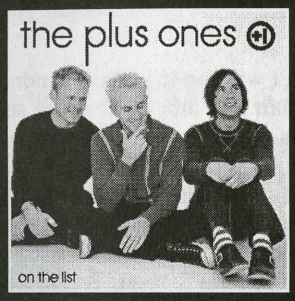

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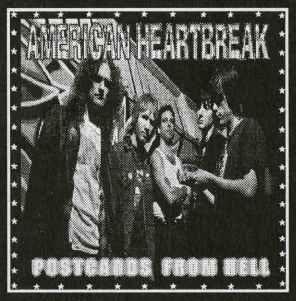

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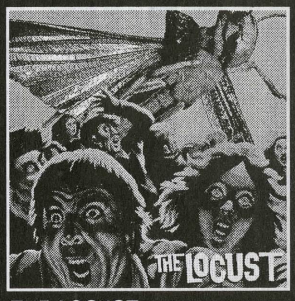

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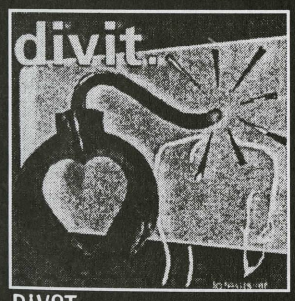

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TREADWELL
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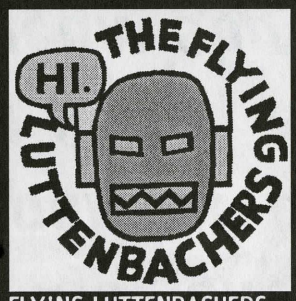

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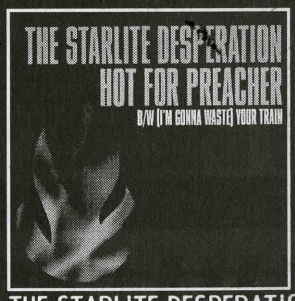

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HIT SQUAD

My name is Tim. I am 38 years old. I make pop-punk records. I was not cool enough to be into punk rock in 1977. I was old enough, but I was not cool enough. It is a burden with which I must always live. The cool people were into it before me. Then again, nobody was into punk in my town in 1977, so I shouldn't feel too badly. I got into punk in 1979-80 during the Clash Mania period. Maybe a little before the big Clash mania of 1980, but not much. The Clash in 1980 were kind of like Green Day was in 1994. Similar but not quite as big-but they reached kids in every town in America if the kids were listening. You always had to be listening hard in those days - listening hard, trying to find punk.

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There is a very good article in Flipside #120 where a guy that was a couple years older than me tells about the punk rock record buying experience during the late 1970s. Check it out. Ask me for a free pdf file of the Flipside article, courtesy of Editor Todd: MutantPop@aol.com Anyway, the guy wrote about going into record shops, trying to locate a record that was cool. You couldn't just walk to the "punk" section, there was no such thing. The good stuff was lightly sprinkled amongst the vast mounds of bad stuff, along with a certain percentage of bad stuff that was disguised to look like good stuff. The guy who wrote the story told about how for no good reason he put off buying certain album - like The Ramones (they had long hair like 1970s coliseum rock stars and long hair was VERY uncool in the punk rock world back then. Punk rock was a fashion movement, too). He told about how he tried to suss out what was good and gradually pulled the trigger on this item or that. Some-times he was disappointed. Sometimes he fell in love. The story that guy wrote for Flipside is so totally right. That's exactly what it was trying to find punk rock in the small towns around America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Trial and error. Hunt and peck. Now buying punk rock records devolves to one question: how much money do you have today? That's sad.



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That's one thing people coming into punk rock today do not understand: how HARD it was to find cool punk rock music back then. You had to learn the bands one by one, you couldn't run out and buy punk rock magazines at the local cool record store. It was all about finding records that were suitably "New Wave." Punk was part of "The New Wave" in the nomenclature of the time. So was the more wimpy pop with jagged guitar work: stuff like Elvis Costello and The Cars. It was all about the way the guitars were played. "New Wave" guitar work sounded like this. "Rock" guitar work sounded like that. It was an either/or deal.

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I still categorize music that way: The Kung Fu Monkeys are ultimately a Punk band because of the way they play their guitars, even if they wear wussy sweater-vests and sing cheesy pop songs. Nashville Pussy may wear leather jackets, and breathe fireballs, but they are Rock. Punk is a type of music, a noun. It works for me.

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I used to look for two things when I was buying LPs at random, trying to find Real New Wave: short hair and four piece drum sets. Rock bands used big drumsets. Lots and lots of little toms was very cool for a long time. Neal Peart of Rush had an enormous rack of toms. My friend John liked Rush a lot. Jon Bonham of Led Zeppelin had a gong. I liked Led Zepplin. I also liked Queen and Aerosmith. If you want to know what 1970s Rock sounded like, check out any so-called "classic rock" radio station. Same fuckingbands, same fucking songs. It's the land before time, when dinosaurs ruled the earth...

I used to look for two things when I was buying LPs at random, trying to find Real New Wave: short hair and four piece drum sets.

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I lived in Eureka, California until 1977. Then my family moved to Corvallis, Oregon. Eureka was about 25,000 population, Corvallis has just hit 50,000. I like small cities. I live in the country just outside of town, actually. We'll be incorporated someday, and the neighboring fields will be filled with cul de sacs and soulless row houses. The big crop in Oregon is grass seed for lawns and pastures. It's nice and green here because of it. The farmers plant it. Then it sits around for a year, maybe getting fertilized or shot up with selective weedkillers to keep the seed pure. Then the grass grows and blooms and it gets cut and sits around for a couple weeks to dry. Then it gets ground up in $150,000 machines operated by 16 year old kids working 12 hours a day, at least six days a week. Then it gets run through sifting machines and packed into sacks. They used to burn the straw off the fields after they were done, now they bail it. They also grow the other kind of grass here, but that's another story.

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I'm a petty bourgeois oppressor of the working class now - in addition to being a profiteer on the sale of body parts of dead animals. In other words, my wife and I own a shoe store - the term "own" being understood to mean "own" in the same sense that homeowners with a big morgage are said to "own" a house. It's not the best way to make a living, but my conscience is clean. I've been in retail sales for almost 20 years of my life though. I'm tired of it.

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My limbs are weak, my eyes are frail: back in the day you could not go to your room, sit down and type http:// www.worldwidepunk.com into your computer, and wind up making one-to-one contact with a member or fan of virtually any punk band in the world. Learning about bands was more akin to feeling your way around a dark room... Were The Rezillos real punk rock or were they a rock band pretending to be punk? Were big record industry dar-lings The Cars cool or did they suck? These questions were important to me. There was a ton of really bad "new wave" rock and roll records made by major record labels in 1980 and 1981 and 1982. The Industry was changing that "Next Big Thing" really hard.

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I sort of liked A Flock of Seagulls. I didn't like The Psychedlic Furs.

See how uncool I was?

⊕ ⊕ ⊕

I still like The B-52's and the electronic Devo albums.

See how uncool I am?

⊕ ⊕ ⊕

As an uncool guy, I know these things: The Knack was a band marketed to the same 13 year old girls who actually bought 45s. So was Cheap Trick. In the United States, teenage boys bought cassette tapes or LPs - never, ever, ever 45s! That was the order of preference, by the way, rock cassettes were more popular than rock LPs in most crowds. Now the cool kids, the guys with tattoos who wear black leather jackets, like The Knack and Cheap Trick. Imagine that. I owned stuff by those bands back then, but it was certainly nothing that I would have admitted in public...

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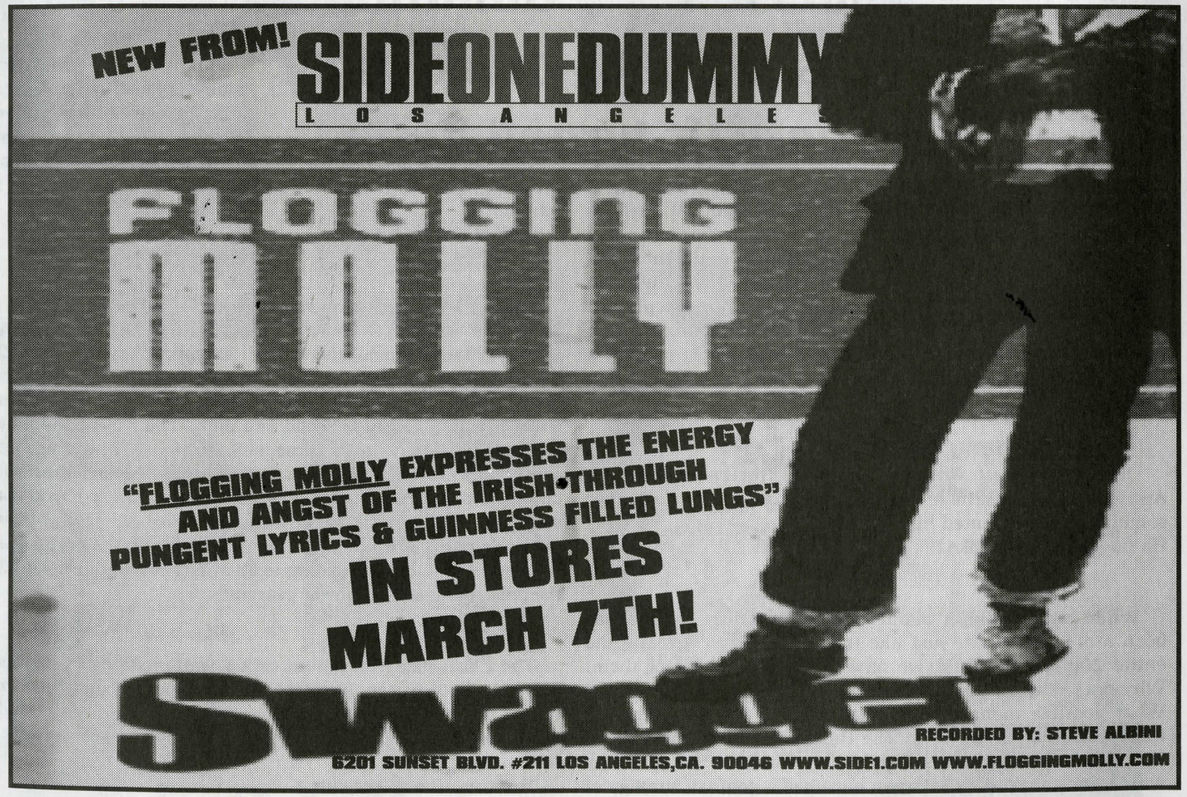
The world of punk is different now. Things are much bigger now than they were then. Punk may be "in decline" in commercial terms, but it is still 10 times bigger than it ever was. There are tons of punk rock record labels and punk rock magazines and people who sit around selling punk rock records to punk rock record stores all day. These punk rock record distributors are big enough that they even have to hire employees. Sometimes they can even pay them.

TIMCHANDLER



HIT SQUAD

1980s History Attack: George Walker Bush's daddy, George Herbert Walker Bush, was a fuck that slaughtered civilians in Panama. He sent in the military trying to capture Manuel Noriega, an alleged "drug kingpin." In the process, our government slaughtered between 500 and 2000 civilians (accounts vary). The human beings who were burned to death in their sleep were poor black folks, so no one ever bothered to compile a proper list of the dead, as far as I know. I kept watching the papers for an official count and never saw one. I looked pretty hard. I'm pretty sure they just dug a big hole, threw the bodies in, and forgot about it - urban renewal writ large. The Americans blew away an entire neighborhood, just like a Schwartzenegger movie. Noriega ran to the Vatican Embassy to attempt to escape. Our military set up outside with a massive loudspeaker system and blasted bad music at him 24/7 until he was eventually persuaded that the jig was up and that he should surrender.

A band on a big record label calling was calling attention to an illegal war in Central America. Sandinista was a bad punk rock record, it turned out.

The next morning at the press conference about the event, George Walker Bush gushed and tittered like a fratboy that had just fucked half the University of Texas cheerleading squad. He had just murdered 500 civilians and he was proud of himself. I watched his performance live on CNN and I can honestly say that it was one of the most disgusting things I have ever seen in my life. Somebody needs to write a book about that Panama shit. Bush was just so pleased with the great thing he had accomplished, abducting a "drug king-pin" - a person who was incidentally head of state of a sovereign nation at the time.
Details, details...

Our Government Creatith, and Our Government Taketh Away. Noriega must have crossed the CIA on a cocaine deal or something, they wanted him baaaaad.
Ha ha ha. That's a joke.

While we're talking about Central America: Mexico has been a one-party state just like the Russkies for virtually the entire 20th century. But we haven't been paranoid of them. Why not? Why all the obsession with Nicaragua in the 1980s? What possible menace could that obscure and impoverished third world backwater be to The United States of America and The Free Anti-Communist World For Which It Stood? Why would the so-called Evil Empire have had a goofball strategy of coming to power in an impoverished Central American wayside and then marching all the way up to America to pull smug Republicans out of their beds, rape the women, and blow off the heads of the whole family with Kalashnikov rifles in front of the two car garage?
This sounds farcical, you think I joke, but I honestly believe this is what the senile Ronald Reagan believed the God-less Communists were intent on doing. I wish I had Reagan's Collected Works on my bookshelf, it would be good for a periodic laugh. Ronnie's Sochineniia would probably have 18 point type and colored pictures and have been about six volumes long. A great intellect he was not.

Ronald Reagan would have been elected to a third term if it was permitted by the Consititution. People loved him. They thought he was a nice old man, a kindly and somewhat dotty old uncle. In reality, he was just a puppet for a whole bunch of nasties...

After he left office, The Gipper was formally diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's Disease.
Many of us had suspected all along.
That's not a joke.
Scary.

The Bottom Line on 1980s Nicaragua: the decision-makers (in the vernacular of the political scientists) must have been worried that the Nicaraguan revolution would destablilize Mexico, the slumbering giant to our south.
So they snuffed it out.

Funny, I just remembered something. I subscribed to a Sandinista newspaper for a couple years in the early 1980s. Barricada International, the English edition. It was aesthetically cool, printed on really bad newsprint in Nicaragua. The paper was full of boring stories about the revolution. Good spirit but the content was sorely lacking. Turgid and dull. The American-funded civil war ultimately forced democratic elections. The average person in the street was really suffering during the civil war with taxes and drafts of young men as soldiers and a truly horrid consumer supply situation. While many may have sympathized with the goals of the revolution, in the final analysis the Nicaraguan people just wanted the fighting to be over. The Sandinistas lost at the polls, and they left power peacefully.

The Clash made an album called *Sandinista* in 1980. That was very cool to a political person like me. A band on a big record label calling was calling attention to an illegal war in Central America. *Sandinista* was a bad punk rock record, it turned out.
You can't have everything.





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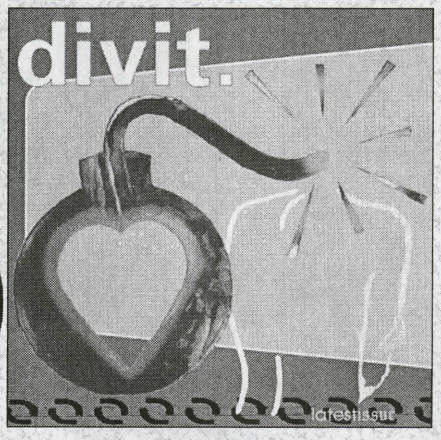

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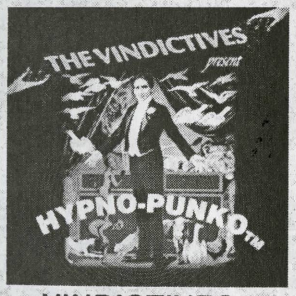

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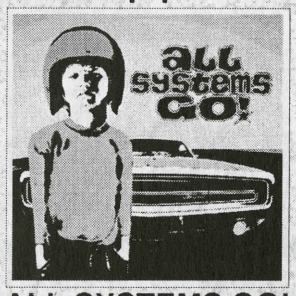

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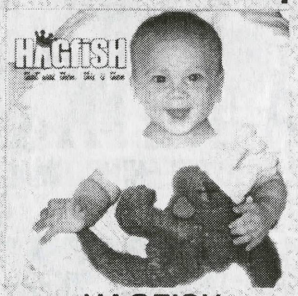

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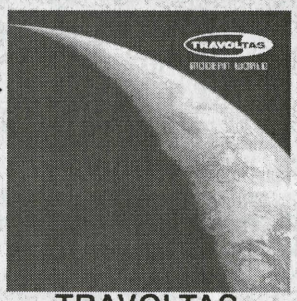

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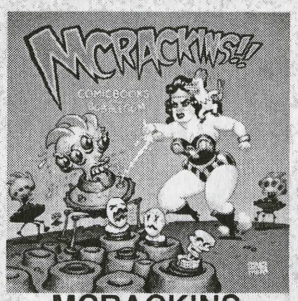

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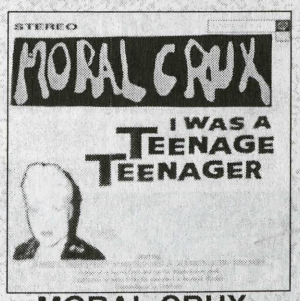

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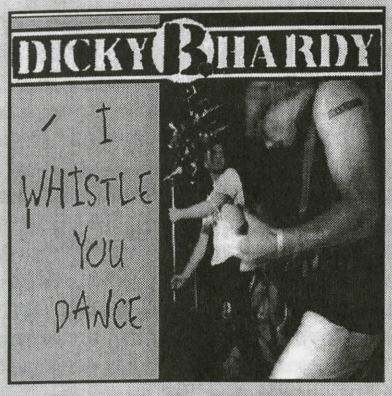

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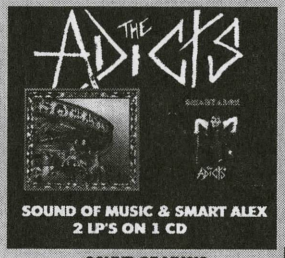

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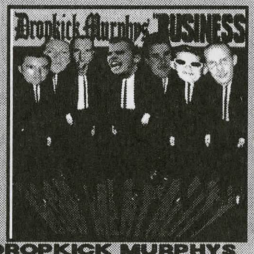

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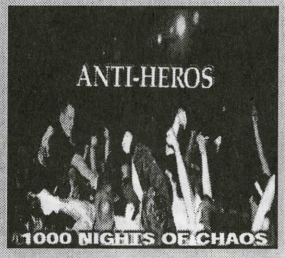

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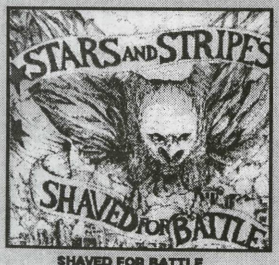

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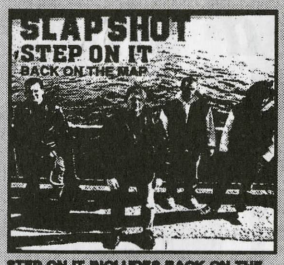

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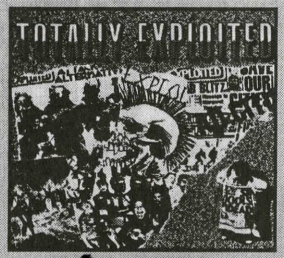

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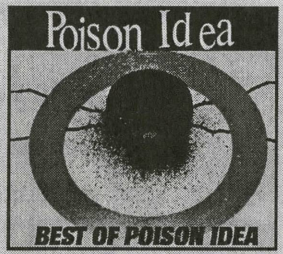

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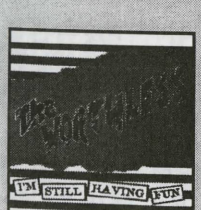

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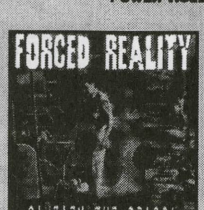

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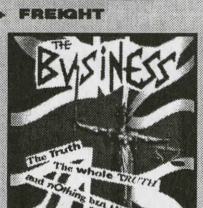

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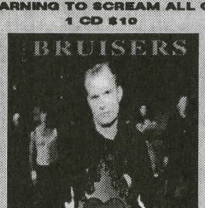

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JUKEBOX JURY

by jeff jarema

Thank goodness that *Hit List* came along. With my own 'zine (*Here 'Tis*) again on hiatus, and the paying gigs more 'n' more in the past, I've currently got no outlet - nowhere to release rants on what's great and not so great on my rock 'n' roll radar. *Hit List* first roped me in to pen a Chesterfield Kings piece (in *HL* #6), an editing effort which netted me neither beer money nor, now I hear, even a byline credit. But *HL* editor Jeff Bale was overly apologetic, and I'm easily bullshitted, so here I am back on board with this here column. Obviously, *Hit List* and I have a loose deal. As interpreted by me, that's a green light to write on whatever strikes me. Bale promised to up the sixties coverage with future issues, and I'm here to assist. After all, the magazine already has more than its share of blowhard social spew, so count on me instead to tip the scales back to an issue that matters...like 45 rpm records.

The offer of a column has been out there for months, but it was only the other day that an idea finally shook me. I bought an old jukebox two months ago and it has been both an exercise in frustration (why the @#$% do so many of my prized 45's sound like %$#@?!) and also the greatest concentration of ear-bleed blasting music appreciation I've enjoyed in years. As self-indulgent a direction as this seems to be heading, the following is not so much a boasting of "how cool my jukebox is" (though, inevitably, there's some of that) but rather (a) my musings on juke-relocated records worth recommending; (b) the ear-opening, undeniably non-digital, metallic KO of those coin-operated rattle traps; and (c) in a related issue, the sorry state of 45 rpm reissues.

This is the first jukebox I've owned since getting hitched and starting a family

This is the first jukebox I've owned since getting hitched and starting a family. My wife, lemme tell ya, is no kindred spirit when it comes to my essential daily diet of sixties garage (our common ground is any/all soul), which makes it all the more hilarious that due to a bizarre chain of events, despite three floors to choose from for its anchoring, it turns out that the Wurlitzer takes up a prominent chunk of real estate in our bedroom! To make matters more annoying to wife and neighbors, I refuse to allow it to operate at anything less than ear-piercing peak volume.

Having said that, the collection of records (100 of 'em, or 20 selections) assembles a weird cross section based on wha sounds best amongst my largely sixties soul, garage and Bri Invasion appetite, plus a half dozen "concession" items so tha my wife doesn't throw juke and/or me out of bedroom. My guess is that it would take no less than twice as many record (400 selections) to have some kinda all encompassing "cool (purist) juke - one that also includes all the key blues, country rockabilly, and frat cats.

Instead, from a way narrower perspective, mine mixes u everything from garage greatness ("I'm Gonna Make Yo Mine"/"I'll Make You Sorry" by the Shadows of Knight, fo example) to loser third-string teen records that I can't help bu dig, too, like the Flock's rubber soul stomp, "Take Me Back" from genius R&B (Otis Redding, James Brown, Wilson Pickett to some clowns named the Soul Partners, who sound suspi ciously of a whiter shade on the ok "Lose The One You Love but get in the groove overwhelmingly on its flip, the tremendou "Walk On Judge" (on Bell Records; who were these guys?).

For proto-puke frat rock, only the Sonics (this week, fiv sides plus a bonus Wailers flip, courtesy of Norton Records an their crunching, five-star "Etiquette Jukebox Series") and th Raiders appear from the obvious field. In other words, among others, no Kingsmen. Instead, due to space limitations, I opte for one beat-to-hell but still bruising Standells 45, "Hel Yourself"/"I'll Go Crazy" (on Liberty; recorded all the way liv at PJ's in Hollywood, 1964). Though overlooked, this is a tw sided killer, with drummer Dick Dodd taking the lead vocal o "Help Yourself", to ultra-cool effect, while "I'll Go Crazy" make up for the otherwise weak Standells unison white boy barkin with constant berserk screams and lots of energy all the wa around. On a previous juke, I included same period Standel ("Linda Lou"/"So Fine") an yet never seem to mak space for much from the later, better known Towe Records "punk" period. guess the jukebox don lie...this sounds 20 time wilder than "Why Pick O Me".

In allowing thes ears to pick what sound best on the juke, maybe the greatest irony is that horns (th bane of sixties garage collectors, and rightfully so) make for "plus" instead of something to disqualify a disc. Of course, a the Stax stuff, with its base of the MG's/Markeys (aka Memph Horns), sounds better than 99.9% of the competition. Curre picks to click (...at the selection keys, dummy) include Edd Floyd's "Raise Your Hand" and "Big Bird" (there's a great flip o the latter: "Holding On With Both Hands"), William Bell "Eloise", Otis' "Satisfaction", and Don Covay's "Sookie Sookie amongst another half dozen or so Memphis piledrivers.

Other tops on the late night soul parade include large uptempo workouts from the likes of Jackie Wilson, So Brothers Six ("Drive" kills!), Bobby Bland ("Don't Cry No Mor kills!), the Isley Brothers (forget what I said about the previou two); "Testify" by this scream team knocks 'em ALL dead i their tracks. Reportedly, the guitarist on this '64 sesh is no other than Hendrix), Wilson Pickett, Archie Bell & the Drell

Pre-MOR Al Green (c. '70) and Fantastic Johnny C, to name more winners. The sweeter sound of the soul spectrum also receives it's due/slots/spins, with faves by James & Bobby Purify ("Wish You Didn't Have To Go"/"You Can't Keep A Good Man Down" is a perfect single), Tony Clarke, the Poets, the Impressions, and Willie Tee (even if the two Willie singles are chock fulla violence). There's more, but I'm not here to bore...

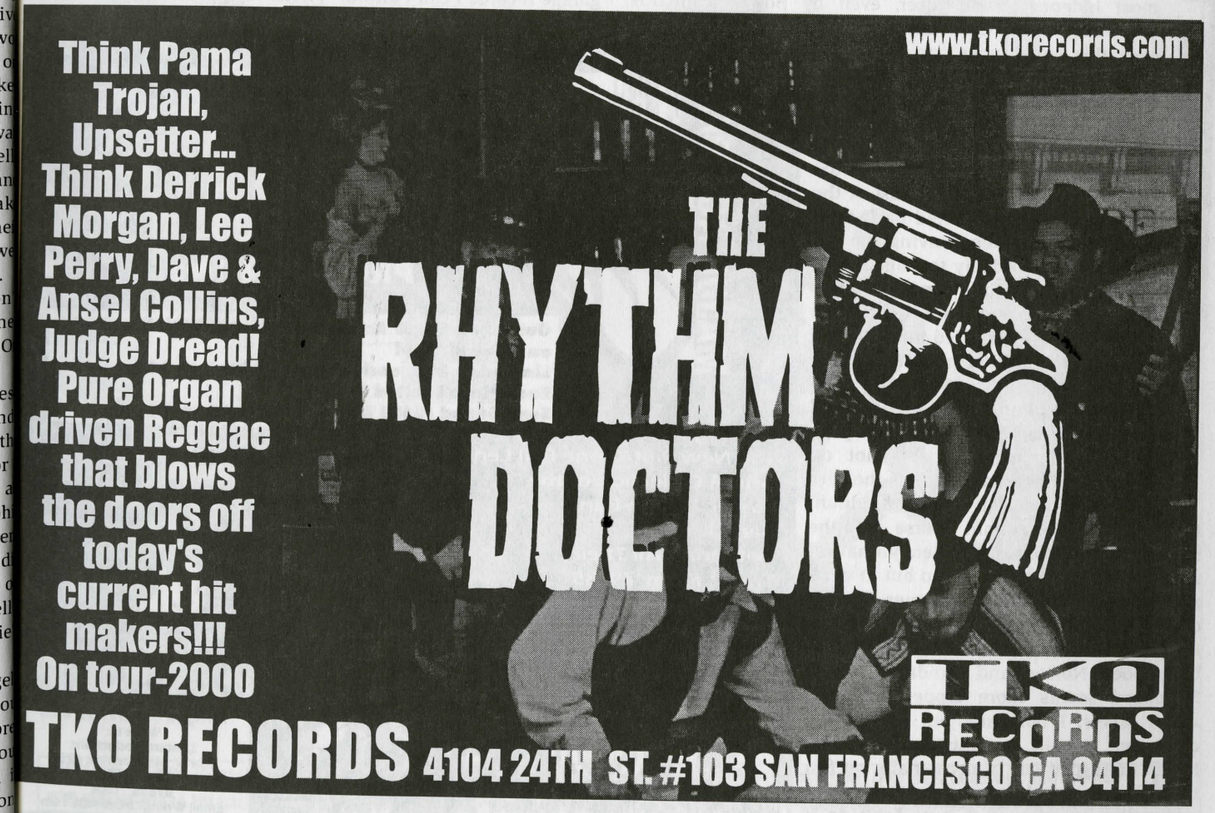
Arguably the most exciting records are neither soul nor garage. It is the instrumentals that really rule the roost on my jukebox. More than with soul or garage, all have been carefully chosen because there are so many great instro records to choose from. From the aforementioned "Walk On Judge" to Link Wray (picking my fave from the Norton/Wray jukebox series, "Dueces Wild"), from Dick Dale to the MG's and the Meters, it's all great, make no mistake. However, the two out 'n' out top assaults are Lonnie Mack's "Lonnie On The Move", a 200-mph ripoff of "Turn On Your Love Lights" (there's no possibility of a studio session musician in earshot of this 'un: this wild performance speaks for the "road hardened" advantage); also, "The Limp" by the Incredible Kings (b/w a crazed take of "Oo Poo Pah Doo" by some other act. Both blistering blasts on this 45 feature a pre-Moby Grape Jerry Miller, and are available from Norton).

To return to an earlier point, both the Lonnie Mack and Jerry Miller tracks feature blaring horns that help push the energy level big-time. On another instrumental-related note, easily the least hip band to appear amongst these lords of loud are, no bull, the Commodores! Yes, same name as the Lionel Ritchie gang, but "Rise Up"/"Keep On Dancing" appears on Atlantic around 1969. Can this be the same band? Fab record.

JEFF JAREMA

In the pages of my own rag (*Here 'Tis*, for those with short memories), I've criticized Brit Invasion records and how anemically they hold up on jukebox next to Stax and the more raving garage records. My memory must've been faulty when I wrote that, 'cause I'm especially digging Brit discs by the Stones, Them ("Mystic Eyes"), the Yardbirds, the Pretty Things, the Spencer Davis Group, and especially the Who. "Pictures of Lily", "I Can See For Miles" and "Can't Explain" are featured this week, though I already have "Call Me Lightning" and "Substitute" in the wings, ready to, um, substitute for some lesser record ("My Generation" was dropped, no thanks to the lifeless copy at hand, devoid of the crucial hi-end). The crashing chord/snare combo of the early Who seems particularly compatable with the sonic boom of the jukebox.

As for the garage, the selections are all of a hi-octane nature. The tamest of these records would be fave hits like "Psychotic Reaction", "Can't Get Enough Of You Baby", "A Public Execution" and "We Ain't Got Nothin' Yet" (in other words, no lightweight stuff like "Mindrocker" or "Shape Of Things To Come"). Like the Sonics, the Seeds are well represented, mainly 'cause their sparsely arranged records sound so damn good on a jukebox (ex: "Pushin' Too Hard", "Daisy Mae", "No Escape". "Satisfy You", despite a lame B-side, owns the next available slot!). The MC5's mega-distorto early version of "Looking At You" was just added. Of course, it slays everything else. My fave



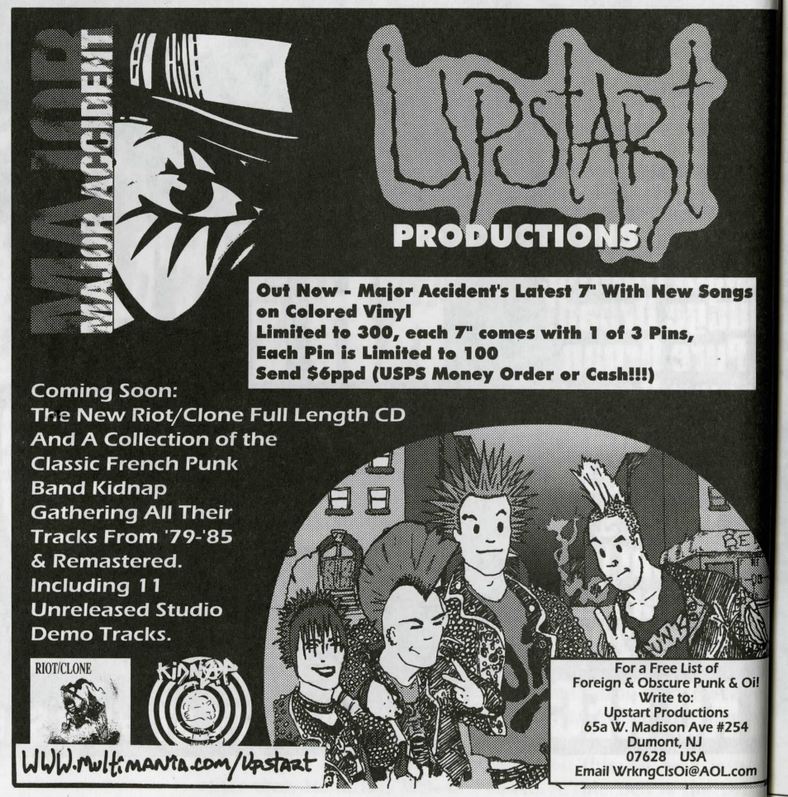
HIT SQUAD

of the many Sundazed choices is disc one of their Druids of Stonehenge howler. Their version of "Who Do You Love" may be the most frantic ever. Side A of Sundazed's Mourning Reign also delivers vital garage goods. While I'm on the subject of obscure garage, another wild side that should reside for quite awhile on the Wurlitzer is "Mellow Down Easy" by the Dirty Wurds (Caped Crusader Records).

Though an unfashionable stance amongst garage collectors, I also dig the music of my youth, the seventies. And unlike the sixties, where there exist so many class records to choose from, digging the less musically rich seventies allows for some truly tasteless choices. So far, I've thrown on "Eighteen" by Alice Cooper, "Jeepster" by T. Rex, "Fireball" by Deep Purple, "Do The Strand" by Roxy Music, "Sweet Jane" by Mott the Hoople, and "Communication Breakdown" by youknowwho. Unfortunately, they have all been cursed with awful sound (esp. AC, T. Rex, DP, and RM, did Warner/Reprise have the lousiest pressings on the planet during this period or what?) and have in short order been removed. This week, the only seventies records that survive on the juke are "Happy" by the Stones and "Queen Bitch" by Bowie. The Stones disc doesn't sound too good either (grating pressing), though, and while the Bowie disc is all monster Ronno riffing, it is paired with one of the most hideous A-sides ever, even by Bowie standards, @#$%ing "1984" (so bad that I resorted to writing "do not play, this song sucks" on the paper title strip). If I can just score "The Wizard" by Black Sabbath plus some choice, better known '77 punk faves, I'll be set w/ the seventies.

Lastly, I gotta complain about the sorry state of 45 reissues. Most of the major labels have trimmed back their 45 rpm back catalog, leaving the job almost single handedly to Collectables Records, one of the worst scenarios imaginable. Dozens and dozens of great groups are relegated to splitting a Collectables 45 with some other totally unrelated (even in sound) group. If I was an alum of one of these bands, I'd be more than miffed. The funniest pairing I've seen recently, and not on Collectables I should note, has the Ides of March b/w Allan "Hello Mudduh, Hello Fadduh" Sherman! Worse yet, the Stones' back catalog is completely unavailable, thanks not only to Abkco but to whoever holds the later Rolling Stones Records catalog (EMI?). The only hope for the future, as I see it, are two labels - the much-ballyhooed Norton and Sundazed. Since Sundazed seems more tapped into the major labels, I bombard 'em around the clock w/ e-mails on this matter. They haven't returned one of my e-mails yet (on this issue, at least), but I stand committed to bugging 'em 'cause if they don't do it who will ? Don't say Collectables!

My current jukebox want list (let me know if you wanna unload any of these, either sale or trade; UK press w/ non-juke small center hole ok - I will drill it out!): WILDWEEDS' "No Good To Cry"; PINK FLOYD's "Arnold Layne"/"See Emily Play" (is there a reissue out there, somewhere overseas?); CREAM's " Feel Free"/"NSU"; the SEEDS' "Out Of The Question"; LOVE's "Stephanie Knows Who"; numerous titles by the ROLLING STONES ("wants" and upgrades, o-o-p reissues ok, including "Not Fade Away", "Tell Me", "Have You Seen Your Mothe Baby", "Dandelion", "Street Fighting Man", "Tumbling Dice" "It's Only Rock 'n' Roll"); the WHO's "Anyway Anyhow Anywhere", "I'm A Boy"/"In The City"; DEEP PURPLE' "Hush" (w/o the Y-BIRDS' "For Your Love on B-side, which i the current reissue); ALICE COOPER's "Eighteen"/"Caught In A Dream" o-o-p reish; JOE HINTON's "Funny" o-o-p reissue, ok the ELECTRIC PRUNES' "Too Much To Dream"/"Get Me To Th World On Time" o-o-p reissue; IGGY & THE STOOGES' "Search & Destroy"; the SAINTS' "I'm Stranded"; the CLASH's "Workin For The Clampdown"/"Guns Of Brixton"; the DAMNED's "New Rose"; the JAM's "Town Called Malice"; the MOTIONS' "Fo Another Man"; the UNDERTAKERS' "Mashed Potatoes"; BLAC SABBATH's "The Wizard"/"Paranoid"; the METERS' "Chicke Strut"; the LOST's "Maybe More Than You"; and dozens o garage records I can't afford. (Write to Jeff Jarema/408 Verno Terrace/Raleigh, NC 27609/USA)



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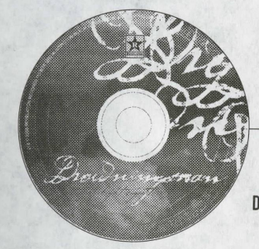

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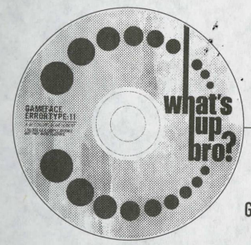



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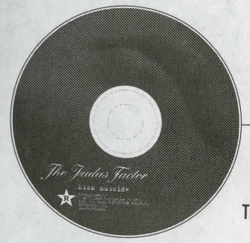

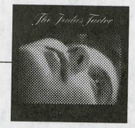

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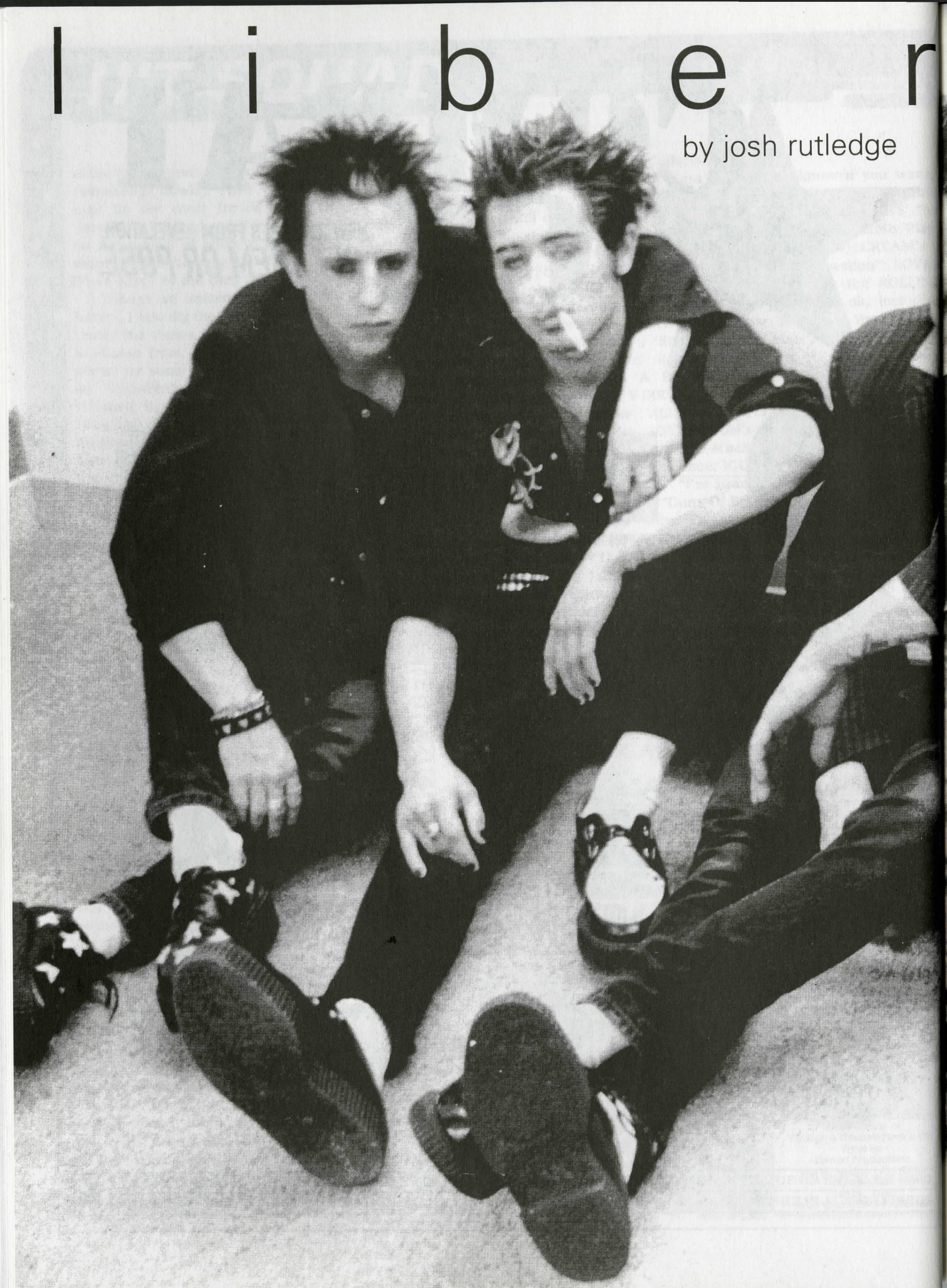
libertine

by josh rutledge



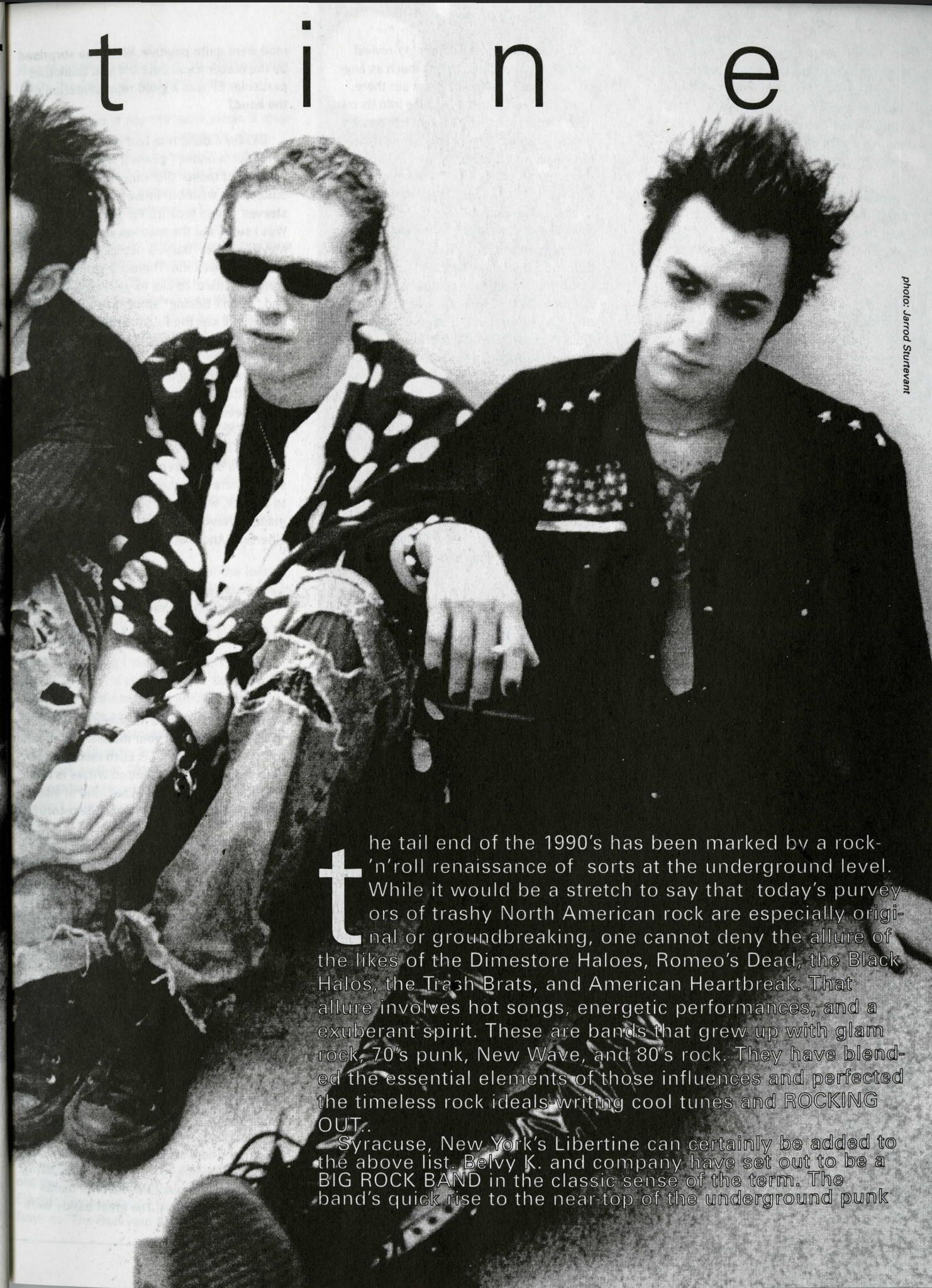


photo: Jarrod Sturtevant

The tail end of the 1990's has been marked by a rock-'n'roll renaissance of sorts at the underground level. While it would be a stretch to say that today's purveyors of trashy North American rock are especially original or groundbreaking, one cannot deny the allure of the likes of the Dimestore Haloes, Romeo's Dead, the Black Halos, the Trash Brats, and American Heartbreak. That allure involves hot songs, energetic performances, and a exuberant spirit. These are bands that grew up with glam rock, 70's punk, New Wave, and 80's rock. They have blended the essential elements of those influences and perfected the timeless rock ideals writing cool tunes and ROCKING OUT.

Syracuse, New York's Libertine can certainly be added to the above list. Belvy K. and company have set out to be a BIG ROCK BAND in the classic sense of the term. The band's quick rise to the near-top of the underground punk

ladder has rubbed more than a few souls the wrong way. Is Libertine a self-promoting outfit hell-bent on little more than egotistical swaggering? Or do pretentious punk rock hipsters simply object to any band that aspires to be truly BIG? Regardless, one point is clear: Libertine are intent on getting on-stage and rocking out-any time, any place, they want to put on a SHOW. The same summer that Libertine played at Woodstock (yes, Woodstock!), I saw the band perform in front of 20 people in the back of a record store. Gossip all you want about these guys, but don't try to deny that they love rock and roll with a rare passion.

Belvy K. believes in his band more than anything else in the word, and he's not shy about telling you about it. Does Libertine live up to the hype? Perhaps yes, perhaps no. But taken out of the context of hype, the band's music is not without its charms. Libertine's debut LP, "See You In The Next Life", is a pleasing amalgamation of raunchy rock'n'roll and moody post-punk pop. In a perfect world, songs like "Heartbreak" and "Moscow" could be radio hits. Even in our imperfect world, Belvy K. still believes in the concept of delivering his band's music to the masses. Whether or not Libertine achieves mainstream success remains to be seen. But it is clear that the band will enjoy their wild ride regardless of the final destination.

Josh Rutledge: Let's go back to the beginning and trace the development of the band. When did you first get the idea for Libertine, and what were you hoping to accomplish musically at the time?

Belvy K: At first? I guess I wanted to just get a "kick-ass" band together, write some songs, see what would happen. We wanted to do something a little different. I've always had a thing for moody Brit bands-really strong songs and hooks, you know? Something cool and with lots of style. At the same time, I've always loved good, sleazy rock and roll. People say Libertine is both of those things, so that's cool. This band has so many influences. I mean the Clash are fundamental. And Gen X and Thunders. From day one, we've always tried to be about good songs first and foremost. Like any new band, we were definitely a lot rawer and less polished early on. Maybe we were a little shy about taking chances, too. After the first CD ("Rise Above"), we were like, "Man, do we really want to be just another '77 revival band?" We love that stuff as much as anyone, but there's so much more out there. Libertine's just starting to come into its own now; it's just starting to sound the way we want it to sound. The band's been going now for a little over 2 years.

Our Kado and Alive EP's came out in the summer of 1998. Since then we've just tried to stay as busy as possible by touring and releasing stuff as much as we can. The new album, "See You in the Next Life", just came out on Sub$tandard/New Red Archives. The Clash and Motley Crue comps we did came out recently, too. We also have an EP coming out on Pelado called "Guttersnipe Glamour". T.S.B Records in Scotland have just put out a CD, "Slowdown", for U.K. release—it's basically the Kado and Alive EP's with a couple of tracks off compilations, etc. We have a song on "A Fistfull of Rock and Roll"-that's this awesome comp that Sal from Electric Frankenstein put together. That'll coming out in Febuary on Caroline/Tee Pee. We're in the film/video too. We also have a song ("I Don't Belong") in this movie called "Freak Talks About Sex". Steve Zahn and Max Cassella are in it. We're doing tracks for Cheap Trick, U.K. Subs, and Dead Boys comps/tributes. Busy, busy, busy!

We've toured a decent amount, but not half as much as we'd like to. Over the last two years we've done a couple scattered U.S. tours, the '98 and '99 Vans Warped Tours, Woodstock, Joey Ramone's 1999 birthday bash, and we've played with everybody we could, including the Misfits, Motley Crue, Kid Rock, Reel Big Fish, D Generation, Electric Frankenstein, Goldfinger, the Lunachicks, the Candy Snatchers, the Gaza Strippers, Murphy's Law, the Toilet Boys, etc, etc. We did this big outdoor thing w/ Smashmouth, 3rd Eye Blind, and Eve 6 in the summer of '98. There were 28,000 kids there, and it was crazy!

JR: How long was the band together before you first went into the studio and did the demo? How do you feel about the material that's on that tape?

BK: The first demo? Jesus, that's a collectors item! We must have been together maybe three, four weeks when we did it-and it sounds like it!

JR: The first CD EP-"Rise Above"-did quite well with the "critics". Most of the reviews I read were quite positive. Were you surprised by the reaction you got? Did you think that particular EP was a good representation of the band?

BK: For a band that had only been together for five months, I guess it was all right. It was one of those "first time in the studio/lets-wear-our-influences-on-our-sleeves" kinda records. I'm glad it did well. Was I surprised the reaction was so positive? Maybe a little. That A & R pick in C.M.J. definitely surprised me. There are some good songs on there. I'd like to re-record "Candy" and "I Don't Belong" some time and do 'em up right. It was the first time that I'd ever sung in the studio, and I had absolutely no idea what the hell I was doing. Early on, I think we all thought "We gotta be like this" o "We gotta be like that". But you know, all we really needed to be more like was ourselves! Now we're just doing what we want, and it's a lot more relaxed. We get on stage and everyone has a blast. Everyone's psyched. It's awesome. There's no name for it. We're not trying to be rock, we're not trying to be punk, or glam, or New Wave, or anything. It's just Libertine. And that's what "Next Life" is.

JR: Sonically, there has been an obvious evolution evident in your material from demo to first EP to the new LP. Each recording sounds different-a nd better. Where is this evolution headed now? What kind of vision do you have for the next Libertine record?

BK: I'm really glad that people are jazzed on the new record, and that they notice a big difference in it. It's a record we really feel we can stand behind. I mean it is a year later, so we should be moving along and improving on things. Touring around and playing a lot of shows really kicked us into shape, especially me; you learn to sing a lot better playing every night. We went through a lot together "Next Life"'s the product of that. The next record will build on "Next Life" as much as "Next Life" built on "Rise Above". Jamie and already have enough new stuff to fill another record and then some. Some of it's along the lines of the more recent "Next Life" material ("Heartbreak", "Moscow", "Next Life", etc.) some of it is just different. But it's all Libertine. There are so many things that we haven't been able to try yet. It'll be amazing. Fuck man, I can't wait! My favorite bands always took chances. The great bands were always willing to try something different: the Clash, the Cure, U2, even the Stones.

JR: One could say that your music is moving away from "punk" and towards a post-punk/New Wave vibe. I know you aren't excited by what's happening in the punk "scene" right now. Is punk rock stale now? Is it time for a musical shake-up?

BK: Fuck yeah, it's stale! It's definitely time for a shake-up. All the bands look the same. Everybody sounds the same. It's all formula. And it's not just the punk scene. It's the whole damn rock scene, it's every musical scene. But maybe that's good. The worse it gets, the better the eventual backlash will probably be. There's this tiny handful of bands doing something a little different, and that's good. We're doing what we do, making the music we want to make, the way we want to make it. We don't think of ourselves as "moving away" or "towards" the punk scene. We see ourselves as just a band, albeit a band with lots of different influences and ideas. As long as we stay true to ourselves, we'll be fine.

JR: What do you think a lot of the lesser punk bands today need to do? What steps do they need to take in order to make more exciting music?

BK: One thing I want to know is where does it say that if you're a punk band, you've got to play and sound like shit? A band like the Clash were pro all the way down the line. People said they were too rock, too polished, they were sell-outs, they were this, they were that. Fuck all that. They were just trying to be the best band they could be, period. They couldn't have cared less what anyone else called it. They put some serious time and effort into the songwriting and arranging, the presentation, and everything else. It was tight as fuck. There was none of this lo-fi, let's-sound-as-shitty-as-possible bullshit. A lot of the bands out there are, um, how can I say this diplomatically? There are just too many bands that sound like fucking trainwrecks. It's all over the place. "Lesser punk bands"? "Greater punk bands"? Who cares! There are good bands and there are bad bands, just as there lways has been and always will be. There's the engaging passionate stuff that makes you feel alive, and then there's everything else. For me, it's got to burn! But music's like art; it's entirely subjective. Having said that, I don't think it's such a bad thing for bands to maybe spend a little more time on things, think it through a bit, and let it develop some. I do think there are bands out there that have their shit together. I like Electric Frankenstein. I like what the Toilet Boys do. The Backyard Babies. The Trash

One thing I want to know is where does it say that if you're a punk band, you've got to play and sound like shit?



photo: Mark Lomery

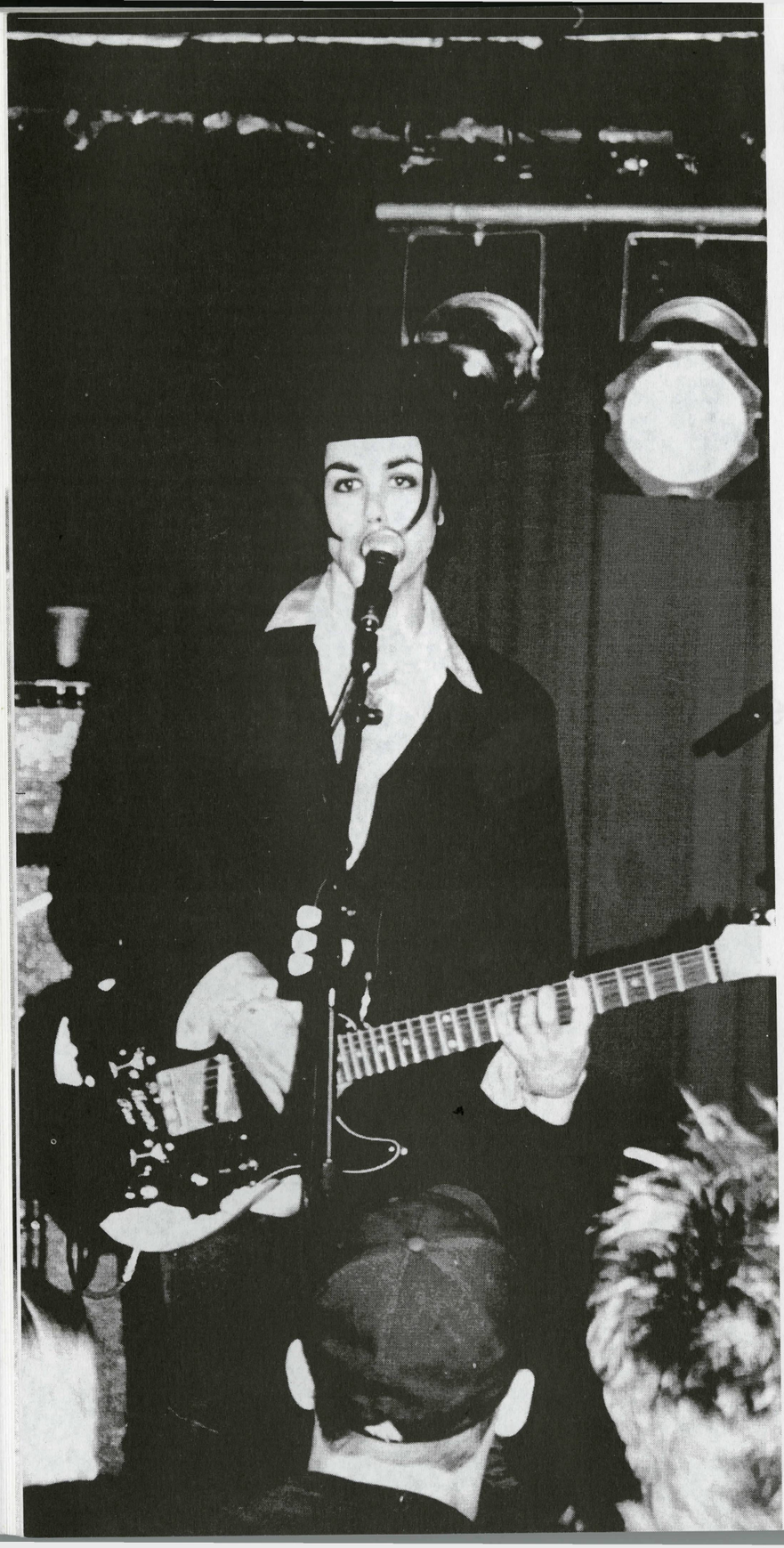


photo: Mark Lomery

Brats. The Swingin' Utters. They're all a bit different, but they all sound like real bands- they write songs, they're tight, and they rock. Isn't that the idea?

JR: Ten years ago, there seemed to be a natural relationship between punk rock and post-punk/New Wave. If you liked Social Distortion or the Clash in 1987, it wasn't unusual for you to also like the Jesus And Mary Chain or the Cure. Now in 1999, there's a clear line between the two styles. Most punk fans I know loathe bands like the Cure. They perceive that to be "alternative" music. What has happened to the once-open minds of underground rock fans?

BK: That's a really good question. I have no idea. I know what you mean, though. It's like there are all these different camps and they're all just stuck in their little tribes. And kids are WAY more jaded now. Those bands you mentioned-the Clash, SD, the Cure, the JAMC-they all looked great, "classic" even, and they all had great songs, too. I don't think there have been any bands in the last few years that have had that perfect combination of style and sound. I think that might be part of it. I'm always surprised at how many people come up to us after shows and tell us they're into the Cure or U2 and the Clash. Maybe it's starting to change; we're starting to see more of a crossover at our shows. Glam kids, goth kids, punks, greasers, normal rock and roll freaks, Korn kids. And that's what you want, a little bit of everything. Maybe we can be the band that brings it all together again.

JR: As your band moves further away from a stereotypical punk rock sound, do you think that many of the "punk" kids will dismiss you?

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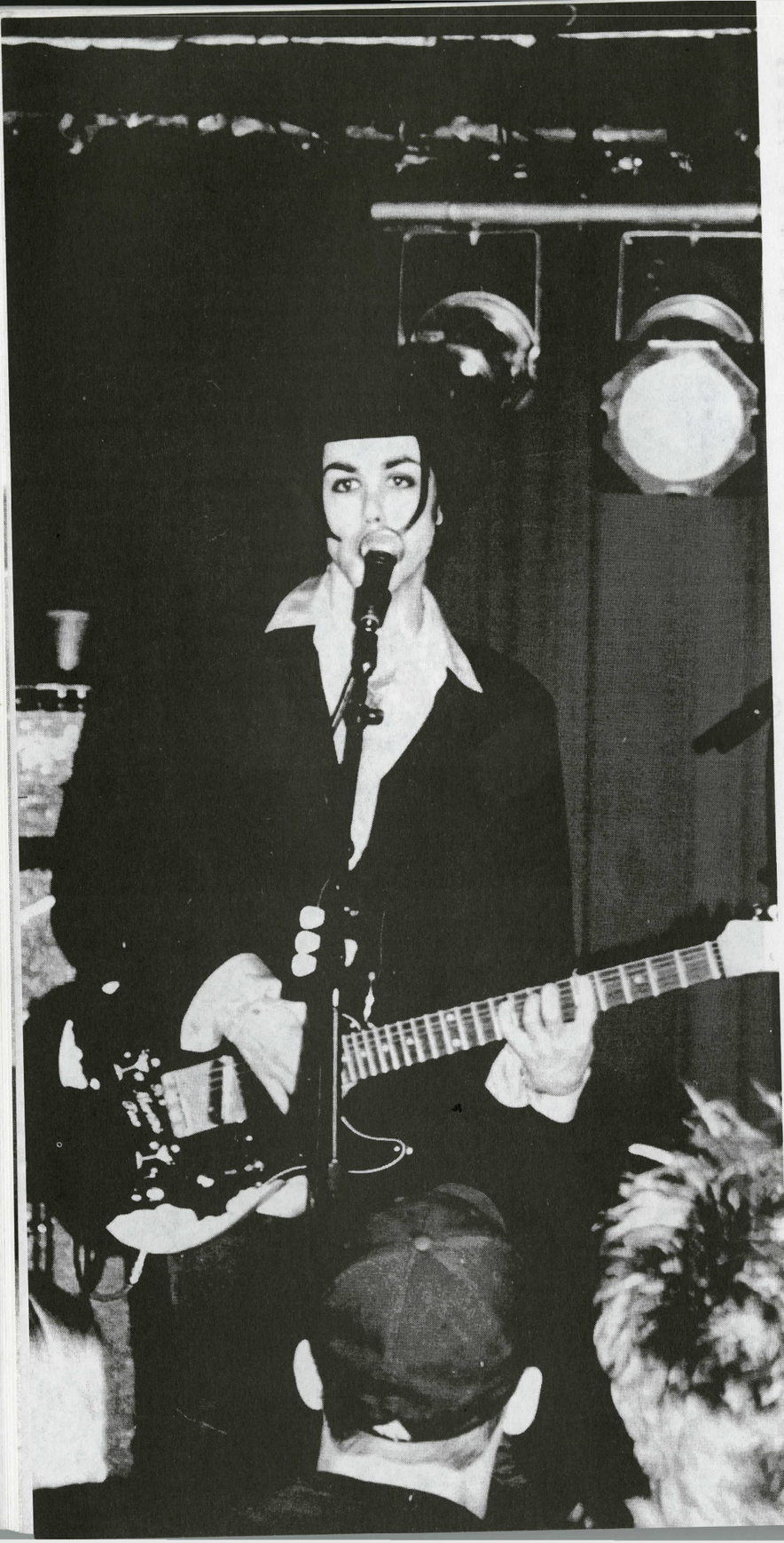

photo: Mark Lorney

Brats. The Swingin' Utters. They're all a bit different, but they all sound like real bands—they write songs, they're tight, and they rock. Isn't that the idea?

JR: Ten years ago, there seemed to be a natural relationship between punk rock and post-punk/New Wave. If you liked Social Distortion or the Clash in 1987, it wasn't unusual for you to also like the Jesus And Mary Chain or the Cure. Now in 1999, there's a clear line between the two styles. Most punk fans I know loathe bands like the Cure. They perceive that to be "alternative" music. What has happened to the once-open minds of underground rock fans?

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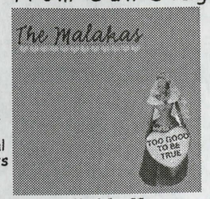

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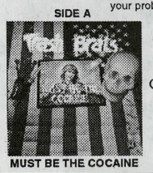

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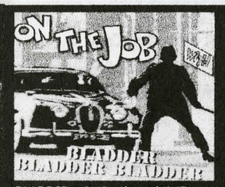

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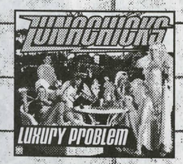

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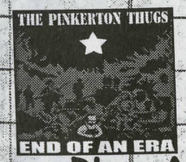

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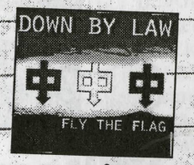

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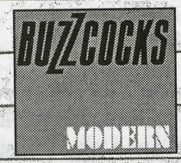

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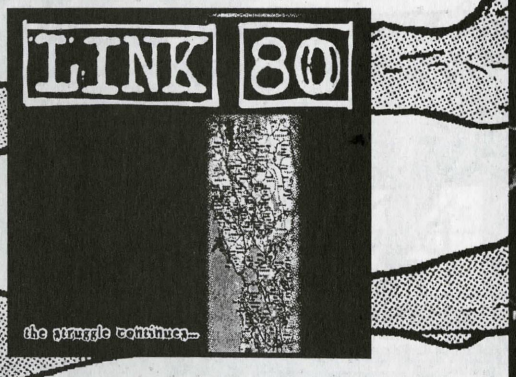

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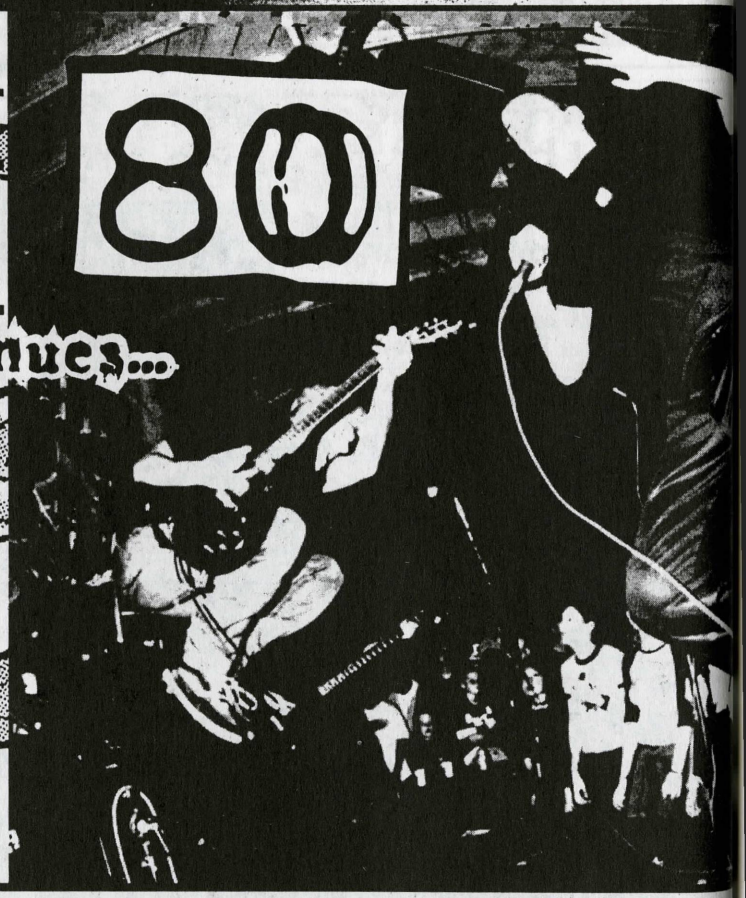

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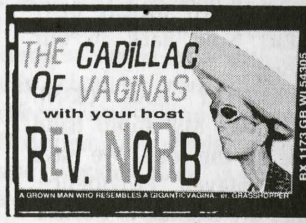
...AND NOW, THE THRILLING CONCLUSION TO "TOUR DIARY-AH '99!!!"

But first, these words from our sponsor: First off, some scurvy blackguard has been sneaking into the Hit List editorial offices every other month and swiping my italics. THIS HAS GOT TO STOP!!! Stealing italics from a columnist who is already next-to-goddamn impossible to understand is not a thrill, a prank, or a joke! Italiclifting can have lasting negative repercussions throughout your life, and will go down on your permanent record!!! (Memo to self: Remember to use term "permanent record" as euphemism for female genitalia, i.e., "Baby, i'm gonna hafta go down on your permanent record!") If the four sentences preceding the parenthetical excursion are not, in fact, italicized, it means this fiend has struck again. Cripes, he's worse than the Mad Punter!!! I may have to dust for prints (as opposed to "dust for Prince," but never mind the PCP humor). In point of fact, i may have to open your permanent record. And i'll KNOW if you've been stealing my italics and hiding them in your garage, because the whole structure would then be leaning at a ten-degree angle. Actually, our bass player's garage leans at a ten-degree angle; Watson, the game's afoot! Further, what would happen if one italicized the Leaning Tower of Pisa? Would it straighten up or just fall over? Or would it be like when you try to italicize a font that can't actually be italicized, and you SEE an italicized screen font on your monitor, but when you print it out, it's regular — i.e., the Leaning Tower of Pisa would APPEAR upon primary visual inspection to be either a) crookeder or b) straighter, but, when measured, would actually somehow show no change whatsoever??? The mind boggles. Somebody has also been stealing my bolds, as well. I think i know who it is, too, because he used to be 130 pounds and white, but now he's black and weighs 240. WELL, I'M JUST GOING TO USE CAPITALS INSTEAD OF ITALICS FROM NOW ON, BECAUSE THEY'RE TOO BULKY FOR YOU TO FIT UNDER YOUR SHIRT, YOU SNEAKY FUCK!!! TAKE THAT!!! Uh, anyway, where was i? Oh yeah, i was attempting to continue the ever-scintillating Boris "AFC Central Tour '99" road diary thing, not like anyone actually cares or i even really remember what happened any more. However, before things begin in earnest, i'd like to apologize to the city of Cincinnati and football fans in general for my glaring inaccuracy in last issue's column, whereby i recounted informing the crowd in said Ohio city that the last time their football team, such as it is, was in the Super Bowl, the Red Rockers and Misfits were considered "new" bands, thinking that the one-and-only time the Cincinnati Bengals were in the Super Bowl was their losing campaign vs. the 49ers circa the '81 season. I was promptly informed (and rightly so) by Nathan from the Shrubbers that there was, in fact, a Niners-Bengals rematch circa '89, which had completely slipped my noggin owing to the fact that, at that point in time, i made my living in the ever-glamorous field of pizza delivery, therefore had to work during the Super Bowl (not to mention virtually every football Sunday) each year and could only listen to the games in the highly non-memorable radio broadcast format, which sort of explained why i could swear i only remembered seeing the Bengals in one Super Bowl. You know, "Video Killed The Radio Star" and all that. Further, as the alcohol-sodden memories of that particular period of my life began to slowly crawl back to me, i remembered that the second Niners-Bengals Super Bowl was the one that fell on, i believe, the 20th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, and there were all these right-to-lifers — including MEN!!! — holding this big protest rally in the park across from the hospitals. Now, whilst pro-choicer i be, let the record show that i have no overwhelmingly violent beef with those of a pro-life bent, nor do i begrudge them the right to peacefully petition for a redress of grievances, or whatever it is that they do, as long as they behave themselves (the fetus-in-a-wastebasket-picture-plastered-on-a-huge-sandwich-board angle i could also do without). I mean, if you honestly, in your heart of hearts, think babies are getting killed right and left, you damn well BETTER try to do something about it, or you pretty much suck (that's why i'm pro-choice: it's easier than thinking. Being pro-choice essentially means "Fuck you, i'm watching some type of televised professional sporting event on TV — YOU go figure out whether a fetus is a human or not! Do i bother YOU with MY metaphysical quandaries???"). However, like Steven Tyler, i got to DRAW the fucking LINE at MEN — real, live, WISCONSONIAN MEN — protesting during the fucking SUPER BOWL. I mean, how goddamned PIOUS can you get??? "Oh, i am so PASSIONATELY DEVOTED TO MY CAUSE that i'm going to PROTEST with my aged post-menopausal crone of a wife instead of watching the SUPER BOWL so i can GUILT TRIP everyone else into doing what i say! TAKE ME SERIOUSLY!!! TAKE ME SERIOUSLY!!!" I mean, fuck, sure it was only two gay teams like the Bengals and 49ers, but STILL, it was the GODDAMN SUPER BOWL (and a fairly good one, as far as Super Bowls other than I, II and XXXI go, at that), and the whole martyr trip was WAY over the line, as far as i was concerned — so, being that the rally was only two blocks away from the store, i drove past the park about a bazillion times, continually peppering the demonstrators with heckles about how good a game it was that they were missing. Ergo, throughout the years, that particular game



What would happen if one italicized the Leaning Tower of Pisa? Would it straighten up or just fall over?

was remembered by myself chiefly as the Heckle-The-Pro-Lifers Bowl — with the actual participants and outcome long since forgotten. PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY. In place of my wise-ass and egregiously inaccurate remark about the Bengals not having been in the Super Bowl since the Misfits and Red Rockers were releasing their first twelve-inchers, please substitute a dig regarding how Oscar Robertson didn't win an NBA championship until he left the Cincinnati Royals for the Milwaukee Bucks. AH! MUCH BETTER! Now back to our story...

i do not want to SEE nor HEAR nor EVEN TANGENTIALLY CONTEMPLATE THE EXISTENCE OF my bandmates. All i wanna do is "TALK."

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE: My dumb band are on the road. We have just played Providence, and are headed to Boston. My girlfriend, who is from Boston, has come. Er, to Providence. Anyway, i keep saying how we go off to "talk," and it really means we go off to "screw," and it's all very amusing. And now, AWAAAAY WE GO..! (note: i have to use paragraphs because I CAN'T GET NO ITALICIZATION out of the freaks who run this mag!!!)

...Stardate 8.11.99, Braintree Massachusetts Motel 6. It is Wednesday. Wednesday is, apparently, HATE YOUR BAND MEMBERS day. I'm sure anyone who's ever been on tour knows that there is that one, special, precious, timeless keepsake day of any given tour where there is nothing you would enjoy more than making a few tourniquets out of bailing wire and broken drumsticks, wrapping them around your bandmates' necks, and twisting briskly until their heads violently exploded like some type of over-inflated Hoppity-Hop(tm) (and/or Mike Holmgren's head when Bill Schroeder would fuck up). Wednesday, it turned out, was the day. Anyway, the show that night was in Boston. I am stationed in one room with my girlfriend, She Whom I Met At The Rat. The rest of my band are stationed, unfortunately, right on the other side of the wall in the next room. She Whom and i, as was explained last issue, have not seen each other all summer, which lead to a rather extensive backlog of "talking" (NUDGE! WINK!) that needed to be caught up on. I have chosen these particular accommodations by virtue of the fact that they are next door — literally, NEXT DOOR — to a train station, and, until it comes time for us to actually depart for the show, i do not want to SEE nor HEAR nor EVEN TANGENTIALLY CONTEMPLATE THE EXISTENCE OF my bandmates. All i wanna do is "TALK." You know what i'm saying? I'm all TALK. G it? Anyway, i figure, you know, hmm, get the Motel 6 by the tra station, then my bandmates can go into the city for the day an LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE so my girlfriend and i can TALK an everyone's happier than a p in shit. Oh, but NO. THAT'S t fucking COMPLEX, too fuckin ESOTERIC a plan for my ban mates to cope with. Anywa the Squeeze and i are talkin (and, believe you me, i'm qui a talker. Now, my girlfrien she can be a little tight-lippe at times, but OW! OW! GO THIS IS JUST GETTIN AWFUL!!! I'LL STOP!!! I'L STOP!!! OKAY!!!), and th fucking phone rings. And it Ron, our drummer. Needless say, i'm like "excuse me, b unless you're bringing me vit min E and a jug Gatorade(tm), i don't want to see you, or hear you, or interact wi you in any way WHATSOEVER until we leave for the gig. What th FUCK are you calling me for???" And Ron's like "well, um, it almost quarter to one right now. We don't wanna take the van in



he city because its full of gear, and it's a 45 minute train ride into oston. And we have to be back here around five. So we're not going to get into the city until like 1:30, and we're gonna hafta eave at 4:00. So we've only got like two and a half hours there." And??? AND??? "Well, Paul is getting really STRESSED about that." Now it is MY head's turn to detonate like planet Krypton. Three men in their thirties in a hotel room LITERALLY NEXT DOOR to the rickin' T station, they have ALL MORNING and ALL AFTERNOON o do WHATEVER THE FUCK THEY WANT as long as it DOES NOT NVOLVE ME IN ANY WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM, and they're getting stressed" because they won't have as much time to spend in the city as they would like. And they have to CALL me to TELL me about it!!! I mean, what the fuckin' FUCK??? "Gosh, geez, heck, i'm REALLY SORRY you guys didn't decide to get motivated earlier, what would you like me to do? Perhaps i can look around the room for Dr. Doom's time platform, and send you back a few hours so you have more time to goof off in Boston? Or maybe i could pull a couple of transporter tubes OUT OF MY FUCKING ASS, would that be better? Or, hmm, perhaps i could run down to the local library, and check out a few books like How To Build Your Idiot Bandmates Their Own Personal Jetpacks Using Nothing But Duct Tape And Borisites 45s??? In the immortal words of the Bard, EXCUSE ME, BUT YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY MISTAKEN ME FOR SOMEONE WHO GIVES A FUCK. I do not care if you go into Boston for two hours, two minutes, two seconds, or not all. You guys can sit in your room and watch Leslie Nielsen movies and jerk each other off all afternoon for all i care!!! GOODBYE!!!" I am absolutely furious at this point. I mean, my god, i'm supposed to plan their DAY for them? I realize that, being the singer, i have all the brains, and all the looks, and, for that matter, virtually all the cock, but, still, THIS...this is absurd! I'm so pissed i can barely talk! In the interim, She Whom gets this brilliant idea that the guys can take the van to her parents' house, which is only a 20 minute T ride to Central Square, blah blah blah, so she gets on the phone with them and they all start plotting out this ludicrously convoluted new plan of attack. I realize that, while all this scheming is going on, i am not going to get any talking in, so i decide to take five seconds to think about their dilemma. I grab the phone from my girlfriend, and tell Ron that i'll just meet them with the van at the club at six, that way they just have to take the T one way, and will have almost four hours to do whatever it is they were going to do in lieu of watching Leslie Nielsen movies and jerking each other off all afternoon. This makes everybody happy. Especially me, because after i am done thinking for them, they go away, and She Whom and i get to spend the rest of the afternoon watching Leslie Nielsen movies and jerking each other off. Of course, all this merriment comes with a pricetag: After load-in, i get to meet, greet and dine with my girlfriend's parents for the first time. I suspect the fact that she was born during the second semester of my sophomore year of high school has not been lost on them. In any event, i decide to dress for success, donning the $8.25 pair of lavender Hush Puppies(tm) i bought at EconoPimp(tm) in Baltimore earlier in the week. Whilst walking from the parking ramp back to the club, a passerby of an ethnicity other than my own with a doo rag on his head (i believe the doo rag in question was Bob Log III) glances down at my spiffy lavender Hush Puppies(tm), looks up at me, looks down at my shoes again, looks back up at me, and growls "get fucked." Ah, Boston! You gotta love Boston (well, i gotta love Boston, or i'll get the rolling pin), America's Biggest Little College Town With Neurotic Delusions Of Being America's Biggest Little Working Class Town. I mean, i can think of no other city i've been to where the inhabitants are so psychotically hung-up on their own alleged working class-ness; the whole town seems to exist with one eye furtively peeping over its collective shoulder, perpetually on the alert for Daddy driving up in the Beemer and asking them and their friends if they want a ride, thusly bringing the whole facade down in flames (case in point, the phrase "working class" is gratuitously bandied about in the liner notes of both those new Real Kids CDs on Norton [the green one is pretty superfluous, but the orange one, mama mia!]; now, i dunno about you, but during the three years i spent as a dues-payin' member of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 310, i never ONCE found a Union Bro' who showed any type of interest in Real Kids-esque poppy-punky-rock-'n'roll sung in a hoarse whisper whatsoever. Actually, the only song i remember anybody i worked with liking was that "why buy the cow when you're getting the milk for free" song by Short Stuff. I don't even think they liked Bruce Springsteen). My personal litmus test for working classness is this: If the number of Starbuckses in the city is equal to or less than zero, it is "working class." If the number is greater than zero, it isn't. DO THE MATH, BOSTON, DO THE MATH (actually, now that i think about it, i was in Cambridge, not Boston — which means my smarting off has been in vain. Sorry, Boston! I'm sure you're all stinky he-men, i apologize for the slight). Regardless, the meeting, greeting, and eating goes off somewhat without a hitch, probably because i stifle all my good lines like "hey, if you really THINK about it, i've been giving oral sex LONGER THAN YOUR DAUGHTER'S BEEN ALIVE — and i'm not really any better at it than she is, so go figure!" I even eat my vegetables (on the odd occasion — maybe once a decade — where i am forced due to circumstances beyond my control to consume plant matter, i always do like Bob Stinson used to tell the Replacements

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van driver to do when they were stuck in traffic: "Close your eyes and floor it"). Then i go dress up like a gigantic green M&M and jump around in front of a bunch of drunks. Yep, your baby girl's landed quite a catch! Chelsea are playing next door, so my Official Comedy Joke of the evening is "What did Elvis Costello say when i asked him if he wanted to go check out the show next door? 'I DON'T WANT TO GO TO CHELSEA!'" ("oh, but Elvis, we've got much better service over here at TT's!" "Bah," says Elvis, "I've seen yer service") (ow! blame that one on Cain!) Later, i sleep with the promoter. Thursday night equals two shows at the Continental in NYC; the first being a "normal" (har) show, the second being a slot in a bazillion-band Ramones tribute show. Owing to the sheer magnitude of bands on the bill that night, everyone will be using the same equipment all night, so, being the paranoid midwesterners we are, we decide to drop all our gear off at the New Jersey Motel 6 we're staying at, before heading back to New York. Unbeknownst to us, at some point in time between Boston and New York, our tape deck clock reset to 12:00 without so much as a by-your-leave, giving us the impression that we were going to be sailing thru NYC around 2:30 PM, thusly avoiding rush hour and the related niceties that type of thing engenders — never actually realizing that we were actually entering New York at 4:30 PM until we noticed that we had become the rock'n'roll caboose on about thirty miles worth of traffic moving at approximately 0 mph and someone thought to check their wristwatch. This began a rather hellish van episode which featured me driving over highway medians to get out of deadlocked traffic, us winding up taking a seven-dollar bridge into Staten Island (?!) just because no one else was going that way, and Erik#1 spending half an hour with his genitals in a Wendy's cup, attempting fruitlessly to make wee-wee. Just to keep up band morale (because, hell, it is now Thursday, no longer I KILL YOU FUCKERS day, and i love my bandmates again), as we inch past signs for places like "Gunhill Road" and "White Plains," i quiz the fellers on what Top 40 hits were recorded by said acts ("Back When My Hair Was Short" and "My Baby Loves Love," respectively). This actually does not work particularly well; apparently no one really gives a fuck about Tony Burrows when their bladder is teetering on the exploding-like-Mike-Holmgren's-angry-head tip. Suddenly, there is an overpowering blast of eye-watering chemical noxiousness, as if God had suddenly dumped a thousand gallons of nail polish remover into the front seat. People are screaming, babies are crying, we're all freaking out in a blind panic, trying to figure out what has happened to our van to cause such a smell, people are yelling and throwing stuff around frantically, trying to find the source, i'm screaming shit about the dashboard gauges, Paul #1 is yelling about ether, Ron and Erik #1 are tearing up the back of the van, trying to find out what exploded, or melted, or whatever the fuck — it's absolute pandemonium for like two straight minutes, four blind, choking guys flailing around desperately for the source of their torment. Suddenly, through tear-streaked eyes, i realize the problem. "At ease, men" i choke, "There's nothing wrong with the van. The noxious fumes are nothing we need concern ourselves with. Look there." I point to a huge sign that says "WELCOME TO NEW JERSEY." That actually wouldn't be that funny, except it really happened — which is why New Jersey is so great: All the jokes you hear about it are absolutely true. In any event, we get to the motel, unload our shit, turn around, burn rubber (not that the smell could be noticed in New Jersey and all) back to NYC, get lost coming out of the tunnel as we always do (i know quite well how to LEAVE New York, but, for some unknown reason, when it comes time to do it in reverse and go IN to Manhattan, i always wind up lost, doing Cheerios in front of the World Trade Center). We make it to the club, everything is peachy, and i decide i wanna go next door to St. Mark's Pizza and get something to eat. En route, i run into the guy from Dumpster Diving fanzine, so we talk for a while. I tell him i'm really hungry, and just wanna get a slice o' pizza before we play. I am about twenty feet from where i need to be. I inch closer. I don't wanna be rude, but i'm fucking hungry. I have almost slithered free, when up walks infamous NYC scenemaker Johnny Stiff, whom i have never actually met in person. We get introduced. Everyone i have ever talked to says he's an asshole, but i have always liked him because in, like, 1984, he called me up when i was still living at my dad's house, and said he could get my band, Suburban Mutilation (hardcore, dude!), a gig at CBGB's, and get us a cool $200 t'boot. Which i loved. Of course, it later came to light that we could have just called up the club, booked the show ourselves and got $250, and that Johnny Stiff was simply calling every hardcore band in existence, offering them a show that they could've booked themselves, and skimming fifty bucks off the top (well, that's what Weasel told me), but so what? We never played further away from home than Madison,Wisconsin anyhow — i was just fucking tickled that somebody actually CARED enough to offer me us a show at CBGB's. So WHAT if he was gonna clip us for fifty bucks? We weren't gonna play the show anyway! It's the thought that counts, and i've held a soft spot in my heart for Johnny Stiff ever since. Anyway, now both he and Dumpster Dive John are talking to me. I'm slithering slowly towards the pizza joint...twenty feet away...nineteen feet...eighteen...waitaminnit. What the fuck is he saying? Johnny Stiff starts talking about how he was trying to find out where Tim Yohannan was buried, so he could get a shot of Agnostic Front pissing on his grave for their next album cover. Suddenly, i am not particularly hungry. I am pissed. REALLY pissed. I don't even know why. Johnny Stiff keeps going, punctuating every sentence with machine-gun laughter. "PISSING ON TIM YOHANNAN'S GRAVE!!! HAHAHAHAHAHAH!!! HIS GRAVE!!! HAHAHAHAHAHAH!!!" I am suddenly, quietly furious. IT'S NOT THAT FUCKING FUNNY. "We wanted to piss on his grave, but he's buried in a POTTER'S FIELD!!! HAHAHAHAHAH!!! A POTTER'S FIELD!!! HAHAHAHAHAHAH!" "Potter's Field?" Wasn't that the Earth-2 version of the It's A Wonderful Life town after Lionel Barrymore got the superpowers??? I don't even know what the fuck he's talking about, and i'm STILL pissed!!! I mean, as i remember it, the whole root of the Tim Yo/Agnostic Front schism happened about 15 years ago, when, as i dimly recall (please forgive me if i get a few details wrong, i got Alzheimer's and shit), skinheads started moving into the Puerto Rican neighborhoods around CBGB's, and, of course, there was all manner of hoo-hah and strife and such (with the skin POV being "so what if we're white, nobody likes us anyway, leave us the fuck alone" and the opposing view being that the Puerto Ricans were justified in defending their turf, 'cause first the marginalized honkeys move in, then the college students, and pretty soon it's all yuppies and Starbuckses and PFFT! There goes the working class cred. If you actually look at that area today, i think it's all condos and such, so i guess somebody knew what they were talking about, although i'm not sure who), and, you know how Maximum operates — "well, we live 3000 miles away from what's going on, but, by golly, we're gonna stick our noses in it anyway" — so, pretty soon, there was a lot of flak being bandied back'n'forth between the coasts. Tim, being a born muckraker (now there's an understatement!), tried to get Agnostic Front (who were deemed, for whatever reason, as the "voice" of the NYC skinhead community, although this deeming was actually against their will) to do an in-person or phone interview, to "set the record straight," blah blah blah, but AF only eventually consented to do an interview through the mail, which Tim hated because he could-

n't ask any follow-up questions. SO, IN A NUTSHELL, the reason why Tim Yohannan hated Agnostic Front and Agnostic Front hated Tim Yohannan and wanted to take an album cover picture pissing on his grave was because THEY WOULD ONLY CONSENT TO DO A MAIL INTERVIEW WITH MRR. I mean, FOR CHRIST'S SAKES, IT WAS FIFTEEN YEARS AGO!!! WHO the FUCKING FUCK even CARES anymore??? Who even REMEMBERS why they were pissed at each other??? Jesus, LET IT FUCKING GO ALREADY!!! Johnny Stiff keeps laughing. I keep being pissed, yet can't quite put my finger on what is actually really angering me off about the situation. After all, it's not like Tim would think his earthly remains were sacred or anything, and would bum out at the sight of them being disrespected — he'd just think of them as some sort of useless mess of carbon atoms and nitrates. Fertilizer. No different than cow manure. Yet, why am i still so steamed at the thought of Agnostic Front going tinkle on Tim's grave? One can't desecrate that which isn't sacred to begin with, what's the problem? Johnny Stiff keeps laughing, and, suddenly, i understand: It's the "Last Laugh" postulate. Tim was totally, TOTALLY into having the last laugh on people (nothing comes to mind. In point of fact, i could just be making this up). The only reason why the Ghost-O-Tim would be hella hacked off at AF making wee-wee on his grave would be because HE COULDN'T PISS BACK, which would torment him forever. And, since the dirty urological deed was never actually consummated by AF, everything is okay. I need not fume. No harm, no foul (and it's a damn good thing, too, because the last thing i want to see at 4:00 in the morning is some sort of four-foot-tall ghost with bad teeth and a luminescent flat-top hovering above my bed going "NNNNNNØØØØØØRRRBBBBBBBB!!! NNNNØØØØØØØR-RRRRRBBBBB!!! MAKE PEE-PEE ON AGNOSTIC FRONT!!! AVENNNNGE MEEEEE!!! AVENNNNGE MEEEEE!!!" I'd be like "NO! NO o ghost of Tim Yohannan!!! I don't even write for your stupid commie rag any more!!! Get Mykel Board to do it!!!" "MYYYKELLLL CANNNN'T PEEEEEE IN PUBLIIIICCCC!!! HEEEEE HAAAAAS AAA NERRRRRVOUS KIDDDDDNEEEEEEY!!! HELLLP MEEE, NØØØØRRRRBIEEEE-WAN-KENOOOOBI! YOOOUUU'RE MY OOOONLY HHHOPE!!!" ...anyway, i eventually calm down, and we talk about minor league baseball for a while, which i know nothing about, and i re-decide that Johnny Stiff is okay, simply because i respect anyone that laughs that much. Finally, after fifteen minutes of exertion, i break free of John and Johnny, and make a beeline for the pizza joint. I am six feet away from my holy grail, when Erik #1 walks up to me, and tells me that we're going to play in a couple minutes, so i shouldn't eat right now. Gah! We manage to play our regular set without me keeling over from hunger, and, in the interim between that and our Ramones set, i take a stroll down the block. I notice that Coney Island High — as you will recall from previous columns, a club that had a monthly rent of $12,000 — precisely 25% of what i paid for my HOUSE — has gone out of business. Gosh, i can't imagine why! Naturally, one would think that this would be the perfect time to rent the building and start my long-awaited goth club, Donuts Plus(tm) — but, alas, all my venture capital is currently tied up in my forthcoming big-budget Hollywood motion picture extravaganza, "Honey, I Shrunk Duane Peters." I return to the club, Ramones tribute show in full swing, where i and George Tabb get to introduce co-organizer Tim Stegall's band, the Napalm Stars. I keep saying "I love the smell of Napalm Stars in the morning," but nobody seems to think that's particularly amusing, so i try to lead the crowd in a singalong version of "Commotion in the Ocean" from the Dee Dee King album, but nobody's buyin' that, either. The Napalm Stars do a cool version of "Mama's Boy," which is surprising, considering what a shitty song it is. Furious George also did a great, be-wigged "Rock & Roll High School/Betty Crocker, Punk Rocker" interpolation, but that was pretty much it as far as highlights went. The Ramones tribute acts began heading sharply south thereafter — starting at merely humdrum, and quickly working their way to legitimately embarrassing in short order. First off, the whole "I Am A Cool New York Rock Dude In My Leather Pants, Black Hair Dye, And Sleeveless Black T-Shirt With A Jack Daniels, CBGB, Or Similar Motif" thing began to really put a yucky spin on things — i mean, when did anyone ever say it was all right to play Ramones songs at half-tempo and add totally hokey lead guitar licks??? Did George okay this??? I fucking doubt it! ...things got even worse when, after about five minutes of some band's singer blubbering about how important the Ramones were, his band proceeded to launch into a pointlessly pedestrian version of "I Wanna Be Sedated" with HIM READING THE LYRICS FROM A NOTEBOOK. And they were the WRONG LYRICS. Fer the luvva Pete, if the Ramones were ONE-TENTH as important as you just SAID they were, would that not be evinced by you actually having LEARNED THE LYRICS over the course of the LAST TWENTY YEARS OR SO??? Truly pathetic. Needless to say, by the time our fifteen minutes worth of fame rolled around, we had had it up to here with New York's feeble attempts at paying tribute to their favorite sons, so we staggered on stage in our color-coded "End Of The Century" t-shirts, informed the audience that while, yes, we had recorded an entire Ramones tribute album at one point in time, we had, however, recently been hit on the head with large blocks of cheese, and were not sure if we were playing the right songs, and then proceeded to play the entire Circle Jerks "Group Sex" album. AND THE CROWD GOES WILD!!! George even jumped up and did the "Uh-luh-luh-luh-LANK! Uh-luh-luh-luh-LANK!" thing in between "I Just Want Some Skank" and "Beverly Hills," just like in the Decline Of Western Civilization. It was stupendous, one of the greatest moments in the mega-annals of Borisdom. We capped things off with "Kill The Ramones." How could we not? The funny thing is that Joey Ramone watched the entire set. He musta been like "Uhhuhahah, Monty, when did we wrat THOSE sowngz?" (ya know how Joey Ramone looks like he's seven feet tall on stage? I got news for ya, he's actually more like nine feet tall. If Tim Yohannon ever told Joey Ramone his hair smelled terrific, it would be quite the scandal [i gave Joey the secret handshake. He told me, and i quote, "Youh a verra springy fellah." O, the honor!]). Friday night was New Jersey, which is, as i'm sure you know, Algonquin for "don't bother." We did have fun shaking up beers and spraying them hither and yon during Doc Hopper's cover of "Alcohol," though. Saturday night was at the Euclid Tavern in Cleveland, where they shot the rock scenes in that movie "Light Of Day" with Joan Jett and the perennially Elvis-less Canuck Michael J. Fox. I've never actually seen the movie. If they lit the stage the same way they did for us, i know what it looks like, though: Four shadows milling around under like two red lightbulbs. We got to play with the Beatnik Termites though, which is always great. Their new bass player, Heather, has, if nothing else, the biggest boobs of any bass player they've ever had. By far. Even bigger than that guy they had back in '95! Homeward bound on the Ohio Turnpike, beat and weary in the wee hours, i can't help but think i've forgotten something. It is not until i cross the Indiana state line until i see the same billboard i saw when we started the tour: "TOBACCO KILLS A TRUCKLOAD OF HOOSIERS EVERY DAY!!!" Once again, i have forgotten my big anti-Indiana pay-off joke to tell in Ohio. DAR! Now i'm gonna hafta sit on that joke for another two years! Too bad all the other 49 states don't abut New Jersey, i'd never run out of material.

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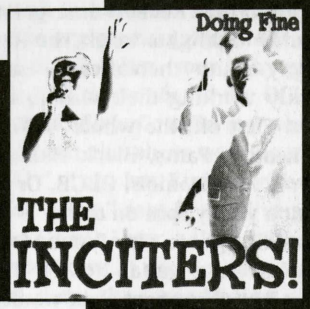

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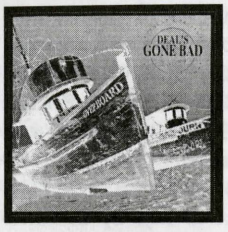

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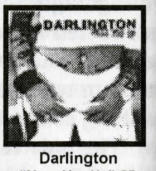

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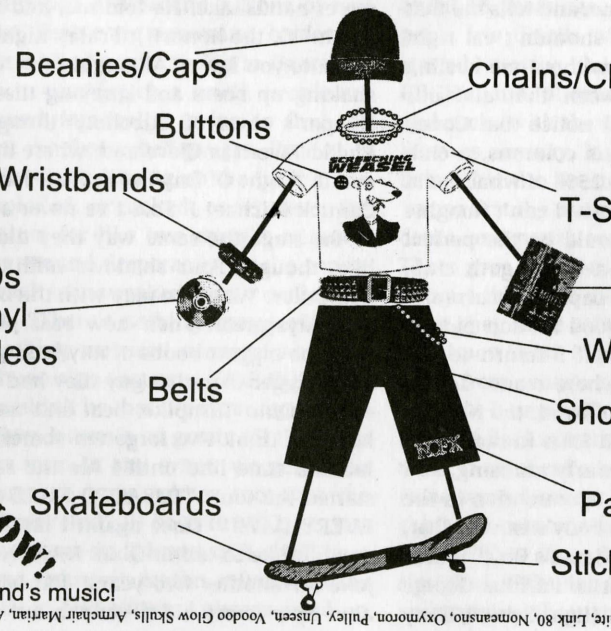

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COMPLETE CONTROL

mental manipulation by big brother? it's not as crazy as you think...

The bulk of the unclassified literature dealing with arcane yet "mind-boggling" topics such as thought reform, non-lethal weaponry, and mind control is of little scholarly or historical value. Most of it is breathtakingly superficial and sensationalistic, and a significant portion of it clearly falls into the category of paranoid conspiracy-mongering. Among the very rare exceptions are the studies of "Armen Victorian", a pseudonymous author with a Ph.D. in a scientific field and, apparently, firsthand experience working in certain government agencies with some degree of responsibility for developing and testing advanced weapons systems. Several of his articles have already been published in the "left Labour" British parapolitics magazine *Lobster*, one of the few non-secret publications dealing exclusively with intelligence matters that have real value. (Others include the high-quality British academic journal, *Intelligence and National Security*, and the right-leaning American journal, the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, which mainly features the research and analysis of former members of the U.S. intelligence community.) More recently, Dr. Victorian has published an entire book, *The Mind Controllers* (Frog, 1999), which is also exceedingly interesting and informative.

In the interests of bringing the results of Dr. Victorian's provocative research to a wider audience of readers who are not specialists in intelligence operations and covert politics, we are very pleased to be able to reprint some of his articles that previously appeared in *Lobster*, with the kind permission of both the author himself and the editor of *Lobster*, Robin Ramsay. Since I myself am not an expert on the technical aspects of mind control or on the capabilities of advanced weapons systems designed to modify or manipulate human behavior, I am not qualified to state that every bit of information presented in the articles below is accurate. I can say, however, that of all the materials I have examined on these convoluted and fascinating topics, Dr. Victorian's articles seem to me to be the best informed, most sober, and most thoroughly researched. Even if some of the details he has enumerated below turn out to be inadvertently distorted or incorrect-and I have no reason whatsoever to believe that they will-the overall value and reliability of his research can scarcely be doubted. And even though he has only shed light on certain eye-opening and important aspects of what is undoubtedly a much larger story, something that is perhaps inevitable given the current inaccessability of a much more substantial corpus of relevant and reliable data, the evidence he has painstakingly unearthed and evaluated certainly provides a great deal of food for thought, if not grist for nightmares.

Whenever I read about people who claim to have been "zapped" by sinister devices aimed at controlling their minds or otherwise harming them from afar, my first impulse is always to laugh and assume that they are suffering from delusional paranoia. 99.9% of the time, such a condescending impulse is undoubtedly warranted. However, the public might be legitimately concerned about the remaining .1% if weapons development programs similar to those described by Dr. Victorian are still being actively pursued. In a chaotic world full of unfriendly and belligerent nation-states, every major power is justified in pursuing such R&D programs in the interests of self-defense and the protection of its own citizenry. In unscrupulous hands, however, such devices may well end up being used in improper and undemocratic ways. Thus, in very rare instances, perhaps paranoids are indeed people who know all the facts.

-Jeff Bale

Note: Subscriptions to Lobster may be obtained by contacting Robin Ramsay at 214 Westbourne Avenue/Hull HU5 3JB/ENGLAND or at the following e-mail address:robin@lobster.karoo.uk

The military use of electromagnetic, microwave and mind control technology

by Armen Victorian

'Isn't it true that when those poor devils stop suffering it is through a loss of what you call psyche?' (1)

The psychotronics era

The former Soviet Union had a long history of programmes in energetics and psycho-energetics technology, known to the West as psychotronics. Until recently, the bulk of the initial work on the science underpinning this technology had been done in the West and smuggled to the Soviet Union. For decades the scientific community of the West ignored the work of people like Moray Abrams, Hieronymous, Tesla, De la Warr, Down and Reich, giving the Soviets at least 30 years head start to build and consolidate their position in psychotronic weaponry. When Brezhnev suggested at the 1978 SALT negotiations banning weapons 'more frightful than the mind of man has ever conceived', President Carter had no idea what he was suggesting.

Project Pandora

The U.S. government woke up to the reality of psychotronics when from 1960 to 1965 the American Embassy in Moscow was targeted by a mixture of electromagnetic and microwaves, causing a wide range of physical and mental illness among U.S. personel serving there, including the eventual death of the U.S. Ambassador. Dr Stephen Possony, one time Science Advisor to the Department of Defense, now retired, said to me:

> 'After the death of our ambassador in Moscow, due to contracting leukaemia, and a couple of other employees, it suddenly dawned on us to have a real careful look at what was happening there.'

A huge project got underway. Overall it became known as Project PANDORA, and it included a number of parallel projects, such as Projects TUMS, MUTS, and BAZAR, involving the CIA, Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA), the State Department, the Navy and the Army. They were tasked to study the effects of the emitted Soviet microwaves on animals and humans. The electromagnetic signals, which were subsequently named the 'Moscow Signals', each day targeted the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. These signals in the short 'S' and long 'L' spectrum had complex modulations with a pattern of variations, some of which were random. A Top Secret-Eyes Only memorandum from ARPA, dated 20 December 1966, shows the significance of this project.

> 'The White House has directed, through USIB [U.S. Intelligence Board] that intensive investigative research be conducted within the State Department, CIA and DoD to attempt to determine what the threat is. The national program has been coordinated by the State Department, under the code name "TUMS". ARPA is represented and is conducting research on a selective portion of the overall program concerned with one of the potential threats, that of the effects of low level electromagnetic

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radiation on man. This memorandum summarises the initial results obtained from this program called PANDORA.'

In April 1976 the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger sent the following telegram to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow which summarised the conclusions of the study of the Moscow signal.

Subject: Radiation and UHF and Electromagnetic Dangers

1. On April 6 AFSA president John Hemenway submitted the following report to AFSA's governing board:

2. Begin text:

'Beginning in 1960 the Soviet Union directed the high frequency beams of radiation at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow which were calculated not to pick up intelligence but cause physiological effects on personnel.

The effects the Soviets calculated to achieve in the personnel serving (at least as early as 1960) included (A) Malaise (B) Irritability, (C) Extreme fatigue. At this time the Soviets believed that the induced effects were temporary.

Subsequently, it has been verified that the effects are not temporary. Definitely tied to such radiation and the UHF/VHF electromagnetic waves are: (A) Cataracts, (B) Blood changes that induce heart attacks, (C) Malignancies, (D) Circulatory problems, and (E) Permanent deterioration of the nervous system.

In most cases the after-effects do not become evident until long after exposure - a decade or more.'

In 1974 V.P. Kaznacheyev demonstrated that death could be transmitted using ultraviolet rays, at a distance. (2) In the same year, Robert Pavlita, a Czech engineer, showed how he could kill insects at a distance by psychotronic devices. It has been reported by U.S. intelligence that Pavlita developed two psychotronic weapons — one effective at 320 kilometres, and the other effective at any distance, capable of inducing powerful and un-controllable emotions, seizure, paralysis or death. At that time Pavlita reportedly had thirty years experience of building psychotronic generators. (3) Anecdotal evidence of similar work continued to emerge in the West. 'An American biophysicist who participated in an exchange program at the University of Prague in 1979 told me not long ago, "Just prior to my arrival an East German graduate student was killed there while working on a project using a superconducting waveguide [a cryogenically-cooled device that aligns and aims radio waves with great precision]. What is surprising is what happened next. The Soviets had the entire wall of the physics lab ripped out and all the cryo equipment, wave guides, and other gear shipped to a castle near the Czech-USSR border." The biophysicist said, "I learned from other professors who helped with the project that after a few months Soviet scientists were able to kill goats at ranges beyond one kilometer and to cause disorientating or incapacitating effects depending on the aspect angle of the goats' heads at well over two kilometres."' (4)

The Soviet 'Woodpecker' signal

After the 'Moscow signals' the next Soviet activity which caused alarm in the United States was the so-called 'Woodpecker' signals, first detected in late 1975. These high frequency signals which could be picked up on domestic radios at 21 MHz, had a repetitive sound like 'tock, tock, tock' - hence the name 'Woodpecker'. (5) Their source was eventually tracked down to three stations in Riga, Latvia. The emitted signals could be 25-30 times as strong as the earth's natural background electromagnetic field, which is 7-7.5 Hz. The brain of mammals on earth are naturally entrained with the 7-7.5 Hz frequency. But 25% of mammalian brains could be affected by 10 Hz modulation of the Woodpecker signals. In turn these modulations could be adapted to carry any type of message which could be pumped directly into the brain.

The frequent changes in the characteristics of the transmitted pulse, as well as the frequency of the transmission, suggested to some that it was used for remote control or telemetry. However, intelligence gathered by the Defense Intelligence Agency showed that the 'Woodpecker' was the Soviet Union's first attempt to develop over-the-horizon-radar (OTHR). The first radar site was constructed in 1975. Shop tests were begun and were conducted for several years. It turned out that the electromagnetic signal was being attenuated while passing through the Polar Ionosphere. Of ten missiles launched, the radar could only guarantee detection of some. (6) 'Woodpecker' was the brainchild of F. Kuzminskiy, the chief designer, who later became the Director of NII (Scientific Research Institute). An internal power struggle between Kuzminskiy and Vladimir Ivanovich Markov, a Technical Science Advisor, brought the project to a halt. Despite apparently solving the system's problems, Kuzminskiy was unable to obtain the backing of the Soviet regime and his system was never completed. (7)

Although the DIA report on the 'Woodpecker' system makes repeated reference to Kuzminskiy's work as a 'weapons system,' it is now clear that the 'Woodpecker' was not deliberately designed to tamper with the brain. Yet upon its discovery it was presumed to be a means for 'controlling the world's weather, or creating physiological or psychological effects on people outside the USSR.' (8) Similar attributes are now being applied to the U.S. Department of Defense's HAARP program, under construction in Alaska, USA. (9)

The Department of Defense's programmes

Trying to play catch-up, the U.S. Army and Navy embarked on intensive research programmes in electromagnetics, microwaves, radio frequencies etc. Most of these programmes were, and remain, highly classified. Some sections which had not been initially classified were reclassified in the late 1970s. Wherever and whenever there were areas of interest in these programmes, the CIA stepped in and, by funding them, extended the research dimension and shared the results. Laws were introduced to curtail any enquiries made by the public, and university authorities were banned from questioning the members of their own academic fraternity engaged in such programmes. Educational values and ethics became irrelevant. A similar situation pertains on the campuses of some British universities. (10)

The results of some of the experimental programmes were shocking. (11) Various military and intelligence establishments did have suspicions about the possible harmful effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation and microwaves on humans. The Defense Intelligence Agency, the CIA and the Army had been monitoring the progress made by the former Soviet Union and its satellites for decades. Despite the intelligence reports on the harmful effects of Electromagnetic Frequency (EMF) and microwaves, they decided to try to establish the facts themselves. The PANDORA programme was in effect a stepping-stone. Extensive testing was conducted in the Army, Navy, Air Force and CIA, either through contractors or in their own laboratories. Contractors provided them with non-volunteer human test-beds. Several military contracts involved working in highly dangerous environments. Some still

do. At times, their employers were aware of this, and yet allowed it to continue. There were two main reasons: (a) to comply with the terms of the lucrative contracts; (b) to gather data about the effects of irradiation on humans. Years later a flood of court cases brought by unwitting victims once more raised the serious question: does the end justify the means? After all, those responsible in several cases were indeed aware of the harmful effects of EMF, and yet they had deliberately concealed the facts from their victims or employees. Several lives were lost, yet no liability has ever been admitted by the establishments or their contractors. The situation remains the same today. (12)

U.S. military interest in electromagnetics is now well-established. The Tri-Service Electromagnetic Advisory Panel (TERP), represents the interests of all three military services in the U.S. (13) TERP's Memorandum of Understanding of 1990 states :

'PURPOSE: This Tri-Service Panel is re-established and re-chartered to ensure a visible, effective co-ordination of efforts by the military departments, each possessing common and service unique requirements to conduct research and development on the biological effects of non-ionizing Electromagentic Radiation (EMR) on man.

'OBJECTIVE: a Identify and periodically review those medical research and developments regarding biological effects of non-ionizing EMR which are common to the three military departments and those requirements which are mission specific to a single department.

b. Identify medical research and development objectives which are responsible to the needs of the military operating forces, systems developers, and the military scientific and technical community.

c. Coordinate utilisation of facilities, material, personnel and funds to accomplish the required research and development in a timely and effective manner.

d. Develop procedures for continuing interservice exchange of information on all aspects of ongoing research and develpoment on the effects of non-ionising EMR on man.

e. Develop procedures for the coordination of research and development in this area by the three military departments with other agencies.'

TERP consists of three full-time military or civilian employees who are selected by the Army, Navy, the Air Force and the Marine Corps. The panel regularly calls in distinguished members of the scientific community for further advice and progress. TERP serves as an advisory body to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and other offices within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (OASD). TERP does not limit its research to within the military and has an active interest in national research.

TERP's research covered a wide area in 1990. For example, the Army's interest in the bioeffects of non-nuclear electromagentic pulses led to study and research in areas such as:

* human dosimetry and bioeffects of high peak pulsed electromagnetic fields,
* the development of an occupational and environmental non-nuclear electromagnetic injury data base.

To achieve these it is vital to learn the effects such fields have on humans. Already a number of civilians have been the target of covert experiments in this field, both in Europe and the U.S., but they have failed to identify the source of their mistreatment. Their efforts to obtain support from their politicians or from various international victim support organizations, such as Amnesty International and the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, have produced no results. (14)

The U.S. Air Force has been conducting research into:

* Ocular injury by exposure to millimetere wave system
* Bioeffects of High Power Microwave in low microwave regions (S band)

The 'Minutes of the Tri-service Electromagnetic Radiation Advisory Panel (TERP)', held in the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine, in Brooks Air Force Base, Texas, on 27/28 October, 1987, show the significance attached to behavioural control. On page 2 we find this:
'The Radio Frequency Radiation (RFR) behavioural pro-gram at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) is considered high priority.'

The use of High Power Microwave (HMP), developed at Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore or Sandia laboratories by each of the military services seems to be commonplace. A letter dated 18 March 1986, concerning the TERP meeting of February 10-13 1986 noted that, 'The Army will take deliver of a 2.5 GHz system developed by Sandia on 3 March 1986.' The same letter noted that 'The biological studies will emphasize the eye, heart and behaviour.' The Department of Defense keeps track of medical research in this field. Minutes from TERP's 1 May 1989 meetings recommends that 'any medical surveillance criteria' on the 'vulnerability, survivability and Effects of Electro-magnetic Beams' would play a crucial role in the outcome of research. (15)

The U.S. Navy seems the most interested of the services. The list of progammes released by the Office of the Chief of Naval Research (OCNR) (16) on the biological effects of electromagnetic waves is monumental. The index alone in April 1989 was in *five volumes*. (17) These programmes vary from the use of body current to assess absorption rates of Very Low Frequency (VLF) and High Frequency (HF) transmissions, biological effects of magnetic fields, the development of effective electromagnetic field surveillance, and the effects of EM on genes and DNA - to topics akin to science fiction, such as Electroportation (a synonym for teleportation). (18) The scope and results of these studies, while scientifically invaluable, could have far-reaching and frightening implications if they are further modified to be used offensively.

By taking advantage of the Electromagentic Field (EMF) technology, various intelligence agencies have developed enormous capabilities. The NSA has shown great interest in devel-oping technology to remotely monitor the evoked potential from EEG. Should such techology be developed, and the EEG of the targeted individual decoded, it would enable the agency to not only study the thought processes of the targetted individual, but might be able to influence the thinking patterns of the decision-making processes of such targets. Already preliminary progress has been made. Seeking to help strike victims who have lost their speech powers, Dr. Donald York, a neurophysiologist, and Dr. Thomas Jensen, a speech pathologist from the University of Missouri, have been able to identity and decode 27 words and syllables in specific brain wave patterns. They have been able to correlate these EEG patterns with both spoken words and the silent thought words in 40 subjects. They produced a computer programme with the brain wave vocabulary. (19)

At the height of the Remote Viewing programmes, several intelligence organisations with the U.S., such as the CIA, the Army and the DIA, embarked on intensive study of the EEG of their remote viewers. The idea was to try to ascertain how information is obtained by the viewers, and whether, by reversing the process, information given to the viewer could be passed on to influence the target. Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) conducted extensive research programmes in this area. 'Modern electromagentic scattering theory raises the prospect that ultrashort pulse scattering through the human brain can

result in reflected signals that can be used to construct a reliable estimate of the degree of central nervous system arousal. The concept behind this "remote EEG" is to scatter off of action potentials or ensembles of action potentials in major nervous system tracts. Assuming we will understand how our skills are imprinted and recalled, it might be possible to take this concept one step further and duplicate the experience set in another individual. The prospect of providing a "Been there-done that" knowledge base could provide a revol-utionary change in our approach to specialized training. The impact of success would boggle the mind.' (20)

In recent years a number of mind control programmes have been developed to be incorporated into the non-lethal weapons concept. Among the candidates for such a role are Infrasound weapons, which incorporate a Very Low Frequency (VLF) or Radio Frequency (RF) modulation to cause nausea, abdominal spasm and vomiting. A confidential report prepared by the U.S. Army Mobility Equipment Research and Development Center, Fort Believer, Virginia, as early as 1969, detailed the effect an infrasonic system would have on humans. These effects range from disruption of nervous systems to death. (21) Records show that Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1994 conducted a research and development programme with the support of the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC) on the design and performance of microwave weapons. (22) Some of these weapons might have been previously used by U.S agencies and departments covertly in the U.S. and U.K.. Furthermore, in a recent letter from the U.S. Department of Defense, in response to one of my Freedom of Information Act requests, pending since 1994, for acoustic generators (anti-personnel, anti-materiel) high-power microwave generators, neural inhibitors, and wireless stun technology, I was informed that the information I sought is now in the purview of the previously unknown Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate. (23)

At a classified conference organised by the Los Alamos National Laboratory, with the support of the American Defense Preparedness Association on November 16 and 17 1993, the following speakers presented papers on different topics of mind control, as part of the new, non-lethal weapons concept:

* Dr. George Baker (Defense Nuclear Agency — now Defense Special Weapons Agency, DSWA): 'Radio Frequency Weapons — a very attractive non-lethal option'.
* Dr. John Derring (Scientific Applications Research Associate — SARA): 'Acoustic Technology'.
* Dr. Clay Easterly (Oak Ridge National Laboratory): 'Application of ELF Fields to non-lethal weapons'.
* Ms Astrid Lewis (U.S. Army Chemical Research and Development Command): 'Chemical/Biological Anti-Terrorism'.

In the U.K.

The United Kingdom, too, has played a role in the study of microwaves in relation to defence matters. Professor E.H. Grant and Dr. R. J. Sheppard from Queen Elizabeth College have been working in this field. Grant has done an enormous amount of work commissioned by the U.S. Air Force, as has Sheppard for the Navy. Grant has delivered several lectures as the principal scientist at the NATO Advanced Research Group. (24) During 1983-4 Sheppard was working with the U.S. Air Force, Torry Research Station and GEC Ltd. (25) My inquiries to GCHQ about their current programmes concerning the use of pulsed microwaves in defence matters was answered after a long delay by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who informed me that such programmes have been granted to various universities and that GCHQ does not conduct any independent research into these matters. (26)

'Zapping' peace campaigners at Greenham Common

At the height of the deployment of Cruise Missiles in the American bases in the U.K., women peace campaigners staged a series of peaceful protests outside the American bases. In late 1985 the women living in the peace camps at Greenham Common began to experience unusual patterns of illness, ranging from severe headaches, drowsiness, menstrual bleeding at abnormal times, or after the onset of menopause, to bouts of temporary paralysis and faulty speech coordination. There were also two late - at five months - spontaneous abortions, Suspicious of the possible use of electromagnetic biological weapons, they looked for help. *Electronics Today* magazine carried out a number of measurements and in December 1985 published their report, which concluded: 'Readings taken with a wide range of signal strength meters showed marked increases in the background signal level near one of the women's camps at a time when they claimed to be experiencing ill effects.' They noted that if the women created noise or a disturbance near the fence, the signals rose sharply.

In 'Peace Women fear electronic zapping at base' in the *Guardian*, 10 March 1986 Gareth Parry reported that, 'The American military [at Greenham Common] have an intruder detection system called BISS, Base Installation Security System, which operates on a sufficiently high frequency to bounce radar waves off a human body moving in the vicinity of a perimeter fence.' In a Hearing before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, on Military Construction Appropriations for 1985, General Schneidel made an indiscreet reference to the possibility of the use of microwave technology at Greenham Common.

> 'The concept of our operations is to protect the highest value resources on the base...We have a set concept that provides for security while in garrison and certainly in wartime, when it deploys off the installation and into the operational mode.... Whatever the case may be, where *the system is not full up* with all the required sensors, fences and lights, people will be assigned to *compensate for* those shortfalls in the equipment.' (emphasis added)

After the deployment of the microwave security system, the number of U.S. personnel guarding the installation fell dramatically. The deployment of this security measure was further indirectly confirmed through the year-end Report of the Department of the Air Force Headquarters 501st Security Police Group: 'The Greenham Common bylaws went into effect, the *superfence* was constructed....' (emphasis added)

It is not clear whether the Greenham women were targeted by a microwave *weapon* or were irratiated by prolonged proximity to a microwave security fence. But since the US authorities at Greenham did not alert the protesters to the dangers of such a fence, it comes to much the same thing. The effects of non-ionizing radiation on humans were well-known to the U.S authorities. (27)

The late Kim Besly, a veteran peace campaigner and frequent visitor to Greenham Common, in the conclusion of her report on electromagnetic radiation, written on 30 October 1986, asked, 'Do we have to wait three generations for "hard evidence"?' (28) Liz Westmoreland from Peace and Emergency told me recently that several women peace campaigners from Greenham Common are suffering from various types of cancer. (29) Is it possible that the U.S. passed lessons learned from a

Cold War adversary on to the citizens of one of her closest allies?

Silent Sound - Voices in the Brain

For many hears the technology of altering and or influencing the human mind with the help of new electronic techology, has been the subject of several projects and programmes by military and intelligence organisations in the west, especially the U.S.. Here are some examples.

The Psycho-Acoustic Projector

'Broadly this disclosure is directed to a system for producing aural psychological disturbances and partial deafness of the enemy during combat situations. Essentially, a high directional beam is radiated ffom a plurality of distinct transducers and is modulated by a noise, code or speech beat signal. The invention may utilise various forms and may include movable radiators mounted on a vehicle, or means employed to modulate the acoustical beam with respect to a fixed frequency.' (30)

The idea of this weapon is to provide intense aural and psychological disturbance in the target, thereby immobiising him.

Methods and System for Altering Consciousness

The Department of Defense through various projects and programmes has already acquired this technology. The abstract from one such programme states: 'A system for altering the states of human consciousness involves the simultaneous application of multiple stimuli, preferably sounds, having different frequencies and wave forms.' (31) From another: 'Researchers have devised a variety of systems for stimulating the brain to exhibit specific brain wave rythms and thereby alter the state of consciousness of the individual subject.' (32)

Silent Subliminal Messsages

Dr. Oliver M. Lowry has done several classified projects for the U.S. Government on what is termed in the military and intelligence world Silent Sound Spread Spectrum (SSSS), sometimes called SQUAD. The system was deployed against Iraq.

'According to statements made by captured and deserting Iraqi soldiers, however, the most devastating and demoralizing programming was the first known military use of the new, high-tech, type of subliminal messages referred to as ultra-high-frequency "Silent Sounds" or "Silent Subliminals". Although completely silent to the human ear, the negative voice messages placed on the tapes alongside the audible programming by PsyOps psychologists were clearly preceived by subconscious minds of the Iraqi soldiers and the silent messages completely demoralized them and instilled a perpetual feeling of fear and hopelessness in their minds.' (33)

Oliver Lowry provides a more technical description of this system from his patent: 'A silent communications system in which non-aural carriers, in the very low or very high audio frequency range or in the adjacent ultrasonic frequency spectrum, are amplified or frequency modulated with the desired intelligence and propagated acoustically or vibrationally, for inducement into the brain. The modulated carriers may be transmitted directly in real time or may be conviently recorded and stored on mechan-



ical, magnetic or optical media for delayed or repeated transmission to the listener.' (34)

Sound could also be induced in someone's head by radiating the head with microwaves in the range of 100 to 10,000 Mhz, that are modulated with a particular waveform. The waveform consists of frequency modulated bursts. Each burst is made up of ten to twenty uninformly spaced pulses grouped tightly together. The burst width is between 500 nanoseconds and 100 microseconds. The pulse width is in the range of 10 nanoseconds to one microsecond. The bursts are frequently modulated by the audio input to create the sensation of hearing in the person whose head is irradiated.

Cloning EEG

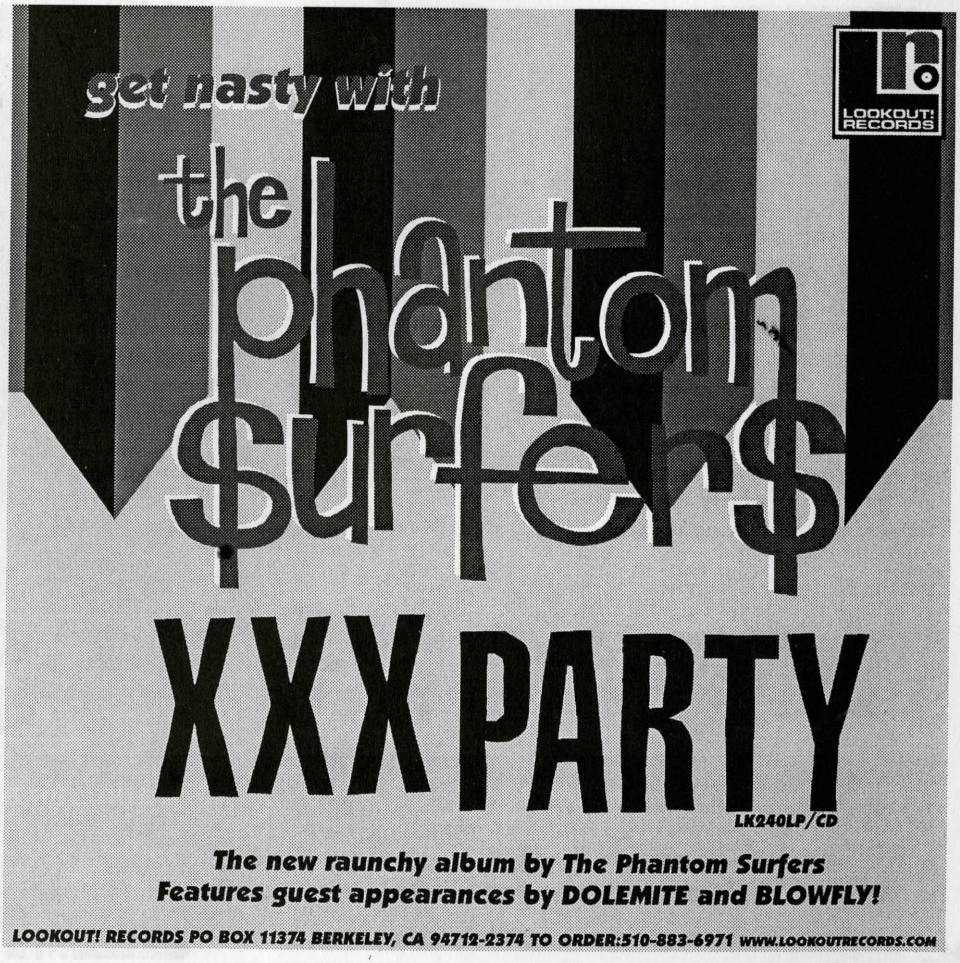
The latest development in the technology of fear and mind control is the cloning of human EEG for the purpose of controlling the mind of any targeted victim or groups. With the use of powerful computers, segments of human emotions, which include anger, anguish, anxiety, contempt, despair, dread, embarassment, envy, fear, frustration, grief, guilt, hate, indifference, indignation, jealousy, pity, rage, regret, remose, resentment, sadness, shame, spite and terror, have been identified and isolated from the EEG, as 'emotion signature clusters'. Their relevant frequencies and amplitudes have been measured, then the very frequency/amplitude cluster is synthesised and stored on another computer, each one of these negative emotions properly and separately tagged. 'They are then placed on the Silent Sound carrier frequencies and will silently trigger the occurence of the same basic emotion in another human being.' (35)

Many victims of mind control, claiming to hear voices in their heads, are dismissed as needing psychiatic help. But evidence in hand suggests that the technology to produce 'voices in the head' exists. What I have described here is surely but a fraction of what the military have developed or are developing. It is up to us, each intelligent individual, to wake up and acknowledge the facts. The age of the true 'Manchurian Candidate' is already here.

I thank Judy Wall of Resonance *for her support and some pertinent material which is included in this essay.*

Notes:

1. Dr. Walter Freeman, the first person to practice frontal lobe lobotomy to alter minds. He conducted over 3,500 lobotomies. Lobotomy is still very much in use to today, in Scotland and Sweden in particular.
2. V.P. Kaznacheyev et al, 'Apparent Information Transfer Between Two Groups of Cells', *Psychoenergetic System*, Vol. 1, December 1974, and 'Distant Intercellular Interactions in a System of Two Tissue Cultures', *Psychoenergetic System*, Vol. 1 no. 3, March 1976.
John Alexander, the founding father of the non-lethal weapon concept, also has a keen interest in this subject. Several of his on the record conversations with various American researchers, examining the possibilities of inducing illness from a distance, are in my archives.
3. Defense Intelligence Agency Report DST-180S-387-75, 'Soviet and Czechoslovakian Parapsychology Research,' 1988.
4. *The Atlantic* , Vol. 259, March 1987 p. 24.
5. The 'Woodpecker' signals started operating at the start of the eleven year solar cycle, when sunspot activities, which interfere with commerical radio systems, are at their peak. Whether it was an attempt by the Soviets to hide the 'Woodpecker' with the solar activity, or the solar activity playing the role as catalyst in increasing the effects of Woodpecker, is unknown.
6. Defense Intelligence Agency JPRS Report, Soviet Union; Military Affairs, 3 May 1991.
7. DIA Report (see note 6)
8. F.C. Judd, 'The Russian Woodpecker: Has it become an extinct species?' in *Short Wave Magazine* March 1991
9. Oddly enough, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories (LLNL) also has a highly classified programme called 'Woodpecker', though LLNL's programme seems more in tune with their efforts in the development of non-lethal weapons, some of which do effect the human mind. (Various corres-pondence with Lawrence Livermore.)
10. For more details on the activities of the British military in universities, see *The Campus Connection — Military Research on Campus* by Rob Evans, Nicola Butler and Eddie Gonsalves, Student CND, London 1991.
11. The Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory in Pensacola, Florida, in the course of their tests carried out in Project SANGUINE, in Clam Lake, discovered that exposure to the magnetic field component in the SANGUINE antenna - within ELF field of 45 to 74 Hz. - produced stress identical to gross alcohol consumption. Records released by the U.S. Navy on Project SANGUINE to the author. See also Robert Becker, *Cross Currents*, Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc., Los Angeles, USA, 1990, p. 202.
12. See my 'The Killing of Robert Strom', in *Open Eye* no. 3, 1995. The Strom story was covered by CBS News' 'Sixty Minutes', 'Strom vs Boeing', produced by David Aummel, 5 March 1989.
13. When the TERP was established, the respective memorandum, dated 21 July 1980, was signed by military representatives including Major General John W. Ord, USAF, MC, Commander, Aerospace Medical Division of Air Force Systems Command; Brigadier General Garrison Rapmund, MC, Comm-ander, U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command; and Cap-tain John D. Bloom, MC, USN, Commanding Officer, Naval Medical Research and Development Command.
14. I have corresponded with the Home Office, Amnesty International and the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture without positive results. My archives contain several files from individuals of high intellect, who have been, and in some cases still are, subjected to daily torture by electromagnetic means. To date no organisaton has admitted responsibility for this, nor has their plight been listened to by any victim support organisation.
15. Meeting Report of TERP, 1 May 1989, p. 2
16. Letter to author from Lois Welch, Office of the Chief of Naval Research, 13 February 1991.
17. *Biological Effects of Nonionizing Electromagnetic Radiation*, Vol. XII, numbers 1 to 5, December 1988; Office of the Chief of Naval Research, Arlington, Virginia, published April 1989.
18. Example of one sci-fi type project is Project Code 441k708-04. 'Electroportation: Theory of Basic Mechanisms - Progress: the quantitive theory successfully describes reversible electrical breakdown of a bilayer membrane due to large electrical pulse and passive charging with the retention of the charge due to small pulse.'
'The scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, a centre of nuclear research, talk about such things as brain bombs - being able to take energy of a nuclear weapon and focus it into a selection portion of the lower end of the electromagnetic spectrum, and being able to use that energy to affect the enemy's brain. The idea would be to have enemy soldiers drop in their tracks.' *The Atlantic*, Vol. 259, March 1987
19. Personal correspondence with the author, 1994.
20. 'Biological Process Control', in *New World Vistas — Air and Space Power for the 21st Century*, U.S. Air Force, 1996, p. 90
21. 'An Infrasonic System', U.S. Army Mobility Equipment Research and Development Center, Fort Believer, VA, 1969. See section on 'Effects-Human'.
22. LA-CP-94-0061, Microwave Weapon Design and Performance Envelope, work supported by the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC), Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey.
LA-UR-83-150, 'Microwave Related Efforts at the Los Alamos National Laboratory', submitted to: High Power Microwave Technology Conference, Harry Diamond Laboratory, Aldephi, Maryland, 1-3 March, 1983.
23. Letter of 2 October 1997 from William A. Longwell, Acting Counsel, Marine Systems Command to author, concerning a request filed in 1994. See also 'Pentagon to set priorities in non-lethal Technologies' in *Inside the Air Force: an exclusive weekly report on Air Force progams, procurement and policy-making*, Vol. 5 no. 15, April 1994.
24. Grant was the principal scientific witness for Mercury Comunications Ltd in their successful appeal under the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act against the refusal by Manchester City Council to allow the installation of a microwave tower on the grounds that it would be a health hazard.
25. Queen Elizabeth College Annual Report, 1983-4, p. 31
26. Letter from FCO to author, 1993
27. Eldon Byrd, a scientist for the Naval Surface Weapon Centre, USN, in one of his lectures in 1986 on the effects of microwaves stated:
'We can alter the behaviour of tissues, cells, organs and whole organisms.... you can cause up to six times higher foetus mortality and birth defects in laboratory animals, and these fields are so weak you can hardly detect them...You can do genetic engineering with ELF [extremely low frequency] weak magnetic fields without micro-surgical techniques that are currently employed to do genetic engineering. It is known how to induce malignant diseases in human cells and how to cure them. You can entrain human beings' brain waves across a room with a very weak magnetic field.' Taped lectures in author's possession.
28. *Preliminary Report - Background information Microwave/Electromagnetic Pollution: a little known hazard*, October 1986, updated June 1988.
29. Besly died of cancer in 1996.
30. Psycho-Acoustic Projector, Patent 3,566,347, US Patent Office, 23 February 1971
31. Method and System for Altering Consciousness, Patent 5,289,438, U.S. Patent Office 22 February 1994.
32. Method and System for Altering Consciousness, Patent 5,123,899, dated 23 June 1992.
33. 'Hi-Tech Psychological Warfare Arrives in the Middle East', Bulletin, 23 March 1991, from ITV (London) News Bureau Ltd. See also Newsweek,July 30, 1990, p. 61.
34. Silent Subliminal Presentation, Patent 5,159,703, U.S. Patent Office, 27 October 1992.
35. This paragraph is a paraphrase of, and the quotations are taken from, 'Silent Synthesised Brainwave Clusters TM', Silent Sound Inc., 5188 Falconwood Court, Narcross, GA 30071, USA.



Neural manipulation by remote radar

by Armen Victorian

This essay has been written using recently declassified records on Project Pandora released on 19 December 1994 to the author after a Freedom of Information Act appeal filed three years ago. The aim of Project Pandora was to study the microwave frequencies targeted on the US Embassy in Moscow by the Soviets during the 1960s and 70s. All the sources quoted in this paper were included in the Project Pandora papers released to me.

Abstract: In 1961 Allan H. Frey provided evidence that the perception of sound can be induced in normal and deaf humans by irradiation of the head with low-power density, pulse-modulated, UHF (ultra high frequency) electromagentic energy: a type of radio wave. It had previously been shown that the UHF energy of wavelengths smaller than 10 cm. could produce a heating of the skin up to severe burning. Since then, work by Frey and other has shown that this same microwave energy is capable of producing selective tachycardia (a speeding up of the heart beat) and brachycardia (a slowing down of the heart beat). In 1973 S. M. Bawin *et al* provided further evidence that brain waves can be inhibited or enhanced by low power VHF energy. (1) The ability to modify behaviour with auditory-cortext stimuli, peripheral heating, brain rhythm modification and many other biological applications of microwaves has been repeatedly shown since the 1950s. *The energy in question is used in radar. In view of the fact that radar is capable of detecting a single insect at a distance of over 1 kilometre and at an altitude of 600 metres, it is therefore possible that the biological application of radar could be used as a weapon on an individual or mass basis for sociological or political purposes.* (2)

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Electromagnetic energy in bio-sciences

Although the use of electromagentic (EM) energy in bio-sciences is considered to be a relatively recent development, bioelectric research dates back at least as far as 1786 when Galvani and Volta were arguing about electricity and frogs' legs. It was not until 1908 that the term diathermy for the heating of body tissues by high frequency current was coined by Von Zeyneck, the pioneer in the use of direct electrodes. (3) But the real progress was made in the 1920 when F. Cazzamali, an Italian physician, discovered that he could induce hallucinations in the minds of highly suggestible individuals, and claimed to have detected radiation from the mind. His work, *Radiating Brain*, was translated in 1965 by the Foreign Technology Division of the Wright Patterson Air Force in the United States. The Dutch physician, W. A. G. van Everdingen made further progress during 1938-43. He observed that microwave irradiation affected the heart action of the chicken embryo in relation to its glycogen level. (4) In 1946 J. E. Nyrop recorded specific effects on bacteria, viruses and tissue cultures of exposure to short-pulsed EM radiation with the heating effect deleted. (5) These early pioneers in biologi-

cal manipulation with EM energy paved the way for a new era of more detailed research. It was not until 1961 that the work of Dr. Alan H. Frey convinced the scientific community that radio-frequency (RF) energy could indeed do more than heat a tissue culture.

Biological response to EM energy

Direct electrodes stimulation: it has long been known that *direct stimulation of the brain* with electrodes will produce artifical reactions dependent upon the region stimulated. Walter Hess, a Swiss physiologist and Nobel Prize winner, was the first to pioneer the implantation of electric wires in animal brains in order to record electrical activities. He found that the hypothalamus and associated neural structures located in the rim of the brain stem, the limbic system, controlled emotional and aggressive behaviour. (6) It was also the site of appetite, the focal point of sexual behaviour and was tied to the sense of smell.

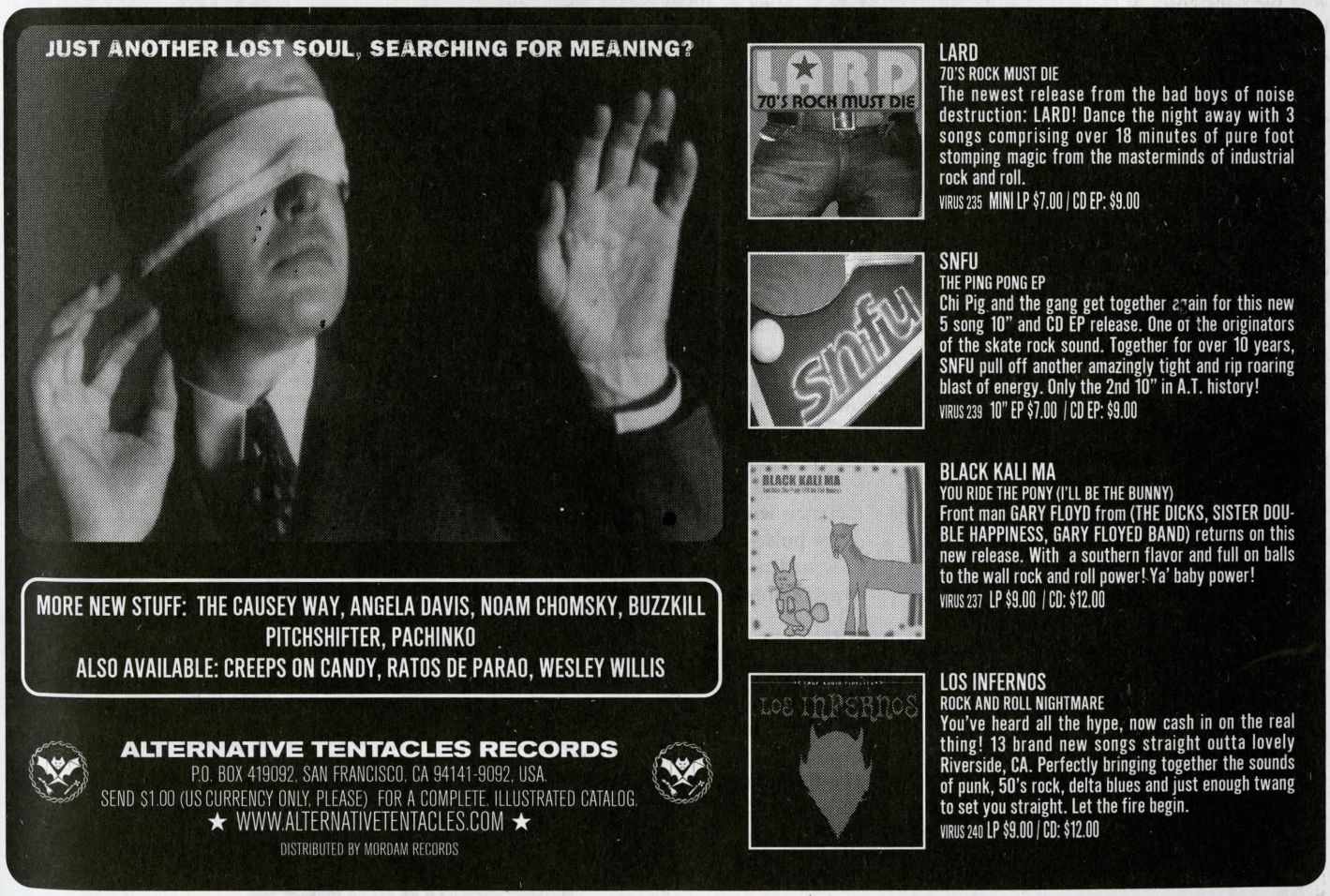
W. Penfield, a neurosurgeon, took Hess' findings one step further. He used electric currents to stimulate the cortex of his patients' brains while the brains were exposed during surgery. The results were astounding. Epileptic patients would experience complete episodes from their pasts, so real that it was as if they were literally reliving them. If the same spot was stimulated twice, the entire sequence would repeat itself from the beginning. (7)

In 1960 Neider and Neff used direct electrical stimulation of the brain (ESB) to produce auditory sensations in cats for the purposes of conditioning. (8) They pointed out that sounds are produced by direct stimulation of the brain (ESB), that sounds are a proven behavioural conditioning stimulus, and that the quality of the sound improves in proportion to the depth of the electrical stimulus in the cerebral cortex.

Radiesthesia is a term for the ability of humans to detect electromagnetic energy. James Beal of NASA's Space Flight Centre, who studies the phenomenon, believes that we are all tuned in. He believes that external energy may have profound effects due to the fact that each cell, or neurone, is a tiny complex electrical system. (9) Robert O. Becker, a research orthopaedic surgeon at the State University of New York, suggests that each neurone has the characteristics of a semiconductor, behaving as a transistor or solar cell. He believes that the gial cells of the nervous system may actually act as liquid crystal in resonance with surrounding energy fields. If this is true, the nervous system is capable of magnifying electrical effects over a million times in amplititude. Becker is convinced that the brain contains a middle structure with a stronger direct-current field than the rest of the nervous system The intensity and perhaps the polarity of this current directly influences consciousness. Animals' brainwave patterns went from waking to comatose when Becker placed a magnetic field at the right angle to the brain-stem. He then reversed the process. Becker applied direct current to the frontal region of the brain and awoke chemically anaesthesised animals. (10)

Auditory response to RF energy

Allan H. Frey made the following astonishing announcement on April 24 1961 at the Aerospace Medical Association Meeting in Chicago: 'Our data to date indicate that the human auditory system can respond to electromagentic energy in at least a portion of the radio frequency (RF) spectrum. Futhermore, this response is instantaneous and occurs at low power densities. Densities which are well below that necessary for biological damage.' (11)



Frey placed his subjects over 100 feet from a sweep antenna which they could not see. There was no sound from the antenna. Yet they reported hearing a buzzing, knocking sound each time the RF beam swept past them. The noise level was estimated at 70 to 80 decibels (db), and earplugs allowed the subjects to hear the sound more clearly. The sounds were the same in all cases, and always seemed to indicate a noise just behind the head. Shielding studies showed that the temple areas were critical to RF sounds. When the temples were shielded the RF sound was gone. There was no doubt that the responses were independent of the tympanic membrane of the ear. A new form of communications, with immense implications for the military, was discovered: direct communication to the brain by radio waves. By 1961 experiments had proved that the effect and range of auditory response to RF energy could reach thousands of feet. With appropriate modulation of the carrier transmitter the RF energy could create all types of biological effects on the targeted subject, including 'pins and needles' dizziness, nausea, and vomiting.

The path had been cleared to replace the electrical stimu-lation of the brain (ESB) using electrodes with RF energy. It was now possible to achieve results similar to those achieved with ESB using radio waves.

The man from Manchuria

This discovery makes the creation of a Manchurian Candidate a reality. For the pulse-modulated transmitters could also carry information placed on the signal: it could be modulated to send words to the brain. An expendable intelligence asset, programmed by remote hypnosis, in a post-hypnotic state, could be activated by these means, to carry out orders directed to him or her bypassing his or her consciousness. The hypnotic command the target obeyed would be considered the target's own idea, originating within the target's self. Such operations could be carried out on the basis of a 'timed hypnotic command'. A hypnotist could order certain information to appear using RF means in the hypnotised target's mind at a given time in the future. A similar effect could be obtained when a hypnotic suggestion is made to be triggered by a word, a picture or other signal.

Today it is known that brain waves carry data for the processing of information in the brain. W. R. Adey believes that this data is digital coding imposed by frequency modulation of the wave. (12) There should be no fundamental difficulties in transmitting brain waves into the brain of another person. For example, in infrared transmission a highly con-centrated beam is used for information transmission.

Information conveyed into the brain of a person in any of the above ways has the effect of a suggestion when the input takes place in a hypnotised state. There are also means of blocking access to retrieve any such information. By inducing amnesia in a person it is possible to disrupt, block, inhibit and reconnect his or her conscious (mental) concatentations at will, and thus produce contrasting effects which are of the highest value for later hypnotic commands. (13)

Social and political implications

The radio wave energy used in most of the experiments is pulse-modulated or CW microwave energy. It is the same type of RF used in radar techniques: radar equipment is used in almost all of these experiments. J. H. Richter et al explained that if a radar can detect a housefly at 1km, it can detect a man too. Radar range at 10cm wavelength - the type used in most of the lab experiments - is over 25 miles. Therefore it would be quite possible to trace and target an individual's movements, within the radius of 25 miles. (14) The same technique could be applied to the same target using EM irradiation.

Clearly pronounced symptoms of microwave irradition are extreme fatigue; constant or periodic headaches; irritability; sleep disruption; memory difficulties; pains in the region of the heart intensifying after physical stress; laboured respiration; decreased appetite; enlargement of the heart; and other heart problems. (15) A US State Department report by G. W. Biles suggests it is quite possible to induce a heart attack in a person from a distance with radar, since radar uses the same pulse-modulated UHF energy that Frey had used in some of his previous experiments on isolated frog hearts. (16)

Comment: What could happen

By 1974 Lawrence Pinneo, a neurophysiologist and electronic engineer at Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, California, had developed a computer system capable of reading a person's mind. It correlated brain waves on an eletroencephelograph with specific commands. Twenty years ago the computer responded with a dot on a TV screen. Nowadays it could be the input to a stimulator (ESB) in advanced stages, using radio frequencies. (17) The concept of mind-reading computers is no longer science fiction.

Neither is their use by Big Brotherly governments. Major Edward Dames of Psi-Tech (18) said in April this year (1995) on NBC's 'The Other Side' programme: 'The US Government has an electronic device which could implant thoughts in people'. Dames would not comment any further.

Notes:

1. Bawin, S.M., Gavlas-Medici, R.J., and Adey, W.R., Effects of Modulated VHF fields on specific brain rhythms in cats', in *Brain Research*, Vol. 58, 1973, pp. 365-384.

2. *Microwave US-USSR*, Vol. VI, July-December 1976, p. 4, Office of Security, US Department of State.

3. Jaski, Tom and Susskind, Charles, 'Electromagnetic radiation as a tool in the life sciences', in Science, vol. 133, no. 3451, 1961, pp. 443-447

4. *Ibid*

5. *Ibid*

6. Edson, Lee, 'The psyche and the surgeon' in *New York Times* Magazine, September 30 1973.

7. Steven, Leonard A., *Neurons: building blocks of the brain*, (Crowell, New York, 1974).

8, Neider, Philip C, and Neff, William D., 'Auditory information from subcortical electrical stimulation in cats', in *Science* vol. 133, 1961, pp 1010-1011. They summarised the auditory responses at the beginning of their paper:

'It has long been known that auditory sensations may be produced in human subjects by direct electrical stimulation in or near auditory areas of the cerebral cortex. The sensory effects produced: knocking, booming, buzzing and so on. Some evidence has also come from conditioning studies on animals, in which direct electrical stimulation of areas of the cerebral cortex has been successfully used as the condition stimuli.'

9. Ferguson, Marilyn, *The Brain Revolution: the frontiers of mind research*, (Davis-Poynter, London, 1974).

10. Telephone conversation with the author, May 1992.

11. Frey, Allan H., 'Auditory system response to radio frequency energy', Technical Note in *Aerospace Medicine*, vol. 32, 1961, pp. 1140-1142.

12. Adey, W. R., 'Information storage and recall' in Corning, W.C. and Balaban, M., *'The Mind: biological approaches to its function'*, 1968

13. Shapitz, J. F., 'Experimental investigation of effectiveness of psycho-physiological manipulation using modulated electromagnetic energy for direct information transmission into the brain', January 1974: personal unpublished papers submited to the US State Department.

Schapitz suggested the following experiment. 'Brain waves that have been produced by drugs of known psychic effect are going to be registered on magnetic tape. The recorded rhythms will then be modulated onto a microwave (or several beams if there have been multiple tracings) and will thus be transmitted into the brain of non-drugged subjects. Their state of mind will subsequently be investigated by interview, psychological tests and by polygraph recordings. Thus it will be determined whether non-drugged subjects are in the same state of mind as the drugged subjects.' He even proposed to use similar microwave transmission methods in transmitting the muscle movements of an individual to another targetted individual.

14. Richter, Juergen H. et al, 'Remote radar sensing: atmospheric structure and insects in Science, vol. 180, no 4091, pp. 1176-78.

15. *Microwave US-USSR* Vol II 1972-1974, US Department of State Office of Security, 'A study of electromagnetic-biological effects', p. 5.

16. *Microwave US-USSR* 2, p. 4

17. 'Mind reading computer', in *Time*, July 1, 1974, p. 67. See also David M. Rorvik, *As Man Becomes Machine*, (Sphere Books, London, 1979).

18. On Psi-Tech see *Lobster* 25, p. 8.



INDECISION

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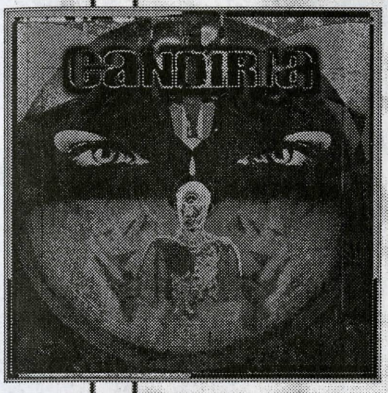

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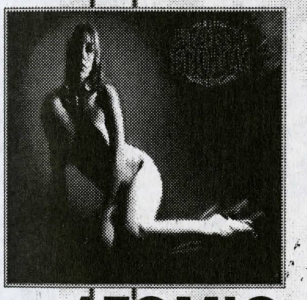

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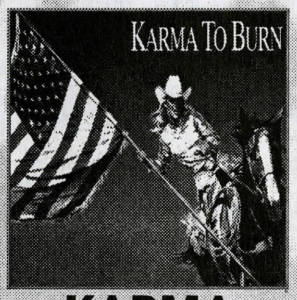
keith ackerman-**X-SLAP ROCKET**



CORE

THE HUSTLE IS ON

somwhere between hendrix, cream, and blue cheer with 70's miles davis.



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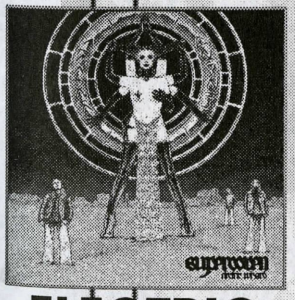

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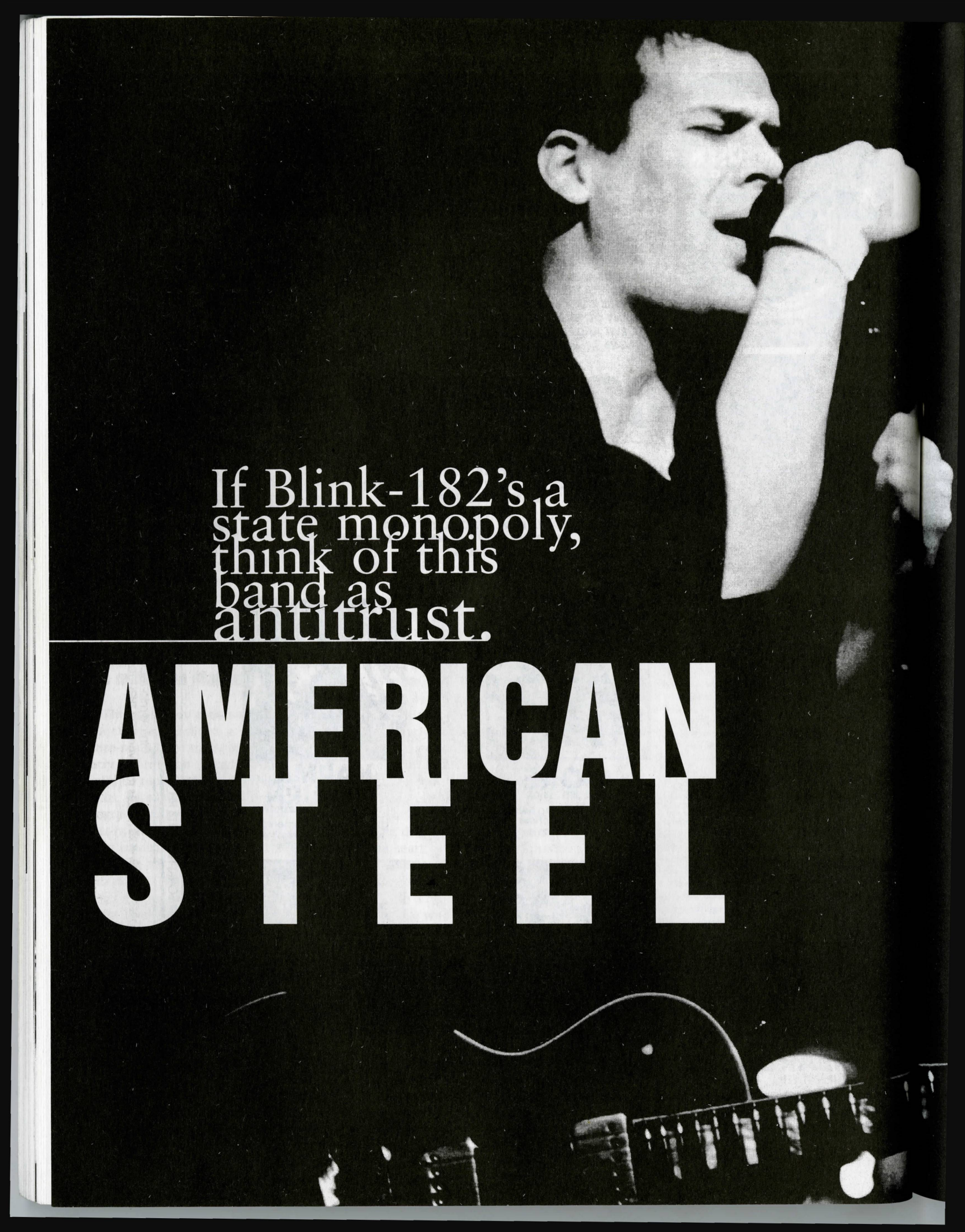
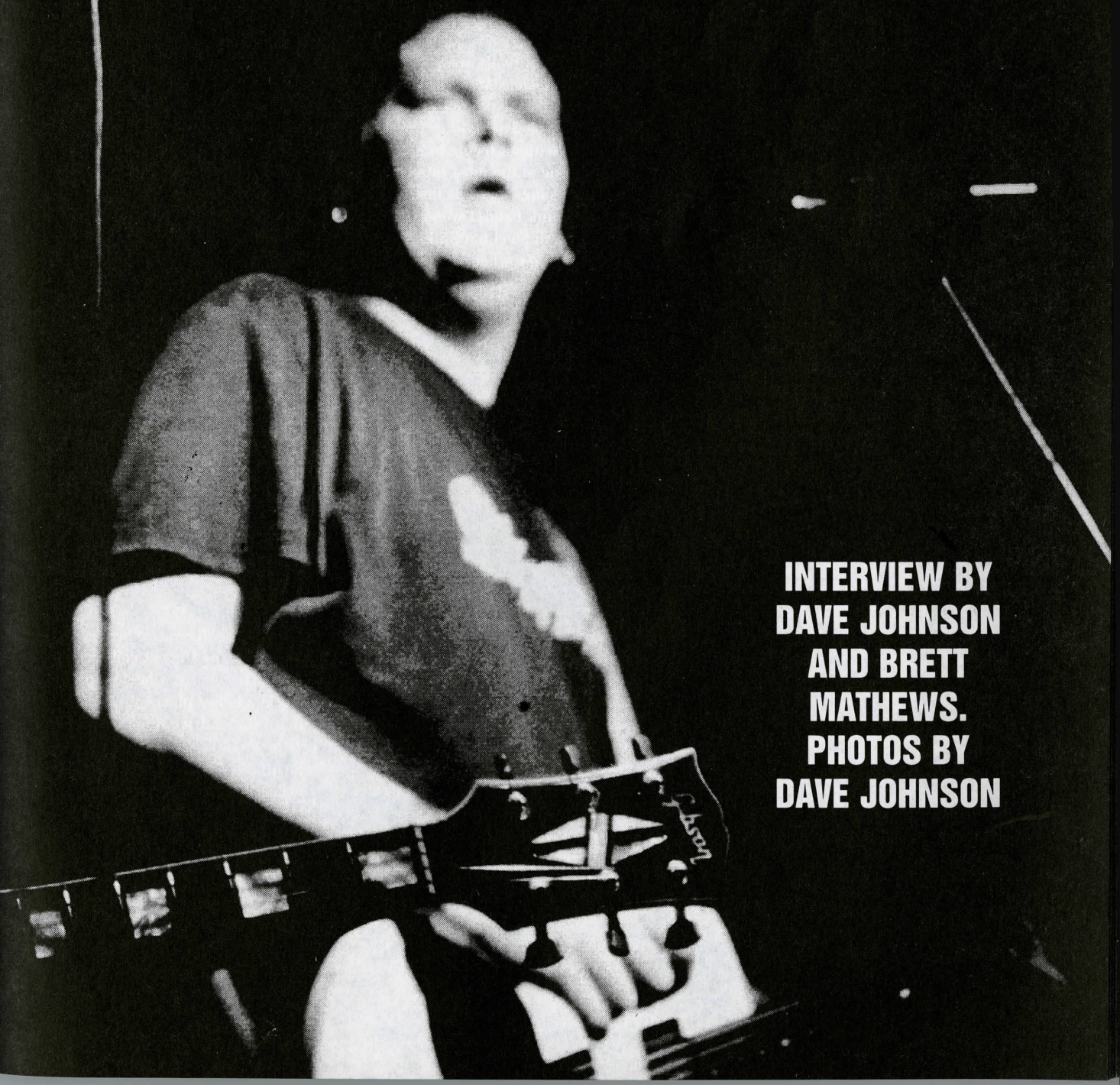

If Blink-182's a state monopoly, think of this band as antitrust.
AMERICAN STEEL

"What if Lookout! threw a show and a punk came?"

That was a question posed to me by a waggish friend on the eve of the Lookout! Freakout at a miniature golf course in Castro Valley on Labor Day, 1999. And certainly, Lookout! as a label has strayed from putting out records that sound very much like the records that made them their rep as a chronicler of the East Bay scene, circa 1989. But even back then, how much did Brent's TV sound like Operation Ivy sound like Crimpshrine sound like early Samiam? Suddenly though, after pretty much only keeping the "Punk Rawk" banner flying over the University Avenue offices by releasing records by Pinhead Gunpowder, Avail and the Criminals (One could maybe throw Citizen Fish in there as well, given the Subhumans connection), Lookout! came back back in 1999 with *real* punk records from the likes of Cleveland Bound Death Sentence (featuring Aaron Cometbus and St. Patrick of Dillinger Four), Richmond, VA's Ann Beretta and most notably, and maybe most importantly, the East Bay combo American Steel.



INTERVIEW BY DAVE JOHNSON AND BRETT MATHEWS. PHOTOS BY DAVE JOHNSON

Starting off as a drunken joke between primary vocalist/guitarist Ruairi and secondary vocalist/guitarist Ryan, AmSteel, much to the surprise of many people in the Bay Area — and indeed even to Ryan and Ruairi themselves — has become a real band. And not just a *real* band, a really *amazing* band. While their first full-length, the self titled, seventeen track record on New Disorder was a fairly solid disc in the East Bay tradition of Crimpshrine, Operation Ivy and Rancid, it wasn't exactly revolutionary.

Then, in the fall of 1999, they dropped a sonic bomb on the East Bay (and the rest of the country) in the form of *Rogue's March*. My personal favorite studio album of 1999, it was recorded intermittently throughout Ryan's battle with leukemia. *Rogue's March* stands as a punk monument to the human spirit, much in the way the first Clash LP did. Clash comparisons aren't something I throw around lightly. I mean, yes, I'll say, "Oh, they obviously really like the Clash," or "Hey, isn't that a Clash riff?" But ultimately, American Steel has the most *important* element of the Clash — the *spirit*. Since 1994, East Bay punk has been in what many would consider a slump — Screw 32's dead, AFI, Green Day, and Rancid, while still maintaining East Bay roots (though Tim Armstrong now lives in LA), have moved on to bigger things. The Criminals, while beloved by many, never quite brought people together in the way that those other bands did. But AmSteel could very well be an Operation Ivy for the new millennium.

Rogue's March has made more top ten lists in *HL* than any record in the time we've been doing the magazine; Jimi Cheetah (who put out the band's *Every New Morning* EP last year), Jeremy Cool (who maintains that the first record is as good as *Rogue's March*), Brett Mathews (who keeps trying to sign them to Coldfront) and I (who probably listen to *Rogue's March* more than all three of those guys combined — up to 60 or 70 times a week), are all huge fans; and we're all into different brands of punk rock.

But that's the beauty of this band; equal parts Joe Strummer and Blake Schwarzenbach (with a raspier voice than *either*), Ruairi's incredibly literate writing flows effortlessly between politics and relationships; drummer Scott and bassist Johnny thrash, bash, bump and thump in a wonderfully organic way. Ryan and Ruairi trade off rough and throat-blisteringly intense vocals as if their lives were hanging in the balance. Normally, we wouldn't devote this many column inches to a band many punks outside of the Bay Area haven't heard, but we I think I can safely speak for at least Brett, Jeremy and Jimi when I say we *completely* believe in American Steel. They're amazing guys; intelligent, warm, genuine, funny and knowledgeable; their strength and determination to record this album through Ryan's illness is admirable, and ultimately their commitment to their ideals without slavishly writing them on their hands to remember them (and show them off) are only *part* of what makes this group something very special.

This interview was conducted on a cold roof patio in Berkeley at Ruairi's former workplace. During the course of about five hours, eleven pitchers of beer were consumed, countless cigarettes were smoked, and a large planter was repeatedly used as a urinal. Somehow it turned out to be a surprisingly coherent (though wide-ranging) romp through both the politics and personal experiences that have shaped this fantastic band. If only *all* interviews could be this much fun and informative...

-Dave Johnson

Dave: One thing that really struck me — especially about *Rogue's March* more than the first record — is the politics behind the record; especially on a song like "Loaded Gun", which — without trying to be an asskisser — is one of the most interestingly literate political songs that I've heard in a long time by a punk band. I was wondering, does American Steel have a kind of political agenda? Like when you sing "They wanna isolate the left/ They wanna isolate the right" where do you guys feel like you fit into that?

Ruairi: I ended up writing a lot of those political songs, and I definitely have a sort of political agenda; strong political convictions. But if you just listen to the record, it may make you feel that there's this sort of body politic to the whole band, which isn't really fair to the rest of the guys. They all have their own individual politics. I mean, everyone leans pretty heavy to the left — if not *squarely* far left. I think that that's safe to say, but in terms of a "body politic", I don't know.

Scott: We differ on *fine* things, but I think as a general rule we all agree on the same things, and like when Ruairi writes lyrics, we say "Yeah, that's pretty much how we feel," It's not like we've ever said "Dude! Back off!"

Dave: Again, I think "Loaded Gun" is a fucking amazing song, and one of the lines that really nailed me in that was "The liquor store is COINTELPRO." It's interesting to me, because drinking is such a prevalent theme in your lyrics -

Ruairi: [smiling] It pops its head up once in awhile. More than we notice, probably. It's like you say "dude" more than you really realize it.

Dave: Yeah, "*We* didn't write a song called 'Sloppy Fucking Drunk'!" [laughter and McKenzie Brothers-style epithets fly] But how do you feel about that dichotomy between "drinking as part of the artist's process" and something that's holding down a repressed class in so many ways?

Ruairi: It's sort of important to mention that I don't really buy into the conspiracy theory that the under- or lower classes in this country, as defined by race or economics, are sort of held down by a sort of ploy by the ascendancy to maintain superiority, but more the issue that drinking is endemic to that repression. That line was sort of paralleling with the sort of Black Panther/CIA situation. When people are organized and actually aggressive towards social change that the government, in response, has to show its true colors. You're at least pushing the envelope — you're at least taking the lamb's head off the wolf. But we also shoot ourselves in the foot.

Dave: By doing what?

Ruairi: Well, by doing things that aren't anyone else's fault but our own but keep us disorganized and keep us separated.

Ryan: As far as people being fucked up all the time — I think the Rich Man is just as fucked up as the "underclass"; they just manage to do it in a more glamorous way, instead of just sitting on the street with a bottle inside of a bag, y'know? They have access to better drugs, too.

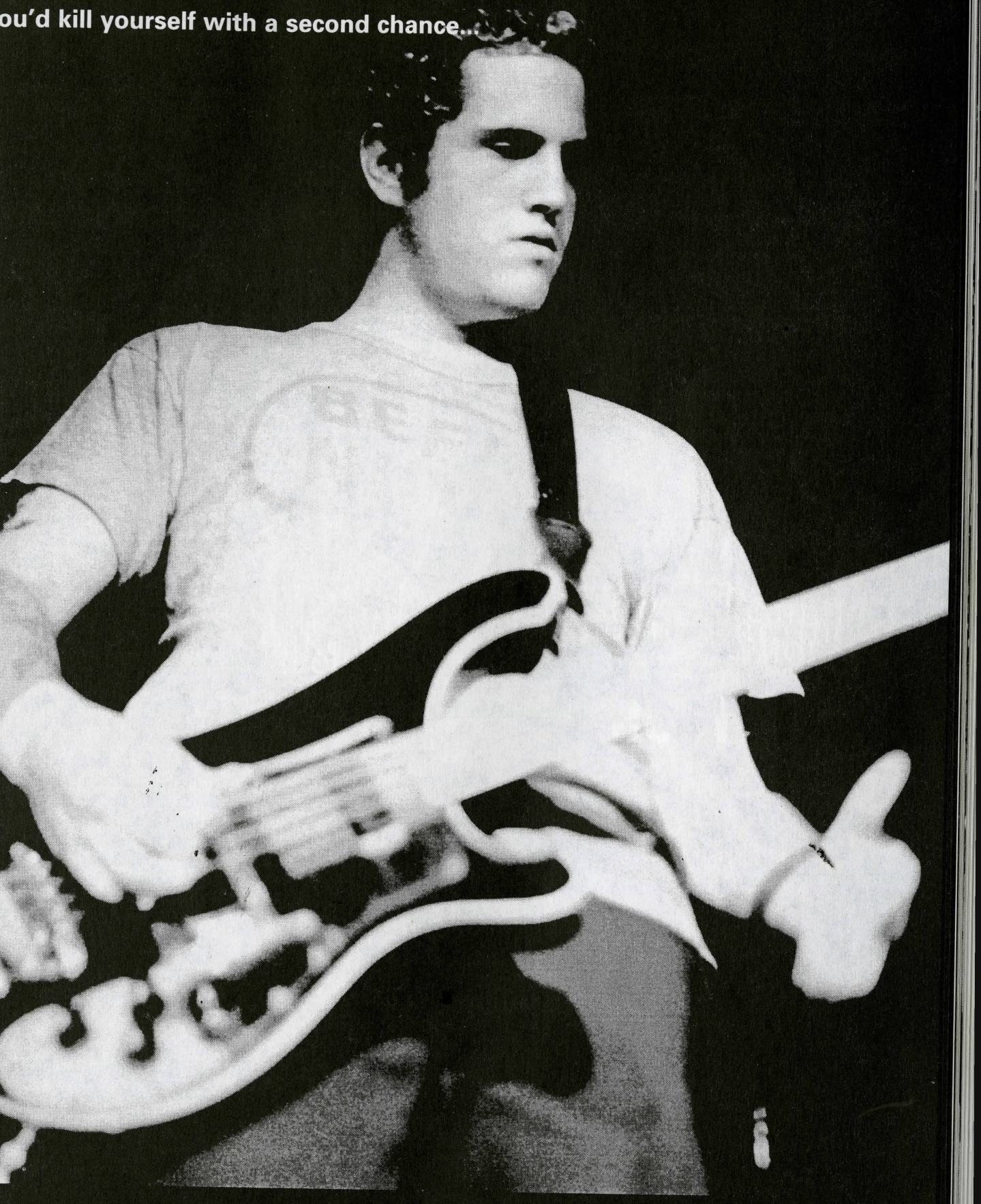
Scott: You've got a homeless guy in front of Carl's Jr. with a cup and he opens the door for you and wants a tip, while on the other end of the spectrum you've got a guy starting a dot-com calling investors groveling, trying to get money. It's the same thing, it's just that one guy wears a suit and has a nice place to live.

Dave: If the difference between the guy on the street and the dot-com guy is simply financial, what can be done to make this world a better place? Which is something that I find a drive to do in your music.

Ruairi: I'm kind of torn, personally. Either you believe in step issues, or you believe in an overarching re-scheming, as I do. But as far as step issues, health care, yeah, but I think those issues are sort of more the progressives' fight. Me personally, I'd like to see a classless society. I know that's impossible; I'm a raging socialist; no shame in calling myself a leftist — I don't think you should be involved in punk rock if you're afraid to call yourself a leftist. Those sort of issues that people get



ou'd kill yourself with a second chance...





...we're the heart and soul of this heartless country...

enraptured in are like the New Deal. The New Deal dealt from the bottom of the deck again. Appeasement — things that compromise *real* social change.

Dave: Appeasement of whom?

Ruairi: I think around the time of the New Deal, our country was *very* close to achieving some real social change. The government stepped in, wisely, and threw out a little candy which sort of band-aided the problem. I totally hedged the question there. One of the other guys might be able to answer it better.

Scott: What was your original question?

Dave: My original question was about the difference between the rich dot-com guy and the poor man on the street. If their lives are equally fucked, though in different ways, what do we do to alleviate that central humanistic turmoil inside that gets the better of so many great people?

Ryan: First of all, I think there's *huge* difference between those two people. If you're the position to beg banking investors for money, you've obviously had a very different background — at least in *general* terms. You've had a different background and a different level of education, so there's a *colossal* difference there. But beyond that, keeping the general humanistic problems in mind, you know what? If you're not fucking strong enough, you fall to the side. And that's not a matter of economics. Nobody can solve other people's suffering; they suffer and they deal with it; they suffer and they grow, or they die. There are specific political and activist things we can do in a concrete way to make people's lives better, like financial programs or through helping people's real *needs*. By needs I mean things from clothing, to food, to healthcare, but as far as the overarching humanistic problems, they've gotta deal with the angst themselves.

Ruairi: I don't know...if humanity wants to keep patting itself on the back for its achievements, as a society of beings that wants to consider itself compassionate or sentimental, we should at least have a safety net that we don't have now, for people who *do* slip through the cracks. Of course, people have to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

Brett: But then you're also looking at, "The more you do for others the less they do for themselves." You're setting up a society where people aren't gonna do *shit*.

Ruairi: I don't really mean like a welfare state. Speaking on humanism, I think we're totally

devoid of a will or want to have a more compassionate society. I don't know what to do. I'm sort of pessimistic about the way the average American feels.

Dave: In some ways, I'm realistic about certain issues, saying to myself, "Well, this is the popular American consensus," but at the same time, if I was gonna be a pessimist about it, personally, I'd have to shoot myself. There has to be that element of hope and that element of change, and I can't spend my life hating humanity. Even though there are so many fucked up things that I spend a lot of my life trying to point out to people, at the very base level, that's something that comes out of love; and comes out a love for people. I know it sounds hippie, and I know it sounds cheesy, but at a base level why do people get involved in activism anyway? What's the point? Take somebody like Cesar Chavez for example, who fought all his life for change in the fields and didn't live to see it completed, but fought for it anyway. There's a driving sort of force, and that sense of faith that humanity can better themselves.

Johnny: Well maybe that's where we can bring art back into it — music specifically. The very least music can do is let people know they're not alone; that's the very least lyrics can do. Before music "smashes the state" and all that, the least it can do is make people realize they're not so alone in how they feel.

Dave: Being a punk rock band and writing the music that you do; singing about the things you sing about, is that comparable to activism?

Ruairi: I wouldn't want to say yes, like we're doing our part by preaching some sort of "gospel".

Scott: And that's also not our purpose; it's not like we say, "Okay, we're gonna go on tour, and when we go on tour, we're gonna make all these people believe what our lyrics think," y'know? We go on tour because it's...fun.

Ruairi: I mean, we'd *like* to...

Scott: Yeah, it'd be nice to maybe get people to think or maybe broaden people's minds.

Ruairi: I'm kind of keen on the concept of punk rock as folk music, rather than just angry music that people mosh to or dance to. It doesn't have to be hardcore political; it doesn't have to be real sappy music that really speaks to the lonely heart. But I sorta like the idea, and I like the idea of bands that treat punk rock as folk music.

Ryan: It just seems that frequently, the bands that label themselves as "political" and are into making these huge, overarching statements are usually the ones are usually the ones who tend to be extraordinarily stupid and don't really have very much to say; perhaps because they don't realize the conflicts between what they say and what they do. I totally agree with Ruairi; the whole folk music thing seems right on. You can inspire people with music, and you can perhaps get someone to lean your way, but you're never gonna browbeat someone into political submission with lyrics. It seems so much more important to inspire them and make them feel something for the hours of their day that they waste at some crappy job.

Ruairi: Of course, there's the whole issue of the minor oversight of forgetting about people's free will, free thought and free association. Plus, one of the few things that all punk rockers can agree about — if there was one sort of base, libertarian sort of politics of punk rock that everyone agrees upon — is free thought, free will, free association, don't fuck with me.

Scott: Otherwise I'll knock your mailbox down...

Dave: ...Or I'll egg your house, *man*...

I know in the interview in *MRR* that you did with Jimi that you mentioned that you were really influenced by Irish folk music, which is something I heard in your music before I read that, and I was wondering — I mean, there are the random Irish-Catholic references through the music, and going back to "Loaded Gun" again, you use "granda" instead of "grandfather" or "grandad"...

Ruairi: ...Or as Ryan likes to point out, I used "petrol" instead of gas...

Dave: That's where I was going next! [laughter all around] I'm second-generation Irish, and I've got a lot of family over there...

Ruairi: In my own defense, just on that issue, the only thing I read is either really dry political books that were usually written by English or Irish people, so I sort of pick up on those sort of usages, or when I get too sick of that, really lame science-fiction books. [the table erupts into fits] Oh yes, people talk about reading all the Beat writers...

Ryan: ...And Ruairi's like, "Oh yes, I read all the *Dragon Lance* books.

Dave: I read the *Man-Kzin Wars* maaan...! But seriously, yeah, I mean, listening to "Bloody Murder", it seems like kind of a classic Irish Catholic working song re-contextualized. When I've been over there — have you ever been to Ireland?

Ruairi: No.

Dave: One of the methods of going to dances and pubs and stuff when you live out in the country, is that there's a private coach. And everybody gets in the coach; you can drink on the bus — you pay your five quid and everybody's busting out with "The Fields of Athenry" and all these Irish protest songs. A lot of the stuff, especially on "Rogue's March"; I hear that in the

The very least music can do is let people know they're not alone; that's the very least lyrics can do. Before music "smashes the state" and all that, the least it can do is make people realize they're not so alone in how they feel.

JOHNNY

music, and I was wondering how you would touch on that?

Ruairi: It's nothing I intentionally do. I just kind of grew up listening to it. I've always loved it. A lot of people grow up with it and sort of have this hatred for it, but I've always loved the honesty and simplicity of it. I guess I just absorbed it. It's the only music I really *really* like all-around. It's kind of like old Motown or old soul; it's gritty.

Dave: Were you raised Catholic?

Ryan: Just with his mom's Catholic hangover. [laughter]

Ruairi: It was never forced down my throat.

Dave: My parents were *very* involved in the Catholic church until their mid-thirties/early forties but encouraged me to do my own thing, but at the same time, in "Parting Glass" you mention Christmas Mass, and what's the song on the first record where you talk about the rosary? ["It's Too Bloody Anyway"] It's not as much of a recurring theme as being drunk or in jail, but it *is* a theme that pops up now and then.

Ruairi: In jail?

Dave: How many times on those fucking records do you sing about being in jail or being taken away in handcuffs?

The Band: Huh?

Dave: Okay, "Latchkey Kid"...

Ryan: Okay, that was one...

Dave: [from "Every New Morning"] "I wish I was back in the drunk tank dying"...

Ruairi: That was more *metaphorical*...

Dave: There's a couple more...

Ryan: [in a goofy, creepy Liverpudlian English accent] Couldn't the drunk tank as well be your *room*?

Ruairi: Your dreary, weary ho-hum life? [giggling all around]

Dave: I don't know, I just sort of noticed a lot of prison references, which maybe takes it back to Irish music: being in jail and being united through song. Being completely fucking stuck in and only having music to liberate you. Music and faith — whatever faith that is; not necessarily religious faith, but some kind of faith in *something*. And that's a theme that strikes me throughout your records.

Ryan: I think a lot of this kind of stuff is stuff that just soaks up into you over the years; it's not so much an intentional statement or anything; it's sort of how we grew up. I mean, Ruairi's got the folk; the Irish influence, and you know Ruairi's actually the guy who got *me* into Irish folk music. I grew up on American folk music. You just have a passion for that kind of stuff; that soaks up into you. Some of that language does, but I don't think there's that much *intention* to it.

Ruairi: Absolutely not. Actually, the more snippets you point out, the more I realize how *abused* some of that stuff is. [laughter]

Dave: One thing I've always appreciated about American Steel is that that "Irishness" came through in a very organic way. It didn't come through like the Dropkick Murphys where it was like "Hey! We're Working Class Irish!" If anything — Dan and I were talking about this today over at Lookout!, and he was saying "What I totally like about American Steel is that that Irishness comes through; but it doesn't come through in a way that they're singing in an Irish accent," like trying to be streetpunk. Instead, it's very *American* music, but the Irish element comes through lyrically and musically — intentionally or unintentionally — it comes through like a truer filtration of the Irish-American experience, instead of being American and clinging to some "Irish" sort of ghetto — which may be the difference between growing up Irish on the East Coast and growing up Irish on the West Coast.

Ryan: I get the same feeling from a lot of bands out there who try to do "the Clash Thing"; that's their schtick. I mean, I really like the Clash, but what the Clash did was take all these elements of different genres known and lesser-known stuff and sort of melded them into one thing.

Ruairi: Which is why *London Calling* is one of the best records ever...

Dave: *...Exactly!*

Ryan: And that's a matter of taking those influences that are around you, absorbing them, and sort of making them part of *you*.

Ruairi: Of course, people are reading this going "Bullshit! American Steel are *total* ripoffs..."

Ryan: But we rip off so many *different* things!

Scott: What really bothers me about a lot of bands out there is that they're trying to do a *certain* thing and staying in that little circle. Like every one of those songs that're like "Working Class! Working Class!"

Dave: One of the things I wanted to touch on, similar to what Ryan was saying, are bands trying to be like the Clash. And they miss the whole fucking point of it. And to be honest, in my mind, is that American Steel reminds me more of the Clash than any band in America today. You don't *sound* anything like the Clash, but that spirit, especially on the first three Clash records, that same spirit is there.

Ryan: It's funny, because we've been *trying* to go in more of a Varukers direction. [howls of laughter]

Scott: I think the main thing is that we never tried to sound like anybody...

Ryan: ...Oh come on! We tried to sound like Crimpshrine for a couple years.

Scott: But I wasn't in the band then, so that's all right!

Ruairi: That's how we *started* though...

Dave: How do you guys feel about that, though? Crimpshrine is still the band I hear you guys compared the most to.

Ruairi: I guess our older stuff definitely sounds like it. It doesn't really bother me; Crimpshrine's one of my favorite East Bay bands. It's there. I don't think we sound a lot like them anymore, but I think a lot of people probably cue off my voice, too. I started singing like that because all my favorite bands sang like that.

Dave: How *do* you sing like that?

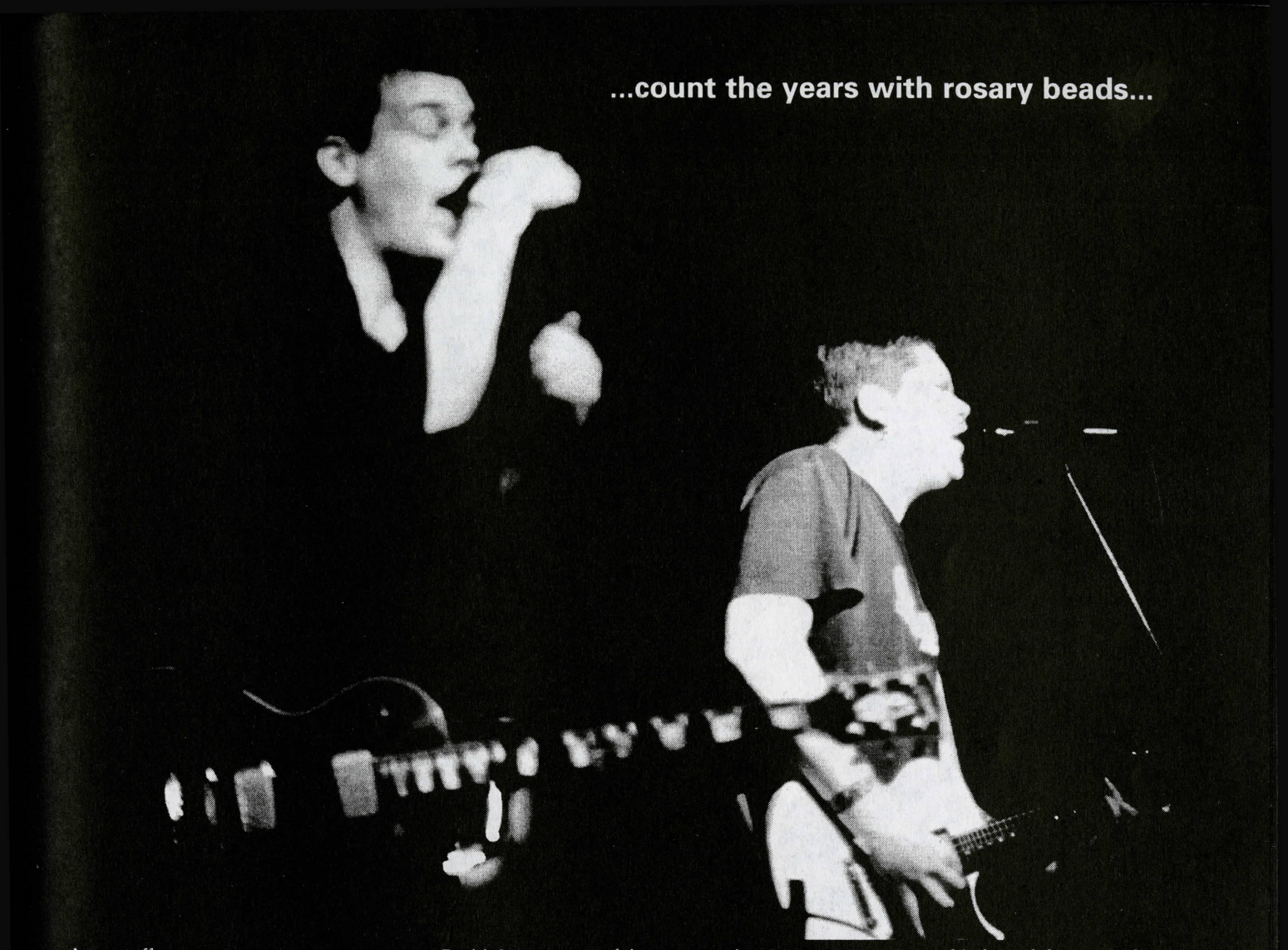
Scott: Did you notice how many cigarettes he's smoked while sitting here?

Ryan: Ruairi's a fifty-pack-a-day earache. I think some of that's fallen away over the years, though — and out of all of the bands out there to be compared to, I'd much rather be compared to Crimpshrine.

Dave: I hear Rancid on the first record...

Ruairi: Well, it's East Bay...

Dave: Well, I hear a little more Op Ivy than Rancid, but there's certain elements — especially on the first side of it — that really have more of a Rancid vibe to it than



your later stuff.

Ruairi: I don't think that's too far off...

Scott: I think right when we released that album, if you had a little bit of punk and a little bit of ska and a gravelly voice, you got compared to Rancid. They were the biggest band that did that.

Ruairi: I hate those bands that go, "Oh, we don't sound *anything* like them!" It's like, come on, you *do*.

Dave: So how do you guys feel about the first full-length versus *Rogue's March*?

Ryan: It's kind of *worlds* of difference...

Johnny: Your first record is years of songs and your second record is a *year* of songs.

Ruairi: I think it's more...*you*.

Ryan: Especially when you make your first record when you're younger. I mean, that was the first real record any of us had ever made.

Ruairi: I wrote most of those songs when I was fourteen.

Ryan: The thing is, that first record has seventeen songs on it, and we could have put *more* on there. There was stuff that got cut that *barely* got cut.

Ruairi: Not *enough* stuff got cut!

Ryan: And as it is, we wish we could've weeded out more. I mean, I like the new record a lot. But there's a certain honesty and youthfulness to the first record that I like; and maybe that it's a little sloppier, the production is a *little* bit worse, none of us played quite as well. I don't know — I'm sort of *drawn* to music like that. Like, you listen to the Crimpshrine records, and there's inspired music *writing* going on, but in terms of the musician*ship*... I mean, I love amazingly high-quality, amazingly-produced records, but I also love fucking four-track recordings. Y'know? It takes a really great band to make a bad four-track recording amazing.

Brett: It was kinda cool, because when you went in to record this last record, you guys had the time and you had the engineer that could make it this really slick record, yet you came out with this really rough, really attacking and aggressive record — and still sloppy, in a cool sense.

Ruairi: [in a petulant, whiny voice] *I* didn't think it was sloppy! Fuck off! [laughter]

Scott: I think that has a lot to do with Kevin. Kevin is really *good* in his engineering. He can do a really awesome, clean-cut album, or he can do something that sounds just the way you play it.

Ryan: I think if Kevin wanted to polish us up more, he *could*, but I don't think he thought it was in our best interests. I mean, we could've gone out and rented different gear than we play through; do all this stuff and basically sound like a major label band, but there would be no point. It's not our sound.

Ruairi: But even when you listen to all the major-label Green Day albums, *Insomniac* is

...your mind is so nonchalant and fresh...



the most compelling, sonically.

Dave: I agree.

Ryan: You listen to the guitar tone at the beginning of what's that fucking song? The one that's like, "Duh-nuh! Duh-nuh! Duh-nuh! Duhnuh! Duhnuh!"

Dave: "Brain Stew".

Ryan: Yeah, they spent *hours* getting that guitar sound. And *that's* the kind of stuff Kevin can do.

Dave: One of the very compelling sonic things, specifically about *Rogue's March*, is that there's this sense of sloppy fucked-upness, yet it's *tight*, and it's got an incredibly full sound. It covers the range of megahertz — from the bottom end to the top end. I remember the night we were over at Jeremy's house [They had just brought over the as-yet unreleased vinyl of *Rogue's March*], and Brett was like, "Well, are you going to be able to hear the bass?" [A lack of full-sounding bass was a common complaint about earlier Kevin Army recordings.]

Scott: We also have Ryan in the band, who's a really great sound engineer, and knows what we're supposed to sound like. So when we're in mixing, it's always Ryan that goes, "Yeah, it needs to sound more like *that*." I think we're lucky to have somebody who's a really good engineer in the band, who can also kind of be the guy who represents us, and helps us sound the way we want to.

Dave: Okay...I hate to go back to this song again; but just to the beginning of the album — "Loaded Gun." The guitar comes in, then the drums come in and it has this very Black Flag-*Damaged* sound to it. Then suddenly, the whole band comes in and it's just massive-sounding. To me, that's a really interesting thing. I don't know if it's a crazy mixing trick, but the second guitar and bass come in, and suddenly it's full.

Ruairi: It's straightforward. We don't fool around with layering or anything like that.

Ryan: Yeah, we did more in this record than we did before, but we're pretty much a live-to-tape type of band. We overdubbed the vocals and guitar parts here and there. I mean, we recorded to 16-track, and that only leaves so much room for fucking around, really.

Scott: Yeah, it *seems* like a lot, if you haven't been able to work with that before.

Dave: I mean, yeah, you've got at least eight of 'em taken up with the drums.

Ryan: More than that...

Scott: Well, with all my cowbells and stuff.

Dave: All right there, Tommy Lee.

Scott: We'll go, "We should throw in another guitar track there," and Ryan'll go, "Eeehh...no. Sorry buddy, there's no room. You're not gonna get it!"

Ruairi: "No Ruairi, we shouldn't."
"What if we throw a harpsichord solo in there?"
"Ruairi, shut up."

Dave: That'd be *awesome*...like a harpsichord solo in that transition part at the end of "Graveyards". [laughter erupts]

John: I think we had to physically restrain Ruairi from going to the flea market and buying a pedal-steel guitar.

Ruairi: Yeah, on "Got a Backbeat" I wanted to add a pedal-steel guitar part.

Dave: That would've been *rad*! Hot Water Music did it on their last record and it sounded great!

Scott: Then we're *not* going to do it!

Ruairi: It's strange to get likened to contemporaries like Hot Water Music. The first time I heard Hot Water Music was because I kept reading about them in our reviews. "Oh, these guys sound just like us?" So I listened to it and went, "Okay...we *sing* sort of similar..." I'm a little bit dumbfounded when we're compared to contemporaries.

Dave: Yeah, but I think Hot Water Music sounds more like Fugazi and you guys sound a lot more like Leatherface.

Ryan: Actually, we got into Leatherface after we first got compared to them on our first record. It's the same sort of thing — we *like* 'em a lot, but we *really* weren't that influenced by 'em.

Ruairi: People are just insane about Leatherface; people are just *insane* about certain bands — Hot Water Music.

Brett: Best fuckin' band in the world!

Dave: Y'know? Of my four favorite records this past year, one of them is *Rogue's March*, the other one is *No Division* by Hot Water Music, the other one is *Moonpies for Misfits* — also by HWM, and the fourth is the live Clash album. I would have to say, in terms of people comparing Hot Water Music to American Steel, American Steel has a much more forward motion and a more out-of-control, and — not in a bad way — but *fucked-up* vibe. Hot Water Music is very controlled; they often tend to be a little more behind the beat, you tend to be ahead.

Ruairi: When I listened to them, I just thought, "We're so much *faster* than them," almost to the point where it sort of defies comparison.

Dave: So what *are* your influences?

Ryan: Punk bands?

Dave: Or any bands.

Ryan: As far as the punk stuff goes, the early Lookout! catalog is definitely a huge part of that. I've also got a bunch of old stuff like 7 Seconds, which I got into at first without really understanding where it came from. I just remember hearing 7 Seconds and just realizing, "Wow! This band isn't on a major label, and they like, are *good*?" It was really confusing to me. It was sort of like when I first found out that there were good bands in Berkeley and Oakland, and not like a bar band, but really *good*. It was kind of a revelation. And that real people could be musicians.

Brett: Do you find the heavy East Bay influence because it was always there in your face? I mean, I've never heard a band that sounds like you guys come out of the East Coast.

Ruairi: I'm proud to be an East Bay band. It was there where I first started getting into punk rock.

Ryan: I remember two years of sitting up late at night with Ruairi every few nights listening to bands like Crimpshrine, or whatever...

Ruairi: All the bands that the people on the other coast don't know about...

Ryan: ...Sewer Trout, Blatz, and all this kinda crap, sitting up late at night drinking and playing poker.

Ruairi: Special Forces...

Ryan: Totally!

Everyone: [somehow all singing in the same deep, melodramatic voice] ORLANDOOOO!


...ain't that hardnuckler, swashbuckler i was back then...

Ryan: Orlando X! [East Bay punk/Oi! icon, former chief of security at Gilman, former vocalist for Special Forces and United Blood, currently fronting Intrepid A.A.F. and head of security at Amoeba Records in San Francisco — one of the greatest, oddest characters you'll ever meet.] I used to *work* with that motherfucker!

Dave: Where was that?

Ryan: Rasputin's [Records] in Pleasant Hill. He'd be drunk at work. He'd get me drunk on our lunch break, and I was like 17. He'd take me to the bar, and be like [affects patented, melodramatic Orlando-Tone] "Serve this man." [table erupts] It was a lot of fun. Sitting up late at night, listening to that stuff all the time. It's sort of a nostalgic memory; it was this time in our lives when we didn't really do a whole lot except get drunk, listen to music and have a blast all the time.

Dave: Maybe you realize how fortunate you are to have all these amazing bands like Crimpshrine, Op Ivy and all the other old Lookout! bands to influence you, to say "Fuck! These people are from *here*!" I grew up in Sacramento, and I got kinda into punk in eighth grade, but everyone I was friends with in high school was into

Ryan: I mean, the same thing happened to me growing up in Lafayette [a suburban haven roughly ten miles east of Berkeley]. There was lots of stuff that I would've loved to have heard, that I never heard. I was listening to stuff like 7 Seconds, but I didn't know that I could go see Op Ivy any night of the fucking week, practically.

Brett: I know this is kind of a hard question, because it's kind of a fucked-up thing to answer, but I've had this conversation with you about it. With the way you sound and what you guys are doing...I've told you and you've told me that I'm crazy, but you guys *are* the band that — at fifteen you went and listened to Crimpshrine — you guys are the band now that kids are seeing, and are the Crimpshrine of *their* era. [*Rogue's March*] is a record that will be eternalized. It'll continuously sell like the Dead Kennedys; like Op Ivy...how does that feel?

Ruairi: Well, I don't know if that's true...

Johnny: I *hope* that that's what we do. I'd *way* rather sell a few records here and there and then ten years down years down the road, have people say, "It's kinda like that old American Steel sound." I'd rather influence a

Ruairi: If that's the case, that'd be awesome. There're so many great bands in the East Bay right now that it really frustrates me that it's not really observed; sort of the legacy of bands that came before sort of ruined things for kids now. If we can be one of those bands in the East Bay who makes people stop living in the past and start celebrating what's going on now, either musically or just scene-wise, that would be awesome. It's always a threat around here — "Oh, it'll never be like the days when Op Ivy was playing at Gilman."

Scott: No! Because back in the day — because I'm a little older than the rest of my band — you'd go see a show at Gilman that was like Crimpshrine, Op Ivy, and whoever was headlining.

Brett: Isocracy.

Scott: Yeah! Isocracy! *Headlining!* And you'd kinda watch Crimpshrine and everybody'd be ho-hum about 'em. One day Crimpshrine would be totally awesome; the next time you saw 'em they'd totally suck. There *was* that feeling about Op Ivy. Everybody kinda had that feeling; they were just the *shit* — but Crimpshrine, people were just kinda ho-hum about. And now, Crimpshrine's like this iconic band.

You'd kinda watch Crimpshrine and everybody'd be ho-hum about 'em. One day Crimpshrine would be totally awesome; the next time you saw 'em they'd totally suck.

SCOTT

Metal. I mean, you had random punk bands like the Yah-Mos, but punk was always a joke. There are so many kids who grew up in towns like I did, and I mean, Sacramento's only what, ninety miles from the East Bay...

John: ...It's a *long* ninety miles.

Dave: Yeah, it is! And all this brilliant shit was going on not that far away from where I was, but I had no idea about a lot of it until I moved down here in '94.

Ruairi: You came down at the wrong time — '94's when stuff started to change.

Dave: Yeah, I know, I look back now and go, "Fuck..."

bunch of people who want to play music than sell a million records.

Ryan: I wanna be like the Velvet Underground, who didn't sell much in their time, but everybody who listened to the Velvet Underground went out and started a band.

Ruairi: And if *that* happened, we could all go off and have solo careers. [laughter]

Ryan: Major label solo careers.

Brett: It's not so much *then* — it's *now*. It's like you were talking about sitting up and listening to records at two in the morning; people are doing that *now* with American Steel.

Ruairi: People are *fanatical* about Crimpshrine. People who like Crimpshrine now are *fanatical*.

Scott: Well, the first time I saw Crimpshrine, I was blown away. I was like, "OH MY GOD! This is the most *amazing* band." The next time — the first time I saw them was like at The Farm or some stupid place — then went to Gilman and went, "Is this the same band? They *suck* ! This is the worst band I've ever seen!" Which was probably due to the whole borrowed gear thing, and that they probably never practiced, and how drunk they were, or whatever.

Brett: You guys are talking about these bands you saw at Gilman Street. Gilman

Street people used to go and see shows and, I don't know if it's the whole '94 thing or what, but Gilman Street is jaded now. The East Bay is *jaded*. They go to Gilman Street on Friday nights because that's their family. There just happen to be annoying fucking bands that play in between them trying to hang out. That's the way I see Gilman Street.

Ryan: There are shows that I would agree with you with on that, but there's a lot that I wouldn't — and I'm there more than I probably should be. There are nights when bands play where there's like this whole new generation. I went to a show — I don't even remember who the hell was playing — but I didn't know anybody there except the old-time workers. There's a new generation of kids out there waiting to be inspired, and then there's the people our age who whine about it, complain that it's jaded, wish that they have a place where they could drink...

Ruairi: We had our fun; you guys can't have yours!

Ryan: Yeah. You just have to realize that there's a new generation there who's having a great time and you just aren't a part of it.

Ruairi: I think the first four years of getting into it is just inebriating.

Ryan: Yeah, we all have places that we go now and see bands liquored up and whatever, but I don't know. If you talk to your contemporaries, *they're* jaded about it, but if you talk to the kids, they're just excited to be there and to have a place to go.

Dave: A friend of mine from the old Benicia/Gilman contingent [Benicia is a small town on the outskirts of the Bay Area notable for spawning such bands as Fifteen, Pinhead Gunpowder, and Monsula] used to go to Gilman all the time back in the "old days"; since then, she's lived all over the country and become disconnected from the scene. She went back again recently — hadn't been there in like six years, and was like, "You know? I had to get outta there."

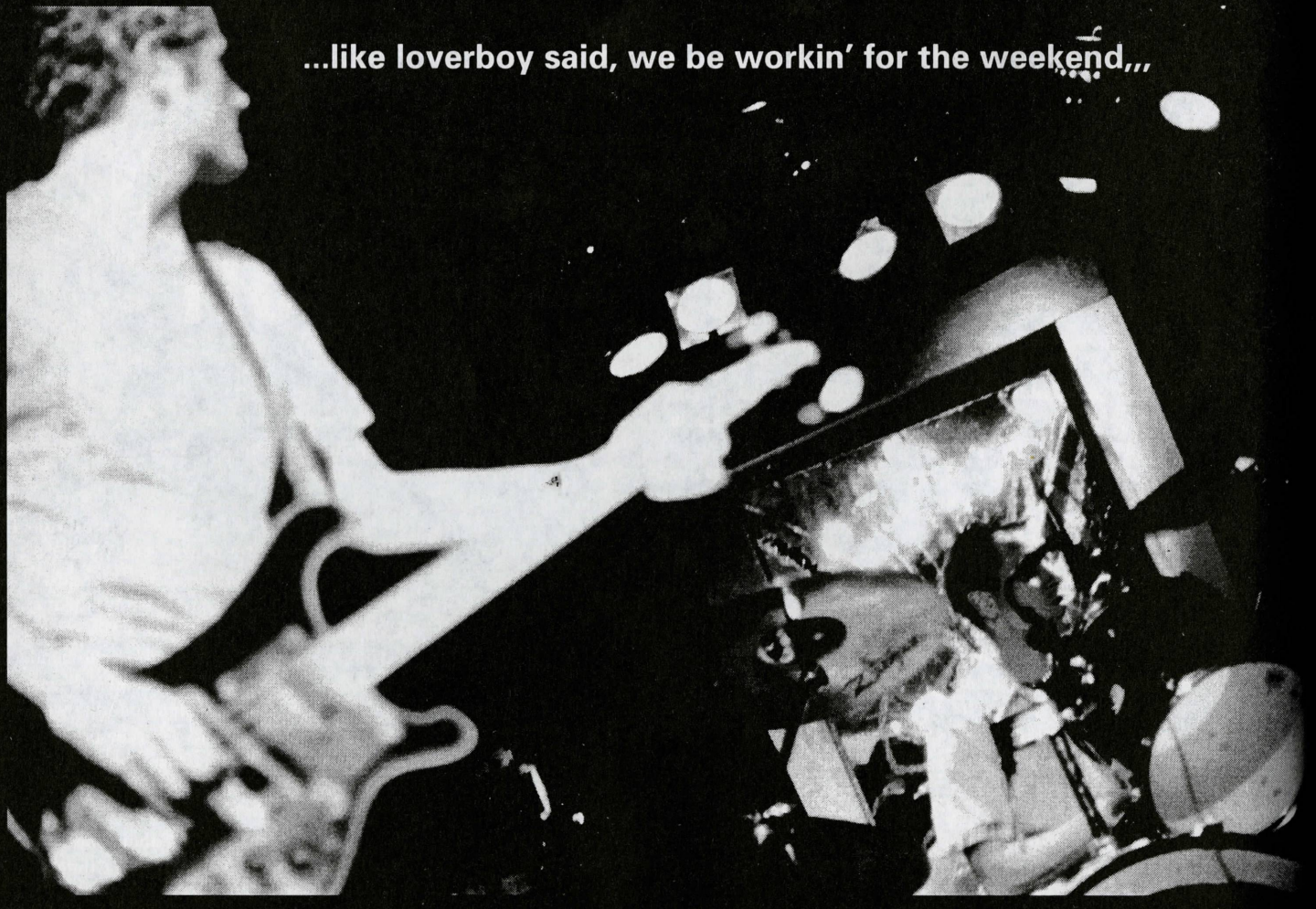
I spent a year hanging out at Gilman and felt like *I* had to get out of there. And that's something I struggle with, because Pete the Sticker Guy wrote recently in *MRR* about the "old fogeys" in *Hit List*. I mean, in relation to Vic Bondi, I'm very young, and don't really feel that old in terms of punk rock, but it's a *thing*. I mean, when is it time to give up and move on? Are we all just jaded?

Ruairi: Y'know? There's a time to just *step aside* and let the new crowd come in.

Dave: Where do you guys you stand in that?

Ruairi: I think, [in country bumpkin voice] "*A leg in both fields.*" Well, I think it's obvious that once you start playing in a band for a long enough time, you stop getting excited about every show. But hopefully, you're taking up somewhere somebody else stepped aside; the older musicians who stopped their bands and stepped aside, so you're filling their spot. So you're not the ones taking *away* everything, you're *adding* something. Maybe one day we'll sit around and be Jello Biafra and sort of run a record label and give out helpful advice every once in a while. [laughter]

Ryan: Of course we're less excited by a come-and-go show every weekend than we used to be. We see something like a hundred shows a year, and you can't quite have the same excitement when you had when you were fifteen years old and going to a show was like this amazing experience: you had to lie to your parents to go, then you had to shoulder-tap to sneak liquor and then make out with the girl behind the bushes. I mean, it's this



huge dramatic experience every weekend!

Dave: The record seems to be split in a way, between songs about relationships and politics. How would you guys touch on that?

Ryan: Both seem valid in their own sense. I think the things you're considering "relationships" aren't necessarily girl/guy relationships, but just *people* relationships. A lot of my stuff ended up being more people-oriented on this record, perhaps even more than on the first record, just because I was really sick at the time, so a lot of my shit revolved around people rather than caring much about large political stuff. But I think in general, if you feel things politically, it's important to put it out there, and to let people know; to try to inspire people to do better and change the world they live in, but there's also just matters of the heart — which are just as valid and just as important, but in a different way. But certainly worth putting on a record.

Ruairi: Any band could be boring if they were *all* of either one.

Ryan: I'm no more interested in an all-political band than I am in an all-romance band.

Ruairi: Yeah, exactly. You don't wanna hear about the vagaries of the heartbroken kid; you don't want to trivialize the poignancy of personal interaction. You also just don't wanna spout off too much about politics.

Ryan: And it gets down to that same thing about not drawing from one thing. If you mix it up a bit, everything means a little bit more. If you're willing to be really loud and brutal on one song and really quiet and sad on another, you convey your points better, in that you're willing to have dynamics. People don't fit in *boxes*, and when bands do, they don't challenge people or aren't as interesting.

Johnny: On any given day, you've got *all* the realms — personal *and* political. I mean, you get up and go to work and there's interactions with *people* as a whole, as well as with individuals. It's not true to yourself if you stick to either one.

Scott: Imagine having a friend you went and hung out with and they *only* talked about one thing. He'd be the most boring friend in the world! It's true...I mean, why as a band should you only follow one path? That's bullshit! As a human being, you're rounded. Ruairi works, he has girlfriends and he's into politics, so why should he only write about politics? Because that's what punk rockers are into? No...

Ruairi: If anything, they're not. [laughter]

Scott: Anarchy! I've got a good anarchy policy... So many kids have these Anarchy patches, and you kinda wanna walk up to them and go, "So, ya believe in anarchy?" "Yeah." "So you hate cops and believe that there should be no laws?" "Yeah." "Okay then, gimme your skateboard."

Ruairi: But also, a lot of people don't get what anarchy really is. Anarchy isn't the Wild Wild West; real political and conceptual anarchy is a lot more high-minded. I'm not an anarchist myself, but I probably would lean toward anarcho-syndicalism, maybe a little bit.

Dave: I think that's a valid extension of the conversation. I spent a some time in college studying anarchist theory, and really gained a lot from that. Personally and idealistically, I *would* identify myself as an anarchist. I mean, I'm not blindly charging into the future chanting "Anarchy, Anarchy, Anarchy!" I'm not throwing bricks through Starbucks windows. If anything, I buy coffee there. I'm sorry. I like their coffee. [laughter all around]

Ruairi: Anarchists towing the *Hit List* line!

Scott: My point is, there's the anarchists who we respect, and then there's the kids with the anarchy patches, who just don't fucking know what they're doing.

Ruairi: Who might be buying our records in the future... [laughter]

Ryan: It's the same as the kids from Danville [another suburban East Bay hamlet even farther away (both geographically and ideologically) from Berkeley] buying those AK Press "We Have Found New Homes For the Rich" t-shirts with the pictures of gravestones.

Dave: It's a problem if you don't look don't look beyond it intellectually. But it's a phase that I think is very valuable for people to go through, in the sense that, "Okay, we're questioning everything, we're trying to fuck with everything, we're trying to get somewhere — we're trying to get to some kind of truth." If that's a phase you go through between the ages of 16 and 21, that's great.

Ruairi: It teaches you more about the precepts of personal liberty and freedom. If that's your mindset that makes you learn about high-minded ideas like personal liberty, equality and freedom, then that's more than *any* history book's going to teach you in high school. If you actually learn and appreciate the ideals that are written and not practiced in our Constitution, then that's more than any history book will teach you.

Dave: It's like when I go to Gilman Street and see the kids with the Anarchy patches and go, "Kid, what're you doing?" on one level, but on *another* level I hope and say, "Well, you know, this is something they're going through and I *hope* they retain some of that." Because other people go through from that to just saying, fuck all that — like in the movie *SLC Punk*, where he just says, "Fuck it, I'm gonna be a lawyer." Did those types of people ever learn anything?

Ryan: But it's valid to make fun of those people — maybe especially to their faces — so they have to think a bit more about what they're talking about.

Ruairi: It's a *little* mean-spirited...

Ryan: A *little* bit, and I get criticized a lot for playing Devil's Advocate, but I think it's important to make people question everything that they're saying, so they can be very sure of the reasoning that they've taken to end up at their position. I appreciate people doing that to me because it makes me make sure that I have a solid basis for what I'm talking about. To me, making some kid explain why they're wearing something — and not that you'd wanna go up and just *do* that — but it's a good thing. It's good to make people feel a little bit uncomfortable about things like that and make them have to explain them instead of just being like, "Oh yeah, Dude! Anarchy's *so cool*! Yeah! Anarchy in the U.K.!" Because there's a lot of high-minded ideals that are associated with punk rock that most people don't think about enough to really have them really be high-minded, interesting or useful. But if they have to think about them a little more; do a little research to figure out find out what the hell it is they're talking about, yeah.

Ruairi: What the hell *is* COINTELPRO?

Scott: Yeah...what's "cointel"? Is that a change machine?

Ryan: Isn't that a phone company?

Ruairi: No it's "*The* Company"! Maybe they'll look up COINTELPRO and find out about a great piece of American history: the Black Panthers.

Dave: How do you feel about the Black Panthers?

Ruairi: If you just look at the fact at how

freaked out the government got at a bunch of politicized, organized black people together fighting for social change, without all the racist rhetoric, that it freaked them the *shit* out. Unity freaks them the *shit* out. It's freaky when you get a lot of people talking about socialism. The government's like "Okay, we'll deal with Watts riots. Watts riots are cool, we can deal with them once every ten years. We'll just let black people express their frustrations every once in awhile." And then suddenly, it's "What is this educated, politicized and well-organized group who are talking about altering the landscape of this country entirely?" But they're not doing it like the Nation of Islam, with any seeds of hatred. It's this idea of unity. Personally, I think the Black Panther movement's demise validated its existence. And it's unfortunate that its demise was so quick.

Ruairi: Right! Where's my acre and a mule?
Scott: I think that was part of the genius about the Black Panthers — they scared the government to death with their thoughts, and then scared the public to death with the pictures of them in the newspapers of them standing out in front of their headquarters with their assault rifles, which scared the general public...

Ruairi: ...Or *emboldened* the general public.

Scott: Right! And their thought process is what scared the government. Whether they planned it out or not, it came together really well.

Ruairi: The threat of the Black Panthers wasn't their guns, it was their intellect; and that's why they were taken so goddamn seriously.

Ryan: Right. Otherwise they just could've been brought down. But since they were intellectuals it was harder to weed them out.

Dave: At the same time, this is my caveat about the Panthers. In the early '70's, my dad worked with underpriveledged kids in Oak Park; a rough neighborhood in Sacramento. My dad worked very hard to try to get black kids off the streets, but *he* was scared of the Panthers. Because at that point, it had gotten away from that intellectual base and that's an important thing in *any* movement. I mean sure, you have people like Lenin, Trotsky, and high-minded people like that, but ultimately, you're filtering your message down to followers that are less educated and maybe less intelligent than the leaders. And it's the same thing with religion throughout the ages. You get sects; you get groups, and it gets diluted.

Ruairi: You get Stalin.

Dave: Exactly.

Ryan: Or deluded — "D-E" instead of "D-I." But that's true with all things. I mean, anybody can take a good cause and make it into a negative thing.
Dave: But how do we create responsible citizens?

Ruairi: Well, that's the frustration. The frustration that you may believe in certain things are for the collective good, for lack of a non-Marxist sounding term. And not everybody believes in the collective good, and maybe we *are* just bound to failure. It's a little depressing, but my personal theory is, "Yes, I'm really depressed by all this. I'm really depressed about the state of the American populace, but the important thing is, what other choice do I have?" What other choice *do* I have? It's what *I* believe in and it's the way I've chosen to live my life. And even if I believe it's futile or destined to failure, or even if I believe humanity as a whole is destined to failure, it doesn't matter. I'm going to live and die, and in the time I have, the only choice I have is to either have scruples about it or not. I'll be happy dying in a futile world knowing that I tried to do the right thing.

Ryan: I totally, totally agree. It reminds me, I was reading an article in *Punk Planet* last month. It was Bob Conrad talking about vegetarianism, but the subject matter is really irrelevant. It was that he got into this sort of like — what it sounded like to me, and I should really read the article again, because I kinda wanted to respond to the guy; it really pissed me off — there's really no point to personal responsibility, because society as a whole is gonna be fucked anyway. It seemed like the most ridiculous argument to me, ever. That I should lead a meaningless life because there's no hope. To me, even if the odds are against you, you've gotta do and make a little bright corner in the world around you. It just seems so important to take the responsibility upon yourself to make things as good as you can and to inspire as many people as you can. If you fail, you fail. But you never *really* fail when you've at least tried.

Ruairi: And, conversely, to be willing to accept inspiration when it comes your way.

Ryan: They were great at towing the legal line while being utterly subversive. Like, they were really good with their guns. They always carried their guns in a fairly legal fashion, but in such a way that it was *extremely* threatening. It's so great when you can follow a company or a country's legal guidelines and utterly horrify them, because *you* aren't the people they made those laws to protect, and yet you're using them to protect your point of view. I think *that* was really brilliant.

Dave: I remember watching a video of Stokley Carmichael talking about that. I think the great thing is how they *got* their guns. They didn't really *know* anything about communism, but they went to San Francisco, went to Chinatown, bought a bunch of copies of Mao's Little Red Book, and sold them to college students on the UC steps. They hadn't even *read* the book when they started selling it! But that gets back to Stokely Carmichael's quote — something to the effect of "Niggers with guns are gonna freak people out!" And they went to the State Capitol with their guns, and people freaked out.

Is the wool being pulled over our eyes now? I think so. How do people pull the wool over your eyes? That's a really good question. There's obviously an authoritarian agenda at work, and are you a part of that?

RUAIRI

Dave: I think that's a *very* important point. I think you fucking hit the nail on the head with that, Ruairi. Lately, I've been reading a biography of Cesar Chavez. I don't necessarily agree with a lot of his religious motivations. I personally am not *religiously* motivated, though I am *spiritually* motivated. I don't necessarily agree with all of his tenets, but in the sense that he got people to organize, and got people to think about their lot in life, and got people to *believe* in themselves, which I think is a very powerful thing and the means with which he did that, as well as the end those means were directed at. I mean, a lot of people followed Hitler because he made them believe in themselves as a people again, saying "We believe in Hitler because he resuscitated our economy." That's why so many Germans supported Hitler.

Ruairi: They didn't know what was going on.

Dave: Right. But in the sense of trying to resuscitate people's sense of value in themselves; it's something people need, and when done in a positive, non-manipulative way, that's something to be respected, and that's very much what I get out of your band. You guys may not be Cesar Chavez, but I do get that passion and that sense of striving for something that again, I got from the Clash. For me, it's the most valuable kind of punk rock. I mean, I love loud, obnoxious, aggressive music, but more than that, I love something that brings people together and inspires them.

Ruairi: When you mentioned Hitler, this crossed my mind, and it ties into the things you were talking about earlier. Americans and people who weren't in Germany in the time, people will talk about it and ask, "How the hell did one man pull the wool over an entire nation's eyes? How did they do that? How did they turn a culturally advanced, technologically advanced, historically rich people into Evil Incarnate? How did that happen?" Well, hmm... Is the wool being pulled over our eyes now? *I* think so. How *do* people pull the wool over your eyes? That's a really good question. There's obviously an authoritarian agenda at work, and are you a part of that? Are you an erstwhile conspirator to that?

Dave: And it goes back to the age-old question, and it's very simplistic, but it's very true: "Are you a part of the solution or are you a part of the problem?"

Ruairi: I guess I was trying to avoid saying that. [laughter]

Dave: I think that it's a complete truism. And it's something that I try to live by, in a sense. I mean, there are *obviously* gray areas in any aspect of life, but at some level, you can distill practically anything by it. And hopefully, people believe, and I believe this, that most of the reason that it gets perverted is because people are basically good, but people are scared; we're scared to be hurt.

Ruairi: And that ties into Cesar Chavez. Cesar Chavez was this Robin Hood who didn't believe in Robin Hoods. He believed in people making changes as individuals. Obviously at this point — people harp on it all the time, the media harps on it all the time, activists harp on it all the time — people don't think they can make a difference as individuals. So we have these Robin Hood characters, we have Zapata, we have the martyrs of this and that. Maybe those are important figures, but the fact is, Robin Hood's sort of a liability. We don't want to believe that we are a nation of followers... or a *species* of followers.

Brett: Okay, I'd like to ask Ryan — so you're twenty-four years old and you're diagnosed with leukemia. How does that affect your life, your view on the band, your relationship with the band, and the way that you view what you're doing in the band and your music from that point forward?

Ryan: It affected everything. But I mean, from Day One, when we found out I had leukemia we were about a week-and-a-half or two weeks away from what was intended to be about six months of touring. You've gotta look at the personal impact that we'd quit our jobs or given notice that we were about to leave town. We'd bought all of our tour merchandise — from t-shirts to records, so there's that kind of debt. From there, there's "Was I gonna get better? Was I not?" These three guys were left holding on, having to scrape together new jobs, new apartments and new lives while waiting to what the hell is gonna happen with me. On top of that, there's all sorts of other questions like health care. Right now, I'm lucky enough to be on my parents' insurance, which expires for two months. Then I can get COBRA for three years, but you gotta pay for that, so at some point, I have to find a job that covers my medical problems.

Scott: Without looking at your past medical history.

Ryan: So we're not talking about being able to go out and get Kaiser on my own, because they won't cover me. Or if they *will* cover me, they *won't* cover me for leukemia. I've gotta find something with group health insurance, which basically means I gotta have a job, so there's issues like that. Then there's just sort of issues like, "What the fuck am I doing?" and "What are my plans?" and "How the hell did we get here so fast?" Just sort of reevaluating who you are. I mean, I *love* what we do as people. I love all of these guys as people, but you get into things like — we've done a lot of tours, and we've *consistently* lost large amounts of money. I don't really feel *bad* about that. That never bothered me. But on the other hand, if you're suddenly looking at it from the point of, "How can we do this and take care of ourselves, too," like, we can't keep pretending that we're eighteen years old forever; none of us having medical insurance, none of us taking care of ourselves and going out on the road. To some people that's okay, but I'd like the people I hang out with to live to be older than thirty years old.

Scott: If I could just interject, though, I think the band was probably one of the most stable things to Ryan, because it was actually something to look forward to. Ryan called me up and said, "Dude, I have leukemia," but the way I always looked at it was, "Wow. Too bad we don't get to tour this summer, but man, when Ryan's better and once he's done with his cancer, we're going on tour." It was never like "Fuck, dude. Ryan's got cancer." It was like, "Well, when' he's done with his chemotherapy, then life's gonna be good again." We never had any thoughts of stopping.

Ruairi: I think a lot of that comes from Ryan just being a benchmark of how to deal with that type of thing. I think Ryan really set an example in how he dealt with it personally. As close as me and Ryan are, as long as we've been friends, I'll never really know the truth of how he felt at the time, but he made everyone else stronger with his exemplary actions, and I think that made everything better. I think everyone else was really good about it. And I believe strongly that that sort of positive attitude had so much to do with the fact that...

Ryan: ...I'm still here to piss you off today!

Ruairi: Yeah, exactly.

Scott: Yeah, you fuckin' jerk! You didn't get any nicer! [laughter]

Ruairi: In interviews, people talk about Ryan's health, but we all see this as sort of a non-issue to this day. It was something that was dealt with so open-mindedly — I can't say

...all my words are sharpened with sorrow...



this enough: Ryan was so strong about it and everyone else was so strong about it as well.

Ryan: In some ways it *is* a non-issue, like we keep making plans as if that isn't out there, but in other ways, it's *there* all the time. Like, every week when we're on tour, I've gotta get a blood test. Right now, I'm arguing with my insurance company over if whether they're going to cover me — I need this one kind of shot that I can't give myself that I need every four weeks, and my insurance company technically doesn't cover anything outside of California. Can we get them to cover that? Or do I have to fly home in the middle of tour? But actually, sort of back to what Scott was saying, the record, *Rogue's March*, was the greatest thing *ever* for being sick. We were planning on going in and doing it before I got sick; we were gonna go into the studio for seven days and it'd be over. As it turned out we had to split it up between each of my treatments. So I'd go into the hospital for a week, be sick as a dog for like two weeks — the whole bit; throwing up twenty hours a day, the whole thing.

Ruairi: This is where both Lookout! and Kevin Army both get props.

Ryan: *Major* props for working our schedule. And then, suddenly, I'd start feeling better, and we'd get to go do two days in the studio. It was this total thing to keep my mind focused on; of something to look forward to through all this shit.

Scott: Ryan and I talked a lot about things to look forward to, and that's what he's always the best at. He called me up, we had the whole conversation; we were in tears. A few days later, I talked to Ryan and he's like "It's only gonna *take* like six months. And then, when I'm done with this stupid chemotherapy thing, we're gonna be going on tour, so it's a pretty short time away." I mean, that was paraphrased, but it was essentially like, "Whatever, it's only six months."

Ryan: What a *fucking* six months! [explosive laughter]

Ruairi: If you've known Ryan long enough — I sort of have this death wish; I sorta assume I'm gonna die young — Ryan's this guy who sorta poked me and went, "You're a *dipshit*." Ryan's like the guy that wants to be old and like...

Scott: Sit on his porch with a shotgun loaded with rock salt going [assumes crotchety old man voice] "Get off my lawn!"

Ruairi: I don't know if I could have been as

strong of a person if this happened to me; I have a lot of respect for Ryan for that. It sounds trite, but I'm sure it's true of the rest of the guys — and all of Ryan's really close friends who aren't in the band — it really altered *my* life. I think that was sort of the end of my adolescence. I stayed awake for two days, staring at the ceiling, having all these ridiculous epiphanies about my father, as well. I just went, "Oh my God! What the fuck am I doing?" I think it's been positive all around. I don't know if I've even told Ryan that, but I think it's been, oddly enough, positive in a lot of weird ways.

Brett: Do you think the band would be as tight as it is today if this hadn't happened?

Johnny: I think the album is, just because it was recorded over such a long period of time. We could sort of sit down with it more; think about it more. It was going to be recorded right before we went on tour, but instead it got recorded over a series of months while we were stuck in town.

changed the way we do the band. In some ways, maybe in ways that make me kind of sad. But sad in the same way that you're kind of sad about losing your childhood or something like that. We can't really conduct ourselves with the same bravado that we once did. We're no less in our convictions, but at the same time...

Johnny: We can't play *any* house; sleep on *any* floor.

Ryan: Yeah. Part of the lingering health aftereffects of this whole situation is that I can't necessarily sleep on a total scumfuck floor — I'm still on medication for another two years — so it's not really the greatest idea for me to stay in these scumfuck punk houses around the country. Some great houses, some great people, but it's *really* easy for me to get sick compared to most people. It's things like that...

Scott: Not to mention the twelve pack of beer you drank that night...

Ryan: There could be a point there.

Ruairi: Oh yeah.

Ruairi: I have problems with the last record — it's sorta like if you wrote down some poetry and left it in a shoebox for about five years and then read it, you'll go "What the fuck was I *thinking*?"

Ryan: Or your first 'zine from when you were sixteen...

Ruairi: Ryan's got transcripts from mine...

Ryan: I do! And they're going on E-Bay next week! [laughter]

Scott: Something like "Sloppy Fucking Drunk" may not reflect where we are now, but Ruairi wrote it when he was like fifteen years old.

Dave: "Sloppy Fucking Drunk" is one of the least emotionally bare and potentially embarrassing songs *on* that record.

It's pretty easy when you're sitting alone in a hospital room every day for months on end to feel really isolated and alone. I think a lot of that sort of isolation had a big effect on me.

RYAN.

Scott: I think your question really, as far as tightness of friends — I think we're all really close as friends anyway. When Ryan got sick, we didn't even *need* to come together as friends, because all of us were such close friends anyway. It was like, "Okay, Ryan's sick, we're gonna take care of him, things are gonna happen. No big deal." We're all that close anyway. It didn't really *bring* many people together.

Dave: Ruairi, how much of what you've been through with Ryan affected what you're doing with your life?

Ruairi: Without going into too much depth, last year was just a burly, burly year. It's been life-altering, and it's been other things, too. I'm fully convicted with writing music and being in this band.

Ryan: In the same vein, I think it's kind of

Ryan: Yeah, I can't drink like I used to, either.

Scott: No, you still pretty much *can*... [laughter]

Ryan: I really don't though — big occasions I do.

Ruairi: It's hard, because we used to be quite the carpetbaggers together.

Ryan: So stuff has changed in that way. I don't know, we're not a bunch of seventeen year-old rabble-rousers anymore. Things are just different.

Brett: Well, this might actually come through to the difference between the first records — where the first one was kids making a record, the second record is people faced with reality and being grown-up; making more of a *reality* record.

Ruairi: Well, it's so short — there's nothing to lose from that.

Scott: Then there's our "brooding sophomore release..."

Ruairi: You're *not* helping us sell records here!

Brett: I hate to come back to this, because we kind of touched on it, but we also talked about the impact the cancer had on the band. I'm curious, even if this isn't part of the interview, because *I* could never fathom this — I'm sure a lot of people said to you, "I understand, and if there's anything I can do," but they *don't* understand. How did this personally affect you and maybe affect your lyrics? I mean in the worst case, was it like, "This record is what I leave behind?"

Ryan: There was a lot of that at the beginning. When I first found out, honestly, one of

my first reactions was, "How the fuck am I gonna make this record before I die?" And that's *totally* for real. My prognosis improved as things went along, but when they first talked to me, they weren't really giving me a lot of hope to live outside a year and a half. I was totally freaked out. It was like, we've worked our asses off just to be what we are now — to lose that without making the record...I mean, we were *just* about to make the record. But it was also just a *huge* motivator to get off our asses and get it done, and get it done *right*. I wrote all of my lyrics besides "Graveyards" [after the diagnosis] Like, "There Could Be More"? There's no *way* in a different situation I would have put that on a record. Mostly just because it's kind of a sappy love song. I mean, there's sappy love songs and then there's *sappy love songs*, but that one pretty much takes the cake. Other than that, the other way that affected me personally is that, though I've got a lot of really great friends, and I've got a lot of faith in those people and hopefully they've got a lot of faith in me. But it's pretty easy when you're sitting alone in a hospital room every day for months on end to feel really isolated and alone. I think a lot of that sort of isolation had a big effect on me.

Brett: There's gotta be a lot of self-realization and self-questioning going on.

Ryan: Absolutely. I think more questioning. It'd be nice if there was more realization than questioning. I'm not sure if that's always the case. You have to remember to keep stuff in perspective in those situations. You have to remember that those people still care and still want to be there for you. It's hard thing to do, y'know? It was a total mindfuck all around.

Brett: Did you ever sit around and go, "I'm 24! This isn't cool! What the fuck?"

Ryan: Yeah, but on the other hand, I've had a lot of my family die from cancer and I've lost an awful lot of both family members and close friends over the years. Stuff like that doesn't really surprise me like it could other people my age who perhaps haven't had that many people go. My dad died from cancer when I was little, my grandparents; I've had all sorts of friends die. But was I surprised? Yeah. Like Ruairi said, I always sort of expected to be the one in my mid-seventies, while I watched the rest of these motherfuckers self-destruct somewhere in their thirties. But I was never that shocked by the whole thing, it was just sort of like, "Well isn't *this* just a bitch?"

Brett: You're sitting there saying that, "My father died at this point; obviously I might have to worry about it someday, but I'm twenty-fucking-four years old!"

Ryan: Well, when my dad first got cancer — he had melanoma, which, if it goes beyond its first stage is pretty much a death sentence — when he first had it, he was 28 years old, which was two years before I was born. They took it out, but it came back twelve years later and got him. By the time they caught it, it had spread throughout his system. So he wasn't really that much older than me, and he was lucky as hell — especially with technology being what it was back then — that we were even *born*. Or at least *we* were lucky.

Ruairi: I think now is probably a good time to probably point out the strength of your mother through all this.

Ryan: My family's amazing. I've also got three brothers, a sister, two stepsisters and a stepbrother and an awesome stepfather. You can't get through something like terminal sickness on your own, and those people were *all* very awesome.

Brett: It seems like you've got an extended family here, as well, that was like, "Focus on the positive, get better, we've got a fucking record to write!"

Ruairi: We took Ryan's cue on that, though. We were like, "The record doesn't matter!" Lookout! was like, "The record doesn't matter!" Kevin's like, "Nothing matters!" Ryan's like, "The record *matters*." We're like, "Okay, the record matters! Let's go!"

Scott: What really bugs me, and it *still* gets to me, Ryan said before we'd even started the album, "I'm gonna record this album if this is the fucking last thing I do!" I was like, "Dude! Fuck you! Don't say something like that!" But I could see the desperation there.

Ryan: In regards to the extended family thing, in a lot of underground scenes — punk rock kids and definitely gay people — we create our own families. I'm lucky enough to have a really great blood family, but there's a whole 'nother family we've created all on our own — which has its own dysfunctions and everything — but we all watch out for each other. One of the other things I found through punk rock was a whole 'nother family of people who were very genuine that I really cared about; we really treated each other like family.

Ruairi: We wouldn't still be a band if it weren't for people who were like, "Yeah, I had a great time at that house party you guys played. You guys stink, but I had a good time." [laughter]

Brett: [Scott], consider the impact it had on you to hear him say, "I'm gonna make this record if this is the last thing I do," if you take that and multiply that by a fucking gazillion you might begin to imagine what it means to say...

Scott: Oh yeah! I mean, it lit a fire under *my* ass. My boss was like, "Scott, what's the deal? You give me three days' notice that you're gonna go up and record in Berkeley?" I was like, "Fine! You can *fire* me!" I'm gonna make my album, and I'm gonna do it for my band — I'd quit my job regardless for the band, because you can always get another job — but also, it's like, "Look, Ryan wants to get this album done and we've got two days to do it? Hey job, you can go to hell!" You can always find another job. You *can't* always find another band.

Brett: Or another friend...

Dave: Or another band *this* good.

Scott. Well, you don't think that when you're in the band.

Ryan: Well, you do, because you remember your old bands. [laughter]

Brett: So I hate to ask the lamest question ever asked in an interview — but the name "American Steel" wasn't that like a building or something?

Ryan: I used to live in a warehouse in West Oakland. I lived there a couple times. Once in a recording studio and once in my own place. There was just a big American Steel warehouse across the street. We were gonna be playing a show and we needed a name right away for a flyer.

Ruairi: I think it's important to mention that we started off as a joke band, and that's where the name comes from, too.

Ryan: At this point, we were emulating Sewer Trout. Ruairi played guitar and sang, I played bass, a friend of ours, Mike Fuller — who is actually a bass player — played drums most of the time. We were just throwing something together. It was a total joke. Then, slowly, we got John in the band, then we got Jamie in the band; an old friend of ours who was *actually* a drummer. We became more and more of a band, but the name just sort of stuck.

Ruairi: They didn't like my other names.

Dave: What were some of the other names?

Ryan: George Brazil! George Brazil's Bastard Sons!

Scott: Something and the Rossmoor Swank?
Ruairi: Jerry Atric and the Rossmoor Swank.

Dave: Yes!!! My post office is in Rossmoor! [Rossmoor is an area of Walnut Creek filled exclusively with retirement homes inhabited almost entirely by crotchety old rich people. *Contra Costa Times* columnist Joe Garofoli refers to it as "Planet Rossmoor", which is really about the most apt moniker for the area I've ever heard. It's a *surreal* place.]

Ruairi: It was sort of like, me and Ryan hanging out one night and going, "Hey, let's do a fucking gutter-punk band."

Ryan: It was just like, "Let's do a drunk-punk band."

Dave: Were you poking fun at the drunk-punks?

Ruairi: We were just a bunch of *drunks*!

Ryan: Neither one of us had a band, I'd actually never played an *instrument* in a band. I'd been a singer once, but like, when we first started, I could hardly play guitar. It was for kicks. It was for shits 'n' giggles. We'd play music, and it was a kick in the ass. That's all there was to it. There was no long-term goal.

Ruairi: But then we started to have a practice once a month...

Ryan: We actually played fairly often for as big of a joke as we were...

Ruairi: I said, "Well, if we're gonna be a joke band, we should at least have a *few* songs sitting around that are funny. Like 'Cheer Up', 'Sloppy Fucking Drunk'."

Ryan: "Latchkey..."

Ruairi: Then I started calling people and saying, "Let's do band practice again." And again. The other people involved were like, "I thought this was a joke band?"

Ryan: Ruairi and I were totally gung-ho.

Ruairi: Me and Ryan were like, "Hey, we've got nothing to do!"

Ryan: Yeah, we had *no* lives whatsoever!

Ruairi: So we started writing some music.

Ryan: We were either drunk or hung over at the time. Suddenly, the next thing we knew, we found ourselves with a backlog of songs. I was growing more competent with my instrument, Ruairi was already decent.

Brett: Did you guys just say, "Fuck yeah! We like these songs?" or what?

Ryan: Well, our friend Mike Fuller was playing drums and he didn't have the time anymore, so we got John to play drums.

Johnny: The tempo of our songs was as fast as I could play them. [laughter] That was the tempo of *every* song.

Ryan: But John was really into it, and that was the main thing. We sort of grew from there. Then we asked our friend Jamie, who was an excellent drummer if he'd like to play, so we sorta grew there again playing with a *real* drummer. John was a really good bass player.

Ruairi: We were like, "We've got a really good drummer and a really good bass player — what do we do now?"

Ryan: We decided to tour -

John: *After* putting out a 7"...

Ryan: Yeah, Ernst and New Disorder deciding to put out a 7" [the now out-of-print *Hope Wanted* EP] sort of inspired us to keep going.

Ruairi: I was like, "Let's play Gilman." So we played Gilman and Ernst was like, "Hey, let's make a record!" I was like, "Okay!"

Ryan: And then Jamie wasn't willing to tour, so it was like, "Let's find a drummer." Then we found Scott, and that's sort of how we ended up where we are today — it went from being this serious two little kids' drinking joke to...well, whatever the hell it is we are now.

Scott: Four *older* kids drinking!

Brett: Well, props to Ernst for going out at that point and seeing kind of a joke band and catching kind of an ember in the fire!

Ryan: Yeah, we probably wouldn't still be a band if it wasn't for Ernst. If you think of who we were at the time...our very first show at Gilman — it was us, this band Crackrock from Florida who you've probably never heard, but get their 7" — in the tradition of Crimpshrine; bad sound quality, amazing songwriting. It was a six band show. Who was it?

Johnny: We opened, then Crackrock, then Half Empty, then Subincision, then Link 80...and one other band.
Ryan: Well, whoever it was, we were this teeny little band playing Gilman for the first time, and I remember seeing Ernst sitting on the side of the stage just looking at us like, "Wow!" And it was *so* cool — you're this teeny little band and this guy offers to put out a 7" for you. At the time we had already recorded like seventeen songs at this crappy little studio and were talking about putting out a record ourselves. We had no finances...what the fuck were *we* talking about? It totally changed everything, and Ernst rules for that. Literally, we probably wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for him putting that record out. Then the next day, we went to the City — I stole a work van and we went to go see Crackrock and Half Empty, got really drunk and had a lot of fun! A very inspirational weekend.

Brett: So you guys have this East Bay background, you watch all these bands. Next thing you know, you're playing Gilman Street and you're on Lookout! records, which spawned the majority of where you guys are coming from. How's that?

Ryan: It's neat in a way. That's sort of like, you talk to a bunch of fifteen-year-olds and they think how neat it would be to play Gilman — they'd shit their pants. But once you've done it a bunch, it's like, "Neat. Gilman."

Brett: But you know what's cool about you guys playing Gilman? You know how we were talking about Gilman earlier? How everyone's so nonchalant? There's a *different* crowd there when you guys play. There's an energy there; there's a spark in a burnt-out fire that starts glowing when you guys play at Gilman Street that I don't see at any other show. It's tota'ly fucking cool; it's almost like — the Rebirth of Slick; US3, there ya go. [laughter]

Ryan: What I like about the Lookout! thing is that Lookout!'s put out some *really* amazing records over the years, and now is that they're sort of putting out punk rock records again.

Dave: Yeah!

Ryan: I think they started that awhile back, actually when they put out the Black Fork record and the Criminals record. Suddenly they were putting out local, relevant bands again. Whether you like those bands or not, they were definitely local and relevant. I like being part of that. I think that's a kick in the ass!

Scott: A lot of people said, when we went to

Lookout! — we had a small group of people, not very many, who said, "Why would you sign to Lookout!? They don't even put out any good punk rock records anymore." Another group of people came out saying, after our record came out, "Wow, it's cool that Lookout!'s getting back to their roots."

Dave: They even advertise you that way.

Scott: Like yeah, Ann Beretta and stuff like that. Like real punk rock bands.

Brett: Lookout!, at this point, no longer has Avail. There really isn't too much in the way of punk rock going on at that label, when suddenly, you guys come along and are *what's going on*. So how does it feel seeing American Steel on Lookout! — as far as the Lookout! records you grew up listening to, AmSteel is pretty much the only thing going that's akin to that sound today.

Ryan: There's this little insignia on the back of the records — what that really means to me is that people like Chris and Tristin *help* us be a *band*. I mean, of course there's something cool about being on the label that so many bands you admired you were on, but we didn't sign to Lookout! because Crimpshrine was on Lookout!. We went with Lookout! because we met those people, they were decent to us, they treated us well, and they made us feel comfortable. And they help us do the things we wanted to do. I think that has a lot more to do with why we are where we are label-wise than because of any legacy.

Brett: One thing I was really stoked on is that your record came out sounding the way it did. I mean, it sounds so non-late 90's Lookout!...

Ryan: They never told us to do a goddamn thing.

Scott: They said, "Go record your album."
Ryan: "So who're you gonna record with?" "Kevin Army." "Okay, here's your budget. Thank you very much." Then we handed them the record. I don't know if they ever heard it until it was mastered.

Dave: Dan, for example, is somebody who works at Lookout!. We were talking today about the record and how great both of us thought it was, and he said, "You know, I had a tape of the record for like seven months before it came out." He said that he'd listened to it so many times before it came out that he had to go back and make another tape because he broke the tape that it was on originally. To have somebody at your label who wears out a tape of your band is a really valuable and cool thing.

Ryan: I think they've all made us feel that way — obviously at different levels. I think they've all given us the feeling that they *honestly* enjoy our band. They don't just want to help us out because we're on the label and they feel they have to, but because they *want* to. And *of course* that's nice.

Brett: If you guys got a chance to go on a Kid Rock tour — and I know there's an extreme disgust for Kid Rock among you — but if you had the chance to go out and use that stage as your forum, would you take that?
Ruairi: I think a more eloquent way of putting it is — we spoke earlier about how our politics are different, so therefore we don't want to project a body politic. Likewise, I think there are differing opinions in the band among choices a band at this juncture might take. Some of us are more hardline about punk rock ethos than others, but the fact is that we won't let anything be divisive within the band. So the fact is, if it doesn't work with all of us, it doesn't work. If Scott wanted to be on a major label and John didn't, we wouldn't be on one. There's not one strong band body politic about it, it's just that we refuse to let things divide us. We agree on things by consensus. It maintains our solidarity and our longevity.

Johnny: About the Kid Rock reference, I think we'd all agree that we'd never tour with him.

Brett: But back to your lyrics, you guys obviously have a strong feeling for what you guys are saying, and if you had a forum to say that to 10 to 15,000 kids a night...

Ryan: So we'd get out there and play to 50,000 people a night and 90 percent of those people are fucking frat rock jock guys who wanna get in the pit. Like when Nirvana did "Polly" and a couple of people raped a little girl to "Polly." I mean, you get in an arena rock situation like that and it doesn't mean that much. That doesn't mean that you should only preach to the converted, but think about going out with about going out with a band like Blink-182. They're a bunch of fucking morons! They're a bunch of sexist assholes! What good does it do to tap into their 30,000-plus a night audience? But beyond that, just talk about the indignity of having to play with *idiots* like that!

Ruairi: We won't be isolated, but we won't be divided. To put it into words that people would understand, I love being on an independent label. I believe in independent labels. Maybe not for the same reasons that a lot of punk rockers do, but I believe in them. I don't wanna work for Pepsico, I don't wanna work for Warner Bros., and the fact of the matter is, I don't think a major label could offer us anything that was actually beneficial to us. So it's kind of a moot point in my mind. It's not like I have this hard line dogmatism about it. I mean, at the same time, I don't really see a problem with being on a major label and making a video for MTV. That's me personally...

Ryan: *I* do!

Ruairi: But I know Ryan's against it, and since Ryan's against it, it's not gonna happen. And I don't really care enough anyway. Like I said,

Some of us are more hardline about punk rock ethos than others, but the fact is that we won't let anything be divisive within the band. So the fact is, if it doesn't work with all of us, it doesn't work.

RUAIRI

I'd like to make a living doing this, but I'm not gonna do it stepping on other people's backs, and I'm not gonna sacrifice my own morals.

Ryan: I think most of the people who truly have something compelling to say and who choose to do it without huge commercial support end up being heard and appreciated. People like Tom Waits — or a band like Fugazi. And there's room out there to say something and not have to say it grossly limited audience. There are people who are hungering for something more than something that's currently being offered by the major labels, which is currently a bunch of wannabe soul-R&B crap.

Ruairi: As a real musician, you don't want to be a part of any organization who doesn't actually like your music...

Ryan: It just seems like there's an unlimited audience out there, and I don't think we're limited because we choose not to play with somebody like Kid Rock. If anything, I think choosing to play with somebody like that compromise our integrity and keep us from reaching more people. We'd be "That band who opened up for Kid Rock," instead of "That band who gives a fuck about what they do."

Ruairi: This is where we start talking about Chumbawamba and the Clash.

Dave: But I think Chumbawamba were in a *very* different situation than the Clash.

Ruairi: Well, of course. Back then, *everyone* was on a major label.

Dave: I read an interview in *The Big Takeover* recently with Joe Strummer, and he said, "I wish, in retrospect, that we would've been an indie band." He said that it didn't really seem like an option for them, but in retrospect, he wished they could've been a spearhead of that kind of revolution. It's a valid point. I think the Chumbawamba side of the equation is very much like the Rage Against the Machine side of the equation.

Ruairi: I mean, once you're on a major label, anything'll fly. It doesn't matter if it's punk rock or not — if MTV pushes it, it'll fly. The whole idea that there was a "Punk Rock Explosion" — whether you believe it was Nirvana or Green Day — doesn't matter anymore. I think Blink-182 proved that. It's always gonna be there. There are always going to be punk rock bands who are major-label bands that sell records on MTV. It's sort of a tacit of the industry. If you play all your cards right in the industry circles, then they'll do it. Some great bands got overlooked — some great bands signed to major labels. I don't care, personally, that they signed to majors — Samiam, great band; Jawbreaker, great band...

Ryan: ...God, I held it against them *so* badly...

Ruairi: ...I'm actually a little bummed that they didn't succeed, because I think they would've been a good influence.

Dave: Jawbox, as well. In some ways, of all three of those bands, Jawbox made the best albums of their career on a major.

Ryan: And Jawbreaker and Samiam made fairly disappointing records...

Dave: Green Day made their best record on a major.

Ruairi: Not at all! Green Day's best records were on Lookout!!

Brett: Even *Insomniac*? Even the stuff they re-recorded was so much *heavier*, so much more where they wanted to be.

Ruairi: *1039 Smoothed Out Slappy Hours*, the compilation of those 7"'s? That's the end-all, be-all Green Day.

Dave: And I *love* that record — "Paper Lanterns" on there is my favorite Green Day *song*, but my favorite Green Day *album* is *Insomniac*!

Ruairi: Let's talk about the most overlooked East Bay major-label bands — the first one, Sweet Baby. Time-Warner. 1989. That record, *It's a Girl* [now available on Lookout!] is my favorite East Bay record *ever*. And it's on a major label! The way they recorded it was so true and honest. They recorded it live. Vocals? Live. It blew people away.

Ryan: Yeah, about 3,000 of them. [laughter]

Ruairi: Green Day/Sweet Children were obviously biting off Sweet Baby, and biting off Op Ivy a little bit later...

Dave: ...Not to mention Buzzcocks, Stiff Little Fingers...

Ruairi: ...But Green Day were Golden Boys. I don't wanna say they didn't earn what they have, but they've gotten a lot of good breaks. Industry breaks which Samiam didn't get, which Jawbreaker didn't get. They're a great band, and they deserve what they got, but Samiam's a great band and they didn't deserve what they got. Jawbreaker's a great band and they didn't get what they deserved. I was a little bummed that they signed to major labels, but I really hoped they'd do well. I really hoped they'd do as well as Green Day, just because they're great bands. With Samiam — Sunny Day Real Estate, a great band, just beat 'em to the punch. I hate the fact that I love Samiam so much, because to me, they were the progenitors of emo music, which I hate.

Dave: What about Rites of Spring?

Scott: What about another *real* question? [And thus the "emo question" thread that's run through my last three interviews was thwarted.]

Brett: Do you guys see any projected destination?

Ryan: I think we're gonna go tour a lot, and that defines a lot of what we're doing. Because each time we go on tour, it sort of changes what we are and who we are. The only thing I can think of is that the next record will probably be more *involved*.

Ruairi: I don't want to say too much, but I feel safe saying that the next record will challenge us, and it'll probably challenge other people too. I can't write "Cheer Up" a million times. I can't write "Loaded Gun" a million times.

Dave: Which is really too bad, 'cuz it's a fucking great song! [laughter]

Ruairi: Well...it'll be interesting.

Brett: So what have you learned from this band?

Ruairi: I honestly think that it's made me a better person in the sense that I've always had a tendency to have a really laid-back attitude about things. I always had a really negative perception of ambition in general, and this band has helped me sort of see as ambition as not always an evil thing. Which is a pretty big step for me as well.

Dave: Or a different kind of ambition, as well.

Ruairi: Well, ambition in general, I sort of viewed as being self-absorbed and evil. I had this really hardline attitude about pure ambition in anything. Maybe I was just justifying my laid-back attitude. I have a really frenetic mind, and it kind of helps me exercise my mind in that sense.

Dave: Like exercise in the aerobic sense or exorcise in the *Exorcist* sense of the word?

Ruairi: Probably a little bit of both. Writing songs — I get frenetic about it. I usually spare the rest of the guys the trouble — when I'm sitting around in my room at like 5am "Oh, I have to be at work at four hours, but this little transition here...I'm gonna make life *hell* for Scott!"

Ryan: When we first, first started, I was probably 20 and Ruairi was probably seventeen or eighteen. We've grown up together; we've just changed a lot.

Dave: How old are you Ruairi?

Ruairi: 22.

Dave: Wow!
Ruairi: How old did you think I was?

and seeing the country.
Ruairi: With *any* band, and not just ours in particular, there has to be a pretty *damn* good reason to forfeit...

Ryan: ...Everything...

Ruairi: Yeah, everything — you're willing to regress to a huddled mass, as it were. There has to be some form of incredible drive — it really struck me because I have this real love for ferrets. [Everyone starts to giggle.] I'm going somewhere with this! One of my closest, oldest friends, has a couple ferrets. I'm like Uncle Ruairi to them. I'm like, "Man, ferrets are cool, dogs are cool; I want a dog, I want a ferret." Then I'm like, "Wait a minute, I can't do that because I've dedicated my life to being on the road so much and just being a Rock Guy." You're a transient. Transient with ambition. I go, "I can't get a ferret, because I couldn't take care of it responsibly." This is why it's sad, because my second thought was, "Well, I can't really have a girlfriend, either!"

year — I love making records. I like the process of recording, I like when people finally hear it; that's really exciting. To some people it's all about the shows, and I love playing live, but I *love* records. I think they're just the coolest thing ever.
Ruairi: We're studio gangsters, basically.

Ryan: And beyond that, those *special* shows. You can never predict what they're gonna be, because sometimes you show up to a show like, "I can't believe we're here, this is total bullshit. What is this? Our first tour, we're playing in this kid's garage for his grandmother..." Then it turns into the best thing you've ever played in your life. Or playing some total fucking rock club and going, "This is going to be *so* lame — this is a dumb Rock Club," and suddenly there's 700 kids there jumping up and down going nuts. We're like, "How the fuck did this happen!?"
Scott: So, someday, when that *happens*...
[laughter]

You can make compelling and interesting music that's challenging to people without making exactly what they need — or think they want.

RYAN

Dave: Like 25 or 26. I'm like the youngest person I run into on a regular basis with the exception of various ex-girlfriends.

Ruairi: Most of my friends are usually a couple years older or a couple years younger than me, but I'm usually the youngest person around.

Scott: But as a friend, you're more of like a father figure.

Ryan: Like Ed Asner.

Brett: In an ideal world — which we obviously don't live in — what's the reason for American Steel?

Ryan: I want the fucking cash!
Scott: It's all about touring and having fun

[laughter]
Brett: So you want people to understand what you're saying? Or do you want to go out and do the "band thing"?

Ruairi: I'd love to give a selfless answer, but I don't know if I can. I love writing music, and if I can make a living at it, I'd love to do that. I'll *say* that. I don't mean that I wanna be a millionaire at a major label or anything, but it's my first love. Some people find it trivial that you want to make money doing things are expressive and sort of look down on people who make a living not actually "working".

Ryan: To answer Brett's question, I think the two most satisfying things about playing in a band — and honestly, I don't think people realize what you have to give up to be in a band that tries to tour six months out of the

Ryan: Those sort of things, and the ability to do something creative that actually seems *meaningful* — I mean, how much do we get to do during our day-to-day existence that actually seems meaningful? Being a band seems to be a meaningful thing to me. It comes from inside of me — whereas, the work I do, though I like company I work for and they're decent people...

Brett: But your boss won't give you a break! [unison groan from around the table at the lyrical reference] So while we're on the topic of songs and lyrics, when you guys are playing at Gilman and you look down and see people singing along, are you thinking, "Do these people *really* understand what I'm saying?" Does it matter?

Johnny: I'm usually thinking, "Oh, so *that's*

how the song goes!" [laughter]
Ruairi: You hear musicians saying, [in a poncey English accent] "I don't really give a shit whot the fock people think about it! I write music for me!" It's always this caveat like, "Why did you write a bad album?" "I wrote it for *me* okay? I wrote a bad album for *me*!" When I write a song, I don't write it just for me. I don't write it about just any one person, either. It's about a million people — or even if I'm writing about a person, it's a composite, and I'm writing it for the guys in the band, too! It's for *everybody*. I want people to *like* it, also. I don't necessarily adjust it the way I think people will like it, but I want to be playing music people like, too. It's sort of part of the whole process. I don't feel part of that statement; I hate it when people say, "I don't give a shit if people like it or not!" I *do* care if people like it!

Ryan: Yeah, but you can make compelling and interesting music that's challenging to people without making exactly what they need — or think they want. I can think of bands who got big who complained that people showed up at their shows who *obviously* didn't get what was going on.

Ruairi: I don't think *we* run that risk right now. [laughter]

Brett: If you go to sleep knowing somebody came to your show, liked that catchy tune that you wrote, but don't understand the music, do you feel like your day is complete?

Ruairi: I *don't* assume that they didn't understand the music.

Brett: Let's say you *know* they don't understand the music. Let's say they don't have a fucking *clue* about the music, but they say, "Hey! That number was *catchy*!" Can you feel complete saying, "Hey, we wrote a cool song?" Or do you think, "Yeah...but they didn't quite get what we were saying!"

Ryan: If a guy comes up to you and says, "Yeah, I heard your song, and what I got out of it was a strong message to do the opposite." That'd suck.

Dave: So let's talk about your -isms...

Ruairi: I'd say the rest of the band is stuck with some of my isms that aren't theirs, and that's gotta suck a bit for them.

Ryan: Nah...I mean, I'm half-Irish/half-Swedish, and a lot of that Irish stuff crosses over in ways. Also in stuff you'd never think about, like that my Swedish folk heritage isn't that much different than his Irish folk heritage, though there's much less of a "struggle" perspective.

Scott: One thing I think that all of us have to say a lot about, is our mothers. And it's kinda weird, I don't know...but *all* of us have a lot of respect for our moms. They pretty much raised us on our own, mostly with Ruairi and me.

Brett: So do you think that this is something you guys take from your upbringing, as far as family unity? Because you guys seem to come through with *lyrical* unity almost as strong as Op Ivy did — where it's like, "Let's unite, let's feel *this* way." You guys were talking about the Black Panthers; how they united and their voices *as* one were a lot stronger than the voice *of* one. It seems like you guys are coming through on the punk rock scene, saying, "This is how *we* feel, does anybody else feel this way?"

Ruairi: Well, we're not about to write another unity song.

Dave: Hey — there's nothing wrong with a unity song!

Ruairi: Sham 69 did a good job back in '79, seems like Op Ivy did a pretty good job ten years later.

Dave: ...And ten years later, American Steel!

Ruairi: We're not a *unity* band. I mean, I'm down with unity, but *punk rock* unity is — I mean, I don't want to sound like I'm dissing punk rock or the punk community, but it's *larger* than us. Real life is larger than us. Unity on a large scale is more important than us. People who take punk rock shows *so* seriously; I mean, it's great, it's a niche that certain people fall into — and I'm one of 'em — but there's a larger world out there to think about *while* you're there. It doesn't mean you need to leave it.

Ryan: I think community is there for you to create. I mean, there are a lot of people who are "punk rock" but they've never tried to create much of anything; help each other out or anything. I mean, I feel like *I* have a community of people; a lot of people who've been working at Gilman for a long time; people who I hang out with; or even these people here — we have our own little community or our family or whatever. But the idea that punk rock is supposed to be unified as this large mass of people...

Ruairi: Who are so independent-minded...
Ryan: ...Yeah, who are so independent-minded and so busy being so fucking wasted all the time and challenging everything. You know? It's a load of crap. It's like the idea that you should be unified with all of humanity when half of humanity is a bunch of blathering morons. There are fucking *stupid* people.

Brett: But as a band who take their music and lyrics so seriously; you don't take something so seriously just to say, "I'm standing apart." It's gotta be a piece of a larger thing — something far from completed or a missing piece or whatever. There's *obviously* something going on.

Ruairi: I'd love to see unity on a larger scale. Personally, I believe that's one of the ways we can deal with the racial dysfunction in this country, which is a huge social aberration; it's this sort of unique flaw. While patriots will say it's what makes us strong and subversives would say it's what makes us weak, the United States is *so* much an influence on the rest of the globe. If you believe in social change — if you're a Third Worldist or what have you politically, you need to believe that real global social change won't happen unless it happens in the United States first. We have a sphere of influence all over the world. You can't just sort of escape the ills of this country. If you feel frustration here, for example, if you're Irish and you say, "Well, I'm Irish, so all I believe in is the IRA and the Struggle," or "I'm Palestinian and all I believe in is the Palestinian movement," or "I'm Hispanic and all I believe in is the Zapatistas."

We got into a long discussion about how concurrency is important in global social change the other night, but really, you're not going to realize global social change until there's a significant shift in what's going on in this country right now. I think a lot of has to do with racial and class divides in this country — even though our lowest classes are better off than a lot of people in the rest of the world. It's the issue of, until the United States is a classless society, the United States won't be a color-blind society. Until the United States is a classless, color-blind society, the rest of the world won't be able to enforce radical social change. The impetus is on us. The impetus is on people reading this right now. It's on me, it's on you; it's on everyone, to change things significantly in this country so we're not a negative global influence anymore; and further, so we're a positive one. When our leaders say "We're spreading democracy across the globe," it doesn't mean they're spreading capitalism, it means they're spreading democracy.

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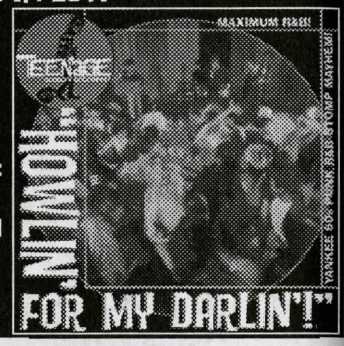

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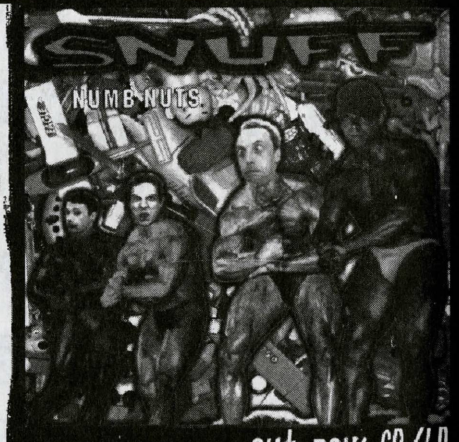

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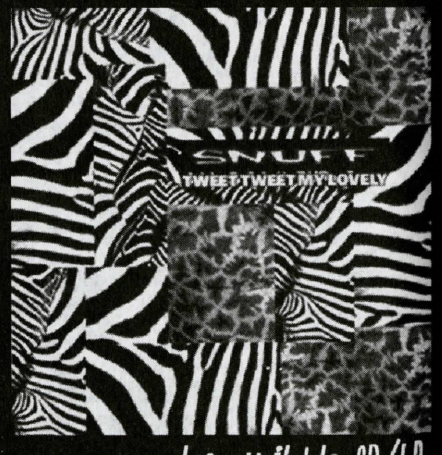

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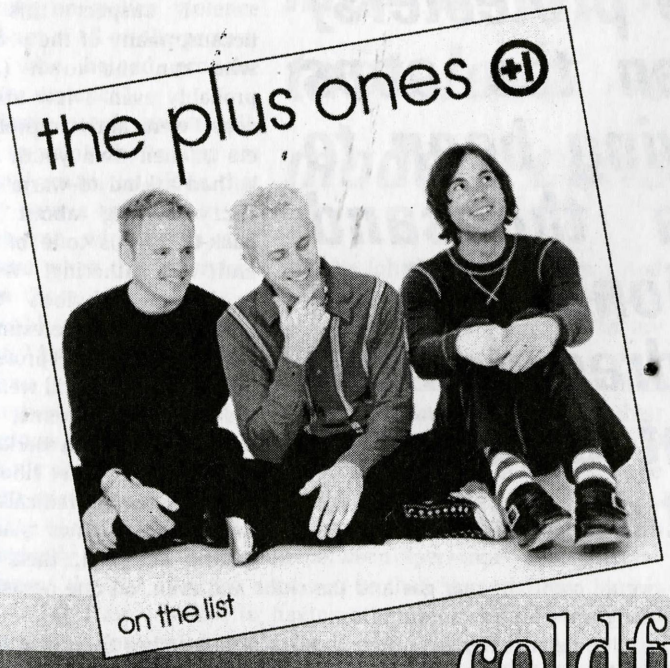


coldfront records

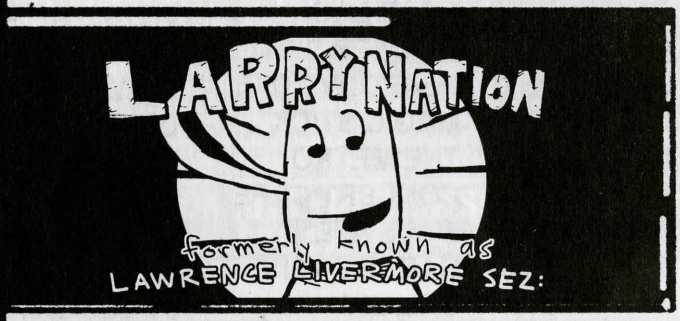
HIT SQUAD

If you read this column last issue, you'll remember my friend Danny, the middle-class anarchist. Ironically, while I was busy finishing the column, he was having his arm broken in five places by the Metropolitan Police.

Naturally he was more than slightly annoyed by this, and over some beers a few weeks later, we talked about how it happened. "What makes me really angry," he said, "was that I wasn't doing anything. I was just standing off to the side watching."

I found it hard to resist saying, "*This time* you weren't doing anything.." He's had a few run-ins with the police and would have had quite a few more if they'd been clever enough to catch him.

It's true, though, that this time he was a innocent victim of police brutality. He'd been watching a demonstration in support of the Seattle anti-WTO protests when about a hundred mask-wearing proponents of the "Destroy everything" school



burst out of the crowd and tried to take over the streets.

The police had been expecting a major demonstration and riot like the one we had last summer. They were made to look like fools that time, being completely unprepared for the scale of the rioting. They weren't going to make that mistake again.

There were thousands of them, more police than demonstrators, in fact, and they'd stood there looking bored while the usual political speeches and drumbeating went on. Unlike the police, I wasn't being paid to be there, so I finally went home, only about five minutes, it turned out, before hell briefly broke loose.

In addition to Danny's injuries, a policeman was stomped by a group of about six "anarchists" and put in the hospital with permanent damage to his spine. A police vehicle was overturned and burned, about 40 people arrested, and about 10 others injured, most of them policemen.

Considering the pain he'd been in and the crimp it had put in his career (he's a writer, so he rather needs his right arm), it wasn't surprising that Danny wasn't feeling too upbeat about the police. "I wouldn't mind if someone came along and shot the lot of them," he said at one point.

I don't know why, but I felt compelled to get him to see both sides of the story. There's no excuse for a cop repeatedly whacking an innocent bystander with a club, but was there any more excuse for the clowns who started throwing bricks at the cops and then melted into the crowd of mostly nonviolent demonstrators? One of the reasons that fighting is generally a bad idea is that it has a tendency to get out of hand, and when it does, most of the rules of civilized behavior go out the window.

I'm no different. If someone in the middle of a group of people were throwing rocks at me, my first priority would be to get at him and make him stop. I wouldn't deliberately bang into innocent people on my way, but they wouldn't be my first concern. If they want to avoid getting hurt, they can either get out of the way, or, better still, they can stop the guy who's throwing rocks at me.

Much of the debate over what happened at Seattle centers around each side-cops and demonstrators-crying, "They started it!" I wasn't there, though a number of my friends were. Most of them blamed it on the cops too, but having been to at least a thousand demonstrations and at least a hundred demonstrations that turned into riots, I'm not so sure.

I've seen times when the cops totally went nuts and attacked a peaceful crowd, but I've also seen times when the crowd was determined to start a riot and did whatever it had to do to make it happen. My guess is that some of both was happening in Seattle.

Because Seattle's a "liberal" city, the demonstrators were actually allowed to gather in the streets; in a less tolerant town, let alone the "police state" many protesters claim we're living in, the marches would have been stopped by whatever force necessary. You didn't notice the Chinese military worrying too much about civilian casualties at Tiananmen Square, did you?

Most of [the protesters] blamed it on the cops too, but having been to at least a thousand demonstrations and at least a hundred demonstrations that turned into riots, I'm not so sure.

I suspect this is because many of the people who run the town (and probably even a few of the cops) were antiwar protesters in their own youth and so had a kind of warm and fuzzy feeling about the back-to-the-60s tone of the anti-WTO gathering. When it became obvious that they'd grossly underestimated the scale of the protests, they overreacted and went to the opposite extreme. It used to happen in Berkeley all the time; the liberals would cheer the radicals on until the windows started getting smashed, then out would come the tear gas and the clubs and even, on one occasion, the guns with live ammunition.

I've been reading through a series of dispatches from Seattle in the February issue of *Maximum Rock'n'roll*. It was valuable commentary and I'm glad they published it, but there are a couple view-

points I'd question. One was the notion that the left had somehow "won" some great victory by temporarily interfering with the WTO's ability to meet. No doubt this provided an emotional charge, but isn't it really just the politics of symbolism? WTO members can just as easily make dirty deals over the phone or in a more secure city, so the real work of the WTO was barely affected by the Seatle protests.

If the point of Seattle was to call attention to the dangers and excesses of the WTO, it was a marginal failure there as well. True, a lot more people have heard of the WTO now than before, but not many more understand what it is or why it's a problem. Ask the average American what "WTO" means to him and he'll probably say "Those kids rioting in Seattle."

And you can't blame it all on the media. Here in Britain the media were rather sympathetic to the protesters, at least before the rioting broke out. There is a lot of anger about the Americans using the WTO to force us to accept genetically modified organisms and hormone-treated meat. But as the old journalistic saying goes, "If it bleeds, it leads," and once violence broke out, that was the story, not the intricacies and complexities of international trade negotiations.

About right now I can imagine thousands of nice little left-wingers and anarchists crying with outrage, "But almost all of us were peaceful and non-violent! The police totally overreacted to a couple hundred troublemakers and we got blamed for it!"

I understand your feelings. I've been attacked and tear-gassed and chased down alleys by crazed club-wielding policemen too. But aren't you making the same mistake as Danny did by blaming his injuries completely on police violence and not at all on the protesters who helped provoke police violence?

Some people aren't willing to admit that police are even human, let alone that they have a right not to get showered with rocks and bottles when they're trying to do the job they're paid to do. And even those of you who don't want to see cops' heads get broken probably think they don't have a right to attack people who are "only" breaking windows or looting stores.

I'll admit, I had mixed feelings when I saw them taking out a Starbucks. I hate Starbucks, even more than I hate McDonald's. To me, it typifies the most tasteless excesses of modern consumer society.

You may hate Starbucks and Nike. I hate Starbucks and Nike. Whether we have a right to express that hatred by smashing their windows is open to question. But what's not open to question is that it's part of the police's job to protect property. If they didn't do it, the vast majority of people would be up in arms.

One of the "black bloc" anarchists writing in *MRR* came up with a logically tortured distinction between "personal" and "private" property, the gist of which seems to be that "personal" property is something I am justified in having whereas "private" property is something I don't think you're justified in having. In other words, you're perfectly entitled to loot one of those pairs of $150 sneakers from Niketown (Mr. or Ms. "black bloc" approvingly mentioned the looting), but what happens if you're running down the street carrying those sneakers and I decide I need them more than you do?

Whether they're now considered "personal" property or "private" property, the reality is that if I'm bigger than you or have a better weapon, such semantic distinctions make no difference, because they're going to be MY property. Being a good anarchist, of course, you wouldn't dream of calling the police on me, but about 98% of the American public would prefer to have the police, with all their faults, sort out such problems instead of a mask-wearing, club-wielding street gang.

So, all you peaceful protesters who were unjustly gassed and beaten, answer me this: what did you expect the police to do? Sure, it would be nice if they could have just stood by and let you have your peaceful protest, but there was a certain number of people among you who weren't going to let it be peaceful. Whether the police or the anarchists started it is irrelevant; once a situation gets out of control, you have the choice of getting it back under control yourself, or knowing that the police will come in and do it for you, and probably not in a nice way.

Ideally the hundred or two "black bloc" types could be assigned a separate area of the city where they could fight it out to their hearts' content with the police. But because at heart they're cowardly thugs, they're not going to do that. They're going to use thousands of innocent people as a human shield, hoping that people who get clubbed or gassed will thus become radicalized and join them in their riot. They don't give a shit if you get hurt or even killed, so tell me again, how are they any different from the worst sort of police?

Many of the writers in *MRR* agonized over how to reconcile the tactics used by peaceful protesters and not-so-peaceful ones. I don't see how they can be reconciled. There's certainly some overlap, but the two groups are after fundamentally different things. The great majority wants to alert the world to the dangers of the WTO and work for either its reform or abolition. The "black bloc" or whatever they'll be calling themselve next time, are convinced that they're morally superior to everyone else, and have the right to violently impose their views on others.

Someone once defined "fascism" as the imposition of aesthetic standards by political means. The ultimate example is Hitler, who decided that blue-eyed blonds were the best-looking people and set out to kill everyone else. That might sound like a far cry from smashing Starbucks windows because you don't like their aesthetics, but ultimately it's the same principle.

Another example: in *MRR*, Vanessa Vyselka chortled over how crowds of protesters had surrounded and harassed "anyone in a suit." Some revolution! "You're going to dress in a better style or we'll make your life hell!" Where are these fashion police when

dog-on-a-string crusties or bellbottom-wearing retro-hippies make our streets unsightly?

Sure, her reasoning is that corporate types mostly wear suits, but then so do millions of ordinary working people. All the boys at my Catholic school had to wear suits to class; should we have been attacked by a mob for supporting corporate capitalism? More to the point, when police wade into a crowd attacking anyone who "looks like" a protester, maybe they're just responding the same way. I mean, to an outsider, one punk looks pretty much the same as another.

People trying to build on the alleged "success" of the Seattle protests are going to have a tough time of it. Next time the police are going to be better prepared, and will respond more quickly to any signs of trouble, which is exactly what happened here in London this year: the police were widely criticized for letting things get out of hand in June, so they brought massive force in November. Danny, with his broken arm, paid the price for that, but so did the anti-WTO movement: last summer as many as 25,000 people turned up; in November it was down to one or two thousand.

The police are a known quantity. You can predict pretty accurately how they're going to behave. What the protest movement needs to sort out is its own identity. Is it to be about a few hundred people smashing things up and throwing bricks, or a few hundred thousand people successfully bringing important issues to the attention of the broader public? I don't think you can have both.

Millions of years of evolutionary history show us that ultimately intelligence and adaptability win out over strength and brute force. Want to trash Starbucks? Don't smash their windows, smash their image. Use your brains and imagination to make them an object of ridicule. They can replace every window you can break, but once you've shattered their image as a semi-cool place to drink coffee, they can never replace that.

The bad publicity Nike got over foreign sweatshops did more to hurt them (and change their policies) than any number of trashed Niketowns, and the continuing growth of vegetarianism and animal rights awareness will hurt McDonald's in ways that dwarf the ludicrous efforts of a few brick-throwing anarchists.

Ultimately, if you're smarter than your opposition, you'll win. If you try to contend on a field where the state has a near-monopoly, i.e., the field of violence, you'll not only get crushed, you'll make life worse for millions of the people you claim to be supporting.

I personally favor reforming, not abolishing, the WTO. Enough reasonable argument and I could be convinced otherwise, but unlike some, I don't see globalization as the earthly manifestation of Satan, merely an understandable and logical phenomenon with which we're going to have to contend for the foreseeable future. To portray the WTO or the messy globalization process as a sinister "conspiracy" sounds too much like the paranoid views of the old John Birchers and isolationists, who were terrified that America was on the verge of being overrun by communists and foreigners.

The most important thing is to keep learning and to keep talking about these issues. Knowledge and dialogue and understanding are powerful weapons, perhaps the most powerful of all, and they're the last things likely to result from a brick through a window or a brick to the head. ⊕



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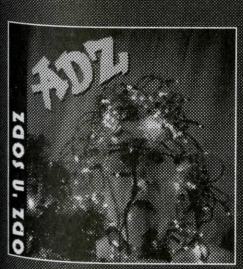

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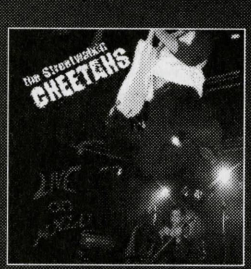

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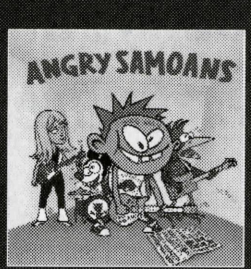

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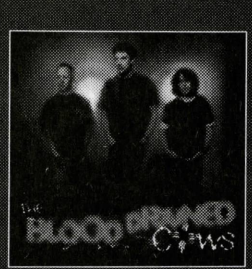

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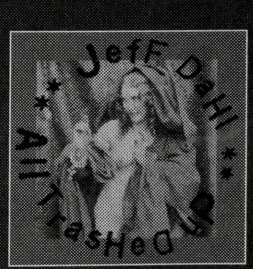

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THE FUTURE IS NOW

It was in a nondescript and tiny conference room in London, on the 15th of February, 1993, in the Kensington offices of a now-defunct-record company called Imago Records, that I got my first glimpse of the future of music.

By this, I don't mean the sounds, styles, or genres themselves. With so much music in so many different varieties available, each individual determines his or her own future music preferences. Who really cares what a pundit like myself might say? For instance, when I was young, the papers screamed, "Springsteen is the future of rock 'n' roll!" and I never came close to buying that one, either. Ha! What a bore.

Likewise, nowadays some precocious smartypants will tell you that Electronica, or Trip-Hop, or this or that flavor just being



invented is the "future, daddy-O", and that "nothing else matters." Yawn. Whereas I have often found that the "future" for me can even be the distant past. I.e., even music made before I was born, such as timeless 1930's recordings by Louis Armstrong, Leadbelly, Bessie Smith, the Mills Brothers, and Fats Waller, is "new" music if I'm hearing it for the first time. After all, if it's new to you, it's new. Anything that turns one on matters, period, end stop.

The record industry is going to split, and there's going to be the ever-corporate entertainment monopoly, because they've already decided to eliminate hardware anyway.

No, what I mean by "the future," is not what music we will get and listen to, but how we will get it—so much different than we do today, or have for a century. The person who clued me in to what was coming is one of the intellectual giants in music in the last quarter of the 20th Century. His name is David Thomas, and I'd been sent to London to interview him by that aforementioned, badly-managed record label (so badly managed that they blew $600 sending me to do the piece for a magazine that itself was about to fold, *Creem*). The massive-bodied Thomas is best known as the leader of one hell of an intriguing band, Pere Ubu—check out their fascinating debut LP *The Modern Dance* from 22 years ago—but it was he who was captivated on that day, when, in the midst of a discussion about bootlegs of Pere Ubu and his legendary earlier band, Rocket From the Tombs, he stopped abruptly to scrutinize the state-of-the art Sony D3 walkman I was recording the interview with.

It was a model he hadn't seen before, one I had spent some extra buckaroonies on so that I could see the recording levels light up, to insure I didn't conduct one-shot interviews and go home to find an empty tape. As he fingered the Walkman, studying it, he suddenly launched into this very piece of clairvoyance, by way of explanation on the bootleg (i.e., grass roots, collectors' music) issue:

"Clearly, what's going to happen is the record industry is going to split, and there's going to be the ever-corporate entertainment monopoly, because they've already decided to eliminate hardware anyway. The CD is out. All these other things, these digital cassettes, none of that stuff. It's all going to disappear. Do not buy those machines. They will disappear."

"Because," he continued, "I know that Phillips Corp. and Sony Corp. have decided to dump all that hardware, and they're moving into satellite transmissions and pure software, so that there will be nothing left to bootleg anymore. If you eliminate the hardware and the unit that the software is contained on, then you eliminate the possibilities of bootlegging it. So what will happen is, the real record business that I'm concerned with will return to the '50s. It'll return to people selling records out of the back of cars to Mom and Pop shops who specialize. The big bucks era will be gone. Or the big bucks will get even bigger. The Madonna level of things will always exist, and they'll have this Mom and Pop shop stuff at the bottom, at another level, and nothing at all is going to be in between. And when it reaches that point, that will be good."

"But how," I asked seven years ago, "can they do away with hardware? What will we play our music on?" "Easy," he shot back. "You'll just download albums on your computer and some bank will deduct $20 from your account, whether it's Elvis Presley or Pere Ubu. Music is not music to these people, it's just information data for transmission, like any other data."

His argument struck a chord with me, since in 1993 I was only in my fourth year of buying CDs (and CD players) after a solid 15 years of amassing a generous and much-beloved vinyl record collection. Whereas in 1985 I might have scoffed at Thomas for exaggerating, we had already seen first hand how the record business was changing both the software and the hardware before our very eyes after 80 years of vinyl (since it beat out Edison's cylinders).

Still, his prediction sounded like something that might occur several decades hence, if at all. In 1993, like most people, I had never even heard of "the internet", much less realized its impending pervasiveness; had never conceived of the very service I would use to send the

column you are reading to my editor; had no way of knowing that the "future" was, in fact, just around the corner. In 1993, if you disagreed with Thomas, could you have e-mailed him to tell him so, like you can e-mail me now if you disagree with this column.

Mind you, for the last six years since I've gotten online, all the music I've heard from the net is little snippets of songs that take too long to download, "information data" that takes up so much memory I might as well have downloaded the Manhattan phone book (white and yellow pages). And I've listened to a live concert broadcast on my friend's dinky little computer speaker, which reminded me of someone listening to transistor radios when they were first invented. Talk about tinny.

But the technology is still in its infancy. Here's an analogy. When I was a Second Grader in 1969, I loved playing with my father's bulky, expensive, electric adding machine in his business office. Now, like everyone else, I nonchalantly crunch my numbers on a tiny solar-powered calculator that makes my Dad's "modern" machine look like a Model T.

And sure enough, two years ago I was sent the press release that Thomas had foreseen. An online "music entertainment company" (almost the exact words Thomas had used) was debuting "a new system for music fans to purchase and download music tracks over the internet, marking a *fundamental shift in the traditional music process* (my emphasis)." Said the company's chairman and CEO, "This will offer artists alternate formats to the traditional CD and offer consumers greater flexibility in how they purchase music."

Moreover, in conjunction with the previously-referred-to Phillips folks, those who download the tracks "can create their own custom CDs using a Philips recordable CD drive or other recordable drives which will soon be supported." Now we all speak the language of "MP3."

I'd read some articles about how the technology keeps improving on the download time. As the speed of downloading increases even more, and the "music player" technology" and memory issues are tackled, it looks like not only the "traditional CD" is in danger (I laugh when I hear the words "CD" and "traditional" being coupled like this, but let that pass), but—and here's the real rub—the "Traditional CD store" as well.

Like Thomas, I'm betting that only those retailers who provide a service larger than the mere stocking of shelves will survive. Like the specialty Mom and Pops of his vision, the clientele hungry for the real underground music will still need them badly in order to even find out what exists out there.

In other words, just 'cause some little, barely-promoted band has a website doesn't mean that it will be getting 1/1000th as many hits as, say, Madonna's is. Or the Madonnas of the future. Which means that, even if this little unknown band offers to sell its own music on the net, to be downloaded for a fee (or even for free!), it still may well have to hawk its wares out the back of the car, just like the legendary labels of the '20s-'50s (and Stiff Records in 1976) had to do. Or at gigs. Non-specialty retail and distributors may take the biggest hit of all here.

For in the years to come, we as a people might not need the Mega-chain stores any more for our best-seller purchases. If you mellow out as you get older and want the new Springsteen record in the year 2018 when he's 69 years old (and is still the "future of rock 'n' roll!"), you'll just download it and, presto!, you got it. Baby, you were born to run—just not to the store anymore. If that seems weird to you, you're right alongside me, particularly if (like me) you're still playing your beloved record collection as if it were a trip to some fossil museum. But it's



inevitable, isn't it?

"What about artwork," you say? C'mon man, that end has diminished so much since CDs came in, I don't know why they even bother any more. Compare the beautiful maroon felt cover of the Bee Gees 1969 pre-disco double-LP pop masterpiece *Odessa* to the totally blah, tiny, plain red CD reissue version, and you'll see what I mean. On CD after CD, what were once foot-long splashes of color, light, and attitude are now so minuscule that it's like the difference between a Jackson Pollack painting and that same painting as a postage stamp.

True, downloading whole LPs is a phenomenon that's still not totally here yet. And just as the Wright Brothers' work at Kitty Hawk didn't mean that rich North Carolinians could book their flights to the West Coast right then and there, the MP3 choices—from which one must download their music player software as well at the songs themselves—aren't offering all that much just yet.

But we've flown to the Moon now, let alone to the Coast, and that's a development so recent in history that my still-living 92-year-old grandpa remembers when airplanes were just called "flying machines." And in a similar fashion, the implications of this new technology and the changes it will initiate are as profound for the music industry as Thomas suggested on that eye-opening afternoon six years ago.

And I can't say I much like it myself. Whether you're a plain old underground/garage/psychedelic/new music/alternative/modern rock/punk/new wave, whatever-they're-calling-it-now fan like me, or just a plain old music lover (or just a plain old musician), the idea that music is merely a file, a bit of information data to be transmitted around the galaxy like pie charts of industry assets or stock evaluations, like the average rainfall figures for Guatemala, like the batting averages of Triple A baseball players...to be taken as casually as a game of "Sonic the Hedgehog", or whatever the kids are playing these days on their screens (who needs juvenile prisons when video games will suffice?)...well, at the risk of sounding like a Luddite, it just sounds wrong, if that is all that will be offered to us within the next 10 years.

The scratch of a cello, the burning hiss of a guitar through an overheated Marshall or Mesa Boogie, the angry shout or gentle coo of an impassioned vocalist...all nothing but another bit of information, as cold as any other impersonal data. Compress a sound into a little box and then open the jack in the box with your Buster Brown decoder ring, and out pops the surprise. Music. But will our attitude about it ever be as magical again? That really remains to be seen, doesn't it? "Hey man, download my album, it's really rad." I never thought I would ever get nostalgic for the days when punk rock bands used to trade crude demo cassettes at gigs. But it sure sounds far more organic than these days, when everyone seems so ambitious while having so little to offer.

The information age is truly here if music is just information and nothing more. Yikes.

With any luck, nothing kills the spirit of raw and energized or unspeakably beautiful music, not even ones and zeros flying endlessly through space through satelitte phone lines and eventually something else. Impassioned music has survived digital approximations of what records really sound like, so there's always hope. And if it means that someone in Guatamala can hear a band in Timbuktu more easily, there might even be some gain. We'll see. But then, CDs were supposed to be cheaper than records... ⊕

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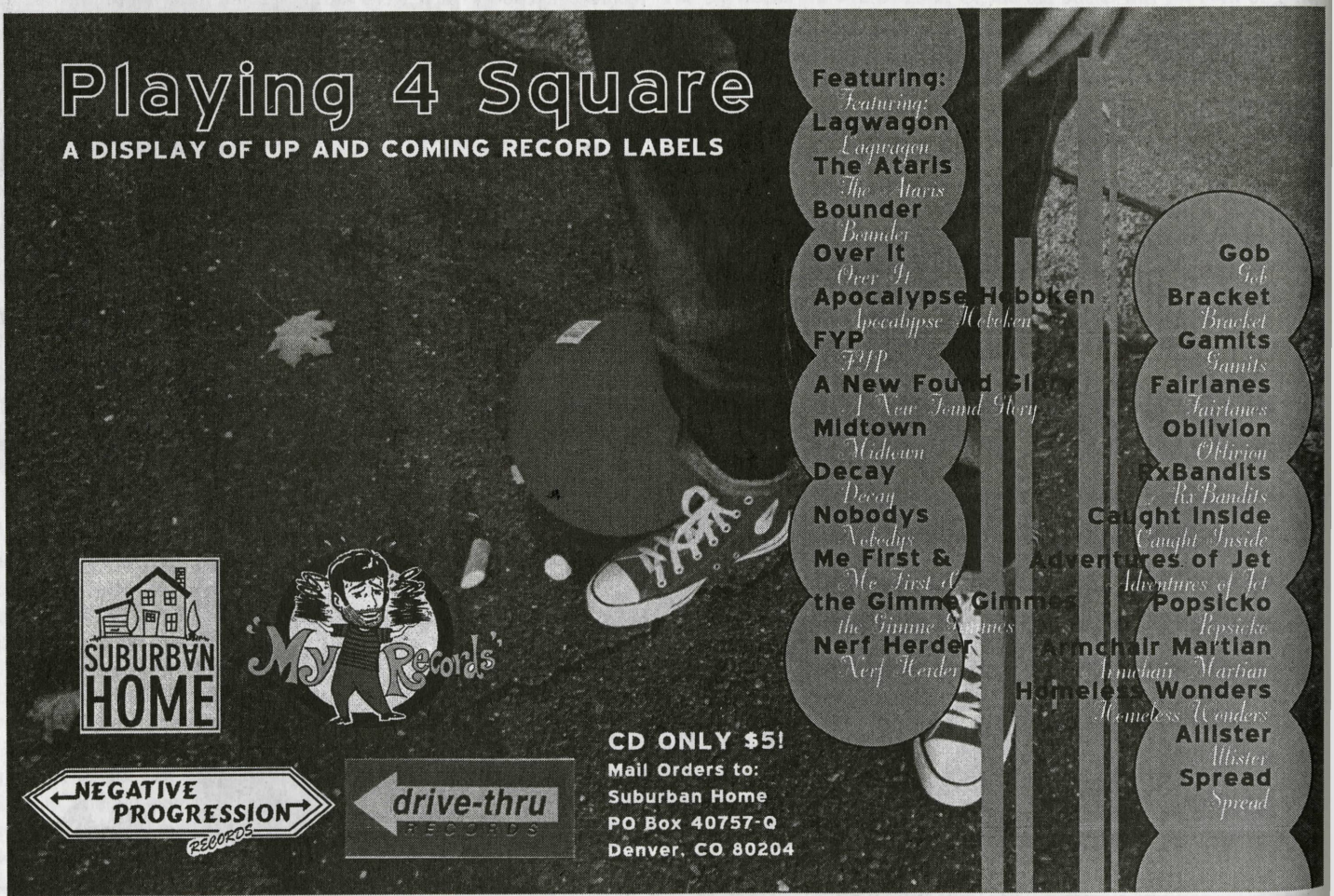

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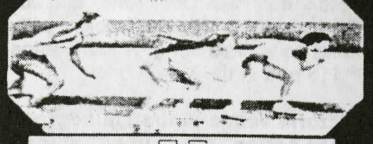

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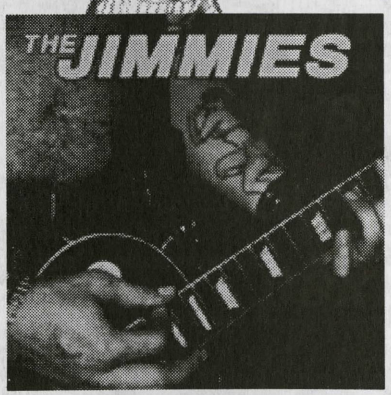

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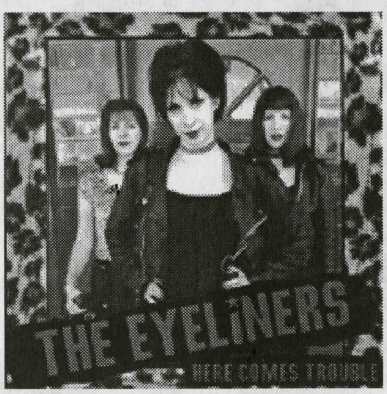

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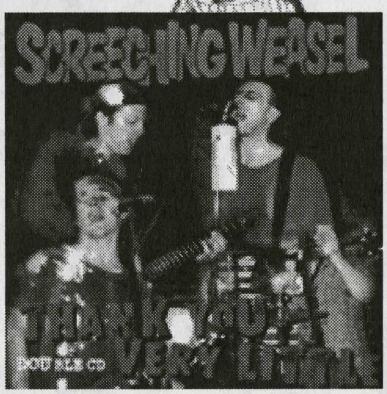

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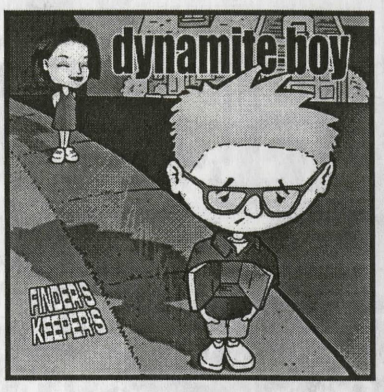

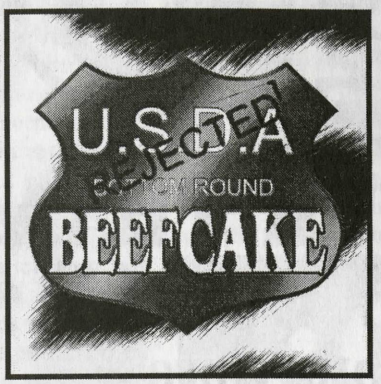



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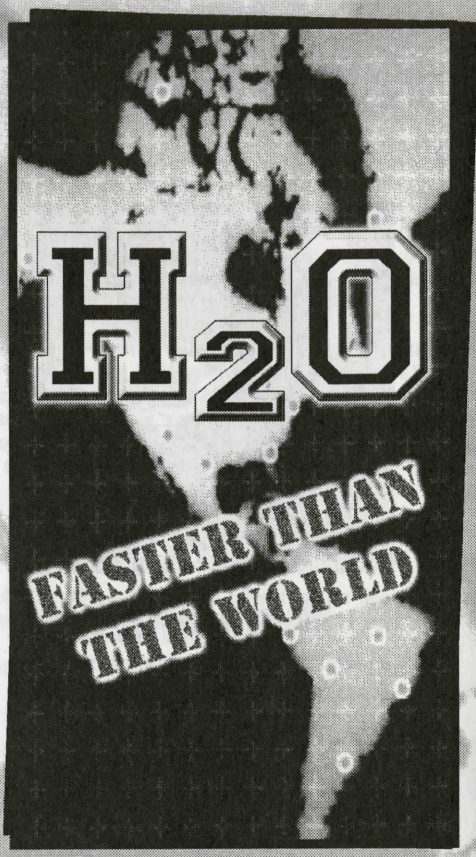

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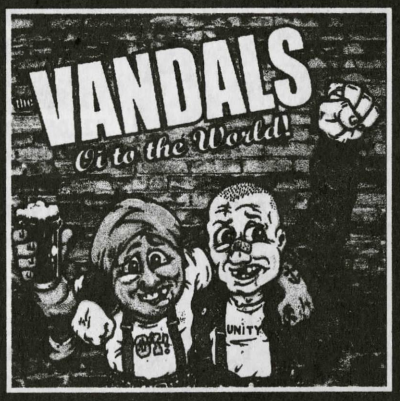

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KUNG FU RECORDS

Nick Fitt

Jury duty is allegedly our solemn civic duty. It is sometimes explained away in much the same manner as taxes — our "dues" for living in a free society. During my recent tenure at the Attleboro Court House I was told that the jury was the main line of defense against state tyranny. That the laws of this country are laws that we have all agreed upon and that, in doing so, we've committed ourselves to protecting them through our service to the courts.

The first thing that I found contradictory about the whole jury duty thing related to my recent recognition of the intimate connection betwixt means and ends. Up until then I had always put an iron curtain (pun intended) between means and ends. I separated the two. I subscribed to the doctrine of Malcolm X that people, groups, and parties ought to achieve their ends "by any means necessary." This is merely a rephrasing of the old saying "the ends justify the means." I no longer believe this to be true.

Jury duty is an excellent example of means and ends in contradiction. We are told that we live in a free society and that to preserve these basic freedoms we must perform a certain kind of involuntary servitude, a tenure of, at worst, slavery and, at best, indenture to the court system.

This was my first problem with jury duty. I was merely pissed off about even having to be there. I mean, what the fuck? My time is precious, I'd have to miss classes, and most likely I would be excused either for being a student or for actually having knowledge of American jurisprudence. No such luck on either count.

My second problem with jury duty was the stupid video that we watched with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts on it talking about our civic duty and explaining the jury process to us. He was the one who kept referring to "laws that we have all agreed upon."

The point is — we have not all agreed upon these laws. I'm sure that everyone can find at least one law that they have a problem with, and the more extensive your knowledge is of the laws in America, the more likely you are to have disagreements with specific instances. I personally loathe teen curfews, social welfare programs, and the bloated military budget. Rack your brain and find things that you don't like and that you would never agree upon.

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This is not to say that I believe people ought to just go around violating any law that they have a disagreement with. Obviously not, since I showed up for jury duty in the first place. I think that in extreme cases civil disobedience is the only ethical action. However, there is a democratic electoral process in this country which could reflect the will of what they call "the people" — at least if half of the shaven apes in this country actually got off their asses and became acquainted with the real issues that face us.

My only objection to the idea of "laws that we have all agreed upon" is that it makes it look like the government does, could, or should operate on the basis of consensus. Consensus in this case would mean watering down the desires of the majority in order to make them palatable to the minority, rather than the majority respecting the rights of the minority and saying "thank you very much but we will determine the course of history."

A jury is selected after a few hours of sitting around. Other problems with the jury system soon become apparent.

First of all, neither the counsel for the defense nor the prosecution interviews any of the prospective candidates for the jury. For all they know one of us could be mentally disabled, unable to speak English, blatantly racist, or possess vast amounts of prior knowledge about the case. We are simply asked one blanket question: "Do you know anyone in this courtroom today?" No one answers. One woman is excused for reasons which become clear at the end of the trial. We are selected for the jury merely based upon where we happen to be sitting in the court room.

Forget about the basic qualifications of literacy and/or proficiency in the English language and prior knowledge of the case. Ask yourself this — do you trust a system which allows any yahoo with a social security number to be called upon by the state to decide your fate? This seems absolutely ludicrous. While the judge and the lovely video that we watch try to impart some kind of rudimentary knowledge of justice and law to us, it's clear that everyone already has their minds made up about how they are going to vote from the very beginning of the deliberations.

Part of this is simply because the people on the jury were perhaps the most concentrated collection of idiots it has ever been my misfortune to eat cheap subs with. So ass-backwards were these people (and perhaps so representative of the average juror), that I can say without any amount of hesitation that I think the trial-by-jury system which exists in the United States is perhaps one the stupidest ideas which has ever been bandied about, much less implemented. One woman kept making jokes about nothing at all. Another woman insisted that the defendant must have assaulted two of the witnesses because they had bruises on their bodies. Another woman kept saying "well, that's how they are down there, it's their culture", referring to the fact that the defendant was from Guatemala. Two women insisted that "we have to get him on something."

The first case provided a clear example of why, at the very least, compulsory jury duty is completely idiotic. She clearly didn't want to be there, nor did anyone else when all was said and done. In her defense she was the only person other than myself that I believe took the process seriously and actually cared more about justice being meted out than getting home in time to watch the Red Sox play the Yankees. Two other women kept saying "OK, let's just get this done with so we can go have a cigarette", and "I want to go home, can we wrap this up?"

The racism is simply inexcusable and could perhaps have been screened out by asking a few rudimentary questions of the jury pool. There are ways to phrase questions about race in such a way as to get an honest answer rather than eliciting what the person knows is politically correct. Rather than asking "Do you hate Latinos", the attorney

might ask a question like "Do you consider Latinos more likely to commit crimes than whites?" The question doesn't ask about a person's general opinion of the culture or their knowledge of statistics. It simply asks if they have a bias.

Furthermore, the sheer idiocy of the jury and their total lack of knowledge played a great part in the trial. The forewoman became extremely abusive with me when I noted that there was no physical evidence relating to at least the first two charges (both of which were assault charges — the third was assault with a dangerous weapon and related to the defendant's escalation of the fight by using a belt buckle to bludgeon two of the witnesses) and that in failing to provide any sort of physical evidence, the prosecutor had failed to meet his burden of proof. Furthermore, testimony on the part of the two witnesses and one police officer hardly constituted proof. Two of the witnesses (two brothers who claimed to have been assaulted) clearly had a stake in the outcome of the trial, and the third (a police officer) didn't even claim to be present at the time of the incident. Therefore, the only thing to debate was whether the use of the belt buckle was in self-defense or was malicious.

One of the duties of a juror is to study the case at hand objectively. A case cannot be studied at all, much less objectively, while one is asleep.

It was when she became abusive that I lost all faith in the jury system and perhaps also in democracy. I was called "an arrogant little shit" with "no life experience" and accused of bringing "all this legal bullshit [?!?!?!]" into the case. Never mind that I was the only person there with any sort of knowledge of the American legal system. Never mind that we were there to discuss precisely what this knuckle walker considered "legal bullshit". The point of it all to her was that we should not let this guy get away with something and that we should get done quickly so that she could go home and watch the fucking playoffs. All reason went out the window. She began calling me even worse names and yelling at me.

The reason she was so adamant about finding this guy guilty was that she had prior knowledge of the case. An interesting thing about prior knowledge is that it doesn't automatically bar you from serving on a jury. What does bar you is a prior bias, which she clearly had. As a matter of fact, I saw her nodding off more than once during the proceedings. One of the duties of a juror is to study the case at hand objectively. A case cannot be studied at all, much less objectively, while one is asleep.

So that was my experience, but what about the broader picture? Well, first of all, it's clear that trials that are judged by twelve morons can hardly be decided fairly. But this doesn't mean that they necessarily victimize the defendant. They can also aid the defendant depending on various extraneous factors, such as appearance, social standing, etc. To use a litany of the high-profile cases of the last twenty years- how can there be such widespread objection to the verdicts in the Rodney King, O.J. Simpson, the West Memphis Three, and Mumia Abu-Jamal cases? In the first two cases, it's a good bet that you will run into tons of people who disagree with the verdicts. Indeed, it is taken for granted that Rodney King had a more or less unwarranted can of ass-whooping unloaded on him and that O.J. Simpson killed his wife. In the case of the WM3 and Mumia, international campaigns professing their innocence have been set up for the purpose of acquitting them or calling for a new trial.

My personal opinions of these cases aside, it's notable that we now live in an age in which Court TV brings trials all over the world into our homes. My father, for one, watched almost every second of the O.J. Simpson trial and knew just as much about the case as any of the jurors probably did. How can someone who sat through nearly the same experiences as the jurors come to the opposite conclusions that they did?

One of the differences that I would guess (although this is mere speculation) was present is that my father has been a juror before. One of his closest friends is a workman's comp attorney, and he has testified during a number of workman's compensation trials. In short, my father has some kind of working knowledge of the legal system. He's not ever going to graduate summa cum laude from Harvard Law, but he has a working knowledge of terms that most of the American populace doesn't understand. Terms such as "burden of proof", "physical evidence" and "jury nullification" that many Americans have never even heard of, let alone be able to explain.

The point of all this is to say that mistakes can be made on both sides. It's fair to say that a bunch of Alabama rednecks are more likely to convict a black man accused of raping a white woman, and that a bunch of Berkeley liberals are more likely to acquit a black man accused of shooting a police officer.

The principal of jury nullification is somewhat terrifying. Simply put, juries can acquit the accused if they feel that the law in question has been misapplied (such as murder one charges against a person who has committed vehicular homicide) or if they believe the law to be immoral (such as drug cases). It's one of the legal principles upon which our legal system is founded, and is roughly analogous to the Supreme Court's ability to declare laws unconstitutional (with the main difference being that Supreme Court justices by definition are likely to have an encyclopedic knowledge of Constitutional Law). On the subject of jury nullification, John Adams once said that "[i]t is not only his [the juror's] right, but his duty...to find the verdict according to his own best understanding, judgement, and conscience, though in direct opposition to the direction of the court." Benjamin Franklin took it a step further and said, "If it [jury power] is not law, it is better than law, it ought to be law, and will always be law wherever justice prevails."

However, what these men who themselves knew the principles of law inside and out took for granted was that jurors would be informed about where and when jury nullification is appropriate, as well as that

they would have some knowledge of the principles of law upon which jury nullification was based. What they did not foresee was things like universal suffrage, which allows any slackjawed yokel who happens to be born in this country to become a juror by no other virtue than a level of stupidity so high that he or she could not get out of what is now viewed as a ridiculous burden. What they did not foresee was ridiculous applications of jury nullification such as U.S. v. Thomas, where one juror was dismissed for refusing to convict drug dealers because "they were in a disadvantaged position" (http://www.ndsn.org/JULY97/2NDCIRC.html).

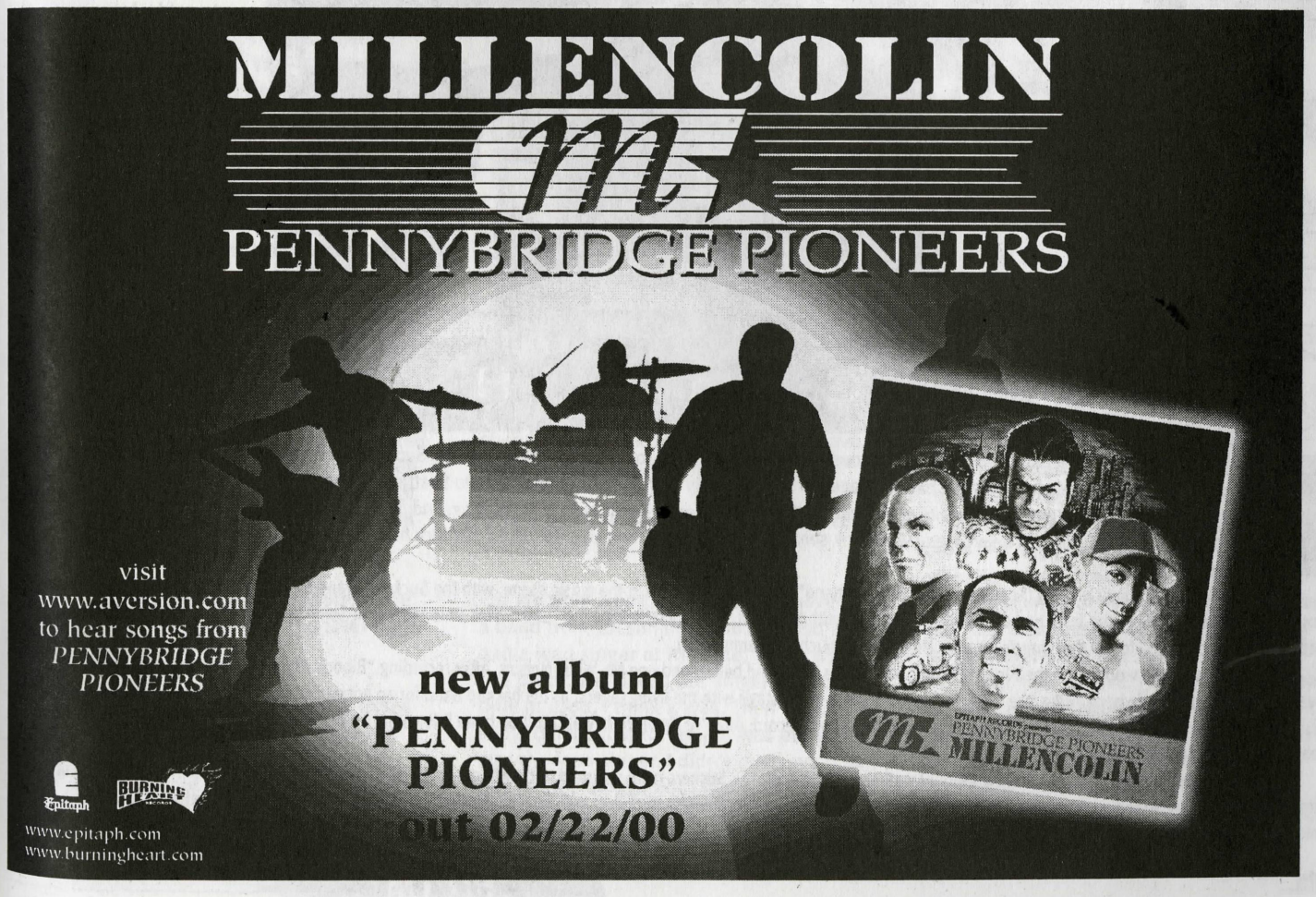
Indeed, the consequences of jury nullification in the age of "multiculturalism" are truly fearful. First, people are not acquitted because "they were in a disadvantaged position", as if dealing drugs is somehow similar to Jean Valjean stealing a loaf of bread. This ludicrous example is probably just the most notorious. The truly frightening idea is that juries may acquit wholesale members of other cultures that reside in the United States. Is it impossible to foresee at least a lone juror's attempt at jury nullification in a child abuse case involving the genital mutilation of a young girl, as is common in some North African and Middle Eastern cultures? How far are we from this? Not far at all. In the not too distant past, juries filled with white racists acquitted white men who murdered blacks. Nowadays, the reverse is increasingly common. Clearly, jury nullification is a double-edged sword — it can be used to nullify those laws which are truly unjust, or it can be used, say, by left-wing do-gooders for "righting" real or imagined social differences and inequalities.

The problems with the American jury system all seem to be tied together by one common theme — the general ignorance of the American population. This lack of education and literacy reflects a general malaise in America today, and indeed throughout the entire world. The days where a significant portion of people strove to educate themselves and fight for literacy and knowledge are long since past, and they may not ever come back. This has a number of disturbing consequences which would make any rational person question some of the underpinnings of Western liberal democracy.

However, this essay is merely about the jury system. Why did the jury system work in the past, and why does it no longer work today? One of the key reasons was alluded to above — education is no longer viewed as intrinsically valuable that one should pursue vigorously. Instead, it is all too often seen as an unnecessary burden. Those who do "educate" themselves generally do so only because it is difficult to find decent employment without a college degree of some sort. Another reason for the failure of the American jury system is that people no longer live in relatively small communities where they might acquire prior knowledge concerning a case and yet still not be unduly biased one way or the other.

The first reason is perhaps the most compelling, and it also provides the key to a possible solution. Nothing can be done to turn the clock back to the days when people lived in smaller communities. On the other hand, much can be done about the present-day ignorance of juries. I believe that the current jury system should be completely thrown out, the baby along with the bathwater.

One possible solution would be to select professional jury pools, either by election or by appointment. These professional jurors would be much like the Justices of the Peace of a bygone era. If judges are former lawyers, than why not try to ensure that jurors be former paralegals? They need not have an encyclopedic knowledge of legal procedures or even a level of knowledge equivalent to the average law school graduate, but any knowledge at all would be a considerable improvement over the present system. Legal decisions should not be made by people who do not have a basic working knowledge of law. There could be pools of jurors relative to the size of the areas in which they serve, and attorneys could still reserve the right to eliminate jurors that they felt had prejudices concerning particular cases. In fact, the only real difference would be that our justice system would then be influenced in the most direct fashion by regular citizens who had some knowledge of the general principals of law.



the SUPERSUCKERS

THE EVIL POWERS OF ROCK N ROLL



photos by Lisa Johnson

by Chad Hensley

In a surreal Sergio Leone spaghetti western where tattooed anti-heroes race hot rods and wrangle drugs, the Supersuckers would provide the soundtrack. These (juvenile) cowboy delinquents from Arizona have managed to stir up a heap of trouble since relocating to Seattle at the end of the 1980s. Snatched up by Sub Pop from almost the git go, 1992's *The Smoke of Hell* blazed the band a depraved trail of fighting, fucking, and dope smoking. Juke joint hits like "Coattail Rider" and "I Say Fuck" melded a love of heavy metal with punk sensibilities, not to mention an ample dose of shtick humor. The result was a whole hellava lot of super-charged fun.

Two years later, *La Mano Cornuda* (Spanish for the "horned hand") tore a new asshole in the music scene, with the Suckers' brand burning holes in eardrums and scorching funny bones. This time, the boys had definitely made a pact with the Devil. "Creepy Jackalope Eye" and "I Was Born Without a Spine" rocked as hard as they made you laugh, proving once and for all that there's no such thing as too much goddamn guitar.

The next year, while working on their fourth album *Sacrilicious*, the band befriended one Mr. Willie Nelson. After recording "Bloody Mary Morning" with Willie for the Justice Records tribute *Twisted Willie*, the Suckers found themselves on stage with the living legend as his backup band for an appearance on the Tonight Show. This and a fistful of Farm Aids influenced the Supersuckers so much that their next record, *Must've Been High*, was a full-on bona fide country album. Confused fans thought their favorite band had finally fallen off the deep end.

Now, after a major label fiasco and a few years of well-earned wisdom, the Suckers have returned to their roots with *The Evil Powers of Rock 'N' Roll*. If that wasn,t enough the band has also released a compilation of favorites and b-sides entitled *The Greatest Rock and Roll Band in the World*. Before a sold out show at Seattle's Crocodile, frontman Eddie Spaghetti was hip to spilling his guts about the trials and tribulations of rock stardom. So hang on, it's going to be a wild ride straight to hell and back!

When did Satan get in the picture with the Supersuckers?

ES: Satan's always been a part of my life because my mother has always be a vehement hater of the Catholic school of organized religion. I'm not a believer in any sort of real deity, necessarily. I'm more into a Mother Nature-oriented thing. The universe is definitely bigger than me. But I don't believe in this one being, a single omnipresent god. It's like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny to me. I'm not buying it. So Satan to me is the cool one with all the good artwork. He's got the good publicity people working for him. It's easy in America, which is such a puritanical society so rooted in morality, but nobody adheres to this restrictive moral code at all. They just put up a front. So for me it's just about a little bit of acceptance of reality. Satan is kind of a metaphor for truth. People go to bars, get drunk, and fuck somebody they don't want to. They do drugs and wind up passed out. They didn't mean to do that. The next day, they turn around and say, "That did not happen. I repent." Fuck that. I admit I did that. So what? That's Satan to me.

Are the Supersuckers a drug-friendly band?

ES: Definitely. I love to explore the terrain that is the mind. It's not that we haven't had our troubles with it. We've had a lot of bad drug experiences. I do think that responsible recreational drug use is a good thing. Irresponsible drug abuse is not a good thing. There becomes a point when it's not a party anymore. It's like I'm not going to go do heroin ever again. But I will smoke pot. There are differences between drugs, but I think they should all be legal, with personal responsibility being placed on people. If you legalize drugs, you could eliminate drug-related crime and take the power away from the dealers and give it to the government. You should put the responsibility on individuals to decide what is good and bad for themselves. Pot is definitely my favorite drug. I like anything that kind of sends me down a little bit, like a little Valium or Zanax, but mainly pot.

The first album, *All The Songs Sound The Same*, is a lot different than the later stuff. Why?

ES: It's a natural progression of shit-asses growing up together. When we made our first recordings as the Supersuckers, we didn't really set out to be a punk rock band or anything. When the reviews started coming back calling us a great punk band, I was kind of surprised. I never really thought of us as being a punk band. I just wanted us to be a great rock band, although the music was fast and the songs were short. I love punk rock, so I didn't mind that people thought we sounded like a punk band. But our hearts were always just in being a straight-up rock and roll band writing kick-ass rock tunes that are maybe a little bit more hyper-thyroid than your regular rock. Now we're getting old. We're settling into where we're a little more comfortable. It's easy to hide behind things like speed and volume when you're writing a song. If there's a weak part in it you just speed through it, and it elevates it a little bit. Now, my goal is to write songs that I can relax into, and that rock anyway. AC/DC is one of my favorite bands in the world, and they're fucking slow. But I don't know that it's strictly a tempo issue that's different about us. There are a lot of different things, especially after the country record. None of my favorite bands would ever release a country record, except for X, and we have. I'm at a loss to explain my actions.

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Where was the band living when that first album came out?

ES: We were living in Seattle. We moved as a band from Tucson in May of '89 and we had a lead singer at the time, so we were a five piece. We kicked our singer out sometime in 1990, I think it was. Then we made some demos just to see if it was okay that I was the lead singer. I didn't really want to be the lead singer, but I wrote all the songs so it was logical that I would sing them since I wrote the words. Those demos wound up becoming *The Songs All Sound The Same*, basically. I listen to it now and cringe quite a bit, especially at the singing, but there is an undeniable spirit there that people latched onto. For better or worse, we then launched our little cottage industry.

What made you move from Tuscon to Seattle?

ES: The heat. The boredom. Tucson is just of one of those places where you grow up as a kid, and later you just have to leave. It's programmed into you: I'm leaving. The band all went to the same high school together, and then graduated the same year. We're freaks. We're like what the Ramones pretend to be. We're kinda like a living cartoon. Imagine if all the little South Park characters grew up and formed a band. Seattle was also chosen because we knew some people who had moved there from Phoenix. I used to drive up to Phoenix because the rock scene was a lot better there; there was a lot more there that I was into. It was more show-oriented. Hard rock, glam rock, and punk rock were all things I was into in the late 1980s. In Tucson, it was more of a jingly-jangly desert rock kind of vibe. Now, desert rock is considered cool, like with the Queens of the Stone Age and Kyuss. But back then, desert rock was bad. Jingle-Jangle singer-songwriter-y crap was something that I did *not* like. Phoenix seemed real hip and cool and fun to me. When all these people moved from Phoenix to Seattle, I was bummed. Then they started telling me how cool the scene was in Seattle. In Tucson, there was only one bar to play at. In Seattle, at the time, there were three. But we were

also entertaining the notion of moving to New Orleans, just because it sounded like a cool place, too. It was literally a coin toss that decided the issue, so we came to Seattle.

Tell me about *La Mano Cornuda*.

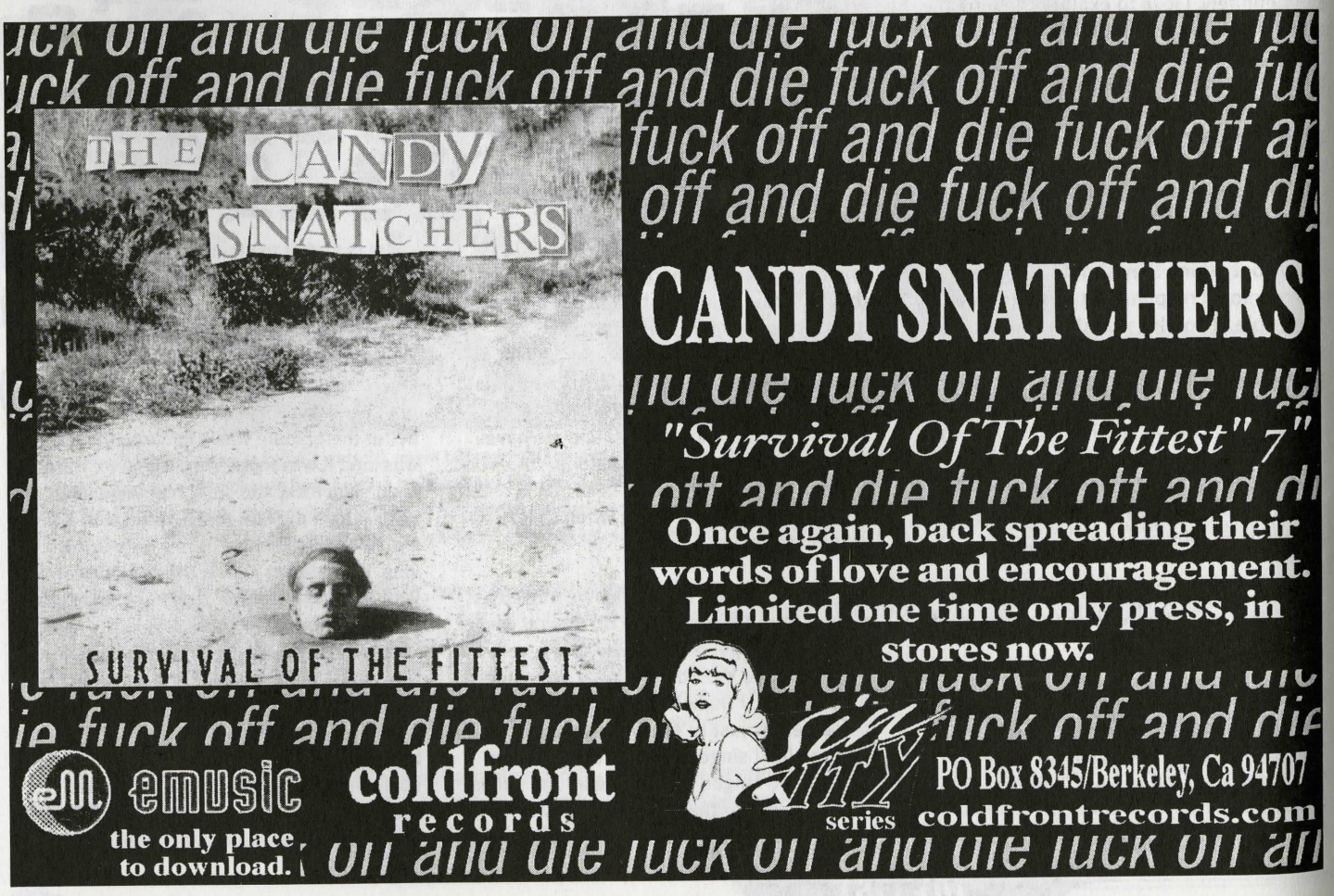
ES: It means the "horned hand". It's the stupidest album title in the world. The album is full of in-jokes and stuff. With the *Evil Powers of Rock and Roll*, I'm trying to retain the in-jokes but also to make it a little easier to get your tongue around. No one ever says "I love *La Mano Cornuda*, because it's impossible. I now rue that album title, although I like the songs. For example, there's "Seventeen Poles", a place where the kids can go and party down and not be hassled. Every town has one of them. When you finally get a car, or you're old enough to ride with somebody in their car, you go out to one of these places. Then, if you're lucky, you make out with a girl. You jump over the bonfire. You drink out of the keg. "Seventeen Poles" refers to this intersection on the east side of Tucson. You went seventeen telephone poles down, and then hung a left into this desert clearing. Everybody would say "So, you going down to seventeen poles this weekend after the football game?". At the time, I really felt that I was coming into my own as a songwriter. There was a meld of metal, punk, and comedy, and so it was a fun record to make. We made it really fast. I'm really proud of all the songs. In our set, it's largely this record, the new record, and a smattering of other things. We went on tour right before and after *La Mano*, and that's where the cowboy image really got cemented. Now, I'm pretty much the only cowboy in the band. Ron's on a 1970's trip. Bolton lives in his own world. We're like the Village People of punk rock. We haven't had to get real jobs since *La Mano* first came out. That's the goal of all of this. It can be kind of rough for us. We don't have huge album sales, so we have to go on tour a lot. Luckily for us, we enjoy it. I put camper shells on trucks in Tucson for a lot of years, and that was hard, physical, hot, itchy, fiberglass-covered work. I'm so appreciative that I don't have to do that any more. But I'm only this far away from having to work a real job all the time.

There's a song on *La Mano Cornuda* about shooting up a high school just like the Columbine shooting in Denver.

ES: Yes, there is. It's called "How to Maximize Your Kill Count". We actually played in Denver the day after the Columbine shooting happened, and we opened up the set with that song. Some of the people who didn't get it were like "Oh, my god, I cannot believe how fucking insensitive these guys are". And it's true, but shit happens. It bums me out that bands like Marilyn Manson get all the credit for saying all the wrong things and being completely subversive in terms of undermining the youth of America, whereas I've been at it for ten years and get very little if any flak from church groups or government organizations. I'd love to have people picketing our shows. So far, it hasn't happened. I read a lot of subversive literature, and I read an article that was sort of an instruction manual on how to be a "legend of slaughter". That song was thrown together at the last minute in the studio. It's very simple. It was just one of those spontaneous moments, but it has since wound up becoming one of the staples of our show.

When did the whole country western element weave its way into the band?

ES: I was always into country music. Growing up in Tucson, it becomes a part of your fabric. I've always felt that country and punk are very similar in their honesty and simplicity when they're both good. But I hate "cowpunk". I like Jason and the Scorchers OK, but that's not what I wanted to be. I like city rock. I like to think of our rock and roll as urban and our country music as about the sticks, but we have melded them together. Once again, I don't know why or how. I think in a way it's best not to reflect too much on or question these things, because if you start questioning what you're doing all the time



you're going to compromise and second-guess a lot. When we made the country record, the first instinct was to call it a different band like the Junk Yard Dogs. But everyone liked the record a lot and Sub Pop did too. So we went ahead and called it the Supersuckers. Kudos to our fans for letting us get away with it.

Does the rest of the band share your enthusiasm for country music?

ES: They do, but they didn't share my enthusiasm for making that record at first. It was real hard to switch gears like that. In retrospect, everybody is equally proud of it and is looking forward to the time when we'll do it again, although we're going to make a few more rock records first. The confusion that we've become a country band is unfortunate, because I thought we would make the country record and then a few months later our rock record would come out. But as luck would have it, it's taken two years to get another rock record out.

Let's talk about the country record, *Must've Been High*. Tell me about the song "Non-Addictive Marijuana".

ES: That song was actually written by Ron Heathman, our guitar player. It's really an anti-drug song. Ron wrote it when he was in a treatment center. He had been out of the band for nine months. The gist of the song is "you say that marijuana is non-addictive, but give me a hit,brother, and I'll show you what that shit can do." For some people, it's not about any one particular drug. It's the concept that one mind-altering substance leads you to another, and another, and another. Some people don't know when to say when. We've gone through that ourselves. There are sober people among our ranks. There are also some that have had abuse issues. Then there are those that seem to party rather healthily without losing control. It's a case-by-case scenario with us. But since I write the words, I get to sing it's praises.

Tell me about the song, "The Captain".

ES: It's another song on the country record. It's about a recording experience we had with Captain Sensible from the Damned that did just not go well at all. But even though the experience went badly, out of it we produced this really good song. We were in England and this recording session was set up by this guy who puts out a fanzine. He told us that Captain Sensible really wanted to do it. He told Captain Sensible that we really wanted to do it. When we got together, both parties were like "what are we doing here?". So we decided to record a kind of revved-up version of



"Whisky River". We went and laid down the basic tracks. Meanwhile, the Captian started messing around with all of these synthesizer parts while I was doing the vocals. I came back in and the guys in the band said "Eddie. Check it out, man. He's fucking around on those synthesizers and we think he wants to use them. So I walked over and said "Maybe you should start playing that piano. I think that would sound pretty cool." But he got really pissed off, packed up his shit, and left. In retrospect I wish we'd have just let him do what he was going to do. Then we would have the item. Instead, we have a really long, boring version of "Whisky River" that sucks, since it has a big gap in it where he was going to be. It's a bummer. We never have talked to him since. I don't even know if he is aware of the fact that we wrote a song about him. If I saw him again, I'd be pleasant. I don't have any hard feelings towards him, since I got my jab back at him with the song. So I'm cool with it.

You're a big Willie Nelson fan.

ES: Real big. When we were recording the *Sacrilicious* record in 1995, we had an opportunity to record a song with him. Through friends of a friend, he came in and recorded with us. Our manager Danny Bland and our friend Randle, the guy who introduced us to Willie, put the compilation *Twisted Willie* together for Justice Records. It turned out really good, and that was the impetus for our relationship with Willie. Ever since then, we have kind of become stoner buds and have sort of kept in touch. We played a couple of Farm Aids, and we backed him up on the Tonight Show one time. We also played at his Fourth of July picnic out in Texas. That was a lot of fun. We recorded with his daughter, Amy. We were just out in California hanging out with her and his ex-wife. In fact, he called me on the phone just the other day. It's amazing. This guy is a living legend. He's one of those people that walk the earth representing something bigger than all of us.

Why did it take so long to get the new record out?

ES: Label problems. We signed to Interscope Records, recorded a record for them, got dropped, and they wouldn't give us the record. So we re-recorded it. I'm glad because, in the end, the record that we have made now is so much better than the one we recorded for Interscope. It's so much more like what we should sound like-raw, warts and all. It has a live sound. This particular situation turned out to be very fortunate for us. We rallied together and we're stronger now. We've been kicked in the ass and we have something to prove. We're proud of who we are, and that feels good.

Are all the songs on *The Evil Powers of Rock 'N' Roll* the same ones you recorded for Interscope?

ES: No. About sixty percent are the same. I wrote a bunch of new songs, and we Chose a few of those. I'm constantly writing songs. In that time, new ones came up that were a little bit better than some of the other ones.

What's happened to the other forty percent?

ES: Interscope is just sitting on them like the big, fat Baby Huey that they are, hoping that we die a horrid death. They can kiss my ass. Tom Wally can kiss my ass. I don't think they'll do anything with it, unless of course something really unforeseen happens, like we have a hit. I think that's what they hold onto those things for. It's like "Okay, we'll just keep these songs, and if they do well then we'll make some cash off of them." Rest assured, the thought of bootlegging our own Interscope record has crossed our minds.

Do you have a favorite song on *The Evil Powers of Rock 'N' Roll*?

ES: I've never really felt proud of a record until the last couple years. I was proud of the country record in many ways, because it was so different and we pulled it off. I'm really proud of *The Evil Powers of Rock 'N' Roll*, because it really sounds like us. We've coalesced into a breathing aberration, which I like. One song on the new record is called "Cool Manchu". It's a lament about what happened to the simple decadent pleasures of looking at naked ladies and smoking indoors. All these things that are going by the wayside, due to things like the puritanical nature of America. "Political correctness" is an oxymoron like "military intelligence". They just don't go together. Another song on the new album, "I Want the Drugs", is shamelessly about giving me drugs. I'm down with that. Another song, "Gone Gambling", is simply about the joys of winning and losing at gambling. There's no disclaimer attached to them. People can live vicariously through me. I'll walk that tightrope for them.

How did you get involved with the so-called "West Memphis Three"?

ES: It struck a chord in me when I saw the film "Paradise Lost". I never really thought I could do anything about it. I was talking to a friend of mine one day, and we decided that maybe we could actually get some bands to rally around this. This could have happened to any one of us. They could see you walking down the street in your Satan shirt near the crime scene, then come over to your house and check out your books, see what you've been listening to, and then you'd be fucked. You'd be considered a criminal. I'm into things a little left of center. If they came over to my house, I could be those kids. It's so obvious that they're innocent and that the whole idea is that a particular community always looks for a solution, whether it's the right solution or not, so that they can sleep at night. One of those kids, Damian, is on death row. He could get executed. We've made contact with him, and he's really nice. It aches my heart to know that this kid is in jail. He's really appreciative of what we are trying to do. A lot of the bands on this record that we're putting together are a lot more popular than the Supersuckers, and he's a big fan of theirs. So it really means a lot to him that we're rallying around his innocence. The story is so rich and thick with irony, sadness, and the bureaucratic bullying around of "unimportant" poor people. They're throwing money at innocent people to make them seem guilty. It could happen to any of us. That's what strikes me so hard. No one is really safe from this kind of persecution. You might think that this would never happen in America, but it does. Granted, there are millions of other cases that are probably equally worthy of our attention, but you can't go after all of them. To me, the planet itself is going to be fine. Pollution is the solution to the problem that is Man. But maybe we can at least get these kids out of jail.

Tell me about playing Woodstock.

ES: That sucked. It was fucking horrible. We played the baby stage, the emerging artists stage. It was awful. We played to a couple hundred awake people and two thousand sleeping people. But the next day, I got to sing with Willie Nelson. He called me up on stage. The next day, my grandmother called me and said that she saw me on the pay-per-view. I was really nervous, because there were two hundred and fifty thousand people out there.

What's the typical Supersuckers fan like?

ES: A total meathead, as in "Dude, I like hotrods too. Let's get drunk and go party!." But you got to love 'em. You can't pick your fans. They can't all be intellectually-oriented bookworms, or you'd have a Sebadoh show. I don't consider myself a stupid person, but for some reason I just appeal to stupid people. The goal of the Supersuckers these days is to take the training wheels off of indie rock. I think we can exist on our own terms and that we don't have to sell million of records to have a valid career. This may seem like a high falutin' word, but I think that's what makes us artists. We're doing what we want to do all the time, and are not answering to any higher authority. I don't think there's any better life to live than that. ⊕



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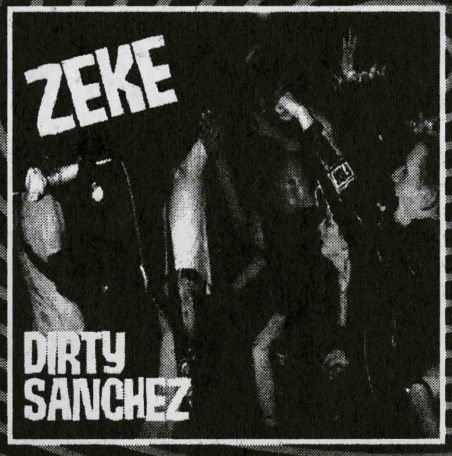

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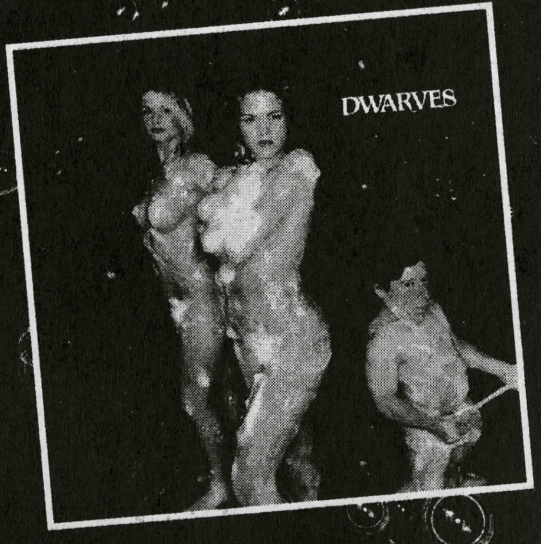



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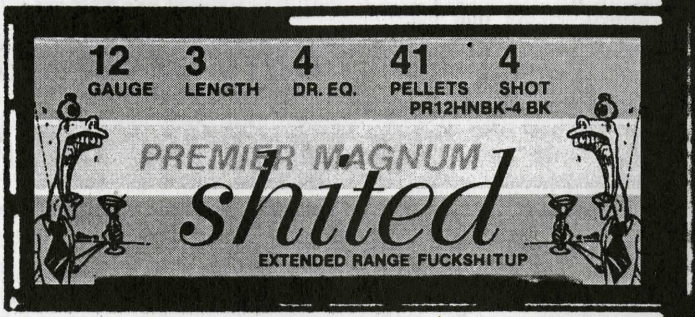
GUNS AND BUTTER FOR THE MASSES!

Yassir, let me begin this grandition of Premier Magnum ShitEd with a statement designed, intended, and calculated to raise the hairs of the PC "annoyed and annointed". Guns and butter for everyone! There, I've said it again, but since whatI tell you only twice is not likely to sink in...GUNS AND BUTTER FOR ALL! There, I've said it thrice now, that's three times to you, and what I say three times is fuckin' true! (Look out, Lewis Carroll!)

I have to assume at this point that many of you readers have flinched, moved right on past "guns", and fixed your attention on "butter"—and you are now assuming,presuming, fuckin' ZOOMING that I mean free food! Aw cuntrare, non potatoeshogrotten here. I ain't talking about givin' out free anything, except maybe pussy, butI'll get to that later, eh? What? You want to talk about pussy NOW? Slam a Dixie cup on the end of it for the half hour it takes for your semi-literate self to toil through my rather easy prose.

No? Alright, alright, keep you friggin' pants on and quit whining—we'll do pussy first. Butter. Butter here is a metaphor for the lubricunt used in theact of sexual conquest, er, I mean conceptio..., oops, I mean CONGRESS (no wonder the US Congress is so fucked, they are fucks!). To fuck is heavenly, to leave afterward so you don't have to listen to him or her—divine. The world needs a hole lot more fucking (um, by the way Jeff, do I have to mention to you that my misspellings in this document are a deliberate and horrid collection of excruciatingly bad puns? I didn't thinks so), and it needs the wherewithal to do so. Cocks and cunts abound (the mental image of sexual organs bounding about is really quite charming), but the means of bringing them together in thisshadowed world of HIV Pissoffitiveness (not to mention the horror of herpes—is that a blister on your buddha or are you just glad to see me?) is sadly lacking. Too many people are just too friggin' terrified of friggin' and the Big A to joyously come together to cum together. (I am coming apart grammatically so that you may come together somatically.)

Solution? What the world badly needs (besides a cure for both AIDS and the uncommon cold down THERE) is a few billion ounces of slippery prevention. It isa well-known fact that only a few goddesslike women of heroic proportions exude sufficient lubricunt to keep the evening's entertainment in a well-oiled-groove. Such women, who can leave a wet spot on the mattress



three feet in diameter that soaks all the way through to the other side, where it drips happily onto the floor under the bed...pant pant, where was I? Oh yeah: such women are priceless gems to be honored and cherished, but alas they are too few. What we need is the Ultimate Intimate Lubricunt (it's not just for cunts either, it also has to work for the most ardent packers of fudge) that exhibits most exhibitionistically the following twatraits:1) Create a smooth glide of pistoning parts, yea, even unto rectal membranes being hardpacked with 5" pubic hairs caught in the action.2) Be impervious to, and deadly toward, all the little wrigglers—bacterial andviral nasties that get passed betwixt poker and pokee, to wit: sperm, HIV, herpes simplex-duplex-multiplex-whatEVER, syph, NSU, gonorrhea (DIEarrhea), ebola, dengue, hepatitis A thru Zed, et al, etc, ad nauseum. With the creation of a universal Prick 50, possessing qualities of infinite lubrication and protection, then the women of the world should respond by opening their legs to all cummers. Pussy for everyone! It must possess the bestadvertised qualities of Slick 50, combined with a universal barrier to what makes Peter go dripdripdrip in the night.

Such a substance as I have described would go a long way toward preventing war.If people are fucking, they aren't fighting, and even when they are done fucking and can't get George to stand at attention anymore, they're so darned happy they don't feel like fighting anyone. So, am I merely espousing the old hippie dicktum of "make love, not war?" Of course not! I haven't said one word about love. To hell with love—I wanna fuck!

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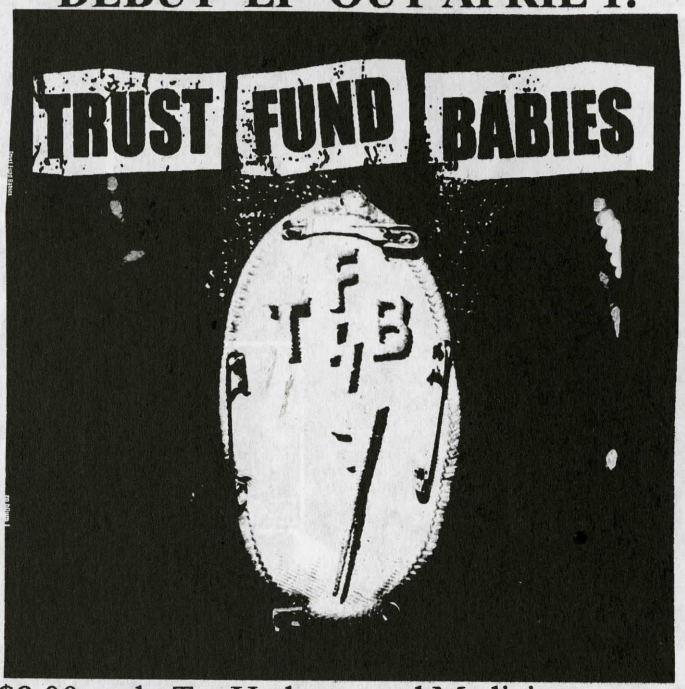

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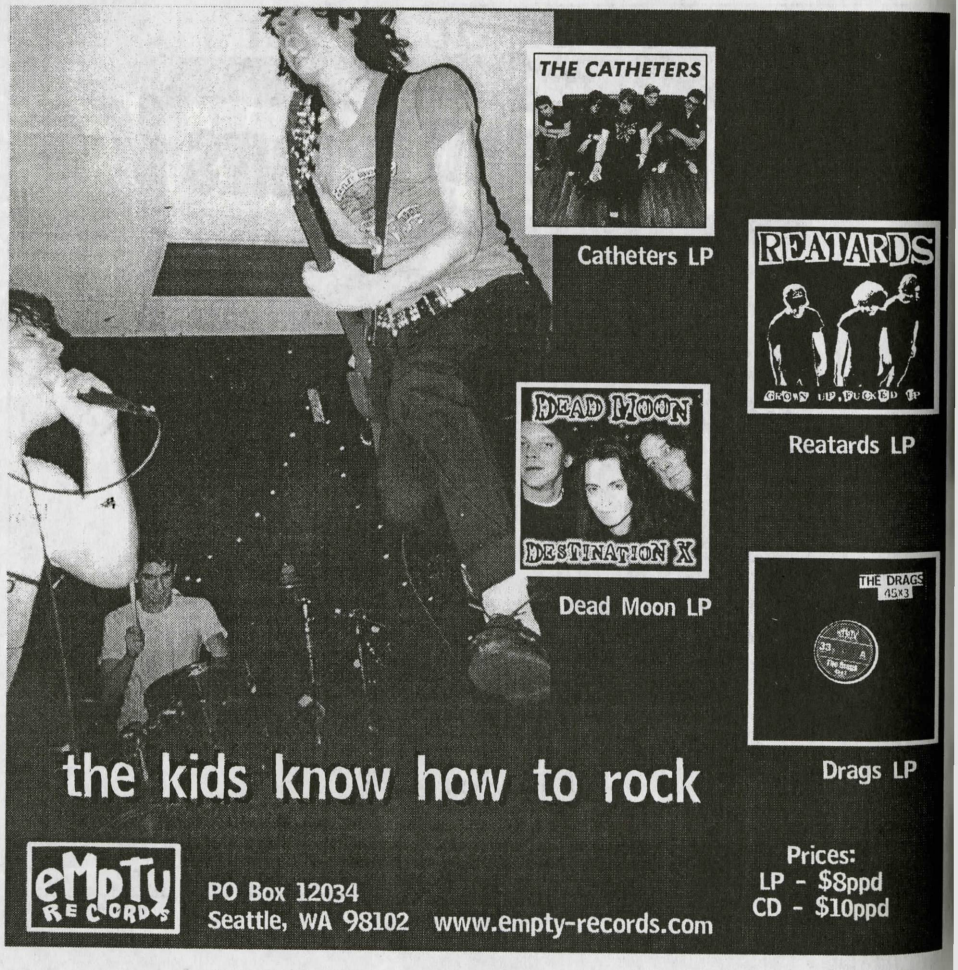
HIT SQUAD

Guns. Oooh, nasty nasty nasty, you've been taught to think. Your teacher told you, CNN told you, Connie Chunks told you, and Brit InHume told you—andwhat they say must be true because it's on TV, right? Pah! They're a wimpering pack of wusses. They lie. Their figures lie. They suck bilge slime through an unwashed length of cadaver duodenum. The most armed-to-the-teeth society onthis planet is also the safest: Switzerland. Most of their crime is perpetrated by tourists and resident non-Swiss, who, as it happens, AREN'T armed. Figure that one-out. It's true, but you just can't reconcile that datum with what you see on TV, and you know why? The editors in charge of the major media in this country are in agreement with the government that the American population should be disarmed. Yeah, fancy that: the media, who are in theory supposed to jealously guard ourfreedom of information against government restrictions, are actually restricting what you hear and see in order to promote the cause of anti-liberty. Fuckin' assholes. They are supposed to be, and SAY they are, on OUR side, but in actual fact they are on the side of the soldiers and police who want to be the only ones with guns. Do you trust THEM? I don't. A soldier does as he's told, and a cop, well, if I have to tell you what many cops are like then you are a hopeless turd who should go live in Communist China, or Iraq, or someother un-fun place where you live a Holiday In Cambodia.

Get a fucking clue: the Branch Davidians were nothingmore scary and dangerous than a Christian church (loud yawn).

The horrible truth about the PC left is that they are making the same mistake that the liberal left made in Russia during and immediately after the Oktober Revolution, who helped place in power a centralized control over the Russian people. The liberals in Russia were taken out and shot by the Bolseviks—aftertheir usefulness was over. And that's what would happen to the shiny-eyed idealists of peace and no-guns: after all the guns were gone out of American hands, then the government could do whatever it pleased and no one could fight back. Protesters would be rounded up, interrogated, and killed. Hey it's doneall the time on this planet. Say bye-bye to Watergate exposer Bob Woodward. Dead man. Buy a headstone for Wolf Blitzer—if you manage to find the body. Fuckin' wake up and notice that we live in a relative paradise. Our government doesn't do a Tiannamen Square massacre because it knows that there are 80 million armed Americans—and their own agents are badly outnumbered! That's probably what spooks them: the FBI and BATF would sleep soundly at night if only they were the sole possessors of firearms in this nation. Why do you think they practice so hard using military SWAT tactics against "terrorists", the terrorists being whoever they decide to label as terrorists? The fuckers practice the drills necessary to take this country away from the people, occasionally as live exercises, like at Waco. Get a fucking clue: the Branch Davidians were nothing more scary and dangerous than a Christian church (loud yawn), and their leader's sexual excesses with teenage girls were actually less nutty than thoseof the founders of the Mormon church. So he liked to marry himself a harem of tight 14-year old twat? I don't know about YOU, but I'm jealous. But the media did the full-on "fellow traveller" job by demonizing the Davidians as monsters. They fucking did a hatchet job for the government with their nonstop nattering about the "Davidian Compound", as if the church and its buildings were some sortof fortress full of wild-eyed terrorists out to nuke the nation's shopping malls. So what the fuck? We can't trust the media, who are ostensibly operating under the aegis of the First Amendment, to protect us against the chicanery of our own government. Thecongress clearly can't be depended upon either. The courts, even the Supreme Court, can't be trusted



either—read a few of their decisions some time. That leaves us with the Second Amendment as our fallback position and last line of defense—if all else fails we can always shoot the bastards, right? Not if we've been disarmed, and believe me that IS their intent!

We used to have military arms guaranteed to us (actually, we still do on paper, but the Second Amendment has since been eroded), as an informal, non-coercive version of the Swiss system of universal soldiery. The Swiss orderall their young men to report and become soldiers, which they remain until they are old. That's why both world wars in Europe raged around Switzerland but never into it: who in their right mind would invade a country where every man in the country is part of the military and capable of fighting? But we didn't end up with the Swiss system because Americans don't like to be told what to do, and even today resist being ordered around. So the mandatory training and enrollment of the Swiss wasn't feasible in this country. Instead we were guaranteed the freedom to be armed, and whether we enrolled in a local militia was left to personal choice. But it was always assumed by the government itself in the old days that the ENTIRE male population of the country would serve as its militia, whether everyone had joined up with a local unit or not. It was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the militia system in this country began to be replaced by a Big Lie. That lie is that each state's National Guard constituted the only valid militia of each state—and notice that the federal government gradually-put National Guard units more and more under their direct control until the pointwhere they could be ordered about like exactly what they have become: just another branch of the regular military. These days no one squawks when our alleged "militia" is ordered to Saudi Arabia to fight Sadaam Insane. And if the Army National Guard are not militia anymore, then there is no real militia left. The sumbitches have taken over. A "well regulated militia" does not mean one which is controlled by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, damn it! "Well regulated" means it behaves in an orderly fashion: it drills regularly, and doesn't go out on training exercises will the sole intent of getting as drunk as possible in the woods!

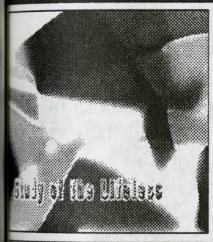
We've been robbed. And, worse still, the fewer guns that are in the hands of good people, the more that professional criminals and the national police will be able to prey on them.

The solution is simple: arm people. Arm men. Arm women (Arm every woman insight! I actually agree with Henry Rollins on one point: beautiful women with shoulder holsters are a beautiful thing!) Arm everyone who isn't a criminal and who IS a citizen. People with criminal records, and citizens of other countries, need not apply. Everyone else should be trained thoroughly and trained TOUGH, but armed only with basic military rifles. Let private organizations pay for everything. Let the NRA pay for most of it. Hell, they've been running their mouths long enough on this subject, so let 'em put their money where their mouths are.

A lot of so-called "freedom-loving punks" aren't going to like what I just wroteabout guns. Too fucking bad. None of them are likely to come over to my house and try to beat me up, since I'm armed. Haw, haw!

One last word must be uttered. I don't know if our leader Jeff had such things in mind from *Hit List*'s columnists, but I'm going to use the word anyway — and I'm sure Jeff will allow it to be printed because he's an anti-censorship guy just like me. Ready, here's the word: "NYAH"!!!!!! Ha!. What has all this got to do with punk rock? Nothing! But just like punk rock, it was fun, right? So shaddup already!

—ShitEd, Tujunga, Californication (fuck the Chili Peppers for using one of my signature words as the name of their latest CD—are they going to title the next one "Tujungatrashland?") ⊕



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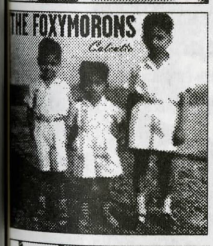

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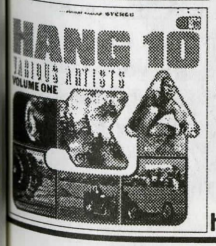

"**Hang 10**" has 15 cool surf related tunes from Queers, McRackins, Helen Love, Beatnik Termites, Man Or Astro-man?, Kung Fu Monkeys, Phranc, Saboteurs & others.

AMERICAN POP PROJECT

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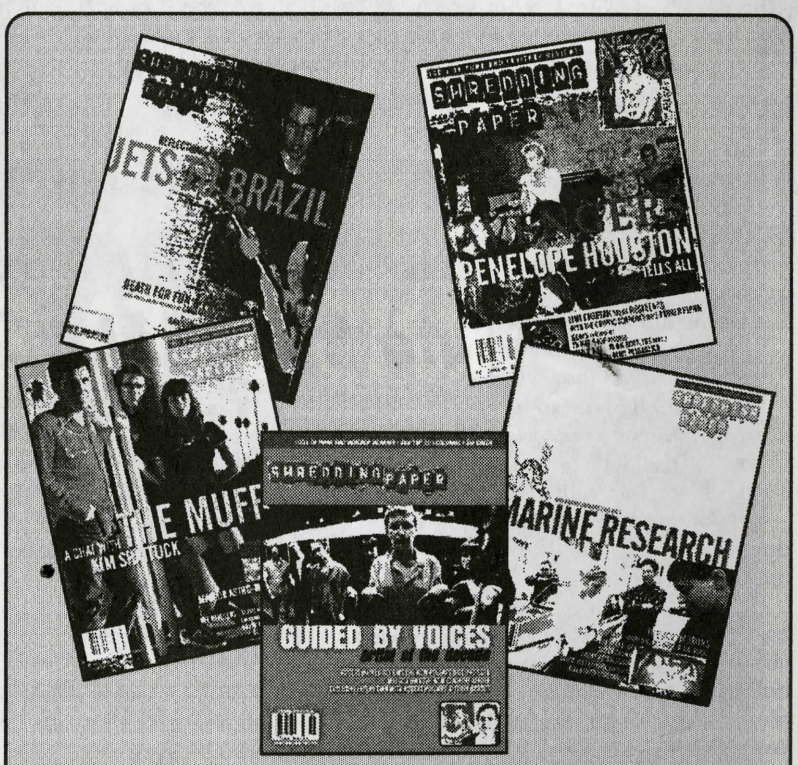

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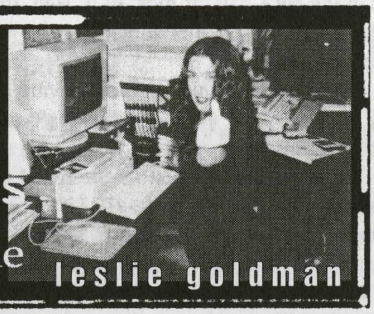


flip flops AND champagne

leslie goldman

I really try not to mention my zine in every one of these columns (obviously, so far I haven't been very successful in that regard), but it's hard not to - it takes up such a huge chunk of my life that it always seems to be a reference point for something else I want to talk about. So excuse me, because I'm about to do it again. Our subject today is pornography, a popular topic among you readers, I'm sure, since *Hit List* is *geared* toward men and only *men* like porn. (I hope you all realize I'm kidding here, right?) Over the past few years, because of my zine, I have repeatedly been put into positions where I have had to defend pornography. This is due to the fact that lately we've been reviewing X-rated movies and have had, and will probably continue to have in the future, interviews with porn stars, porn directors, and other types of sex workers. Unfortunately, because some people who see our zine have a problem with that, I get my share of angry letters. Occasionally I get angry letters about other things too, but they usually tend to be from someone who is whining about their band getting a bad review (which, of course, I just toss out, because those missives are too ridiculous to even respond to). I actually *do* respond to most of the people who try to take me to task over the porn issue, though, because I feel it's necessary to state my opinion on the matter.

I voluntarily write about porn because it's no big deal to me.

Sometimes, aside from just defending pornography's right to exist, I'm put in weirder positions like having to educate women about why a photo of a model with her underpants showing is not an example of how men degrade women. (To me, an example of something that's degrading to women is when one woman tries to suggest that another woman shouldn't have the right to show her panties in a photo if she wants to.) Sometimes I'm put in even *weirder* positions than that, but I'm not here to talk about my sex life. Defending porn isn't always easy because a lot of it is, in fact, pretty bad. Some of it is completely distasteful and without merit in just about every way, but I still think it should be allowed to exist. I want the right to be able to watch it if I'm so inclined. If I don't like something I see, or if it makes me uncomfortable, I can simply turn it off. This option also applies to others in connection with my zine, but people never seem to get that. They can't just toss it out and be done with it, they have to try to convert me to their way of thinking, which will never happen.

I voluntarily write about porn because it's no big deal to me. I think that, in general, it's fun to watch and write about because everything about it is so over the top and blown way out of proportion. (Excuse all the puns contained herein!) When Larry and I sit down to watch the videos we review, it's not a prelude to some hot action in our bedroom; we watch it like we would any other B-grade movie. We talk all through it, and almost all of the videos are at least good for a couple "oh my god, look at that" type things. Most of what I've seen doesn't make me hot, but I'm willing to keep looking. Just like most other forms of entertainment, you've got to weed through all the bad stuff to find the good stuff. I really can't understand these broad, sweeping generalizations people make, for example "the existence of pornography is in itself degrading to women." That one's been tossed my way a couple of times. My theory is, pornography in some form has been around forever, long before women had most of the rights we do today. We've made it this far, so I don't think it will stunt our growth as a gender any further to let it run its course. If anything, what will probably drag us all back into the Dark Ages is the ridiculous notion that there is "a right way" and "a wrong way" for women to think and behave, and that if your way of thinking and behaving deviates at all from the "feminist" ways espoused by the likes of Andrea Dworkin (feel free to insert the name of your least favorite "feminist" here), then you are an uneducated or unintelligent slut. I'm not saying every woman should run out and buy a vibrator and a copy of *Debbie Does Dallas #20* in order to assert herself as a strong, smart, self-actualized woman. (Although the vibrator part is a good idea. I *will* go on record as being in favor of that.) I believe in "different strokes for different folks". (Remember, I apologized for any puns earlier.) I'm just saying, don't bother me if I want to watch it or write about it - or imply that there is something *wrong* with me because I'm OK with it. Pornography is probably not going to go away, so if it bothers you that much, you might want to make it a point to avoid it.

I do get some interesting mail, though - there's no doubt about that. The letters in which the writer gets all high and mighty with me - as if they don't ever think, talk about, or have sex - are really amusing. Maybe they really don't think about it, talk about it, or do it, but I find that hard to believe. Everyone does, don't they? Maybe not *everyone* gets to have sex as often as they might like, but surely we can agree that everyone gets horny sometimes and has the urge to have sex. Maybe these people are upset because they know how perverted they really are behind closed doors and they can't handle the guilt - I don't know. I don't really try to figure out the underlying motives of

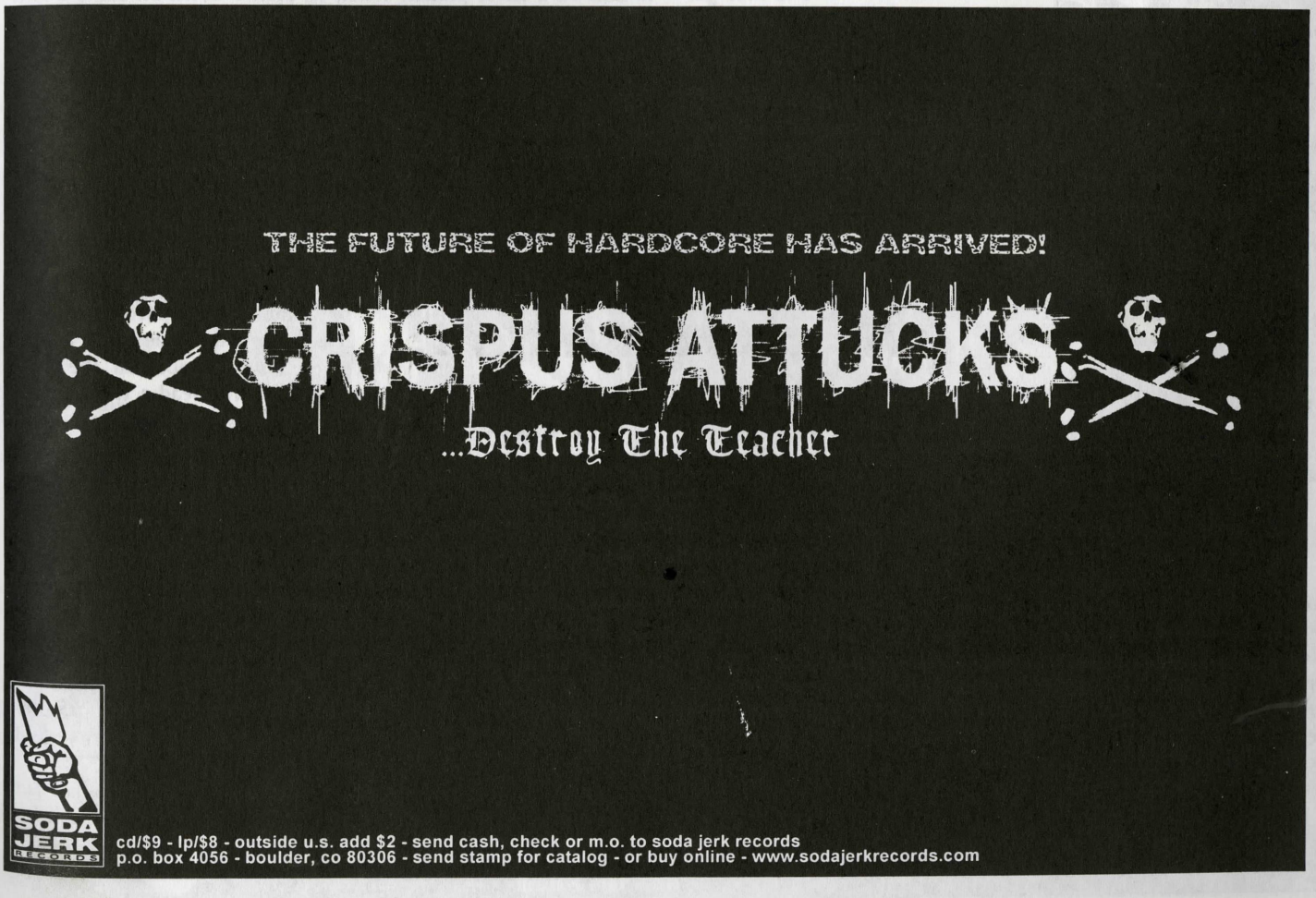
these people, I just try to state my position on the issue and hope that's that. I realize I'm probably not going to make them feel any less frigid with my explanation of my opinions and how I've formed them - any more than they're going to make me more frigid with their ignorance and insults to my intellect. (And don't *ever* try to dissuade me from using alliteration, either. I am the motherfucking *queen* of alliteration!) But I digress.

I don't mind being the sole fall guy - so to speak - for my mag and its contents, but when you try to come off like there's something wrong with me because what you saw and read made you uncomfortable but doesn't make me uncomfortable, then you have crossed the line as far as *my* level of tolerance goes. The world is not black and white, and nothing is all-positive or all-negative. Life isn't that simple, much less that fair. I'm not saying that all porno is wonderful and brilliant, or that Ron Jeremy should get an honorary Oscar for his contributions to cinema. I think Ron Jeremy is a disgusting, hairy, troll of a man but hey, if someone else is willing to screw him for money then I say more power to him (and her). Porn is probably the only way a guy like that could ever get laid by good-looking young women, so you can't really fault the guy for sticking around the business for so long. (I myself wish he would go away, though, since he *is* pretty damn gross.)

At any rate, I think that I have a healthy sexual attitude. I like sex. Sex is fun - at least in my world. It's not something to get upset about or bothered by. There are probably a number of different factors that influenced the way I turned out, some which are none of your damn business and are hence inappropriate for me to discuss in this forum - some of them may even be inappropriate for the *Penthouse Forum* - so I won't be airing all of my dirty little secrets here. I'll save that for my scandalous tell-all book, to be published after my death. A lot of it can probably be traced back to how I was raised. I don't want to imply that I was raised in a house of loose morals, I don't think that I was. My parents instilled a lot of morality in my sister and I - like honesty and the importance of hard work (alas, there were probably some others that didn't really stick) - but I certainly wasn't raised in a home where sex was considered a bad, evil, or dirty thing, and as a result I am now able to reap the benefits of that upbringing with a happy, sex-filled marriage of my own.

I understand that not everyone grew up that way. I understand that some people are uptight about sex, and I can sympathize with that. I understand that some people think porn is disgusting. I also understand that some people who aren't uptight about sex think porn is disgusting; sometimes when *I'm* watching it I think that as well, but I'm woman enough to handle it. If you're not man or woman enough to deal with your own sexuality, that's cool with me. All I ask is that you keep it to yourself, and that you let me be free to wallow in my own crapulence. ⊕

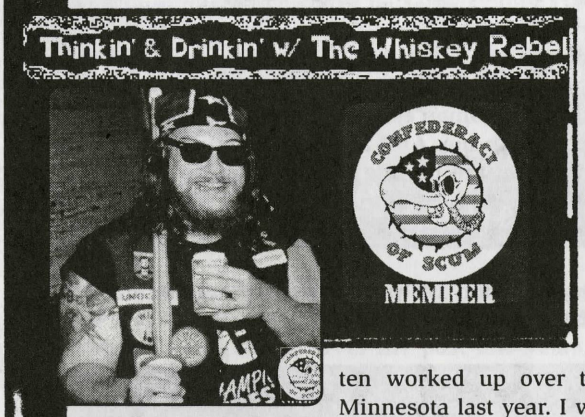
I'm the editor of Carbon 14 *magazine. You can contact me at* C14/*PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125*



I WIPE MY ASS WITH YOUR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BALLOT!

I'm serving notice here and now, publicly, to all you politically-minded chuckleheads who love to spout out that old cliche: "If you didn't vote, then you don't have any right to complain". I challenge you, ANY ONE of you, to step forth and explain to me why I should waste my time—my precious time—voting for the obvious Republican and Democratic presidential candidates.

The field of candidates is so weak this time around that it inspires even ME, a man who FUCKING HATES the entire political game, to waste the opening part of a column on it.



Lookey here...the ONLY election in my entire adult lifetime that I've ever gotten worked up over took place in Minnesota last year. I was incredibly interested in Jesse Ventura's campaign. I signed up to be added to his e-mail list, and I followed the election campaign closely, even though I couldn't vote for "the MIND". On election night, I spent several hours monitoring the returns from Minnesota. When Jesse appeared to be the victor, I drank a 6-shot salute in his honor!

I'll admit that at first, his candidacy mainly caught my attention because he's one of my all time favorite wrestling heroes. After reading transcripts of press conferences and the radical position statements that were posted to his website, however, I realized that Jesse Ventura was no joke. Of course, usually it's pointless to support a 3rd party candidate (or 4th or 5th or 6th) in an American election. Perhaps nowhere else in America is this fact so obvious as in my present hometown, Philadelphia: "HOSTILE CITY, USA".

People here in Philly see elections in exclusively black-and-white terms—you're either a Republican or you're a Democrat. There is no gray area at all. 3rd party candidates are ignored here. They get to appear on a couple local talk radio shows, and that's about it. The locals here are not about to deviate from family and social class political traditions to vote for a candidate that stands no chance of winning. Jesse Ventura wouldn't have been elected here in Philly even though it's a helluva wrestling town. I don't know what it is about the voters out in Minnesota, but I salute them! I hate like hell to say it, but Jesse's victory was a 1-in-10,000 shot fluke. 3rd party candidates everywhere will probably stand LESS of a chance of winning a major office than before, now that the Democrats and Republicans have been caught napping once.

Now that you politically minded readers know that it's possible after all for an acknowledged apolitical creature such as myself to get interested in an election..I challenge you to explain the appeal of ANY of the major candidates.

I remember years ago, when my ol' pal Jello was waging war against Tipper Gore, he commented to me how scary it was that a shitheel like Al Gore was so close to the White House. I listened to what Jello had to say, but after thinking it over I personally pooh-poohed Gore's importance at the time. I admit now that Jello was turned out to be right. Furthermore, I certainly wouldn't want to be in his shoes if Al and Tipper end up being elected! Gore is the most disgusting kind of politician, a creep who grew up with an influential politician Daddy who handed anything he desired to him on a silver platter. When Al breaks down on camera and pretends to be "concerned", I feel about as touched as when they work a phony injury angle on "W.W.F. RAW" or when a shoe salesman pitches extra shoelaces or socks to me.

Then there's George W. Bush, yet another creep who grew up with a famous politician Daddy who handed him anything he desired on a silver platter.

I admit now that Jello was turned out to be right. Furthermore, I certainly wouldn't want to be in his shoes if Al and Tipper end up being elected!

It's pretty obvious that in the eyes of people like Bush and his Daddy and his supporters, citizens like Jeff Bale and myself (and perhaps you, the reader) who lead a rock 'n' roll lifestyle are childish, immoral, suspicious kooks that need to be watched. Furthermore, they suspect that we're all "high on drugs". I know a lot of you think that you're sticking it to the "cause-oriented" Democrats by voting for a guy like Bush, but remember one thing: If you aren't a Christian with "family values"—in other words a TOTAL FUCKING SQUARE—Bush and his ilk have NO USE AT ALL for you.

I'm therefore forced to ask myself why anyone who reads *Hit List* would vote for Bush? If you do, you're like a Jew voting for Hitler.

These two aren't any more different from one another, ideolog-

WHISKEYREBEL

ically speaking, than the last several pairs of candidates that we Americans have been forced to choose from to select a President. I must say, though, that they are two of the most transparent personalities to come along in a quite some time.

So tell me, all you "get out the vote" advocates. Instead of insisting, AFTER the election, that people like myself have no right to complain if we don't vote for one of these jerks, please instruct me why I should support either of those two? Why shouldn't the American political system be able to produce several remarkable, sincere, talented, visionary candidates in every Presidential election? Why is it always two dunderheads that we get to choose from?

I can already hear a few of you mumbling that I've skipped over Bradley, or Hatch, or McCain, or Barry Commoner, or Pat Paulsen, or Mickey Mouse, or Bob Backlund. I skipped all of them because I don't think that any of 'em stand the chance of a fart in a whirlwind of actually being elected President. And if by chance any of them actually happened to share many of my own beliefs, the vast majority of Americans wouldn't elect them anyway!

And then there's the "God" issue.

The voters of the U.S. have NEVER, and undoubtedly WILL NEVER in my lifetime, seriously consider electing a President who doesn't profess to believe in the Christian god. If the candidate really does believe in "God"...for real, then he's as gullible as all the other Christians. He's just a mark who prays to a nonexistent entity that invented crib-death and testicle cancer. If he only pays lip service to believing in god in the hope of being elected, then that makes him a goddamn PHONY.

All you registered voters out there, which do you prefer?

A sincere but moralistic Christian?

Or a shrewd phony?

Hot piss or cold piss?

Americans actually prefer Christian candidates. They also prefer handsome, smiling, slick-tongued candidates.

Americans are suspicious of "egghead" candidates with new ideas and solutions to problems. They feel somehow safer with professional politicians and their smooth talk at the wheel. That's not going to change any time soon.

As for me, I prefer to cynically sit on the "WHISKEY REBEL THRONE" in my basement and drink while all you suckers vote. And by the way, I don't need to ask permission from any of you TO COMPLAIN, whether I vote or not.

Intellectuals can hash over the "issues" all they want, but in the end it won't matter. On election day our democratic form of government guarantees that the ignorant, square masses will have their way. The next wave of voters to come of age appear to have been fooled by *Pokemon* and rap-metal. Don't expect them to change anything.

But I don't want to waste an entire column on politics. It's about time that I devoted a few words to a truly sick bunch of prickfaces—RECORD COLLECTORS.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm crazy about vinyl. My primary hobby for the last 20 years has been searching out cheap records at thrift stores and flea markets. I fucking LOVE records. BUT...after working for many years as a dealer at record shows where I've been exposed to the "collector" mentality, I flatly REFUSE to consider myself a "record collector".



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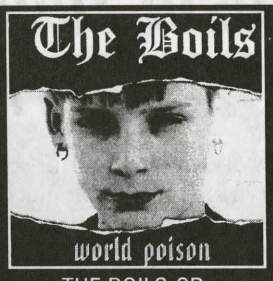

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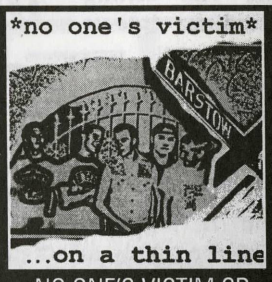

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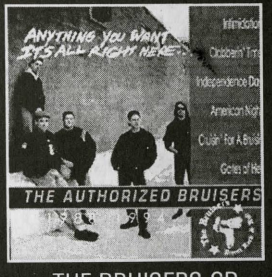

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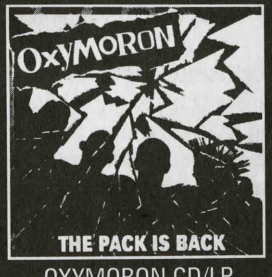

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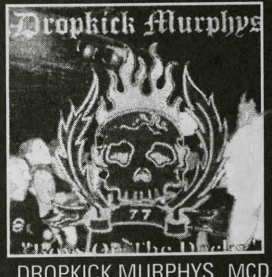

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HIT SQUAD

Record "collectors" scurry around the tables at record shows like hunchbacked rodents on their hind legs. They scurry around from one table to another sniffing for a sucker dealer who has underpriced records to feast off of. Even though I'm at the record show to make a buck too, I'm always disgusted by the predatory gleam in the eye of a "collector". These fuckers have NO CLASS! So many of them run about in a mad rush with their faces screwed up into a mask of desperation. If you observe their actions for awhile, and listen to them speak to one another in their cocky arrogant tones, it's obvious that they aren't there to find music to listen to. No, the record "collector" is there to symbolically RAPE an unsuspecting dealer who doesn't realize the value of a record that has caught the "collector's" eye. After a big find, the collector will crow, and crow loudly, for all to hear about the stupidity of the dealer who priced his record too low. The collector's cronies will gather around to gape at the prize, and even though they pretend to be happy for their "friend" (HAH!) you can see them burning up with envy beneath the surface. "Collectors" somehow transform what could be a peaceful marketplace for buying and selling music recordings into a COMPETITIVE event.

Collectors" somehow transform what could be a peaceful marketplace for buying and selling music recordings into a COMPETITIVE event.

As an example. I have shared a table at the WFMU record show in N.Y.C. with my good buddy Jeff Clayton from ANTISEEN several times. At every single show we work together, there's this same nut who trots around the room with a little record player. He's a tall, scrawny, and very nerdy looking dude with a huge schnozz and coke bottle glasses. This guy is only interested in oldies 45's. If you let him, he'll pull 50 records out of your singles bin (which you had carefully organized the night before) and then proceed to play a little burst of music, 3 or 4 seconds at the most, from both sides of every record. He is a very fast worker. He slams the record onto his turntable, and drops the needle down with a flick of his wrist. He grimaces after two seconds, rips the needle off, and flips the 45 like a pancake on a grill. He makes NO EFFORT to handle your records carefully, but in his eyes it's your fault if one of your records gets scratched; after all, you agreed to let him play them on his portable player with its nail-like stylus. If the guy bought a few of the records he sampled it would be one thing, but he never does. As a final insult, the guy leaves your table with an arrogant scowl on his face implying that your stock of records is a pile of shit.

The first time Jeff and I worked a show together, even though I knew who this clown was, I let the guy check out a pile of my singles just to get a rise out of Clayton. After the guy manhandled a dozen or so of my records, I looked over at Jeff and saw that there was steam coming out of his ears. He couldn't believe what an asshole this Yankee bastard was! Jeff lives in sleepy South Carolina and is used to a slower tempo of life. His pleasures are simple—slowly rocking in a porch swing while cleaning his guns, napping in his hammock, idly scratching his coon dog behind the ear. If the beanpole "collector" ventured to Dixie and behaved in the same wound-up manner that he does in New York City, he'd be dragged behind somebody's pickup truck within hours of hitting town.

Another annoying "collector" jerk that pissed Jeff off was a sour-faced fellow who was into female vocalists like Julie London. He pulled a half dozen albums out of Jeff's bin that were priced at about $15-$20 a pop. He offered Jeff $30 for the whole bunch, and pretended not to hear Jeff when he said "No!". He flipped through another bin of albums for a couple minutes, and then repeated, "I'll give you $30". Once again Jeff said "No!", this time with a bit more of an edge. The guy spun on his heel and left the table with the records scattered all over the top of Jeff's record bins.

Jeff was mildly pissed, but not for too long. He filed his records away again, and soon after was able to have a good laugh with me about the guy. We laughed too soon. The same guy came back to our table an hour later. He silently pulled the same albums out of the bins again. I guess we both expected him to pay Jeff the full amount or make a reasonable offer. Hell no! With that same deadpan look on his face, the guy said, "I'll pay you $30". There came the steam out of Jeff's ears again, but the guy actually stood and argued with Jeff for 5 full minutes before storming off in an arrogant huff.

There's a peculiar method of flipping through record bins that I've only seen Japanese "collectors" use. Instead of working through the box front to back, one record at a time, these guys begin at the BACK of a bin. They take a deep breath and using both hands they alternate between yanking one record up and over to the left, and the next up and over to the right. The most striking factor about this technique is the SPEED involved. They couldn't possibly be focused on any individual record title for more than a fraction of a second! At the end of the bin, they relax their muscles and exhale heavily. Have you ever seen one of Japan's "iron chefs" on television, armed with twin cleavers, dicing up entire pike, eels, or melons in seconds flat? When these guys are done yanking your records left and right out of your bin, they are in a total fucking mess. Do you think even one of them would bother to help you straighten up the mess they just made? Of course not. It's on to the next table, where they do exactly the same thing.

Then there are the "dealers", many of whom are merely "collectors" with tables. I usually make the rounds at a show during slow periods. It's unbelievable how many dealers can annoy me within 30 seconds of arriving at their tables. A lot of them make small talk while staring at you bug-eyed, trying to detect an iota of interest on your part in an album. If you stop browsing for a few seconds and actually pick up a record to examine it, they pounce on you, babbling about what a great record it is...blah blah blah. "Hey, I'll hook you up!", they promise, as if we were old buddies. I REFUSE to deal with this type of dealer. I've learned to shop at tables at which the dealer has obviously left his wife in charge so that I can shop in peace.

WHISKEYREBEL

Speaking of wives, mine has been kind enough to help me out at many record shows. She once pointed out that no matter what state of the union a record show is in, North or South, summer or winter, by 2 O'clock there is a literal fog of hamburger-like B.O. stench wafting throughout the room. My sweetheart is right. I've been to gun shows, auto shows, boat shows, toy shows, horror-fests, and comic-con's, and I have to agree: record collectors fucking STINK! The reason so few of them bring their wives or girlfriends is probably either because no women would even have them, or perhaps because their women are even funkier and uglier than their "collector" freak men. Any woman who would tolerate some of the cross-eyed, cash register-jawed dudes I've seen scurrying around record shows with their little want lists must be real specimens.

I don't mean to imply that everybody I see at record shows acts like an asshole. There are a lot of decent people there too, who are actually in it for THE MUSIC rather than the "collector" aspects. These people know who they are, because I spend as much time as possible talking to them at my table. Likewise, some of the dealers are really cool people who you can learn from. Once Jeff and I set up next to a guy that was a dead-ringer for Johnny Paycheck. He told us the life story of Mel Street. Then, there was the dude in Baltimore who kept bringing me beers at one slow show. He counseled me when I was getting depressed at the poor turnout. "I don't give a fuck" he said. "I'm here to drink!". I wish I had had a Dad or Uncle to provide me with sage counsel like that.

Yunno what? Baseball card collectors are even worse than these record "collectors". Many, many baseball players will no longer sign cards and bats for kids, because they've seen too many of them turning around and handing them to their greedy dealers Dads. Now that is really fucking low, getting your kid involved pestering some guy for an autograph that you fully intend to sell.

What many people consider to be the two best record shows in the country are coming up in the near future, and Jeff and I will be setting up at both if you want to come by and say hello...or tell me to fuck off. You can even buy a copy of my new book (plug, plug), *Jobjumper*, as long as supplies last. Either way, please bring me beer. These two shows have a rather high percentage of attendance by record shoppers, as opposed to obnoxious record "collectors". They ARE NOT the kind of puny "local" shows where you can't find anything but overpriced doo-wop and Beatles stuff. If they were, we wouldn't waste our time at them. If you are looking for the kind of rock and roll covered in *Hit List*, come see us at the Austin record convention on March 18th and 19th and at the WFMU show in NYC on May 13th.

Whiskey flavored kisses to you all.... ⊕

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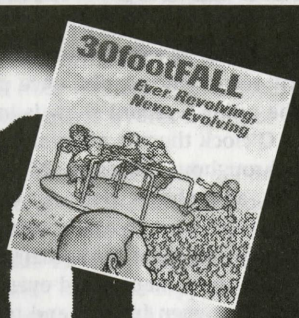

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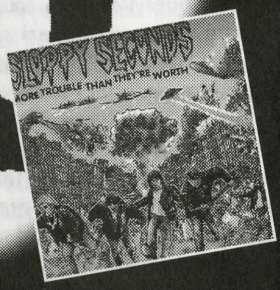

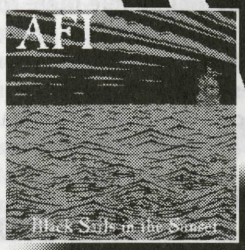

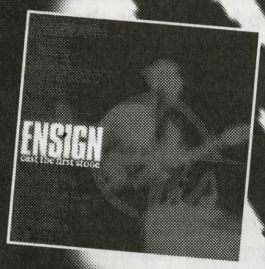



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Michelley QueenofQueens has decided to spend the rest of the winter at "Hedonism Two", getting her rocks off in the blazing sunshine, with butch daddies serving her frozen alcohol until her blood becomes car coolant. Never one to shirk her responsibilities, Michelley has invited her close personal friend Mrs. McFeelme to entertain you all with a lighthearted little column we call...

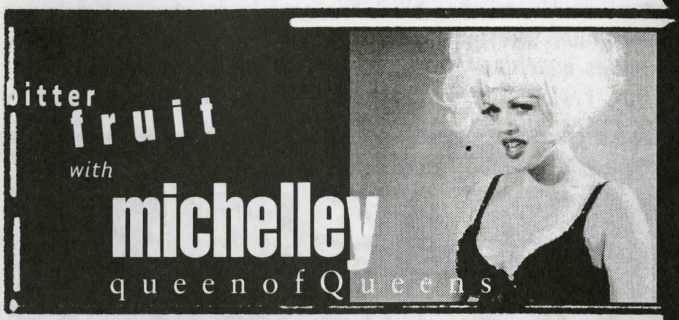
SHAGGY? THAT'S FAGGY TO YOU!

I, Mrs. McFeelme am proud to be a rug-munching, crew-cut sporting, ben-wah ball-dildo-packing grade "A" dyke of the first order! During the warmer months of the year, card carrying queers like me are hard at work trying to meet our quota of straight-to-gay conversions for the year end count. The chilly winter months provide those of us that live in the north with a much needed break from the ofttimes physically demanding work of these conversion missions. At season's end I pack away the lesbian porn that has helped to change so many closed minds. I oil up my trusty folding table and chair and put them in my closet (the ONLY things that belong in one!). Finally, I file away the posters depicting the hideous boredom afflicting heterosexual lifestyles, images so shocking that I have been arrested several times for displaying them in public. When i have completed these tasks, I settle down on the couch and click on the TV.

Now I know what all my queer sisters and brothers are thinking, how can I loaf around watching reruns of *Will and Grace* when we have a war to fight?! I assure you all that I am no slacker. While most of you are drinking a quart of St. John's Wort a day just to stay alive, I am fighting the good fight with only my remote control and my "private dancer" for company. Day in and day out I monitor the infinite number of cable channels that I receive thru my satellite dish to ensure that the subversive media influence our pink and purple predecessors put into place back in the 1950's is still sowing sapphic seeds in young minds. My superiors usually assign me the task of animation monitoring, which I am always happy to do, since everyone knows that cartoon babes are hot!

How can I loaf around watching reruns of Will and Grace *when we have a war to fight?!*

Last Saturday, while dutifully sitting at my post, I caught an episode of *Scooby-Doo* which was so flaming I couldn't believe it had formerly evaded my attention. I don't remember all the details of the plot because I fell into a vast "K-hole" after I saw it. The scenes I do remember were simply stunning! As usual those darn kids were driving thru an area that was rivaled in spooky solitude only by the neighborhoods surrounding Chernobyl. After a while they happened upon a deserted airfield that was being haunted by a Yeti (a stark white Tibetan Bigfoot, for those who are not in the know). The "Doo-ers" immediately attempted to discover the Yeti's true identity. During the course of their madcap and "far out" chase, the beleagured Yeti revealed not only his misogynistic and straight-hating tendencies, but also his abundant, homoerotic lust for Shaggy (Mr. Boombastic indeed!). At one point the Yeti, in a desperate attempt to conceal his gay identity, tried to saw our lesbian heroine Velma in half by strapping her to the conveyor belt of a circular saw a la "Oil Can Harry". The Yeti, like everyone else, underestimated Velma's lesbian ingenuity and she easily escaped from this trite scenario—presumably to call *The Enquirer* to blow the Yeti's cover. Meanwhile Fred and Daphne were incorrigibly flaunting their straight affection, which angered the



repressed snow monster. So naturally, he tried to blow them up with some old dynamite. He was once again thwarted, this time by Daphne's supersize diaphragm, which deflected the explosion and allowed the couple to escape, just barely making their flight to "Sandals" resort. In the midst of this mayhem, our nelly beatnik friend Shaggy and his longtime companion Scooby Doo were busy sampling the tasty tidbits that only a deserted airfield's mess hall can offer. Scooby rudely ingested an entire chicken and a jar full of olives (found in a dusty cabinet) without offering his "friend" Shaggy even the smallest portion of said meal. Angered by this insult, Shaggy flew off in a huff and apparently found comfort in the hairy, white arms of the Yeti. When he finally returned to his friends, he was moaning and covered in a sticky white substance. What does this say to you!? Daphne, Fred, and Velma barely survived gruesome attacks on their lives, and all Shaggy got was splashed with a coating of Yeti gruel!? Figure it out, people!

I have no idea what happened next and I don't much care. The Yeti came out, and all over Shaggy. Shaggy was the only member of his crew besides Scooby who the confused Yeti did not threaten with physical violence. Obviously, the Yeti is a homosexual member of PETA. This cartoon episode by far makes the most bold pro-gay statement I have seen in quite some time. More importantly it was filmed in the mid seventies, when Ellen was still smellin' her mama's melon. When the organization receives my report, they will be overjoyed. Now I must depart, *Josie and the Pussycats* is on in five! Mrs. McFeelme wants you to tell her who your first cartoon crush was . Contact her at mcfeelme@ulster.net See you there!

HIT SQUAD

I had a great year in the stock market in 1999. The bulk of the credit for it really goes to my girlfriend Amy, who works for a Silicon Valley startup called EdopeE Software. They did an IPO last March and Amy was able to use her connections to get me 1,000 shares at the opening price of $15 a share. By year's end I was able to sell the stock for an incredible $85 a share, a profit of $70,000! The stock soared mainly on the popularity of an application called Backen. Backen is an exciting breakthrough in protecting and archiving computer files by translating them into a series of ones and zeroes which can be printed on to paper, and stored safely in a box. I wanted to celebrate my awesome financial windfall by



buying something really special. I told Amy how I felt, and asked if she had any ideas for something really special we could buy. She suggested plants. I wasn't too excited about the plants idea, but I didn't want to hurt Amy's feelings so I said, "Plants; now that's a possibility, but I'd kind of prefer getting something that you know, maybe isn't plants, you know, something less plantlike." I really wanted to splurge and get something expensive and cool, but that wasn't what Amy wanted. I think Amy has yet to get over an experience she refers to as her "15 months of fame".

As strange as it may sound Amy was once offered 26 million dollars for a web site she created. Recently I came across an audio cassette labeled "AOL negotiations". I asked Amy about it, and she said that when she and her lawyer met with the AOL people she taped the meeting.

Before I go any further I should explain that Amy has a cat named Fluffy. In 1997 Amy got the idea to have a web site for her cat Fluffy. She registered WWW.FLUFFY.COM as her domain name. Her spin on the web site concept was that instead of simply doing a web site about her pet, she would do the site from Fluffy's point of view, and make it like Fluffy was actually the one creating the web site. For instance you might have read, "Hi. My name is Fluffy. I am a cat. Here is a picture of me. Amy took the picture. Amy is a very talented photographer. Amy is my guardian. She is a wonderful person. Amy loves me very much. Here is a picture of Amy. Isn't she pretty. Amy is very smart. She programs computers to make money to buy me food. (picture of food) Look at this picture of the cat on the cat food box. That is a very pretty cat. Amy says that I am even prettier than the cat on the box. She says that even though the cat on the box is a professional cat model, that was specially bred for modeling, I am even prettier. Amy says I should be the cat on the box, but that I never will be, because of what she calls "politics". Amy really loves me. If I get sick, Amy takes me to the cat Doctor. Then I feel better. I hope Amy lives a long time so I will always be taken good care of. When Amy goes to work in the morning I am all alone. Amy taught me how to use the computer, so I could make this web site to share my life with you. Every day is an adventure for me. I can stay in the house and sleep or work on the computer, or I can go outside through my little door. (picture of door) When I go in the back yard, the dog on the other side of the fence barks at me. I don't understand why the dog doesn't like me. I have never done anything bad to the dog. I think the dog may have serious mental problems. (picture of dog from a distance)"

The Fluffy web site was quite impressive. All the photos were taken from ground level to create a Fluffy point of view. Every day Amy would update the site, to create kind of a Fluffy diary. It was really fascinating the way Fluffy (actually Amy) would keep the site interesting and topical every day. For example, "Today is Monday, but Amy didn't go to work today. That's because today is a holiday. It's President's Day. I don't know much about Presidents. That is because I am a cat. Cats don't have holidays. Also, cats are not allowed to vote. Since Amy was home today she was nice enough to help me with today's web site update. Usually, I have to do it all by myself." Here's another example, "My guardian Amy heard on TV today that scientists have developed a way to clone mice. Sounds delicious." When Amy started the site in August '97 she put a web counter on the Fluffy home page, and within two months FLUFFY.COM was getting an average of 800 hits per day, with the numbers growing daily. In November '97, Amy got an e-mail from the publishers of *Computing Today* magazine asking if she would agree to appear on the February '98 cover of CT, with Fluffy! They offered Amy $5,000 to do the cover, and she agreed. After that issue hit the stands the phone didn't stop ringing. Amy was getting calls from old friends she hadn't heard from since High School. Strangely it seemed that Amy and Fluffy were becoming celebrities. In late February, *USA Today* ran an article with a nice picture of Amy and Fluffy. The headline above the photo read, "An Internet Entrepreneur and Her Guardian, Amy". A club that Amy belongs to did a nice write-up on her in their newsletter with the headline, "MENSA Female's Perspicacious Feline Flaunts Binary Finesse". Amy and Fluffy even got a brief mention in a *Cosmopolitan* article on how the internet was empowering women. In April, *Cat Fancy* had Fluffy on the cover, but not Amy. Amy was a little upset over that, but they did pay her $10,000. A month later Amy and Fluffy appeared on Fox's *America's Favorite Pets*, where they were slightly overshadowed by a parrot who had a winning lottery ticket, and a ferret who liked to go for rides in a clothes dryer (on the temperature setting for woolens). The wave of publicity was amazing, and it seemed there was just no end. The only really negative press was something Amy came across at the supermarket checkstand. Without any permission, the *World Weekly News* used a picture of Amy and Fluffy on their cover, with the headline, "Computer Programming Cat a Hoax!" Another less than favorable news article that mentioned Amy and Fluffy was the P.E.T.A. newsletter's, "Are Pet Web sites Ethical?" Yet another time the press was less than favorable was an article in *PC Magazine*, "Is the World Wide Web Becoming the Refrigerator Magnet of the 90's?", in which Fluffy's site was described as, "... a cornball pastiche of second rate photography and third rate humor, hosted by an obese yard cat." But for me the low point was in September '98 when Amy and Fluffy appeared on *Entertainment Tonight*, and Mary Hart had the gall to ask Amy if she and Fluffy had any plans to deal with their weight problems. Despite the occasional

negative press, Amy had collected close to $100,000 in various fees and endorsements by the end of '98. Of course much of the money went to lawyers to pay for things like incorporation, trademarks, computer equipment, etc. Amy had sparked a trend. At the end of '98 the Pet Central web site listed 281 cat web sites, of which Fluffy's was by far the most visited. There were also 196 dog sites, 21 fish web sites, 14 turtle sites, six hamster sites, two ferret sites, and strangely only one bird site. I say strangely because birds can actually speak, so you'd think there would be more bird web sites. All these sites copied Amy's style of doing the site as if it were actually being done by the pet. Although hundreds were copying Amy's style, no one was matching her success. In February of '98 following Amy and Fluffy's appearance at the Super Bowl halftime festivities, and the Friskies Super Bowl ad featuring Amy and Fluffy, daily hits on the Fluffy web site reached an amazing 33,000 a day. In March, Amy's lawyers received an offer of a quarter of a million dollars to be part of an ad campaign for Miller Lite beer, who were doing some humorous and innovative ads at the time. Amy agreed to do the ad, but the Miller people wanted Fluffy to appear in the ad, as well. At that point Amy decided to turn down the $250,000 offer, because she was already getting hate mail from animal rights people, and was afraid to enrage them any further. Variety magazine reported Amy turning down the ad as, "Cat Lady Nixes Suds Spots Fearing Jealous Zealots".

I want to get back to the cassette Amy made. I listened to it for the first time recently, and I thought it was very interesting. It was a tape she made when she met with America Online who wanted to acquire the rights to the Fluffy web site. I went through the tape and transcribed some portions of it. I should explain that Amy was accompanied by her lawyer Bernie Gelb.

James: "Amy, Bernie, it's good to see you here today. Here at AOL we're big fans of FLUFFY.COM, and we're looking for a partnering opportunity to bring you into the AOL family. And make no mistake about it, AOL is a family. We are people who enjoy working together each and every day and striving to meet the challenges of tomorrow."
Bernie: "What about beyond that?"
James: "Yes, certainly, tomorrow and beyond. At AOL we're no different than any other family, except that we have both horizontal and vertical resource integration, extended economic resource planning, and a market capitalization of 100 billion dollars. Now I want to introduce you to Edward Hornek, AOL's Vice President of Content Acquisition. Edward's going to outline the parameters of the substantial opportunity AOL represents for FLUFFY.COM."
Edward: "Thank you very much James for those well chosen words. Amy, Bernie, James was on target with his expression of the genuine affection we at AOL have for the Fluffy web site. Fluffy is a very dynamic animal. Clearly, at this point in time, the value of Fluffy is sky high. Some less substantial enterprises than AOL might shy away from trying to acquire the Fluffy rights at this time, but as James indicated, AOL is a 100 billion dollar company with an eye on tomorrow and beyond. In acquiring all digital rights to Fluffy, we hope to create a demographics based dynamic synergy. Our focus groups show that Fluffy's appeal to women 18-34 is unrivalled, and if you can accept my double negative it seems that nobody doesn't like Fluffy. Amy, Bernie, as you know, AOL is America's largest ISP, but in addition to that we are a value added provider of exclusive content to our users. AOL is in the content business. We love where Fluffy's been, and where Fluffy's going. The Fluffy phenomenon certainly hasn't escaped our attention here at AOL. I've read all the articles; *Wall*

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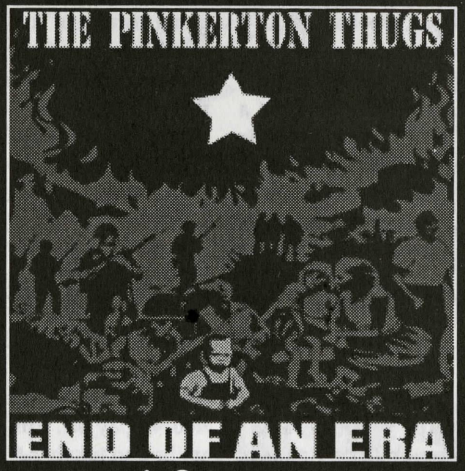

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Street Journal, Interactive Week, USA Today. I've seen the television appearances; Jay Leno, *Entertainment Tonight*. Incidentally, I found Mary Hart's comment about your weight totally inappropriate. I think you look great, Fluffy too."

James: "That's right Amy, at AOL we all think you look fit as a fiddle.

Amy: "Thanks. Yeah that was really weird when she said that. I asked them to edit it out of the show, but then they didn't. I might have been 10 pounds overweight at the time, but she certainly didn't need to mention it. My boyfriend said that she might have said that because people look fatter on TV than they really are. He says it's because the picture tube is slightly curved, you know, it's like not totally flat. I've lost about 5 pounds since then. I was so embarrassed. My boyfriend was really upset. He won't even watch *Entertainment Tonight* anymore. He claims that Mary Hart's voice gives him seizures, although that seems kind of odd, doesn't it."

Edward: "Amy, Bernie, as you may know, that show is owned is owned by the Time-Warner conglomerate. They are our competition."

Amy: "I certainly don't think of myself as someone with a weight problem. Maybe I should exercise more than I do, but I've been losing weight. My boyfriend is helping, he never takes me out to dinner anymore."

Edward: "Amy, Bernie, let's get back to what AOL can do for you, because I'm sure that's what you're interested in. First of all, we have a complete commitment to a broadband roll out. AOL's underlying broadband infrastructure means that there should be no concern as to any gating factor. Another point I want to make is that in our contractual presentation that Richard, here, will be detailing after I finish, you'll see that you're dealing with the industry leader. We have deep pockets, and any other suitors you may have in this industry can't offer you offer stock options in an industry leader experiencing the explosive growth we have at AOL. And they can't compete with licensing bonuses based on a user base of our size or the unique opportunity to tap into new on site revenue sources. Our upcoming launch of AOL Shopper will give Fluffy red carpet access to a potential 20 million shoppers from our subscriber base and access to group buying on our flagship service. AOL is rapidly building critical mass in market sectors that didn't even exist a year ago. The next point I want to make is best illustrated by this chart. Well I should wrap up soon to give Richard a chance to make his financial presentation, but first let me show you this chart I had prepared. This chart displays the traffic profiles for AOL and FLUFFY.COM. The green line is AOL, the red line is FLUFFY.COM. As you can see from the shaded areas we have a near parallel convergence in all high traffic dayparts, a perfect match. Keep in mind that AOL is a key consolidator in content delivery through integrated caches. Well, let me hand you over to Richard, and then afterwards I'll be available along with the rest of the AOL family to address any specific questions or concerns you may have."

I hope that gives you an idea what was going on. The financial presentation was extremely complicated, but it's critical to understanding what happened, so I'll try to explain. AOL extended a contract to Amy. Under the contract AOL would receive all digital rights, merchandising rights, intellectual property rights and trademarks associated with FLUFFY.COM. In return Amy would get commissions and bonuses based on Fluffy generated revenues. More importantly, AOL offered a gigantic profit sharing package that included extremely generous stock options. These would allow Amy to purchase specified quantities of AOL stock up to two years in the future at the market price that AOL stock was selling for the day the contract was tendered. Amy was given 30 days to sign the contract. AOL retained the right to retract the offer any time within the 30 days unless they were presented with a signed contract. Also, the offer would be retracted if 30 days elapsed without AOL receiving a signed contract. It's important to point out that although I can give you the gist of what the contract offered, the contract itself was very complex, and cloaked in legalese. The contract was in small type, and ran 18 pages. Amy probably should have just signed the contract right then and there, but she wanted to give her lawyer a chance to carefully review it. If you are wondering how much money the whole package was worth, I'd estimate 3 million dollars. I know that sounds like a lot, but in reality, Amy was already $300,000 in debt over the web site at that point. For the previous year, in addition to the legal fees, Amy had to hire a full time employee to answer the hundreds of daily e-mails the site received. Also, Amy had hired a design firm to develop Fluffy merchandise, and had to pay staggering fees for servers and hosting to accommodate the site's enormous ever growing traffic. In the week after the meeting AOL's stock price started to skyrocket. The whole stock market was going crazy, and internet companies were leading the way. With the 30 day period half over, the increase in the price of AOL stock increased the value of their offer to 19 million dollars. I talked to Amy and told her to tell her lawyer to deliver the signed contract to AOL immediately. Amy said she would. When Amy got home from work the next day I asked if the contract had been taken care of. She said that her lawyer had meetings scheduled the following week with AMAZON.COM, Microsoft and A,T&T. She said he was confident that one of those companies would match the offer. "Match the offer!! Is he insane!! What good does it do if someone matches the offer!? This is 19 million dollars we're talking about. I'm just surprised they haven't withdrawn the offer. They certainly never intended to offer you close to 20 million dollars. Have Bernie deliver the signed contract tomorrow!" "Mel, I'm not going to tell Bernie how to do his job. He did a great job getting a wonderful offer, but I'm not going to accept it if it's not the best offer out there. We've still got another week. Fluffy is hot right now. There might be a better offer coming, and I could be making a big mistake and end up costing myself millions of dollars."

Well, you've probably figured out what happened next. The following week Bernie's meetings with Amazon, Microsoft and A,T&T produced no offers. On Thursday, after a morning meeting with Microsoft, Bernie returned to his office where he received a registered letter from AOL. The letter explained that due to the dramatic increase in AOL's stock price the acquisition of FLUFFY.COM was no longer consistent with AOL's strategy of cost effective content acquisition. In other words Amy was screwed. The deal at that point would have been worth 26 million dollars. If you're wondering what happened to FLUFFY.COM, Amy had to shut it down. With $300,000 in debt to pay off, Amy was lucky to find an internet company that was willing to pay her $300,000 for the rights to the domain name. As for AOL, after they retracted their offer to Amy they bought the rights to the Fifi the Poodle site, and a site for Betty and her talking Parrots.

When Mel isn't hanging out with Amy, he's doing his quarterly fanzine Shredding Paper which has articles on his fave bands, hundreds of punk and indiepop record reviews, and even another one of his columns.



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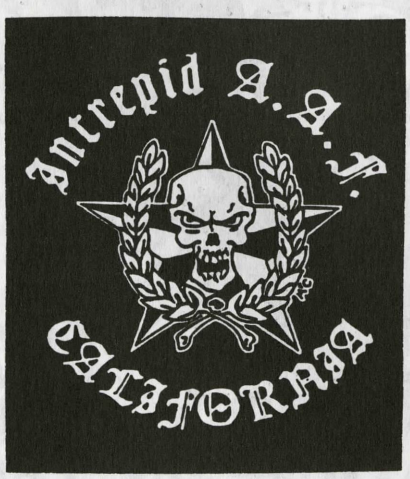
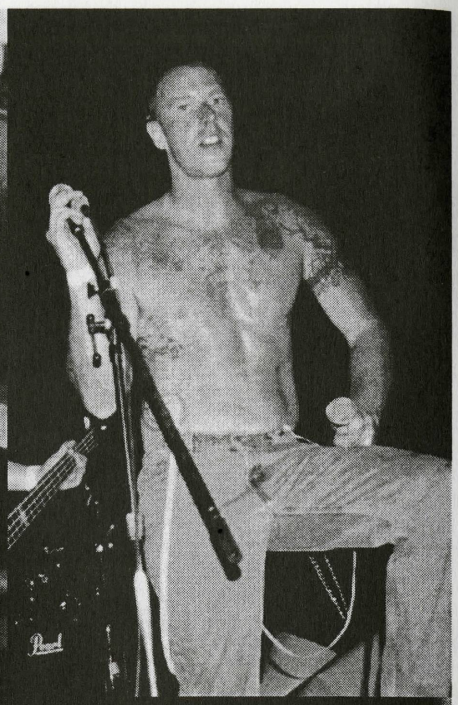












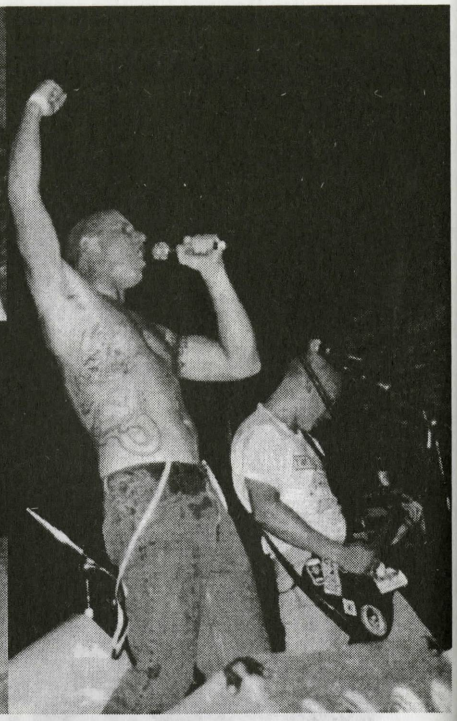
RESPECT the AUTHORITY!

The Authority! are a 4 piece street-punk/Oi! band that set themselves apart with a gritty no-holds-barred approach to playing live. Along with Bonecrusher and the Stitches, they rule the L.A. and Orange County punk scene. Their new Outsider Records full-length *On Glory's Side* has created quite a stir, with UK street-punk zine *KONTROL* calling them "the U.S. band to watch for in 2000." Recently they've shared the bill with Cocksparrer, The Templars, Dropkick Murphys, The Business, and The Gonads. Bill Barnes is the vocalist for The Authority! and was interviewed for *Hit List* by Forced Reality founder Pete Moricey.

Pete Moricey Well let's jump in with a bit of your band history. The changing of the vocalist and the reason behind it, the line-up now, names and ages, and where you guys reside.

Bill Barnes: The band started back in the late 1900s, to be exact it was 1993. Basically, with the exception of myself, the band consisted of different members than now. I was the original guitar player, and as time went on we had some line-up changes, the most significant of which was my move from guitar to vocals. Boost, our former vocalist, felt it was time for him to retire and focus on his family life. At the time, we were getting ready to tour and getting really busy with band duties. So at that point, I decided to step up to the mic and give it a try. I wasn't willing to let the Authority! or the message we were trying to convey die





When we sing about unity, strength & pride, brotherhood etc, we mean what we say. The stories on our CD are real and we've lived through a lot to get to where we are now.

due to a band member's departure. After all, I created this band and there was no way I was gonna let it die after all we've been through together.

The current line-up is (me) Billy (28) on vocals, Brandon (22) plays guitar, our bass player Andy (20) and last but not least our drummer J.J. who is also 20 years old. We're all from Huntington Beach and Long Beach, California.

PM: I have the new CD and I've played it a number of times. How has it been received? I heard you're creating a bit of a stir out West.

BB: It's been received really well, we've gotten nothing but positive reviews so far. It seems like people are starting to understanding where we're coming from. 3 years back, only a few understood our type of punk or Oi, but now people are more into it thanks to the renewed interest in street-punk or whatever. Oi is really about the truth and I'll keep voicing my opinion and steppin on' toes. Fuck - I can't help it cause it's in my nature. Sometimes it does stir up trouble but I guess sometimes this type of music causes trouble. But if you're pissed off at the government or if you're a hard working, hard drinkin', over-taxed under-paid, pissed-off but grinnin'-at-the-world type of American upstart then you're gonna love our new CD and that's the bottom line.

PM: How has Outsider Records been for you guys (seeing that my band is working with them right now)? Dave and Dave seem like really great guys.

BB: Outsider Records - these guys really have their hearts into what they're doing. They're really into the type of music they're releasing, and we were pretty excited when we found out they were planning a Forced Reality record for later this year. Along with bands like Bonecrusher and Blind Society I guess you could say they're makin' waves all around the world. They used to promote Punk & Oi gigs in Long Beach for years, and that helped build the scene up around here. Not to mention the prostitution ring and smuggling operation they run on the side.

PM: How long have you guys been involved in this scene (not as a band, but as individuals)? I'm just wondering if you

guys are as old as me, ha! And what changes have you seen through the years with the people involved with this music and lifestyle?

BB: I started going to see punk gigs around 1987. I got more into traditional ska and Oi in 1990. Next thing I knew I was wearing boots and shaving my head. The other guys are a bit younger but they've been around and done their time. Over the years, we've seen some changes in the people involved in the scene. There will always be the ones that are into it for the wrong reasons, and just plain lack the heart to keep up the fight. Those types will come and go and I think that's one of the problems with any scene. They get into it because it's the latest trend and don't fully realize what's happening within the scene. When we sing about unity, strength & pride, brotherhood etc, we mean what we say. The stories on our CD are real and we've lived through a lot to get to where we are now.

PM: **Do you incorporate any of your political views into your music? I know a lot of bands these days are afraid to touch on certain topics so as not to be labeled a certain type of band.**

BB: Yes, I express my political views in some of the songs on the album. This is the only way I may ever be heard and I'd like to express my ideas to as many people as possible. Take voting in a democratic country. We all know voting is just checking a bunch of choices on a ballot that are already determined by politicians that claim to have our interests at heart. They smile politely and thank you for participating, but who knows what happens to the your vote once you drop it in the ballot box? We aren't a political band in the vein of Crass, nor are we the Young Republicans or the Democratic Club. That's all bullshit as far as I'm concerned. If you really want to know how we feel or what we're trying to say, read the lyrics on the record. There are no secret messages to decode or hidden agendas. But try not to get too deep with it all - we're just out to have a good time. Although if you backwards mask "On Glory's Side" you may hear some weird shit relating to Britney Spears, Dennis Rodman and Satan.

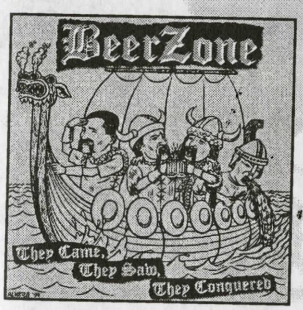
PM: What kind of topics do you guys hit on as a band?

BB: Almost anything that an average hard-working middle class person can relate to. Having the will to keep fighting to get ahead no matter what kind of fucked-up situation this world throws your way. A lot of the lyrics are meant to be positive messages to myself. Basically the songs motivate me and hopefully others to make changes in our personal lives and the world around us.

PM: **Any controversy surrounding the band that you'd like to talk about? Anybody with shave heads and DMs on their feet seems to get a lot of shit thrown their way.**

BB: You know, it seems the more popular a band gets, the more people want to talk about you - and it's not always accurate. Sometimes rumors get started and that shit can get way outta hand. For example, just recently we got misquoted in a local magazine where I was trying to talk about the scene and I said we try to play shows locally and not have it break out into some kinda brawl where there's skins fighting skins or punks or whatever. Due to a bad editor, and a lot of rumor bullshit, by the time I heard about it the article had me saying fuck all skinheads from one crew or an area out here. Well the truth is I'm friends with a lot of those guys I was supposedly talkin' shit

2 THE HARD WAY!!!



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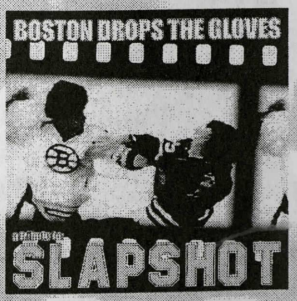

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on. People got their feelings hurt for nothing. Luckily, the truth always seems to come out in the end. I mean if people would stop listening to the media and half-baked bullshit of what skinheads, Oi! and punk in general are all about, there would be a lot less misunderstanding.

We're not into destroying American values, but we've got the right to raise our voices and draw attention to situations that we feel strongly about. The founders of our country fought and died for our rights to freedom. Just because a few politicians have lost their integrity and insight into what makes this country great, that doesn't mean I have to roll over and accept their bullshit. Sure they may use the media to paint us as bad guys, but fuck 'em - whoever said we had live up to their ideas of "good" and "bad". All I know is the thing they fear the most is the Truth, and that's all I need.

PM: How have your shows been going, and what type of crowd are you pulling in? Has there been any violence at your live shows? If so, how do you deal with it?

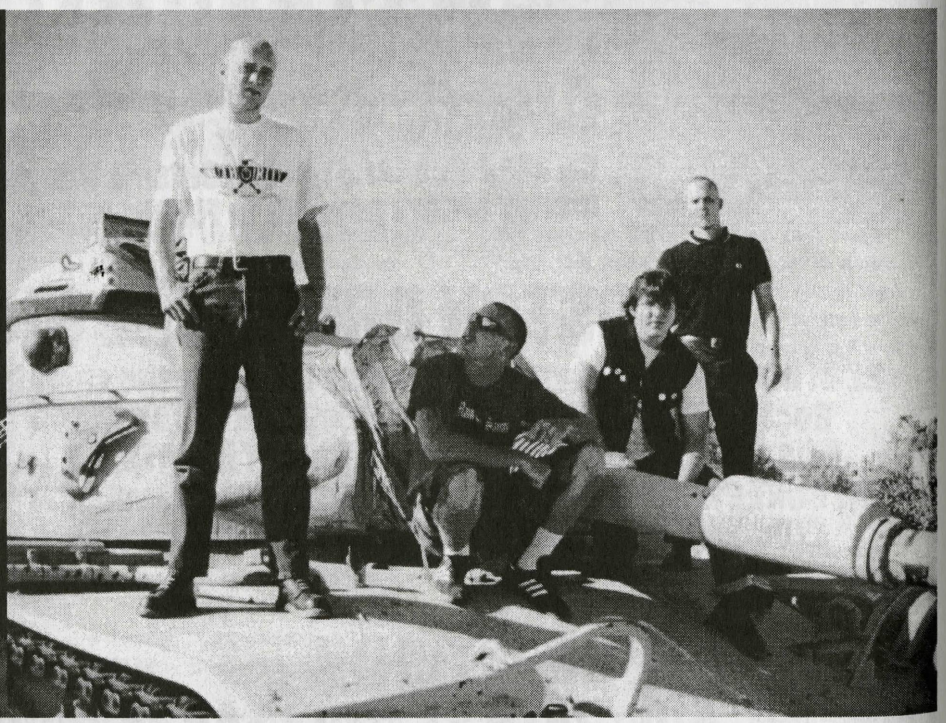
BB: Our recent shows have been great. The support within the local scene has grown a lot. "On Glory's Side" seems to be one of the major factors in attracting a larger audience, along with cross-country touring. The all-ages shows are my favorites. They always seem to have a lot more energy and those kids are there to just have a good time. They aren't concerned with who's wearing what or who's spreading rumors or any of that shit. I mean, if you gotta pay and hour's wage to see a punk show then you outta make the best of it. That's your chance to get your aggressions out, crowd participation is what it's all about. But leave the tough-guy attitude at home - that's for the jocks. If you're tough then you know it and you shouldn't have to constantly prove it to people.

Sometimes fights start at our shows, hell, sometimes we're the ones fighting at our own shows! But we're not out to kill anyone. Sometimes that shit just happens for no good reason. And you can rest assured that The Authority! will get the blame. I see bands that love to start trouble at their own shows and then boast about the number of clubs they've been kicked out of. Personally, I don't like being banned from certain venues because of violence. Sure it's happened to us before, but I'd much rather have our shows go off without the promoter or security stopping the show 'cause some guy bumped into the wrong guy. We love playing live 'cause that's how we get our message across, and a lot of that message is about brotherhood and unity.

PM: Growing up, what were the bands

Sometimes fights start at our shows, hell, sometimes we're the ones fighting at our own shows! But we're not out to kill anyone.





that made you fully want to be in a band such as The Authority!?

BB: When I was young, I was really into the rocker bands like AC/DC, Motorhead, Judas Priest and shit like that. Those bands are probably the reason I started playing guitar. As I got a little older I started discovering bands like Agnostic Front, The Misfits, The Ramones and they blow me away to this day. As far as music goes, anything that's good is an influence. But I really try not to mimic other bands if I can help it, but I'm sure our influences show up in our songs nevertheless.

PM: Who was the "Garry Johnson" of the Authority! on your GMM release?

BB: The guy who did the spoken word version of The Voice on the first CD was a brilliant madman named Tony Butler. He later committed a string of band robberies in Northern California and is believed to be hiding out in a straw hut somewhere in Thailand where he is famous for his appearance in a highly popular HBO miniseries.

PM: Any fears going into the new millennium? What do you think it will bring?

BB: Well, there's the typical fear of Armageddon. But I think for the most part everyday life won't be very different and things will be business as usual. Hopefully, the new millennium will bring some positive changes to our scene. It seems that punk music is bigger than ever and that's a good sign. The youth is ready for a change in the way our system is being run. I personally have a lot of goals in different aspects of my life that I'm going to achieve this year. It just seems that with a new century on its way it's a good time to make some changes and strive to have the best time possible by getting the most out of life. Also I'm working hard to make sure my computer is Y3K compliant - there's only 1,000 years left you know.

PM: Well I hope you guys will be hitting the East coast soon. Any plans for that in the near future? We would love to play with you guys.

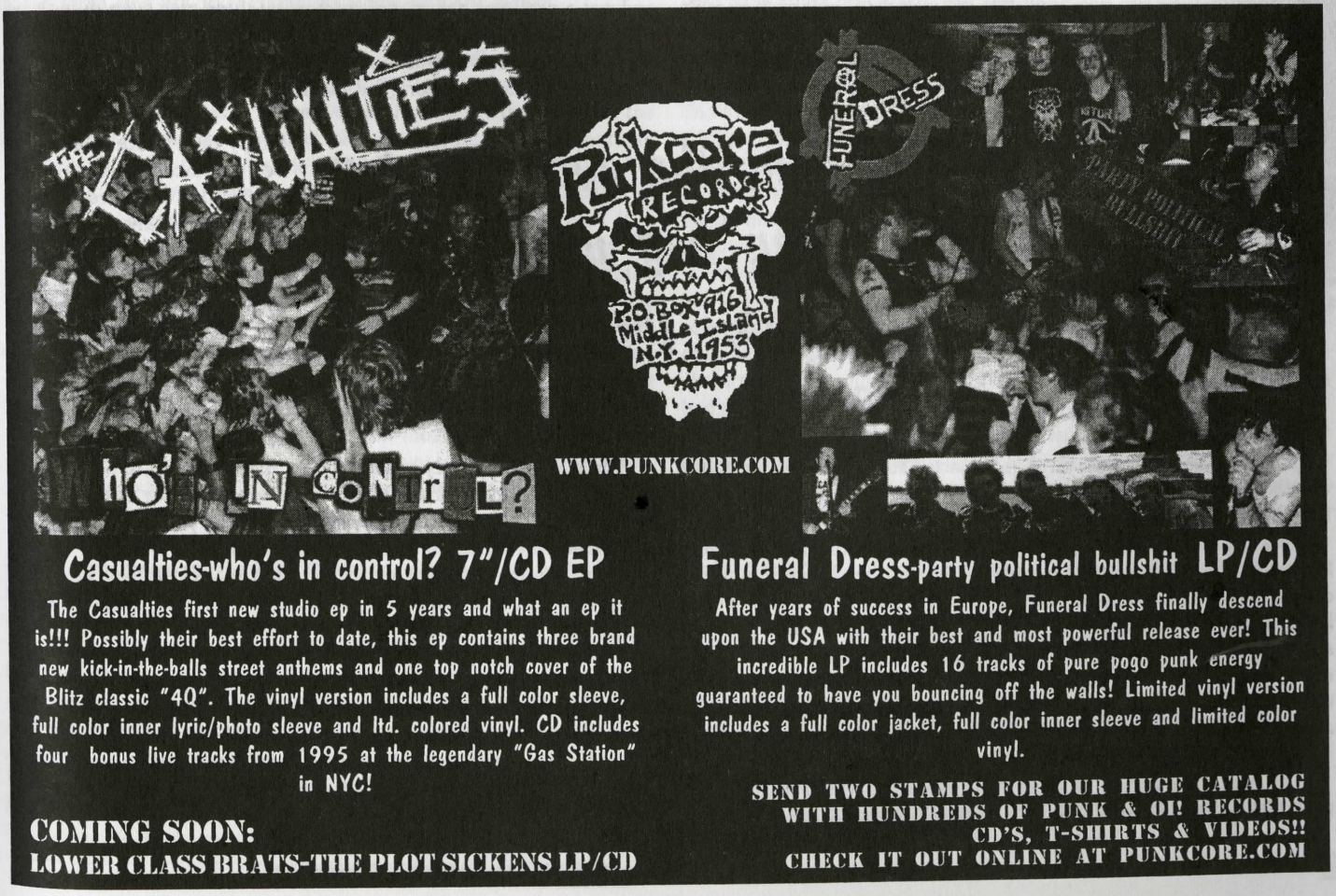
BB: We're planning another U.S. tour for the Summer although we're still confirming dates. But when we hit the East coast I'd be honored to play with Forced Reality. I heard some of the new material that Outsider Records is putting out and it kicks ass. I'm really glad you guys are back, so we'll hook up for sure.

PM: The new material is great! Do you have anything new coming out soon? (Everybody should check out their rendition of The Pogues "If I Should Fall From Grace With God" on the Outsider comp, *Scene Killer 2*)

BB: We've got some new material ready to record, although we're still deciding how we want to release it. Flat Records wants to do a split 7 inch with us and Tommy and the Terrors. In the meantime, if you haven't heard "On Glory's Side" yet, do yourself a favor and pick it up.

PM: Any last words? This was my first interview and I hope it wasn't too generic. Take care guys and good luck. Hope to hook up with you soon.

BB: Yeah, believe only half of what you read and less of what people say. Find out the truth for yourself. We're into this music, scene and lifestyle because we love it. We're trying to build it stronger so it will continue for another 20 years. Hopefully someday it will be recognized as contributing to a part of an important scene in the same way Agnostic Front, Forced Reality, or Cockney Rejects did at the time. Thanks for your time Pete - you outta be a professional journalist or something. ⊕



Casualties-who's in control? 7"/CD EP

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Funeral Dress-party political bullshit LP/CD

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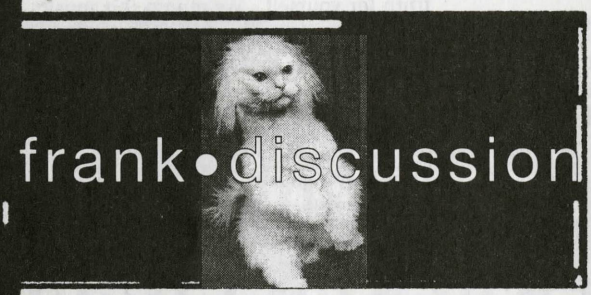
HIT SQUAD

THE BATTLE IN SEATTLE: STARBUCKS IS NOW OPEN...

As many of you know, a couple of months ago we had ourselves a little fun in Seattle. A good time was had by all. What started out as the usual collective whining, with the usual : "Hey Hey, Ho Ho (fill in the blank here) has got to go" became meaningful after just three little words were spoken: "Starbucks Is Open"

This was said after Starbucks received a new drive-in window. Ah, there's nothing like the sound of breaking glass, is there? Of course, immediately afterwards people indulged in a little "proletariat shopping" (vulgarly referred to as "looting"). In all, approximately nine stores had their windows caved in. In itself that was nothing: one vandal on good night could pull that one off. But the police reaction (read: idiocy) was what led to the really interesting uh... events.



First the good mayor declared martial law, labeling a good portion of downtown a "Non-protest Zone", and then enforced it with police pulled in from all the outlying towns and the National Guard. They assured people it was now safe to work and shop downtown as long as they weren't protesting. So many of the good-natured working folks foolishly showed up for work the next day. Boy, did they get a surprise.

During the day, there were a few skirmishes and a bunch of the protesters sat down in the streets and got themselves arrested. This was all to make some sort of point, I suppose. But by the afternoon things started to warm up. The police were itching to use all that fancy new riot gear they were a sportin'. They weren't gonna have none of this anarkist shit today.

Oh, and then [the cop] shot him with a bean bag gun at point blank range, just for good measure.

As a bunch of people gathered around the tourist hot spot Pike Place Market, the pigs went nuts. They started by shooting a bunch of tear gas into the crowd, which included shopping sheep, sheep leaving work, the obligatory TV crews, and, oh yeah, there were even some protesters there as well. They chased them all down the street using their batons and pepper spray. Oh, I almost forgot the rubber bullets and 'bean bag guns', didn't I? And to be really tricky, they had a bunch of other pigs attack from the side as all the shoppers and working folks tried to flee to safety.

The pigs then started to show their best side, which was all happily picked up on local TV that night. They sprayed one of the reporters (with her WTO credentials hanging from her neck) with pepper spray, and she fell down as she rounded the corner. When a couple of good samaritans went to help her up, they got sprayed for their efforts too. It must have ruined the cut of their career suits for good. A TV camera crew was sprayed. It really wasn't their fault. After all, when you see a group of guys in suits with microphones, lights, and a big TV camera that has the number 4 in a circle painted on the side, and they have all these big ID things hanging from their neck that says "Press", what do you think? Well, if you said "Anarchist" or "Protester", you're on your way to a promising career with the police. They roughed up a couple of city council members, yanking one out of his car and shoving him up against the car. This was after he'd identified himself, but what the hell. The pigs were having some mighty big fun. Yep.

That evening, when things were quieting down, they followed a bunch of protesters up to the Capitol Hill area of town. OK, so this was some 10 or 12 blocks outside the "no-protest zone", but they're the police. Then the protesters did something really nasty. They started going home for the day.

This left the pigs with a bit of a problem. But being really clever guys, they soon realized that the fun didn't have to be over so soon. There was other game afoot. There were all these people in restaurants and shops that looked like they really needed some tear gas and pepper spray in their lives. So they went after the denizens of Capitol Hill.

Pretty soon it was the people who lived in Capitol Hill who were now facing off against the pigs. Their chants were a lot more direct than those of the professional whiners...er...protesters. And a hell of a lot more meaningful. They were chanting things like "These are our streets" and "Go Home". One guy who identified himself as a resident and not a protester got pepper sprayed by three pigs even though he had his hands up. Later, a pig chased him down the street and kicked him in the groin. Oh, and then he shot him with a bean bag gun at point blank range, just for good measure.

Now the picture of the happy little Space Needle has been replaced as the symbol of Seattle. Replaced by the picture of jackboot stomping on a handcuffed protester's face. That and the guy getting kicked in the nuts by a cop. We had the delightful experience of seeing those particular images about, say, 30, 000 times over the next few weeks.

The cops proved they could do a lot more damage to Seattle than a handful of Anarchists and Situationists anyday. They also proved to everyone's satisfaction who they really work for, just in case anybody was under the delusion that they were there to protect the public. Yeppers, the good citizens of Seattle got a real close look at Officer Friendly's real face. Everyone is to be treated like Kings...Rodney Kings, that is.

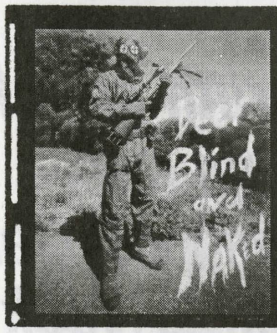
And a lot of people were suddenly able to cut through all the bullshit to get to a single demand: These are *our* streets.

Hell, if I had known that smashing nine store windows would lead to all this beauty, I would have done it years ago.

Insurrection is never having to say you're sorry,

-Frank

Y2KY?: BECAUSE YOU'RE GETTING FUCKED!!!



WITH
Richard
Tater

"Life is a terminal S.T.D." Statement by some agitated barfly in Oregon. "When the end of the world arrives nobody will notice it." Plato, Ice Cube, and/or Boyd Rice, I can't quite remember.

So, here it is, day 31 after the onset of the new millenium, or at least the culturally accepted turn of the millenium. An entire planet can't be wrong. Almost seven billion people, and nobody can do the right math. It's the last year at 00, not the first. No lolly pops for the pop'. We're dumb, we're doomed, but we seem to be here to stay, for now. Anyway, the universally-accepted end chime of our moronic millennial culture struck and the skies did not open, the sun did not become as black as sack cloth, frogs did not rain down upon us, the sea did not become a cauldron of bloody boiling death, or any other of that cool shit from Revelations. We're still here as is, unfortunately.

Y2K. Same paranoia, different package. A different marketing scheme/scam. THE BUG! AHHH! Run for your fucking lives. Some codified computer Godzilla is going to accomplish what almost half a century of the Cold War couldn't deliver. You'd think these fucks could think of something better. We're really running out of ideas here. We've gone from floods, to plagues, to nuclear holocaust, to big fucking rocks slamming into the planet, to arrive, finally, at the binary code bogeyman. The computer geeks have definitely taken over every aspect of our finite lives. Down with the nerds - bring back the religious right wingnuts and the John Birchers. At least their paranoia was more creative and had great movie possibilities. Nuc' winter, famine and locusts, the Ebola virus, and BIG RED COMMIES infiltrating our society.

Two and half years ago I heard the first rumblings of this bullshit theory of computer doom. Trapped in Bumfuck, Oregon alone, with only a radio that exclusively picked up AM for company, I was forced to listen to - of all fucking things - Art Bell when my insomnia got the better of me. It was that Norteno, new cunt'ry, or Gomer Pyle-gospel programming. Not that FM radio is any better, but I'll take "Can't Get Enough of Your Love" over the continual ramblings of the Godfather of the Secular Armageddon.

So there I was, twenty miles from "civilization", hopped up on caffeine, nicotine, ephedrine and good ol' fashion sleep disorder, listening to the ringing of Art's Bells. And the Bell tolls for thee, thou, and a few million other brain-deficient and fearful folks puffed up in the self-righteous notion that the world's coming to an end. Well, no shit. One small grain of truth and these nail-biters think they're solypsistically surfing in holy waters, that suddenly they're a mixture of Nostradamus and Albert Einstein. Ah, no. They're still mostly wrong about everything, they just stumbled onto a little nugget of truth that, like gold leaf, they've tried to hammer out into an all-encompassing philosophy. Well, that works for gold nuggets, not ones made of shit.

Let me let ya'll in on a big secret. The Earth, just like everybody else on this rock except maybe Keith Richards, will die someday. By simple luck of the dice, one of these foolish, lonely prophets or some small heavily-armed band of loons will end up being right in a normally wrongheaded prediction. The world will end, and as the asteroid hits, the aliens land, the mega solar emission contacts the atmosphere, the gravitational wave flux of a nearby supernova snuffs out the sun like a matchhead, or as some super virus feverishly burns through the whole of humanity, writhing around in some preternatural pain, the few who finally called it can have that last laugh. Those few nimrod Neanderthals can have the feeling that "damn it, they were right", as the flesh is peeled from their frames. It'll be the ultimate "I told you so." Of course there will be no one to tell about it, because we'll all be dead. It's like making some monetary bet where, by winning, you die and can't collect. Where's the fun in being right, if you can't smugly bask in the afterglow?

That's where these poor bastards seem to get lost. It's one thing to walk around with your chest puffed up, decked out in your sunday best, knowing that you're at one with the one, O.G. big cheese. Why? Because deep down we all know that the ontological query about the existence of an afterlife and what kind of potentate reigns there can only be answered post-mortem. And thus far, "light at the end of the tunnel" stories aside, no one has come back to give us the lowdown. Ask a couple day-old corpse all the questions you want, and the answer will always be the same.

Forecasting and prognosticating the end of the world is a sorry business on a personal level. On a business level it's a booming cottage industry, but I'll get to that later. I've known a few people who have fallen into the fearful end-times con. Two of them are your standard dyed in the wool survivalists with a decade's supply of M.R.E.'s and enough firepower to hold back a battalion of Feds. They're okay guys, despite the preparations and paranoia. The other was a young lady I knew from my hometown. She had a bright future ahead of her in the field of psycho-bio, studying at a prestigious East Coast college. A bit of Western-filtered Eastern philosophy, with a dash of the "new age" and an unhealthy dose of paranoia later, and poof! she dropped out of school, paid for by fat grants, and was heading for some ashram in the Midwest.

As she made preparations to split, which included coughing up her last semester's grant money, and selling off all of her cumbersome worldly possessions, she tried to convert us to the philosophy of some Ram Dumb, Ram Alama Ding Dong. Rambling on all the while about the usual millennial madness, this ex-psycho bio's psychobabble had something to do with 1996 being the actual turn of the second millennium (it was late '95 when all this went down). Her story, or rather her repetition of their story, was that biblical scholars had screwed up the date, that there was this area in Wyoming that was a gravitational nodal point that Ram Alama Ding Dong's ashram was located on, and hence that it was safe there...blah blah blah. Call me when the shuttle lands. I watched her explain this to me, glazed over and wide-eyed, thinking about how she used to be this ultra-sexy, dark, and cynical woman straight out of post-WWI, Left Bank, Paris expatriate circles. Tasteful black velvet clothes, draping over skin with a deathly, sexy white pallor. Dark eyes obscured by black shades, and an eternal cigarette dangling over a glittering bar barrel of booze. *[Ed. - Wow!]* Then, all of the sudden, she was just another New Age, pseudo-Easternized, curried Jesus-freak, complete with enough stone jewelry to set the foundation of a small house.

On top of the fop philosophy and hippy haberdashery, she was

pimping the end-times and, most importantly, an escape route. The crucial part of the end times con is the escape. This is where cheese-dick con-artists like Art Bell, or more directly his multitude of end-of-the-world product sponsors make their cash. Dried foods, hand-cranked radios, courses on survival techniques, etc. Religions, of course, have been making money off of the impending "end of the world" for centuries upon centuries, so it's refreshing to see other niche markets put their money-grubbing hands into the Armageddon pot. The absurd thing is that if a real threat was around the corner, all these rat bastards would still try to make a few more bucks before the final hammer fell.

I'll admit that when I first heard about Y2K I thought, "For once, a viable large-scale threat!" The "duck and cover" mushroom cloud specter of my youth had long been replaced by a more personal small scale threats like AIDS, T.B., hep', and the usual clusterfuck of random conspiratorial horseshit that I could dwell upon here and there, but it just didn't put that teeth-grinding childhood fear in me. Nothing had threatened the virus of man, in my mind, since the Ivan's dropped the nuclear football, or at least that's the perception vis-a-vis the propaganda following old Ronnie's single-handed crushing of the Iron Curtain and communism (har har). With Y2K, there was finally some juicy food for thought. Computers, leading to the collapse of high tech society. My "Mad Max" fantasies were looming on the horizon. Push-button pussies fleeing from the Hounds of Hell in the form of violent, beer-drunken idiots, namely me and my peer group. Trading sexual favors for food with beautiful woman who, up until Dec 31, 1999, wouldn't have put your flaming head out with the back tires of their SUVs. Sick fun in the rubble of a crumbling world.

If truth be told, I don't see computer geeks or munitions makers suffering from a lack of finances these days.

The computer bug story/paranoia caught on quick, and what else do people use paranoia for than grinding out a quick buck? If I was a bona fide "conspiracy theorist", I'd have to say that the whole Y2K phenomenon was brought to you by some cabal of Illuminati tied into the computer world, bottled water companies, and makers of finer firearms everywhere. These folks seemed to make out like one-armed bandits in the wake of the changing of the calendar. But I'm not. I realize that business is opportunistic and that these folks jumped at the sudden chance to exploit fear and desperation in order to make some quick capital. Insurance companies, real estate agents, and your law-and-order type politicos have used the same scare tactics for years in their quest for hard cash, so why not let others have the chance and join in on the fun? After all, there's enough money for everyone, right? Although, if truth be told, I don't see computer geeks or munitions makers suffering from a lack of finances these days. What could be better than one billion dollars? Why, two bill', ten bill', or thirty bill', of course. Just ask Bill Gates or the Rothschilds, speaking of "conspiracy theories".

I knew "The Bug" wasn't going to live up to its press when I saw all the marketing it began generating. A corporate Barney-style purple-washing of the impending event. Y2-this, Y2-that, Y2 listen any more? Y2 believe that the fat cat Santas holding the financial reins of power/money are going to let something meager like a glitch in code on obsolete computer programs stop their reindeer games, cancelling their year-round Christmas? Once the marketing and advertising vultures arrived on the scene, I knew Y2K was dead as a threat to the status quo.

Many folks like to look for omens or find symbols in the world around them to give them direction. I found my symbols and omens for the Y2K hoax and the changing of the new year within the confines of Merry Ol' England. Two stories came out in late December which hipped me to God's great plan. The first was an absurd backwards contest offering up 1.5 mill' to the first crooked-teeth Brit' "bird" to crap out the first kid of the new millennium. This, of course, had a predictable outcome, as the pregnancy/expectancy rate for the turn of the new year shot up dramatically. Every poor-to-middle class nudnick with an operational uterus and even a smidgeon of maternal instinct joined in what must have been a late-March-to-early-April Limey humpathon. Had I had a little forewarning of this impending Bacchanalian feast on the Isles, I would have had my friends pool together to get me a plane ticket to London and a motel room instead of the Dobro I got. Music may sooth the savage beast, but not as much as a couple week's worth of being sexually raked over the coals by desperate seed-seeking British women.

The other story out of G.B. also has a birthing motif, but is far better for the planet. It was a record-making effort of creation. It seems that a man who was in a London hospital for some heinous gastronomic disorder, which led to what must be constipation of legendary proportions, gave birth to a twelve-foot defecate. How they measured this I don't know, but they're trained professionals and I'll take their word on this one.

For me the twelve-foot turd is a perfect symbol for Y2K, or at least the marketing surrounding it - an astounding lump of shit, ungodly painful, and leaving relief in the wake of its expulsion. The kid-crapping contest was uncalled for nowadays. If there's one thing the world needs less of, it is people. So much for the English and their alleged intellectual superiority. For once the great hordes of vidiot America seemed to show a little more reason, as our birth-to-death ratio gets closer to zero growth. Of course, that probably has something to do with our incarceration of large numbers of virile males and our national pastimes - killing ourselves and others. But hey, some good always comes out of evil, or at least what's perceived as evil. Order comes out of chaos, creation out of destruction.

Speaking of which, the world will come to a screeching, screaming end someday. We can only hope that it hits so quickly that none of these slimy bastards will see it coming and be able to grind a few more cents out of us, making us dance like monkeys for their amusement before the blade slides down upon our collective head. If we're all going to die at the same time, let's at least have a little egalitarian justice for once. Let's all go down on equally fucked terms. No rich or poor, no informed or ignorant, and - above all - no self-righteous fuckers being able to point their tut-tutting "I told you so" fingers at anybody. Just one big unhappy family of similar simians screaming in unison as the little flickering light is snuffed out.

1. Position of a punk, 32,000 feet above the west Texas desert, 850 miles from Mexico City, where Leon Trotsky was murdered.

What the hell is hardcore, anyway? Almost twenty years after hardcore American punk began, hardcore American punks are still debating the question. It's a constant motif in *Hit List* columns-in fact, the question itself propelled *Hit List* into being, since Jeff's articulated intent was to provide a response to this question that didn't hew to *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll's* dogmatic answers.

I remember debating the question almost twenty years ago, on AoF's first American tour. We'd played El Paso and crossed the border to stock up on Mezcal, and then drove, full-bore, through the insufferably hot night and emptied those fifths, coming to no clear resolution of the question of whether Johnny Cash was hardcore or not.

Answer or no, I can recall the outline of that debate because people still argue the question of hardcore along those lines. On one hand some hardcore fans insist that hardcore is a style of music, a genre form. On the other hand some hardcore fans insist that hardcore is an expression, an idea, found in any genre of music from Johnny Cash to John Zorn.

I'm pretty hard on the idea side, so much so that I'd argue that a lot of music people call hardcore doesn't have a bit of hardcore in it, not if, as I maintained way back then, hardcore means finding some aspect of your humanity that cannot be compromised, seduced, commoditized, or used to advance the continuing abuse and exploitation of humans by humans. Music liberated me from an appointed future as a naval officer, militarist, and all-around fucker of people, so I figured that any music that liberates is good and any that just helps you pass time is not so good, and any that simply perpetuates or celebrates a crummy state of things is bad. And should be destroyed.

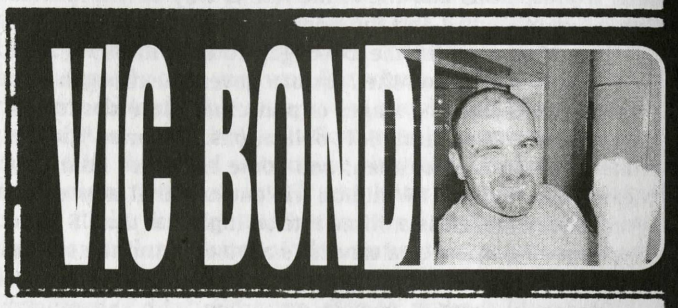
So, by my terms, Johnny Cash is hardcore. And, of course, he isn't hardcore. Because, even though I'm hard on the side of the hardcore idea, I recognize that hardcore is a genre, and it is a style of music. So that even though Johnny Cash is hardcore, the Bad Brains are hardcore with a capital "H" because they not only had a Hardcore attitude, but a Hardcore sound. And this is where things get complex. Because what was Hardcore about the Bad Brains sound, or the sound of American hardcore circa 1981 was not the speed, or the power, or the screaming vocals, but the fact that no one had ever played so fast and so furious and so loud before. It was a revolution in music and I loved it and played a small part in advancing this. And it is the revolutionary intent-in both method and message-that makes for real hardcore. And that's why I like Johnny Cash and John Zorn and hate Green Day and Mike Ness.

And that's why I like-blasphemy of all blasphemies-the new Rage Against the Machine album.

2. Fear and More Fear in the Big DF.

By the reckoning of official culture, Mexico City is the city of the next millennium. After all, it should be the chief beneficiary of all the great and grand neoliberal economics that are sweeping the globe. Officially GATT, NAFTA, WTO, and all the other anagramic standards of free trade globalism are not only bringing unprecedented prosperity to the First World, but are elevating the Second World out of poverty. During Clinton's visit to Mexico City in 1997, Mexican president Zedillo cited NAFTA as a source of "more and improved economic opportunities and more and improved jobs for Mexicans as well as for U.S. citizens." Officially, then, seven years after NAFTA was signed, Mexico City, the Distrito Federal, capital of the nation, and home to almost 20 million people, should be a gem of prosperity and democracy.

I didn't see much prosperity or democracy there. In fact, the single most striking thing in the DF is the number of armed cops and security guards everywhere; that is, anywhere in the city where there is money. That means that every single bank in the city has at least two armed guards posted outside the bank (and several more inside), in full body armor, one usually armed with a rifle, a semi-automatic machine gun, or a shotgun. It also means that every



single governmental office in the city had a cop posted. It also means that every department store, electronics outlet, clothing store, book seller, newspaper stand, supermarket, diner, or bodega that can afford it has a guard patrolling the street. I had lunch at a downscale tacqueria famous for its tacos al carbon, and they had two men on post. You tip them just as you do the waitress. When you enter a bar in Mexico City, there's usually a guy with a shotgun at the door. They even post guards at children's playgrounds. Estimates hold that there are roughly 181,000 security forces in Mexico City: 91,000 uniformed cops and 90,000 security guards. New York City, roughly the same population as Mexico City, has only 38,000 policemen.

This police presence doesn't make the city safe. On the contrary, Mexico City seems to increase the number of cops in exponential relation to their utter ineffectiveness. The New York Times reported in 1998 that 94% of violent crimes in Mexico are never solved or prosecuted. But you can drive down Avenida Insurgentes and bump into a cop or security guard every 100 feet or so. They make on average less than $200 a month and are so corrupt that it would be the rare cop who'd actually take a bullet to protect café diners from a mugger, much less to protect someone's mutual fund. And the security guards are so green and untrained that you constantly fear an actual robbery-if there was one, undoubtedly these guards would spray the street with bullets, hitting everyone but the banditos.

Given their wages, moreover, most of the cops in the city make money the old-fashioned way: they steal it. Graft is so omnipresent that when a cop actually acts to defend the public, he makes the news. My Mexican associate warns me not to drive in the city because the cops will pull over anyone that looks

vaguely Norteamericano and shake him down. Francisco also says that he considers himself lucky because his apartment has only been ripped off three times in ten years; his sister's place has been ripped off three times in one month. In 1995 three off-duty policemen tried to kidnap the son of Mexican president Zedillo. In the words of the Mexican writer Homero Aridjis, "We live in a culture of fear, and we don't really know if the men watching out for us are good or bad, honest or criminal."

You don't have to be a professional sociologist to figure out the cause of this crime wave. Maybe there are historical and cultural factors contributing to the problem. But Mexico City is not unique: melt the social structure of any city down, and you'd have the problems currently plaguing the DF. After all, it wasn't always this way. And clearly the biggest single solvent of society in Mexico City is poverty. A contrast with New York is simplistic but illuminating: New York is prosperous and the crime rate is way down; Mexico City is impoverished and the crime rate is way up.

The crime rates in the DF began to soar in 1994, after NAFTA was signed and the Mexican government began cutting spending (and the wages of policemen) in order to fulfill its World Bank and IMF obligations. Reported violent crime is up 34% since then, and some estimates hold that Mexico City suffers 15 million violent criminal acts every year. The net result is a crime rate so high that the US State Department has issued a traveler's advisory. And the streets of Mexico City are empty by nine.

Obviously there is something wrong with the official cause-and-effect relationship between NAFTA and prosperity postulated by Zedillo and Clinton. Unofficially (that is, according to the AFL-CIO), the wages of Mexican workers are down 29%, and 8 million Mexicans have fallen from the middle class to the poor since NAFTA. World Watch estimates that 70 to 75 million Mexicans are living at or below the poverty line; they also estimate that 433 children die everyday from malnutrition in Mexico. No doubt the AFL-CIO and World Watch are not disinterested parties with regards to NAFTA, and officially these statistics are wrong. But forced to choose between the official and unofficial versions of the results of NAFTA, only the unofficial version explains the Mexican crime wave. Because if the official version of NAFTA is correct, there wouldn't be a crime wave-unless you hold to the racist belief that the Mexicans are somehow genetically predisposed to crime.

It's the environment, not genetics, that determines behavior in Mexico City. And the environment is hardcore. Fear is a constant for the visitor and the resident alike, and for the millions of poor inhabitants of the city, the social and economic pressures that deform personality and morality are immense. Ten years ago the same taxi drivers who are robbing people now simply took them to their destination. What has changed?

Economists don't usually reckon the human consequences of poverty into their calculations, but if you've been poor those consequences are all too real and all too determinant. Homo economus is supposed to be a rational creature, responding to the logic of the market. But trading your labor for wages that won't keep you in groceries isn't logical, and the outcome of that contradiction is despair, confusion, guilt, and desperation. As Francisco put it, the situation in Mexico City is "beyond hope." It takes a certain hardcore of humanity to rise above that. Or a revolution.

3. How Leon Trotsky ended up in Mexico City

In the 1930s Leon Trotsky was among the most feared and hated people on the planet. His resume inspired the fear. Along with Vladimir Lenin, Trotsky was the promulgator of the Russian Revolution, and even more than Lenin, Trotsky was responsible for its survival. Trotsky commanded the Red Army from 1918 to 1921, the crucial years after the revolution, when the Bolsheviks were assailed from all sides by counter-revolutionaries, white Russians, and the expeditionary forces of the western powers. With no military background, Trotsky forged a highly efficient command and defeated his opponents, becoming notable for his utter ruthlessness against the enemies of the emerging Soviet Union. From there he went on to create the Comintern, the agency of the Soviet Union chartered to inspire revolution around the globe. During the Great Depression, given his success in fomenting and administering revolution in Russia, heads of state and capitalists in many nations justifiably feared Trotsky would succeed in overthrowing them as he had the Czar.

Trotsky was also an intellectual, and a skilled writer and propagandist. He spoke six languages, and published scholarly articles on Freud, Einstein, and Chinese history. His exile in Western Europe before the Russian revolution had resulted in his forging close ties to the artistic and literary communities in Vienna, New York, London, and Paris. Consequently he was a patron of the explosion in Russian arts that followed in the wake of the revolution. In his book *Literature and Revolution* (1926), Trotsky articulated the ethos of the Russian experimentalism of those years. Almost all art, he argued, was innately radical, restless, constantly advancing, a production at odds with reality, and with the status quo. Any artistic production that did not buttress and advance the exploitation of people was valuable and to be encouraged; the measure of a work of art was how well the radicalism of its content was matched by the radicalism of its form. These prescriptions expressed well the freewheeling spirit of the time, which produced artists as important as Eisenstein and Malevich. But it did not last. In 1934, following the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, art and literature in Russia was restricted to a grim realism designed to glorify the Soviet Union and its dictator, Josef Stalin.

Trotsky was Stalin's great enemy, and for this he was hated, especially among the zealous communists who had made a religion of their politics. But even after Stalin successfully ousted Trotsky from the Communist party in 1927, stripped him of his power, and sent him into exile, he could not silence him. Trotsky used his skill as a writer to draft devastating broadsides against Stalin, the most important of which was *The Revolution Betrayed*, a 1937 history of Stalin's undermining of revolutionary values.

Trotsky's opposition to Stalin was based in part on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Similar to what he had argued in reference to artistic innovation, Trotsky held that political revolutions only succeed insofar as they expand, continue, and develop. As revolutions spread to new nations with different cultural values, the plurality and scope of democracy would increase; if revolutions were restricted to one country, a ruling class would develop with nationalistic priorities and insular values. As Trotsky saw it, the best ideals of the Russian revolution would only be realized if the Soviet Union inspired and advanced revo-

lutions around the world. Stalin argued that the best ideals of the revolution would be realized only if the Soviet Union developed "socialism in one country." He felt that revolutionaries had to defend the Soviet Union before they could go on to advance revolutions in other countries. But to Trotsky, isolating socialism to one country inevitably limited the range of democracy that could be practiced in Russia, and created a "fortress mentality" which spurred bureaucracy, militarism, and the rise of dictatorship. Which is, fundamentally, what happened: Stalin consolidated his hold on Russia through its administrative bureaucracy and became a dictator.

And he devoted himself to destroying Trotsky. In the 1920s, Trotsky was still too acclaimed a figure of the revolution to be attacked openly, so Stalin-like the Czar before him—sent Trotsky into internal exile; when that failed to silence Trotsky, Stalin threw him out of the country, knowing full well that almost no nation on earth would host Trotsky, the theorist of permanent revolution, who had dedicated himself to overthrowing the status quo.

Trotsky found refuge, briefly, in Turkey, then France, and then Norway. At the insistence of both conservative and communist parties in these countries, he was hounded by the police and ultimately driven out. But Trotsky continued to write and protest Stalin's betrayal of the socialist ideal, eking out a living as an essayist and author and gaining fame in the west, for better or worst, as the embodiment of the best principles of the Russian revolution. So Stalin murdered his family. He killed Trotsky's first wife and all her relatives; one of Trotsky's sons disappeared into the gulags; the other was murdered by the Soviet secret police in Paris. Finally chased to Mexico in 1937, Trotsky spent the last years of his life virtually imprisoned in his home in Coyoacan, which is today a neighborhood in Mexico City. He survived an assassination attempt on his life in 1940, but later that year, upon the direct order of Stalin, an NKVD agent plunged an ice pick into Trotsky's head. It was 20 August 1940. Barely a year earlier, Stalin, the great defender of the ideals of the Russian revolution, had signed the Nazi-Soviet pact with Hitler, making World War II inevitable.

4. Why you should play the new Rage Against The Machine record for your congressman.

So the new Rage Against the Machine record is out, and the underground backlash is in full swing. It's understandable. It's hard to take seriously a band that claims to stand up for the common man against corporations when they're on Epic, a division of Sony, and use the marketing arm of that corporation to advance themselves-including winning the cover of that lame old hippie rag, *Rolling Stone*. It's hard to believe millionaires when they call themselves communists (okay, *socialists*). Their website has links to a lot of causes celebre: Mumia (who will probably be murdered by the state of Pennsylvania by the time you read this), Leonard Peltier, Amnesty International, etc. They even have a page they devote to "rebel of the month" or some such thing. The politics seem simplistic and 60's-style old-fashioned: middle-class boys pissed off because they didn't make the JV team, so the world must be against them.

Except they absolutely fucking rock. Just check out the record: the rhythm section is so tough it can just about stomp the shit out of any band on the planet. The guitarist, Tom Morello, really is an inspired player, choking amazing noise out of his axe. Punk wise, he's the clear successor to Gang of Four's Andy Gill, except he's got a dose of old-school butt-shakin' rock in him that Gill never had. The opening riff in "Sleep Now in the Fire," is as classic as the one in "Smoke on the Water" or "Satisfaction." And De La Rocha is a spit-fire freestyle shaman with a sharp eye for America's growth industries:

Ain't it funny how the factory doors close
Round the time that the school doors close
Round the time that the doors of the jail cells
Open up to greet you like the reaper.

And he walks it like he talks it, bottom line. Next time you take that holiday in Maui, consider the fact that De La Rocha is probably down in Chiapas, spending his vacation dodging bullets.

The truth is that the music on the record is so creative, experimental, and flat-out cool that you can't really say that Rage sucks as a rock band. They simply don't. If anything they represent the fruit of two great revolutions in sound-hardcore and hip-hop-and they fuse the two so effortlessly and naturally that you wonder why no one did it before they did (much less why crappy ass dickheads like Limp Bizkit or Kid Rock even bother). So the only reason you probably don't like the band is because they are 1) crazy successful, and you're jealous, or 2) you hate their politics. In both cases, I'm a little sympathetic: It's a little tough to watch a band articulate some of the same things you did twenty years ago to a hell of a lot more success and money-at the very least, I wish I'd been able to make a living with rock the way they have. And the politics seem preachy and sanctimonious at times.

But however much you and I may resent Rage, we need this band, and a hundred more better than them. Because what they've got to say needs to be heard. There's a big-ass culture lock-down going on, with the media in the United States deciding that the best way to deal with problems is to ignore them altogether. Honestly, you can go abroad and read more about what's going on in the United States than you can in your own country (much less get the straight dope on what's going on across the oceans). So the fact that Rage is there, high visibility, suggesting that $60 sneakers made by children in Burma aren't a bargain, is a pretty great thing.

And the fact of the matter is that Rage aren't a preachy band. Their politics begin from the gut and work out. On the new record the standout track isn't the MTV anthem, "Guerrilla Radio" (the subject of which, frankly, Public Enemy addressed better eleven years ago), but a series of raw personal cuts in the middle of the record, "Born of a Broken Man," "Born as Ghosts," and "Maria." All of them deal with the personal consequences of politics and economy. All of them deal with being poor at a very intimate level: people go crazy, kill themselves, murder, run. In all three songs, De La Rocha hones in on exactly what makes America a brutal, savage country: the assumption that poor people are born for it, condemned to it by a perfectly just God who rewards the virtuous with wealth and the poor with pain and suffering. So poor children are born dead, without hope. And the elite shake their heads sadly, as though this was inevitable, and as though their own opulence and greed weren't directly connected to the suffering

they deplore.

This kind of dissembling stinks. It perpetuates a horrible state of affairs and justifies it as inevitable. It has real, human consequences. I saw it when I taught at Brighton high school: the bright kids in the back of class who'd be pregnant, jailed, or dead by eighteen. It's De La Roche's father, the subject of "Born of a Broken Man." It's Charles Murray saying that blacks aren't bright and are therefore justifiably poor, or Janet Reno denying that the situation in Mexico City is connected to the latest trade agreements.

Bad things are happening in the world, no matter how much USA Today and Wired magazine glitter the fairy dust of prosperity and technology to convince us that our lives huddled in the malls are worthwhile. And although these things are terrible, what's really bad in the world is not that they are starving in Sudan or that Mexican girls get raped hopping the freights for San Diego. It's that we deny that these things even happen, or worse, that we have anything to do with them.

Rage Against the Machine deliver that shit a well-deserved kick in the head. Play it for your congressman during his next benefit dinner.

5. Why you should make Rage irrelevant.

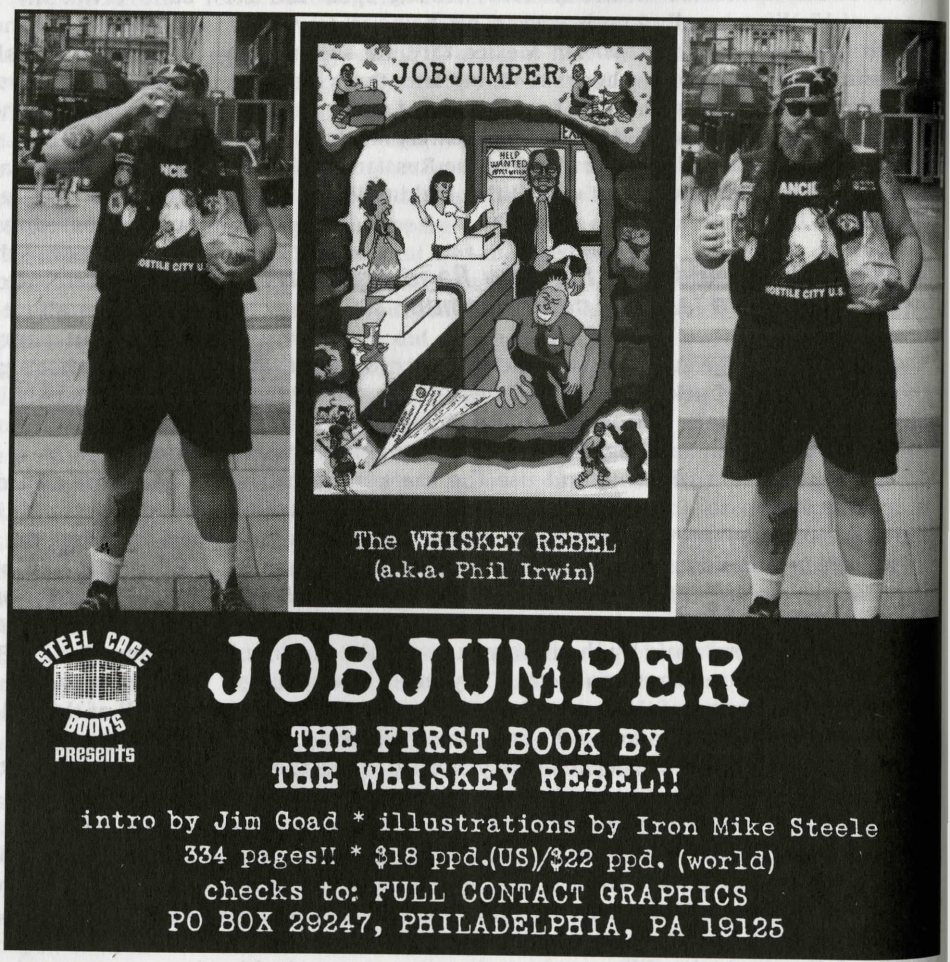
Since the Mexican revolution of 1910-20, the country has been essentially a one-party state, ruled by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (The Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI). This oxymoronic entity has set a standard for corruption unparalleled in the developing world. Given that Mexico is the fourth largest nation in the Western Hemisphere, and is blessed with an abundance of petroleum and mineral resources, it should be among the richest countries in the world. Instead, there is dire poverty-although how much is difficult to tell, since the PRI -led government refuses to issue statistics on poverty. The World Bank, however, estimates that one-fourth of the population of Mexico earns less than two dollars per day and that 17% of the population earns less than a dollar a day. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Carribbean, moreover, notes that the distribution of wealth in Mexico is concentrated among the elite, with the poorest 20% of the nation receiving only 4% of the GNP, while the richest 20% hold 60% of the nation's wealth. Only six nations in Africa have a more radical gap in the distribution of wealth.

Modern Mexico didn't look like this after the Revolution. At that time, radical proposals for equalizing income and bringing the poor of Mexico into prosperity were common. Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution distributed land to the poorest Mexicans, and Article 123 was among the most advanced provisions ever drafted for industrial laborers. But none of it lasted. The PRI, as it institutionalized the revolution, purged it of its ethos, and illustrated in the process the compromise of revolutionary ideals that Trotsky had documented in Russia during the rise of Stalin. It almost seems to be a law of politics that revolutions are betrayed the moment you attempt to institutionalize their policies and not their values.

I'd argue that this holds for art as well as politics. And from that standpoint, as great as the new Rage record is, it would be foolish to imitate their sound-or their politics. The key to that band is its originality, its compassion, and its willingness to find the right targets for its anger, instead of scapegoats. The same thing is true of 1980-style hardcore. That idea is a hell of a lot more rock than the sound. But hardcore is an idea that, in the process of mastering the form, loses a lot of the message. When you institutionalize it, it becomes meaningless.

So sooner or later Rage Against the Machine will become completely a part of the institutions it despises. Which should not be a cause for alarm.

It's an opportunity. ⊕



THE ALMIGHTY TOP TENS

SHIT LIST

Jeremy Cool

Coming in 12th place at the D.I.Y bowling tournament
V/A - Grease Soundtrack Comp CD
AMERICAN STEEL - :Live @ Bottom Of The Hill
NERF HERDER - "How To Meet Girls" CD & live
TRAVOLTAS - New CD
AMERICAN HEARTBREAK - "Postcards From Hell" CD
Chicken Is Good Food # 6
THE GAMITS - "Endorsed By You" CD
MIDTOWN - "Save The World, Lose The Girl" CD
SCREECHING WEASEL - "Thank You Very Little" 2xCD

Dave Johnson

JAWBREAKER - 24 "Hour Revenge Therapy" CD
AMERICAN STEEL - "Rogue's March" CD/Live
THE CLASH - "London Calling" CD
THE CLASH - "The Clash" (U.S.) CD
THE CLASH - "Clash On Broadway" 3XCD
THE CLASH - "The Clash" (U.K.) CD
THE CLASH - "The Story of the Clash Vol. 1" 2XCD
THE CLASH - "From Here to Eternity" CD
THE CLASH - "Give 'Em Enough Rope" CD
THE CLASH - "Combat Rock" CD

Jami Wolf

COCK SPARRER/REDUCERS SF/ WORKIN' STIFFS - LIVE in SF 2/12/00
SMOGTOWN/TFB - Live @ The Mad Dog
BODIES/PRESSURE POINT - Live @ The Boomerang
BOVVER WONDERLAND - Live @ Boomerang
WRETCHED ONES - ANY
SMOGTOWN - "Fuhrers Of The New Wave" CD
TRUST FUND BABIES - "Up To No Good" 7" EP
IMPULSE ITEMS - Live @ The Tempest
THE BODIES - (upcoming) "We Fly The Flag" on Vulture Rock
TEMPLARS/GUNDOG - split 7"

Brett Mathews

AMERICAN HEARTBREAK - "Postcards From Hell" CD
BACKARD BABIES - "Total 13" CD
DIVIT/LONELY KINGS - split CD
AMERICAN STEEL - Rogue's March CD
DIVIT - Live/w MXPX
JAWBREAKER - Any
TRUST FUND BABIES
Rip Off Records
PLUS ONES - "On The List" CDEP
HORACE PINKER - "Copper Regret" CDEP

Ramsey Kanaan

AMERICAN HEARTBREAK - "Postcards From Hell" CD
D.O.A - "Festival of Athiests" CD
WEAKERTHANS - "Fallow" CD
NOFX - "The Decline" CDEP
THE SAINTS - "Eternally Yours" CD
4 SKINS - "Singles, Rarities..." CD
SLUDGEWORTH - "Loser of the Year" CD
NERF HERDER - "How to Meet Girls" CD
DILLNGER FOUR - Anything
ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE - "Making Love" CD

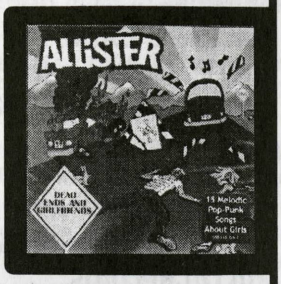
Unfortunately, due to issues beyond our control, as well as a frenetic schedule on the part of both ourselves and our review staff, we here at *Hit List* were only able to compile about half of our usual amount of reviews. Chock it up to a hectic time of year for our review staff, laziness, or whatever, please accept our apoligies for the brevity of this issue's usually enormous review section. To all the bands and labels who submitted records, trust that with the next issue, the reviews will be back and bigger and better than ever. Again, we offer apologies for lack of inclusiveness — but not for bad records.

-Jeff Bale, Brett Mathews and Dave Johnson

Your fearless leaders through the vast and daunting catacombs of rock 'n' roll recordings. Just so you know who to blame when you plunk down your hard earned cash on a slab of plastic, run home as fast as your little punk legs will carry you and spin it anxiously, only to find it completely, totally and indisputably sucks: Jeremy Cool (JER), Brett Mathews (BAM), Dave Johnson (DGJ), Jimi Cheetah (JC), Jami Wolf (JAW), Ramsey Kanaan (RK), Dimitri Monroe (DJM).

SHITLIST

ALLISTER
"Dead Ends And Girlfriends" CD



The sticker proudly proclaims "15 melodic Pop-Punk songs about girls" I can't really argue with that. If that's your bag, you'll want to carry this one off and consume it too. It does nothing new with the genre, but at least they don't thank God anywhere, so we should all count our blessings for that small mercy. (RK)

(Drive-Thru Records/PO Box 55234/Sherman Oaks, CA 91413)

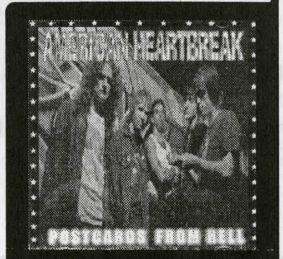
ALKALINE TRIO
"Maybe I'll Catch Fire" CD



Well, this is on Asian Man, has a bunch of tracks on it, and the CD/LP will be in stores February 24th. Why the fuck do labels send out promos with no info on them whatsoever? No lyrics, no artwork, no nothing. Whats the point? The music sounds like poppy emo. They sing about yellow stuff, and smiles...well, that's what I could make out out from listening to it without any lyrics. Oh yeah, the wonderfully informative promo pack did tell me that it was distributed by Mordam Records. (RK)

(Asian Man)

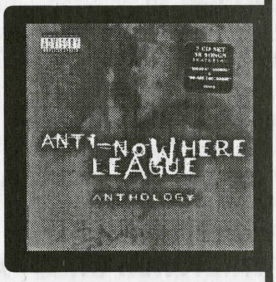
AMERICAN HEARTBREAK
"Postcards From Hell" CD



Apparently this band is full of famous dudes. If so, I've promptly forgotten them, and frankly, who cares? This doesn't need big names - its sheer class stands out on its own merits. Definitely a late contender for the best record of '99, or an early front-runner for the best of 2000. Think punk (as in DEAD BOYS), rock (as in TURBONEGRO), pop (as in the BOYS) and power (as in CHEAP TRICK) and you'll be along the right lines. Top notch. (RK)

(Coldfront Records/PO Box 8345/Berkeley, CA 94707)

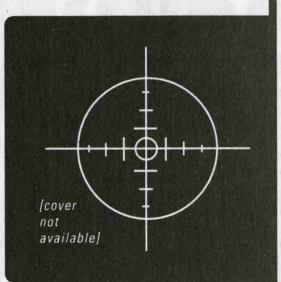
ANTI-NOWHERE LEAGUE
"Anthology" CD



A double CD (one studio, one live), of this legendary band's career. One of the standard bearers, and benchmarks for ballsy, in-your-face Britpunk. Unusually (and fortunately) it doesn't shy away from their second (studio), 'serious' (and overtly political) rock/pop LP in its selection of tracks. ANL were a truly great second-wave punk band, and an excellent rock band to boot. And chain. They were always rockin' live, as the second CD displays. This is actually, unlike some other compilations, a great collection, and an essential purchase if you don't already have any other their other stuff. Alternatively, track down the CD which has their 'Live In Yugoslavia' LP (which includes all their hits) and 'Perfect Crime' (the rock opus) LP on one CD. Either way, you won't be dissapointed. (RK)

(Spitfire Records/www.spitfire.com)

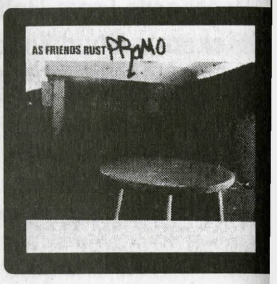
ANTiSEEN
"Blood Battles Of The South/ Live In Tampa, FL" 7"ep



Oh, Jesus Christ! Fucking ANTiSEEN playing some of me favorites - live and in the flesh - in Florida! FUCK! This absolute fucking rocker starts with an extremely hot version of "Up All night", one of the best ANTiSEEN songs of all time, and then goes into the classic "Self Induced Lobotomy". I mean, fuck, it's still like practically 20 years past the point at this time, and ANTiSEEN continue to prove their undisputed heavyweight championship as far as rock 'n' roll is concerned. "NC Royalty " just absolutely smokes on this one. Though I hate live records, this is more than acceptable - and even more highly recommended! (JAW)

(Splatter Mountain Music/POB 540364/Lake Worth, FL 33454-0364)

AS FRIENDS RUST
"Half Friend Town" CD



A band hailing from Gainsville Florida. Judging from their lyrics they are functioning outside/against the Gainsville hipster scene. That's fine with me, as I can't stand the Gainsville hipster scene (you know who you are). All that aside, this is a very strong five-song debut. An uptempo emo performance that's borderline hardcore, with strong lyrics and powerful songs.(JC)

(Doghouse/P.O. Box 8948/Toledo, OH 43823)

ASTRID OTO
"DIY" 7"



Trashy, hooky, punk rock that we've become accustomed to from Aaron Cometbus' bands (CRIMPSHRINE, PINHEAD GUNPOWDER, CBDS etc...). I hope this band is prolific and consistent, as I would love to hear more songs on this level. (BAM)

(No Idea/PO Box 14636/Gainesville, FL 32604)

BACKYARD BABIES
"Total 13"

Stuck somewhere between SUPERSUCKERS and early BON JOVI, these Swedes join the ranks of great bands like AMERICAN HEARTBREAK, BLACK HALOS, TURBONEGRO, the

REVIEWS

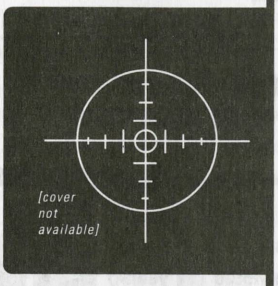
almighty LEE HARVEY OSWALD BAND, and other awesome rock bands bringing big stadium-style, hook-laden, power anthems into the world. This is actually a US reissue, but chances are good that you've never seen it before as it's been almost impossible to find over here. Go buy this, and appreciate the great state that rock n' roll is in today!! (BAM)



(Scooch Pooch/5850 W. 3rd St. Suite 209/Los Angeles, CA 90036)

BAMBIX/SKIN OF TEARS
"Split" CD

A sampler of sorts, I guess. Two tracks each from Holland's BAMBIX and Germany's SKIN OF TEARS. Both play driving melodic hardcore. More in the European (surprise surprise) vein, a la SNUFF or even LIFE...BUT HOW TO LIVE IT, than the SoCal sound. And all the more better for it. I really want to get their full-lengths. (RK)



(Vitaminepillen Records/Lambertusstrasse 20/D-52538 Selfkant-Hongen/Germany)

BLACKOUTS
"Aint'cha Had Enough" CD

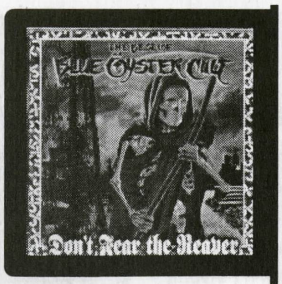
A fairly auspicious offering (debut?) from this San Francisco band. Devotees of the hard-rocking end of punk (from the LAZY COWGIRLS/HUMPERS corner) would do well to check this out. The singer, especially, reminds me of the more amped-up ONLY ONES. (RK)



(www.theblackouts.com)

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT
"Don't Fear The Reaper" CD

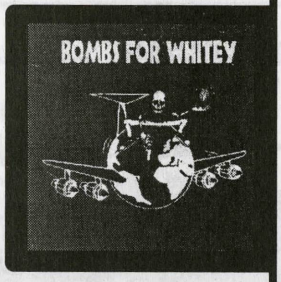
A pretty good 'best-of' retrospective spanning the first decade (1972-1983). While they were (are) a rock band, they come from the eclectic progressive rock end, definitely not the hard rock side. They had a few pop hits - 'Joan Crawford', 'Godzilla', and 'Don't Fear The Reaper' (of course). All have their trademark weird/anti-establishment lyrics. Definitely more ZAPPA or CHEAP TRICK than IRON MAIDEN, or BOSTON for that matter. A good compilation from a great band. (RK)



(Columbia/Legacy - steal it from a mall)

BOMBS FOR WHITEY
"Time Wait For No-One" CD

Great name. Fairly run of the mill amped up garagey rock 'n' roll. Jeff Bale should be reviewing this. I'm sure he would love it. The copy I have is one of those home-made CD-R jobs. Good for them. (RK)



(Bombs For Whitey/PMB #183, 1455-E Foxworthy Ave/San Jose, CA 95118)

BORIS THE SPRINKLER
"Group Sex" CD

A faithful, if slightly fuzzier/faster rendition of all the entire LP, in all its 15 or so minutes of glory. Not quite sure what the point of such things are. Though if folks are looking for classic records rerecorded note for note, how about RUIN's "Fiat Lux" or McRAD's second record. (RK)



(Bulge Records/PO Box 1173/Green Bay, WI 54305)

CELIBATE RIFLES
"Wonderful Life" CD

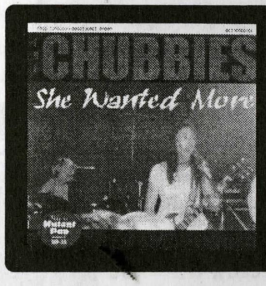
A greatest hits package of sorts from the perennial power-pop/rockers from Oz. Nearly twenty tracks from eight records from the last 15 years. The die-hards will already have all of this material. Anyone else ought to pick this up as a consistently high-quality introduction to a consistently high-quality band. Amped-up twin guitar rock 'n' roll. If you've never heard them at all, never fear - its not too late. Just think REPLACEMENTS, or a SMITHEREENS with some bollocks and rough edges. (RK)



(Tronador/CP 3383 Centro/CEP 01060-970/Sau Paulo SP/Brasil)

CHUBBIES
"She Wanted More/Pseudochrist" 7"

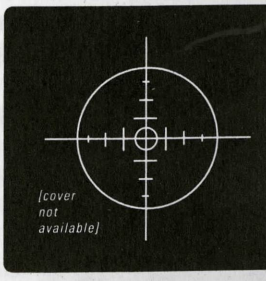
The CHUBBIES are my favorite pop-punk band. Mutant Pop is my favorite pop-punk label. The combination of the two is amazing. Plus as a bonus old Timbo at M.P. had the genorosity to prvide us with a full discography for the band on the inside sleeve. Great record. (JC)



(Mutant Pop/5010 NW Shasta Avenue/Covallis, OR 97330)

CIRCUS OF POWER
"Magic & Madness"

This is some bad music for bad people,but when my teenhood heroes, Alex & Ricky first played me this CD aboard their tour bus in Boston a long time



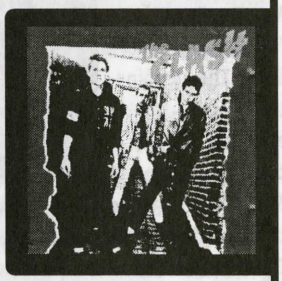
SHITLIST

ago, I was initially put off by some of the major label grunge-polish that was so in vogue at the time. Nowadays, when I can't find no punk rock to believe in; when it all seems like 12th generation gimmick-hungry yobs rehashin' the same tired formulas and playing dress-up at the end of the world, and all that popular, macho biker-rock the fratboys dig sounds like joke-metal to me, it was like a revelation hearing this album again. Gen-u-wine Blues Devils, Alex Mitchell & Ian from the Cult bellowing about...Majick and Madness! Gary Sunshine went on to join the N.Y.LOOSE, and became Axl Rose's guitar-coach (Can you imagine?!) while Showbiz Al appears in NASHVILLE PUSSY videos and is lookin' for someone to publish his novel. I'm kinda hopin' I can lure my old pal Ricky into my band if somebody reading this can put me in touch with him. (DJM)



(FUCK MAJOR LABELS)

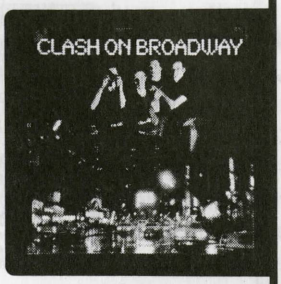
THE CLASH
"Clash City Rockers" CD



What can I say about this release that hasn't already been said? If you don't own it already, you shouldn't be snooping around punk circles in the first place. The first major punk LP to come out of London, and to my ears, the best of '77-78. "Clash City Rockers" remains possibly my favorite CLASH song to date, and with the pure sonic annihilation of "Complete Control" and the stretch into reggae on "White Man in Hammersmith Palais" and Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves", you really can't go wrong with this album. If you already own it, there's no compelling reason to purchase it again, other than the remastering cleans up a *tiny* bit of midrange/treble muddle. But if it's between the U.S. and U.K. versions of the record and you don't have either, I'd say this one's the pick. (DGJ)

(EPIC)

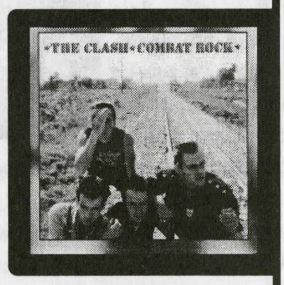
THE CLASH
"Clash On Broadway" Triple CD



The grandaddy of all CLASH compilations, "Clash On Broadway" gives you all the hits, some demos from the pre-CBS Guy Stevens sessions (financed by Polydor), an unedited version of "Straight to Hell", a wonderful remastering job, and maybe best of all, liner notes including pieces by ex-PATTI SMITH guitarist and rock guru Lenny Kaye, eccentric rock-crit/NyQuil Abuse Prevention Poster Boy Lester Bangs, and rememberances from band, crew and hangers-on compiled by CLASH insider Kosmo Vinyl. If you want an overview of the band's career but don't want to invest in five albums, this is probably your best bet. It's got the tracks deleted from the U.S. version of *The Clash*, as well as the immortal "1977". All in all, a thorough compilation, brilliantly packaged. (DGJ)

(EPIC)

THE CLASH
"Combat Rock"

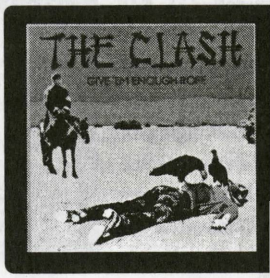


The monster U.S. hit record. Who over the age of eighteen *doesn't* know "Rock the Casbah" or "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" While there are weaker tracks, like "Red Angel Dragnet", those who made it through *Sandanista!* with their Clash-mania intact, will get off on the Allen Ginsberg collaboration"Ghetto Defendant" and the pure emotional wretchedness of "Straight to Hell". Not the perfect Clash record, and not as expansive or experimental as *Sandanista!* but still a vital document of how this band continually stretched the boundaries of popular music. (DGJ)

(EPIC)

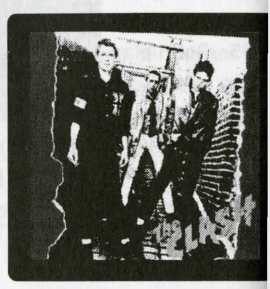
THE CLASH
"Give 'Em Enough Rope"

The reissue of the CLASH's sophomore album benefits a bit more from the remastering than the first, and the reproduction of the LP's cover art is a nice touch, but if you already own it, there's not a particularly compelling reason to purchase this version over the old one that you can surely find in the used bin. If you don't own it already, reasons to buy include the classics "Safe European Home", "English Civil War", and "Tommy Gun". This was the CLASH's first attempt at recording an album on a truly large scale, and while I would still consider it a work of greatness, it doesn't quite stand up to the pure rawness of the first record or the combination of expanse, energy and perfection of "London Calling." Sort of the (very attractive) red-headed stepchild of CLASH recordings. (DGJ)



(EPIC)

THE CLASH
"Janie Jones" CD

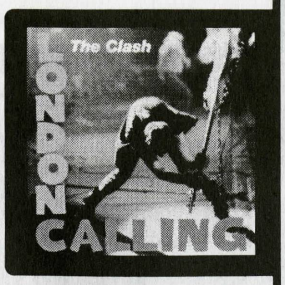


The first in Epic's CLASH reissue series is the long-awaited (23 years!) official U.S. release of the CLASH's eponymous debut in original form. With four different tracks than the original U.K version, this record is a vital and important counterpart to the U.S. release of the first record. Instead of "White Man in Hammersmith Palais", "Jail Guitar Doors", "Clash City Rockers", and "Complete Control", you get "48 Hours", "Protex Blue", "Deny", and "Cheat". While I personally like the U.S, version better (I know, blasphemy among most CLASH purists), any serious fan shouldn't be without this reissue. The sound quality's upped a bit - more separation in the midrange and treble, a higher overall volume, and a tighter low end, though most casual listeners won't notice. In any event, in a time when we're inundated with bands copying this band's sound without a trace of the spirit, why not pick up an original instead of an imitiator? (DGJ)

(EPIC)

REVIEWS

THE CLASH
"London Calling" CD



The first of the CLASH reissues that's truly essential for both Clashaholics and neophytes alike. The packaging on this record has been fully restored to include the Ray Lowry-designed liner notes and lyrics, is printed on a nicer paper stock, and most importantly, the new mastering job has done wonders for it. The horns *jump* out of the speakers on "Rudie Can't Fail", "The Right Profile" and "Revolution Rock". The hi-hat doesn't get lost in the muddle anymore. This record sounds fresher than the original, and if you're not familiar with the CLASH, this album and the U.S. version of the self-titled record are the best place to start. This album is the CLASH record I'll never stop listening to - I'd even go so far as to say it gets better with age. I'd recommend this record to *anyone* - hell, my sixty-seven year-old father even digs it! (Of course, he also digs *Hit List*, so your parental mileage may vary.) (DGJ)

(Epic)

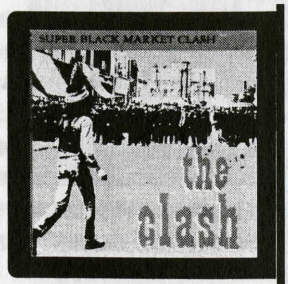
THE CLASH
"Sandanista!" Double CD



Personally, this is the CLASH album I listen to the least, and in ways, respect the most. Rock 'n' roll purists, stop reading here. *Sandanista!* is a World album that was ahead of its time in so many ways, which is probably why it stands as the moment when rockers lost interest in the band. The liner notes are lovingly restored on this one, in the original "Armagideon Times" propagandist broadsheet format. A challenging record, and one I haven't ever quite been able to embrace fully, but still, an amazingly prescient blueprint for the next twenty years of popular music. (DGJ)

(Epic)

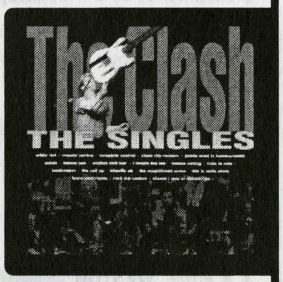
THE CLASH
"Super Black Market Clash"



An odds and sods collection of random b-sides and rare tracks, this record is for die-hard completists. One can get the best of the band's output by owning the "Clash On Broadway" 3-disc set and the five studio albums, but if you need "1977", the band's cover of BOOKER T's "Time is Tight" and the alternate dub/dance remix versions of "Bankrobber" and "Rock the Casbah", this is the record to own. Essential track - "Capital Radio Two". It blows the more widely-released "Capital Radio One" out of the water, though I think it's recently been eclipsed by the rip-roaring live version on "From Here to Eternity". Definitely one for completists, but the first half is an enjoyable listen for any music fan. Informative liner notes by Kosmo Vinyl, as well. Learn the true identity of the mysterious Pepé Unidos! (DGJ)

(Epic)

THE CLASH
"The Singles" CD

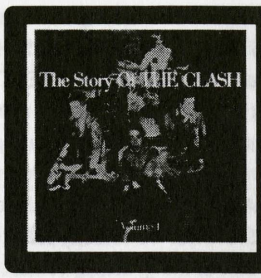


This CD includes all of the CLASH's A-sides. It's a good overview of their career, but useless if you own all the studio albums, *Clash On Broadway* and *Super Black Market Clash*. If you're a casual CLASH fan, pick this up, but if you're serious, you've already got all this stuff - though it *is* a pretty good mix to play in the car (DGJ)

(Epic)

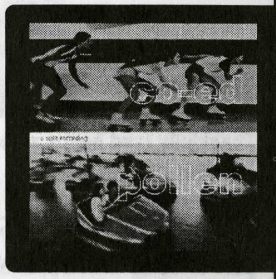
THE CLASH
"The Story of the Clash, Vol. 1" Double CD

This double-disc reminds me of an ex-girlfriend I was completely spun on. It was on the jukebox in our favorite bar, and why shouldn't it have been? If you're gonna buy one CLASH record to start with, you could do *far* worse than this. To rip off an old eighties surfer phrase, it's "All killer, no filler." It includes "Bankrobber", "Clash City Rockers", "Rock the Casbah" and "Safe European Home", among others. My only *real* compaint about this best-of is that they didn't include "Rudie Can't Fail". The remastering on the later stuff is wonderful, and it includes humorous Strummer-penned liner notes from the point of view of the band's fictious valet, Albert Transom. (DGJ)



(Epic)

CO ED/POLLEN
"A Split Recording"



CO ED. Now this one's tricky. So if the singers from HOT WATER MUSIC did vocals on this, you would say, "this is definitely HWM, and maybe some of their best stuff to date". Now take out the gravel, and add the singer from the CRANBERRIES (minus the annoying and shriekiness). There. We've created CO ED, and what a great thing that is. POLLEN drop by with more of their ALL-influenced brilliance. Amazing guitar riffs, backed by groove-ridden bass lines while topping straightforward, rock-solid drumming - all surrounding powerful vocals. 7 songs from each band here. You can't go wrong. (BAM)

(Cool Guy/PO Box 2361/Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670)

COCKNEY REJECTS
"The Power And The Glory" CD



I think of all the seminal punk bands who 'progressed' (usually ignominiously) after a classic first album or two - CLASH, BLACK

SHITLIST

FLAG, UNDERTONES, DISCHARGE, COC, SSD etc etc. Well, this was the 'REJECTS' (and at the time, they did change their name to the REJECTS) attempt at going from 'ready to ruck' to 'ready to rock'. Not metal as such, more like TSOL's "Hit And Run" era, or the rock sound of the PROFESSIONALS. It's actually pretty good, if you like that sort of thing, complete with power-ballads and a cover version of MOTÖRHEAD. (RK)

(CAPTAIN OI/PO BOX 501/HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKS, HP10 8QA)

CRO-MAGS
"Revenge" CD



Originals Harley Flanagan (now harnessing lead vocals as well as the bass to his massive frame) and Parris Mayhew are back. And it's actually pretty good. Thankfully (and hardly surprisingly) most of the shit metal is gone. Lots of driving hardcore "Quarrel" style, with some more melodic stuff a la first-LP-era SUICIDAL TENDENCIES (thanks in part to some distinctive lead guitar work from Rocky George), and even the odd power-pop ballad. A keeper for sure, which is considerably more than can be said for most of the reformation efforts over the last five years. (RK)

(CRO-MAG RECORDINGS/PO BOX 612, VILLAGE STATION/NEW YORK, NY 10014-0612)

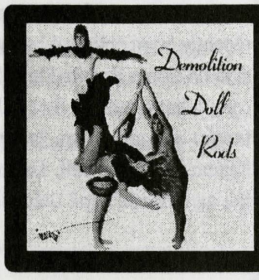
DEBRIS
"Static Disposal" CD



Perfect example of a band well ahead of their time. DEBRIS were around for less than two years in the mid 70's. Just long enough to independently release a self titled record (a collector's wet dream record that fetches upwards of $200 nowadays) and garner a widespread legacy of influence that helped pave the way for punk and avant garde music in general. Amazing dadist stuff that keeps its roots in 'n' and roll while dipping into the same magic well as CAPTAIN BEEFHEART or PERE UBU. This particular release is comprised of that original album plus 10 never-before released tracks which include some demo versions as well as brilliant re-workings of the STOOGES "Real Cool Time" and JOHN CALE'S "Gun". Topping off all of this is an extensive 28 page booklet with a full history, rare photos and personal remembrences from 3 out of 4 band members. A great CD that I was thrilled to discover. (JC)

(ANOPHELES/P.O. BOX 170045/SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94117)

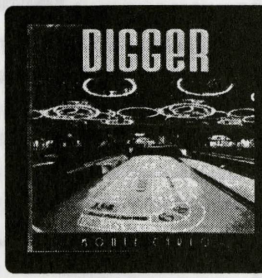
DEMOLITION DOLL RODS
"TA" CD



By far the most interesting, not to say tantalising thing about this CD is that it claims you can stick it in your computer and "dress up the DEMOLITION DOLL RODS", which would suggest to sad fuckers like me that they might get naked in cyberspace. However, my computer doesn't have a place where you can stick a CD in, so I'm stuck the music. Stripped down, fuzzy garage nonsense. A real dullard. (RK)

(MATADOR RECORDS)

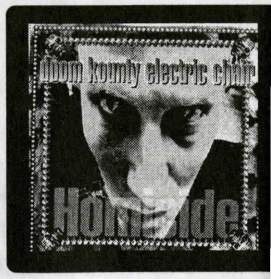
DIGGER
"Monte Carlo" CD



While WESTON slowed down over the years, DIGGER - who share similar pop-sensibilities, and a commendable talent for writing a damn fine tune, and sweet vocal harmony - if anything, have speeded it up a notch on this new record. And it works exceedingly well. If a combination of melody, power and craftsmanship is one's idea of a good pop-punk band, then look no further. (RK)

(HOPELESS RECORDS/PO BOX 7495/VAN NUYS/CA 91409)

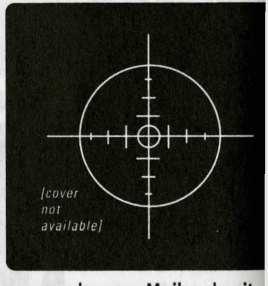
DOOM KOUNTY ELECTRIC CHAIR
"Homicide" CD



This little gem starts off with a cover of 999's "Homicide". First off, I never understood bands that would start a record off with a cover song, and secondly, why would you ever name your own CD after someone else's song? I mean, chances are, your cover isn't gonna be that good, and DEFINITELY not good enough to name your record after it. Lo and behold, it's the same deal here - except to make a bad situation worse, DCEC decides to also cover - as their SECOND(!) song - "Hybrid Moments". On this five-song CD, only two are originals as far as I can tell. But who cares, because this eats a fuckin' dick either way. Imagine if you had to witness THE CULT, GUNS 'N' ROSES, and ALICE IN CHAINS collaborating on a project. Get the picture?? (JAW)

(PERSUASION RECORDS/POB 133/ANAHEIM, CA 92815)

DROPOUTS
"Puke" CD



4 songs. Just over 6 minutes. Absolutely nothing new here musically. If I lose this copy of it, I'll definitely order another. Strange, huh? There's just something really cool about this little pop punk gem. Mail-order it, and maybe you can explain it to me. (BAM)

(MUTANT POP/5010 NW SHASTA/CORVALLIS, OR 97330)

DROWNINGMAN
"How They Light Cigarettes In Prison" CD



7 tracks of raging, pissed off precision-hardcore-math-rock. Screamed vocals, twin guitars, lots of chops and changes, riffs and tempos. I

guess if this is the shape of hardcore to come, we could do worse. (RK)

(REVELATION/PO BOX 5232/HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA 92615-5232)

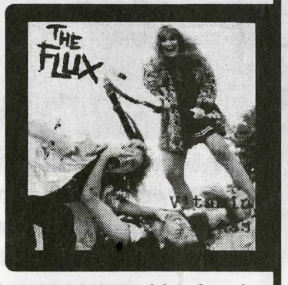
EXPLOITED
"The Singles" CD



Of course, it's not all their singles. Just those from their first three records. The good ones, supposedly. Me, I never liked them. Real stupid gumbie punk. Shit music, embarassing lyrics, and a cartoon caricature of what punk was meant to be about. But then again, I am biased. I had to live through it. The kids did love them though, and you will probably too. There's no accounting for taste I guess. Then again, the kids really love BRITNEY SPEARS and LIMP BIZKIT too... (RK)

(EAGLE RECORDS, A DIVISION OF EAGLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT)

FLUX
"Vitamin Ass"

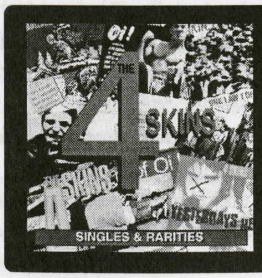


Nice fucked-up CD, just like I like 'em. I get the impression that FLUX might be big pro wrestling fans. I'm going to go out on a limb here and call this a mix of NAKED RAYGUN and ALICE DONUT with a female singer. This suffers mostly from bad production that drowns out the bass and makes the drums sound like tin cans. Fortunately that can't ruin the charm of this record and aside from the BLONDIE cover, I would reccomend getting this. (JC)

(FAN ATTIC/P.O. BOX 391494/CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139-0015)

4 SKINS
"Singles And Rarities CD"

Finally! The essential 4 SKINS collection. For anyone interested in Oi, there were only two bands originally - the 4 SKINS and the LAST RESORT. Both are absolutely essential. By far the best material the 4 SKINS recorded ended up on the various Oi Compilations and singles. This collects them all. Forget all the sad imitators, desparate wannabes, and second-rate rubbish. Go straight for gold. You won't be dissapointed. Twenty years later, and it never sounded so good. (RK)



(CAPTAIN OI!/PO BOX 501/HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKS, HP10 8QA/ENGLAND)

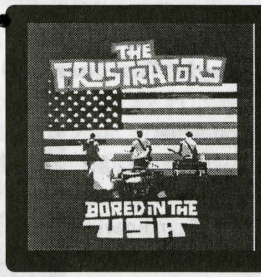
FRIGG A GO GO
"The Winning Score" CD



A winning record, drawing on a rich blend of musical influences (the TROGGS and ANIMALS come to mind). Coming across more rootsy than contemporaries like the MURDER CITY DEVILS or others of that ilk, though I think Spencer from the Devils is a better frontman. The classically drawn-on sound doesn't detract, however, from a strong band that plays an album full of imaginative and inspired tunes. Songs that keep you interested and entertained - even in a retro style that in the hands of a lesser band would get repetitive and boring. A sweaty organ-driven go-go band perfect for your next pool party or spy movie. (JC)

(SCOOCH POOCH/ 5850 WEST 3RD STREET SUITE 209/ LOS ANGELES, CA 90036)

FRUSTRATORS
"Bored In The USA" CD



Eight tracks, running the gamut of the poppier end of punk. Includes an amped-up BLONDIE cover-version, which should give you some idea of where their hearts lie. Also includes a member of GREEN DAY, though the band are a little speedier/rougher. The most frustrating (pun intended) part of the package is that my promo came without a tray card, so I'm possibly missing no end of vital material to pass onto you hungry fans in readerland. (RK)

(ADELINE/ADDRESS PRESUMABLY RESIDING ON THE WAYWARD TRAY-CARD)

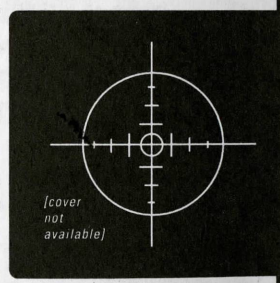
FUNERAL ORATION
"F*O - 1983-1998" CD



FUNERAL ORATION are a fantastic, high energy melodic hardcore band with a rich legacy of songs. They've always reminded me of MORRISSEY singing over "Suffer"-era BAD RELIGION. This double CD is a thorough discography with lots of cool demo versions, out-takes, etc. from the band's 16 year history. Check this out and see how a band from Amsterdam, Holland can do the So-Cal style better than half of the So-Cal bands. (JC)

(HOPELESS/

GENERATION X
"KMD Sweet Revenge"



I've taken a lot of flack over the years, but it's still absolutely true that GEN X are my faves of the Seventies punk bands,along with CLASH, and even more melodic bands like the ONLY ONES. Yeah, I can still look ya in the eye and say those scam-merchants,Billy Idol & Tony James are total heroes of mine, but you start to wonder how much the lesser known members contributed, 'cuz there ain't been nothin' since, in either artist's ouvere with even nearly this much heart! All the GREEN DAY-style-"correct"-punks swear by the first record, but all three are essential,if you ask me,and these alt.versions/seldom-heard cuts are an extremely welcome addition to my life. Grand, Golden,Teenage-Trash-Romantics! T.Rex & Gen X forever, children! (DJM)

(MUNSTER/P.O. BOX 18107 28080/MADRID, SPAIN)

SHITLIST

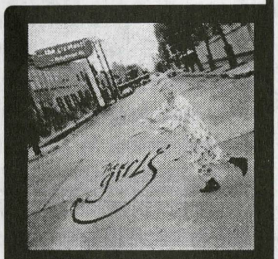
GERIATRIX
"Pretty Little Nothing" 7" EP



This was my first *Hit List* review for 2000, and I hope it is a sign of good things to follow. Great old-school sounding punk rock akin to a band like the WIERDOS. Cool band, cool packaging and a rip-roaring cover of DOW JONES AND THE INDUSTRIALS' "Can't Stand The Mid-West". (JC)

(Transparent/6759 Transparent Drive/Clarkston, MI 48346)

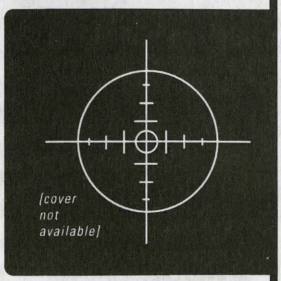
GIRLS
"Things Are Getting Weird Tonite" CD



This is kinda like alternative rock stuff that could readily be confused with rock-n-roll by those easily-pleased trendoid, glam rocker-types - really radio friendly and boring. This just does *not* get my wheels spinning, but maybe it'll make someone else happy. Think of it this way: they sound exactly like what you think they would sound like with such a totally non-descript name like THE GIRLS. Exciting, eh? (JAW)

(The Girls/1729 S. Halsted 2F/Chicago, IL 60608)

GLORY STOMPERS
"Ninesixnineseven" 10"



These guys kinda sound like a cross between the ANTI-NOWHERE LEAGUE and latter-day SKREWDRIVER (sans the ultra-retarded lyrics). At times these guys shine - "Look Out Here We Come" and "Demented With Dents" are examples of tuff, mid-tempo street rockers, however, the majority of this record is rather predictable stuff. This doesn't totally move me, but it doesn't suck either. (JAW)

(Knock Out Records/Postfach 100716/46527 Dinslaken Germany)

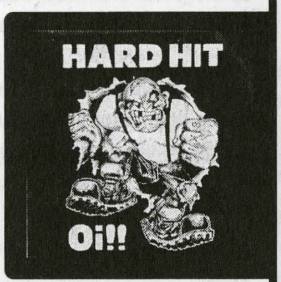
GUTRENCH
"Never Forgive, Never Forget" CD



Chugga-Chugga slow hardcore with shouty vocals. Great cover art. Unfortunately, the insides reveal that they dig God, but that doesn't stop 'em from turning the other cheek. No siree, these guys are tough, and if you mess with them, they'll make your life hell on earth (presumably you'll have to wait to deal with your Maker sometime later). However, they do have their crew (Ironside no less), and they'll stick by em. (RK)

(Gutrench/334 Bascom Avenue, Apt 302/Pittsburgh, PA 15214)

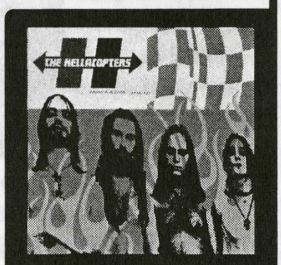
HARD HIT
"Oi!" 7"



Amazingly melodic, yet (pardon the reference to the band name) hard-hitting Japanese Oi. Who knows what the hell they're saying, but it's so good, who cares? If you see this 3-song rocker at your local mom & pop's, pick it up. (BAM)

(Knock-Out/Postfach 100716/46527 Dinslaken, Germany)

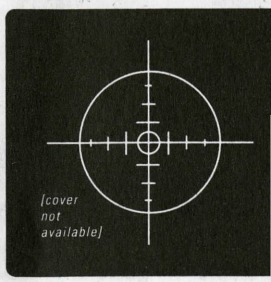
HELLACOPTERS
"Payin' The Dues" CD



Together with TURBONEGRO, these dudes head the Scandinavian return to sonic rock. MC5 rock. Undoubtedly you will love this - and so you ought. My CD had a bonus live CD attatched. Hopefully yours will too. (RK)

(Sub Pop - a registered trademark of Sub Pop Records)

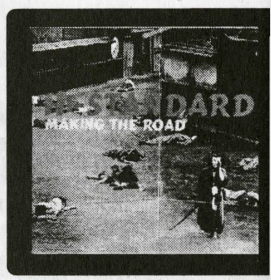
HENRY FIAT'S OPEN SORE
"Gnarly" 7"



This could be one of the best kept punk rock secrets. Trashed out lo-fi punk a la early BLACK FLAG, but way more fucked-up lyrics and song-writing. This rules. If the punk rock gods are with us, look for Man's Ruin to re-release the HFOS full length here in the states. Until then, get this 6 song rocker to tide you over. (BAM)

(Wrench/BCM Box 4049/London WC1N 3XX)

HI-STANDARD
"Making The Road"



The latest installment of these Japanese superstars' brand of infectious, breathy, choppy pop-punk. A superb production, and even more layered harmonies 'n' overdubs only add to their boisterous, exuberant sound. For everyone who wants their pop-punk with balls, instead of all that lite crap. (RK)

(Fat Wreck Chords/PO box 193690/San Francisco, CA 94119)

HOMEGROWN
"EP Phone Home" CD EP

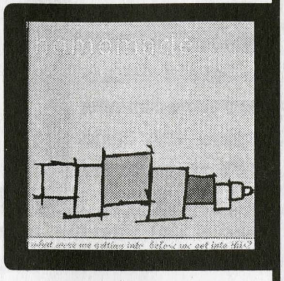


A 5-track effort from the SoCal pop-punkers. While these guys have definitely improved immeasurably over the years - both in terms of musical proficiency and songwriting, it has mainly been accomplished by listening to NOFX's "White Trash..." on repeat. Be

that as it may, definitely one of the better tribute bands around. (RK)

(Fueled By Ramen/PO Box 12563/Gainesville, FL 32604)

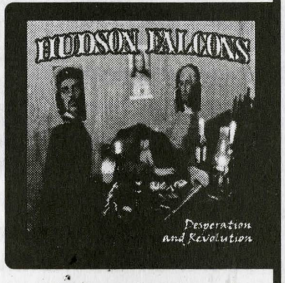
HOMEMADE
"What We Were Getting Into Before We Got Into This" CD



Pretty standard fare for the label that discovered PENNYWISE. Uptempo melodic hardcore with shades of later-period ALL. Not much zing in the tunes, but there is some definite potential in lyrical content and the singer's overall delivery. (JC)

(Theologian/P.O. Box 1070/Hermosa Beach, CA 90254)

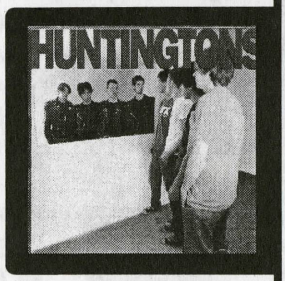
HUDSON FALCONS
"Desperation and Revolution" CD



Working class band with strong political/W.C. lyrical content. Not as much of the Oi! sound that would usually accompany such content, but I can see them playing with those bands easily. The HUDSON FALCONS have more of a rock influence mixed in - like a poppier version of the ANTI-NOWHERE LEAGUE. Worth checking out and worth supporting. (JC)

(GMM/PO Box 15234/Atlanta,GA 30333)

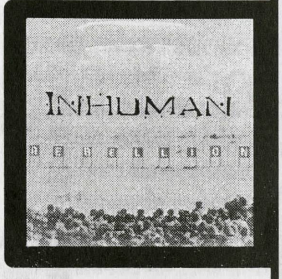
HUNTINGTONS
"Plastic Surgery" CD



These dudes prostrate themselves at two altars - God's, and the RAMONES. Unfortunately, they aren't one and the same. Though actually, we do have tangible proof that the RAMONES *did* exist. Both, however, have left a sad legacy. The former has probably been the single biggest cause of war, violence, bigotry, hatred, intolerance, witchunts, family values etc etc. (Or rather, arseholes the world over have invoked his name as an excuse for such anti-social behavior). The latter has spawned an embarassing plethora of bands who seem to want to do nothing else but try and sound, and look - as exactingly as possible - like their chosen Gods. In both cases, such blind worship is a waste of braincells, electricity, and the consumer's hard-earned cash. (RK)

(Tooth And Nail)

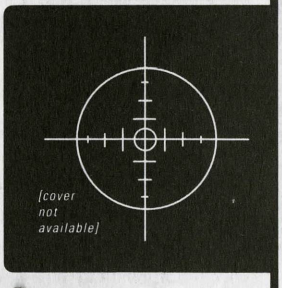
INHUMAN
"Rebellion" CD



Speedy metallic hardcore. Kind of reminiscent of early GBH minus the catchy tunes. It all starts to sound very samey after a couple of tracks. The singer *does* thank "all the girls who have come and gone in my life" which is a nice touch. (RK)

(Exit/PO Box 263/New York, NY 10012)

JUD JUD
"No Tolerance For Instruments" 7"



Not quite as powerful as their original "Demos" release. I don't think that they're as hungry as they used to be, and their lyrics don't seem to carry their once-important message with the same impact. There also seems to be a little less energy captured in the recording. These are all things that are essential to hardcore and straightedge, but despite that, JUD JUD remains one of the premier and influential bands in the history of the genre. (BAM)

(Schematics/No Address)

KLOPECS
"Born To Lose Again" CD



Mutant Pop returns with yet another short-run CD, available only through mail-order. This time it's the demo session from the upcoming KLOPECS long-player. Good recording, good band, and 4 great songs that have me looking forward to a full length. The kids also get points for not ending their short thanks list with "and anybody else that we forgot", but rather a much cooler - "and fuck everybody else". (BAM)

(Mutant Pop/5010 NW Shasta/Corvallis, OR 97330)

KNOCKOFFS
"12 Sucker Punches" CD



Solid uptempo pop punk. Standout faves are: "Fuck I'm Hungry" and "I Want A Monkey". QUEERS/SCREECHING WEASEL style with edgier vocals. (JC)

(Heartpunch/2139 55th street/Sacramento, CA 95817)

LARD
"70's Rock Must Die" CD EP

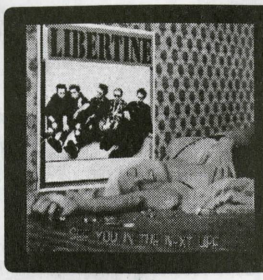


I've always been a big fan of LARD, but I just can't handle the title track to this. Sure I get the joke, but the song is far too horrific and goes on way too long. With a running time of over 7 minutes, it was a sheer test of my willpower to even get through it. The other two tracks are much more listenable and retain a lot of that LARD magic. (JC)

(Alternative Tentacles/P.O. Box 419092/San Francisco, Ca. 94141-9092)

SHITLIST

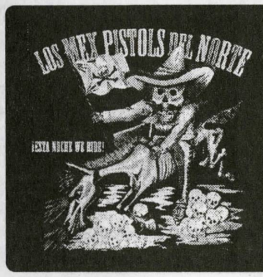
LIBERTINE
"See You In The Next Life" CD



Eyeliner, JOHNNY THUNDERS swagger, RANCID'S big fat song hooks and SOCIAL DISTORTION-esque raspy vocals and heartfelt lyrics. Pretty fucking cool record. I can see LIBERTINE getting real big real soon. Most of the songs on this are extremely catchy and well, the guys in the band are just *damn* cool looking. (JC)

(Substandard/New Red Archives /P.O. Box 210501 /San Francisco, CA 94121)

LOS MEX PISTOLS DEL NORTE
"Esta Noche We Ride!" CD



Honestly, this is just completely not my thing, so I might not be the best judge o' this disc. What you have here is a nineteen track CD of Salsa-flavoured , surfy, upbeat instrumentals. Imagine MAN OR ASTRO-MAN if they were Mexican , playing edgy - dare I say peppy - surf-y instrumentals sans the space shit, but including a percussionist, sousaphone, and bullfight-type samples. This is okay, I guess, but it's just not interesting to me personally. If you're into different instrumental-type bands, you might wanna check this out. I don't mean this necessarily as an insult, however, though I wouldn't necessarily even call this rock 'n' roll. (JAW)

(NMX Records/110 Pacific Street #121/San Francisco, CA 94111)

LOVE AS LAUGHTER
"Destination 2000" CD

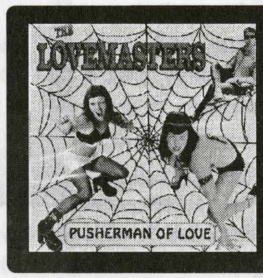
Indie rock with a glam singer. Not the best thing that I have heard from Sub Pop lately. An o.k. record, lacking in many highs or lows. Favorite track for me was "Margaritas" which was pretty catchy, but not really examplary of what you get from this record. A problem that I have with this release that's typical of many lately is the omnipresent thanks list which comprises the bulk of the CD booklet.



No lyrics or any useful information, just endless name dropping. This trend needs to stop. I don't care who put you up in Walla Walla, or the name of your favorite tattoo artist - I want lyrics, propaganda and maybe even a manifesto of the bands plan's for world domination. (JC)

(Sub Pop/P.O. Box 20645/Seattle, WA 98102)

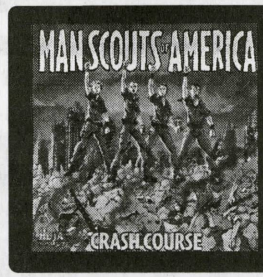
LOVEMASTERS
"Pusherman Of Love" CD



Quite the 70's preservation society going on here. I was a bit surprised when I opened up the booklet and didn't see band member names like Asheton or Osterberg. This band hails from Detroit and I wouldn't be surprised if they had bastard Stooge-child blood in their somewhere in their background. Judging from the music and lyrical content, I would say that they definitely have *something* awry coursing through their veins. Comparisons aside, this is a cool record and fans of the old Detroit style should love it. (JC)

(Sir Aquarius/No address)

MAN SCOUTS OF AMERICA
"Crash Course" CD



Best parody band name since REO SPEEDDEALER or BI-CURIOUS GEORGE. Brutally macho rock 'n' roll music comes easy to these fellers. Compare to the DICTATORS meet the TOILET BOYS. The entertainment value is high, but I *do* think they need to work on their songwritting a little before the have the total package. Worth checking out nonetheless. (JC)

(RAFR/11054 Ventura Blvd. #205/Studio City, CA 91604)

CRAIG MARKEL
"Verses On Venus" CD



This is not so much music as it is masturbation. Some clueless fuck with a four-track and some computer synths who thinks he's gonna be the next BECK (who I kind of like). Utter shit, avoid at all costs. (JC)

(Mag Wheel/P.O. Box 115/Stn R. Montreal/PQ H2S 3K6)

MENACE
"C&A" 7"



Amazing how quick emotions can turn. At first I was stoked, thinking that there was unreleased material from the almighty MENACE finally making its way to me for my listening pleasure. Imagine the horror when I roll the 7" sleeve over and see pictures of the California Raisins playing instruments! Oh, wait - that's MENACE, and these tracks were just recorded. Damn! Why, you guys? MENACE, the legends, possibly the second best '77 punk band ever, going down the reunion road that has never done anybody any good. Permanently slinging the albatross firmly around their necks, MENACE release three new tracks, and a '99 version of "Last Year's Youth", which in comparison to their classic '77 version shows exactly how embarrassing this recording is. If you're familiar with MENACE, leave it as it is. If you're not familiar, go out and pick up the CD collection of their 7"s called "G.L.C." NOW!! I believe that it's on Captain Oi!, and is on an even par with the first STIFF LITTLE FINGERS album. I only pray that this 7" doesn't lead to a new full length, or God forbid, a tour. (BAM)

(Knock-Out/Postfach 100716/46527 Dinslaken, Germany)

REVIEWS

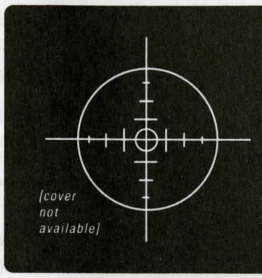
MEPHISKAPHELES
"Might-ay White-ay" CD



This is what the modern ska-punk scene needs - a band that's twisted and evil. Pretty creative stuff that breathes life into a long-dead style of music. On par with bigger bands like VOODOO GLOW SKULLS or the TOASTERS. (JC)

(VELVET /740 BROADWAY/NY, NY 10003)

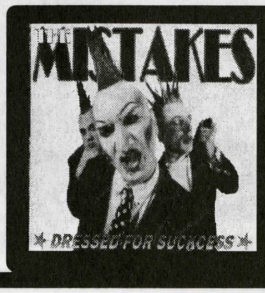
MILLENCOLIN
"Pennybridge Pioneers" CD



Since "Suffer", the world has seen countless BAD RELIGION/PENNYWISE copyists/devotees. Sweden seems to be a fertile breeding ground (though to be fair, the Swedes take ALL their copying seriously - having produced the world's finest DISCHARGE surrogates too). MILLENCOLIN used to be an also-rans in the Swedish replicant canon (NO FUN AT ALL taking top honors), but this new record really does thrust them up there. I'm sure a Brett Gurewitz production hasn't harmed them either. Its a real pain in the bum though, these promo CD things. No artwork, no nothing. For all I know, they could be pushing the realms of cover art/booklets into new cosmic territory which would negate any lingering cycnicism that one might have over their musical repertoire. (RK)

(EPITAPH - ALL THE CD SAID WAS MIKE TRUJILLO FOR PUBLICITY, SO YOU MIGHT WANT TO CALL HIM)

MISTAKES
"Dressed For Suckcess"



Early RANCID-style driving punk, with the ol' shouty choruses. Lots of 'go' and that of sort thing. An OPERATION IVY cover doesn't seem out of place either. Proud members of Artists Against Racism, which stands them in good stead. (RK)

(REJECT RECORDS/PO BOX 595/NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA 91603)

MICHAEL MONROE
"Life Gets You Dirty"



I really gotta nit-pick to find something I don't like on a Mike Monroe record. On this one, well, I'm not wild about the car noises in "Go Hard", but if you don't respect this cat,you and I just have violently conflicting notions of how we define rock 'n' roll. Like it or not, Make-Up-Phobes, HANOI ROCKS influenced virtually all of yer fave punk bands - just ask Billy Humper,Willy Candy Snatcher or Pete Chicken Hawk if ya don't believe me. Though his legendary band crashed and burned over a decade ago, Michael has learned to play everything himself and continued to develop and embellish his original mixture of STONES raunch, BOWIE glitter, DOLLS camp, and DAMNED fury - which deserves a helluva lot more than a VH1 "Where Are They Now", or the blame for what followed Guns 'N' Roses. Vital, energetic, and sensetive songs from this exhuberant cyclone. One of our last standing rock 'n' roll superheroes. Get this any way you can. (DJM)

(CLEOPATRA IN AMERICA?)

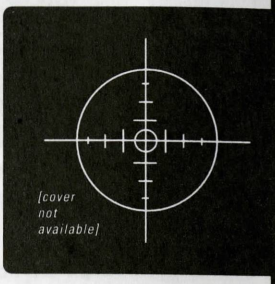
MOTÖRHEAD
"OverKill" CD
"Bomber" CD



Remastered (with extra live and single tracks) edition of MOTÖRHEAD's classic third and fourth records, which defined a style both heavy metal, and a monstrosity all their own, at once. Hard-drivin', ass-kickin', amphetamine-driven music that was total volume, over the top, rock 'n' roll rebellion personified. There's a very good reason why in the late 70's (several years before thrash and crossover brought them together) there was only ONE rock band that the punks dug. (RK)

(ESSENTIAL RECORDS, A DIVSION OF CASTLE COMMUNICATIONS)

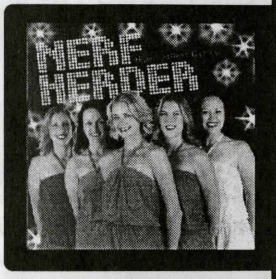
NAKED VIOLENCE
"She's Got It" 7"



Another great example of balls-out punk and roll. Gruff vocals, wanky guitar licks, great natural chord progressions, and lots of "yeah, yeah's" in the choruses. Well worth seeking out. (BAM)

(FUCK DOLL/PO BOX 42093/PORTLAND, OR 97242)

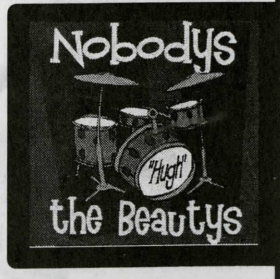
NERF HERDER
"How To Meet Girls" CD



Ah. Finally. A new NERF HERDER record. An exquisite combination of pure anthemic pop and hilarious lyrical wizardry, covering such universals as unrequited love, heavy metallers in love, girls, Courtney Love, and a love gone wrong. I fucking love this record. You will too. (RK)

(HONEST DON'S/PO BOX 192027/SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94119)

NOBODYS/BEAUTIES
"Hugh"

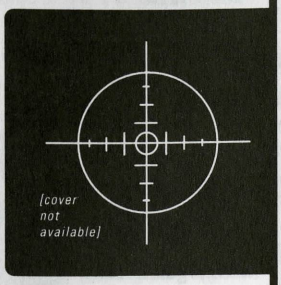


Two bands, one good cause. Fairly run of the mill pop-punk and garagey/rock 'n' roll fare respectively. (RK)

(SUB CITY/PO BOX 7495/VAN NUYS, CA 91409)

SHITLIST

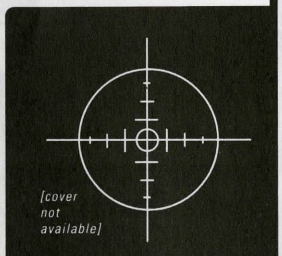
NOBODY'S HEROES
"Kill Tomorrow" 7"



Surprisingly enjoyable snotty, pop-influenced punk. A little too fast at times, and a little out of key here and there, but if not for that, this would probably wouldn't be as entertaining, and could quite easily slip into the realm of generic. I'll definitely keep this as it is. (BAM)

(Burnt Harry Butt/10 Liam Ln./Centerville, MA 02632)

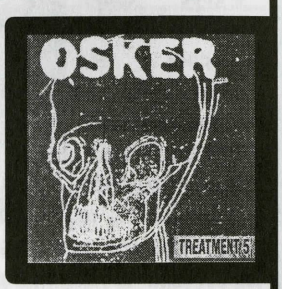
NUEVOCATECISMO CATOLICO
"Generacion Perida" CD



Catchy name. A hell of a record by a band that I know absolutely zip about. What I do know is that they fucking rock. Classic 70's American punk style from this Spanish band. Half the CD is originals, the other half consists of a broad range of old cover songs from the likes of The CLASH, D.O.A., PAUL REVERE AND THE RAIDERS and even a U.F.O. song (damn me for recognizing that one). They have a real genuine sound and seem to really have their hearts into what they are doing. (JC)

No Tomorrow/Apdo 1134,12080/Castellion, Spain)

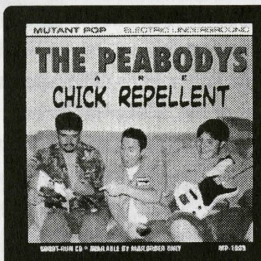
OSKER
"Treatment 5" CD



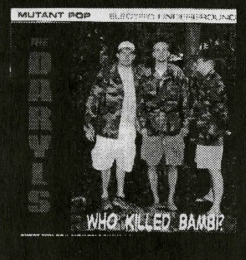
I guess Epitaph must always have to have a kind of shit punk band to champion, along with all the big-hitters that exhibit the more commercially viable Epitaph sound. Y'know - they had DFL, and before that, TOTAL CHAOS. Now they have OSKER. The latter play speedy straight-ahead punk. It's well recorded, and well played. Still pretty rough and snarly. And instantly forgettable. (RK)

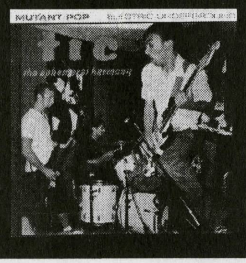
(Epitaph/2798 Sunset Blvd/Los Angeles, CA 90026)

PEABODYS
"Are Chick Repellent" CD-R
PROTEENS
"Professional Teenagers" CD-R
DARYLS
"Who Killed Bambi" CD-R
TIC
"The Ephemeral Harmony" CD-R





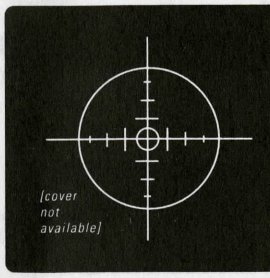




While hardly groundbreaking, this a great DIY way of getting cheap music out there. A new series of short-run (not sure why they have to be short-run - to increase their collectable value?) CDs, available only by mailorder from Mutant Pop. Especially if such bands are going to encourage everyone to make their own copies, this harkens back to the glory days of early eighties tape-trading and demo-tape making. Of course, one of the beauties of such demo daze was that bands actually used to record demos, perhaps sold in limited numbers at their shows, traded or whatever , PRIOR to making a 'real' record. It was a kind of filtering process. Weeded out the real shit, helped bands get some experience in recording, writing etc etc. Going straight to a 'real' release defintely lowers the bar on quality control. Certainly, all these releases sound like demos. I guess they originally were in some case. They are very amateurish by and large, and all sound like SCREECHING WEASEL trying to sound like the RAMONES. If that's your thing, go crazy. (RK)

(Mutant Pop/5010 NW Shasta/Corvallis, OR 97330)

POLLEN
"Chip" CD



Seriously impressed by this band. I haven't heard a band do the ALL/DESCENDENTS thing this good since the almighty HAGFISH. I'm sure that the band is probably sick of the ALL connection, but this is Chad Price-era ALL all the way. Mid-tempo, catchy as hell, intelligent punk for the ages. ALL never got a portion of the respect that they deserve; hopefully POLLEN will fair better. (BAM)

(Fueled By Ramen/PO Box 12563/Gainesville, FL 32604)

PROSTITUTES
"25 Hits Of Punk Rock Fury" CD



The PROSTITUTES + Pelado records = pure punk-rock genius. This is a fabulous collection of their recorded work from 1995-1997. Listening to this makes you feel like the 80's and 90's never happened. Raw punk rock in a serious old-school vein. (JC)

(Pelado Records/521 Wilson #B202/Costa Mesa, CA 92627)

QUADILIACHA
"ES MUERTO" CD



A whirling, swirling maelstrom of raw punk-rock energy. Great name and a great band. I saw these guys live a few years back and I was blown away.

REVIEWS

Similar live energy to AT THE DRIVE IN, but QUADILIACHA are in a much more crazed hardcore vein. Musically akin to SPAZZ. (JC)

(Goat Lord/P.O. Box 14230/Atlanta, GA 30324-1230)

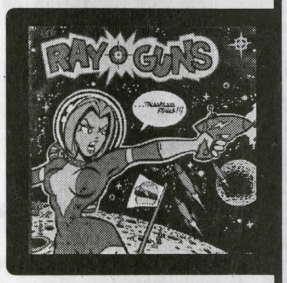
QUADRAJETS
"All My Rowdy Friends Are Dead/Mr. Eliminator" 7"



Balls-out SUPERSUCKERS-influenced rock, with a southern twang. The title track, taken from their last Estrus full length, pays tribute to their southern influences. The b-side, "Mr. Eliminator", is a DICK DALE instrumental. It is what it is, take it or leave it. (BAM)

(Bronxcheer/PO Box 13/Glasgow G12 8NS/Scotland UK)

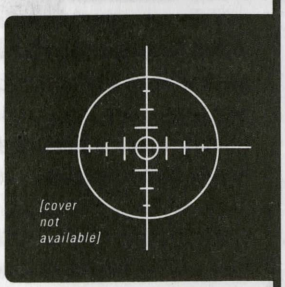
RAY-GUNS
"Talentless Fools" CD



Well, they aren't talentless. Indeed, there must be a certain knack for producing such well-played and executed bland, innocuous ska-punk. Nothing at all makes them stand out, other than the heavy-set guy on the right of the group photo with the DESCENDENTS t-shirt. (RK)

(Tomato Head Records/PO Box 61298/Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1298)

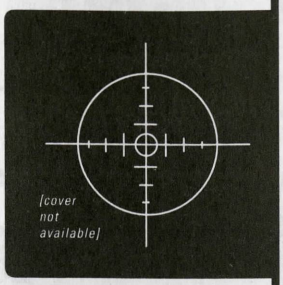
REDS
"Red's Theme Song" 7"



Lo-fi punk & roll with almost megaphone-style snotty vocals. Crispy-crunchy guitars, and attitude galore. 2 of the 4 songs on here only have 4 words each, yet you never seem to mind. Punk. (BAM)

(Little Deputy/PO Box 7066/Austin, TX 78713)

REDS
"Under Control/Pop Action" 7"



With their snotty vocals and bad attitude, I guess it was inevitable that this band would end up on Rip Off Records, the best punk label going today. Two more reasons for me to wait anxiously for a full length? "Under Control", and "Pop Action". (BAM)

(Rip Off/581 Maple Ave/San Bruno, CA 94066)

REEL BIG FISH
"Everything Sucks"



One of those early demos, unreleased stuff type compilations. This is actually very good. One of the better ska bands around. Largely because they can play and don't just rely on being frenetic. I almost like some of their slower, laid-back groove material. Presumably if you dig this kind of stuff, you'll want to pick it up. I think they are pretty famous aren't they? (RK)

(Mojo - part of some scumfuck major bastard)

RESONARS
"Bright And Dark" CD



Super-jangly modern-day hippie music. Initial listenings brought to mind the BYRDS or the MONKEES. The RESONERS have the style down pat - you could easily see them playing a love-in and toking on hookah pipes. Probrobly a blast live. (JC)

(Get Hip/PO Box 666/Canonsberg, PA 15317)

RETARDOS
"Tune In" CD



Scooch Pooch records finds their version of the HELLACOPTERS. Great new band; crunchy guitars and gruff vocals full of rock power. Delivering the one-two punch with cool originals and covers of GANG GREEN and G.G. ALLIN. (JC)

(Scooch Pooch/ 5850 West 3rd street Suite 209/ Los Angeles, CA 90036)

REZILLIOS
"Radio Session" 7"



Fuck yes, this rules! If you don't already know the brilliance of power-pop legends the REZILLIOS, then you better get your ass back in school. "Top Of The Pops", "It Gets Me", "Good Sculptures", and "No" are taken from a radio session, and the sound on this is amazing. The only thing that could have made this any better would be the possible addition of "Flying Saucer Attack". Pretty sure that this is limited, so find it as soon as you can.

(No contact)

SAINTS
"Eternally Yours" CD

Originally released in 1978, this is the SAINTS' second full length. Taking the power, passion and intensity of their legendary debut, they added horns, harmonica and organ - to wonderful effect. Rock 'n' roll with melody, that burnt down the garage twenty years ago. Cross the LURKERS with the ADVERTS second LP, and you'll begin to

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get some idea of the depth that The SAINTS were starting to exhibit on this classic. An essential investment. (RK)



(Captain Oi!/PO Box 501/High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 8QA/England)

SCREECHING WEASEL
"Jesus Hates You" picture 7"

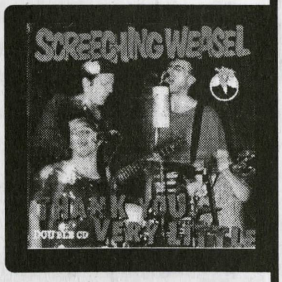
For starters, there's a totally hot naked chick on the cover of this limited edition picture 7" (praise the Probe!!). Musically we have 3 cover tunes here. "Fuck You" by the SUBHUMANS (no, that's NOT a DOA song you dolt), which I think was done a little bit fast, "Suspect Device", which could be the best cover version of this I've ever heard, and "Dirt" by the STOOGES. Pick this up while you can, and even if you don't like it, you can probably get a small fortune for it on E bay a year from now. (BAM)



(The Almighty PROBE)

SCREECHING WEASEL
"Thank You Very Little" 2x CD

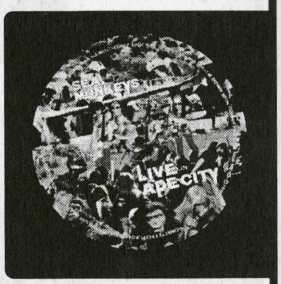
So 1995's "Kill The Musicians" CD was supposed to compile all of the SW stuff that had either gone out of print, been lost on comps, or just plain never saw the light of day, and honestly, it was one of my favorite SW records. There's a lot of stuff on this CD that was left off the "left off" album, and with a lot of it it's easy to see why. With the first of the two discs being mostly chronological, it slowly runs the gamut from damn near unbearable, to actually enjoyable by the last few songs. After all, it has been 5 years since the KTM album, and the later excerpts from this album weren't around for it, including unreleased tracks from "Bark Like A Dog", "Television City Dream", and "Emo" era recordings. Disc 2 is comprised of a 5 song practice session, and a live show from '93. 2 CD's, 50 songs total. Hardcore SW fans will be creaming their panties over this one, and if nothing else will eat up the last half of disc 1.



(Panic Button/PO Box 148010/Chicago, IL 60614)

SEA MONKEYS
"Live In Ape City" 7" EP

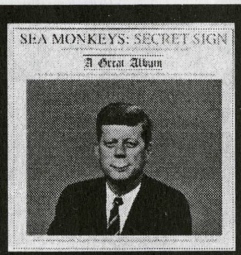
First off, this is a picture disc play on PLANET OF THE APES - which right there gives it a big thumbs-up for me..."Damn Dirty Apes!!!!" The music is hyper, straightforward punk rock. Goofy and fun, it looks good in any collection. (JC)



(Solamente/312 Park Place #3/Brooklyn, NY 11238)

SEA MONKEYS
"Secret Sign" CD

A great trashy punk rock record. This comes howling out of the garage with an infectious enthusiasm. At their best, sounds like 'Machine-Gun Etiquette' DAMNED, with some great lead-guitaring. The cover proudly proclaims this as a great album, and you can sure read this book by its cover. (RK)



(Eerie Records/www.eerierecords.com)

SERIAL KILLING 101
"Tri-State Killing Spree/Leave Me Alone" 7"

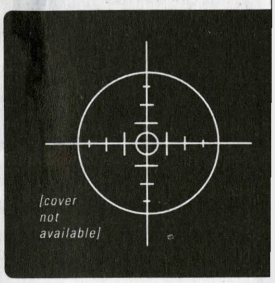
Female fronted bar rock, with lyrics about kicking ass and killing people. Reminds me of that one band that's inevitably playing every show you go to, that's not amazing, yet definitely not bad. I'm curious to hear the full-length. It should tell all. (BAM)



(Slow Gun/1611 S. Euclid/Anaheim, CA 92807)

BRIAN SETZER
"Collection: '81-'88"

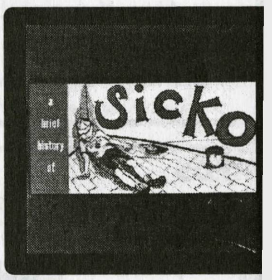
For years I referred to this cat as the most underrated guitarist in rock 'n' roll, and y'know, I ain't one of these guys who'll write you off 'cuz you start to succeed, but his whole big Swing comeback thing has me a little oversaturated right now. Even still, in one of my rash, unjustifiable moments of impulse buying, ("I DESERVE SOMETHING, DAMMIT!!") I shamefully shelled out over sixteen hard-won bucks for this disc - or more accurately, for one fucking song I liked as a kid,"Knife Feels Like Justice" that'd been outta print for ten years.Of course, you know he's a consummate rawker. (DJM)



(Another major label)

SICKO
"A Brief History Of..."

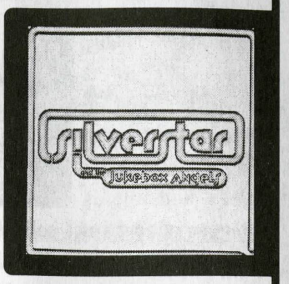
Not a greatest hits package (did they have any hits?). Rather, one of those singles/obscure tracks/live stuff anthologies. This is actually a great record. They were superb musicians, and churned out a wide variety of music, on top of the basic pop-punk fare, at which they excelled. Nevertheless, I suspect that this is one for the fans only. Me, I'm a fan.
(RK)



(Mutant Pop/5010 NW Shasta/Corvallis, OR 97330)

REVIEWS

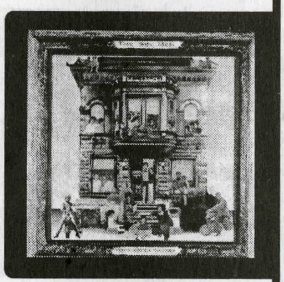
SILVERSTAR AND THE JUKE-BOX ANGELS
CD



Jesus, another horrible pseudo-hipster glam-rock piece of shit. Not only do these guys look like total poseur dorks, but they sound equally as horrible. This is exactly the kind of malarchy I would expect to hear at places like SF's Beauty Bar when they're doing their version of 16/rock 'n' roll night, or whatever, except its way more heroin-chic, man. These guys sound like they listen to a lot of T. REX, BOWIE, and THE DOLLS, which is great, but their influences come out in all the wrong ways - very soulless and superficial. (JAW)

(Crash City Records/15 Milton ST Belmont/MA 02478)

SIN MEN
"Lunar Foster Children" CD

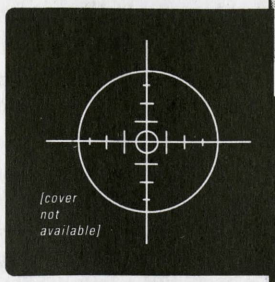


Indie-pop with a heavy WEEZER influence. Fairly innocuous until you get to the part in "Buddy Holly" (hey wasn't that a WEEZER title also?) where they think they're real clever by repeating the line "Punk was dead before I was born". Well guys, we here at *Hit List* think punk is alive and thriving in 2000 and judging by the weakness of your music, you don't have clue one about what punk (or decent rock 'n' roll for that matter) is. So you can take that and shove it up your PAVEMENT lovin' asses! (JC)

(Who gives a fuck)

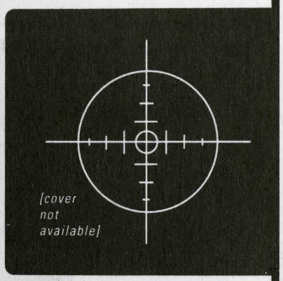
SIXTY FT.DOLLS
"Joya Magica"

Not only the best Welsh Britpop group, but maybe the finest rock and pop hitmakers around today. With a gift for optimistic hooks - a la the KINKS or the WHO with the glammy-white-boy-mod-soul of the BUZZCOCKS or JAM. Smashing, lovely hard-candy pop tunes, mostly preoccupied w/winning backsome irretrievable lovebuzz or some imaginary lost summer. Also look for their debut,"The Big 3" in the cut-out bin. These albums are nursing me through another winter of my discontent. An amazing band! (DJM)



(PREDICTABLY NEGLECTED BY DGC)

69 EYES
"WASTING THE DAWN"



Former Sleaze 'n' Trash Punks,the Finnish rockers 69 EYES,churn out a big, slimy, gothic-blk, glamdustrial CD,a lot like SISTERS OF MERCY's "Vision Thing" updated for the Apocalypse,or worse yet, what you imagined Axl Rose's epic-studio-catastrophe-influenced-by-NIN was/is gonna sound like. Scary,dark and dangerous modern metal, punctuated by singer Jyrki's obsession with Mistah Mojo Risin'. (DJM)

(Gaga Goodies/P.O.Box 483/FIN-33101/Tempere, Finland)

SKULL CONTROL
"ZZZZZZZZZ" CD



Fucking amazing stuff. I had heard that they were good and I was eager to get this for review. Kind of an artsier, more old-school sounding JESUS LIZARD. I think that I read somewhere that this is one of the guys from SWIZ, who were also pretty amazing. I'm gonna go get their other record now. These guys better tour soon. (JC)

(Touch and Go/P.O. Box 25520/Chicago, IL 50625)

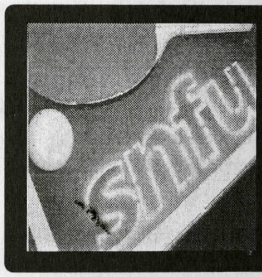
SMOGTOWN
"Führers Of The New Wave" CD



Fuck! These guys are awesome! This is straightforward punk rock 'n' roll - heavy on the guitars - not wanky, but heavy. If you're into US BOMBS-inspired, slightly English-influenced rock 'n' roll action with a very SoCal feel, then you'll love SMOGTOWN. The production on "Führers" is not as stripped down as "Beach City Butchers", but this record still absolutely rocks!! Winners include "Payola Time", "Teen Age", "Judy Is A Model", "Static Ecstatic", and "Harbor Blvd. Nights", and that's being understated! Honestly, this record gets better every time I hear it. Very highly recommended. (JAW)

(Disaster Records/POB 7112/Burbank, CA 91510)

SNFU
"The Ping Pong EP"



5 new tracks from the slightly tarnished legends. Their first two LPs were amazing energetic hardcore punk. Their subsequent records on Epitaph were a lame embarassment. They have a new label, and while there are no new surprises with the sounds, they actually come out pretty spritely again. A keeper, and makes me actually want to hear the new full-length when it appears. One thing though guys - it's called table-tennis. An Olympic sport, no less. (RK)

(Alternative Tentacles/PO Box 419092/San Francisco, CA 94141-9092)

STRANGER DEATH 19
"Jealous Robot" CD

Cute packaging, dumb name. Not too thrilling of a band - they sound a bit to much like J-

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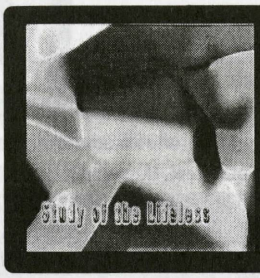
ing grabbing yet. My advice? Change your name and start over from scratch. (JC)

(Elastic/P.O. Box 17598/Anihiem, CA 92817)

STUDY OF THE LIFELESS

"Promice Land" CD

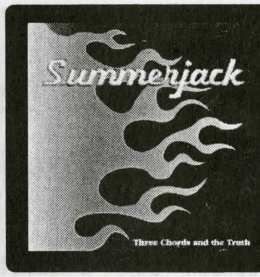


Shades of a deflated MY BLOODY VALENTINE. Lo-fi and dreamy, but overall, a "study of the lifeless" seems appropriate. Kinda cool music for stoned-out rainy days or background music to bathe your cat to. American Pop Project has had a lot of cooler records than this come out lately. For example, has anyone heard the ALIEN CRIME SYNDICATE? Now *that* was a cool record. (JC)

(American Pop Project/P.O. Box 227/San Rafael, CA 94912)

SUMMERJACK

"3 Chords and the Truth"



The truth is that this is pretty unimaginative and derivative of big bands like GREEN DAY and NOFX. How many of these records come out every week? The playing is good, but the songs just go nowhere. (JC)

(Cool Thing/P.O. Box 4916/Boise, ID 83711)

SUNSET STRIPPERS

"TEENAGE TIMEBOMB"

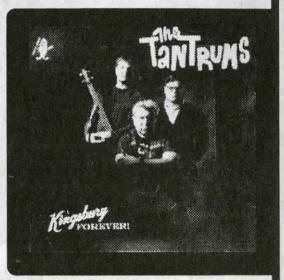


Ask around - a lot of folks'll back me up on this one - the best of the fresh,unsigned NYC trash-punk bands. The S.S. boast a charismatic skin-head vocalist by the name of Mike Raphone, a trio of hot rockin' babes, and midwestern luminary/guitar star, Brian Morgan, who taught me half of what I forgot about romantic glam melodies and shitbox Gibson garage damage at a young age. With kickass originals like "Showbiz" and "That's Entertainment", it's a shame no underground label seems to have the savvy to discover, cultivate,and market real rock 'n' roll talent like this beyond our little fuck-you punk club. A viable, important group who deserve the hype you're hearing. (DJM)

(Sunset Strippers/148 Kingsland Ave./#2-L/Brooklyn,N.Y.11222)

TANTRUMS

"Kingsbury Forever" CD

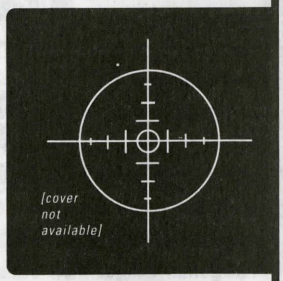


Not the stellar female fronted rockabilly punk band from Berkeley (maybe a split 7" is in order), Wisconsin's TANTRUMS are a formidable band in their own right. Great thrashy old-style garage that sounds like it could have easily been recorded in the era of the SONICS or SEEDS. This-self produced little gem is definately worth seeking out. You will probrobly have to mailorder it, because I don't think this will make it to you local Tower. (JC)

(Tantrums/1726B North Arlington Place/Milwaukee, WI 53203)

TAJ MAHAL & THE HULA BLUES BAND

"Sacred Island"



Whaddya listen to when you've worn out all your WEAKLINGS,DRAGONS and NEW WAVE HOOKERS records? (DJM)

(Windham Hill)

TANGER

"Omnipotent" CD/LP



Now if FUGAZI only rocked this hard, I would understand why people liked them so much. Similar in style, what with heavy noisy guitar notes and chords dragged out over rock solid drum and bass lines. The difference is that FUGAZI almost takes you there and leaves you wanting more, where as TANGER blows right past that point, almost delving into BLACK FLAG range. Killer fuckin' record. I was hoping for this to turn out this well after watching them demolish the local club on their tour prior to the release of this record. No disappointment here. Go see this band, go buy this record, thank me later!! (BAM)

(O&O/PO Box 36/Fort Collins, CO 80522)

TEMPLARS

"Omne Datum Optimum" LP



OK, I believe I reviewed the CD version of this record a while back. The same applies - TEMPLARS fucking rule as far as today's Oi! bands are concerned. These guys write straightforward, ruff-n-tuff rock-n-rollers. Just check out "Victim", "Guardian Angel", or "They Don't Care". It's true that this record is way more "produced" then their previous outings, however I don't believe that that's necessarily a bad thing. This isn't as primitive-sounding as their previous efforts, and the songwriting is simply exceptional all around. This record gets a vote for one of the best of the last year - if you don't already own it, you should. (JAW)

(GMM Records/POB 15234/Atlanta, GA 30333)

TEMPLARS/ WODNES : THEGNAS

7"ep

The TEMPLARS start this one off with another lo-fi, stripped down, SKREWDRIVER-influ-

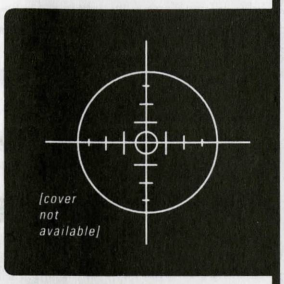
enced winner entitled "No Compromise". WODNES: THEGNAS shares members with the TEMPLARS, and in turn, sounds very similar. I think this record rocks. WODNES gets a bit metal-y on the guitar end, but overall, very highly recommended. (JAW)



(Haunted Town Records/ 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave. #169/ Chicago, IL 60647)

TRUST FUND BABIES
"Up To No Good" 7"

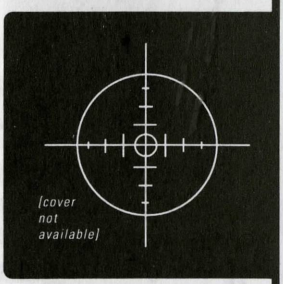
Another blast from one of the most consistent '77 power-punk labels, Radio Records. This is very reminisant of the BODIES, which if you know the connection is actually quite funny. Great poppy, lo-fi punk. Send this label all your money, and request one of everything. (BAM)



(Radio/PO Box 1452/Sonoma (Home of the Abominable Sonoman!) CA, 95476)

TURBO AC's
"Hit It Run/Acceleration" 7"

NY City greaser punks light it up with a full speed ahead rocker, backed with a heavy crunchy little number. A very solid sampling of this band's capabilities. Rock & Roll is fun, you should try some. (BAM)



(Into The Vortex/Fehrfeld 26/28203 Bremen/Germany)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Boycott Radical Records: A Label Sampler" CD



OK, this CD sampler starts off with a kickass BLANKS 77 song called "I Wanna Be A Punk". ROAD RAGE is up next, and they kinda sound like if SCREACHING WEASEL were Oi! or something...a bit poppy, but they're trying to be super tough - singing about bein' "the Boys". Not very exciting. Track three starts, and it's some horrible ska band called INSPECTER 7. It's all downhill from there, except for the tracks by THE CUFFS, and of course, BLANKS 77. My suggestion: skip this CD unless you're into modern-day ska crap, and track down the Radical Records releases (and others) by the aforementioned two bands. (JAW)

(Radical Records/77 Bleeker St.#C2-21/NYC, NY 10012)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Bulletproof Poems: The (Un)Authorized Dogs D'Amour Tribute Album"

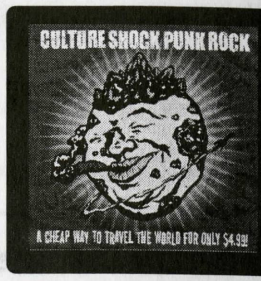


TRASH BRATS, AMERICAN HEARTBREAK, NEIL LAYTON, SOFA KINGS (from Hawaii!!) and the BLACK HALOS are among those who deliver the standout cuts that strike this last bandit as being particularly more committed or convincing-sounding than all the bands that appeared on whatever yesterday's tribute album was, but the DOGS D'AMOUR have always engendered that depth of passionate loyalty from misbegotten sauce kings and scallywags like you 'n' me...Here's to the reunion... (DJM)

(Desert Inn Records/Nick Barolo/Via Dotti 49/31100 Treviso/Italy)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Culture Shock Punk Rock" CD

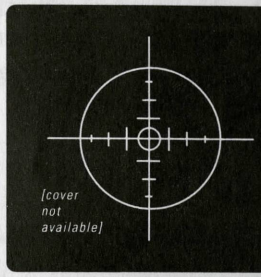
A real decent compilation of the modern sounds of today's punk rock. Mostly pop-punk, melodic hardcore and ska type stuff. And of course, just to prove that punk knows no boundaries and is indeed an international language, there are lots of tracks from bands from Japan, Australia, Canada, and even Switzerland. Some familiar names might include DIGGER, ALKALINE TRIO, MU330 and BLINDSPOT. It's one of them cheapo compilations...you can't really go wrong. (RK)



(Tomato Head Records/PO Box 61298/Sunnyvale, CA 94088)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Fuck You Up And Get High" 2x 7"

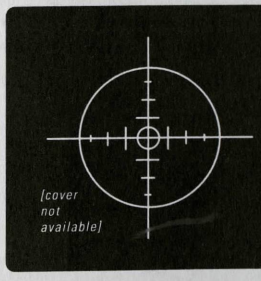
14 trashed-out punk bands try to out punk the punk kings with their own songs. 14 bands, 16 renditions of classic DWARVES songs. No big name bands here, but nonetheless great tracks from JOHNY MOTEL & THE FAST FUCKS, BUMP-N-UGLIES, HYBRID MUTANTS, and GC5 (amazing band). Major thumbs down to MR TWISTALS' weak ass version of "Back Seat Of My Car", and the double shot of unlistenable deathcore laid down by UNHOLY DEATH. (BAM)



(Transparent/6759 Transparent Dr./Clarkston, MI 48346)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Graveyard Drag Race"2X 7"

This Halloween-themed double 7" succeeds in spreading a creepy, eerie feeling over some of the best trashed-out rock and roll bands going right now. Ironically, in a symbolic passing of the torch, ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN get smoked by the other three, more dynamic bands. Amazing tracks from THE CANDY SNATCHERS and STREETWALKIN' CHEETAHS, and probably one of the best

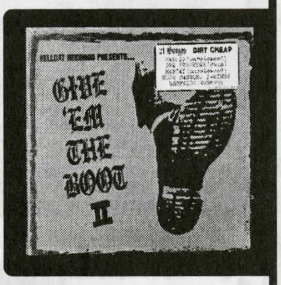


SHITLIST

While the theme's only good about once a year (even though in a perfect world, Halloween would happen every day!!), these are tracks that are good to rock your ass 365 days a year.

(REPTILIAN/403 S. BROADWAY/BALTIMORE, MD 21231)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Give Em The Boot II" CD



A new sampler from Hellcat Records, highlighting the rocksteady, ska, reggae and streetpunk on the label. Added enticements might be unreleased HEPCAT and RANCID, and a JOE STRUMMER demo, though he's neither punk nor rocksteady, nor reggae anymore. Difficult to describe. Bland world music perhaps. (RK)

(HELLCAT)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Grease: The Not So Original Soundtrack From The Motion Picture" CD



A stellar cast is unleashed on everyone's favorite musical. BORIS THE SPRINKLER, J-CHURCH, ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE, BLANKS 77, CONNIE DUNGS and DIRT BIKE ANNIE are some of the myriad of modern ensembles doing serious damage to this 70's classic. Some of us are old enough to have lived through the original! (RK)

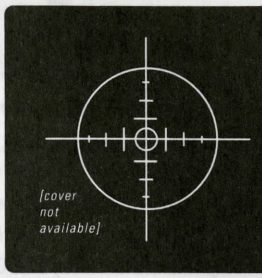
(DUMMYUP ENTERPRISES/PO BOX 642634/SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94164)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Horseshoes and Bar-B-Ques" CD

An eclectic mix of styles and genres, with a lot of them in the folkier indie-rock vein. Luminaries include the SANDYCOATES, TUCKER and the CABLES. Standout tracks for me were the garagier numbers provided by SUICIDE DOORS and the FITSNERS. (JC)

(11345/P.O. BOX 4948/BERKELEY, CA 94704)

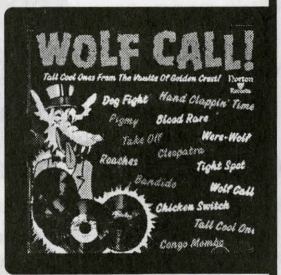
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Scene Killer, Vol. 2" CD



I think I like this one even better than the first. 30 blasts of in your face, working class punk rock. This definately has more of a classic feel to it with MENACE doing "C&A", The AUTHORITY! doing the POGUES' "If I Should Fall From Grace With God", DROPKICK MURPHYS doing STIFF LITTLE FINGERS' "Nobody's Hero" and there's even a NINE NINE NINE track! Other standout bands were the UNSEEN, ANTI-FLAG and the BOILS. Great compilation, I hope this is an ongoing series. (JC)

(OUTSIDER/P.O. BOX 92708/LONG BEACH, CA 90809)

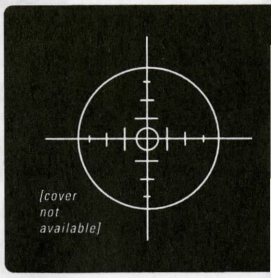
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Wolf Call, Tall Cool Ones From The Vaults of Golden Crest" CD



Starts off with a werewolf theme, but that gets dropped after the second track. From there on in, it's just great rock 'n' roll. Basically, this is the story of Golden Crest Records rock 'n' roll division. A label historically and commercially most well-known for putting out the first WAILERS records, including their watermark tune "Tall Cool One", this is a raucus collection of crazy a-sides and fabulous flips. Other stands are the MAD PLAIDS' "Blood Rare", MASKED MAN AND THE AGENTS' "Roaches" and WADE CURTISS AND HIS RYTHEM ROCKERS' "Rompin". Gravy tunes from lip to flip. (JC)

(NORTON RECORDS /P.O. BOX 646 COOPER STATION /NEW YORK, NY 10276)

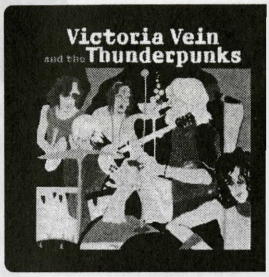
VICELORDS
"Rock-n-roll Epidemic" CD/EP



Oh Lordy! First track, "What Went Wrong" is a song about being a closeted drag queen - pretty cheesy. The second track is not much better. This is basically very guitar driven rock-punk, but more towards the metal edge - loads of solos, and what sounds like doubled-tracked screaming-type vocals. Pretty scary, predictable stuff here...and that's being nice. (JAW)

(THE VICELORDS/POB 2503/JAMAICA PLAIN, MA 02130)

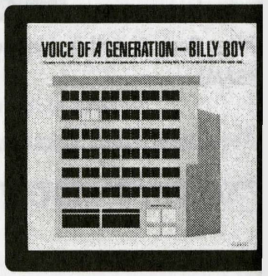
VICTORIA VEIN AND THE THUNDERPUNKS
"Rear Guard Action/Other Things" 7"



This is basically the rest of the story of the amazing DEBRIS album. V.V.+T.T.P. were the precursor band that featured two of the main DEBRIS guys. Great rock 'n' roll out of 1974 Oklahoma. Much more straightforward than the later band, they sound like LOU REED or the NEW YORK DOLLS. Thanks to Anorpheles records and their labours of love for getting these two cool records to a modern audience. (JC)

(ANOPHELES/P.O. BOX 170045/SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94117)

VOICE OF A GENERATION
"Billy-Boy" 7"

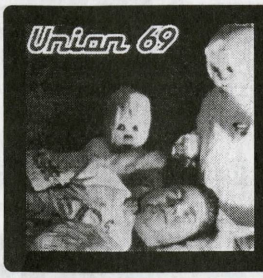


Attacking street-punk verses leading up to chanting SHAM 69-esque choruses. No wonder skinheads are always drinking, as anthems like this call for a trip to the pub. Title track taken from their new full-length on Side Kick Records (which rules by the way), followed by two unreleased tracks, and an unre-

leased demo version of 'Ultraspecial". Good shit!

(Knock-Out/Postfach 100716/46527 Dinslaken, Germany)

UNION 69
"Holiday 69" CD



This would be your typical Scandanavian rock band - heavy on the guitar edge, very "rawk", and riff oriented. Overall, these guys are pretty damn generic, plodding through one song to the next, on and on...and on...You've heard this before, and much better. It kinda sounds like they're trying to do some sort of UNION CARBIDE-type thing, but it's just refusing to happen. Anyhow, these guys would probably give those Sub Pop nerds a boner, but personally, my panties are still bone dry, and I'm still in need of some double r-to the muthafukkin'-r action. Boresville. (JAW)

(Bad Afro Records/Poste Restante/Frederiksberg Alle 6/DK-182046 Frederiksberg/Denmark)

WOHLSTANDSKINDER
"Delikatessen 500 sl" CD

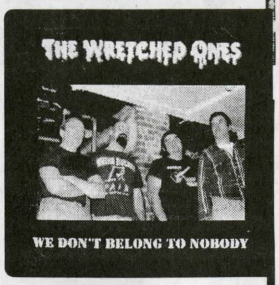


A German band, singing in German, which is a welcome relief in itself. They seem to mix equal parts So-Cal style melodic hardcore, with vigorous lashings of pop-laden ska, not unlike the early HIPPOS. And they do it all rather well. Any adventurous souls willing to cross the Atlantic for some fresh sounds should start here. (RK)

(Vitaminpillen Records/Lambertustrasse 20/ 52538 Selfkant-Hongen/Germany)

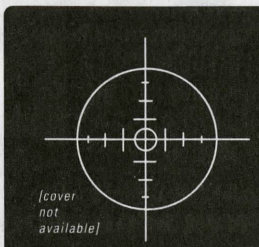
WRETCHED ONES
"We Don't Belong To Nobody" CD

The sleeve proclaims them as America's oldest Oi band. I can believe it. They certainly look pretty old. As befits gents of such advanced years, the music is at a more pedestrian pace. Still packs a reasonable punch, though there is only so much one can take of beer, drinking, hanging out with the lads, and getting another round in at the bar. (RK)



(Headache Records/PO Box 204/Midland Park, NJ 07432)

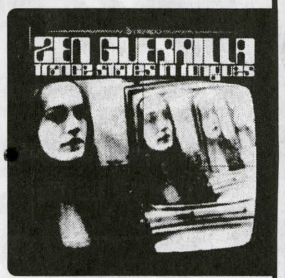
YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS
"Domination" LP



This is super-quick Oi! with tuff, raspy vocals. Great song titles like "P.B.R. Bootboys" and "Thugs Not Drugs". Wait - my favorite lyrics: "Our angry faces tell the truth, on my flight I'm gonna PIN YOUR TOOTH!" hehehheh. These boys are pretty funny despite the pseudo-patriotic crap like "Pride" , "Independence Day" and "United Skins". If you can take the lyrics with a grain of salt, then strap on your boots, and grab a six pack, 'cause the truth is that they do deliver the aggro goods. Overall, an all right effort from these East Coast Oi!-sters. (JAW)

(Vulture Rock/POB 40104/ABQ, NM 87196)

ZEN GUERRILLA
"Trance States In Tongues" CD



Great band that just gets better with every release. A sonic assault on the senses. Low rumbles that build into an absolutely satanic garage blitzkreig. Fantastic live band that catches most of their live energy in the recording, but you still need to see them live to get the full experience. (JC)

(Sub Pop/P.O. Box 20645/Seattle, WA 98102)

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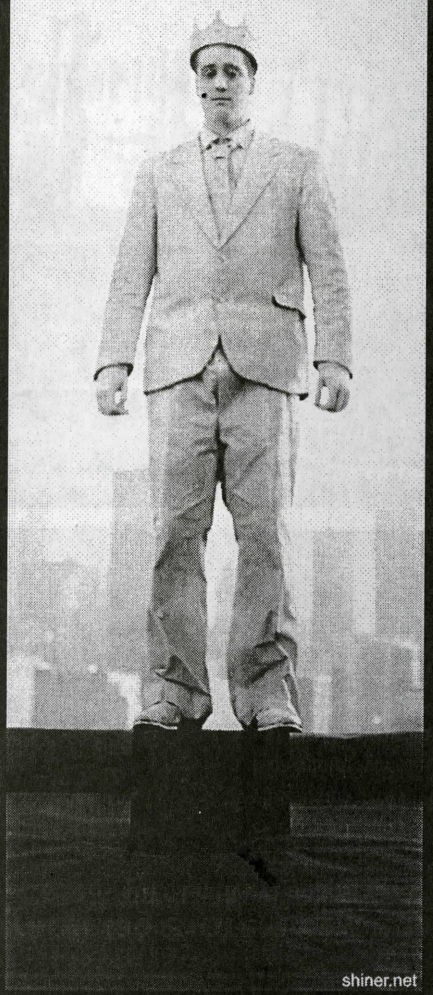

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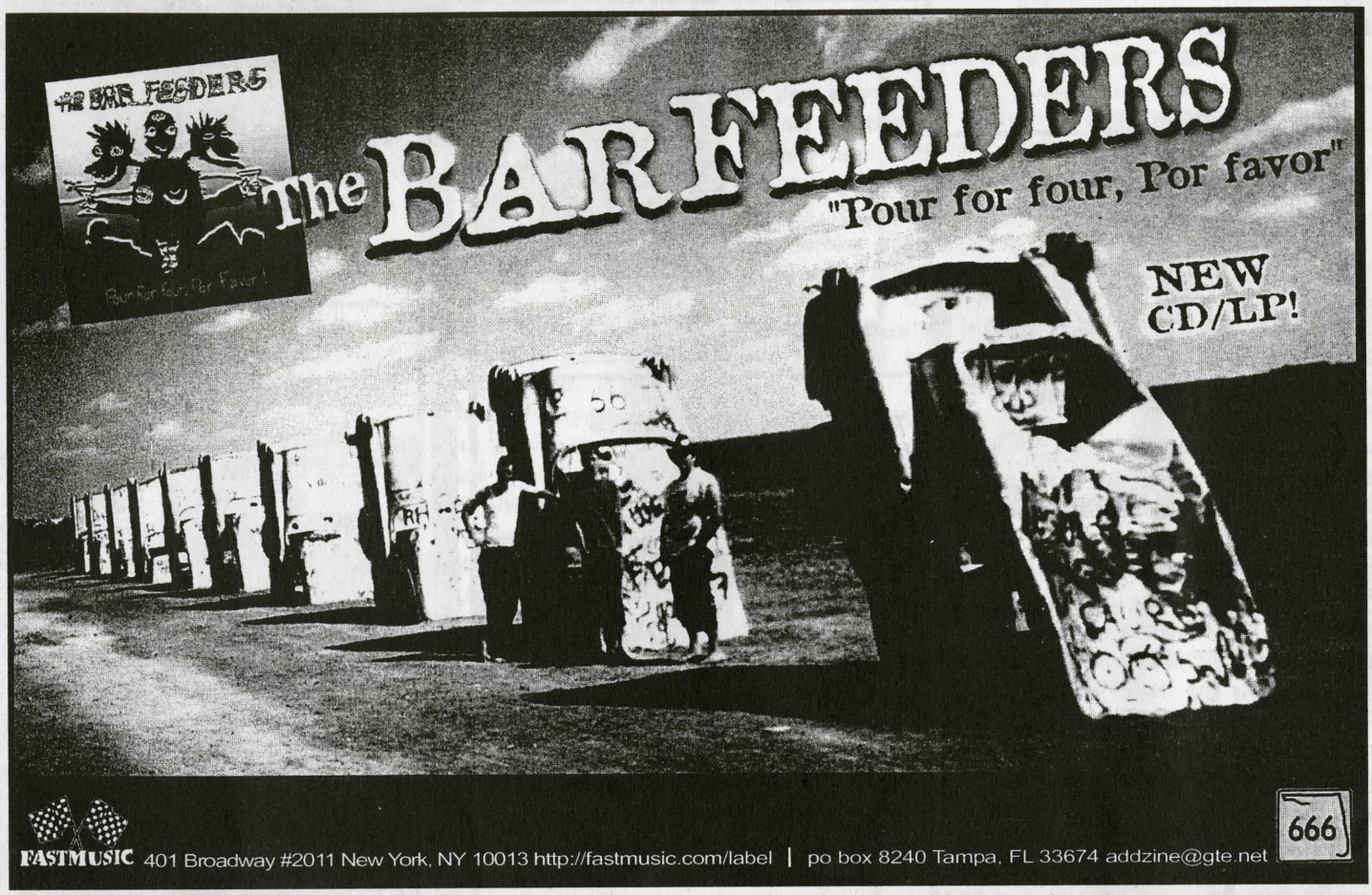

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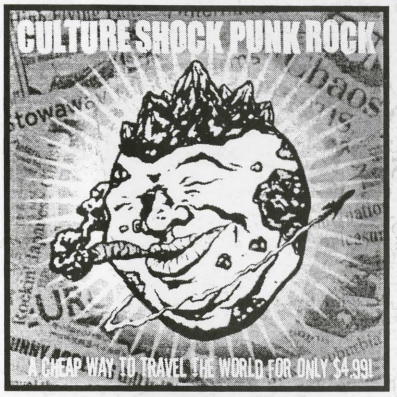

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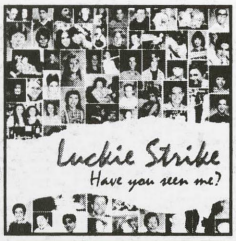

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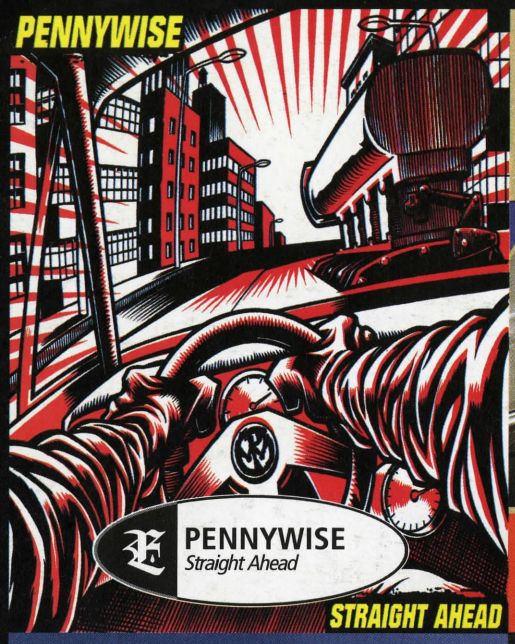

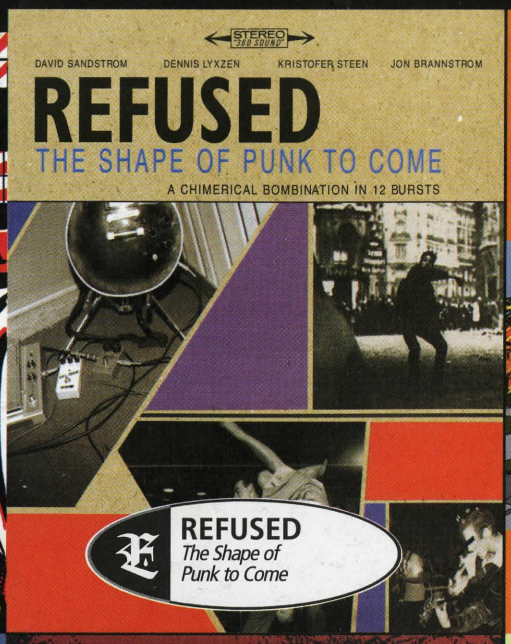

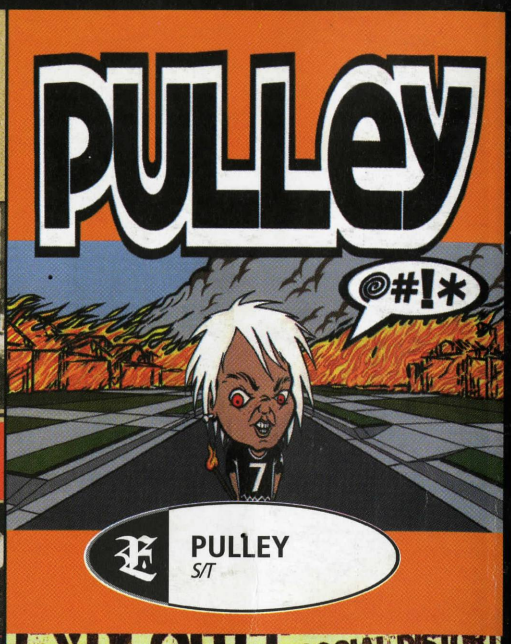

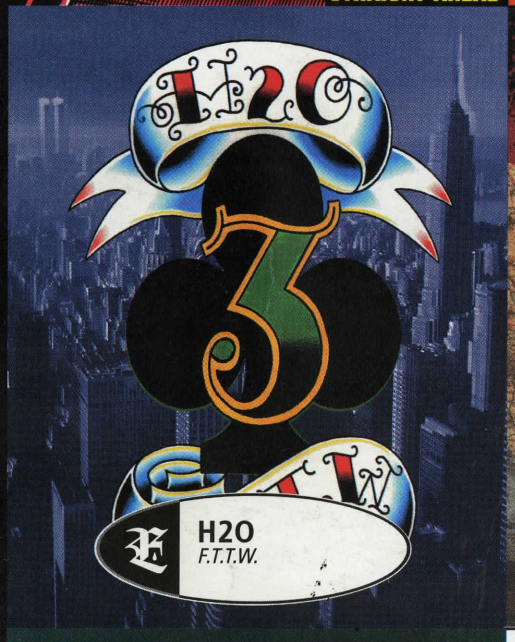

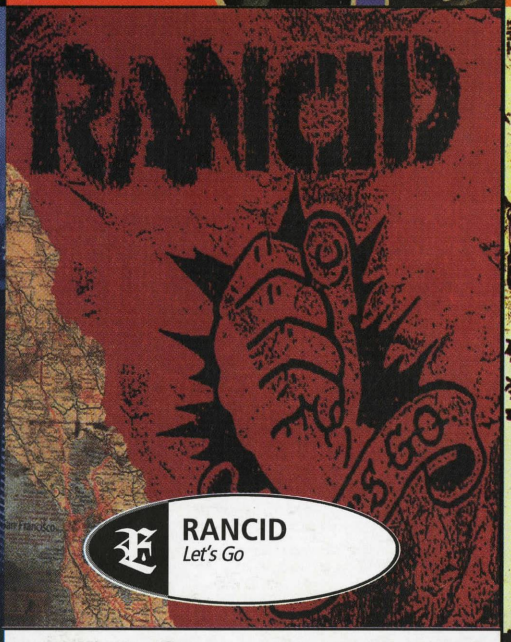

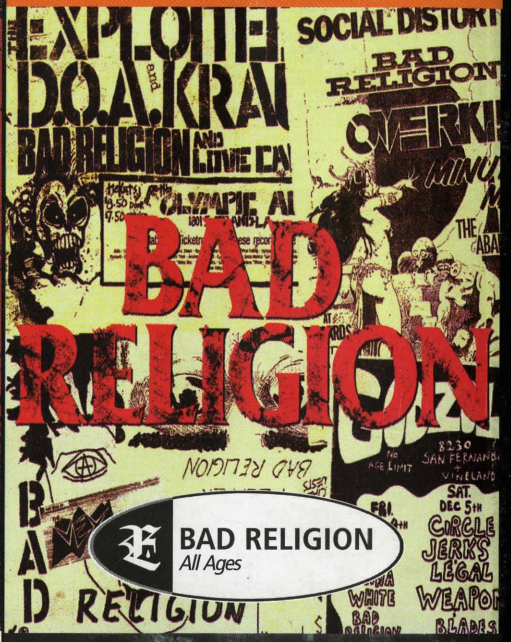

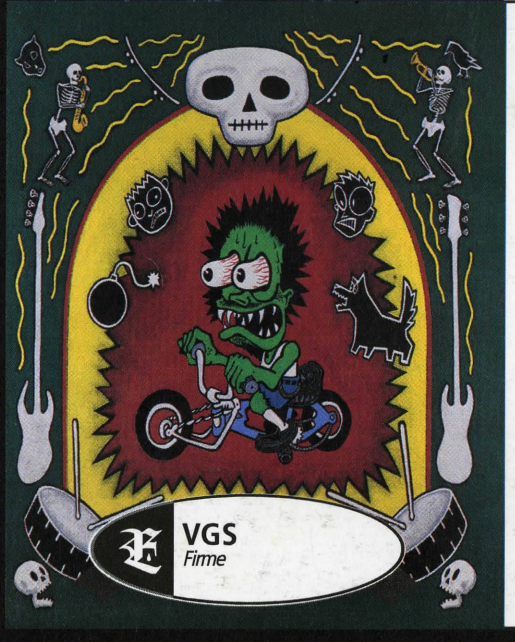

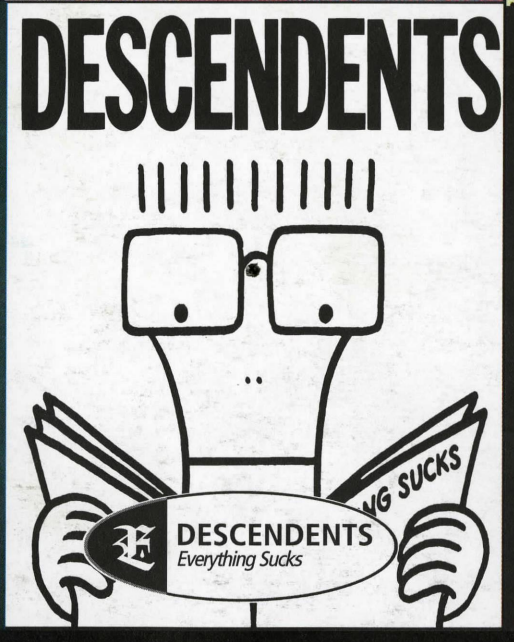

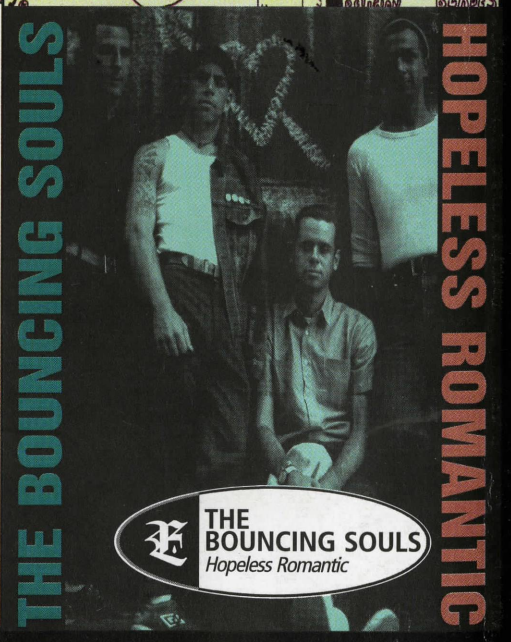

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