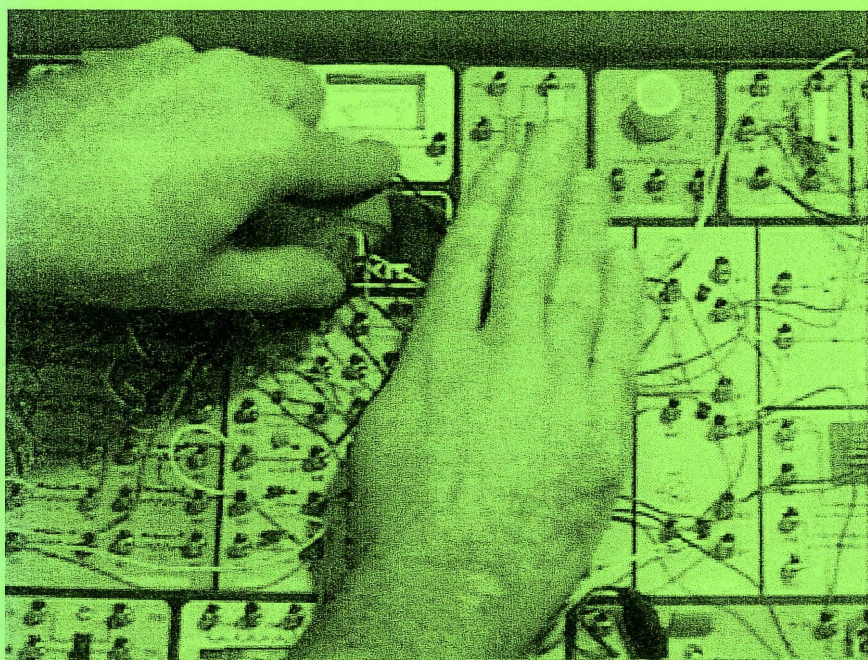


THE PORNOGRAPHIC FLABBERGASTED EMUS

by Wred Fright



Previously in The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus:

A college student named Ted Abel moves unexpectedly into a house occupied by other college students—Alexander Depot, Funnybear, and George Jah—who also happen to be in The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus, a rock and roll band. It isn't long before Ted joins the band, but he soon discovers it's not easy juggling rock and roll with school and work plus his girlfriend Flannery. And as usual he and the others are broke from living la vida indie rock and need a new housemate to help pay the rent. They're also still wrestling with the fallout from the departure of their old manager Il Duce who booked gigs and recording sessions for them that they now have to manage themselves. But things aren't all bad, for though it's still winter, the scent of spring is in the air . . .

Introduction

Welcome to the sixth and penultimate (love that word--"penultimate"!) installment of the serialized novel The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus! I hope you enjoy it! This issue includes three chapters—numbers 15, 16, and 17--as we near the end.

The fifth issue was released in June 2003 at the Allied Media Conference in Bowling Green, Ohio, and the response to it was swell. Thanks to everyone who read it!

I'll be touring to promote this issue on the Perpetual Motion Roadshow, along with Toronto rapper More Or Les and Chicago zinester Jessica Disobedience from September 17-23. The exact schedule isn't known yet but it looks like we'll be in Toronto the 17th., Montreal the 18th., Boston the 19th., New York City (Brooklyn) the 20th., Cleveland (Mac's Backs) the 21st., Cincinnati the 22nd., and Chicago the 23rd. If we'll be in your area, then please come on out as it should be a fun indie press show/reading/signing. There should be an additional local act on each night as well, adding to the festivities. You can find more information at the PMR website (www.nomediakings.net), courtesy of Jim Munroe and the other volunteers who work on this fine project.

Thanks to Michael Dee (mp_escuela@yahoo.com) for the great cover image! I'm responsible for everything else herein.

Cheers!
Wred Fright :)
August 2003

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P.S./ Issue # 7 should be out soon after this one--no 3 month wait!

#15

Tape Oops

b/w

#6 In Japan

"A sound recording we will make, the tape's rolling and we're rocking,
We don't want to do another take, so please don't come aknocking!"

Intro—Theodorable

My girlfriend Flannery and I are studying at the food court in the university union. People are eating, moving, talking, and generally causing one large ruckus around us. Surprisingly, it's a good place to study though because most of the noise just fades to a background hum once I get into reading, thinking, or writing and go into a Zen zone. It's a good thing too because we don't have many other choices for study locales. We used to study at one of our places but every time we did, we ended up doing it instead, and never got any work done, even in the afterglow. Midterms loom so we've decided to study in public from now on to discourage such nonscholarly intercourse. Our first attempt at the library was a failure because we ended up having sex in the stacks (a quiet corner on a quiet floor, the government documents section I think), so we've opted for the food court where we'd pretty much have to go at it on a table or chair in front of an entire crowd. So far, it seems to be working as a deterrence; there haven't even been any public displays of affection yet, much less groping. About the only downside to studying here is that people we know keep coming up to yap, but it's usually nice to see them anyway, and at least they don't tear us away from the books for as long as turning into the beast with two backs would.

I finish Othello and I'm reading some Hemingway short stories when George comes up. He's dressed as a pirate, complete with eye patch. "Hey," he says, "You need to help me hold up one of the lunch counters here."

"What?" I say, looking up from "The Killers."

"We need money to record. I just saw Karl Knipples. He says we're his meal ticket now that the record company is refusing to release the new Knibbled Knipple cd," George says.

"Why?"

"They want them to change their sound."

"What's he going to do?"

"Nothing."

"They'll kill him."

"I guess they will."

"He should get it remixed in Chicago."

"He said he's just glad he's going to be recording us so it'll take his mind off the military-entertainment complex b.s. I didn't tell him we were broke and couldn't pay him," George says.

"We'll dig up the money somewhere," I say, "Buck up, matey."

"That's why I want you to help me rob one of the fast food places here," George says, "You can be my getaway. I'll demand the money by waving a gun I've sculpted out of black rubber and then when they give me it I'll hop on your back and you run away. You're playing the role of my pirateship in case you were wondering."

"Uh, George, that's quite a plan, but stealing is wrong."

"They're all big corporations. They probably won't even miss it. I'll even let you pick your least favorite one to rob. The Bagel Boar? Nuclear Submission? Ho Chi Mama's Rice-A-Rama? Take your pick."

"George, would you want someone stealing from you?"

"No, but I'm a lowly buccaneer, not a big corporation. It's different."

"Only in scale. Whether it's a penny or a million, theft rots your soul and brings bad karma. 'Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not kill. And thou shalt not fuck with the Dudleys' as Il Duce's favorite wrestling tag team used to say."

"What if you were starving, and stealing some bread from a rich hoarder was your only way of surviving?" Flannery chimes in.

"Well, maybe then, but that's an extreme hypothetical. We're talking about knocking over a fast food joint to pay for a rock and roll record," I say.

"Flannery, if you dress in a parrot costume, then you could be my accomplice," George says, "You seem to understand the concept of the Marxist surplus value and how big corporations are bloodsucking thieves themselves. Really, I'm just stealing the money back that they stole from us originally through scamming taxpayers and exploiting workers. Plus, smashing windows to loot is a hoot! Argh!"

"I don't know, George. Count me out. Maybe we can do some white collar crime together sometime instead; you make more money that way and you usually don't get brutalized by the police afterwards either," Flannery suggests and goes back to reading her economics textbook.

"George, before you embark on your new career as a restaurant pirate roaming from town to town terrorizing teenagers and senior citizens making the minimum wage, I have some scholarship money I was saving in case I had to take summer classes, maybe we can use that to pay Karl with," I say.

"Yes," says George, "That's a good thing to do."

"I can't stand to think about you getting shot by a rent-a-cop. It's too damned awful."

"Well," says George, "You better not think about it."

Verse--Funnybear

There's a line outside the door to get into Vic's Happy Hour Club. After setting up Funnybear's drums so another band could use them, Funnybear stands on Funnybear's drumstool and flashes Funnybear's nipples at the people in the line outside through the front window but nobody throws any bead necklaces at Funnybear when they get inside.

They probably couldn't see Funnybear behind the Zurp beer sign in the window. Oh, well. It doesn't matter. Funnybear's feeling good. Tonight's a triumph. The bandana wearing boner in the funk rock band Spider Cider who works the door here told Vic that booking the Emus on a big night like Mardi Gras was a mistake and that no one would come, and Vic should have booked his band instead.

Vic told George that and George told Funnybear that so Funnybear has been delighting in antagonizing the babushka sporting doofus all night. Funnybear walks over to the edge of the stage and tells the doorman, "Boy, it sure is dead tonight, isn't it? Have you ever thought about booking shows here? It seems like you have a good handle on who draws, the pulse of the nation so on and so forth, and what the next big thing is."

Keeping his back to Funnybear, the doorman stamps someone else's hand with the underage rubber stamp and reaches for the i.d. of the next person in line, "If you guys hadn't turned it into a Fat Tuesday Fest, this place would be empty. They're here to see the other bands like Boy In Love, Anal Spikemobile, The Rhythm Method, CD Truth, Jericho Turnpike, DeNiro Youth, Fake, The Pirates Who Carve Out Your Eyes And Piss In The Sockets, and especially The Copulating Crabs, not you guys. You still suck. Whereas my band's been on tv in Argentina. We could probably sell out a stadium there by ourselves."

"Hey! Why don't we get high sometime and then we'll take a good three minute pop song and extend it into a twenty-minute jam where we all solo at the same time and drain all the life out of it and make sure no one ever wants to hear the song again?" Funnybear says, downing another cup of free draft beer and tossing the cup.

"Fuck you, Funnybear," the doorman says.

"Okay," Funnybear puts Funnybear's leg on the doorman's

shoulders and starts humping him in the back of his head. The crowd cheers.

The doorman brushes Funnybear's leg off. "I'm trying to work. Buzz off!"

"What's the next hit song on the radio you're going to take the chords and melody from and change the words and claim it's the new Spider Cider original?" Funnybear rubs Funnybear's belly with both hands, rears back, and chuckles.

"I quit!" the doorman says, gets out of his perch between the door and the stage, and pushes his way through the line to march forth home on March 4th.

Funnybear hops into his chair. The next person in line hands Funnybear an i.d. Funnybear hands it back. "I don't care how old you are. Just give me some money," Funnybear says, picking up the overage rubber stamp, "Anyone who lets me stamp their teats gets in free."

Vic takes over working the door himself soon after every other order for drinks at the bar involves flashing.

The bartenders boo, and give Funnybear free anything the rest of the night, not just the cheap draft beer.

Funnybear has a hangover all through Lent.

Chorus--Theodorable

I go see Dr. Late, my advisor, to see if I need to take summer classes or not. If I can graduate on time without them, then I can use the excess scholarship money for recording the Emus, and maybe putting out cds. Perhaps I can even start my own record label.

When I get to his office in the basement of the oldest remaining unrenovated building on campus where the administration houses things they don't care about but have to keep around for some reason like the Faculty Senate offices, The Center For Minority and Employee Owned Businesses, The University Press, frosh classrooms, and old English professors who like to swear during class, Dr. Late's face down on his desk, rubbing his temples and moaning. All I can see is his grey hair, wrinkled hands, and the top half of his back. His office is pretty much pile upon pile of books and papers with a walkway cleared to the desk. It smells like pipe tobacco and musty books inside, the same as him.

"Who is it?" he groans.

"Ted Abel," I say.

He looks up, verifies, and sputters, "Shut the door, please, then grab a seat."

I shut the door, and pick up some student papers off an old wooden chair.

Dr. Late stops moaning, picks his head up, leans back in his chair, opens a desk drawer, pulls out a small fan and ashtray, plugs the fan in, turns it on, pulls a pipe and some tobacco from his sweater pocket, packs the pipe, lights it, settles it in his mouth, and says, "Just throw those papers down on the floor. If the pages get mixed up, it could only make them better, I'm certain."

I spike the student papers on the floor along with my backpack and sit down. Dr. Late looks at me, "Ted, I'm glad it's you. I've been hiding from my colleagues all day. They keep wanting me to go to these stupid meetings and I've got a horrible hangover. Last time I went to one hungover, I said what I thought and cursed out the president of this fine institution and she's had it in for me ever since. I would have just cancelled my office hours today but they've been getting on me about that too so I've had to use the old migraine moan to keep them at bay. They don't want me smoking in here either. I only took this dungeon office in this old decrepit building because they still let us smoke in here. Now they're trying to not even let me do that. Why in the old days I used to smoke in class, and so did half the students. Hell, we used to drink in class. It lubricated learning. It's getting so you can't do a damn thing anymore, and they still expect you to be able to teach."

"That's too bad," I say, "I imagine a pipe in the classroom adds character to the class, or at least a distinctive aroma."

"Everything has to be the same anymore and safe for everybody, so we have to conduct all business at the level of the dumbest moron in the university. By the way, in case you were wondering, that's usually the vice president for academic affairs. Damn bureaucrats. The only good administrator is . . . well, never mind, there are no good ones. They're all despicable beancounter con artists," Dr. Late says, picking at the left elbow patch on his faded grey cardigan with his right hand, "But enough about them, what do you want? Please don't show me your penis again this time, I was only kidding last time with that dare when talking about Allen Ginsberg's naked poetry readings and you whipped it out in front of the entire class. Admittedly, it's a fine specimen, but keep it in your pants."

"Uh, I just want to make sure I'm on track for graduation," I say, taking out some papers from my backpack and passing them to Dr. Late.

Dr. Late puts on his reading glasses and looks the papers over, "Ted, you're not leaving me so soon, are you? Who will keep the rest of the class from lynching me when I crush their necessary illusions about society, not to mention their favorite authors?"

"Not just yet, but eventually. At the moment, I just must know if I

need to take any classes this summer in order to graduate on time next spring," I say, explaining about my scholarship account and recording with the band.

"No, it looks all right, you don't need any summer classes for graduation, but you should spend your money on something longer lasting than that rock and roll fad. Look into plastic surgery. Ted, you're so ugly I can barely look at you," Dr. Late says, staring at me and smiling, "I swear God invented blind women so ugly men like you could get laid."

"Uh, my girlfriend's not blind, she's just nearsighted," I say.

"Just nearsighted.' Oh, dear Ted, you're so funny, anybody else would be halfway to the dean to cry about insensitivity and discrimination by now. Everybody's so uptight nowadays. You can't tease or joke or even talk about anything. Higher education has more blasphemies than the monastery I used to be in," Dr. Late says, breaking into his native Southern drawl.

"That's why I want you on my thesis committee, all I have to do is swear in my papers and you give me an 'A,'" I say, "I'll bring the form next time I come by."

"As long as I don't ever have to see your genitalia again, I'll sign any form you want," Dr. Late says, pointing the back of his pipe at me, "And I know you just did that so I couldn't call you a hermaphrodite anymore, you might as well admit it!"

Verse--George Jah

I shake the middle-aged guy in jeans and a dirty red flannel shirt and wake him up to Van Gogh Gogh, "Barry! Get up!"

He rolls off the couch, his combover unfurled, and jumps up, "What?! What?!"

"You fell asleep," I say, imagining myself as Picasso and Barry as a Cubist painting, balding but the remaining hair long, "Aren't you going to finish your sculpture?"

It's 3 a.m. and I'm at the sculpture studio, putting the last touches on my latest piece, a giant metal guitar pick. Barry Cary is an older guy who's come back to school and is in my sculpture class with Professor O'Please.

"Oh," Barry says, and sits on the couch with his head in his hands, "No, George, I'm going to bed."

"Here?" I say, as Duchamp would, "Aren't you going to go home?"

Barry sighs, "My wife kicked me out, George, I've got nowhere else to go."

"How can you sleep here?" I say, brandishing a Da Vinci smile,

looking around at people sanding, welding, and sawing at various machines around the studio, trying to finish their projects before the midterm critique at the end of the week.

"It's a habit acquired out of necessity," Barry says, laying down on the couch again.

"Hey, we need a new roommate at the house, why don't you come live with me and my band?" I say, Koonslike.

"A band?" Barry says, "Do you really think that'd be any quieter?"

"We don't practice at 3 in the morning, Barry, the persistence of lobster phones," I say, Dalimode.

"Well, when can I move in?" he says.

"Tonight," I say, Michelangeloesque, "I'm almost done with my sculpture."

"Oh, yeah! That's right!" he says, enthusiastically, "When are you going to build the giant guitar?"

A giant guitar! That's brilliant! And then a giant amp! And then a giant bass! A giant drum set! This could be a whole new series! And I was just trying to use up some scrap metal with this pick piece because I'm saving money for recording. "Hey, you wanna be my new personal assistant?" I say, Segalistically, "None of the other ones understood art."

"Are you saying I don't understand art?" Barry says, looking hurt.

Oh, shinizzle, I forgot he's having a midlife crisis and takes everything the wrong way. "No, no, you do, that's why I think you'd be better at it than they were," I say, all Holzerific.

Barry smiles, "Thanks, I need a job, how much does it pay?"

"It doesn't but you can't quantify experience, Barry," I say Basquiaty, then add Paikly, "Maybe, I can give you a kickback on the rent."

Someone in the back of the studio starts hammering on a metal sheet. "Okay," Barry shouts, "As long as you also give me free drinks at the bar when you're working."

"Actually, we need a new bouncer to work the door, so maybe I can get you a paying job," I shout, ala Munch.

The hammering stops.

"Wow, that'd be great, thanks George!" Barry says, standing up, "I've been trying to get back on my feet again. Did I ever tell you I was in a band when I was your age? We were big in Sweden."

"Really? That's cool," I say, Warholian.

"Yeah, but then I got married and had to quit the band and

school. I always wanted to be an artist," Barry says, starting to tear up.

"It's never too late to be what you might have been," I say, using the George Eliot quote Ted always says when he's procrastinating on writing a paper, tossing it in the conversation like a Pollock splatter.

"Yeah, but it's always too early to stop being what you once were," Barry says.

Chorus--Theodorable

We're playing at The Antarctica Ice Cream, a bar that serves stuff like beer slushies, vodka popsicles, and rum ice cream sundaes. Business was booming this summer, but fell off in the winter so they've decided to have bands to get people in again. Il Duce booked us this gig. Unfortunately with Duce out west and not keeping tabs on things, the bar booked some other bands for the evening since "We weren't sure you were still playing." They could have just called us and found out that yes, we were indeed still playing, but of course, as is usual for bars, the person who books bands is a dimwit and didn't think of that. So now we have to wait until some horrid rap metal bands are done playing, and the rap metal bands think we're jumping on their bill and not the other way around so they make us play last. The first one, Vehicular Vomiticide, takes forever to set up and as part of their allure duct tape swastikas on the floor. Look, maybe it was punk at one time to flirt with Nazi imagery, but it was probably dumb then too. It's certainly dumb now. Nazism was a bad idea and Nazis, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, are creeps. No, that's not ironic. I mean it. Me, prejudiced against Nazism and other evil philosophies? Guilty As Charged. Right On Too. Not surprisingly, the band is awful. I'd say get them off the stage except at The Ice Cream there's no stage, they just push the pool table over and bands play on the floor. So get them off the floor.

Vehicular Vomiticide finally dribble to an end after attempting ten times to play a song they obviously don't know. Uh, ever heard of practice, guys? Sadly, the next band is even worse. Dragondyck are a bunch of old guys from Akron, but unlike The So, these guys seem to have gotten worse with age. They're lousy. They sound like a 1983 hair metal band, but instead of sticking to what they know how to do, which might make them tolerable in a kitschy way, they try to update their sound "for the kids" by rapping their lyrics and having their rhythmically challenged drummer do breakbeat breakdowns, a vile combination which makes the music utterly wretched. In addition, they look horrible because they still dress in tight spandex pants and jean jackets, and they must be the same spandex pants and

jean jackets these guys wore in high school because they don't fit anymore so tattooed flesh is bulging everywhere in unseemly fashions. Disgusting! They're also obnoxious between songs, claiming they have the number 6 album in Japan and we the audience are so lucky to get to see them in a small venue, since they usually play stadiums overseas, not small ice cream bars. After they say this, Funnybear borrows Alexander's lighter, lights it, and waves it in the air during the remainder of their set. Alexander says that Funnybear owes him some lighter fluid now. That's about the only amusing thing that happens during Dragondyck's set though. As my grandmother liked to say, may this band melt like the snows of March. That's a bit unkind but I don't think you can help how you feel. You can only control how you act, and though it's a struggle, I am polite to Dragondyck when they're finally done.

But perversely, supporting the claim that no act of kindness however small goes unpunished, Dragondyck doesn't return the favor, leaving as soon as they're done with their set instead of sticking around for the rest of the show. Worse, they take the public address system, which apparently is theirs, not The Ice Cream's, home with them. On their way out the door, the lead singer tells me, "Sorry, man, I gotta get up for fucking work at six in the morning. I can't stay out any later or my old lady will kick my ass. Plus I can't miss work. I got to pay child support to my first two wives for our brats."

So we have to play an instrumental set at first since there's no p.a. or microphone for vocals. Fortunately, our new roommate Barry runs back to the house and gets our microphone and we juryrig something together so the vocals come out of one of the speakers at The Ice Cream. People do come see us though, a lot of them went down The Trough or The Toon Tavern to drink while Dragondyck was playing, so they're all drunk when they come back and they dance.

But then some of Dragondyck's pals were moshing to them and Dragondyck's awful, so I'm wondering if we're deluding ourselves. Maybe we shouldn't even bother to record. Who'll want to remember this music years from now anyway? After we're done playing, I'm all depressed so I blabber to our pal Leroy Shell of Whore 54, Where Are You?, er, now My Mother, The Toothbrush, about how Il Duce booked this session, otherwise we'd be recording with him again, and how I'm not even sure we should bother recording at all with anybody.

MIDDLE EIGHT--LEROY SHELL

**TED, IT DON'T MATTER WHAT I THINK,
IT DOES MATTER THOUGH WHAT YOU THINK.**

**YOU'LL WANT TO HEAR THESE SOUNDS AGAIN.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE, I DON'T KNOW WHEN,
ALL I KNOW IS THAT YES, YOU WILL,
YOU'LL WANT TO REMEMBER THIS STILL.
A GOOD DOCUMENT OF THESE DAYS,
WILL TAKE YOU BACK HERE AS IT PLAYS.**

Verse--Alexander Depot

"All right, who called Ethiopia?" I say, pointing to the phone bill posted on the fridge.

"Not me," Bear says, waiting near the stove for his peas to finish cooking.

"Are you sure you didn't do it while you were drunk?" I say, leering, furious at having to pay an exorbitant phone bill.

"Geez," Bear says, "Down, boy, it's just a phone bill, it's just money."

"You wouldn't say that if it was in your name," I say.

I don't think Bear's had a job in his life. No wonder money doesn't mean anything to him. Well, it does mean something to me. I can translate dollars and cents into hours and days of my life I've given up to work. I know its value.

"So just don't pay it," Bear says, turning off the stove and dumping the water from the pan into the sink.

"Not pay it!" I explode, "So my credit rating turns to shit because someone in this house won't take responsibility for his actions? Look, there's phone calls to Somalia, and phone sex lines! Why should I have to pay for someone else's fun?"

"It wasn't me!" Bear says and walks out of the kitchen, pouring hot sauce into the pan of peas as he goes.

I grab the phone bill and follow Bear out haranguing about it until he goes upstairs and locks himself in his room. Jah comes out of his room and says, "Calm down, you're going to scare Barry away. He just moved in. You don't want him to think that we get in fights every month when the utility bills show up."

"We do get in fights every month when the utility bills show up! But Barry's the only one in this house who has nothing to worry about," I say, "You on the other hand may be the guy who dialed up 1-900-Bondage Bingo! You did break up with your girlfriend about the date of the call. Feeling a little lonely in the night, Jah?"

"No, I didn't and I'm not talking to you anymore until you try a little tenderness in your tirade parade," Jah sniffs and goes inside his room, closing the door calmly but forcefully.

"That's right, you can be calm, the phone company isn't going to make you declare bankruptcy!" I yell.

Abel and Flannery pop their heads out of his room. I look at them and say, "Well, at least I know you guys probably didn't call the sex lines, but how about Albania? Got any relatives there, Flannery?"

Abel says, "Alexander, chill out! Those are all Il Duce calls. I remember him calling some of those places after he got done helping me clean the house for my first date with Flannery."

"Oh, how sweet, you cleaned the house for me," Flannery says, putting her arm around him.

Abel looks at her, "I remember everything about our first date, darling."

Oh, yak. Thankfully, they shut the door and go snog or shag or something so I don't have to listen to any more of their lovey-dovey talk. I'll just pretend the thumping coming any second now is Bear playing the drums.

I head downstairs and call the phone company. I engage in that shadowy area between law and justice. "Hello," I say, "I'd like to transfer the phone bill from my roommate's name into mine. His name is Alexander Depot. My name? Il Duce. That's right, you heard correctly. I-L is how you spell my first name . . ."

Note to self: Don't scream at the operator.

Chorus—Theodorable

Recording with Karl Knipples is different from recording with Leroy Shell. Leroy's all pretty much plug in and go even though he comes to your house whereas Karl takes an hour to set up a single microphone on the drums and we're in his home studio. I think Karl spends longer on each mike than he does on his hair, and that's impressive. First he puts the mike in position and has Funnybear hit the drum it's near for awhile while he tests the recording level, then if Karl doesn't like the level he's getting he stands near the mike and looks at it stroking his chin and fixing his little round glasses. Then just when you think he's turned from animal to plant or to even mineral he moves the mike like an inch and has Funnybear hit the drum again. This goes on again and again until he gets a recording level he likes. It takes forever.

Meanwhile, the rest of us are just eating chocolate, on the advice of Zand from the Grasshopper, who said, "Make sure to eat plenty of chocolate while you record." Of course, Zand is cryptic (Alexander says senile) and doesn't tell us why, but we follow the man's advice anyway. And his advice is good for keeping our energy level up, but the sugar is making us more impatient than we normally would be. Somewhere in the third hour of drum miking, Alexander says, "Just stick the mike up Bear's ass, that should get a good reading."

Karl chuckles the way someone does when he or she really doesn't think the joke is funny but wants to be nice and acknowledge the effort at levity. Alexander's comment does spur Karl into speeding up though. The very next second, Karl moves the boom mike for the toms and cymbals a centimeter to the left, instead of staring at it for another ten minutes.

Finally, Karl gets all the mikes set up and all the levels where he wants them and we're ready to start playing. He's going to record us playing live although he says everything but the drums will probably be scratch, which apparently means tracks that won't be in the final mix.

George says, "Then why are we all fucking here? I could have slept in while the little drummer boy got his blood pressure checked."

Karl calls George, "Unprofessional," and that quiets him up. It's rare to see George intimidated into silence but the recording sciences must mystify him too. He isn't used to a quiet studio, that's for sure. Everytime I go into that sculpture studio of his and Barry's, I fear for my life with all the people who don't know how to use power tools using them anyway.

Distracting me from a daydream nightmare involving myself and a power drill, Karl then goes on to explain that we'll build up a song recording track by track after the basic drums are laid at the foundation. This seems sort of bizarre to me since he's recording a band, not making an audio collage, but I don't own thousands of dollars of recording equipment so I keep my piehole shut.

When we finally do start playing live, it's very strange because none of us can see one another. Karl's set up wooden and styrofoam baffles around each of us to isolate the sound for the mikes so there's no bleedthrough.

Funnybear says real rock and roll needs some blood though so Karl says Funnybear can bleed on the master recording later if he wants.

It takes us a while to get going because without being able to see one another, it's hard to be tight. I never realized how much we relied on visual cues to stay together. But we seem to finally get used to it; I even enjoy making weird faces while I sing at the wall.

At first, Karl interrupts us to do additional takes but after a bit,

he just lets the tape roll and us rock. We play about every song we know, ending with my latest, "Reading In Public Places." On this one, after about seven false starts because somebody quits playing and tells the rest of the band to stop, usually George messing up the bassline, playing the verse instead of the chorus, or me forgetting the words, Karl says profoundly, "I'm not quite sure why you want to record a song you don't know. Is this some sort of Dadaist experiment?"

Uh, o.k., we'll skip that one.

We call it a day and Karl burns a cd-r for us to take home and listen to while we pack up. He says he'll call us next week and let us know whether to show up again Saturday or Sunday.

We give him some cash, mostly mine, for his efforts, which he accepts, but he declines our offer to take him out for a pizza. He says nine hours in one room with us is enough for one day.

We all smirk like Karl. We'd be too tired to laugh even if it was humorous.

Coda--Theodorable

We skip going out for a pizza and go home and order a delivery instead. We all gather around the living room stereo and listen to the recording, talking and pointing out things to one another. We play it again and again and again, finally just leaving it on repeat until these versions are burned into our heads, every bum note, every perfect stop on a dime, every lyric never heard before, every improvised solo. We all agree, it's a sound recording. George even thinks it can get top twenty in Australia as it is.

When we play it for our friends, they like it too, although the third time I play it while Flannery and I make love, she says, "Can't we listen to something else instead once in a while?"

I reluctantly agree and put on The Young Marble Giants.

Next time we study in the university union food court though, I listen to the Emus on headphones. If I was a pirate, our recording would be my buried treasure. My audio aural booty beauty. Something that never existed before but now means the world to me. I just hope that when we send out our message in a bottle it doesn't get lost at sea. Or in the back of my closet.

#16
Spring Sprang Sprung
b/w
Droll Drool

"Time to take a break before you explode,
Flowers start to bloom as you hit the road!"

Intro--Alexander Depot

Seven in the morning and I'm mainlining coffee to stay awake as I drive through downtown Rock on my way to go studentteach. At a redlight, one of the many college students stumbling out of bars at this hour crosses in front of me and pukes in the middle of the street. Her friends help her get out of the road before the light turns green. Ah, Saint Patrick's Day in a university town, you just have to love it!

Last year that would have been me, up at five in the morning for a little kegs and eggs action, getting drunk and obnoxious before I'd normally even be awake, and laughing hysterically every time Bear asked a female to "drive the snake out of my pants, baby!"

My, how things have changed. A year ago, I would have found all that terribly amusing. Now I'm the responsible adult, tsk-tsking at the drunken kiddies. And it's not just the shirt and tie and having to show up at work early (though I don't get paid at this apprenticeship phase of my career I'm sad to say) because I don't think I'd want to do that again even if I could. I mean I'm glad I did it but the little clock inside my skull tells me it's time to move on to another part of my life.

At school all day I'm thinking about this, more than I am about The Problems Of Democracy or A.P. History. I look at my students and think that used to be me and now I'm on the other side of the classroom (putting aside for a moment my radical notion that maybe there shouldn't be sides in a classroom and challenging the teacher-student boundary--my assigned teacher Mr. Gore would scoff at that anyway, saying, "That educational theorist hasn't been in a real school lately, let me tell you, Alex!"). Indeed, it's kind of fun to watch my students go through all the high school angst and whatnot but been there, done that as the pundits

on tv are fond of saying. And though I'm not entirely sure I want to be in Mr. Gore's position for the rest of my life either, I know that given the choice between the two, it's no contest. I relate to him far more than them now.

I'm not completely an old fogey though. After school and writing up my observation report and lesson plan, I go out with Abel to see a Pogues cover band, Shane's Missing Teeth, at The Grasshopper. I thought they'd be local but they actually tour doing this so we're lucky to be seeing them on St. Patty's. The Grasshopper is packed too so they don't seem to notice that they aren't playing a city with a large Irish population like Boston, or New York. Of course that's probably why they're here in the first place. The real Pogues and other big Irish acts are probably in those cities tonight.

I open another Guinness and we're drinking and singing along. Abel says, "Hey! We're going to be on the road soon like these guys! Won't that be cool?"

Instinct answers, "No, probably not, but I'll do it anyway."

Abel looks confused. I lift my glass, "May the road rise with you! Us, I mean!"

Note to self: Don't eat the yellow snow, and don't drink the green beer.

Verse--Theodorable

I start to make a website for the band and put it on the server space the university generously provides for students. On it, I keep a tour diary. The first entry reads:

<html>

<head>

<title>The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus Tour Diary</title>

</head>

<body>

<p>Day: One

<p>Location: Rock, Ohio (The Grasshopper)

<p>With: The Cheating Hussies and Shang Tsang

<p>Wow! What a fun show, and a great way to kick off our spring break tour! We played our hometown the day before Roll State let out for spring break, and our pal Nigel got so excited during our performance that he threw his underwear on stage.

<p>Unfortunately, he was still wearing them at the time!

<p>Ha, ha!

<p>No, seriously, he dug them out of his dirty laundry just for the occasion so we appreciated the gesture. Unfortunately, his white briefs didn't fit any of us and had skidmarks to boot so we threw them back.

<p>Ha, ha!

<p>Wow! I've never written a tour diary before.

<p>Of course I've never been on tour before!

<p>Ha, ha!

<p>Uh.

<p>Anyway it was fun and we set up a merchandise table for the first time. We sold t-shirts we had bought at the thrift store and then had written "The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus" on them with a magic marker. People really liked them. They especially liked the ones Funnybear drew little cartoon Emus on. The one he drew with stick figures having sex was a big hit too. Spring must be in the air as well as on the calendar. We also had some tapes of our latest recordings. We're not done yet because the guy who's recording us (who shall remain nameless upon his request) keeps having to postpone our next session due to his busy schedule, but I dubbed off cassettes of what we've done so far on my boombox all week for our rabid fans who can't wait!

<p>We sold three and gave away twelve!

<p>Big thanks to Barry, our roadie, for humanning the merch table for us. He used to be a used car salesman so he knows how to hawk product!

<p>Free product anyway! He gave away all the buttons we had made for the entire tour in one night. Way to go Barry! Hope he enjoys working the button machine between our shows in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and New York!

<p>Ha, ha!

<p>Next stop: Cleveland!

</body>

</html>

Chorus--Alexander Depot

I ride with Abel to our next show in Cleveland and when I fall asleep he somehow gets us lost. He wakes me up in some neighborhood with all the locals staring at us like we just landed in a flying saucer instead of an economy car. I tell him to just keep moving but we keep running into dead ends where the railroads and interstates cut up the city. We eventually end up downtown by the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame And Museum because I tell him to aim for Lake Erie ("When the car starts filling up with water, put it in reverse"), and he says, "O.k., I know where to go now."

Abel looks at the Rock Hall as we drive past and says, "Wow! Do you think we'll ever be in there?"

"Well, if we pay the admission fee, they might let us in," I say drollily, trying not to drool on myself because I'm falling asleep again.

He wakes me up at the place we're playing, some DIY joint called The Spelling Bee's Knees. A collective of punk and indie kids have rented out an old ethnic social club on the West Side in a neighborhood that's seen better days. I find the least disgusting couch inside and fall asleep again. And to think, I used to be a night owl.

I wake up when the bands start playing. The Stain play first, Toledo hardcore. I go across the street to the gas station and buy some coffee to wake my ass up. I must have drooled on myself a lot during my nap because the middle eastern proprietor slides my change back across the counter rather than risk touching my hand by giving it to me. Um, o.k. The neighborhood must not be that bad though because he's not behind bulletproof glass. That's good, the smell coming from all the crust punks gathered in one place is frighteningly enough to deal with at the moment.

I go back across the street and we play. Bear's so drunk that he ends the set by kicking over his drumset. He almost takes my keyboard with it but I hang onto it until he's done thrashing around. Jah's amp isn't so lucky and tumbles over to the floor. I guess they think it's cool to destroy things here because that gets the loudest applause of the evening.

The amp's all right but Bear slobbers apologies to Jah the rest of the night before passing out around his latest forty-ouncer in the corner. I'm sitting nearby when the woman from the band after us, Assmeat Buffet, comes up and says, "What's wrong with him?"

"Nothing, he's just the larger version of the toy monkey drummer. We turned him off to save on the batteries," I say deadpan.

"Can I set him on fire?" she says, pulling out a lighter.

"No, we still need him for the rest of the tour," I say, scratching my head.

She waves over one of her bandmates, shaved head guy.

"Hey," she says, "Let's set this freak on fire."

Shaved head guy says, "Why?"

"I don't know. I'm bored," crazy woman says.

"I guess, if that's what you want to do," shaved head guy says and walks away.

Crazy woman lights her lighter. I blow it out.

"Hey!" she says, "No fair!"

She lights it again and I blow it out again. I pull out a ciggie. "Got a light?" I say.

"No," she says and walks away.

I pull out my own lighter and light up. I don't set Bear on fire. I just use him as my ashtray and watch the last band, UmClunk!

Note to self: Cleveland rocks all right, the rocks of choice being crack rocks in my estimation. Next time advise crazy woman to go set the Cuyahoga River on fire again next time she wants to see something burn.

Verse--Funnybear

Funnybear likes spring break. College would be heaven if every week was like spring break. But no, they have to load one up with classes and tests and papers all the other weeks. Funnybear says fuck that!

Hmm . . . if Funnybear quit going to class, every week would be like spring break. A sillyogism:

There are no classes on spring break.

Spring break is eternal.

Therefore Funnybear never has to go to class again.

This seems an infallible piece of reasoning. And if Funnybear's spring break never ends, Funnybear never has to go on daylight savings time again too.

Funnybear hates daylight savings time. If some farmer or whoever wants to get up early, by all means, be Funnybear's guest. But why should the rest of society have to conform to an insane morning person's schedule?

Funnybear tells Barry, Funnybear's new housemate this, and Barry agrees, as Funnybear and he sit on the couch watching daytime television. Funnybear's band being the only band in the world "on tour" that spends most of their time at home.

At least Funnybear's band finally has a roadie. Funnybear asks Barry to change the channel. Barry passes Funnybear the remote control. Funnybear passes it back, "Oh, no, son, that's part of your job description while we're touring."

"We don't tour again until this weekend Funnybear," Barry says, flipping through the channels.

"Oh, no, son, you're mistaken. Alexander may have to student teach over break and we may have to wait for him, but we're still technically on our spring break tour, which means you're still technically my roadie, which means you technically have to go find me a groupie tonight," Funnybear says.

Barry laughs, "I'll give you the phone number of my ex. She's a trumpet strumpet."

"Stop there! Breaking music news on the tv!" Funnybear says, pointing to the television.

Barry goes back to The Rock and Roll Report. A famous rock star, Job, has spontaneously combusted backstage at his concert last night. "I bet the CIA or the FBI did him in because he was getting too radical," Barry says, "They did that to a lot of my heroes when I was growing up, giving Bob Marley cancer, drowning Jim Morrison, poisoning Janis Joplin, having a mind-control experiment shoot John Lennon. Some of them they didn't even let us know they died; they just replaced them with android zombies. That's why their later music is so bad."

"Nah, I bet Job's spontaneous combustion was a suicide. I'd kill myself if I made that sort of top forty pablum," Funnybear says, "Actually, on second thought, I'd never kill myself, so if they ever say it was a suicide, I was framed by a lazy coroner. Or the government or big business. Life's too sweet. And if it ever starts stinking, I'll just go become a monk or something. Dying's easy, living takes some wits."

An onscene reporter interviews a drugged out woman, "Like we were backstage, and then poof! he just burst into flame. It was heavy, yo."

"Hey! That broad's in the band you guys played with the other night, what's their name? Assmeat Buffet!" Barry yells and almost falls off the couch from excitement.

"Really?" Funnybear says, "I don't remember too much about that show."

"Yeah, I made out with her in the bathroom. She said they were going to be opening for a big act soon," Barry says.

"Was she into it, man?" Funnybear says, "I like it when they're into it."

"Sshhhh!" Barry says.

Back at the studio, the newscoldude anchor says, "Job's ashes blew away, but many of his fans report being mysteriously showered in ash later that evening."

The camera cuts to a fan wearing a Job t-shirt, the caption of which

reads "Job with a long 'o,' not like 'job' as in 'get a job,' now go get a job so you can afford to go see Job!" The fan is holding an ashtray with some ash in it. "It's him!" says the fan, "This is cooler than the concert t-shirt, not to mention a lot cheaper!"

The newscooldude anchor comes back and says, "Already, there have been reports of fans setting themselves on fire to emulate, or is that immolate?, Job, with allegedly two fatalities, one at an impromptu memorial service in a city park near the site of the concert, New Orleans."

The screen cuts to a grief counselor advising fans to stay away from matches, lighters, and open flames.

"Did you hear the new Job single?" Funnybear says, "It's smoking hot, dude! It's lighting up the charts! A real heatseeker!"

"A man has died Funnybear, that's nothing to laugh about," Barry says quietly, "A fellow traveler on planet earth has checked out."

Awkward silence reigns aside from the tv, reporting on the controversy of spontaneous combustion until Barry says, "Still it's better to burn out than fade away."

They laugh guiltily, and Funnybear adds, "At least he went out in a blaze of glory."

Funnybear decides to carry a fire extinguisher with his drumset. Funnybear can spray the crowd with it when Funnybear gets bored, or Barry with it when he starts taking life too seriously. After all, the first three letters in funeral are "f-u-n."

Chorus--Alexander Depot

I drive to Pittsburgh so Abel doesn't get us lost again.

This time I get us lost. What kind of city is this? Everything's a one-way street; on and off ramps on the highways are about ten feet long and come up with no warning; and you can see and be fifteen feet from where you want to go, but you have to drive five more blocks and turn around twice to get to it. And unlike Cleveland, there's no lake to navigate by. There's just all these hills and curves so I never know what direction I'm going in. And every other block, I'm crossing a bridge over some river. How many rivers does one city need? The best thing I can do for navigation is a giant neon ketchup bottle but every time I see that I end up heading out of the city, not in. Did drunken steelworkers moonlight as surveyors here?

The only thing more frustrating than being lost in the dark is

having to listen to Abel talk about how much he misses Flannery since she went down South with Jess, Birgit, and my old girlfriend Hildegard on a spring break trip they had planned last fall. I haven't been laid for months and Abel's singing the blues over a few days. I'm about ready to bang my head into the steering wheel, or better, Abel's.

I shouldn't even have to be here, wasting time and gas. This show should have been aborted. We were supposed to play at some party Jah's friend, Clark Yuns, was throwing but Clark got sick and called up right before we were going to leave saying the party was cancelled. We would have stayed home but The Our Things were supposed to play the party with us. Clark asked us to please call them and let them know since he was going to bed with some crackers and comic books a.s.a.p. We called and no one answered. Afraid they had left for Pittsburgh already, we hurriedly arranged a show at the house of another one of Jah's friends, left directions and information on the answering machine of The Our Things ("If you got a message, shoot!") just in case they hadn't left, and split for the Pitt.

I finally find Jah's friend's place in the suburbs. Jah and Bear and Barry have been there for a couple hours already. "Where were you?" Jah says.

"We're on tour, right? So I was being a tourist. I've never been to The Pitt before," I say, accentuating the positive of driving around hopelessly lost in an unfamiliar city.

"They call it 'The Burgh' around here. You're lucky you didn't fall into a giant pothole and then call a tow truck and get beat up by the irate driver because he thought you were saying his city was 'the pits.' Better learn the local lingo. Otherwise I'll be concerned about you," Jah says, "This is my friend Steeler Penguin."

Steeler has huge thick glasses and is wearing about five black and gold sweaters. He offers me some Cheese Poodles and Iron River Cola. "Sorry, the house is cold. My parents like to leave on the air conditioning all year round and pretend we live in Florida, not Western Pennsylvania. They're sleeping upstairs right now too so you'll have to keep the volume down."

Steeler's a super nice guy, but this is the worst show ever. The Our Things, who actually didn't leave for the show until after we did (meaning this whole ordeal could have been avoided), keep calling

from the football stadium, the only place they know in Pittsburgh, to ask for more directions. They never do show up, so we play a show for Steeler and his girlfriend from West Virginia in his basement while his parents snore upstairs. I passed up the opportunity to date a fellow teacher because we had to finish our big tour--witch's curse alert! I am very mad. Complimentary soda pop and chips do not make me more happy.

Note to self: Try to score the couch, not the floor at Jah's parents' house. I've suffered enough for one night.

MIDDLE EIGHT--BARRY CARY

I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS STUCK IN GEAR,
THE SAME OLD THING YEAR AFTER YEAR.
BUT IT WAS SO EASY TO CHANGE,
JUST WALK OUT THE DOOR AND GO RANGE.
EVERY DAY A DIFFERENT PLACE,
EVERY NIGHT A BRAND NEW FACE.
IT'S A GRAND ADVENTURE TO ROAM,
AS LONG AS I DON'T THINK OF HOME.

Verse--George Jah

At breakfast, my Dad asks how much money we've made on the tour so far. I laugh so hard I almost choke on my bagel.

When I recover, I say I think we made enough at our hometown show, the first tour stop since charity begins at home, to cover the cost of the rental van we're taking to New York.

My Mom asks why we're renting a van. I say that Ted has a coupon and figured out that between the cost of the gas and the tolls for two cars it'd be about the same expense so we might as well go in one vehicle this way we won't get separated or lost. Some members of the band are directionally challenged but I won't mention any names.

Cough, cough, Ted, Alexander, cough, cough.

After breakfast (thanks Mom and Dad!), Ted and I go to get the van. I'm in a hurry because it's a day's drive to New York and I find it creepy that Barry's hitting on my sister so the sooner we hit the highway the better.

They're all out of vans at the car rental place, but the lady says a sport utility vehicle almost has the same amount of room so we get one of those.

When we get home and pack up the s.u.v., I imagine she's right, an s.u.v. is roomy if only one person is gas guzzling in it! For

us, it's like a sardine tin. We manage to cram all our equipment and the five of us in it with about an inch to spare. I thought for a while that I was going to have ride to New York with my head out the window like a dog so we could have some more room on the inside, but Barry's a packing genius and funnels me into the middle of the back seat between Funnybear and my amp. He drives most of the way too, which is great, except for having to listen to these southern punk bands on the tape deck. They sound like Lynard Skynard on speed. When I ask politely in the Poconos if we can please fucking listen to something else, Barry says that if I want to drive, I can listen to anything I want.

In my head, I try to decide what's more annoying, redneck punk rock or New York City drivers.

I let Barry keep driving.

When we get to New York, we have to pay a toll to cross the bridge into Manhattan. I say, "We have to pay just to get into the city?"

Barry says, "Yep!"

"That's pretty cheeky," I say, looking at all the tall buildings.

Funnybear says he'll pay any price as long as he can get out soon and pee.

Ted asks if we can go record shopping in the Village or Lower East Side since we still have time before the show.

Alexander says he's hungry and asks if there's any more cheese poodles left from last night.

Well, eight hours in the car together and we haven't killed each other yet so I'd say the tour is going pretty well. Hey, what's that smell and why's the seat getting warm and wet?

Funnybear sports a smile as tall as the Empire State Building.

Chorus--Alexander Depot

Bear stinks of piss but it's New York so no one seems to notice. Bear buys big apple boxers in a souvenir shop and bootleg jeans off a street vendor, and we go back to the s.u.v., parked in a parking lot which costs more to park in than what we'll make tonight, I'm sure. Jah's already wiped up the piss on the seat with copies of alternative weekly newspapers from the newspaper boxes on the corner. He says, "Well, at least it won't have that annoying new car smell on the way back."

Then he points out a listing for our show tonight in one of the newspapers.

"Well, I'll be, we're in the big time now," I say, "Even if it is in the back of the paper in fine print along with the one hundred other concerts listed for tonight."

Bear gives his old clothes to a homeless guy, who sniffs them and puts them in his shopping cart, before strolling and rolling on.

"Let's go shopping!" Abel says.

"Let's go sightseeing!" Barry says.

"Let's go eat," I say.

"Let's do all those things but keep coming back to the s.u.v. at odd intervals so the parking lot attendant doesn't call his car thief friends and we get our guitars stolen," Jah says, eyeing the parking lot attendant suspiciously.

"Guitars?" Bear says, "They'd obviously steal the drums first if they knew what they were doing. That's one good-looking drumset."

"Not a bad idea, Jah," I say, "Cover everything with blankets. Few thieves will waste their time on stealing something they can't see and don't know what it is. That and the piss smell inside should guard against theft pretty well."

So we stick close to the area the show's at, hitting bookstores, record stores, funky shops (at one of which we buy a car air freshener in the shape of a big apple that says "Fuck you, you fuckin' fuck" on it), and just digging the streets and all the people, while bopping back to the s.u.v. so often the parking lot attendant finally asks us to bring him back a cup of coffee next time.

We end up in a pizza joint, chowing down. We get a cup of coffee to go and then it's showtime. The parking lot attendant's so happy with his lotta latte he lets us take the s.u.v. out of the lot to unload it at the venue a couple of blocks away, and then come back to park again for free.

The venue's The Pinstriped Pinstripe, a bowling alley. Man, we play some weird places. I tell this to Abel and he says there's a place called the Fireside Bowl in Chicago that's a bowling alley where bands play too. Ferdinand, the guy who runs this bowling alley where bands play, says, "Oh, no, we thought of it first. That's how things go, we start cool things in New York and then they spread across the hinterlands."

As I've noticed that the cool bands in New York right now all sound like bands in Ohio sounded five years ago, I have my doubts. Nevertheless, Ferdinand's a nice guy and makes us feel at home,

although he refuses to turn on the lanes for me to bowl a few frames.

"I'm sorry, no bowling tonight. Every time we have a band and bowling at the same time, the bowling leagues riot so we've learned to have music and bowling on separate nights. The bowling crowd is pretty reactionary and the music audience is pretty avant-garde. Though they share similar tastes in fashion, both favoring colorful shoes and shirts with names on them (even if the names on the shirts of the indie rockers are seldom ever their actual names since they usually bought them at a thrift store), we've found that mixing the two crowds isn't a good idea," Ferdinand says.

The show itself goes pretty well. Not too many people show up for us, besides a couple people we know from Ohio who live in New York now and whom we sent email about the show to, but there's a lot of people there to see Assmeat Buffet, who also end up on the bill. They've apparently gathered quite a buzz this week since they opened up for some dead pop star on his last show.

Unfortunately, most of those people leave as soon as Assmeat's done playing. A few of them stick around for us, though I don't see any of the famous rock critics or A&R people still in the audience. It's just another night in the big city and we're just another band apparently.

Our set goes well. Bear doesn't trash his drum set again, and we can play as loudly as we want without having to worry about waking up a dentist or his wife so the tour is ending on a high note.

E, I think.

We sell the rest of the tapes and shirts at the merch table too, although people seem more interested in Abel's garage sale, stuff he wants to get rid of like some old records and zines that he brought along, thinking people in New York might dig them.

It's a good thing for Abel and us that Bear didn't follow up on his threat to throw Abel's box of junk out the window on the way to New York to make more room in the s.u.v. because Abel ends up making more money from selling that crap than what Ferdinand pays us after our set! Guess who pays to fill up the tank on the way home!

We stick around for the last band, an old New York hardcore band called Dead Hot Dog. I don't get the name, who eats a live hot dog?, but they were supposed to be pretty big in their heyday.

Too bad they didn't break up and then get together for a reunion show a decade or two later, I bet this place would be jammed to the bowling pins. Instead, they've been playing together all these years, just no one comes to see them anymore because their time has passed I suppose. Ferdinand says he only books them still because he feels sorry for them. They're not bad. The lead singer is kind of funny. His shtick is putting on a different hat for each song. Like one song he'll be a miner, then the next a cowboy. I watch them for a little bit, but I'm too tired for eardrum charity so I eventually join everyone else in the bowling alley bar.

The only one who stays out there watching them is Barry because he's still working the merch table, God knows why. Afterwards, the guys from Dead Hot Dog ask us where we're from. We say, "Ohio."

They ask us if we can get them a gig out there. We say sure. The lead singer says to the drummer, who's some young kid, unlike the rest of them, if he wants to play Ohio. The drummer says, "Fuck, no. This was bad enough, and at least I could take the subway here," then heads out the door with his bass drum.

Eight million stories in the naked city but the good news is the crazy woman from Assmeat Buffet isn't inspired by The Statue Of Liberty to set anyone on fire tonight except for Barry, and only metaphorically. Barry bids goodbye to us now that the tour is over and joins Assmeat Buffet's crew. They need more people now that they're getting bigger. Jah can't believe it. "What do you want us to do with all your stuff?" he says.

"Burn it," Barry says.

Note to self: Make sure I go through Barry's stuff to see if he has anything I can sell before torching it.

Coda--Alexander Depot

Somebody, I think it's Abel, gets the bright idea to save money and drive home tonight. I thought we were going to stay with one of the Dead Hot Dog guys or one of our friends from Ohio. All I know is I'm drooling on myself in the s.u.v. before we leave the parking lot in New York City and when I wake up we're at a rest stop in the middle of Pennsylvania. I stumble out to take a piss and the stars are beautiful.

When we get back to Pittsburgh in the early morning, I go with Abel to return the s.u.v. The woman working the car rental

counter is in disbelief. "You did over a thousand miles in less than 24 hours?" she says.

"The coupon was for unlimited milage," Abel grins.

I drive Abel and Bear back to Rock. Jah says he's going to spend some more time with his folks, but I think he just wants to go to sleep as soon as he can.

When we make it back to Rock, it's a bright, sunshiny spring afternoon. Bedtime!

When I wake up, Abel's already gone through Barry's room and snagged all the good stuff. He chucked the remainder in the shed out back. I go out and look through it but don't see anything worth the trip to the pawn shop. And I feel a cold coming on. Great! As if being sick of rock and roll wasn't enough, now I have to actually be sick too.

I look around the shed for something to blow my nose with. I settle on an old empty candy bar wrapper, blow my nose, check the color of my snot--clear, maybe it's just allergies--ball it up, and throw it hard into the back corner of the shed.

I look at all the stuff in the shed that's been accumulated from old housemates over the years, and shake my head. Oh, well, it's a good place to leave behind my rock and roll career too. I don't want to end up like the guys in Dead Hot Dog. That was just sad.

Note to self: Always leave them wanting more. Except for maybe penis size.

#17

Scream! Ethnomusicologist! Scream!

b/w

Funnybear's Big Day

"Out in the field to observe and take note,
Sure hope the tribe does not slit my throat!"

Intro--Funnybear

Funnybear likes skipping school. Funnybear even likes Monday mornings now, seeing as how Funnybear only has to experience about two minutes of them since Funnybear doesn't wake up until about noon. After stumbling downstairs to pee, Funnybear turns on the tv to see what's going on outside the Emu house, or at least what the multinational corporations who own the tv channels claim is going on outside the Emu house. On the news channels, the big story on the big day is that thought to be incinerated pop star Job is alive. Some fans claim he's risen from the ashes like the phoenix, others say he's been resurrected like a Christ figure, but Job himself at the news conference claims it was a hoax hatched by a bet between his manager and his record company. Job claims he was duped himself and has come forward to expose it. Some conspiracy theorists think it was a plot to do away with Job in a fisher king type sacrifice to prepare the way for a new pop star, this year's model, who would be easier to control. Job says he's glad to be back and is giving up smoking.

That's enough modern mythology celebrity gossip for one day, Funnybear thinks. Funnybear goes to the bookshelf and looks for a book to read, and thinks how much Funnybear has learned since dropping out of school. Now Funnybear can read the books Funnybear's interested in and learn at Funnybear's pace not at the average pace of thirty people in a class. Funnybear grabs a book by Jon Savage off the shelf. Yes, life is good.

Until the end of the semester, when Funnybear will move to the big city and have to find a job. Enjoy it while you can.

Funnybear is also enjoying while Funnybear can, eating George's groceries. Working up to the fridge, Funnybear opens up George's cupboard to see what delicacies awaits Funnybear today. Ooh, George has been to the store! A new loaf of bread!

"Looking for something?" George says from behind Funnybear.

"Yeah, when are you going to buy some more pastry popups?"

Funnybear says, closing the cupboard.

"About the time you stop eating my food," George says, waving to someone in the living room, "It's all right, you can come in."

A bespectacled man with a beard, wearing a safari hat and khakis, and carrying a digital recorder, notebook, and pen comes into the kitchen. He looks around as if in a trance and says, "Fascinating!"

George introduces the man to Funnybear, "Funnybear this is Mr. Boogie, he's an ethnomusicologist and he's going to be studying us for his dissertation. Mr. Boogie, this is Funnybear, he's our drummer."

The man rouses from his trance and shakes Funnybear's hands, both of them, "Pleased to meet you. With your help I hope to be Dr. Boogie someday."

"Is this an April Fools joke?" Funnybear says, "Isn't today the first of April? I'm losing track of dates now that I've dropped out, though oddly enough not days of the week."

"No, it's not a prank," George says, "Mr. Boogie's going to be living with us and doing some fieldwork on the band."

"I couldn't afford the airfare for Thailand or Indonesia or Ghana, nor even raise enough gas food lodging money to travel to the mountains of Virginia or Native American reservations of South Dakota or bayous of Louisiana to collect folk songs so I sold my dissertation director on conducting research on garage rock," Mr. Boogie explains, his voice rising with excitement, "It's a whole music culture right in our backyard! And one which remains underdocumented by the academy. That's where I come in."

"This is where I go out," Funnybear says, leaving the room, "I'm going to get drunk and go to the library."

"I'll get drunk with you," George says, "But we have to go to the campus bookstore too."

Mr. Boogie opens his notebook and begins to scribble. "You want to get drunk too, Mr. Boogie?" George says.

Mr. Boogie slams his notebook shut. He grins, "When in Rome . . ."

Verse—Theodorable

I hope I don't become an alcoholic. I have a great uncle in Ireland who pretty much lived in a pub. His brothers went to America and became wealthy businessmen while he stayed home in a stupor and gave advice to his fellow drunks. He said he was smarter than his brothers. He said people work hard and end up with nothing well he had nothing too but at least he didn't work hard for it. He also said he was storing up his treasures in the

kingdom of heaven where they were safer so he spent his earthly money on pint after pint to feel good and gave the rest to the poor by buying them the occasional round. One time the brothers who went to America came back to Ireland for a visit and on their visit they made an appointment to see their brother in his wee village. They were an hour late getting there due to difficulty finding a driver, finally getting a nephew to give them a ride. The nephew drove them down to the village but when they got there, my great uncle wasn't home. The brothers stayed in the car while the nephew went looking for my great uncle, finding him of course in the pub across the road. He dragged the great uncle out of the pub to meet his brothers whom he hadn't seen in years. But in the hour the brothers were late, the great uncle had gotten tight in the pub and upon seeing them in the car gave them a lecture instead of a hug. He said, "You gentlemen have been all around the world, traveled across the ocean and made your homes in America, well today in this wee village you're going to learn a lesson you should have learned long ago . . ."

The great uncle pulled out a pocket watch on a chain and pointed at it. He tapped the watch to the beat, and said the mantra, "Always be on time! Always be on time!"

The brothers told the nephew to get in the car. "Drive off, drive off!" they said, so he did and that was the end of the family reunion, leaving my great uncle in the middle of the main road in his wee village tapping his pocket watch and saying, "Always be on time."

I suppose he just went back in the pub after his brothers and nephew disappeared down the road.

I tell this to Flannery, Alexander, and Funnybear as I legally get drunk on my twenty-first birthday and Roger Manning plays on the jukebox. Mr. Boogie writes the story down in his notebook, and says he wants to record me saying "always be on time" in his digital recorder. He mutters, "Interesting intonation, typical of the British isles," and sets up his microphone. We're at Vic's Happy Hour Club again, where we started out since George is working tonight, after Funnybear dragged me to all the bars in downtown Rock that I'd never been to before because I was underage. We got free shots at all of them, the liquor industry equivalent of the drug pusher's "the first one's free, but the rest will cost you" I guess.

I'm about to say "Always be on time," into Mr. Boogie's tape recorder when George comes out from behind the bar and hands me a shotglass. "Try this," he says.

I down it.

My throat burns.

I can't talk.

I wheeze something into Mr. Boogie's recorder.

George chuckles, "Happy birthday!" and goes back behind the bar.

Five minutes later, when my voice comes back, I say "Always be on time" into Boogie's recorder. We start talking about clean and green energy and the future and the world we're going to live in. I say I'd like to wipe out poverty. I ask Funnybear what he's going to do now that he's dropped out. I'm worried about him.

He tells me he's going bushdiving.

"Gross," Flannery says.

No, not that kind of bushdiving, Funnybear says, bushdiving as in run at a bush and dive into it.

I must be drunk. That seems like quite a sensible idea. On the walk home, Funnybear, Alexander, and I dive into bushes. Flannery begs us to stop so we don't poke out our eyes while Boogie records the sounds of us leaping into shrubbery.

When I get home, I'm black and blue and the bed spins as I lie in it. Whee! It feels weird but kinda good until the next morning anyway when I ache and want to die.

When I'm late to class, the professor tells me my great uncle's advice.

Chorus--Funnybear

Funnybear is bored. No one is home except for Boogie who is watching Funnybear flip through a magazine. He's so quiet sometimes Funnybear forgets he's there. "Boogie!" Funnybear says.

Boogie sets down his pen on his notebook, "Yes."

"Here's a new category for your grounded activity theory. It's called 'Making A Zine.'" Funnybear says, holding up the music magazine Noise Hoist with Job on the cover (the headline reads "Refried Superstar! Job Goes Supernova But Doesn't Disappear Down A Black Hole! Now He's Hotter Than Ever!"), "This is a magazine. Eh, it's all right but every band in it is backed by a big corporation, and all the articles play it safe, trying not to offend the big record companies that buy ads in it. We're going to make something honest."

"Of course the Emus will be on the cover and we'll publish it anonymously," Funnybear adds.

"What will we call it?" Boogie says, looking excited.

"The Boogie," Funnybear says, "Now turn on your recorder you're going to interview me. I'll be the Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus, and you'll be, well, The Boogie."

Boogie and Funnybear spend the rest of the afternoon in *The Boogie* newsroom (i.e., the living room in the Emuhouse). Boogie reviews the shows he's seen in the last week (everything from a symphony concert to a basement punk show) and Funnybear writes a series of features on local acts Funnybear likes like *The Our Things* and *These Fags Are Pissed*, and an editorial about why *Spider Cider's* music is the sonic equivalent of ass vomit.

Funnybear types everything up on Uncle Teddy's typewriter (Boogie's sure to be a doctor, his handwriting's already illegible; Boogie says, "Not that kind of doctor. Philosophy! Philosophy!") and lays the copy out on a single long sheet, front and back. Boogie takes it to Responsible Reproduction for photocopying, and then as an afterschool special *Antigone* drops off copies at record shops, bookstores, clubs, and coffeehouses around town.

George brings home a copy that night. "Hey, did you see this?" he says to Funnybear, "We're the lead story. The guys from *Spider Cider* are furious. They're combing the town looking for who said they were 'as thoroughly awful as getting an enema from a power washer,' but there's no address listed. It just says to send letters to the editor telepathically. All they know is that a girl dropped it off at the bar. I don't remember doing this interview either and I particularly don't remember saying you were the musical genius of the band. I must have been drunk."

"Well, they do say alcohol lowers inhibitions and enables you to get in touch with your true feelings," Funnybear says.

"Cut the shit," George says, "Who's *The Boogie*? I have to work with those *Spider Cider* dolts, remember? It was miserable, they sulked all night, complaining about bad press. I had to do everything at the bar. They only perked up when they overheard a couple of people saying they wanted to go see *Spider Cider* to see if they were really as terrible as *The Boogie* said."

"I forgot. Any publicity's good publicity. Next time I'll pretend they don't exist," Funnybear says, "Did you buy any pastry popups yet?"

"You need to get a job," George says.

"I've got a job, I'm editor in chief of *The Boogie*," Funnybear says, "Next issue's lead story is a day in the life of George Jah."

"Really?" George says, "That'd be great! I need some clippings for my art career press kit."

"If you buy an ad, I'll make sure it's a puff piece," Funnybear says.

"Okay, but I get to write the article," George says.

"Great!" Funnybear says, "I love press releases. They save me the

cost of hiring reporters! Someday I hope to have The Boogie be all press releases and advertisements, no work and nothing but profit!"

Funnybear likes journalism.

Verse--George Jah

A day in the life of George Jah, one of the leading young artists in the country, scratch that, the world, scratch that, the universe, scratch that, all of existence today.

Writing is tougher than it looks. There's so many words and so many choices. I take a break and dig out one of the pastry popups hidden in my sock drawer. Yum, the smell of artificial blueberry filling and feet!

Funnybear's out of the house for once, thank God! so I go downstairs to stick my popup in the toaster and Insane Ishmael stops by. "Hey, dude!" he says, "Trips, hash, weed. I just bought some fireworks."

"What?" I say.

"Trips, hash, weed. I just thought I'd stop by and see if anybody wanted to shoot them off with me," Ishmael says, opening up his backpack to reveal a plethora (that's a good word, I'll have to remember that for the article--"George Jah has a plethora of talent") of bottle rockets and firecrackers.

"Why do you keep saying, 'Trips, hash, weed'" I say, pulling out a bottle rocket ("Super Super Super Super Screamer! Scream! Bottle Rocket! Scream!") and looking at it.

"Isn't that dude here? The little guy who records everything you do?" Ishmael says, looking around the house.

"Mr. Boogie? No, he's not here. He's following Ted around today," I say, putting the bottle rocket back in the pack.

"Oh, good, he makes me nervous, dude. I don't like somebody watching me. How do you know he's not from the CIA or FBI? Maybe they think the Emus are like a terrorist cell or a street gang," Ishmael says, unwrapping some explosives.

"Maybe we should do that. The band thing isn't working out too well. We haven't booked any shows since Il Duce left and the guy who was recording us disappeared. Funnybear's dropped out of school, Alexander's already started on his new life as a responsible adult, Ted's always studying with his girlfriend, and I think I have Crohn's disease."

"You should candyflip with me, dude, it'll make you feel better," Ishmael says, pulling out a baggie from his backpack.

"Candyflip?" I say, "Is that like a donuthandstand?"

"No, dude," Ishmael says, and hands me a pill and a tab, "Take this and then this and then your brain will be" he pulls out a bottle rocket "like this!"

I hand them back, "I don't know, Ishmael. Living with Funnybear lately is kind of like being on drugs already."

Ishmael pops the phamanooticals in his mouth, "Well at least shoot off some fireworks with me."

"O.k.," I say, grabbing some matches from a drawer, "We can fire them at those fucking squirrels that wake me up every morning."

Ishmael must have stuck something in my pastry popup because in what seems just a few minutes later I'm firing bottle rockets inside the house at giant squirrels and laughing hysterically.

The last thing I remember before waking up the next morning in a tree in the backyard to the sound of squirrels chattering is being thirsty and drinking like a gallon of water straight from the kitchen faucet while telling Mr. Boogie I was onto him.

I'll have to read my article to see what I did yesterday.

Chorus--Funnybear

George's article is a bunch of gibberish about a robotic squirrel conspiracy so Funnybear bumps it and runs an expose on Knibbled Knipple in the next issue of The Boogie instead. From Funnybear's anonymous source in the Knipple camp, Funnybear has learned that the band has broken up and Karl Knipples has gone into rehab for alcohol and drug abuse.

Funnybear surmises The Emus won't finish recording anytime soon since Karl was recording The Emus' album, which Boogie freaks out about ("But I wanted to document a recording session! Aren't you guys going to do anything about it?"), but the whole sordid tale goes far deeper than that. Funnybear types:

Once "the next big thing," local band Knibbled Knipple has deconstructed. The band has broken up, and been dropped by their record company WSBunyversalmonigarnier (the monopoly sole major label after decades of mergers and buyouts) and their powerlunch powertool Hollywood management Tanny Minor Agency. The band once seemed to be living a rock and roll fairytale. They formed to put on a single show but were soon playing to packed audiences weekly in Rock. Then, a

demo of their song "Baby, I'm The Meat And You're The Grinder (Mean Grind Remix)" began getting heavy airplay on a Cleveland "Moderate Rock" radio station (allegedly due to sexual favors granted to the music director), attracting the attention of A & R rep Will Usedtobecool. Their first record saw them touring worldwide and receiving airplay on radio and television, almost going aluminum. Their second record was poised to launch them into the pantheon of classic rock playolalists, but despite making music for the first time that wasn't cringe-worthy, the band fell victim to record company politics when Usedtobecool was fired. Deemed uncommercial, the record was sent back to the band who were told to make something that could be marketed as part of the already dying electronica harmonica trend. The band fought over this, eventually leading to round robin lawsuits and the firing of lead singer Keith Knipples. The remaining trio rerecorded the album, which again was refused release on the grounds that it actually had some aesthetic merit and wasn't pure disposable product as requested. This time the band was urged to scrap the songs, and write new ones in a bluegrass/power violence vein, and to test market the new material at a "Moderate Rock" Radio festival. By that point, the pressure had taken its toll on the already fragile psyches of the band members. Drummer Kip Knipples showed at the festival, chowed down on the deli tray, and left. He hasn't been seen since, and, eurotrashily, is suspected to have returned to his home in Luxembourg. Despite having half the drums programmed anyway, the remaining members, guitarist/programmer Karl Knipples and bassist Kent Knipples, began heavily drinking and got into a fistfight. The band, supposed to headline the festival, never performed. After waking up to the sound of Cleveland "Moderate

Rock" morning dj Howdy Clown breaking Knibbled Knipple cds on the air and urging listeners to do the same ("Kids were crying, unable to believe their favorite band had swindled them out of their money! Knibbled Knipple will never be heard on this station again!"), Karl had a nervous breakdown and checked into a substance abuse rehabilitation center in Akron. Kent embarked upon a brief solo career that ended that afternoon when the record company and management sent telegrams severing ties with the band and all members thereof. He currently works at The Trough's pizza parlor. Knibbled Knipple's first album can now be found in cutout bins nationwide.

Funnybear needs something to cheer Funnybear up. This is what an unsigned band aspires to? Getting exploited and fucked over? This is as depressing as all the rock and roll biographies Funnybear's been reading this week. Making fun should be fun. Funnybear wonders if George has any food hidden in his room. Funnybear will look.

Middle Eight--Mr. Boogie

**I buy a bass and a small amp.
It's just like the old days--band camp!
I play along as they practice
to tonal chart bnt the fact is
I've always wanted to rock out!
Shake my hips Elvis, scream, and shout!
Yes, technically, it's primitive.
But I like the way these guys live!**

Verse--Alexander Depot

Since I'm graduating in less than a month, I make a resume on my computer. For some reason that only Mister Boogie can fathom, Mister Boogie's watching me type and obsessively taking notes.

If this is what graduate school does to you, then I'm glad I'm entering the workforce instead.

For kicks, after I finish my work resume, I make out a love resume, listing all my past romantic relationships (Hildegarde, etc.), how long they lasted ("September-November," "Thursday,"

"between the hours of midnight and four on February 12th"), and how far we went ("kissing," "heavy petting," "full time employment"). I call one night stands temp work. I list my skills ("certified for tantra") and objective ("To obtain gainful employment as a full time boyfriend").

Oh, it's a chuckle. I joke to Mister Boogie that I should print up some copies and hand them out next time I'm at a bar. Mister Boogie says he usually uses the personals himself (his never failing lead line--"Are you bored?"--because if you're reading the personals, you're bored) but it's not a bad idea. Then he asks if he can have copies of the documents I've created today for his research.

Oh, anything for the promotion of the arts and sciences and the general knowledge of humanity I tell him and print them out. I ask him how his research is coming along, and he says great, except he's just learned that some sociologists in Sweden have already done similar work on garage rock bands so he's a bit bummed that he wasn't first. I tell him not to feel bad because I know from studying history that most things have been done before anyway.

We go downstairs and Jah says, "Do you want to practice before the show tonight, or just say fuck it?"

"Fuck it," I say and go smoke a ciggie on the porch. When I get back inside, Mister Boogie's got his bass and amp out and demanding that we practice. He says, "Don't you care about your fans?"

Jah says, "Mr. Boogie, this is rock and roll, not chamber music; sometimes it's better raw."

Boogie says, "That's a cop out! I'm playing with you guys tonight! We've got to practice!"

"We' don't have to do anything. If you want to practice, go ahead. I'm not the one who's worried about it," Jah says.

"I'm not worried! Stop projecting your neuroses on me!" Mister Boogie yells and starts playing his bass loudly through his amp.

Note to self: Bludgeon with my keyboard whoever said this guy could sit in with us.

Chorus--Funnybear

Funnybear loves when Boogie freaks out. It's hysterical. He shakes and moans and incessantly complains, always suggesting that someone should do something about something but never him of course. Funnybear tries to wind him up as much as possible by making sure not to leave for tonight's show until well after it's started. This nearly causes a seizure in Boogie ("Look at the time! Shouldn't we go? I wanted to do research on the other bands, you know! We're going to miss the show! We're going to miss the show!"). It's some all ages thing at a city park and if Funnybear's band arrived on time then Funnybear would have to sit through an unending wave of bad flavor of the month bands.

Furthermore, Funnybear wouldn't be able to drink, among teens and their parents.

"But the music!" Boogie sweats, "The music!"

Although Funnybear's sure Funnybear would think the bands were great if Funnybear was in high school and was friends with the band members who would then be Funnybear's classmates, but Funnybear's not so Funnybear can be objective, or at least a different kind of subjective. These bands leak.

"How can you say that?" Boogie says, "You haven't even heard them!"

Music is social, Funnybear explains. It doesn't exist in a vacuum, and not just literally. Music outside of one's social network is hard to appreciate. To many, it's just noise, no signal. Funnybear likes the kids who invited Funnybear's band to play the show, and Funnybear thinks it's cool they're doing something positive like putting on a DIY show instead of lapping up whatever crap the corporation is dealing out, but that still doesn't make Funnybear want to hear their bands when he's heard so many like them before, and enough of them to develop a theory that can explain and predict phenomena. These bands will reek.

"But they're young!" Boogie cries, "They're honing their chops!"

They may be learning but there's no obligation on Funnybear's part to hold their hand or clap Funnybear's hands while they do. That's for Mom and Dad and their friends.

Now if Funnybear could drink while watching them . . .

"You're jaded!" Boogie cries, "Aren't you at least going to cover it for The Boogie?"

"Nah, I'm bored with The Boogie, it's time to move on," Funnybear says, "It's time to move on from a lot of things. It's a big world out there

and this is just a small part. I'll always think of it fondly, but it's no longer where I want to be."

"Do you think I really want to do my dissertation?" Boogie stomps, "But you don't see me giving up, oh no!"

"There's nothing wrong with giving up when what you're doing is stupid," Funnybear says, "Sticktoitiveness is only a virtue when it's something worth doing."

"Are you saying my research is stupid! How dare you!" Boogieman smashes, quoting Churchill, "Never, never, never, never give up!"

Boogie's nagging finally gets on Funnybear's nerves so Funnybear's band leaves for the show.

Without Boogie.

Coda--Funnybear

At the show, somebody's dad says Funnybear's band's arrived too late and can't play. The kids only have the pavilion at the park rented until eleven, and it's ten to eleven when Funnybear's band arrives. Since Funnybear just knows Funnybear's band wouldn't have played until now anyway, Funnybear says "I'm not sixteen and your offspring. I don't want to embarrass you in front of your child, who's cooler than you by the way, but if you continue to pull a power play I will pummel you. Sorry, we're late, but we're playing."

Dad huffs off, not used to someone talking back to him, but since he doesn't pay Funnybear's allowance or salary Funnybear figures Funnybear can get away with it. Funnybear's band plays for five minutes until the park police pull the plug promptly at eleven. The kids boo but that's all folks. That's o.k. Dads usually gets the last laugh in garageland. It's usually their garage afterall.

Funnybear likes moms better anyway. And lots better if they're single and lonely.

The kids think The Emus are all right, but if they were really cool they'd be on television, or at least on the cover of a fanzine, wouldn't they?

Dad refuses to pay the Emus since they were late and didn't play a full set but that's o.k., Funnybear was doing it for the kids, and it's sort of a rock and roll tradition (though not a good one) anyway that everybody but the musicians get paid first. The musicians can have what's leftover, if anything.

George gets some cash from some mom anyway.

And her phone number. That George!

Yips!

1) Father Ted

This BBC comedy series about 3 fuckup priests exiled to a small Irish island is hilarious. Feck off!

2) Sweatshop by Peter Bagge

This new DC Comics series by Bagge (Hate) about a mainstream comic strip studio makes me laugh out loud. (www.peterbagge.com)

3) The Best Democracy Money Can Buy by Greg Palast

Palast is that rare reporter who isn't content to just print press releases verbatim or parrot whatever news corporations and the government dished out that day. He actually uses critical thinking to investigate the world around him. What he finds going on in the Bush administration and big business among the many other subjects he investigates in this book isn't very comforting, but it's the truth every citizen should know. (Plume 2003 www.gregpalast.com)

4) Dreaming War: Blood For Oil And The Cheney-Bush Junta by Gore Vidal

Yeah, Noam Chomsky knows the score but so does Vidal and he's no bore. For those who like their politics served up with a sidedish of wit. A grand read and eyeopening for a great many I imagine, in this book Vidal traces America transformation into an empire, its awful current "emperors," and the unfortunate consequences for all of us. (Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books 2002).

5) Cleveland All Pro Wrestling

Solid independent professional wrestling here. These guys work hard to put on a good show at an old gym every couple of months or so and it's much appreciated by Cleveland wrestling fans. I just hope they're careful because some of the stuff they do is crazy and I doubt any of these guys have health insurance. The tables match I saw in July was straight out carnage. (www.capwrestling.net)

6) Friction Magazine

Friction's perfect bound, \$7, and calls itself a magazine, but it's got that zine stench all over it and no amount of good design sense can cover that up. It's also an ezine and the print arm complements the online version; always a good idea to make the most of both media. I liked the fiction inside (high quality) but the nonfiction reads well as well. Well? 160 pages that could choke the biggest literary zine reader. (Melissa Hostetler, 277 Luedella Ct., Akron, OH 44310 www.frictionmagazine.com)

7) Kathy Acker

One of my favorite writers, even if some of the more experimental stuff isn't too reader friendly. People like to talk about George Orwell and William Gibson as prophetic writers but any stroll through Empire Of

The Senseless or Great Expectations shows that Acker called the 21st Century back in the 1980s. Terrorism, corporate scumbags, globalization, transgendered individuals, etc . . . I also discovered recently that she published novels serialized in zine form in mail art circles in the 1970s and 1980s . . . still ahead of her time!

8) Summer Extravaganza For Cullen Carter

Zine publisher Cullen Carter was hit by a car earlier this year and put into a coma. He's recovering but has considerable medical bills. To help remedy this situation, fellow zinesters organized this benefit in Chicago in August to raise funds and morale. I was fortunate enough to be able to perform and attend and it was quite an enjoyable show. However, Cullen could still use help with his health care costs, so if you have any extra dosh, even only the cost of a zine, donations are still being accepted at Cullen Carter Benefit Fund, Bank Mutual, Corporate Headquarters, 4949 W. Brown Deer Rd., PO Box 245034, Milwaukee, WI 53224-9534, Attn: Legal Department. There's also an excellent benefit zine called Culled From Cullen out. (www.ashabot.com and www.literaryrevolution.com)

9) Bukowski Hangover Project

Just like The JLA gathered the nation's greatest superheroes to face threats that are too dire for any single hero and just like NWA gathered LA's best rappers because they knew they could do more together than any one of them could do alone, the Bukowski Hangover Project has gathered a collection of some of the underground's best writers, packaged them all together in an upcoming literary anthology (Poison Candy from Sisyphus Press), and is taking on the corporate publishing world. I suspect the small press is about to make a big splash, and I'm happy to be onboard. The results can only be good for 21st Century American Literature. (www.babelmagazine.com)

10) Dennis Kucinich For President

My favorite of the current Democratic presidential candidates. He's from Cleveland and has good sense. He offers a nice combo of Gore and Nader policies and is lots better than the current pretender in the White House. (www.kucinich.us)

Yips! Are Good Things!

Zine Yips!

1) Fish With Legs

Eric's perzine is fun reading! I love his observations and rants, and my favorite aspect is when his rants get so far gone he realizes that even he's full of shit and then calls himself on it. Man, why can't more people be like that? (\$2 postpaid Eric Lyden, 224 Moraine St., Brockton MA 02301-3664 ericfishlegs@aol.com).

2) Rejected Band Names #8

Great perzine! I wouldn't want my life to be as "interesting" as Jerianne's but I sure do enjoy reading about it and admire the way she handles herself and gets through some rough situations. In this one, a car accident with the wife of a drunk redneck and the wedding of an annoying sister. Me? I would have just punched everyone out and made things worse. (\$2 postpaid Jerianne P.O. Box 330156 Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156 jerianne@undergroundpress.org).

3) Works & Days #1

A serialized romance novel about punk rockers and zinesters living in the same house? With great illustrations as well? SIGN ME UP, SCREWBALL! (\$3 postpaid Boy Who Cried "Media!", 3500 Braddock St., Kettering, OH 45420 boywhocried@yahoo.com <http://www.geocities.com/boywhocried>)

4) Zine Nation #1

From straight out of Canada comes the latest big review zine. Always good to have another resource for getting the word out about zines but what I like best about it are the features reprinted from other zines, kind of like a Reader's Digest of zines. Cool! (\$? postpaid Justin Chatwin, 17 Paton Rd., Unit #8, Toronto Ontario Canada M6H 1R7 zination@yahoo.com)

5) St. Cosmo, I Come To Adore You #4

This litzine has some good stuff in it. I particularly enjoyed a story about lowlifes shaking down a suburban family for a donutmaker's mother by Dave Mergenhardt and the story by Christoph Meyer (who also does the cool perzine 28 Pages Lovingly Bound With Twine) about waiting in line to buy toothbrushes and dental floss. Jake, the editor, also does the excellent solo litzine Factory Wounds. (\$1 postpaid, Jake Snodgrass, 6648 Eastland Court, Worthington, OH 43085 Jake.Snodgrass@wabutler.com)

6) Last Laugh #CLXV

This is Texas outlaw writer Wild Bill Blackolive's work in progress magnum opus on the insanity that is life in the 21st Century USA. In it, Blackolive writes his observations and also throws in other perspectives like letters written to him. Can be confusing at first until you get used to Blackolive's stream of consciousness style but once you dope it out, he's your literary pusherman.

(\$2 postpaid, W.B. Blackolive, 1776 N. Campbell, Aransas Pass, TX 78336 www.texasgang.com)

7) Musea #121

In this issue of his long-running zine, Underground Literary Alliance member Tom Hendricks offers a 12 page songbook of his original tunes and lyrics. What a cool idea! "Zine World" was my favorite, of course.

(\$1 postpaid, Hunkasaurus and His Pet Dog Guitar, 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, TX 75219-2275 <http://musea.digitalchainsaw.com> tomhendricks474@cs.com)

8) Xerography Debt #11

Great friendly review zine. Reminds me of early Zine World in that the personalities of the reviewers shine through the reviews. It really does have "perzine tendencies."

(\$3 postpaid, Davida Gypsy Breier, PO Box 963, Havre de Grace, MD 21078 davida@leekinginc.com www.leekinginc.com)

9) Nice Distinctions 2

A lot of people think zines are only things young people do but the oldies who do them are goodies and like most things, the longer one does something, the better one gets at it, hence Arthur D. Hlavaty's always interesting observations on science fiction fandom and modern life in general. (\$1 postpaid, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, NY 10704-1814 [hlabaty@panix.com](mailto:hlavaty@panix.com) www.livejournal.com/users/supergee/).

10) Cathedral #1

New litzine that specializes in running several prose pieces from an author making for a nice showcase. This debut issue features Karl Koweski, Emerson Dameron, and publisher/editor Patrick King. Good stuff! (\$2 postpaid, Patrick King, 138 Overland Road #3, Montevallo, AL 35115 kathychaser@hotmail.com)

Zine Yips! Are Good Zines!

Oh My Gosh, It's A Letter!

Hey Wred,

Been meaning to drop you a quick line. I got your copy of The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus in exchange for my chap "Lost Words Of Suicide Lovers" It kicks some ass. You write like a mofo! Pleasure to be published with you in Babel. I have a new chap out now, and I'm working on a website, you can check it out when you get a chance: <http://hometown.aol.com/veryverymetal13/>

Anyway, just wanted to say thanks for sending the chap and I enjoyed it a lot.

Take Care!

Debbie TNT Kirk

Dayton, Ohio

Thanks for the kind words Debbie. The best thing about publishing a zine is getting to meet all the great writers in the underground! And there's a lot of them! Now I'd like to see us engage with the larger mainstream culture in our society because it affects us whether we want it to or not, and it's been horrible lately!

Merch Table

The next and final issue (#7) will be out swiftly upon the heels of this one, so feel free to order/trade any time after you receive this issue. The first 50 come with a free bonus 7" record. I enjoy trading with other zine publishers. Otherwise it's \$3 postpaid. Additional copies of this issue, #5, #4, #3, and #2 are \$3 each postpaid as well. Issue #1 (32 pages) is available for \$2 postpaid. Get any 2 back issues for \$5



postpaid. Get the whole collection, all 7 issues, for \$15. I'll take orders until 31 December 2003, after that I'll hopefully have it all available on the web as an ebook or published as a printed book.

V/A--Let's Get Killed 12" LP. This compilation from Kent's Cockpunch Records has lots of great stuff on it including Kill The Hippies, Radar Secret Service, and me!

Maximumrockandroll called my contribution "bizarre," Punk Planet called the whole record "a quirky collection of obscure bands," while Razorcake summed it up best, writing, "While all of the bands here easily fall under the punk banner, there's some diversity in sound and the bands are in top form." 13 rocking songs on vinyl for \$6 postpaid.

Fightin' Fun Comics #2. Very funny superteam comic book including the Secret Origin of Astronaut Urine Gorilla written by me. Plus the world's horniest superhero The Bucktoothed Ghost & more! 64 pages of fun reading for \$4 postpaid.

Punch & Pie. Great collection of short stories from the indie literature world, including Maddy Tightpants, Sean Carswell, Jim Munroe, me, and many more, courtesy of Gorsky Press. 160 pages of good reading for \$6 postpaid. Well-hidden cash, money orders/checks to "Fred Wright," or Paypal please. Prices are for those residing in the USA. If you're residing elsewhere, please write first and we'll figure something out.

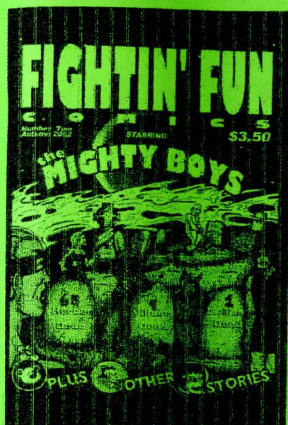
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THIS IS A FICTION. THIS IS A SERIALIZED NOVEL. THIS IS THE SIXTH ISSUE. THIS IS ABOUT A GARAGE ROCK BAND CALLED THE PORNOGRAPHIC FLABBERGASTED EMUS. THIS IS QUITE SILLY. THIS IS \$3 POSTPAID.

"TAPE OOPS"/ "6 IN JAPAN" IS THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND RECORDS SOME SONGS WITH A GRUMPY PERFECTIONIST PLUS DRUMMER FUNNYBEAR HUMPS A DOORMAN, BASSIST GEORGE JAH ADVERBALLY EXPLORES ART HISTORY, KEYBOARDIST ALEXANDER DEPOT GOES BONKERS OVER THE PHONE BILL, AND GUITARIST THEODORABLE BALKS AT BECOMING A PIRATE.

"SPRING SPRANG SPRUNG"/"DROLL DROOL" IS THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND GOES ON TOUR PLUS THEODORABLE BLOGS OUT A TOUR DIARY, FUNNYBEAR GOES ON ETERNAL SPRING BREAK, GEORGE JAH SQUEEZES INTO AN S.U.V. FOR 24 HOURS AND 1000 MILES, AND ALEXANDER DEPOT GETS LOST IN PITTSBURGH AND CLEVELAND BUT NOT NEW YORK CITY.

"SCREAM! ETHNOMUSICOLOGIST! SCREAM!"/"FUNNYBEAR'S BIG DAY" IS THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER. THE BAND GETS STUDIED FOR A DISSERTATION BY A GRAD STUDENT NAMED MR. BOOGIE PLUS THEODORABLE GOES BUSHDIVING, GEORGE JAH CANDYFLIPS, ALEXANDER DEPOT MAKES A LOVE RESUME, AND FUNNYBEAR PUBLISHES A ZINE.

THIS SHOULD BE PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER. THIS IS NOT REALLY PORNOGRAPHIC BUT DOES CONTAIN LANGUAGE SUCH AS THE WORD "PENULTIMATE" WHICH MAY OFFEND SOME READERS. THIS IS COPYWRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR EXCEPT FOR THE COVER IMAGE WHICH IS COURTESY OF MICHAEL DEE.