



RAZORCAKE

\$4

NO. 22

GELSHA GIRLS
MIDNIGHT EVILS
MEEA CULPA
TV CARNAGE
THE BAD VIBES
VOTING AIN'T WRONG



MARKED MEN



I was at a state university in southern California, talking to a literature professor. Since I didn't want to be bogged down in small talk, I figured I could talk about books with her. I asked her, "What's the last thing you read that got you really excited?"

"Oh, I don't read for pleasure," she said. "When I get home, I just watch TV."

Because I'm a writer, this comment really stung. If even literature professors don't read, then who does? Books and zines mean the world to me, and for a minute, I wondered if I was the only person left who felt this way.

A week earlier, I'd been on a reading tour with three of my favorite living writers: Mike Faloon, Joe Meno, and *Razorcake's* own Todd Taylor. Joe was out doing readings to promote his new book, *Hairstyles of the Damned*. Todd was out supporting his new book, *Born to Rock*. Mike was out to bring the glory that is *Go Metric!* to the west coast. And me, I was out doing readings mostly so that I could hang out more with Mike, Todd, and Joe. Also, I was excited to have the chance to share a stage—or really just some floor space in the front of bookstores—with them and to watch them read every night.

It was great to be able to spend days listening to music and talking about books with guys who share similar passions; to go to places like Portland's zine mecca, Reading Frenzy; to help Confounded celebrate their tenth anniversary; to listen to Andrew in San Francisco tell stories of sleeping with rats and bathing in a

four-foot-tall shower, all so he could afford to help open up the zine store/art space Needles and Pens; and to hear Joe say again and again how these little reading tours were our way of recreating the old '80s punk rock tours by getting in the van and bringing underground books to people who have an appetite for them.

The icing on the cake came in Seattle, when Joe and I were hanging out in front of Confounded Books and this guy came up to us and said, "I'm so excited you guys are here. This is like my *Wrestlemania!*" Any bad feelings I may have had or any remnants of the mundane tour malaise were wiped away with that one little comment. For the rest of the tour, whenever people would ask us how it was going, we'd say, "Fucking great! This guy in Seattle said we were like his *Wrestlemania!*"

I should probably add that there were only two more days on the tour after Seattle. Between Joe and me, we told the story another dozen times in those two days.

Then the tour ended, and I got back to work, which is what led me to talking to that literature professor who doesn't read and who made me suddenly feel like I'm the only one in the world who cares about all this stuff. But then I remembered the *Wrestlemania* guy in Seattle, and all the people I met and/or hung out with on tour. And, of course, I thought about the thousands of people who read each issue of this zine. All I could think was, I love this little underground.

—Sean

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FOR ISSUE #24

December 1st, 2004

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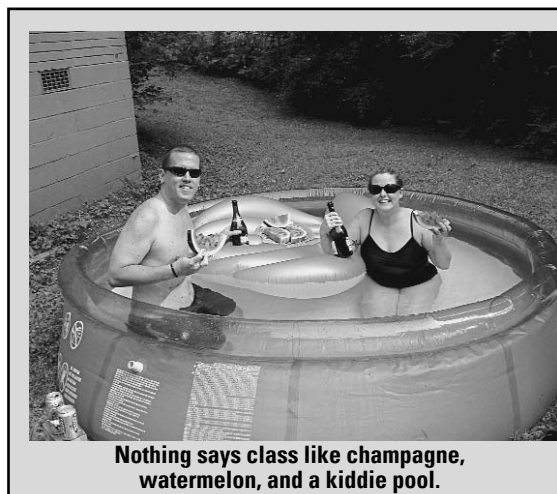
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Nothing says class like champagne, watermelon, and a kiddie pool.

Thank you list: I guess I shoulda gotten your permission first thanks to Toby and Carla for appearing on this here page; stand clear of 50-year-old women on ecstasy, grinding her "vortex" on kids at a show thanks to Julia Smut for her expert computer eyeballs help with the cover. As an added bonus, she also did the TV Carnage layout; Yoda Pez!—Man, I'm going to have some bloody sex tonight! thanks to Chris Larson's illustration in Ayn's column; Artist's rendition of Norb's buttocks thanks to Terry Rentzepis for his illustrations in said column; He-yah! Karate chop to the neck thanks to Kiyoshi Nakazawa for his cartoon in Sean's column; Touch the Stylophone gently and it will purr for you thanks to Randy Iwata for all the digital wrangling in Nardwuar's column; Caught him in a tender, vulnerable moment thanks to Larry Hart for the picture in Jim Ruland's column; The Vice President's a dick, literally, thanks to Rob Ruelas for his illustration in Jimmy's column; Blood, bullets, and headless torsos thanks to Keith Rosson for his illustrations in Todd's article; "Did you know that Captain Eo was written and directed by Francis Ford Coppola?" thanks to Kat Jetson for her Geisha Girls interview; additional thanks to the Geisha Girls for round robin-ing their mugshots; Four strings on a bass is one too many thanks to Aphid Peewit for his Midnight Evils interview; Break a bottle and charge the audience—a hostile city thanks to Jeff Clayton for the Bad Vibes interview; additional, "uhh, we wouldn't have photos without your help" thanks to Larry Kay; It's all too often like a digital version of walking in on someone beating off thanks to all of our record reviewers—Puckett, Brian Mosher, Jason K., Speedway Randy, Donofthedeath, Aphid Peewit, and Cuss Baxter; Although some college literature professors shun the written word, unless they're paid to care, thanks to Gabe Rock and Brian Mosher for zine reviews.

RAZORCAKE

Issue #23 Dec. 2004 / Jan. 2005

PO Box 42129,
Los Angeles, CA 90042
www.razorcake.com

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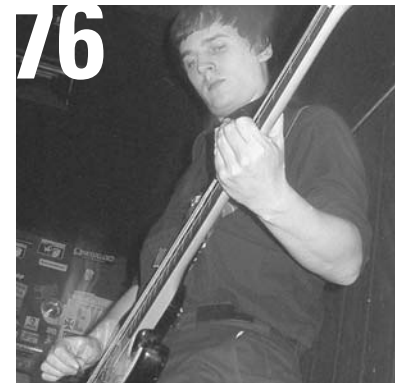
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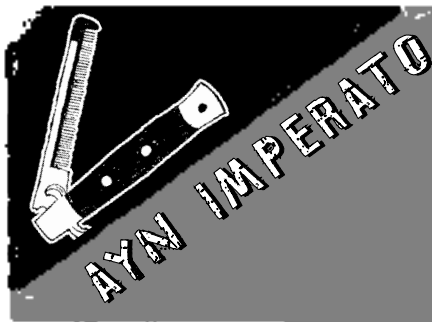
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Razorcake is distributed by Big Top Newstand Services, 2729 Mission St., Ste.201, SF, CA 94110, info@bigtoppubs.com
Razorcake/ Gorsky, Inc. Board of Directors are: Todd Taylor, Sean Carswell, Dan Clarke, Katy Spining, Leo Emil Tober III
Razorcake and www.razorcake.com are put together by Sean Carswell, Todd Taylor, Josh Lane, Megan Pants, Skinny Dan, ktspin, and Felizon Vidad

Razorcake is bi-monthly. Issues are \$3.00 ppd. in the US. Yearly subscriptions (six issues) are \$15.00 bulk rate or \$21.00 first class mail. Plus you get some free shit. These prices are only valid for people who live in the US and are not in prison. Issues and subs are more for everyone else (because we have to pay more in postage). Write us and we'll give you a price. Prisoners may receive free single issues of Razorcake solely via Left Bank Books, 92 Pike St., Seattle, WA 98101, who have a book-for-prisoners program. Want to distribute Razorcake in the United States? The minimum order is five issues. You have to prepay. For \$10.00, you'll receive five copies of the same issue, sent to you when we do our mailout to all of our distros, big and small. Email <sean@razorcake.com> for all the details.



90808

It was pure, sexy, evil.

JUST A NOTE: The following story is entirely fictional. I mention this as I've been accused of having affairs with my own fictional characters in the past but am not, at this time, capable of this unholy feat.

Sinner

It was summer when we laid her down dead. I'd had that cat damn near half my life and it was all my fault. I'd killed her by accident, with my evil ways.

I sat with my friend Veronica in the veterinarian's office on Eighth Avenue, tears erupting. The vet eased the syringe into Butterball's fat white furry cat body. He looked up at me with droopy eyelids. "I'm sorry," he said.

"She used to just flop all over the house," I told him. "Just walk to the center of the room and flop her big body all over the wood floor."

"Flop," the vet repeated, closing his lips in a most wrinkled way. His light blue lab coat was riddled with yellowish stains. He looked like he had had a bad day.

I thought of when she used to plop down on the floor, her belly fat expanding out into an almost flat pancake of white fur. She'd lie in her pancake and look up at you with heavy-lidded yellow eyes. Let out a silent cry. When she meowed it was mute—a silent whisper of air. Only her jaws clicked open and shut as she raised her head, bobbing it up and down with anticipation as if you could hear her like a dog's silent whistle.

We had the body boxed up and drove around and around the city wondering what to do with the little cardboard coffin. I just held it in my hands. We finally buried her at the base of a large tree in a small woods outside of town. We used old tin soup cans for shovels to dig an obscenely large oblong ditch—suitable for a small human, really—in the packed soil. Veronica said we had to dig it deep or dogs would come and dig up the furry body. Together we piled rocks like a stone blanket over the loose dirt of the cat grave. As I settled the last one, I looked at the pile of rocks. The events of the past few weeks fell into place in my mind, one by one, like the stones.

First, I met Jake. I never intended to cause trouble. I was troubled enough. Jake tripped over me at a club one night and tipped his whole life over so hard it slid into hell. I spilled beer on his arm. His entire body, actually. Our eyes met, locked. His were odd small slants; tiny slashes sliced into his face but they were sparkling deep, full of pure soul. My soul had taken an extended hiatus. I was looking for it any

place I could—in the trashed bedrooms of strange boys, in the seedy backs of bars. I had been through a miserable string of affairs and felt hollow as an empty bottle. My soulless beer-spilling self looked up at him and we just clicked. Our eyes slid into place—*snick*—like a bullet sliding into a barrel. The perfect crime.

Jake looked down at his dripping arm. It was ridiculously thin. Tattooed. And now very wet with beer.

"They're all wearing beer this season," he laughed, looking down at his wet shirt. His laugh was high, horsy.

"Jesus. Sorry!"

"Just a little moist," he said, wringing the bottom of his t-shirt in both hands. A stream of yellowish fluid fell and splashed between us.

"It's a good look for you," I stated, pointing awkwardly at his back. "A beer cape. I like it."

We talked for a while about motorcycles, exchanged bar stories, lame most-embarrassing-moment stories—like the time I played pool for an hour with my skirt wadded up in the back of my fishnets, with full underwear exposed. I couldn't believe I was telling him these things.

"Once during a show with my old band Fargo," he explained, his black spiky hair standing alert, "I jumped off my amp and split my pants clean up the crotch. I wasn't wearing any underwear." He took a slug of beer. "I do that."

"Heh, heh," I laughed. "Thanks for the warning."

When the bands finished and were loading out their gear he came up and said, "I gotta split. Here." He thrust a crinkled cocktail napkin into my hand and took off.

"Jana," I said after him. "My name's Jana." But he was already gone.

I unfolded the napkin. It had his email address on it, no phone number. That seemed strange. Impersonal. I was a little dismayed. Even more dismayed when I read his username: "Ace." I gave a secret little grimace to myself. *Ace*. Good god.

I emailed "Ace" the next night around nine and he answered only two hours later. We sent several messages back and forth, witty little flirtations, but not once did he ask me out. Over the next two weeks we talked about life, our innermost dreams, past relationships gone sour. He told me about his room full of KISS memorabilia. I told him about my extensive Pez collection and how my cat Butterball had chewed one of my favorites just a few weeks ago—the Yoda Pez.

Finally I wrote him: "So, do you want to get together and spill alcoholic beverages on each other again?" The next day, a Wednesday, he wrote, "Jana—I am entirely too dry and would

love to once again be spilled upon. Let's meet at The Albion at nine. —Ace"

We met at the bar and the first thing he did was produce a beer from behind his back and present it to me. Inside the pint glass, hovering murky at the bottom of the amber fluid was a Yoda Pez. I smiled and peered deep inside. Through the round glass, his green plastic head was enlarged grotesquely on its beige stalk. "I got it from a street vendor," he explained. "Just today. It was fate."

"I can't believe that," I said, fishing Yoda out with two fingers. "This is amazing."

Yoda dried out on the bar while we eased into conversation. "So what's up with that username? *Ace*," I muttered.

He stared at me blankly for a moment. "Ace. Like Ace Frehley, from KISS."

"Ohhhhhh," I answered, the flash of enlightenment sparking dully across my brain, then sputtering out. "Of course."

"Yeah, the most bad ass guitar player in history! What, did you think I was some kind of dork?"

"You are a dork."

He smiled a grin of slightly crooked teeth. He had a quarter inch gap between the two front ones. He later showed me how he could spit beer between the gap.

A stream of hipsters filtered in, clogging the narrow artery of the entrance. We moved to a more private sector of the bar. In a back wooden booth in the red seamy light we talked in low tones, hushed and hurried words that blended comfortably together into one long streaming thought. He secretly watched re-runs of *Dynasty*. I watched *Dynasty*, too. In that moment it was like we were soulmates living our separate existences on opposite sides of town.

When the bar closed he said he would walk me home. We were giddy from beer and the conversation and the night. At my doorstep when I invited him in, he told me he better let me go. He leaned in slowly and kissed my neck. I reached to return and he awkwardly grasped my elbow.

"There's something I need to tell you, Jana."

"You used to be a girl," I stated, squeezing where his boobs might once have been.

"No," he said. "I have a girl. A girlfriend."

My lips fell open, incredulous. "Jesus, you prick!"

"I'm really sorry. I should have told you sooner."

"Uh, yeah." I stared across the street at a homeless guy in a drooping tan sweater, picking through the trash.

I should have left then. Just said, "No thanks" and a simple "Goodbye." It seems so easy, looking back. But I was too stunned to move. We sat on my front steps in the foggy

streetlight and he told me how they had been together for six years. He didn't love her anymore. They didn't have that "connection" anymore. How he just felt so drawn to me. Red alarms sounded in my head, but I still couldn't move.

"I want to be with you, Jana," he said.

The homeless man had pulled a potted cactus out of the trash and was turning it over and over in his grubby hands.

I didn't email him for nearly five days. During this time I thought of little else. I spent time with my cat Butterball, asking her advice. She didn't have much to say about the matter. Just sat there clicking her jaws.

I met for coffee with Veronica. She sat across from me at the café in a short-sleeved black dress with a red embroidered rose snaking greedily up one side. She was a beautiful, large girl with long dark hair. We were best friends since we were kids and grew up side by side.

She was stable. Relatively. Much more so than I. She had a boyfriend who worked selling car insurance online. I clung to her advice for some shred of sane romantic boyfriend action. At least hers *had* a job. I mean I just dated complete and horrific losers—technical institute dropouts, wannabe rock stars, potheads, TV junkies. One had even worn a sandwich board advertising an acrylic special at a local nail salon. That was his job, just standing there on the street. Most were additionally either alcoholics or Al-Anon-damaged twenty-two year olds who talked about their codependency like it was a separate being that walked around town, ready to suck them back into the alcoholic hell that is/was/could be their lives. But I digress.

"He's a bum," Veronica said flatly. "You hear me? He doesn't even have a job."

"He does!" I explained. "He has worked at a comic book store—the *same one*—for five years. If that's not stability I don't know what is."

"Good god."

"Really! There's nothing wrong with him. He's almost a regular guy."

Except, I thought, that he drank a little much and, apparently, had the capacity for great lies.

"He even has an almost natural color hair."

"Who cares about his hair? He's got a girlfriend! That's a major flaw in a guy!"

"I know."

"Well, you know what to do."

"I do," I said. "Know."

I called him for a drink. "Just to talk."

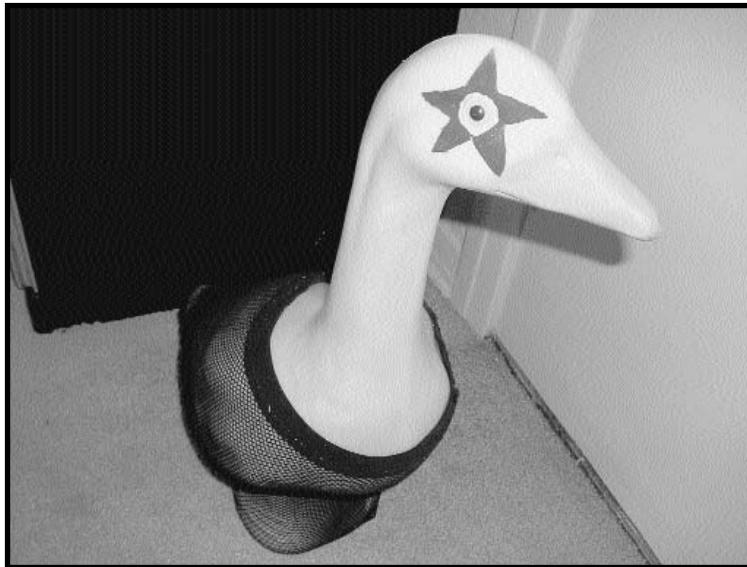
I had, in every way, intended to do the right thing. We met on my front porch where we drank from the cans of beer he brought over. We drank. We talked. Four hours later we were upstairs in the blue hallway of my apartment shucking our clothes off faster than cornhuskers in July. His chain wallet clanged to the wood floor. We made out in a pile of his work pants, my thrashed print skirt and our matching studded belts. We had sex in my room underneath

two hundred trembling Pez.

Butterball took to him immediately. Afterwards, lying on our sides in our underwear on the floor, she paraded up on top of him and ceremoniously flopped down on his side. Her paws jutted out, crossed, and her belly sagged down over his hip, casual, in an almost rock and roll way. She had staked her claim.

A few hours later I asked him, "What are you still doing here? You have a life waiting for you."

He mauled the cat's ears absentmindedly. His pale blue eyes stared at me, murky with a tangle of thoughts. "I like it here."



"You shouldn't."

"I do though."

We were silent. He moved his hand to my back, scratching lightly there.

The next night he came over again. I lit some Virgin Mary candles in the house, along with some others along the windowsills, to drive out the evil we had spawned. We drank a bottle of dimestore whiskey he pulled out from a paper bag and sat out on the fire escape. Our feet dangled down over the street, honking cars.

"Sandra thinks my KISS dolls are stupid," he stated. Below, the cars pressed on through the tight jam. "But you don't."

"Some people just don't understand these things," I told him. "I mean, if only I had KISS Pez, then things would be perfect. Then we could both be happy." He stared at me. Then he kissed my chin.

When we finished the bottle we crept back inside. All the candles' wax had turned soft and hot. A faint burning scent filtered through the room.

We sat on the floor. He leaned back against my old chaise lounge that I had dragged in from the street. He pulled out a pocketknife from his pants pocket, clicked it open. "I can't go back to a world without KISS figurines," he laughed and dug the tip of the blade into his forearm. He sliced it quickly upwards. A burst of crimson sprang from the cut in a long red line. We both sat there watching as though all words had been sucked from the room into the blade. The candles flickered.

I started to chuckle, shaking silently. Uncontrollably. I couldn't help it. "That was stupid."

He burst out laughing. "I'm an idiot."

We laughed, then sat in the dark as the line of blood thickened and hardened. He crawled over and we held each other for a while. Slowly, as though the act had drained the last of our energy, we fell into sleep.

A few hours later I woke up covered in blood. The scab had broken open, dripping over the both of us. I woke him up and we had sex with the blood rubbing, sliding between his chest and my breasts like bleeding under warm water. It was pure, sexy, evil.

Afterwards, he turned me over, facing away from him. He wrapped his arms around me tighter, rocking, until I was enclosed in a strange cocoon of his bloody bony limbs. The cat lay flat in the corner, watching.

Next morning an email: *If it takes 100 Pez to convince you how much I want to be with you, I'll find them.*

I didn't want to become The Other Girl. The Mistress Girl. It seemed fateful that if left to continue I would contract some rare incurable venereal disease or perish in a fiery crash. I sought redemption. I smiled and nodded at old people. I became deliberate in all my motions, Careful Girl, Together Girl, drinking my morning coffee with intent, making sure I didn't carelessly cross the road too fast lest I become Roadkill Girl. Things that happen to those with minds crowded with thoughts. To bad girls. To sinners like me.

Jake came over, as he did many times during those few weeks. We turned on the TV and the *Brady Bunch* was on. It was the one where Greg goes on a date and his brothers left a box of frogs in the back seat of his convertible. Jake howled with obscene horsy laughter as the frogs land on Greg's date's head and splop right in their pizza.

In the dead quiet of night I lay next to a sleeping Jake. He was heavy in my bed, squooshing the mattress into a sad deep "V." His skin was faintly illuminated, filtered red from the curtain, a stark contrast to his ink-black spiky hair. The darkness of it set off his tattoos, which clung to him like thorny plants twisting around his shoulders, through the crook of his arm, reaching down to his wrists in pointy fingers of faded black ink. I put my hand on his bony chest to feel the slow, thick beat in there, like a tom in a flat ribbed drum.

The next morning after he left the apartment I "carefully stepped" to the coffee shop down the block. As I was carefully stepping home, a conga line of four kids paraded past yelling, "Sinner, sinner, sin-NER! Sinner, sinner, sin-NER!" kicking their legs out on the "NER." Maybe I just imagined it. Maybe they were yelling "winner." I trod grimly home.

It must have been one of the most sweltering days in San Francisco history. A hundred and two degrees at least. Butterball lay flat on her back on the wood boards of the floor, belly up and limbs splayed open like a frog on a dissecting board. The candles on my windowsill had melted to sad soft blobs, leaning toward the sun like strange, misshapen aliens beckoning out the window to an already crazy world.

Jake walked in to the open front door. I was nude, sprawled out on the battered chaise lounge. My tiny drug store fan whirred furiously, spawning only the faintest warm breeze to waft in our general direction. In one large thin hand he cradled a tub of ice cream. He knelt by the lounge and fed it to me—*Blueberry*—from a plastic spoon.

"That cools the soul, don't it?"
 "Mmmmm," I said, pulling the blue, icy cream off the end of the spoon. Jake took off his clothes and climbed on the lounge. He took the pint of ice cream and dripped its melted contents all over me. At first it felt good, then slowly melted to an unpleasant mess. I looked down at my blue-streaked nude body. "Sticky," I said, realizing that our meetings nearly always included some sort of goo or blood or food.

"Hold on." He leapt up, nude, and left the room. I heard his big flat feet padding across the linoleum in the kitchen. He returned with a glass of ice water. Standing over me he tipped the glass. One clear stream of glorious cold water fell and splashed against my chest, drops rolling around the sides of my breasts. He bent and licked them off. Then did the same to my arms, thighs, until the skin was cooler to the touch. With the last third of the glass he raised it and dumped it over his tattooed chest and back, shaking out every drop from the glass.

We had sex on the cool wet mattress without a sound, except my drug store fan whirring to the relief of no one. Only the sun shifted slightly in the sky, bending its strange wax aliens toward the window so close they flattened themselves against the glass.

The next day I was peeling them off the sill when the phone rang. I picked it up with one hand, holding a handful of pink wax blobs in the other.

"So, have you dumped the creep yet?" Veronica stated.

"God, that's so... blunt."

"Well you either have or you haven't," she explained. Her voice sounded preoccupied as though she was painting her toenails while making this reminder call. *Don't forget to dump your boyfriend today*, as though it was something a person might forget.

"Well have you?" she asked, impatient.

"Um, not exactly."
 "Not exactly? What are you waiting for? God, Jana! How would you feel if you were that other girl? His *real* girlfriend."

How could I explain? I knew what she was saying. I knew it was lame. "Can't I have a little joy?" I implored. I didn't have much.

There was a long exasperated sigh on the other end of the line. "Oh *Jana*." The way she said it sounded so final. As though she had officially lost all hope. "He's not going to give you what you want, Jana." She paused for dramatic effect. "Ever."

"If you want to meet someone with potential," she continued smartly, "why don't you join a group or something? Take a class. Something you like."

"I went to AA for a while."
 "That's not the same thing!" she shrieked.
 "That's the guys I like."

There was a long silence.

"What can I say then, Jana. Leave him. You'll find someone else."

"I don't want anyone else."
 "You will," she said. "You'll have to."
 I had barely placed the phone back in its cradle when it rang again. It was Jake.

"Can I come over?" he asked.
 "Sure."

Some time later the door buzzer blared. Butterball's eyes widened to full yellow globes. I stupidly slid a Snickers bar—the kind he liked—down the back of my jeans so he would later find it when his hands reached around back there. I instantly regretted the decision. It wasn't nearly as hot as the previous day, but I could already feel it softening.

His face was grim at the door. "Hello Jana." Some of the spikes on his hair were drooping



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS LARSON; CHRISFINGAZ@AOL.COM

and pressed nearly flat in places as though he had slept in an alleyway all night and woken up to come straight here.

"What's going on?"
 "You'd better sit," he stated. I sat. He lowered himself to the battered chair. He sat there silent, head down. Looking into his hands. I could feel the Snickers slowly melting in the crack of my ass.

"Well, what is it? What is it!" I nearly shouted. I was already angry, but didn't know at what.

"Sandra's pregnant. She wants to have the baby," he blurted, glancing up briefly. I glared at him with wide black eyes like the pits of hell. Unblinking. The situation lay knotted on the floor. Outside a woman began screeching obscenities at a man directly beneath our window, drawing out key vowels. *You son of a biiiiiiiiitch! You monumental aaaaaaaaass!*

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"What can I do? She wants to have the baby. I don't." His voice was tense with controlled frustration. His hand fidgeted nervously with his studded bracelet. "But it's her decision, right?"

That's how it works. That's the deal, right?" His eyes were dark, glassy. He looked into the corner of the room where all my papers and junk were piled. I suddenly realized what a mess it had become.

"I can't just *leave* with all this going on," he offered. "I have this responsibility now." His face puckered. "Have to figure out how to pay for stuff."

"But Jana," he continued weakly, finally meeting my eyes. "I don't love her. I love you." The words were like abstract shapes that hung in the air. What did they mean anyway, those sounds? I stared at his crooked teeth.

You jeeeeeeeeeeerk! You jeeeeeeeeeeerk!

He got up and pathetically knelt down at my knees. I felt a sick feeling grasping, then crawling up my spine. "Jana baby, don't give up on us. I want to be with you."

My throat felt tight as a stalk. I knew he was trouble. I should have known you can't permanently bond with people over spilt beer or a mutual love of toys. "I want you to go," I said. "This very second." He wearily stood and walked sheepishly towards the door.

The woman outside began banging her fists into the hood of a car. The thud of denting aluminum shook the apartment window, which vibrated with every blow. "I'll make this work somehow," he said before he left. "We'll figure something out."

He closed the blue painted door. I chucked the flattened Snickers in the trash.

As if on cue, Butterball collapsed on the kitchen floor the next night. Just dropped dead. Nearly. Well, dead enough. I took her to the vet to finish the job. Her kidneys had finally given out, unable to filter out the inner poisons that finished her off.

After that I spent the next several nights alone. She was all I really had, to truly call my own. I took my double shot of karma like a bad bitter pill lodged in my heart to rot. I had lost everything.

I remembered Jake lying on his side, talking to me over the fat KISS candle I had bought for him with the cat's wide body drooping all over his midsection. Peter, Paul, Ace and Gene Simmons were illuminated, a white-hot flame licking above their heads inside the glass. We had sex for nearly three hours that night while that little glass hell burned.

I saw him several months later with Sandra, pushing an ochre-colored stroller down 16th and Valencia with the baby like a tiny pink worm wrapped inside. He looked terribly thin. Sad. She was as fat as he was thin, with a smug little smile and it suddenly occurred to me she must have known. I watched them pass from across the street. Watched them even when they had rounded the corner and gone.

I turned and walked into a coffee shop just to be off the street where they had been. I ordered a cup and sat there looking into it like a black mirror, watching it grow tepid, then cold. I thought of Butterball sleeping silently in the earth in her soil bed, planted like a big soft seed. It comforted me to think of her like that and I imagined I was there, crawling down into her deep dark hole. It was completely still. I lay quietly with the bones.

—Ayn Imperato



SHIZZVILLE

JUKEBOX

PRESENTS

SPOOK CITY U.S.A.

BY THE MISFITS



ART. 08/01



SPOOK CITY U.S.A., SPOOK CITY U.S.A.
SEE THE GHOSTS AS YOU DRIVE BY GRAVEYARDS, SPOOK CITY U.S.A.
DEATHLY SOULS IN AMERICAN GRAVEYARDS, SPOOK CITY U.S.A.

HERE IS WHERE I'LL DIE FOR SURE
I DON'T WANT NO SUBSTITUTE!



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SEE-THRU SPECTERS CRUISE THE HALLWAYS
SPOOK CITY U.S.A.
POLTERGEISTS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROADWAY
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HERE IS WHERE I'LL DIE FOR SURE
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HAUNTED HOUSE ON THE HIGHWAY ROADSIDE
SPOOK CITY U.S.A.
IT EXTENDS AN EERIE INVITATION
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HERE IS WHERE I'LL DIE FOR SURE
I DON'T WANT NO SUBSTITUTE!



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SPOOK CITY U.S.A.

STOP THE MUSIC!!!



I'M SUNG
ALL'A YA!





REV. NØRB

LOVE, NØRB

NOTE TO SELF: IN FUTURE, TRY TO WEAR CLOTHES WHILE FARTING

MY FLOOR IS COOLER THAN SHIT OR TILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS

Let the record show that at 7:44 AM CDT, August 2nd, 2004, i am sitting bare-ass nekkid on my (sorta) newly installed kitchen floor, legs akimbo, heinie slapped unapologetically down upon the layer of cool ("cool" as in "purple and black checkerboard floors installed by an aging, sloppy-drunk punk rock homeowner are cool," as well as the more graphic "this floor is several degrees less warm than my exposed hindquarters" kinda "cool") vinyl that separates my butt-cheeks from the even-cooler (as in merely only less warm) slab o' concrete which serves as my home's foundation, typing frantically away in hopes that i might bash out a column ere i migrate over to the salt mines later this morning. That's right! Typing on the floor, in my birthday suit! And why not? For, O gentle reader, is not today that most Nørblly of all days, the second day of the eighth month, the ever-lovin' Day O' My Birth? The very occasion for which my Birthday Suit—that veritable no-prize of outerwear—gets its name? Hint: *It is!* And what better way to celebrate the acquisition of yet another annual ring around my tree stump's collar than to set here, nekkid as the day i was born (and almost as pink), one with the VCT ("VCT" is hipster argot for "vinyl composition tile," which is sorta amusing if you were around in the '80s and remember that label called BCT, which stood for "Bad Compilation Tapes"), clickety-clacking away in order that i may share the joys of my encroaching (actually, encroached) ancientness with you, the poor fucking schmoe-ass whose birthday today it is not? *HA! IT'S A TRICK QUESTION!* There IS no better way to celebrate this day of maximum Nørbliness! At least not for you! For me there's plenty other better ways to celebrate August 2nd, aka Nørb Day™ (as opposed to Todd Day, who played for the Bucks about ten years ago and didn't really deserve to have a day named after him [no offense, Todd])—unfortunately, i do not have the necessary personnel assembled for the orgiastic revelry one rightly assumes would befit such an occasion were i to have my Ultimate Druthers, so, ha, sitting on the floor typing with the vinyl interfacing with my nether regions it is! (Rest assured, genital reader: **1.** unlike other columnists known to operate computers in the altogether, i do not have shingles; and **2.** i do not have a laptop, either. I have, instead, invented a **RAZORCAKE 14** device [well, perhaps more cor-

rectly a state of being] called the "LLT"—"Loser Laptop"—which basically means i hooked a really long extension cord to my computer, and therefore can haul it pretty much anywhere in the house or out in the yard that i care to go, thusly enjoying all the advantages a laptop computer has to offer [glare, mosquitoes, shock hazards, muck, awkward typing angles, cold tile against my genitals] at a fraction of the cost, with none of the unsightly chocolate mess!) Let this image stay with you a while, gentle reader! Let it burn into the image-retaining areas of your cerebral lunar landscape! Not so much the image of a nude, now-sitting-Indian-style Nørb hunched over his LLT keyboard, hairy elbows poking this way and that a la some manner of spastic and mildly disgusting penny-ante version of The Thinker (not so much the Fantastic Four's enemy [aka the "Mad Thinker"] [and his Awesome Android!] nor the singer for the Minds, i kind of mean the statue of the thinking dude sculpted by Rodin) (presumably right before he terrorized Tokyo with his incessant pterodactyl-flapping and screeching and the what-not and was soundly thrashed by Godzilla™, King of the Monsters)—nay, Reader! Concentrate your mental image-burner not so much on the picture of me haplessly cobbling out a string of words and spaces from my modern stone-age perch upon the kitchen floor, but just kinda focus on the fact that at some lucky point in time, at some lucky point on the floor, my shiny metal ass was, without benefit of culotte nor bloomer, steadfastly affixed for a period of such duration that any gross buttg germs and/or butt-flotsam (and/or, i might hasten to add, scrotum and penis germs and related flotsam as well) (which is to not even take into account the traditional germ and flotsam package which would have been transmitted to the floor via my feet, which comes standard) would have had ample time to migrate floorward and put down roots, Petri dish-like, upon said spot on said floor. I also—upper the disgust ante by perhaps an even order of magnitude—might have, simply to underscore the foulness of it all, jerked off on this spot on the floor as well (i'm not sure. I can change my story dependent on the gender of whom i'm relating the story to) (and, i mean, not EXACTLY this spot i'm currently sitting in. I mean, why shit in your own nest, ya know?), just for effect. Or, hell, maybe i dragged my butt hither'n'yon across the floor via my front paws, like a worm-inhabited doggie. *You'll never know the exact width and breadth of my filth, copper!* However, be that as it may, i men-

tion this whole sordid state of being because, at some point in time, you very well might be over at my house (and, if so, please give me a heads up before you come over, as, for all you know, i might be sitting buck nekkid on the kitchen floor, typing and jerking off). One thing leading to another, once you're at my house, you might find yourself in my kitchen. Once you're in my kitchen, you might find yourself in the process of handling foodstuffs, and, once handling foodstuffs, because you are a fucking clumsy idiot, you might find yourself dropping portions of said foodstuffs on my sorta-newly-tiled kitchen floor—at which point in time, you are like as not going to invoke the Five-Second Rule™, snatch your mishandled morsel off my floor (you would think that right here i would have some sort of Groucho-like rejoinder about flooring your mishandled snatch off my morsel as well, but that doesn't seem to flow quite properly and i am beginning to fart copiously against the tile and therefore must cleave to whatever meager strands of propriety are left to me) (note to self: in future, try to wear clothes while farting), consuming same without further delay. BE THAT AS IT MAY, VISITOR! BUT LET THE RECORD SHOW THAT WE NOW ADD A NEW WILD CARD TO THIS PARTICULAR GAME OF ACEY-DEUCEY-ONE-EYED-JACK in the form of my GUARANTEE TO YOU, AL FRANKEN, that, at (at least) one point in time, i, Rev. Nørb, sat nude upon a portion of this very floor, farting and whacking off and writing and playing canasta and God-knows-what-else. NUDE! COMPLETELY NUDE! WITH NUDITY GERMS AFORETHOUGHT! (and not for medical reasons, either. I'm just bein' disgusting!) Perhaps i cleansed said poisoned area of the floor—heretofore referred to as the Eclipso™ Quadrant (after the DC™ Comics villain who got his powers from a full moon [which apparently turned his head around and around] and a black diamond [which apparently was out on the streets for a living] or something) thoroughly and meticulously after departing the premises. Perhaps i just left the foul residue of butt-goo and Nørblly secretions to fester, and, were one to look closely at the spot where i was sitting, one would notice a fermenting aggregation of bacteria resembling the results of one of those games you used to get at Woolworth's™ where you took the little magnet and drew the beard of iron filings on the little cartoon character. Or, again, maybe not. Perhaps the Eclipso™ Quadrant has been duly sanitized. Perhaps it has not. Perhaps

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the Eclipso™ Quadrant is way back by the mop bucket and my ex-girlfriend's dorm room fridge. Or... hmmm... perhaps it is right in front of the oven or the refrigerator, a yawning swath of filth toward which mishandled morsels cannot help but to gravitate. But it is *somewhere*, working its subtle, behind-the-scenes influence to turn eating off my floor into some horrible form of Russian Roulette (do they make pleasant forms of Russian Roulette?). The rest of this floor is as clean as, i dunno, any floor surface is likely ever going to be at my house. It's Tom Fucking Slick, baby. I, of course, will not give any hints as to which hunk of the floor is the befouled Eclipso™ Quadrant and which portions are merely coated in the standard harmless layer of shoe-borne filth and feces, thus, should you ever wish to eat something you've dropped upon my kitchen floor, do take the time to ask yourself this: FEELING LUCKY, PUNK? ...now, i know what you're thinking: *Gosh Rev. Nørb, booby-trapping your floor by wiping your butt or beating off on it or whatever is certainly very interesting to myself and to everyone else reading this magazine; however, wouldn't you (and begging your pardon here, O Suave One) be better served by, say, wiping your butt on the inside of your oven door instead, thereby bacterially penalizing guests like the Ergs! and Modern Machines who, in some inexplicable fashion specific to touring bands, managed to cook a pizza in your oven with, apparently, about the last inch or so flopped over the edge of the rack and pressed, cheese-first, against the oven door, thusly causing a hideous mass of molten mozzarella, et al, to be baked directly onto the inside of your oven door like some kind of dairy epoxy enamel or something, and requiring the timely intercession of a putty knife (an implement which you no longer own because you got yours so crapped-up tilting your floor that you just threw it away rather than attempting to clean it) to chip and chisel away the offending residue?* Well, yes and no. I mean, the math is certainly there, but i generally hesitate to bring my naked butt in contact with ovens and things of that nature, as that seems to be the type of event that gets the perpetrator listed in the next year's Darwin Awards (plus, i mean, what if a chick comes over and wants to make me lasagna? [kinda like when i was in high school, we were hanging out in my buddy Kirk from the Art Thieves' parents' yard, cooking out and drinking, and Kirk got this brilliant idea that he was going to be "rad" and put out the coals by pissing on the grill. Good one, Kirk. I'm sure tomorrow afternoon when your Dad is serving you up a Urineburger™ for lunch you'll have ample time to reflect upon your contributions to mankind's current pinnacle of achievement whilst savoring the succulent crystals of uric acid generously apportioned in each and every

bite of your lunch]). That said, i also know what else you're thinking: *Golly, Rev. Nørb, I know I speak for Razorcakedom Assembled when i say without fear or favor that we could stand to listen to you attempt to manufacture a column from the events and non-events revolving around your sitting on your naked white heinie on the kitchen floor all day, but... exactly... how... is... this... PUNK?* Glad you asked that, Stu. Actually, i'm not. How dare YOU question ME, the GREAT and POWERFUL Oz?? Here i am on my birthday, not whooping it up with a pitcher of Pucker™-based concoctions, not at the roller

merely a manifestation of the eternal Spy vs. Spy™ graphic design idea indicating both a certain beautiful if formulaic equality (i.e. for every square of color X there is an equal and opposite square of color anti-X) and a certain beautiful but formulaic total conflict (i.e. each square of color X is more or less surrounded by squares of the opposing color anti-X, so they fight, which is punk)—that is to say, the punk rock use of the checkerboard is not to symbolize the harmonious coming together of (theoretical) opposites, it actually indicates taking an utterly neutral and entropic gray and separating it into its two clashing

(but equal) components, black and white. Or, in my kitchen floor's case, black and Good & Plenty™ purple (ya know, i do not really even like Good & Plenty's™ overmuch, yet i've got these now infamous Good & Plenty™ pajamas [THEY'RE NOT "PAJAMAS!" THEY'RE "LOUNGE PANTS!" EXCEPT THE SHIRT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT EXACTLY THAT IS YET!] and on that New Bomb Turks picture disc 45 i did the art for way back when, i used ripped up hunks of a Good & Plenty™ box in the design, so these are obviously candies of great inherent punkitude [i think it's because they look like new wave pharmaceuticals or something, and all the great superheroes like Giant-Man™ and Hourman™ and Underdog™ got their powers from popping pills, so who am i to put the kibosh on quality crimefighting?]). Actually, the punk rock checkerboard usually demands an additional third, uncheckered element—you kinda gotta scrawl a word or something in lipstick or whatever at an angle across the top of the checkerboard (don't even get me started on that project, i STILL haven't gotten

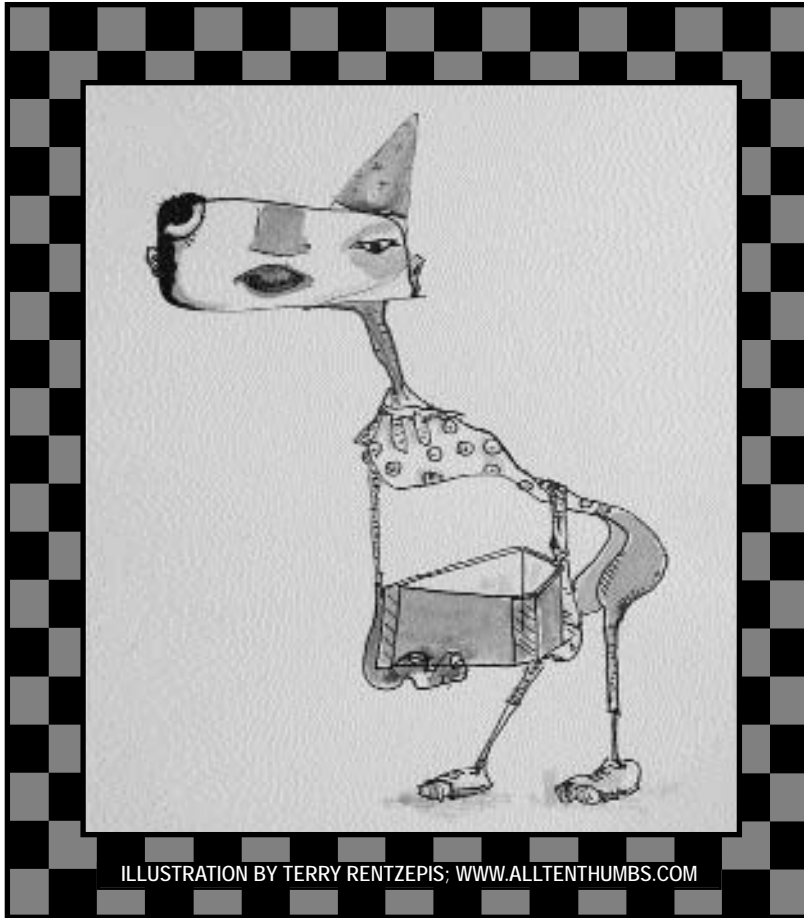


ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY RENTZEPIS; WWW.ALLTENTHUMBS.COM

around to spray painting "THE JAM" on my house yet) (plus i'm out of lipstick), just to show that *ha, not only have we taken the neutral gray, separated it into two warring components and set them in balance (and/or perpetual conflict), we have ALSO added a component that is in conflict with the mannered conflict of the checkerboard itself, that is to say, CHECKERS UNITE TO DO BATTLE WITH YOUR COMMON ENEMY, THE COLORED SCRAWL-AT-AN-ANGLE, WHICH RESPECTS NEITHER YOUR BLACKNESS-AND-WHITENESS NOR THE RECTILINEAR REGULARITY OF YOUR ASSEMBLY!!!* But, hmmm... now that i think about that a bit more deeply (as befits the life of quiet dignity a nude kitchen floor scholar entails), punks don't really hardly ever use checkerboard patterns at all, do they? I mean, there was that Taxi Boys record, but that was taxi, not punk (and, come to think of it, i think Taxi played in Milwaukee last night, which perhaps i should've gone to see, but maybe not). Punks (and New Wavers) actually use grids, not checkerboards. *Whores rouge, punks grid!* I mean, that Clorox Girls album

rink meeting pompom girls and horny mommies, but toiling away bare-ass naked on the kitchen floor, the joints between the tiles pressing red lines into my pallid (but firm and yielding. And also kind of supple) buttock flesh, in the service of filling YOUR journalistic and literary voids, and YOU have the unabashed temerity to squall over the perceived opacity of my floor's claim to punkness?!! Well FUCK YOU, Gene Autry! Fuck you and the unabashed temerity you rode in on! At least have the common courtesy to abash your temerity on my natal day! I mean, cripes! Look at me working! Darning my socks in the night when there's nobody there! What do you care? *My floor is punker than shit! My floor is shitter than heck!! My floor is hecker than punk!!!* First off, not that i need to Justify My Floor to YOU lot (after all, what have you tiled for me lately?), but my floor is a checkerboard. Checkerboards are punk. Actually, checkerboards are ska. Hmmm. You've obviously got me in a rundown here. Well, i mean, the ska checkerboard is an extended metaphor for racial harmony—ebony and ivory and all like that. The punk checkerboard is

around to spray painting "THE JAM" on my house yet) (plus i'm out of lipstick), just to show that *ha, not only have we taken the neutral gray, separated it into two warring components and set them in balance (and/or perpetual conflict), we have ALSO added a component that is in conflict with the mannered conflict of the checkerboard itself, that is to say, CHECKERS UNITE TO DO BATTLE WITH YOUR COMMON ENEMY, THE COLORED SCRAWL-AT-AN-ANGLE, WHICH RESPECTS NEITHER YOUR BLACKNESS-AND-WHITENESS NOR THE RECTILINEAR REGULARITY OF YOUR ASSEMBLY!!!* But, hmmm... now that i think about that a bit more deeply (as befits the life of quiet dignity a nude kitchen floor scholar entails), punks don't really hardly ever use checkerboard patterns at all, do they? I mean, there was that Taxi Boys record, but that was taxi, not punk (and, come to think of it, i think Taxi played in Milwaukee last night, which perhaps i should've gone to see, but maybe not). Punks (and New Wavers) actually use grids, not checkerboards. *Whores rouge, punks grid!* I mean, that Clorox Girls album

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cover, that's a grid, not a checkerboard. Grids are cool because not only do they set color X against color Anti-X, but, by virtue of their non-equality (a lesser being might use the word "inequality" here, but that is not the word i am looking for), the colors drive each other into "foreground/background" roles—so, whereas a checkerboard pattern is a battle across the x- and y-axis fought to a stalemate, with a grid, the battle spills out onto the z-axis, resolving nothing (so therefore more FIGHTING! PUNK!). But, i mean, there are some checkerboard patterns on the covers of old Agent Orange records, but, then again, there are also checkerboard patterns on the covers of old Fastway (!) and Head East (?!!) albums (FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIV-

why there aren't P.R. firms that specialize in clients facing genocide—i mean, it's gotta be a growth industry, doesn't it? Sure, collections might be a bitch and there might not be many repeat customers, but if you do your damn job, you oughtta command top dollar {i'd like to hear the phone calls in that office: "Hello. I am calling from the Sudan. My people are being exterminated by the thousands. You must help." "Look, i told you last week that your bio needs updating, and I can't do anything until I get a decent press photo! Work with me here! Work with me here!" }]]]]], and, as far as i know, on each and every team the guy has worn #2—so the back of his jersey reads "AUGMON 2" whereas i was born on "MON AUG 2." LOOK,

which seems to indicate that a punk floor is a cluttered floor. No arguments there. However, it may be noted that the *cluttered floor = punk floor* axiom was likely concocted specifically with pre-existing flooring in mind. I mean, if you're an adolescent (or an Adolescent or even an adolescent Adolescent), The Man assigns you a floor, and you clutter it, because you are punk, and need to fix the floor (and besides, it's easier than picking up after yourself). However, this particular view on flooring fails/failed to take into account the fact that, many years in the Future™ ("Future™" being the brand of floor wax i slathered bottle after bottle of upon said floor when all was said 'n' done [my wax choice supported by 5) "Into the Future"—Vibrators,

IT SLAYS ME THAT THAT ONE NASCAR GUY DRIVES A CAR ALL PAINTED UP TO ADVERTISE TIDE™ DETERGENT. I'M SORRY, BUT REAL MEN DO NOT USE NAME-BRAND LAUNDRY DETERGENTS!!!

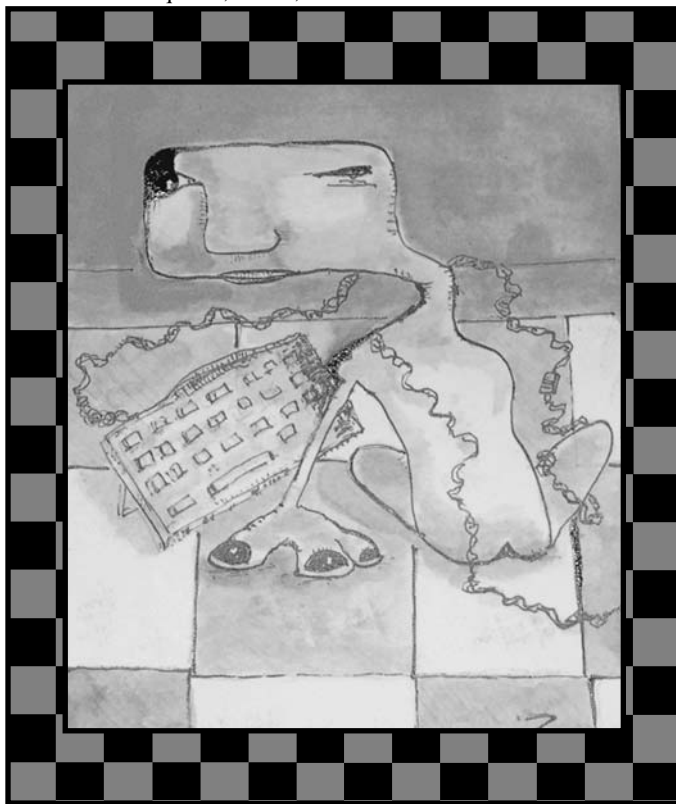
IA FACT: Doug, the bass player for the Didjits, used to work at the same diner that Head East are depicted scarfing down mountainous stacks of pancakes in on the back cover of their 1975 *Flat As a Pancake* LP [i.e., the album with the checkerboard border {plus pancakes} on the front]. Huh. Point well taken. In fact, think about checkered flags. Dude, those NASCAR rednecks WORSHIP the checkerboard! (or maybe they don't. Maybe the checkered flag is merely seen as some quaint, long-established doo-dad like the green jacket of the Masters golf tournament, et al, and, all things being equal, NASCAR fans are actually more into the decals on the cars than the symbol of victory itself [it slays me that that one NASCAR guy drives a car all painted up to advertise Tide™ detergent. I'm sorry, but REAL MEN DO NOT USE NAME-BRAND LAUNDRY DETERGENTS!!!]). Checkerboards, then, are definitely not UN-punk, but, yet, by their implementation in the service of various forms of rabble, are no more exclusively punk than, say, beer. Fascinating'. My floor is definitely a checkerboard, though, and not a grid. Grid = grout, and there ain't no fuckin' grout about it that the grout route was not the route of pursuit. (HEY! FUCK YOU! IT'S MY BIRTHDAY! I'LL BUST MY RHYMES HOWEVER THE HELL I WANT! YOU SEE HOW MUCH FUN YOU CAN SCRAPE OUT OF HAVIN' YOUR BIRTHDAY ON A MONDAY NEXT TIME AROUND!!! [FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I was, originally, born on a Monday. That is why i like the basketball player Stacey Augmon, who just signed with Orlando, i think: He played for about ten different NBA™ teams {including the Atlanta Hawks, for whom, in 1992, he scored (by what means of calculation i am unsure)) the NBA's 6,000,000th point of all time ((six million, coincidentally, being both the estimated number of Jews exterminated by Hitler in WWII, but also the number of non-Jews exterminated by Hitler in WWII [and yet, those other six million folks never get any pub whatsoever. They really should have hired a better publicist. Which brings up the question of

WHEN IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY, YOU CAN CONTROL THE TANGENTS, ALL RIGHT?!?!?!). Therefore, the question remains: *Why—apart from the fact that i'm sitting on it typing a column in the buff—is my kitchen floor punk?* (i applaud those of you who said "because it's lower than the walls and ceiling." You're problem solvers and people pleasers. Wrong answer, though.) Actually, the question even begs a meta-question: *CAN kitchen floors be punk?* I say thee "YES," and support my claim thusly: 1) "All this and more, little girl / How 'bout on the floor, little girl?"—*Dead Boys*, "All This And More," 1977. I mean, it's not "all this and head, little girl / how 'bout on the bed, little girl?", it's not "all this and ouch! little girl, how 'bout on the couch, little girl?"—it's "MORE" and "FLOOR." *Stiv doesn't answer questions like that!* Doubters who wish to point out that the "floor" in question might just as well have been in the living room, bedroom, or Burger King™ restroom as the kitchen, take note: 2) *Another Music in a Different Kitchen—Buzzcocks album title, United Artists, 1978*. I mean, fuck, that's a smoking gun right there. Floors are punk, kitchens are punk, punk + punk = punk (or does it equal 2 punk? [2Punk Shakur?]), i'm good. But wait! Not to overturn my own applearc, but yet 3) "She goes downstairs to the kitchen clutching her handkerchief"—*Beatles*, "She's Leaving Home," 1967 and 4) "Don't try to take me to a disco, you'll never even get me out on the floor"—*Bob Seger*, "Old Time Rock & Roll" (date irrelevant)—so, somehow, kitchen floors are not only punk, but hippie and disco and (ack!) Bob Seger as well!! (note: "Ramblin' Gambler Man" by the Bob Seger System [1969] does, in fact, kick ass) Thus, kitchen floors are not NECESSARILY punk, they merely have the potential punkness molecule dormant within their floorly DNA. This turns the question around to "what KINDS of floors are punk, and what makes them so?" towards which clues might be expected from 5) "History's recorded in the clutter on the floor"—*Adolescents*, "Kids of the Black Hole," 1981,

1978; 6) "We are the Future People of Tomorrow,"—*MTX*, etc.), one might very well come to have, by law, possession of a floor or floors, and, therefore, instead of punkifying the pre-existing (and motherfucking gross—pale green and tan and blue and some kinda fleur-dawhatzit pattern and mold and mildew and OH the horror) floor, one might very well exercise one's right of destruction by ripping and destroying (7) "Rip, rip—rip and destroy!"—*Evil KISS Robots*, "Rip and Destroy," 1978) the old floor, and replacing it with something new (8) "I got a new rose, I got it good"—*The Damned*, "New Rose," 1976). Now, presumably, one would be within the letter of the law were one to replace one's old, unpunkly flooring with new, unpunkly flooring, and then punkify the new flooring via the timely addition of clutter; however, more is expected of me, because i am Reverend Nørb, whose flooring must ooze punkliness and spasticism (not to mention butt-grease and Eclipso™ Quadrants) lest my rep and cred be even further damaged than they have been by that godawful Devil Dogs tribute track my ex-band recorded (for which, of course, i apologize profusely, in the Name of Rock™. Sorry, Rock™!). Therefore, the next question (in a birthday that is truly turning out to be fraught with heavy inquiry) would be: *What TYPES of flooring are punk? Bare concrete with traces of old, carcinogenic adhesive still attached* (you find out all kinds of great stuff when you re-tile your floor, like "don't hit hardened globs of old adhesive with a hammer because it makes cancer dust"—except you almost always invariably find this out about two steps later in the process than you needed to know it to avoid it)? Nah, too redneck. *Linoleum?* Nah, too renterly—The Man puts linoleum on your floor because he knows that you and your friends are just going to spill beer and toss cigarette butts on it anyway, it's kind of like a bib or something. *Wood?* Nah, my house is all metal, and i don't want to offend it. Wood, to me, is like cowshit or leaves or something. Doesn't belong in the house. The only "wood" i want in my swingin' aluminum bachelor pad is

the wood i'm gonna be sharin' with the little girls down on the floor (actually, that's not true. I do own a Willie Wood football card. Plus i own those issues of Daredevil™ drawn by Wally Wood. Plus i own a copy of *West Side Story* on VHS, featuring Natalie Wood [as the busybody Puerto Rican chick who talked Tony the Polack into going down to stop the rumble when Tony had, wisely, talked both the Sharks and Jets into settling their differences via a one-on-one fist-fight between each gang's best fighters—thusly, due to her infernal meddling, fatally cooking the goose of not only Tony, but Bairnarrdo and Riff as well], so i'm afraid *mi casa* is not the wood-free zone i had envisioned). *Ceramic Tile*? Nope, too fancy. Plus you need power tools and shit for that, which is too shop class. *Carpet*? Sure, carpet is punk (9) “Don't you know you'll stain the carpet?”—*Velvet Underground*, “Sister Ray,” 1968), but, i mean, even i don't consider carpet an appropriate flooring choice for the kitchen. The only real choice for a punkly kitchen floor, then, is **VINYL COMPOSITION TILE!** After all, vinyl is certainly punk! I don't even need to support that statement with some manner of musical reference! However... hmmm... shit. Vinyl is also hip-hop and techno, isn't it? Vinyl is even power-pop (10) *The Shoes*, “Black Vinyl Shoes,” 1977, *Black Vinyl Records*). So therefore... hmmm... i've got **KITCHEN** and i've got **FLOOR** and i've got **VINYL** and i've got **CHECKERBOARD**... but, yet, with all those potentially punkly ingredients, i have nothing that is DEFINITELY punk-and-nothing-but. *Egads!* Well, let's look at the brand name of the tile: **AZROCK™**. Now, to me, that breaks down into “AZ” and “ROCK™,” which means (11) *Knockout Pills—Tucson*, 2002-present... which even i have to admit is a stretch. Hmm. I did scoop the tile adhesive (and, believe you me, that vile shit is the Devil's bubblegum!) out of the bucket with half a Tantrums 45, but that's kind of a stretch on multiple levels. I did use that cool old retro-commercial type o' tile, with the white streaky flecks in it, and i've got the grain of the purple tiles running east to west whilst the grain of the black tiles runs north to south, so the north side of the purple tiles faces east, in a way, while the east side of the black tiles faces south (12) “The north side of my town faced east and the east was facing south”—*The Who*, “Substitute,” 1966), but that will hardly stand-up under rigorous cross-examination. So. Huh. We are pretty much left with the color of the tiles themselves. I say they're purple and black (fairly similar to the cover of (13) *Boris The Sprinkler*, 8-Testicled Pogo Machine, 1995, *Bulge Records*, but not exactly so). The tiles themselves say that they are “Mulberry” and “Midnight” colored, which yields (14) “Midnite Deposit”—*Ill Will*, 1981, but also (15) “Stop Beating Around the Mulberry Bush”—*Bill Haley & His Comets*, 1952, and sure, the Comets generally rock (they remain, to this very day, one of the best live bands i've ever seen), but, uh, Mulberries kind of don't. Bushes SURELY don't (16) *41st President—1989-1993*; (17) *43rd President—2001-2005*; (18)

“Shave It”—*Boris The Sprinkler*, 2000 A.D.). Plus it's “MidNITE Deposit” anyway. So, uh, fuck! I'm stumped. I bust my fucking ass ripping and destroying and tiling and styling and coating every object in my home with errant globs of adhesive and i still have no tangible evidence that my floor is punk. *How can this be? How can this be?* I go to class, dazed and confused (like most people having a midlife crisis, i find going back to school a very effective stopgap measure, essentially relieving me from the terrible onus of having to really think about my future for another four years). The instructor, demonstrating an animation principle, creates two squares, which, in a fit of wondrous coinci-



dence, just happen to be the same black and the same purple (“midnight” and “mulberry”—whatever) as my tiles. “I think this is what they call a ‘color DON’T’” she deadpans. I inform the instructor that i just tiled my fucking kitchen using that particular “color don’t” as a model of ultimate fucking cool, or words to that effect. She politely backpedals: “Well, **MAGENTA** works well in CERTAIN situations...” Wait. Wait. Wait. “Magenta?” My tiles are not fucking “magenta.” They might be “mulberry,” or they might be “purple,” but they are NOT magenta. Nor is that square you created. I argue the point—not of whether or not my tiles suck or rock, but whether the color she is pointing to, which only incidentally is the color of half my kitchen, is “magenta” or something else. Anything else. She, and the rest of the class insist: *That square is magenta. Officially.* Eventually, i dope out the problem: I am a child of print media. This means i see the world as being composed of four primary colors of ink: Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black (white we get for free!)—otherwise known as the CMYK color model. *But!* These bewildered young whippersnappers in class with me, they don't know shit about the printed page. They're children of the Computer Age. They see the world as being composed of three colors of tiny light

bulbs: Red, Green, and Blue—otherwise known as the RGB color model. The RGB People, apparently, have “officially” labeled the SO not-magenta color that the tile people call “Mulberry” and i call “kind of bright purple” as “magenta” (or, as i would insist it be called “RGB magenta,” lest it be confused with the real deal). Huh. *Curse these Computer Huns and their puny 72 dpi brains! These bastards don't know magenta from Mulberry! What's this generation coming to???* I attempt to inform the class as to the error of their ways, but my arcane babble about the analog universe falls on unrec-
 ceptive, Godsmack-damaged ears. Deflated, i return home, and dejectedly attempt to make life

better by putting the records strewn about all black and naked-like in front of my stereo back into their respective jackets. AND, FROM THIS MORASS, SALVATION!!! Upon re-jacketing the Exploding Hearts LP, what should i find the band to be depicted standing upon? **A FLOOR!** And not MERELY a floor! A floor floored with **VINYL COMPOSITION TILE** in a **CHECKERBOARD PATTERN!** And what colors, gentle readers, ARE those very tiles in that very checkerboard on that very floor upon that very band is depicted on that very album cover? **BLACK AND MAGENTA!!! THE VERY COLORS WHICH MY DIMWITTED OPPRESSORS CLAIM MY FLOOR TO BE!!!** Okay, sure, that might not be what color those tiles were in “real” life (they could've been white and colored magenta by the cover artist), and their tiles are the one true real CMYK (aka “Process”) Magenta, and my tiles are actually merely only RGB Magenta—magenta via false accusation, as it were—but, goddammit, black-and-magenta checkerboard vinyl composition tile is black-and-magenta checkerboard vinyl composition tile, CMYK, RGB, DTK or LAMF—and who or whom am i to argue my tiles' non-magenta-ness with the best and brightest young minds of their generation???! My kitchen floor is **ABSOLUTELY, POSITUTELY, HYDROLUTELY 100% PUNK** because (allowing for aforementioned caveats) it's more or less the same floor as on the *Guitar Romantic* album! **PURE PUNK! I WIN!** I don't see frickin' **HEAD EAST** posing on a magenta and black VCT floor, RGB or otherwise! I don't see frickin' **FASTWAY** posing on a magenta and black VCT floor! I don't see the frickin' **BEATLES** posing on one! The only band i see depicted posing on such a floor (or CMYK cousin thereof) is the Exploding Hearts, and they are **POSITIVELY, ABSOTIVELY, HYDRÖSPLIVLEY, 100% P-U-N**—... er, one second please... i've just been handed this *Guitar Romantic* back cover, which clearly states that... that... gulp... that the record is “100% **POP.**” *Ack! I am ruined!* My mad quest to empirically prove my floor punk has just run out of floor wax. That is to say that i've got... wait for it... “**No Future™**” (19) “**No Future for you**”—*Sex Pistols*, “*God Save the Queen*,” 1977). Thanks a lot, you've been great. Enjoy Head East.

REV. NØRB

—Løve, NørB



SEAN CARSWELL

A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

EVERYTHING YOU READ IN THE NEW YORK TIMES OR SEE ON CNN IS PROPAGANDA.
THE BIGGEST PIECE OF PROPAGANDA OF ALL TIME IS THE BIBLE.

There I was, the poster boy for the independent media, conducting an interview for a magazine that I helped to start, that I write for, edit, do graphic design for, wrangle distribution for, drive to the printer, take home from the printer, box up and mail out to stores and distributors, and so on. Standing next to me was another independent media poster boy, Todd Taylor. Todd was there to take pictures for a magazine that he helped to start, that he writes for, does graphic design for, wrangles advertising for, drives to the printer, takes home from the printer, and, well, you get the point. Todd and I were both wearing bowling shirts. It wasn't intentional so much as, when you meet a US Congressman, you want to look presentable. The most presentable thing either of us had when we left our respective apartments that morning was a bowling shirt. After all, they button up and have a collar. Anyway, I stood there in my bowling shirt interviewing Congressman Henry Waxman. We were in a lush Malibu state park. It had taken me two months to get this ten minutes with Waxman. I had a lot of questions for him. He had a lot of answers for me. The congressional aide who stood at Waxman's elbow kept looking at his watch and tugging on Waxman's arm. Waxman kept shrugging the aide off, because Waxman had been trying to drum up press about this stuff for months, and if the only person who would talk to him about it was a punk rocker in a bowling shirt, if the only magazine that would run an article on this was *Razorcake*, if the only people who'd read about it were *Razorcake's* ten thousand readers, so be it. Waxman at least had an audience, and he was willing to talk.

So what was Waxman so gung ho to tell me and what was I so gung ho to hear? In a nutshell, President George W. Bush had fabricated reasons to invade Iraq, and Vice President Dick Cheney's former oil company, Halliburton, got the contract to take over the oil fields of Iraq once the US took over the country. If you looked closely at the situation, the only verifiable reason for invading Iraq was to take over the oil fields. Even before the war started, the CIA, the UN, and every other agency in a position to know knew that there were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no Iraqi nuclear weapons program, there was no link between Iraq and al Qaeda, and Saddam posed no threat. Waxman did look closely. He posted all the relevant government documents on his web site. You could read the de-classified intelligence reports; you could read Halliburton's no-bid contract (the one where the US gave them over a billion dollars to pump Iraqi oil); you could read the forged intelligence that claimed Iraq was trying to buy uranium from Niger. Waxman made it easy for reporters to cover the situation, and one of the only bites he got was a punk rocker in a bowling shirt.

As the interview narrowed down, I asked Waxman why no one was covering this story. "I don't understand why this isn't a bigger story," he told me. "The press has not—with some exceptions—given this story the attention it deserves."

So, in other words, he just rephrased the question in a form of an answer. I asked him again, more directly, "Do you have any theories as to why?"

"No," Waxman said. And with that Waxman gave in to the aide tugging on his arm.

I rode home from Malibu thinking about my own theories as to why no one was covering this story. I started to ask myself the larger questions, like what is news? Who decides what to cover and what not to cover? Do we have a free media in this country, or are the big media corporations really just PR firms for government and big business? Has it all dwindled down to the lowest form of propaganda?

It took me two months to get that interview with Waxman. It took another two months before that interview ran in *Razorcake* #15. I still beat CNN to the punch on covering the story.

Fast forward a year. The war in Iraq rages on. US soldiers die every day. Congress orders an investigation into Cheney's ties to Halliburton. It comes out that Halliburton still pays Cheney an annual salary of \$162,392. On top of that, he owns over \$18,000,000 in Halliburton stock. Halliburton secured another one billion dollar contract in Iraq, on top of the \$1.25 billion no-bid contract that Waxman and I had talked about. So Cheney's company is currently drilling oil in Iraq, and US citizens are now paying, on average, about an extra buck a gallon for gas. After a year of searching, the US military is still unable to find any weapons of mass destruction, and, really, if Iraq had any WMDs, wouldn't they have used them when the US first invaded? No evidence of any Iraqi nuclear weapons program was found. The best reason the Bush administration can come up with for all this death and destruction is that Saddam Hussein was a bad guy. Still no one in the mass media pays any attention to Waxman and his mountain of evidence. It never really made a bleep on the national news radar.

In the meantime, Michael Moore has released the documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The documentary seeks to fill the huge gaps that the corporate media has left in their coverage of the Bush administration and the war in Iraq. Despite the fact that most of the sources Moore used in the movie were mainstream news sources, and despite the fact that Moore hired fact checkers from the *New York Times* to verify the information in his movie, *Fahrenheit 9/11* was immediately attacked in the mass media as being propaganda. This made me think more about propaganda, what it is, and how it's used.

The first question: is *Fahrenheit 9/11* propaganda? The answer: yes. That movie is definitely propaganda. By definition, propaganda is the systematic dispersal of a belief. Michael Moore believes that Bush is a lousy president. He disperses this belief through his movie. That makes his movie propaganda. By the same token, every journalist has certain beliefs. Those beliefs filter into his reporting, and that makes his report propaganda. This article I'm writing is propaganda. Everything you read in the *New York Times* or see on CNN is propaganda. The biggest piece of propaganda of all time is the Bible.

That said, propaganda isn't necessarily a bad thing. Our views on everything in the world that we can't see through our own eyes come to us through propaganda. Everything we know about, say, Iraq, we know from news reports (assuming that most of us have never been there). When those reporters went to Iraq to report on it, they all had their own belief system. That system inevitably filtered into their reports. That made their reports propaganda. And that's fine. You can't expect people to completely abandon their beliefs when writing. The best you can do is recognize that it's all propaganda and think critically about the news you receive. So how do we do that?

There are essentially two kinds of propaganda that we're faced with. The first is a rational propaganda driven by enlightened self-interest. In other words, it represents a belief, but the argument is logical and it would be in the best interests of society to act according to these beliefs. Part of *Fahrenheit 9/11* is propaganda driven by enlightened self-interest. At the beginning of the movie, Moore revisited the 2000 presidential election in Florida. He criticizes the Florida state government for banning thousands of legitimate Black voters from voting. His propaganda was to propagate the belief that registered Black voters should be allowed to vote. The logic is solid. It works like this: registered voters should be allowed to vote, regardless of their race. Black voters are registered voters. Therefore, they should be allowed to vote. The premise is true and the conclusion drawn is logical. Check the *modus ponens*, brother. It's tight. In order to qualify as enlightened self-interest, the next step would be to decide whether or not it's in the best interest of society to allow Black people to vote, and,

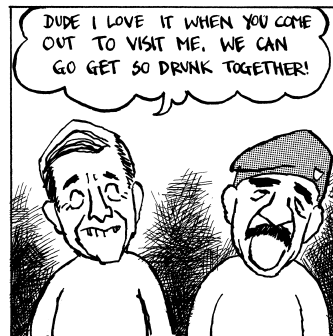
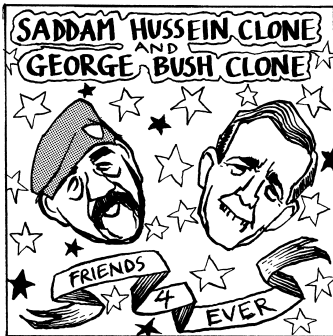
SEAN CARSWELL

obviously, it is. Everyone who lives in a society deserves an equal say in how that society is run. Black people live in this society, so Black people deserve an equal say.

So yes, it's propaganda, but if everyone acted according to this type of enlightened self-interest, then society would be a utopia. (This isn't just my belief, by the way. I'm paraphrasing most of this from Aldous Huxley's essay "Propaganda in a Democratic Society.") You really can't attack Moore for this particular argument. Yet Moore was attacked relentlessly for his propaganda. The same news media that completely ignored Waxman's irrefutable evidence about a false war dedicated a small forest's worth of paper to calling *Fahrenheit 9/11* propaganda. Why is that?

Well, the answer starts to emerge when we look at the second kind of propaganda, which is geared towards gratifying the basest passions of those in power. For example, Bush and Cheney are getting richer off the war in Iraq. When they keep insisting that the war in Iraq is a good thing, they're spreading propaganda to satisfy their own greed. Greed is one of

The implications of that are scary, and the gist of the argument is rock solid. The mere fact that the best the *Star* could do in trying to refute *Fahrenheit 9/11* was to try to nit pick how many Saudis were questioned before the White House flew them out of the country speaks well of how factually solid *Fahrenheit 9/11* probably is. The truth is, no issue of the *Ventura County Star* could hold up to the scrutiny that Moore's film has been withstanding. So why are newspapers like the *Star* trying so hard to attack *Fahrenheit 9/11*? Why are they putting the word "fiction" right next to the title of Moore's movie in the headline for their article on *Fahrenheit 9/11*, when the fact is, they didn't find any fiction? Could it be that papers like the *Star* are humiliated by a movie like *Fahrenheit 9/11*? Is there any way Moore could've made a documentary showing such glaring holes in the mass media's coverage of the Bush administration without the mass media getting defensive about the documentary? Could it be that papers like the *Star* are feeding us propaganda that's worse than Moore's propaganda because the newspapers' propaganda is fueled by the base impuls-



(ABOVE) GOOD PROPAGANDA, BAD PROPAGANDA, OR JUST FUNNY? A COMIC BY THE DRUNKEN MASTER HIMSELF, KIYOSHI NAKAZAWA.

those base passions. It's also reasonable to believe that George W. Bush may have wanted vengeance on Saddam Hussein. After all, Hussein tried to kill Bush's father. So part of Bush's motivation in insisting that the war in Iraq is a good thing could be vengeance, which is also a base passion. And, back to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, there were a lot of attacks on the movie in the press, but those attacks were characteristically weak.

For example, my local newspaper, the *Ventura County Star*, ran an article titled "Research Reveals Facts, Fictions in 'Fahrenheit.'" The authors of the article found only one "fiction" in Moore's movie. In the movie, Moore claims that after the September 11th attacks, when no one was allowed to leave the US by plane, the US government flew 142 Saudi Arabian nationals out of the US. Among those Saudis were members of the bin Laden family. Since the majority of the people involved in the September 11th attacks were Saudis—including the leader, Osama bin Laden—Moore argues that they should've been retained for questioning. The *Ventura County Star* disputes Moore's point by saying:

In the film, Craig Unger, author to the book *House of Bush, House of Saud*, tells Moore that none of the Saudis underwent serious scrutiny.

"So a little interview, check the passport, what else?" Moore asks.

"Nothing," Unger replies.

The Sept. 11 commission's interim report said law enforcement interviewed 30 of the 142 Saudis, including 22 of the 26 people on the flight that took most of the bin Laden relatives out of the country. The report says none was of interest to the investigation.

So basically, the *Star's* argument is that Moore insinuated that none of the Saudis flown out of the US were questioned, when in fact, 30 of the 142 were questioned. And, according to the *Star*, that's the "fiction" of *Fahrenheit 9/11*. It's a weak argument, though, because Moore doesn't claim that the Saudis should've been questioned, he argues that they should have been retained for questioning. It's a reasonable argument. If your brother plotted an attack on the World Trade Center that killed thousands of people, you can bet that the FBI would question you. Not only that, they would tell you not to leave the country until the investigation was over. That's the way our law enforcement system works, and, in this particular case, it's reasonable. But not only were the bin Ladens not retained, they were actively flown out of the US by the US government.

es of jealousy and humiliation? These questions bring us back to the definition of the second kind of propaganda.

In "Propaganda in a Democratic Society," Aldous Huxley wrote:

Propaganda in favor of action dictated by the impulses that are below self-interest offers false, garbled or incomplete evidence, avoids logical argument and seeks to influence its victims by the mere repetition of catchwords, by furious denunciations of foreign or domestic scapegoats, and by cunningly associating the lowest passions with the highest ideals, so that atrocities come to be perpetuated in the name of God and the most cynical kind of *Realpolitik* is treated as a matter of religious principle and patriotic duty.

It's a pretty heavy quote, I know, but basically Huxley is warning us to be wary of propaganda that's driven by base emotions like greed, jealousy, humiliation, and vengeance. He's also giving us the outline of a model that democratic administrations use to spread propaganda. In short, they avoid logic, give incomplete information, create scapegoats, and repeat catchwords a lot. This is the lowest form of propaganda. This is mind control. This is what we all need to look out for.

First off, does Moore's movie adhere to this definition? Well, he does make a scapegoat out of George W. Bush. The evidence he uses is incomplete, though to give a complete argument of as many topics as he addresses in *Fahrenheit 9/11* would be impossible in the context of a two hour movie. However, his arguments are logical and he avoids the repetition of catchwords. Applying the last part of Huxley's definition is tricky. Is Moore associating low passions with high ideals? Is he trying to act like he's fighting for a better society by ousting an awful president, when in reality, he's really just trying to make a bunch of money? Well, Moore did make a lot of money off of this movie. But was this his motivation? It's always tough to speculate on what motivates people, and it is possible that Moore was motivated by base passions like greed and ego. Still, Moore is an Academy Award winning filmmaker. He's wealthy and well-connected. If he was really motivated by greed and ego, it would be much easier for him to put his politics on a shelf and direct big budget action films. So the argument that his high ideals are motivated by low passions is hard to justify.

So how do we recognize this low propaganda in its purest form? Well, let's take a look over at Fox News. They seem to be operating on the model that Huxley outlined. Here's an example.

Recently, the Republicans in Congress put forth a bill

requesting \$87 billion for reconstruction in Iraq. They proposed to pay for this bill by rolling back the tax cuts that the Bush administration pushed through Congress last year. Senator John Kerry had argued that these tax cuts—which have taken millions of dollars out of education, health care, and social security—needed to be rolled back, so he voted in favor of the bill. From his perspective, it was a win/win proposition. The soldiers in Iraq could be fully funded while social services could get back their funding, and it would be financed by making the wealthiest Americans pay the same percentage of taxes that they'd paid in 2002. When the final version of the bill came to a vote on the Senate floor, the \$87 billion dollars for Iraq were still there, but the tax cuts were no longer being rolled back. Now, the bill would have to be funded by raiding even more money from education, health care, and social security. So Kerry voted against the bill. This is very typical of how Congress works.

The Bush campaign, however, attacked Kerry for this. In a campaign speech, Bush criticized Kerry for “flip-flopping,” for changing his opinions on matters of state. As an example, Bush used this \$87 billion reconstruction bill. He said, “Here’s what [Kerry] said, ‘I actually did vote for the 87 billion before I voted against it.’” The crowd at the rally laughed, presumably at how stupid Kerry is. Around the same time, in a campaign speech, Dick Cheney attacked Kerry for the same bill, saying, “Senator Kerry recently said, quote, ‘I actually did vote for the 87 billion dollar [sic] before I voted against it.’” Again, the crowd laughed.

In the documentary *Outfoxed*, filmmaker Robert Greenwald demonstrates how Fox News covered this sound bite by Bush and Cheney. Fox News showed both of the aforementioned speeches, cutting away after the laughter. Then, *Outfoxed* shows a montage of 22 instances where Fox News repeated the term “flip-flop” in relation to Kerry. Greenwald even shows a Fox internal memo where Fox News Senior Vice President John Moody encourages his journalists to focus on Kerry’s “flip-flopping voting record.”

So how does the coverage of this particular issue hold up to Huxley’s propaganda model? Does it “offer false, garbled or incomplete evidence”? Yes. Kerry agreed to vote in favor of the bill on the condition that rolled back tax cuts would fund it. When that condition was eliminated, Kerry changed his vote. That’s a key piece of evidence because it shows that Kerry never changed his mind. He stood by his principles through both votes. That’s not flip-flopping. Next, does Fox News’s coverage avoid

logical arguments and seek to influence its victims by mere repetition of catchwords? Yes. Twenty-two instances of news anchors repeating the term “flip-flop” would certainly qualify as a repetition of a catchword. Does Fox News furiously denounce a foreign or domestic scapegoat? Yes. They make Kerry a scapegoat, and when they call him, “An opportunistic flip-flopper who doesn’t have any principles,” (as one Fox News anchor did) that denunciation can be qualified as furious. Lastly, does Fox News associate the lowest passions with the highest ideals? Well, again, motivations are a hard thing to judge. I don’t know what Fox News’s motivation is. I know this. Fox News has been lobbying Congress to allow Fox to own a larger share of the television and radio news market. Current anti-trust laws forbid this. Michael Powell, the Bush-appointed head of the FCC, sought to change these anti-trust laws and allow Fox to own more of the media. Congress voted against this, but the fact remains that Bush’s appointee did what he could to allow Fox to own more of the media. Fox followed this up by being very gentle on their coverage of George W. Bush, going so far as to appoint Carl Cameron, who’s wife actively campaigns for George W. Bush, as the senior political reporter on the George W. Bush campaign. Fox News even let Bush’s cousin, John Ellis, predict (erroneously) Florida as voting for Bush in the election night coverage of the 2000 presidential election. So is Fox supporting Bush so that Bush will allow Fox to own more of the media, and therefore make more money? Is Fox associating the high ideal of journalistic integrity with the low passion of greed? It’s reasonable to assume that they are, but that’s just an assumption. Again, it’s very difficult to say what motivates people.

In the end, it all goes back to me standing there in my bowling shirt, interviewing Congressman Henry Waxman, asking him why a false justification for war and obscene wartime profiteering by the Vice President wasn’t news. Because what qualifies as news? Why are false pretenses for a hundred billion dollar war not news, but Kerry’s decision to vote for funding of the war, then vote against it, is? Why are furious denunciations of *Fahrenheit 9/11* news, but the quiet points Moore makes about the president’s family and their ties to the family of America’s number one enemy, Osama bin Laden, are not news? It’s because the propaganda model that Aldous Huxley explained in 1958 still holds true in 2004. And it’s up to us to recognize this when we see it.

—Sean Carswell

SEAN CARSWELL





SHIFTLESS WHEN IDLE

I THOUGHT I WAS THE COOLEST THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD EVER. I WAS GOING TO VOLUNTEER FOR A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND I HAD A THERMOS FULL OF SPAGHETTIOS!

Greetings young voters, NASCAR dads and volleyball moms! By the time you read this, Dennis Kucinich will no doubt be gliding his way to an easy victory, since most Americans want free health insurance and don't want to have anything to do with Iraq! Yes, we are about to usher in a golden age, roughly equivalent to the early '80s hardcore scene! Kucinich is the new Ian McKaye! Howard Zinn is busy preparing the pit, and Michael Moore is the new, uh, Henry Rollins? Ah, how quickly the metaphors break down in these difficult times!

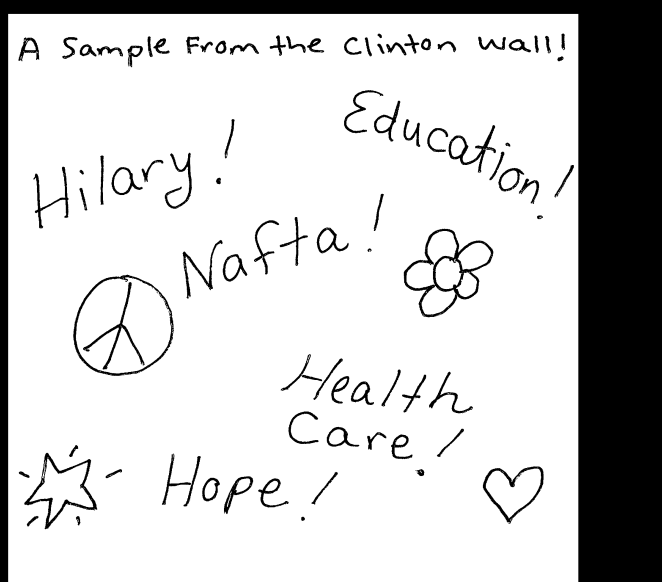
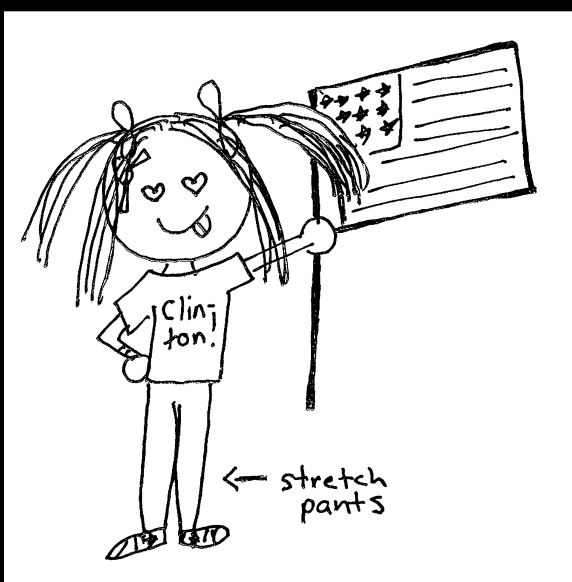
I guess I should just come out and say it: I was a thirteen-year-old volunteer for the 1992 Clinton campaign! Yes, shred my IWW membership card and cancel my subscription to *Maximum Rocknroll!* I helped elect Bill Clinton—when I wasn't busy watching *Silver Spoons* and wishing I owned pink stretch pants.

Allow me to explain. Growing up in my family, you couldn't avoid political discussions. Every night we'd watch the nightly news while eating dinner and my parents would provide a running commentary. You could just say they

backing boy who, politics notwithstanding, I had a crush on), I knew it was time! Time to take back this country! Time to stand up for the ideals of this great nation! Time to call Milwaukee's Clinton/Gore headquarters! And you thought YOU were punk!

The person who answered the phone said to just show up on Saturday, and so that Saturday morning, my dad drove me downtown after packing me a special lunch. On the ride over I thought I was the coolest thirteen-year-old ever. I was going to volunteer for a presidential cam-

MADDY



Anyway, I'm sure that approximately 11.5 percent of *Razorcake* readers are now saying, "Totally punk rock! That's like, dudical, dude! I had no idea!" I base this assumption on the fact that an anonymous punk recently asked me to explain what John Kerry thinks because he "hasn't had time to really pay attention to the news lately." D'oh!

So, while some of us are too busy (read: drunk) to pay attention to politics, plenty of other people are getting involved, even if all that means is throwing empty cans of Sparks at the TV during the local news and saying at least twice a day, "Can I really live with myself if I vote for Kerry?"

In troubled times like these, it's important to look back on the work of activists in previous elections to gain inspiration and hope. And so, I present to you: the shameful grade school involvement of Ms. Tight Pants in the political arena!

were Democrats and leave it at that, but the truth was more complicated and included the fact that they were both registered Socialists while in grad school. And, when my sister had to ask my dad what his favorite song was for a first grade school project he said, "The International," which was also my mom's lullaby of choice for us when we were little.

But by the time I was in grade school they were...voting for Dukakis! The horror! And, like most kids, I believed what my parents believed. Lucky for me, my parents believed that everyone deserves a decent wage, health care and a reasonable weekly supply of Happy Meals (preferably with chicken nuggets).

So by the time the 1992 elections rolled around, I was ready to get involved! After a failed attempt to become a Senate page (which would have been good for at least three issues of *Tight Pants!*), and numerous debates with my classmates (including a feud with one Bush-

paign AND I had a thermos full of Spaghettios!

When we arrived, I was greeted with great interest and enthusiasm. "Wow! You're thirteen and you want to volunteer? That's so cool!" I immediately became the poster child of the Milwaukee Clinton/Gore headquarters. I mean, how many thirteen-year-olds want to spend their Saturdays engaged in presidential politicking?

They set me to work right away, mailing out invitations to events and requests for funds. Then I started going out with other volunteers, handing out yard signs. A few weeks later, I started calling potential voters, explaining the issues to them, and why Clinton was Their Man. Yes, I made calls explaining Clinton's position on the environment and the federal deficit. And I loved it! Soon, I was spending most of my weekends at the headquarters. I started wearing a Clinton/Gore t-shirt with an American flag on it that practically came down to my knees. I even wore it to bed. I missed trick'r'treating or the

first time because I decided that calling potential voters was more important (and the older volunteers bought me candy)!

I was obsessed with Bill Clinton! I couldn't get enough! I started taping *Meet the Press* and watching it when I got home from volunteering Sunday nights. I read Al Gore's environmental treatise *Earth in the Balance*. I dreamt of being a White House intern! I was addicted!

So, I took the next logical step—and transformed an empty closet next to my bedroom into... the Clinton room! Yes, I was slowly becoming insane! My sister (who was not a volunteer, but was always willing to go along with whatever ridiculous idea I had) and I painted the walls white, and then wrote phrases in green, purple and pink markers. Phrases like "universal health care," "more jobs," and "end poverty." And then we cut out photos of Clinton from the newspaper and made collages, framed them, and hung them up. Note: I am not making this up! We even dreamed of fixing up the closet into a functional room. I placed a call to a drywall contractor to repair a gaping hole in the wall to make room for more slogans! When he was halfway through his estimate, he realized he was talking to a seventh grader, and hung up.

But finally all my hard work was to be rewarded. Clinton announced a campaign stop in Milwaukee! I scored tickets to the stadium-seating rally, but decided that was not enough. So I helped organize supporters to meet Clinton's plane as it touched down at a small airport outside the city, and was there when it landed, although I only caught a fleeting glimpse of him. The next day, I convinced my dad to take me to a hotel where Clinton was expected to make an appearance.

That morning, I woke up early and put on what could best be described as the most ridiculous and embarrassing outfit I have ever worn: white stretch pants, my Clinton/Gore shirt, socks decorated with tiny American flags, red, white and blue jelly bracelets, and, for my hair...tons of ribbons that were—you guessed it—red, white and blue. In retrospect, I must have looked like Pat Buchanan's best friend and Woody Guthrie's worst enemy. I was on America overload! And I was ready to go!

We showed up at the hotel and were told to stand behind a thick rope protected by dozens of security guards. An hour went by, and no sign of Clinton. Another hour, and my dad, who was undergoing radiation for cancer at the time, was completely exhausted and said he needed to leave. But I could not depart without seeing my idol! In my blind devotion to all things Democrat, I convinced my ever-sacrificing dad to stay for fifteen more minutes. And then, I saw something out of the corner of my eye. A flurry of activity! The crowd started to cheer! I felt my heart beat faster and faster and my patriotic ribbons jumped up and down as I struggled to see past the crowd! All of a sudden, I saw someone pointing at me. He was dressed in a dark suit with a bright blue tie. It was Bill Clinton! Before I realized what was happening, he gestured for me to scoot under the ropes and shake his hand. I have no recollection of what he said, except that he was very, very tall, and I felt so excited I thought I was going to puke. I even got his signature somehow. A minute later, it was all over.

But, to this day, the biggest regret of my life is that neither my dad nor I thought to bring a camera. With a photo like that, I could have been president someday! Hey, it worked for Clinton!

That photo would have been plastered all over the convention hall as I accepted the presidential nomination. Even my Republican opponent would begrudgingly admit that I was "clearly a patriotic thirteen-year-old." I would have served my country with honor and pride, and instituted free sour gummi worms for everyone over the age of two and mandatory bouncy castle training in the public schools. I would have saved this country!

Unfortunately, all my dreams were dashed when, a year later, I started to realize that I hated Clinton. And a year after that, I started calling myself an anarchist and started checking out books like Emma Goldman's *Living My Life* from the library. My days of Democratic excitement had ended. But, at my mom's house, if you go upstairs, and open the second door to your right, you'll find yourself in the lasting testament to my youthful idealism: The Clinton Room. Most of the collages have since fallen off the walls, and the writing has faded, but in the event that I ever lead a militant movement of workers demanding better wages and working conditions, I'm sure the FBI, in an effort to discredit me, will distribute photos of the room to fellow activists. Soon, no one will believe my cries of "Solidarity!" and "Class War!" Instead, they'll say, "We can't trust anyone who ever wrote 'Clinton/Gore: Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow' on their closet wall. For shame!"

—Maddy



P.S. The Marked Men make me believe in rock and roll again! They are currently the best band in the world! Send Marked Men collages to me at: PO Box 100882, Milwaukee, WI 53210



GARY HORNBERGER

SQUEEZE MY HORN

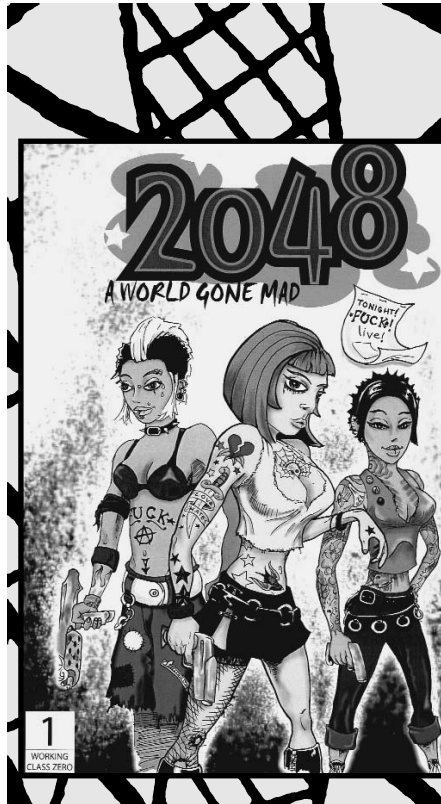
IN A WAY, I LIKED IT, BUT IT MAKES ME FEEL ICKY TO SAY THAT.

I would like to start this issue with a congratulation to my friend Jeff Banks. Jeff and his wife are celebrating the arrival of their son Jefferson Montgomery Banks, affectionately referred to as "Monty." I can only hope that this has no correlation to the character in *Easy Money*. We can only hope that little Monty will forge a similar path as you in the life of rock and law.

The past few months have brought a new fascination to me. With the price of gas reaching new highs, I refuse to give money to nations that just plain don't like me, so I've taken up riding a bike to work. It's roughly eight miles there and eight miles back and it takes me thirty-five to forty minutes to make the eight-mile ride. The cool thing is that it's great exercise, and it makes the first few hours at work go by in a flash because of the adrenaline rush. The route is two main streets and a creek bed. Most of it is flat so the ride is easy and fast. Now you may ask, "Why is this important enough to write about?" Well, it's because I've got plenty of time to think on these rides and there aren't really any other dumb drivers on the roadways to get a good case of road rage going every morning. There is, however, plenty to look at on the way down the creek bed. The creek path is made for bikers and it butts up to the back of the La Mirada/Santa Fe Springs industrial sections. It is here where I find it funny and sad to make ten-minute reflections on the world I live in.

One Monday morning, I pulled off the street and onto the creek path. I went down and under and back up. Upon reaching the flat, I looked down into the creek to see large wooden spindles strewn all over in the basin. During the weekend, a group had decided to toss them over the fence from the furniture manufacturing business. Down into the creek bed they rolled. These are the spindles that are often turned on their sides and used as cheap furniture tables. I also noticed, strewn about, were smaller spindles of colored wire. Don't worry about those. On the ride home, I noticed those had all been retrieved. Apparently, someone found value in that trash. Now a little farther down, roughly the distance of three buildings, I found that someone decided a thirteen-inch TV that no longer worked would be fun fodder for the creek, and what the hell, we'll throw a computer keyboard and some other small electrical appliances in as well. The only thing I can think is that these people were thinking about those poor Chinese kids that get pennies a day to strip the boatloads of scrap electronics we Americans send over on a regular basis. Yeah right.

Then I peddled fast, under a street, under the I-5 freeway, and under another street and on the flat again at the Santa Fe Springs swap meet. I rode through the glop of oil and food wrappers along with the empty toy packages that some little brat couldn't wait until he/she got home to unwrap. Fricken spoiled



the corner and nearing the linen and clothes-cleaning business, where it seems the workers couldn't wait to get started on the weekend's beer drinking and barbecue festivities. Scattered about on the edge of the path I counted some thirteen-odd cases of Coors Light and one burned-out barbecue. I could see my exit out of the dumping grounds of this over-polluted hell just up ahead, yet I still looked down into the abyss to see that the workers on the other side had the same pre-weekend bender, only the beer of choice was Bud Light.

As I was on my ascent out of the creek bed and back onto the car-busy streets, where I expect trash to be thrown out windows and to arrive in nice piles in the roadway medians, I turned to my left to look at the trucks docked in the back of the last business before the street. It's a paint shop. I think it's Sherwin Williams. There on the side of the truck is their logo and it makes me laugh. "Cover the World in Paint." Of course, there's a big bucket of paint pouring out over the globe. I once read a comic that read "Pave the Planet" and noted the sarcasm. Do you think that this company does the same?

All this crap goes into the creek and gets washed into the ocean. I know because I've ridden the same bed all the way to the beach. Just before the 405 freeway, the channel stops being concrete and widens into a sort of wetlands river, but just before it, there's a net spread out across the channel to catch large objects before they get into the river. Now, by "large," I mean like a playground rubber ball. Smaller than that and you're through. So if I was, say, an oil can, I'm in. What may be funny about the whole thing is the same people throwing things in upstream may be the ones going to the beach, playing in the water and going home feeling sick. Now what's that they say about payback?

THE MILKMAN MURDERS #1 \$2.99 U.S.

Honestly, I bought this because I work in a milkbox and figured this had the possibility of helping me vent some frustrations. Unfortunately, after reading it I'm going to have to say no. That's not to say it's a bad comic. Quite the contrary. Since it's a first issue, it's a build-up issue. No murders yet, but after the introductions, you just can't wait

GARY HORNBERGER

to see which degenerate gets it first. The great part is they all live under the same roof. Will it be the mom who we meet first who seems sweet as pie while watching her all-American TV shows, yet can't cook and, for whatever reason, continues to coexist within the house of assholes? Maybe the dad will be first—a crusty, vulgar version of Ralph Cramden who follows through with the threat of “to the moon.” I say kill the son. He's just a smart-ass, anger-mismanaged, big-nosed, bowl haircut ass. Yeah, do him first, then maybe the daughter who's off in her tubetop to screw the PE teacher. That's it, plain and simple. At the end, the milkman has arrived and we're waiting for issue #2 to see who gets it first. The build-up for this one is great. If the rest follow suit, this is gonna be a hit for Dark Horse. (Dark Horse Comics, Inc, 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, Oregon 97222; www.darkhorse.com)

2048, A WORLD GONE MAD #1

\$3.00, \$2.00 S&H/ will trade

Hell yes, it's a world gone mad and it's not even 2048. Punk rock and politics in the future—that's what I'm talking about. This comic takes the Bush administration, rams it in your face, and then shows you what you can expect if you elect him again. You even get a free “Bush Is Watching You” poster to put in your front lawn or on a street pole. The comic starts at a punk show that gets way out of hand, then we get a brief history of events leading up to 2048. What I love about this one is all the things that are wrong with America right now are amplified in the future. Bush basically becomes King George, he rewrites the constitution, and Wal-Mart owns everything. Also, there

are the masses who go along with the norm, concerned only with themselves, and there are those who rebel. I can't wait for issue #2 to find out what other over-the-top thing the new government has to share with the populace. I love this comic. (Working Class Zero c/o 2048, PO Box 1733, Binghamton, NY 13902; www.workingclasszero.com)

66 THOUSAND MILES PER HOUR, Color Special & #1

\$3.50 U.S.

The Mafia, a small town in Jersey, some trappy friends and lovers, and UFOs—I smell victory! What a story line. You really have to pay attention or the dog will steal your steak. This story is too complicated to describe. One minute, you're trying to figure out one group of things, then BLAM!, you're thrown into something else. What's up with the Mafia guys? What's up with the guys they're after? Can you tell me what the hell is her friend doing with her boyfriend? Who the hell are the aliens and what are they after? All I can say is that with all these #1 issues this month, I'm going to be out of cash next month. Once again, a comic leaves me hanging, wanting to know what's going to happen. It's like a mild form of *The X-Files* if you only watched forty-five minutes of the full hour. Get this one and wait 'til next month. (True Believers Press, PO Box 974 New Brunswick, NJ 08903; www.dimestoreproductions.com)

BY BIZARRE HANDS #1

\$3.50 U.S.

Finally, a comic that I don't have to wait to find out what happens and buy issue #2. This is one sick fucking comic. The main character is a

preacher, Judd. We know something of his past—as a kid, he had a retarded sister, was poor, and liked Halloween. On one Halloween night he and his sister went out trick or treating, and the next day she was found with her head bashed, raped, and all of her candy was stolen. Now Judd is all grown up and he's a preacher because the retarded girls needed God training. He finds a widow and her retarded daughter in a remote area and he goes out to give her some God training on Halloween. So he woos the widow into letting him train the daughter, but the woman becomes suspicious when he wants to take her out trick or treating. A fight starts, he kills the widow, chases out to find the daughter, and kills her too. Of course, at this point we find out he's the one who did in his own sister years prior. So there you have it, a comic that makes hillbillies out to be rapists and murderers. In a way, I liked it, but it makes me feel icky to say that. (Avatar Press, 9 Triumph Drive Urbana, IL 61802; www.avatarpress.com)

COLDHANDSDEADHEART #18

\$2.00 U.S. by Mike Twohig

I've read Mike's work before and it never stops baffling me. This is a small work filled with observations and personal experiences. To be able to describe any of it would be futile. There is one story that he tells that I can draw a parallel with. It's about delivering the paper on his route and getting paid pennies. The rest of what is in here is funny, bitter, strange, and enlightening. It's some good reading for the short forum. (Mike Twohig, 72-1 Meadow Farm South, North Chili, NY 14514; Miketwohig@hotmail.com)

GARY HORNBERGER





DESIGNATED DALE

I'M AGAINST IT

Total charges? Thirteen counts of lewd acts upon a child under fourteen and sixteen counts of oral copulation with a minor. And let's keep in mind that these twenty-nine counts are what have consciously been recorded on this offender's rap sheet.

You ever get that overwhelming feeling rolling down from the top of your neck, all the way down your back? It usually happens when you get an afterthought of something that almost happened to you, be it life threatening or extremely creepy.

A couple of summers back, I'd encountered this sensation upon hearing of yet another Catholic priest (former priest now) being brought up on charges of getting his sickening rocks off with different boys over a number of years. Total charges? Thirteen counts of lewd acts upon a child under fourteen, and sixteen counts of oral copulation with a minor. And let's keep in mind that these twenty-nine counts are what have *consciously* been recorded on this offender's rap sheet. One can't help but wonder how many other unnamed skeletons lurk in the creep's closet. The name of this sorry-ass excuse for a human being? Michael Stephen Baker.

Seems the sordid past of Father Mike has finally caught up with him, even if he did in fact confide his inexcusable indulgences some years back to one of his superiors, Roger M. Mahony. As far as I'm concerned, Mahony stands guilty just as much as Baker for his not turning over a stick of evidence nor saying one damn syllable to anyone once he got wind of what was doin' with Baker's shenanigans. An accomplice. Guilt by association. It's the same logic that lawyers Cochran, Shapiro, and Co. are just as guilty as O.J. because of their defending a murderer. Wrong is wrong. Am I the only one who sees it this way? Is it a bit of extreme reasoning for some of you? Let me back up a bit in order to explain my personal feelings on the matter, then.

1970: Before I knew it after I was born, my parents (more my father, actually) had volunteered me unto the Catholic faith by having me baptized. And, for the record, most may call it baptism, but I pre-

fer to call it "branded at birth" (thanks, Bill!). Yeah, my dad was the traditional Catholic—Catholic grammar school, Catholic high school, and the continuance of attending mass every Sunday thereon. So, in natural progression, his family to follow would become tiny spurs in the big cog of Catholicism, too.

Fast forward a bit: The year's 1980. I'm now ten years old and our family has been attending church at St. Paul of the Cross in La Mirada, California. Seeing how my older brother is an altar boy here, I figure it'd be cool to do the same, too. Enter Father Mike. Yeah, *that* Mike, the one I was speaking about earlier. I served many a mass with Mikey boy for a few years back then, and nothing gave me the reason to think that his hands (and god knows what else) were playing hide 'n' seek with some poor, unsuspecting boys for a number of years. Luckily, for the time he was at our parish, I never became a notch in Father Mike's collar. And I can guarantee, without a *doubt* in my mind, that if my brother or I *were* to become a notch or two in that man's collar, my father would have succumbed to his cancer in a prison infirmary rather than at home like he did over two years ago. Think of a 6'1" man with the temper of Sonny Corleone, holding a .38 Special and having no second thoughts of wasting some derelict who's wronged one of his children. Get the picture?

Looking back now, I recall a few instances that cause me to shudder, the few instances that were *right there* under my ten-year-old nose that I had no clue of at the time. I vividly remember sitting at a slide presentation inside our church that Father Mike was speaking at one night. It was something along the lines of "how families need to spend more time communicating together." The main reason I remember this slide show is because Father Mike reflected a

sentiment during his speech before the slide show: "The younger members of the family need to turn off the radio, put away the KISS albums, and start spending more time with their family." I thought what he said was ridiculous, being that KISS was my whole universe back then as a kid growing up. Even my dad looked over at me down the pew and smirked, knowing how much that band meant to me. But there's another reason as to why I remembered this particular evening. When Mike was done with his speech, he sat down between my family, next to me. How convenient. The lights went down and the slides began. During the presentation, Feeler Mike gave my leg a couple of lovingly squeezes, the kind your mom or grandma gives you when you sit closely alongside 'em. I honestly thought at the time that *that's* what they were—the same kind of affection shared like that of my mom or grandma. No big deal, right? It's weird in retrospect, 'cause I was taught early on how to tell if someone's invading my personal space, so to speak. As innocent as it all sounds, I'd love to know what was going on inside of Baker's bent brain when the son of a bitch was getting his grasp on, courtesy of my leg. Makes me frickin' nauseous.

The other instance I clearly remember is when about three or four of us altar boys were finishing cleaning up something in the church hall and Baker came strolling in, telling us what a great job we'd done. He told us all, "You look like you need some sugar," and handed one of the boys some keys. He told us to go upstairs to his bedroom in the rectory and for each of us to pick out a bag of candy he has inside his closet. As we all ran across the parking lot to the rectory, all I was thinking was what kind of candy he had up in his room, ya know? I hadn't the slightest thought to anything else—I was an excited kid who was promised some candy,

man! After we all dug around inside the full grocery sack in his closet, we each grabbed our allotted bag, made our way downstairs and outside, told Father Mike thanks, jumped on our bikes, and split. I think about that day now after reflecting about what's happened with Baker recently. Here I was: a kid inside the lion's den, rooting around inside his closet for a ten-pack of 3 Musketeers bars, no less.

I'm telling you, it flat out gives me the creeps just writing about it, yet I can't even begin to imagine the feelings of Matthew Severson, one of the unfortunate victims of Baker's escapades. And Matthew's victimization from Baker lasted *ten whole years*. To peg the Creep-O-Meter even further, guess which church Severson belonged to? That's right, St. Paul of the Cross in La Mirada—the same church I used to belong to. Upon hearing Matthew's story when he came forward a few years back, it brought on feelings of utter helplessness and claustrophobia within, as well as deep feelings of disgust and rage deep inside. I mean, Matthew is only *three* years older than myself, exactly my brother's age. Strange thing is, no one in my family, including me, can recall exactly who Matthew was, yet his last name sounds vaguely familiar. That overwhelming feeling I talked about at the beginning of this column? I'm feeling it, all right... in spades.

Here's what went down: Severson's abuse started in December 1976 when his parents were helping give a parish New Year's Eve party and Baker offered to let nine-year-old Matthew stay overnight at the rectory. His parents, both lifelong Catholics, liked the idea because the pastor was a close family friend. At St. Paul's, Severson's father often built things for the church. His mother worked in the rectory, cooking, cleaning, and acting as a secretary and event organizer. That night in December,

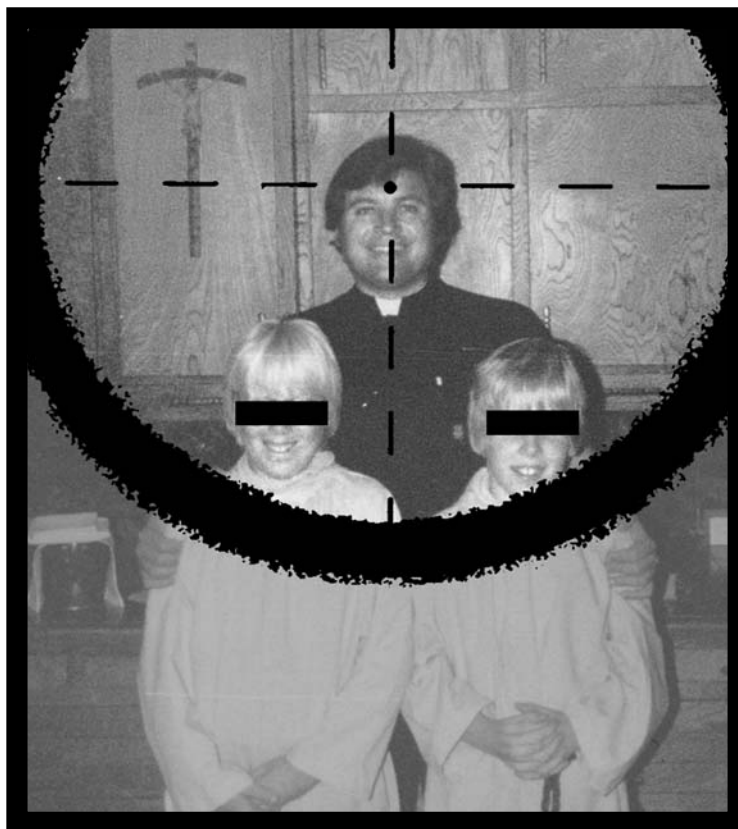
DESIGNATED DALE

Baker insisted he share his bed with him. Severson said he remembers staring hard at a digital clock on a bedside table, watching each minute flash by, as his pajamas were removed and the priest's hands roamed the boy's body. "I was horrified and I knew something was wrong," Severson said. "I was too embarrassed to tell anyone. You have to understand that Father Mike was like a rock star priest. I think even he saw himself as above the church. He did not live like other priests." As the abuse continued, Severson said he tried to avoid the priest, but Baker manipulated his parents to keep the now teenage boy close to him. "If I was too resistant or refused to be receptive or open to him in those situations, he would complain about me to my family," Severson said. His parents, worried that their son might fall in with a bad crowd, encouraged him to spend time with Baker instead. Fox in the hen house situation, if you will. When Baker moved to another parish, St. Hillary in Pico Rivera, California, the family followed. Severson said the abuse finally stopped as he was graduating from high school. "I was becoming increasingly strong about resisting him and saying no," he said.

That same year, 1986, Baker said he confided to Cardinal Mahony, then a bishop, about abusing children. Baker continued to have access to children over the next fourteen years while he was assigned to nine parishes around Los Angeles after attending a treatment center for pedophile priests. Mahony arranged for Baker to quietly retire from the priesthood in late 2000 without notifying law enforcement authorities or informing parishioners about the alleged abuses. Way to go, Mahony. Baker wrote a letter to Severson in 1994 that is now part of the court filing: "I am so glad that you have encountered therapy and a guide who can help facilitate healing," he wrote. "Through my own inner journey I have realized how my own immature emotions and psycho-sexual-screwed-up-ness slashed and burned through those years of your life seeking self-satisfaction in the name of love." (It sounds as if that treatment center did the trick for Baker, didn't it, Mahony? Maybe Baker can even start his own gallery of paintings, ala John Wayne Gacy. I can only hope his first piece is something entitled, "Dead Cardinal & Suicidal Ex-Priest," you jerk.)

Severson testified that during the alleged sex acts, Baker would compare him (Matthew) to Jesus or

say he was the Son of God. Severson recalled several times as a boy when he tried to tell his mother what was happening. On one occasion, they were in her car on the way to church. His mother replied that it was just typical roughhousing by boys and that he was exaggerating the situation. His mother, Diane Severson, said Baker was then her friend and she trusted him. "As a parent, I look back in horror that I did not do my part to protect my child," she said. Her son has



since forgiven her, but Diane said she will never forgive herself.

Matthew said he came forward to reclaim some of the power that was taken away from him as a child. "I want an apology, not just for me but for my family. My family was very, very devastated. It really kind of tore us apart," he said, adding he went public at his mother's encouragement. It makes me ill that Matthew was but one patch on the crazy quilt Baker had assembled over the years.

As I got into my mid-teen years, I dropped out of the whole Catholic scene, not because of a lack of faith, but because I really started to understand how things in this world work politically. At a really young age, my father instilled in us that you should never take things at face value if you truly have any doubts, especially what's in the newspaper or on the television. When need be, always ask

questions. He wasn't shoveling paranoia into our heads, just giving us a head start on what to expect as we got older. Well, I was getting older, and I really started to have issues with the Catholic faith's "just do it because that's the way it is" policy when I felt I wanted to ask a question about something. I explained this to my dad and reminded him of what he instilled in us. Needless to say, he wasn't too happy about the idea of me splitting on being a Catholic, but I told him

these unspeakable actions, because they don't. It would be unfair to stereotype any and all priests because of a handful of malcontents. But if Mahony or anyone else in his shoes were *that* concerned of situations like Baker's, they'd root out the problem directly and be done with it instead of pushing it out of the picture or throwing money at it. That's like a cat trying to scratch over their freshly-laid Kitty Rocha with six or seven granules of litter—it's not gonna cut it.

Here's a fine example: While delving into the resources for this column, I came upon some information that popped up at the time this whole Michael Baker scandal busted loose. Once again, the scenario is as enraging as it is disgusting: A secret \$1.3-million settlement was given to two men who were victim to Baker's filth. The victims' attorney, Lynne M. Cadigan of Tucson, said the L.A. Archdiocese insisted on a strict confidentiality clause. Simply put: we (the archdiocese) pay, you (the victims) shut up permanently. The two victims, who are brothers in their twenties now, alleged in a letter of complaint to the archdiocese that they had been repeatedly molested by Baker over fifteen years. By the way, this little \$1.3 mil deal was approved by Mahony all the while Baker was bouncing around those nine parishes. It must be nice to have available cash to extinguish these troublesome little fires. Then again, available cash must not be a problem for the HCIC (Head Catholics In Charge) being that \$200 mil (yes, you read correctly—two hundred million dollars) was spent on constructing their "Our Lady of the Angels" cathedral in downtown Los Angeles. It's such a nice reminder to the sexually abused victims of Catholic priests every time they happen to drive the L.A. freeways near downtown. What a slap in the friggin' face.

I'm Against It
 —Designated Dale
 DesignatedDale@aol.com

Special thanks to Mary Grant, one of the founding members of the California chapter of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests)
<http://www.snapnetwork.org/>

And also to our pals over at PROTECT (National Organization to Protect Children)
<http://www.protect.org/>

DESIGNATED DALE



SWINGING DOOR CONVERSATIONS



PHOTO BY ALEJANDRO BALAGUER

SHE HAD ONE OF THOSE WILD~CURVED BODIES THAT JUST SCREAMS OUT AT YOU AND TURNS THE BRAIN AND MUSCLES INTO A BALL OF MUSH.

SETH SWAALEY

STRAIGHT STREET MUSIC

I can still vividly remember those early New Orleans morning rides to work. Even now, it's almost as if it constantly hangs in my memory, like a free-floating, suspended dream. I'd leave my house still half-asleep, hop on to my beat-up bike and ride down Burgundy St. in the direction of the French Quarter. Cruising over those bumpy, pot-holed roads with the open-eyed sun rising, with that slight breeze blowing in from the Mississippi River (where I'd spent many a sunsets tongue-drunk silent sitting on termite-infested sinking docks, watching barge ships file out towards the Gulf or out to Baton Rouge), surrounded by hundred-year-old Creole and Victorian houses, I would have this overwhelming feeling that I was amidst a painting full of wild and beautiful movement.

From the Palmettos shading front-yards and the Oak trees that hung over the streets to the weed-infested rusted railroad tracks that held the wheels of the *Norfolk Southern* every day and night; to those empty lots and old steel warehouses barely standing, with the faded traces of the days of dock-**RAZORCAKE 22** workers and long-

shoremen; well it all seemed a bit surreal.

I'd ride through the Quarter and the store owners would be unlocking their front doors and the city workers would be spraying down the sidewalks as the ferns from third store balconies dripped down on to their heads, and some of the homeless would be passed out and lying in drunk stupor on steps and as I'd pull up to the back alley of the restaurant I'd greet the five stray cats that lived under the building and when I opened the back door the dream, well at least the romantic part of it, would start to fade.

For ten hours a day I'd stand in this kitchen the size of a hallway, huddled over a sink, hands in dirty dish water, watching the roaches poke their heads out from the exposed brick. I'd go out into the dining room and clean off the tables for your run of the mill tourists, and overhear rather drab conversations, often times wondering how I always managed to end up at these bottom of the barrel jobs. Here I was closing in on thirty, and I had no skills to really speak of. It was a bit depressing at times, but I'd worked a lot worse jobs so I couldn't complain too much.

Anyway I'd be out on the patio bussing tables and I'd hear this saxophone coming from down the street. Sometimes it'd be a cheesy tune. Like the theme song from *The Godfather* or *Sesame Street*; or something by Elton John or Billy Joel. I figured he'd just threw those in for the musically uneducated tourists, because the other half of the time he'd play an old R&B hit, maybe Marvin Gaye or Otis Redding. Other times he'd really jazz it up with some Sonny Rollins or Parker or Coltrane. Even though I was a good block away I could tell this guy really knew how to play.

Every now and then I'd walk by him on my lunch break. He was a little ball of a black fella' in a wheelchair, maybe three and half feet at the most if he was able to stand. He'd sit on the corner with a bucket in front of him and sometimes I'd see an older, raccoon-eyed guy with an ice-cream cart sitting close by. The first couple of months I never said anything to either one of them. I'd just kind of nod; every once in a while I'd throw some change into the jazzman's bucket.

One day I decided to go on over to the corner and sit down with the two guys. As I was eating my sandwich the jazzman looked over at me and said, "This aint no free enter-

tainment. What, you think you can just sit here and eat?"

"Yeah, pretty much," I said, smiling.

"Oh, I'm just playing with ya." The jazzman held the tenor sax in his lap and watched the people file down the street for a few minutes. He shook his head and said, "Lazy, lazy day. Man. I just don't feel like sitting out here today. Wish I was out fishing."

"Yeah, I could definitely go for some fishing right now," I said.

A few feet to the right of the jazzman was the guy with the ice-cream cart. He sat in a beach-chair with his eyes closed and his chin slumped against his chest.

"Hey Bob!" screamed the jazzman. "You're sleeping on the job! You got business!"

"Huh, what's that?" Bob opened his eyes and stood up, still half-conscious. An older woman was standing in front of the vending cart. "Oh jeez, so sorry mam'. It's that sun you know. Just takes the life right out of you. So what can I get you ma'am?"

"I'll take one of those ice-cream sandwiches."

"Well, all right, you got it, one sandwich. That'll be one dollar."

"Thank you ma'am, and you have a wonderful day now."

Bob sat back down in the chair. "See Melv, you stop playing and I'm a goner."

"What, cuz you're bored you think I just gonna' jump up and play a song?"

"Well, I know you're sure as hell not jumping," Bob laughed aloud, slapping his knee.

Melvin quickly wheeled over close to Bob, pointed his index finger at his face, and said, "Watch yourself Bob. Don't get smart. I might just take one of those Popsicle sticks and shove it up your ass! Ya' heard me?"

"Yeah, yeah, Melvin, I hear ya."

A couple days later I was back in my lunch spot. I made a couple of sandwiches for the guys, figuring it was an equal trade-off for letting me just sit there and hang out.

It was a Friday and the streets were packed. From what I could tell, Melvin was doing pretty well. He told me he was up to about eighty bucks. There must have been something going on that weekend because there were beautiful women everywhere. Melvin had a hard time sticking to the music. One girl in particular was wearing a short red skirt, and her boobs were popping right out of a thin black blouse. She had one of those wild-curved bodies that just screams out at you and turns the brain and muscles into a ball of mush. Melvin played two quick notes that sounded like someone whistling. The girl tuned around, smiled, and then walked on.

Melvin's eyes lit up. "Oooooee! Give me that smile. Say, baby, ever been with a man in a wheelchair? Once you do, you'll never go back to regulars."

Bob and I broke out laughing.

Seconds later, another woman, a little older, but still with that all-class, all-style look passed by. Bob stood up and yelled out. "Hey lady, ever been with a 50 year-old ice cream man?"

This time though the woman wasn't so friendly. She turned around and gave Bob a deathly stare and suddenly it became obvious to me how unattractive, spiritually at least, she was.

"Damn, Melv, guess you can't win em all," said Bob.

"Yeah, some of these woman now, they aint got no sense of humor."

"Wait! Hurry, Melv, play that one song, you know the Egyptian..."

"The snake-charming one?"

"Yeah, yeah!"

Melvin put the sax to his lips and played the tune note for note.

"You ever been married man?" Melvin asked me.

"Nah, I got a hard enough time

keeping a girlfriend."

"Don't do it. Believe me. It's a pain in the ass. You know what, the problem with women today is that they just don't know their place."

Bob and I kind of gave Melvin a strange look, not particularly sure where he was heading with the conversation.

"Now, wait a minute Melvin..."

"No, listen, and I ain't talking about no barefoot, pregnant in the kitchen kind of shit. What I'm talking about is *inspiration*. You see, it's like this. The world is a pretty brutal place. It's rough. It's cruel. And every day a brother goes out into that world. He's got all kinds of messed up shit he has to deal with. It drives him crazy. And when he comes home he wants to be around a nurturing, loving woman. A woman he can confide in, you know, share his love with. Not some woman that's always yapping, always complaining about what he doesn't do right. What the woman don't realize is that's what drives the brother back out on the street. Who the hell wants to come home to that? Like take my old lady. We been married over twenty years and she *still* won't let me practice the sax in my own house. She says it makes *too much* noise. *Too much* noise! Ya see, what she don't understand is that if I can practice I can get better. If I'm better, I'll make more money. That'll make *her* happier. Ya' heard me?"

Melvin was really starting to get juiced up. He was wheeling back and forth between Bob and me. He had the look of a preacher on the pulpit except he was sitting down.

"For instance, take Helen of Troy. You see, Helen was the wife of Menelaus who was King of Sparta. But she left him and went off to be with Paris, son of the King of Troy. So this Menelaus guy launched a war against the Trojans who refused to return Helen. Now they fought a battle for *ten* years. Over a woman! Over a *woman*! Now *that's* inspiration. Y'all know the Taj Mahal?"

"Uh, the place in India?" I said, recognizing the name, but rather clueless as to how it all tied into the inspiration diatribe.

"Yeah, I mean, that building is amazing. Ornate architecture, painted ceilings, gold everywhere. It's beautiful. And you know what? It took twenty-two years to build it. 20,000 workers. And it was all paid for by one man. Shah Jahan. His wife died and in memory of her he built one of the finest buildings in the world. Just for one woman. Love. Friendship. Ya see, what I'm talking about is *inspiration*. Ya' heard me?"

Every day I'd look forward to those lunch breaks out on the corner. I don't really know how to put it, but there was just something about hanging out with the guys and sharing stories as the rest of the city passed by. There was poetry somewhere in it all.

So Bob was sitting out on the corner, looking bored as hell, the umbrella giving him a little shade from the blistering summer heat. Melvin had taken the day off to go fishing and Bob was excited just to have someone to talk to. He was a pretty quiet, easy-going type. He'd always flash that black front tooth of his and give ya a good ol' smile. He was polite as hell with the customers, in a Southern gentlemen kind of way. I was kind of curious how it all worked out with the cart so we got to talking.

"Oh, I get the cart for free. Company stocks it all up and then I get 40% of whatever I sell. Right now it's slow, but when it's busy, sometimes I'll walk with two or three hundred bucks. It ain't bad. Sometimes it's a little boring, but hey, I'm pretty much my own boss. Work my own hours. Get to sit out here. Listen to Melvin. I use to work the Lucky Dogs stands. They're the same people that own this one."

Lucky Dogs were made famous in John Kennedy Toole's *Confederacy of Dunces*, but anyone who's spent a highly intoxicated night on Bourbon Street has probably seen one of the many carts that take up every corner. It's likely they've also forked out the four dollars for the disgusting dog and then found themselves hours later, either vomiting or shitting their brains out.

"Man, no offense, but those hot dogs are gross. I met a guy in Jackson who said he was down here with a friend partying all night. Got a Lucky dog sometime in the morning before they headed back home. About twenty minutes later his friend's face was looking like a blueberry. Had to take him to the hospital for food poisoning"

"Oh, jeez, you don't got to tell me. You should see some of the guys. They don't even replace the dogs from each night. They'll just leave the leftovers in the water and then serve them up again the next day. It's all about the bar-crowd. After 3 A.M. they don't know what the hell they're eating anyway."

Bob said years ago he'd bartended out in California and then for a while in Palm Beach, Florida. They were pretty good jobs, but at some point his wife divorced him, he got into some trouble (I didn't really pry him on exactly what he did), and then, like a lot of people

who lived in New Orleans, he just somehow ended up here.

Off to the side of us Big Mama Sunshine was sitting with her little Casio keyboard in front of her. Big Mama was a big haunch of insane love-radiating woman. One could find her on a different street of the French Quarter a couple times a week, playing honky-tonk and fast blues and growling out words you sometimes could understand and sometimes couldn't. She'd wear all kinds of wild dresses, always with the same Panama hat that had a huge red feather sticking out of the brim. Her big jowly face would wobble around as her chubby fingers bounced around the keys. If you were lucky enough to come across her all you could do was stop and laugh and be amazed.

So Bob and I were sitting out there and I was kind of dreading going back to the kitchen and staring at those plates and dishes for the rest of the day, when I noticed two Spanish women walking down the street. One I guessed was probably in her middle forties. She was very exotic looking. She had this creamy olive-skin and long black-hair and there was this smooth and hypnotizing rhythm to her movements, like she was walking on water. The woman holding her arm, who I guessed was her mother, was very frail and you could tell it was a little hard for her to walk. But there was a wonderful energy exuding from her face, this brightness in her eyes, this warm, radiating smile. You could tell she was digging it all: the music and art and the old buildings and it was like she was a little girl all over again, as if she had that same sense of innocence and excitement. I could tell she was enamored once she caught site of Big Mama Sunshine.

The two women stood in front of Big Mama and watched her play.

"Hey there ladies! Owww! Where you from?"

The younger woman said something in Spanish to her mother.

The old lady smiled and said, "Venezuela."

"Oh yeah, Venezuela! I know just the song!"

Big Mama Sunshine pulled out a little book that I guessed had program settings for the keyboard. She flipped the pages, would put in some numbers, and then would scream when it wasn't working right. She finally got the one she wanted. *La Cucaracha*.

"Bum bum bum bum bah bum."

"Ay," shouted the old woman.

"Wait, hold on," said Big Mama.

She fished through a dirty bag and came out with a tambourine and a pair of cha-

chas. The woman had it all. Suddenly, the two Venezuelan women were dancing on the sidewalk, shaking their instruments, moving to their own beautiful rhythm as Big Mama banged on the keys and growled out loud. They were stomping and swaying and dancing, all full of religion and sex and love. It was like the old woman had just been injected with some wonderful youth potion and had the

underwear?"
"Yeah," said Melvin. "He was teasing Big Mama the other day, saying how she was crazy and couldn't play. So yesterday I got this big crowd all around me. They were really into it. Probably at least ten people standing there. So all of the sudden I see Big Mama Sunshine walking towards me. She was looking even crazier than usual. Wearin' a purple dress with

this Viagra? Man, just last week my neighbor, he be knocking on my door in the middle of the night. I say, what the hell you want, and you know what, he asking me if I got any pills. And what kind of pills? He asking for Viagra. Viagra! I say what da hell you need with Viagra? Man, this place just ain't the same. I remember it used to be speed. Heroin. No. Now it's Viagra."

out a high, sweet-piercing E. I didn't know the song, but the lady obviously did because instantly she was shouting out "Yeah! Yeah!" She started swaying and snapping her fingers. And now Melvin was really getting into it, the notes all electric and floating every which way. His cheeks were so puffed out that he looked like a jellyfish. The wheelchair even started to roll all around the sidewalk, as if it had a

SETH SWAALEY

I MEAN, THERE ARE CERTAIN MOMENTS IN LIFE WHEN YOU REALIZE YOU'RE A PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL.

energy of a ten year-old. Bob and I just sat there, shook our heads, and laughed.

"You hear about the black drawers?" Old Creole asked me. Old Creole was occasionally Melvin's runner. He'd get him food and drinks throughout the day. He was coal-black and had these tiny, bloodshot Asiatic-looking eyes. He'd always sit on an empty milk crate and he didn't say a whole lot. When he did it was usually something perverted. We were all chewing on sandwiches I'd just made when Big Mama Sunshine came into the conversation. Melvin was teasing Old Creole about how she had a thing for him.

"No, you talking about her

yellow stockings. So what does she do? Bends over right in front of me and him and lifts her dress up and screams, 'Check out these black drawers!' It was disgusting. Man, everyone left right then. All my tips. Gone. That lady ran them all away."

Old Creole slapped me on my knee, nodded, and said, "Dat woman crazy."

"Shit, you never know, man," I said, jokingly.

"Hell no. I tell ya this. I went to the nurse back in '85. Had me some of that clap, you know. So the nurse took one look at it and told me I better keep that sucker in my pocket. Haven't let it out since. Not for no woman. Dat's the truth. And I don't understand. What's with all

"Wait, hold on guys, did you hear that?" said Bob.

"What," said Old Creole looking down the street.

"Shit, is that Big Mama? I think I can hear her footsteps."

Old Creole darted up like he was going to run around the corner. After a few seconds though he saw us laughing and realized we were all just fucking with him. He sat down on his crate, slapped my knee again, and said, "Laugh all you want, but dat woman *is* crazy."

A few minutes later, a woman walked up to Melvin and said, "Hey Jazzman, play me something good."

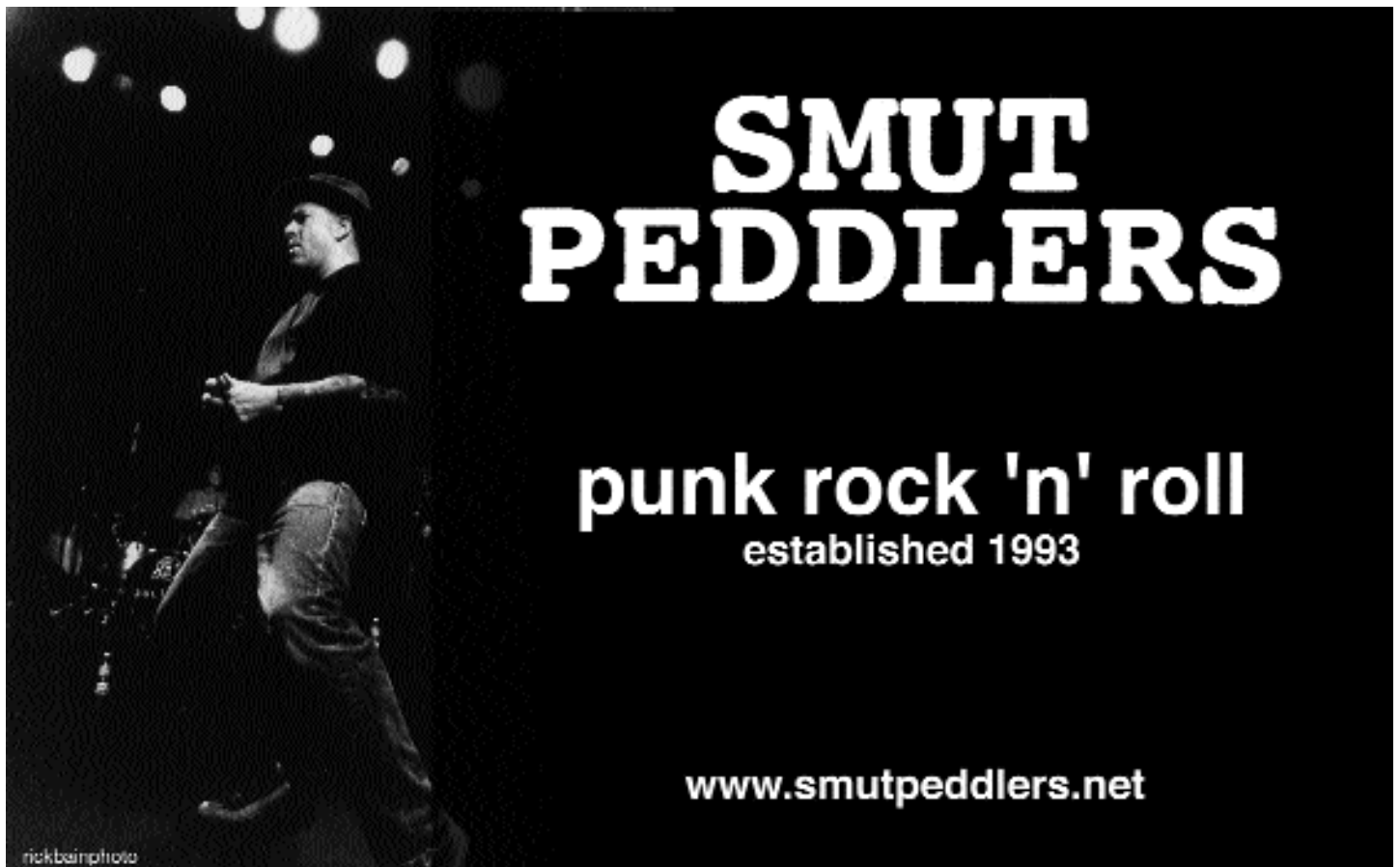
Without a word, Melvin nodded as if it was a rite of passage, lifted the sax towards the sky, and belted

spiritual life of its own.

"Oh yeah, play it hunny, hmmm-mmmm hmmm," said the woman. She was shaking her hips like only women with soul know how to do.

I glanced down at my watch and noticed I was five minutes late. Ah, fuck it, I thought, those damn dishes weren't going to miss me anyway. I mean, there are certain moments in life when you realize you're a part of something special. This was one of them. I put my arms behind my head, leaned back against the fence, and as the sun lit the back of my eyes, I let Melvin and the dancing music of the street slowly carry us all away.

—Seth Swaaley



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THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

The Dinghole Reports

By the Rhythm Chicken
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

Q: How do you solve a problem like Maria?

A: Little girl, it's getting near the hour. On your face I leave a shit tower!

So I was at work flipping Swedish pancakes the other day listening to the soundtrack from *The Sound of Music* when I had the startling realization that many of the questions lyrically posed on this album can be answered in select Mentors lyrics! I just thought I'd open this installment of the Dinghole Reports with the most convincing example. You're welcome.

[That's all well and wholesome, Mr. Chicken, but we're waiting to

hear about the Kansas City leg of your spring tour. – Dr. S.]

(Yeah, Chicken! We want the ruckus! Did you burn down Arrowhead Stadium or what? – F.F.)

Listen, you no good hoosh-washin' slick-slacks! I've got the new ruckus and I'll get to it in good time! Am I gonna have to tie you hot-snots up again or can I trust you not to waste my precious page space here?

[(We'll be good. – F.F. & Dr. S.)] — meekly—

So, I arrived in the Milwaukee airport that Wednesday afternoon rather ragged and fatigued from the Southern California leg of my Spring Chicken Tour '04. Lord Kveldulfr was waiting for me just

outside the gate and gave me no down time. He whisked me to the grocery store so we could stock up on the essentials: Point beer, Leinenkugel's beer, twenty-four bratwurst, and a jar of peanut butter. This was our Wisconsin care package for our brave venture across the Midwest. It wasn't long before we were trying to get as much Wisconsin into our systems as possible before sendoff. We started at the Palomino because Wednesday is \$1 Pabst night, then wormed over to the Cactus Club, and made a final fueling stop at the Palm tavern. At this point we had gotten ourselves excited and Pabsted to the point of thinking it would be a good idea to not wait till morning and leave right then. We zoomed over to my nest to throw the drums and beer into the car. With the car (and ourselves) fully loaded, we walked across my front lawn to the car to see a cop car stop half a block away. It was around 2 A.M. In a few seconds, two officers were walking up my street so we spun on our heels and went back indoors. Maybe it'd be a good idea to take a nap till mornin'.

Lord Kveldulfr and I went to high school together at what he likes to call "GREEN BAY EAST, MOTHERFUCKER!" Paul and Brian (a.k.a. the Fonz and Byron) were two of our fellow punk rock classmates who, through the interests of rock and roll, had moved to KC. We were on our way to our own special class reunion. Some of the nine-hour drive was spent listening to the old boombox recordings of Byron's old band, aptly named The Byrons. The Byrons and the new Descendents album made the miles go by quicker. The Chickenkit was in the back seat with the one weapon that promised to lay waste to bar-b-q-land, THE RUCKUS LOGS!

(RUCKUS!!!! – F.F.)

[Shhh... sorry about that Mr. Chicken. Please proceed. – Dr. S.]

We arrived in KC around 3 p.m. and sat in Byron's front yard drinking good Wisconsin beer until he got home from work. Then Byron, Kveldulfr and I sat in Byron's front

yard drinking good Wisconsin beer until the Fonz showed up. Then the Fonz, Byron, Kveldulfr, and I sat in Byron's front yard drinking good Wisconsin beer. All were in attendance and our class reunion was underway. Byron unveiled his convertible Rambler and we all climbed in to head on over to Davey's Uptowner, where our old honkey-tonk pal Rex Hobart was playing. Many Pabsts were had. As his band the Misery Boys took the stage, Rex approached the microphone and said, "It's so good to be back in Green Bay." They play a stellar honky-tonkin' set and Rex even dedicated "I'm Not Drunk Enough to Say I Love You" to the Rhythm Chicken. Soon we were on our way to the next tavern, Dave's Stagecoach, where many cans of Schlitz were had. Here and there we picked up more KC boys wanting to tag along with the Green Bay party. The night ended back in Byron's front yard, where we all enjoyed good Wisconsin beer. Forty-eight hours ago I was drinking in Burbank. Twenty-four hours ago I was drinking in Milwaukee, and there I was Kansas City enjoying good Wisconsin beer. I love being on tour. That concluded our class reunion. Tomorrow we would have to get down to business, the business being RUCKUS!

(RUCKUS!!!! BRING ON THE RUCKUS!!! – F.F.)

Anyways, Friday was my first day on this crazy tour that I had the chance to sleep through a hangover. Sometime that afternoon the Fonz showed up and we started enjoying good Wisconsin beer while watching DVDs of classic uncensored Bugs Bunny—Bugs was playing against an entire baseball team named the "Gashouse Gorillas." The Fonz took us to his local punk rock watering hole, the Brick. Friday afternoons they have a pub-trivia tournament. We lubed up our brains with Pabst and entered ourselves as the visiting Green Bay team named the "Gashouse Gorillas."

(C'MON! Where's the ruckus? We don't care about your trivial pursuits! You were in KC for twenty-



RHYTHM CHICKEN

four hours already and no ruckus? – F.F.)

[Really, Rhythm Chicken. This is like watching a family slide show. – Dr. S.]

SILENCE! One more outburst out of either of you slick-slacks and you'll wake up bound, gagged, porked, and duked!

—silence—

Dinghole Report #55: Missouri, Meet the Rhythm Chicken!

(Rhythm Chicken sightings #298, #299, and #300! Holy shicken! #300!)

The Fonz's roommate, Keenan, hosted the trivia proceedings. He took a break for intermission and I took to the stage. The regular trivia enthusiasts at the Brick watched me set up the Chickenkit in slight confusion. Keenan turned down the intermission music, which for some reason was the theme from *Doogie Howser*. I pulled on the Chicken head and the thirty-some trivia-heads started snickering. I broke the Rhythm Chicken's Missouri cherry as the opening drumroll rumbled through the Brick. The bartenders stopped stocking the coolers to witness true Wisconsin ruckus. I pounded out wild-ass ruckus

Pabst did flow. The first band was called the Silver Shore and were an odd mix of the B-52's and Gang of Four, I think... maybe. So, by the time they were done the club was packed and the chicken hour was upon us. Kveldulfr helped me move the chickenkit through the thick crowd into the center of the club. The crowd parted in confusion. Then before anyone could question anything, a Wisconsin thunder rolled through the club and eyebrows were raised! YES, EYEBROWS WERE RAISED! THIS WAS SERIOUS! My rhythm riot won over the drinking crowd quick enough. They roared. I pulled out the ruckus rhythms. I pulled out the head-banging, arm-flailing Chickenrock. Then I pulled out the ruckus logs, raising them to the ceiling! The crowd collectively gasped in awe. Taste the sweet monster sound of down home Wisconsin ruckus log lumberjack rock! The walls were sweating! My balls were sweating! I dished out a hot heaping plate of ruckus and they ate it up. I accepted their key to the city and threw my drums into the corner. As if the packed club wasn't hot and humid enough, the next band, The Roman Numerals, cranked their smoke machine up to eleven and the air became hot but-



Like Godzilla, I stomped and roared. A few minutes later I was out of breath at the ATM across the street with a bloody hand.

rhythms, sharing my chaos with my fellow Midwesterners. Missouri, meet the Rhythm Chicken! I halted the mayhem to raise both wings and accept their praise. The late afternoon trivia nuts totally ate it up! I ripped through a few other Rhythm Chicken classic beats and stopped again. They roared. I was in with the trivia crowd! Just when they put down their guard I pulled out my horrible weapons that couldn't make it to California... THE RUCKUS LOGS!!! There was a collective "WHOOOAH!" through the club and I instantly began the monster ruckus, the mutant mayhem, the real BIG SOUND that is the ruckus logs! The tiny Chickenkit took a mighty beating as the logs delivered their trademark demolition sound. THIS is rock and roll! Intermission was soon over and I returned to my Gashouse Gorillas. We ended up taking second place and the cash prize paid for our weighty food and bar tab up to that point. Things were going our way.

We scored the first three seats at the bar waiting for the evening's punk show to commence, and the

ter. After their set, Kveldulfr helped me quickly assemble the Chickenkit in the small corridor between the men's and women's bathrooms. A few ladies wanted to use the facility, but Kveldulfr told them they would have to wait till after the concert. They were not happy. I was literally sandwiched between the two bathroom doors, which couldn't open, because I was blocking them both! The defiant drumming soon became restroom-denying drumming! Once again I filled the small packed club with my Pabst-laden rhythms. The audience turned around to witness the bathroom-blocking chaos and rewarded me with drunken hollering and cheers. Suddenly, I noticed the ladies' room door trying to open and hitting my hi-hat cymbals. Someone wanted to get out! I chuckled to myself thinking about some girl who went in to use the facility or to powder her nose, but then was trapped inside while thunder rained just outside the door! I concluded my evening's rock trilogy, stood to take a drunken bow, and began dismantling the Chickenkit. Just then, the ladies'

room door was forced open and six very sweaty and uncomfortable females stormed out. They weren't too happy. As far as I can recall, Rhythm Chicken sighting #300 was the first ever Rhythm Chicken rock hostage situation!

Well, the final band that evening were called the Architects (formerly the Gadjits, I think). They had way too much equipment and were taking way too long to set it up. From the side of the stage I yelled to their singer, "Hey singer-man! You guys have too much equipment!" He hollered back, "I know!" I asked myself W.W.T.D.? (What would Tiltwheel do?) So, once again, we returned to Byron's front yard for some good Wisconsin beer.

Dinghole Report #56: Sufferin' Chicken Succotash! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #301)

The next morning we loaded the Chickenkit into Byron's little blue van and headed over to his place of part-time employment, a little restaurant named Succotash in the City Market area. We parked the van at the back door and

marched the Chickenkit through the kitchen and dining room. Out in front, I set up facing the Saturday market-goers. I unleashed my mayhem and rocked the ruckus. The City Market crowd was a hard sell, but I earned a few cheers and cat-calls. Then the ruckus logs came out and the crowd knew it was real! I gave them the big sound, the big ruckus. I pounded out my slothy monster mayhem rock and they cheered. After we loaded back into the van a City Market security guard finally showed up to ask if anyone was playing the drums. "No."

That night we gave a Kansas City tradition a bit of a Wisconsin meat-log injection! At the Fonz's place we threw a bar-b-q with our Wisconsin bratwurst and good Wisconsin beer. Kveldulfr and the Fonz were in charge of the grilling. I was in charge of preparing the blessed brat brine. They had some cans of Natural Lights in the fridge. I thought to myself, "W.W.T.D.?" and so then I used the inferior beer in the brat brine. The Kansas City natives marveled at the proper bratwurst-warming

RHYTHM CHICKEN

brine: cheap beer, butter, and spices. I ate SEVEN brats that night. I was huge. I was in pain. I was happily in pain! As the seventh brat was going in one end the first brat was coming out the other, proving my own displacement theory.

**Dinghole Report #57:
Bohemian Chicken Rocks the Faux-hemians!**
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #302)

So, at the bar-b-q I was informed by Shay of the Silver Shore that a good place for the Chicken to rock his rock would be in front of YJ's. She said it was a somewhat "Bohemian" art crowd who would probably really appreciate the audio-visual onslaught that is my rhythmic ruckus. Seeing as how most of my ancestors were from the "Bohemia" region of Czechoslovakia (making Pilsner Urquell the hometown brew of my lineage!), I thought I owed it to my family. After arriving at YJ's, I soon found out that the term "Bohemian" crowd was actually a "bohemian" crowd (lower case "b"). Now, I think this means they like art-type stuff and hang out at coffee shops talking art-talk and support various causes, yet still proba-



**Taste the sweet monster sound of down home
Wisconsin ruckus log lumberjack rock!**

bly watch reality TV when they're home alone. I broke out the Chickenkit and set up across the street. The Sunday morning "bohemians" watched with the raised eyebrows of art purchasers. Then I pulled on the Chickenhead and worked off the previous night's SEVEN brats! I rocked the sidewalk and rolled the ruckus barrel clear across the street and into their faces! My thunder echoed through the little art district. They clapped and hooted somewhat hesitantly, not knowing if it was art or not. Then out came the ruckus logs. Now there was no guesswork. This was RUCKUS! I unleashed the new big sound and they became believers. Just as the bidding war began, I ended the show and retreated. Lord Kveldulfr and I had to get a head start to Lawrence!

**Dinghole Report #58:
Kansas, Meet the Rhythm Chicken!**
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #303)

Byron's current band, Doris Henson, was playing a show one hour away in Lawrence that night. Kveldulfr and I wanted to take in the town early so we headed there alone. After walking around the fancy hipster shopping/tourist area of this small college town we found a tavern right in front of where we parked the car. The Replacements on the jukebox and the Boulevard beer kept us there for a while. Later, we walked down to the Jackpot Saloon, the venue for that evening's rock show. A few beers later we had a few more beers (W.W.T.D.?!). Then our new friend Craig showed up. He was at the bar-b-q the previous night and wanted to drink some more with real Wisconsinites! Three clucks for Craig! CLUCK! CLUCK! CLUCK! During the opening band, Kveldulfr and I kept Craig full of Miller High Life and shots of gin. He was smiley. Then, just before Doris Henson took the stage, Craig went up on stage and made his introduction. I'm not sure, but I think it went something like, "Ladies and gentlemen, I would

like to introduce to you a real live man from Wisconsin who's got something very important to tell you, blah blah blah, Lord Kveldulfr!" I always love it when there's a guy who introduces the guy who will give the introduction. Remember, shots of gin. So, then Lord Kveldulfr runs up and grabs the mic. The crowd of forty to fifty show-goers were now intrigued. He starts rambling off a bunch of ruckus related jibber-jabber and Chicken-friendly hoosh-wash before going into, "All the way from Green Bay, Wisconsin! All the way from Milwaukee, Wisconsin! All the way from Sister Bay, Wisconsin! And all the way from Krakow, Poland... THE RHYTHM CHICKEN!!!!" They were confused. I rolled out the opening thunder and then raised my wings. Some guy to my right yells out, "Sister Bay!" I commenced with the chaos. The High Life and gin were doing their job. I slopped through my first number and raised my wings. The place went nuts. Then the guy to my right yells out, "Bailey's Harbor!" I turned in his direction with a queer look on my Chicken face. These were small towns from my neck of the northwoods! I pounded out another storm of ruckus and halted yet again. He yells out, "Ephraim!" I pulled out the ruckus logs to the fearful gasps of the crowd. Someone yells, "YEAH!" Like a tornado though a trailer park, my monster ruckus logs gave Kansas another natural disaster to fear: MY RUCKUS! The beer, gin, and ruckus logs were a mighty recipe which led to me wrestling my drums... again. Like Godzilla, I stomped and roared. A few minutes later I was out of breath at the ATM across the street with a bloody hand. Two police officers were giving me the eye, so I gave them the slip! Back inside the Jackpot we watched Doris Henson blaze through their Kansas/Missouri blend of rock and roll.

The evening became somewhat blurry. We ended up at a band member's house eating left-over shish kebabs and downing more High Life.

In the morning I woke up on a couch as some guys walked through the room. One of them looked at me and said, "Hey, you're the drummin' chicken guy! I was yelling all those Door County towns at you last night!" I sat up and moaned, rubbing my eyes. I asked the man, "Are you from Door County?" He replied, "No, but I had my wedding in Sister Bay." I continued rubbing my eyes and coughed up a chunk of something. I told the man, "I live in Sister Bay. I'll be back there in about forty-eight hours." He stared at me in disbelief. "Wow, you live in paradise!"

"I know."

As Kveldulfr and I walked across Lawrence with absolutely wretched hangovers to find the car, I thought to myself, "What would Tiltwheel do?" I knew what they would do, but they didn't have to drive from Lawrence, Kansas to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was a long drive home, very long. The Spring Chicken Tour '04 was officially complete. I played in Escondido, San Diego, San Pedro, Los Angeles, Hollywood, Milwaukee, Kansas City, and Lawrence, Kansas. The Rhythm Chicken is now officially back stateside, but I'm thinking of moving back to Poland soon after I vote in November.

[[????????!!!!!! - F.F. & Dr. S.]]

Also, you gotta love it that beloved Chicken roadie Mr. Moose of Spokane, WA recently named his three cats Quesi Anabelle Ruckus, Solomon Brasmaen Ruckus, and Ty Cobb Ruckus. And the wobbly misshapen ball of crotch-rot rolls on....

Somewhere, right now, Tiltwheel continues drinking.

-The Rhythm Chicken

Rhythmchicken@hotmail.com

RHYTHM CHICKEN



Dad thought he was dreaming when he saw The Nightstalker through the sliding door of the den...

THE FACE IN THE GLASS DOOR

It's a hot California night. It could be any year or any day between Memorial Day Weekend and Halloween, the scenario is always the same. Another heatwave, another night when the air lays dense and slightly sticky, making sleep something that the body cannot quite grasp. I'll sit in the den, underneath a ceiling fan, waiting for something resembling a breeze to waft in through the windows. I am watching repeats of the day's soap operas on cable, trying to pry my eyes open long enough to watch as the New England matriarch reveals to her family that she is no longer the loving journalist/heirress who stands as a pillar of the community, but the trash-talking, bar-hopping, murder-loving alter ego that occasionally invades her body.

Just before I lose the battle against sleep, I will hear a rustle in the backyard—pawsteps from a neighboring cat that sound like footsteps. My eyes pop open as I sit up straight. I rise to my feet and feel my legs rip from the sofa, a thin layer of sweat having formed an adhesive between human skin and black leather. I'll look out the window. Nothing. I shut the windows in spite of the heat.

At one time, it was normal to sleep with the windows open. Leaving a door unlocked was not considered a safety hazard. That was before 1985. After that summer, when The Nightstalker rendered Greater Los Angeles paranoid, closing the windows and double-checking the locks on the doors became a nightly ritual. It is not a conscious action, just a habit that stuck nineteen years after the fact.

Richard Ramirez, the serial killer known now as The Nightstalker, is no longer a threat. He sits in prison, the recipient of nineteen death sentences, as other villains occupy our minds. That summer may be in the distant past, but the memory has not faded.

In the waning hours of the night his name will appear in conversations, either on the smoking patio at some venue as the bartenders shout "last call for alcohol" or during a post-club food frenzy, where one hour seems to stretch into three as we try to convince ourselves that cheap food and ridiculous amounts of caffeine may prevent the dreaded hangover. The Nightstalker was as much a part of our childhood recollections as collecting cards featuring grotesque, fat-faced children with names like Sucked Chuck and Dizzy Lizzy and lovable aliens who wanted to phone home. Like the 1992 Riots and the 1994 Northridge Earthquake, remembering The

Nightstalker is what separates the Los Angeles natives from the transplants. Others may have heard about these events, may remember seeing the headlines, but we lived them. Just as we can recall the sunset curfews of the L.A. Riots and just as we can describe the exact motion of sliding earth at 5:00 A.M., we can all describe the summer that saw AC/DC and Avia tennis shoes rise to notoriety.

"Oh, man, I had the worst nightmares that summer," my former college roommate, Estelle, remarked a few weeks ago at a party.

My friends and I were all children in 1985, living in different neighborhoods across Los Angeles, but we all seem to remember the complete panic that had swept the county.

"I had the nightmares, too," I answered. "You know, he was in my backyard."

"Serious?"

Estelle could have been humoring me. I can't imagine that, after almost ten years of friendship involving numerous drinking sessions and pre-dawn recoveries at lowbrow eateries, she had not heard this story before.

"Yeah, I'm serious. My dad saw him in the window and the police found his footprints in our yard." I have to qualify the statement for fear of sounding like high school kids who swear that their cousin's friend's cousin woke up in a bathtub in a seedy hotel missing a kidney. In a way, it seems ridiculous. In the span of a few months, The Nightstalker committed approximately thirteen murders and an estimated two dozen assaults. Given that the population of Los Angeles County borders on about ten million, what are the chances that one resident will encounter another who happened to be connected to the events?

"What happened?"

I try to explain the night of August 6, 1985 as best I can. The Nightstalker was in our backyard. For reasons we will never know, he didn't break into our house. He did, however, break into a house around the corner from us. He shot the husband and wife. Fortunately, both survived. Our house became the hub of activity for the LAPD for some time and the detectives found his Avia footprints in our backyard. Those are the facts.

In recent years, I took to gathering old articles from the *L.A. Times* and reading Philip Carlo's comprehensive book based on the investigation into Ramirez's rampage, not because of any particular interest in serial killers, but because I wanted to fact-check what was in my mind. I wanted to see if what I perceived to be real matched what had happened. My memories are vivid, but they are the memories of an eight-

year-old girl, sweating it out in the San Fernando Valley during the summer that bridged together second and third grade. I can't recall The Nightstalker's victims. I know their names only from newspaper clippings. The articles mentioned a daughter a few years younger than my sister and I, but I can't remember the child either, which is odd, considering that we lived in the sort of neighborhood where all of the little kids seemed to run into each other while riding bikes and skateboards outside.

We knew Richard Ramirez well before he paid a visit to the Northwest San Fernando Valley, not by name but by reputation. The Nightstalker, or The Valley Intruder, was how he was referenced in the news. He was suspected of numerous home invasions and several murders in the neighboring San Gabriel Valley. He had yet to make it to our valley, but we knew who he was from the various police sketches that appeared on the nightly news. My parents have always been news junkies and, even in my younger years, I followed suit. We would watch as the newscaster went down the list of people and places hit by the serial killer, ran through the latest developments in the case, and warned everyone to lock the doors and windows.

For some reason, I remember the AC/DC connection better than anything else. Newscasters seemed intent upon raising the fear factor in the city from a simple "let's make sure the doors are locked tonight" to "let's go out and get some guns and if they don't catch this guy by August, we're moving to Colorado." On days when the networks lacked any noteworthy developments in the case, newscasters took to analyzing the lyrics of AC/DC. A black cap with a shiny AC/DC logo on the front was found at the site of one of the invasions. Somehow, a connection was made between a serial killer who forced women to "swear on Satan" and left pentagrams on bedroom walls and an Australian heavy metal band whose songs seemed to focus more on drinking and fucking than murder. It seems ludicrous now, but, at that time, people were scared and generally unfamiliar with heavy metal.

I remember Dad asking my sister Alex and me if we listened to AC/DC. Alex was six. I was eight. We watched enough MTV to be familiar with the band, but we were too busy arguing over whether or not her favorite band, a British duo known for wearing short-shorts and sweat-shirts that read "Choose Life," was better than my favorite band, four British guys who shunned the shaggy haircuts and matching suits of the four British guys that came before them for hairspray, makeup and ruffled shirts. We

liked cute guys, not hard rock guitars. Frankly, we didn't care who made who—the band or the serial killer.

It was the hottest summer in one hundred years. Living in The Valley, where mountains serve as a barrier between the ocean breeze and us, we were used to pulsating, oven-baked warmth that lasted through the night. However, that summer was worse. It was an intense, humid death grip that my mother describes as a "Tennessee Williams" sort of heat, when you know that, ultimately, the bad weather will make someone go crazy. It was not the sort of weather typical to Southern California and it just so happened that this was the summer our air conditioner decided to break. We searched for water, a quest that kept us hopping back and forth between the YMCA and my grandparent's swimming pool. At home, Alex and I would run through the sprinklers or help Dad wash the cars so that we could turn the hose on each other for relief. At night, we would fight for space in front of fans, trying to cool down enough to actually get some sleep. The truth, though, was that I didn't want to sleep for fear that The Nightstalker would catch me in my dreams.

The dreams started out innocently. I had become a character from one of the books I had read. I was Pippi roaming through the Villa Villekulla, Laura Ingalls beating Nellie Olson in a fight, Harriet spying on neighbors. Then I would see his face. This wasn't the shaded pencil sketch I had seen on the news, but a fleshed out demon of horror movie proportions—all sunken cheeks, yellowed eyeballs and mangled teeth. He invaded my dreams like the molten-faced villain in the slasher films my parents wouldn't allow me to watch.

Dad thought he was dreaming when he saw The Nightstalker through the sliding door of the den. My brother John, who was two years old at the time, had climbed into bed with my parents. Dad, who has always been a light sleeper, got up and went into the den to watch television. He laid down on the floor, underneath the ceiling fan, and started to drift into slumber.

"I saw a dark person in a shirt," he explained. "It was a dark shirt. I saw him looking in on me. I told him, 'Get out of here.' He left."

Piles of debris, left over from the recent addition to the house, stood outside my parents' bedroom. Mom heard a loud thud come from this area.

"That woke me up," she said of the noise. "It was really hot and all of the windows were open. I got a little nervous. I went down the hallway and turned on all of the lights in all of the bedrooms."

She went to the den, woke up Dad and told him what happened. "I just sat in the den for a little while because it was so hot," she added. "We talked for a little while and he said that he thought he had a dream of seeing a man's face outside of the sliding glass door. He thought it was just a dream."

A few minutes passed. "After awhile," Mom continued, "We heard screaming and stuff like that and gunshots."

My parents heard both a male and female voice engaged in an argument before the gunshots. Not knowing the voices, they thought it may have been a domestic squabble, but Dad felt a need to do something. Dad is a tough guy, a former high school football player from East Los Angeles who worked the rubbish route for his father before going to law school. He can spin yarns about fighting thugs and going up against a famous wrestling bear that would easily intimidate the average suburbanite, but he lacked a weapon. He grabbed a broom and ran outside. Mom dragged him back inside.

"I got scared because he didn't have anything with him," she said, further rationalizing that, "He wanted to go save the people... but there was no way he could save anybody. The best thing he could do was call the police, which we did right away."

The police arrived shortly after an ambulance that had been summoned by the victims. Since my parents were still awake, the police asked if they could use our house and phone. Mom agreed and put on a pot of coffee.

Meanwhile, Liz, Alex and John slept through the entire episode.

The police remained stationed at our house throughout the next day, as the metro and homicide divisions came to join our local cops. I remember Mom waking us up fairly early that morning. She told us to get our things together. We were going to our grandparents' house. She didn't tell us what was going on, but I distinctly remember seeing the yellow tape, easily recognizable from news broadcasts, making its way around the neighborhood.

At my grandparents' house, we were told to go upstairs and put on our bathing suits. I had a feeling that Mom was telling my Grandma something important, so I tried to eavesdrop. I couldn't make out a thing. Later on, I learned that Mom told her mother about what happened the night before. She said that she didn't want us watching the news. She didn't want us to know about it until she had found out enough details to explain the situation, particularly since it was starting to look like a Nightstalker incident.

"Just the thought of The Nightstalker was terrifying," Mom



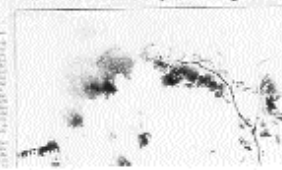
L.A. bolts its doors, windows

Residents brace for new attack by Night Stalker

Violent end to a place of peace

What makes this killer different

Social scientist explains why



NAME GAME: IT CAN SPELL BIG BUCKS FOR A WINNER/A-9

Monday August 12, 1988



IN STYLE: WEAVER FOR THE '80S: WHITE IN COURT C-1

IN SPORTS: IT'S NOT PIZZA: JOHN BRIDGES' D-1

THE BATTLE FOR: Are the Rams under the Eric Dickerson? D-1

Night Stalker strikes again

L.A.'S MORNING BRIEFING

Police Comm. All treated the slacker

WATTS — 20 YEARS LATER



San Gabriel woman raped by intruder

Union Caribull leak sends 125 to hospitals



Top to bottom: Los Angeles Herald's Nightstalker headline, police renderings of the Nightstalker, and a rare Avia tennis shoe, size 11 1/2. Only one pair had made it out to California. The Nightstalker wore them.

Richard Ramirez had roamed through Liz O's backyard.



told me. "I didn't want you kids to be so scared that you would never want to live in this house again. I didn't know what questions the police would ask us. I didn't know if they would talk about The Nightstalker being outside the bedroom windows. I didn't want you to hear about that unless you heard it from me, where I say, 'This is what happened, but it is all over with and everything is safe.' I figured that it would be scarier with the police talking about it. I didn't want my kids to not be able to go to sleep."

• • •

That evening, after dinner, Mom came to pick us up and explained the entire situation—how she heard something in the backyard and Dad saw someone in the glass door, how the people across the street were shot but not killed, how it looked like it might be The Nightstalker. After that day, the police continued to stop by our house. They searched the backyard for evidence and checked out every pair of shoes in my dad's closet. Two weeks later, Mom's cousin Linda had flown in to Los Angeles with two of her kids, Marie and Tony, from Cleveland for a vacation. As John and Tony played together, the three of us girls ran from room to room, singing pop songs at the top of our lungs as the thick, brightly-hued plastic charm necklaces that hung around our necks bobbed back and forth, up and down.

On one particular evening, we were stationed by the fireplace in the living room working on a number made famous by the aforementioned short-short wearing British lads when the

doorbell rang. Aunt Linda, who was in the kitchen making dinner with Mom, ran to answer it.

"LAPD Homicide, ma'am."

We stopped singing and turned to listen.

Aunt Linda paused before yelling, "Hey, Di, I think it's for you!"

Mom led the officer inside and then back outside to the yard.

The footprints in our backyard matched the footprints found at the other crime scenes. Avia tennis shoes, size 11 1/2, were rare. In fact, only one pair had made it out to California. The sole of the shoe bore a different pattern than the normal waffle imprint found on the bottom of tennis shoes. There was a circle print near the toe, cut but straight lines. The circle lay in the middle of a large oval featuring small, diagonal markings. Vertical lines ran down the outer regions of the sole down to the heel, where three or four horizontal stripes resided. Undoubtedly, Richard Ramirez roamed through our disheveled backyard, but the police could not say anything yet.

"He asked me if I could remember anything else," Mom recalls. "I said no. I asked him if he could tell me if it was The Nightstalker or not. He told me that he wasn't at liberty to tell me anything but that this Thanksgiving, we had a lot to be thankful for."

When Mom repeated the story to us minutes later, her voice was flat and hard, like the detective. She stood straight and expressionless while repeating the line, "Ma'am, you have a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving." Our eyes bugged. It was just like that old TV show we would watch with the poker-faced detectives

going after blue-skinned hippies and pot-smoking parents.

All too soon, our cousins went back to Cleveland, armed with California souvenirs and tales of The Nightstalker, we got ready to go back to school, and my dad beamed with hometown pride as an East L.A. mob caught the serial killer as he was trying to steal a car. While our lives went back to normal, this wasn't the case for the people around the corner. The couple survived, but with permanent, life-altering wounds. They moved shortly thereafter.

When I started writing this article, I was struck by a sick feeling at the thought of what could have happened to us, the relief that he didn't hit our family and the guilt that someone else's family suffered instead. I wondered *why them and not us?* I posed this question to Mom.

"My feeling is that he tried to come to our house first. Our house was really vulnerable. We had the windows open because it was so hot. But, the thing is that we didn't sleep well.... I think because I woke up and because all of those pipes were on the side of the house. He couldn't see it and probably walked into the pipes and into the side of the house. That woke me up. I guess that turning on all the lights scared him away from the house, and so he went to the next house he could get into."

Perhaps it was my parents' chronic insomnia combined with the mess left after the remodel that saved us on this fateful night. Perhaps it was just dumb luck. I don't know. All I know is that I can never hear a rustle of leaves without jumping up to shut the windows.

-Liz Ohanesian



LIZ O

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WHO ARE YOU?

Nardwuar vs. Franz Ferdinand

Nardwuar: Who are you?
Alex Kapranos: I'm Alex from Franz Ferdinand.
Nardwuar: Alex, who else is in Franz Ferdinand? Can you introduce them please?
Alex: This is Bob
Bob Hardy: I'm Bob.
Alex: And this is Nick.
Nick McCarthy: Hi.
Alex: And this is Paul.
Paul Thomson: Hello there.
Nardwuar: Right off the bat Paul, is it true that you are a human guinea pig?
Paul: [laughs] Yes, that's true.
Nardwuar: What does that entail? It was regarding your tail, wasn't it?
Paul: I had my tail removed for medical science. [laughs] No, times were hard and I was lazy. [laughs] I had to pay my rent so I decided to have some fat removed from my backside and whole lot of other things which wasn't worth 250 pounds, which is what of your Canadian dollars? Two hundred fifty pounds? \$500?
Alex: No, not that much.
Nardwuar: What did you think, Alex, of your bandmate having to have some flesh taken out? Was that how hard it was in the early days of Franz Ferdinand?
Alex: It was. We were all so incredibly impoverished. I didn't think too much about it until he showed me the scars and then I couldn't get the thought out of my head.

Nardwuar: Are we allowed to see the scars at all, Paul?
Paul: Certainly not. [looks at camera] What time does this go out? [laughs]
Nardwuar: So really, what did it feel like when you got it out? Was it hard to sit down? Did any other people get the flesh taken out? When you signed up for this thing, did you know what was going to get taken out?
Paul: Back off, Sigmund, bloody hell. [laughs] Which question?
Nardwuar: I'm just wondering. You sign up for this thing. Were you picked because you were like the "rock guy"? You'd have to get chunks out of your ass. Were there other people who signed up for this experiment?
Paul: Yes, lots of people in Glasgow have signed up for this experiment. I'm the person who was nominated. I wouldn't do that again. Certainly not.
Alex: The thing is, we needed to get money together for the band to buy instruments and stuff and we thought we're going to sell Paul's ass one way or another, so we might as well do it physically.
Paul: I had to stop them from selling it one way... [laughs]
Nardwuar: I think it's just amazing. The band begins and you sell your ass. And now, is it true that you guys are editing *The Guardian*, the prestigious *Guardian* newspaper?
Alex: Yeah.

Nardwuar: What's going on there? You're going to be the editors of *The Guardian*.
Bob: That is mad, isn't it? They don't know what they've done.
Nardwuar: From flesh removal to editing *The Guardian*, is that how quick things have gone for Franz Ferdinand?
Alex: It is. It's astonishing, really, isn't it? It's astonishing. That's the truth of it.
Nardwuar: Now Alex, looking at your shoes, people seem to be fascinated by your shoes. Kids are fascinated by your shoes, aren't they?
Alex: Yeah, well, if you look, we've all got some interesting shoes on today. I think I'm wearing my conservative shoes now. I'll put on my sparkly ones later on. It's just all part of dressing, isn't it?
Nardwuar: You said you'll never wear Chuck Taylors on stage.
Alex: The what?
Nardwuar: Chuck Taylors.
Alex: What's a Chuck Taylor?
Nardwuar: You know, like the Vans, the sport-basketball type shoes.
Nick: I wouldn't wear ones like that. [points to Nardwuar's New Balance runners]
Nardwuar: That's what I was wondering. That's what I was wondering. What do you think about my shoes? How do they stack up for the Franz Ferdinand?
Alex: I don't know. I guess it's just like every other kind of clothing. You use it to express your personality—and you seem to have a lot of personality to express, as do we.
Nardwuar: The reason I wear 'em is because I also play in a rock 'n' roll band and I like to jump around a bit. But looking at your shoes, how do they work for jumping around? Looking at your shoes, Franz Ferdinand, would we assume that you don't jump around that much onstage?
Alex: Quite the opposite, really. We do jump around quite a lot onstage. But what you've got to realize is with shoes like these—they've all got leather soles—you can do a lot of good sliding motions and skids across the stage and splits. It's a different kind of dancing. Instead of

the basketball kind of dancing we're doing the more kind of...
Nardwuar: James Brown kind of thing?
Alex: Yeah, yeah. We're all going to get those capes as well and fling them off and get Glenn to put them back on again. [laughs]
Nardwuar: Now speaking of shoes—Glenn is the guy you make do everything?
Alex: That's right.
Nardwuar: Maybe we should explain. Who is Glenn?
Alex: Glenn's our friend who looks after us on tour.
Bob: It's more like us looking after him sometimes.
Alex: He's like a big baby, isn't he? A big, incontinent baby.
Nardwuar: Alex, speaking of shoes and such, and jumping around onstage—blisters. You've got quite a few blisters haven't you? Wasn't that one of your early bands, The Blisters?
Alex: My God, you're a good researcher aren't you? Yeah, that's true.
Nardwuar: What were The Blisters like?
Alex: It was, ummm, I guess similar. Just a lot of teenage energy and spazzing out onstage. Maybe not as focused as we are today.
Nardwuar: So here we are, Franz Ferdinand, in Vancouver, British Columbia...
Nick: Er, yeah. [laughs]
Nardwuar: Canada.
Nick: Yup.
Nardwuar: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. What are the Canadian connections to Franz Ferdinand?
Paul: We toured with Hot Hot Heat.
Nardwuar: You toured with Hot Hot Heat. You can't get more Canadian than that! Actually, Hot Hot Heat opened... no, you opened for Hot Hot Heat.
Alex: Yeah, we opened for Hot Hot Heat. We did a tour with them and The Fiery Furnaces. Hot Hot Heat were great. We love their attitude. They're a fun pop band. They make people dance. They're cool.
Nardwuar: How about their shoes? How are they? Do Hot Hot Heat have better shoes than me?
Alex: Dustin's got good boots.

NARDWUAR

Bob: Steve, he's got good shoes. So does Paul. So does Dante. They've all got good shoes.

Nardwuar: So Franz Ferdinand, any other Canadian connections? Hot Hot Heat, you opened for them.

Alex: My mother and my grandparents immigrated to Canada, lived here for three years, and then they immigrated back to South Shields.

Nardwuar: Whereabouts and why did they leave?

Alex: They lived in Toronto and they left again because they had no money. But that was ages ago in the '60s.

Nardwuar: I was thinking of another Canadian connection which you haven't mentioned yet, Alex. Yummy Fur was one of your bands. And *Yummy Fur* is a Canadian comic book by Chester Brown. Is that true?

Alex: That's correct. The Yummy Fur had an album out called *The Canadian Flag*, too. But Paul's more the Yummy Fur man. I just played bass for a bit at the end.

Nardwuar: You had an album called *The Canadian Flag*?

Paul: With a Canadian flag on the front, yeah. Inside a hand.

Nardwuar: When was that?

Paul: '98 or something like that.

Nardwuar: So we have Yummy Fur, we have Hot Hot Heat, we have your relatives and we also have The Monochrome Set.

Alex: [laughs] What's the Monochrome Set connection to Canada?

Nardwuar: First off, what's the importance of The Monochrome Set to Franz Ferdinand?

Alex: Well, for me, I know Bid of The Monochrome Set and he's been very supportive of music I've done before. I've written things for him and worked with him before. He's a cool guy.

Nardwuar: And one of the dudes from The Monochrome Set lives in Montreal now!

Bob: No.

Nardwuar: Yeah.

Alex: Which one?

Nardwuar: I'm not sure. One of the dudes from The Monochrome Set. Another connection to Franz Ferdinand. And lastly, another Canadian connection, Isobel from Belle and...

Bob: Sebastian?

Nardwuar: Belle and Sebastian. Played her last gig ever with Belle and Sebastian in Toron...

Alex: Is that right? Toron-TO. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Toronto!

Alex: Is that true?

Nardwuar: Yes!

Bob: And we toured with Belle and...

Nardwuar: Se...

Bob: Ba...

Nardwuar: S...

Bob: Ti...

Alex: An... In fact, part of the reason we had our band together was because of Belle and Sebastian. Mick, who plays the trumpet and bass sometimes in Belle and Sebastian, gave me an old bass guitar and said, "Do something useful with it," so I kind of taught Bob how to play it and that's how the band sort of started.

Nardwuar: And you guys are Franz Ferdinand. And one of the things I've been really digging about you guys was this picture here. [Nardwuar pulls out a picture from the *New Musical Express*. If you could just open this up, there's a nice little center spread we have here. And show it here. Right here.

Back
off,
Sigmund.

Bloody
hell...

Which
question?

Franz
Ferdinand

I love this photo.

Alex: Great. [laughs]

Nardwuar: It's from the *NME*. Now does this symbolize everything about Franz Ferdinand right here?

Bob: These are our friends. This is our friend Hannah. And Roxanne. And Manuela. And Celia, Jo, Madge. That's Alanah, that's us.

Nardwuar: They're dancing. I'm wondering. Who is that guy?

Bob: She's married to the lead singer of the Yummy Fur.

Nardwuar: No way!

Bob: Yes way.

Paul: Morrissey, he was there.

Alex: Morrissey, there's another Canadian connection.

Nardwuar: But I love this picture because it shows you do like to get the girls dancing, and boy, they really are dancing there. But I love

the indie rock nerd right at the front there with The Smiths shirt!

[laughter]

Bob: Aw, he really is a nice guy. I've spoken to him at parties and he's really nice.

Nardwuar: That would be like me at the front with The Smiths shirt. Does that symbolize, let me cover this up, is that what it used to be like at the gigs before you started? [Nardwuar covers all the people in the picture with his hand except the guy with the Smiths shirt]

Alex: It's what it still is.

Nardwuar: Just one guy at the front with a Smiths shirt. But now you've expanded it.

Alex: Yeah, yeah. We've invited all these characters in and they all

really realized the error of their ways and they realized what an important character he really was in the history of music. They wanted to feature him, but he wouldn't talk to any journalists, so he asked us to interview him instead.

Paul: He used us as a medium, a conduit.

Nardwuar: And did they end up asking all the questions? Did any of your questions end up getting in?

Paul: We ended up preparing forty questions and ended up just having a conversation, really. Somebody sat with a tape recorder and recorded that and is going to come up with an article.

Nardwuar: Hopefully, it'll all come out. Actually, if you could



dance now.

Nardwuar: What's interesting is, you've actually interviewed Morrissey for the *NME*.

Alex: That's right, yeah.

Bob: In the *N-M-E*. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Because Morrissey saw that guy wearing a Smiths shirt in the *NME*?

Alex: Something like that, yeah. We interviewed him for the *NME* recently. He's cool. And his new record is really good as well.

Nardwuar: Now let's just say something right off the bat. Morrissey and *NME* and interview, that doesn't usually go together, now does it?

Alex: Thing was, he hadn't done an interview with them for twelve years and he fell out really badly with the *NME*. They really wanted to do a feature on him because they

show that picture one more time, Alex of Franz Ferdinand. Is this the Chateau? Is this the legendary Chateau?

Alex: This is the Chateau here. This is the last show we did in the Chateau. Hopefully, we'll do some more. This is on the seventh floor of an old art deco warehouse. You can see all the crappy plumbing. We put all these lights in. We put the electricity in. All the windows were done in. [laughs]

Nardwuar: How hard was it to create the Chateau? Because I understand there were mummified pigeons and pigeon shit. How hard is it to clean pigeon shit? And what advice would you give people to clean pigeon shit?

Alex: Buy a mask because of the fumes. The dust can get into your lungs and give you horrific diseases

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and things. But you have no idea how hard pigeon shit is to clean off. It's impenetrable.

Nardwuar: And the mummified pigeons? There were lots of dead things there?

Bob: Lots of dead things. We'd get professionals in because they're toxic.

Nardwuar: Glenn is a professional.

Alex: Glenn is a professional. Actually, he's toxic as well. We've lost him. As usual, as well.

Nardwuar: And you guys are Franz...

Alex: Ferdinand.

Nardwuar: And we are in Vancouver, British Columbia...

Nick: Yeah.

Nardwuar: Canada! Now Franz Ferdinand, you have a song called "Cheating On..."

Alex: "You."

Nardwuar: Now is that true that it has a kind of an early Beatles vibe to it, that you were kind of thinking of early The Beatles?

Alex: Yeah, definitely. As far as The Beatles go, for me personally, I prefer their early stuff where they play really direct, raw pop music. And, yeah, that's kinda what we wanted to do.

Nardwuar: 'Cause what I was thinking is, your band name Franz Ferdinand is very prim and proper. There are other Scottish bands like The Kaisers.

Alex: Oh yeah! The Kaisers. They're brilliant. They've got that total...

Nardwuar: Early Beatles thing going?

Alex: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They've got that total Cavern Club beat feel about them.

Nardwuar: That's a total nobility type rock, gentry type rock thing, The Kaisers, Franz Ferdinand. And I was wondering, were you also influenced at all, 'cause I got a little hypothesis here. Were you influenced by these guys at all? The Thanes from Scotland. [Nardwuar hands Franz Ferdinand a Thanes LP]

Alex: They're another cool band. [looks at LP cover] In fact, I've got a guitar like that! Is that an old Harmony? It looks like that. Yeah, they're from Edinburgh.

Paul: Yeah, they used to put on gigs when I started playing in Edinburgh.

Nardwuar: Was that Lenny?

Alex: Lenny's the drummer. Lenny drums in The Wildebeasts now, doesn't he?

Nardwuar: Actually, we can find out. I actually have a Wildebeasts 7" right here. [Nardwuar hands Franz Ferdinand a Wildebeasts single]

Alex: [laughs] Yeah, we mention The Wildebeasts and there they are.

[laughs] These were all bands that were very much playing in Glasgow and Edinburgh. He's a cool guy and they did a lot of stuff. I think, generally, the history of bands in Scotland, Glasgow and Edinburgh, their attitudes have shaped the way we are.

Nardwuar: It's so cool that you give props to bands like The Thanes and The Kaisers and my theory of that is if you turn over this [Thanes LP] on the back, look at what it says: "Distributed by K Records, Olympia, Washington." Of course, K was one of the pioneering labels importing Scottish rock and were fans of Belle and Sebastian and stuff like that.

Alex: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that. Right. Belle and Sebastian, of course, very important for us too.

Paul: That's Calvin Johnson's label, isn't it?

Nardwuar: Yes it is. Calvin Johnson was importing this Thanes Scottish rock to North America way before this Scottish rock explosion of two thousand and...

Alex: Four...[laughs]

Paul: We played with Dub Narcotic as well, the last time they were in Glasgow. And Calvin Johnson threw this huge tantrum because we ate all his deluxe caramel logs, which are a Scottish delicacy. And he picked up the box and went, "Fuck me! There was a whole box of these!" [laughter]

Nardwuar: You ate his box of candy?

Paul: Yeah. I didn't realize it was his. He was a bit put out. He was looking forward to taking 'em home with him, I think.

Nardwuar: Did he come out to see you in Seattle at all? Were there any K-rockers that came out?

Paul: Eh, um, no.

Nardwuar: I think it's great that you know who K Records are. That you're associated with it. Like, I'm



linked to you guys through K Records, through Calvin.

Alex: Oh wow, how's that?

Nardwuar: Well, just because I bought their records.

Alex: Oh, right. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Franz Ferdinand, you

seem to be able to answer everything and maybe you could help me just a bit more. Winding up here, Franz Ferdinand, what do you know about The Poets, Scotland's number one group from the '60s, The Poets?

Alex: Well, yeah. They were a beat group around about the same time The Rolling Stones were coming out, also managed by Andrew Loog Oldham.

Nardwuar: Scotland's number one group.

Alex: I'm sure they were at some point. I guess they were. They were at the heart of that sort of independent, beat combo sort of attitude, which was, I guess, the beginning of where we ended up. Funny, Andrew Loog Oldham, another connection there.



Nardwuar: He lives in...

Alex: Peru or something?

Nardwuar: He lives in Vancouver now!

Alex: No! [laughs]

Nardwuar: Yes! He's gonna be at your gig tonight I bet.

Alex: No way, really? Cause Andrew Loog Oldham also produced our friend's band, which is V-Twin, and one of the guys that was in V-Twin was in the original line-up of Franz Ferdinand.

Bob: ...And they produced their album in Vancouver.

Alex: Oh, did they?

Bob: Yeah, Michael and Joyce mixed it in Vancouver with Andrew Loog Oldham.

Alex: We've got a lot of connections with Canada!

Nardwuar: But the thing about Franz Ferdinand is, it always goes back to one thing. It goes back to this, doesn't it? What is this? And who am I alluding to and maybe can you try to play it?

Alex: The Stylophone?

Nardwuar: Who plays the Stylophone?

Bob: Rolf Harris

Nick: David Bowie.



Nardwuar: You're missing it.

In a very important band. A band you might have given their first big break.

Alex: Mogwai?

Nardwuar: You had the Kazoo Club, Alex, didn't you? You had the Kazoo Club and you put on lots of bands in Scotland.

Alex: [laughs] How do you know this stuff? Yeah, Yeah.

Nardwuar: And you put on all these gigs in Scotland. And what band did you give an early break at the Kazoo Club?

Alex: I'm trying to think.

Nardwuar: Belle and...

Alex: Sebastian, of course.

Nardwuar: They play a Stylophone.

Alex: Yeah, they do. They do.

Paul: There's one on "Space Oddity" as well.

[Paul starts playing the Stylophone]

Nardwuar: You remember seeing them with one onstage don't you?

Alex: I don't remember seeing the Stylophone...

Nick: Can I have it?

Nardwuar: Um, no. Unfortunately not. I just thought you'd see this and immediately connect it with Belle and Sebastian.

Alex: I didn't. But I do remember them playing with them, definitely, yeah.

Nardwuar: It is true that Rolf Harris was into these?

Paul: Yes, he was.

Nardwuar: He was into these big time. So what can you explain about Belle and Sebastian. Did you really give Belle and Sebastian a big break with the Kazoo Club? What was the Kazoo Club?

Alex: There was a place in Glasgow [laughs] called the 13th Door and, uh, I used to stick bands on there. I had two clubs. I had the Kazoo Club and I had the 99P Club. And the Kazoo Club was free. The idea was the bands would come down and play for a bit of beer and people wouldn't have to pay and we've give 'em amps to play with and stuff. And the 99P Club, we just charged a Quid to get in and the band got the money. It was just a good sort of environment. Lots of people got together. It was a good scene.

Nardwuar: 'Cause I was fascinated to learn that Alex was on the Scottish scene so early, wasn't he there?

Bob: I suppose so.

Nardwuar: Like, giving Belle and Sebastian a break. I thought you were brand new...

Nick: But you don't know anything about...

Nardwuar: I know you (Nick) want this. I know you want this. And I know you're not... is he a big Belle and Sebastian fan?

Alex: He is. He loves those guys.

Nardwuar: Are you really? But you didn't notice that they played these on stage?

Nick: Damn you! [laughs] I didn't.

Nardwuar: Now caught on film. Were you sleeping during their gigs?

Nick: Ah, shit.

Nardwuar: Believe me, some people have, haven't they? [laughs]

Paul: I think we fell asleep during the Stylophone solo.

Nardwuar: Winding up here with Franz...

Alex: Ferdi...

Bob: ...Nand.

Nardwuar: I wanted to ask you about Belle and Sebastian. I mean, in all seriousness, the importance of Belle and Sebastian. Is it true they have treasure hunts, and stuff like that? Like secret games they play with their audience?

Alex: They go for picnics and things with their audience and stuff like that. Yeah, they have a lot of fun.

Nardwuar: Have you thought about doing anything like that?

Alex: Umm...

Bob: Maybe in the summer. [laughs]

Alex: It's not picnic weather just now, is it?

Nardwuar: Who is Rab C. Nesbitt? And how is he important to Scotland?

Paul: He's the caricature of some character that is prevalent in Glasgow.

Nardwuar: How would you describe him to people who don't know him?

Paul: Everybody in Govern, at least, looks like that. [laughs]

Nardwuar: How would you describe Rab C. Nesbitt?

Alex: It's so not true. He's such an exceptional character that sometimes comes across in Glasgow, a caricature. He wears a string vest, which is stained with food and beer. He has the *Daily Record* in one pocket, which is the tabloid newspaper of Scotland. And he usually has a drink. He's usually drunk and shouting his worldviews at the world.

Paul: He's a caricature of pub bores, people who think their opinion is the be-all, end-all of every-

Nardwuar: Are you guys the new Rab C. Nesbitt? Are Franz Ferdinand and the Rab C. Nesbitts?

Bob: I don't think so.

Nardwuar: Because people are listening to you, all over the world.

Alex: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Bob: You didn't even know who Rab C. Nesbitt was, so obviously we're not.

Nardwuar: But you inspired me to check out to see who he was.

Bob: [laughs] Ah, that's nice.

Nardwuar: Thank you, Franz Ferdinand! Franz Ferdinand here, winding up, you guys are called Franz...

Bob: Fer...

Nardwuar: Di...

Paul: Nan...

Nardwuar: D. Have you been confused with anybody else? Like, with Rio Ferdinand? There's a soccer player called Rio Ferdinand, like the brother of... anything like that?

Nick: Everybody's confused in Glasgow.

Nardwuar: He's a guy who conveniently forgot to take a drug test and got suspended for eight months.

Alex: Yeah, that's correct.

Nardwuar: Like, Franz Ferdinand, do people think you're Franz? Or do they think you're related to Rio Ferdinand, the soccer player?

Paul: There's a tribute band, REO Ferdinand, which is a tribute to REO Speedwagon and Franz Ferdinand.

Nardwuar: Oh, no way.

Paul: Yeah.

Nardwuar: R-E-O Ferdinand? Is that the same people behind The Different Strokes and all those tribute bands?

Alex: Yeah, that's right. The Different Strokes...

Bob: And the Morrissey Minors is the new one, children singing Smiths' songs. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Oh, wow.

Alex: Do you know what Moris Minor is?

Nardwuar: Yes, the car.

Alex: Yeah, well, he's got the Morrissey Minors.

Nardwuar: Did you tell him about that when you interviewed him?

Alex: No, we didn't. We forgot to mention it. I think he would have been into that.

Nardwuar: What's amazing about you guys, you Franz Ferdinand-ish type people, is that I was told you were Dadaists, you were Dadaists... Dada Art Schoolists.

Alex: [laughs] We're not Dadaists. **Nardwuar:** I heard you were Dadaists, like, art school guys. But you are so cute and cuddly.

Alex: All the Dadaists are dead. We like Dada...

Nardwuar: But you're so friendly, you're not like Dada Art Schoolish type people.

Bob: We like the aesthetic of Dada...

Alex: I think all these people have this misconception that anybody connected with art is going to be pretentious and stuck-up their own ass, but that's not the case at all. Everybody that I know that's... all the artists I know are really down to earth.

Nardwuar: Anybody that knows The Thanes is a friend of mine. Thank you, Alex.

Alex: Thank you.

Nardwuar: Anything else you want to add to the people out there, at all, Franz Ferdinand?

Nick: It's great to be in Canada.

Paul: Our soundman also does Manitoba, an excellent band and they're from Canada.

Alex: Who are also on Domino Records.

Nardwuar: Which connects to Franz Ferdinand, more Canadian connections.

Bob: In the art school in Glasgow, the wood technician—he makes all the stretchers—his daughter emigrated to Canada. He comes here every summer.

Nardwuar: Amazing, more oozing out. Any last Canadian connections? You've [Nick] gotta have one, c'mon.

Nick: I can't think. The only one I can remember is my girlfriend's parents, who were on holiday in Canada last year. [laughs]

Nardwuar: That'll work. That'll work, Franz Ferdinand.

Nick: They keep on coming, don't they?

Bob: We're practically Canadian.

Nardwuar: Thank you for coming here.

Alex: Thank you.

Nardwuar: Franz Ferdinand, Franz Ferdinand, the shooting of Franz Ferdinand caused World War I, right?

Alex: That's true.

Nardwuar: So, there would be no what, if there was no band Franz Ferdinand?

Bob: No interview? [laughs]

Nardwuar: Ba-boom, that is true. Thank you for creating that.

Bob: It's a pleasure

Nardwuar: Thanks so much Franz Ferdinand. Keep on rocking in the free world and doot doola doot do...

Alex: Doot doo. [laughs]

—Nardwuar

To listen and hear this interview, go to <http://www.nardwuar.com>



NARDWUAR



JIM RULAND

LAZY MICK

I WANT MY TWO DOLLARS Bank Fees and the Culture of Corporate Greed

Few things burn my ass more than bank fees. George Bush, Al Qaeda, Ryan Seacrest—all out of my hands, but bank fees I bring on myself.

I try to avoid bank fees wherever possible, but the institution I have my checking account with—Bank of America—charges me two dollars every time I use an ATM machine that doesn't belong to Bank of America. That's on top of

unlike more liquor stores they won't charge your bank and your bank won't charge you because it's a point-of-purchase transaction) than pay bank fees. If I've got money, I spend it, so I try to take out only as much cash as I think I'll need. When I'm *ahem* in the spirit of things, I'll spend money like a sailor on shore leave and as the night progresses my definition of "need" changes hourly until my pockets are empty and I don't even have enough cash to buy a corn dog at the AM/PM. I tried to train myself to stop caring about bank fees by rationalizing that I was spending more money taking out more than I needed than by taking out only what I needed at the moment and paying the occasional fee; but

This was somewhat of a surprise. The guy who runs the mini-market in the building where I work has started charging for debit card transactions under five dollars, because, he explained, he gets charged fifty cents for each transaction. But that was a point-of-sale purchase, so maybe it was different.

"Two dollars seems like an awful of money," I said.

"We do have an awful lot of ATMs. Where do you live, sir?"

"Los Angeles, California."

"Oh, yeah. They're all over the place. Like thousands of them." She even laughed a little, as

FEW THINGS BURN MY ASS MORE THAN BANK FEES. GEORGE BUSH, AL QAEDA, RYAN SEACREST-ALL OUT OF MY HANDS, BUT BANK FEES I BRING ON MYSELF.

the fee that the ATM charges, which is usually somewhere between 50 cents and \$1.50. I don't mind the money that 7-11 or Arco charges me when I use their ATMs. I know that nothing in life is free. Automated teller machines provide a service, namely timely and convenient access to my money, and I expect to pay for it. It's the additional two dollars that B of A charges me that makes me crazy. If I can make a long distance phone call to anywhere in the country for ten cents a minute or download a digital music file for under a buck, two dollars seems like an awful lot of money for a transaction that only takes a second. It's not like Bank of America has to pay for someone to come out and fill the machines with cash or make sure the toner for printing the receipts isn't running low. It just doesn't seem fair.

We've all been there. You're running late or caught unprepared for an activity that requires folding money, and your debit or credit card won't do: a cover charge for the punk rock show, parking lot fee or tip for the valet, a nightcap at the cash-only bar or a gratuity for the girl who can do more tricks with a ten-foot pole than a monkey with a hundred feet of vine. Sure, now you can get that Misfits picture disk you always wanted with your Pay Pal account on the Internerd, but we live in a thoroughly automated world that our punk rock lifestyles are never going to catch up with, and to that I say amen.

I'm not a particularly frugal person. I'd sooner buy a round of drinks for my friends or kick down to the homeless guy outside the Rite Aid (which, by the way, is an excellent place to use your debit card and opt for cash back when you buy whatever spirits are on sale that week;

my bank statements told a different story. I've probably racked up enough bank fees from the ATM inside the 7-11 across the street from where Juvee and the Garage used to be to buy everyone reading this column a drink.

Bank of America has me over a barrel and they know it. There's a reason why ATMs in strip bars and casinos charge such high fees: people who are making withdrawals in strip bars and casinos have poor impulse control and are not likely to care what the fee is, even if it's \$3.50, \$4, or \$5. And don't get me started on non-bank-affiliated institutions that offer services like check cashing and payday loans at usurious rates and always seem to be located in neighborhoods with large numbers of working poor. A clip joint is a clip joint, but at least in the old days you could count on getting groped by a girl before you got your pocket picked. In Monopoly, the bank errs in your favor. In real life, you have to shell out eight bits every time you pass Go.

While going over a recent bank statement riddled with two dollar fees, I wondered for the thousandth time why the bank felt it necessary to charge their own customers such outrageous fees for accessing their own money. So I picked up the phone and called them.

After navigating the menu maze and being told that my call could be recorded, I finally got an actual human on the phone, a cheerful black lady, by the sound of it. I explained my situation and this is what she told me:

"Every time you use an ATM that isn't affiliated with B of A, the ATM charges us for the transaction, and then we charge you."

if to say, *dude, open your eyes*. And she was right. There's a B of A less than a mile from my apartment and a B of A ATM directly across the street from where I work, but that's not the point.

"So basically I'm being penalized for using other ATMs."

"It's not a penalty, sir. It's a fee."

"Still, and bear with me for a second, the fees I pay for using other ATMs is seldom as high as two dollars, and some banks, like Washington Mutual, don't charge me anything at all. I guess what I'm asking is why two dollars?"

"That's what it costs, sir."

She'd clearly had it with me. It was getting to the point where if I kept asking questions she would start referring to the script she was supposed to follow whenever irate customers called up, trembling with righteousness, hot for justice. I didn't want to be that guy. I thanked her and hung up the phone.

It started making sense to me. B of A prided itself on the number of ATMs they had available for their customers. They charged exorbitant fees to discourage non-bank-transactions. Those who paid the fees, were essentially paying for a service that loyal customers received for free, thus the burden of paying for the installation, upkeep, and repair of ATMs was passed along to disloyal customers. In a weird way, not being hit with a fee was a kind of reward. It was all about loyalty.

I remember a time when ATMs were anything but convenient. When I was a deck seaman in the U.S. Navy, I opened up a savings account with the Naval Federal Credit Union and opted to have part of my paycheck directly deposited to the account. This was a smart move. Back in

JIM RULAND

those days they paid us in cash and I spent that money faster than grass passing through a cow's ass. When I was flat broke, I went to the NFCU ATM, which was located at the only branch of the credit union in all of San Diego. It took a trolley ride and a short trip in a taxi to get there. Sometimes I took my laundry and made an evening out of it. I'd get some money, load my laundry, and suck down Tecates and taquitos while I waited for my civvies to dry, and go back to the ship with money in my pocket. It may have been inconvenient but it was worth the trip because that's where the money was.

A few days after my conversation with the customer service representative, I heard something on National Public Radio that shattered my newfound faith in Bank of America. According to Securities and Exchange Commission reports, many of the wealthiest corporations in America were using tax havens to avoid paying billions of dollars in taxes. Bank of America was ninth on the list of companies with the most off-shore subsidiaries, right behind Halliburton, a company that is seemingly in the business of ruthlessly exploiting unfair advantages. (Arianna Huffington writes in *Pigs at the Trough* that under Vice President Dick Cheney's watch, Halliburton quintupled its number of subsidiaries.)

But for Bank of America Corp., which started as a small California bank, to reincorporate its subsidiaries off-shore and move its corporate address to places like Antigua, Bermuda and Bahrain for the purpose of skirting taxes and obtaining credits is particularly galling. How can a company that calls itself Bank of America avoid paying millions of dollars in taxes because its subsidiaries are not, technically speaking, American companies? If you're going to call yourself Bank of America you should 1) be an American company, and 2) abide by the laws that govern American companies, that is: pay your fucking taxes like the rest of us.

Lately, I've been hearing a lot about the perils of outsourcing: the practice of utilizing cheap labor in foreign countries, but to my way of thinking, overseas tax havens for our wealthiest companies is much, much worse. It's kind of like outsourcing in reverse: instead of sending jobs out of the country, these companies are sending the company overseas, at least on paper. Let's say Company A utilizes call centers in the Philippines. The money they save on labor can be used to make the company more profitable. The more successful Company A becomes the more taxes they'll pay. Company B of A, however, has over fifty subsidiaries in offshore tax havens, which net the company tens of millions of dollars in tax credits. The difference between these companies is that Company A pays taxes even though part of their labor force will never utilize the many services the government uses tax money to provide, while B of A enjoys enormous tax breaks by dint of being a multinational—even though their workers drive on our roads, attend our schools, and use our hospitals. They enjoy the benefits of being incorporated offshore, yet drain America's resources by dodging their responsibilities at home. Every year America loses seventy billion dollars in tax revenue to offshore tax dodges.

You would think that in time of crisis, when our country is hemorrhaging cash in Iraq, strug-

gling with rising security costs, paying through the nose for soaring oil prices, and looking up the bore of the largest deficit in history, the federal government would want to recoup these losses. When the extent of these dodges was made public last year by groups like Citizen Works and The Bermuda Project, there was a public outcry that was decidedly non-partisan. Many sensible Republicans reasoned that in time of war, our wealthiest corporations should help shoulder the burden, but the party that

that honor their obligations and play by the rules to pick up the slack. In other words, they're rewarded for their disloyalty. My disloyalty costs me two dollars. Theirs nets them millions.

I can't tell Bank of America how they should conduct their business. I'm not a banker. I don't sit on their board of directors. I'm not even a shareholder. I am, however, a loyal customer, and have been since 1992 (it says so right on my debit card). The only way I can show B



JIM RULAND

photo by Larry Hart

preaches fiscal conservatism muzzled those in favor of eliminating or curtailing off-shore tax havens for the super rich. It's an election year after all, and it wouldn't do to have Republicans and Democrats working in concert to crack down on Cheney's cronies.

How does it relate to bank fee, you ask? For me, it's all about loyalty. When I do my business with an institution other than B of A, I have to pay. But when Bank of America takes their business elsewhere they benefit from numerous tax advantages and incentives, and leave companies

of A that I disapprove of the way they do business is to take my business elsewhere and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

Bank of America is anything but, and as far as I'm concerned, they can suck it. They're not getting my two dollars anymore.

-Jim Ruland

MY SIXTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

THIS SUMMER I GOT TO GO ON TOUR WITH...

DANNY STURGEON ANNIE SUSY

THE SOVIETTES!

WE WENT CAMPING IN THE REDWOODS!

I GOT TO TOUR A SAKE FACTORY!

KAMPAI!

I GOT TO RIDE ON A BIG SKATE RAMP!

WHA!

WE GOT REALLY DRUNK AND PLAYED FOOSBALL!

(SUSY KICKED MY ASS)

I GOT TO SEE THE FLESHIES! TWICE!!

WE HAD LOTS AND LOTS OF COOKOUTS!

WE WENT TO THE BEACH IN SAN PEDRO!

WE PARTIED DOWN IN THE 'GREENDAY ROAD CREW' HOTEL SUITE!!

WE WENT SWIMMING AT SUSY'S SISTER'S HOUSE!

I MADE SOME GREAT NEW FRIENDS!

NATE KRISTEN AMY MIKE
RANDY DUMBASS
WNCARA DAVID SHIPLEY

AND I GOT A RIDE FROM PORTLAND TO MINNEAPOLIS!

WOO HOO!



I'M A LITTLE AIRPLANE

Real Punks Vote

Nostalgia is a funny thing, and we Americans love to wallow in it. No matter what crazy, screwed up times we live in, we as a culture always seem to find ourselves pining for the crazy, screwed up times of yore.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Fonzie and his gaggle of sock-hopping stereotypes ruled the roost, washing away the bitter taste of Watergate and Vietnam and ushering in the Reagan regime's return to "traditional family values."

As the latter decade wound to a close and Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush, made way for the '90s and Clinton's new conservative spin on democratic party politics, Woodstock and the '60s became cool places to revisit—followed by a fond look back at the '70s, with movies like *Dazed and Confused* and *The Spirit of '76* showing how fun it really was to live in the days of Nixon and Carter.

Now the culture is once again looking backward toward the glory days of Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party's domination of the '80s.

Even the punk scene, which in its initial stages pooh-poohed such rose-tinted glances backward, seems in recent years to have taken to looking back fondly at its "golden age." Older punks ramble on and on about a time "when punk was punk," the scene was strong, and the music was perpetually amazing. Younger punks watch movies like *Suburbia* and *Decline of Western Civilization*, adopt the same hackneyed spikes-and-leather look they've seen on the back of a Discharge album, and lament not being alive when punk was good.

Let me take a minute to burst that little bubble. To be succinct, being a punk for many in the '80s was a miserable experience. It meant being a target for any nutjob with a need to beat on something while screaming "Devo" every time you stepped out of your front door. It meant being chased, beaten, cat-called and harassed by every cop, parent, teacher, principal, classmate and wino you came across. If you're male and really want to know what being an '80s punk was like, put on your mommy's sluttiest dress and take a stroll through the local mall.

Life within the punk scene was not as idyllic as some would have you believe, either. Initially a refuge for those who didn't fit into the outside world and a place where extremes—from music to politics—could be explored, '80s punk was ultimately overrun by assorted gangs, narrow-minded "scene police," backbiting, and an almost stifling intolerance of new ideas. The music itself—fresh, anarchic, and sonically all over the map for a very brief moment—quickly denigrated into

a race to the bottom, where for every innovative band one could find twenty trying to sound exactly like them. In short, all the problems with the current scene that people complain about are not new or unique.

The biggest difference between punk then and punk now is that there were considerably fewer punks, which caused those who weren't "weekend punks" to cling together with an "us against the world" mentality. One thing I would say the majority of punks had in common then, no matter where they were from, was a mutual hatred of a certain prune-faced, Bob's Big Boy-coiffed, neo-fascist, monkey-loving Jesus freak named Ronnie, who happened to be living in a big White House in Washington, D.C.

As most are probably aware, Ronald Reagan finally died not too long ago. The corporate cabal currently controlling the country and its media sent the Gipper off to Valhalla with one last hurrah—numerous funerals, a week-long period of mourning, his near deification and an overhaul of his presidency so complete that, if you hadn't had the misfortune of living through his terms in office, you'd believe he was the best president this country ever had, one who single-handedly destroyed communism, rolled back big government, brought economic prosperity, made the world safe for God-fearing Christians, rid the country of drugs, fought alongside Rambo to finally win the Vietnam war, walked on water, and healed lepers.

Reagan was a miserable president. During his eight years in office, he headed one of the most corrupt administrations in American history, with more than a hundred members of his administration investigated, indicted, or convicted for crimes that included mismanagement of funds, conspiracy to mislead Congress, bribery, and violations of federal ethics laws. He waged covert wars that killed tens of thousands in Latin America and funded those wars by illegally selling arms to countries designated as America's enemies, in itself an impeachable offense. The national debt, the poverty and unemployment rates soared under his watch, all of which he repeatedly blamed on Congress and the previous Democratic administration. He declared war against both homosexuality and a woman's right to choose. When asked if he thought natural resources should be preserved for future generations, he replied, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns." He lied with impunity, gave tax breaks to the rich while slashing social service programs, and took credit for toppling the Soviet Union when they merely ran out of money fighting an asinine arms race before the U.S. did. He accused the homeless of being so by choice, adding that the newspapers were filled with "help wanted" ads. Pretty productive for a guy who told Barbara Walters in an interview that in

school he "never knew anything above C's."

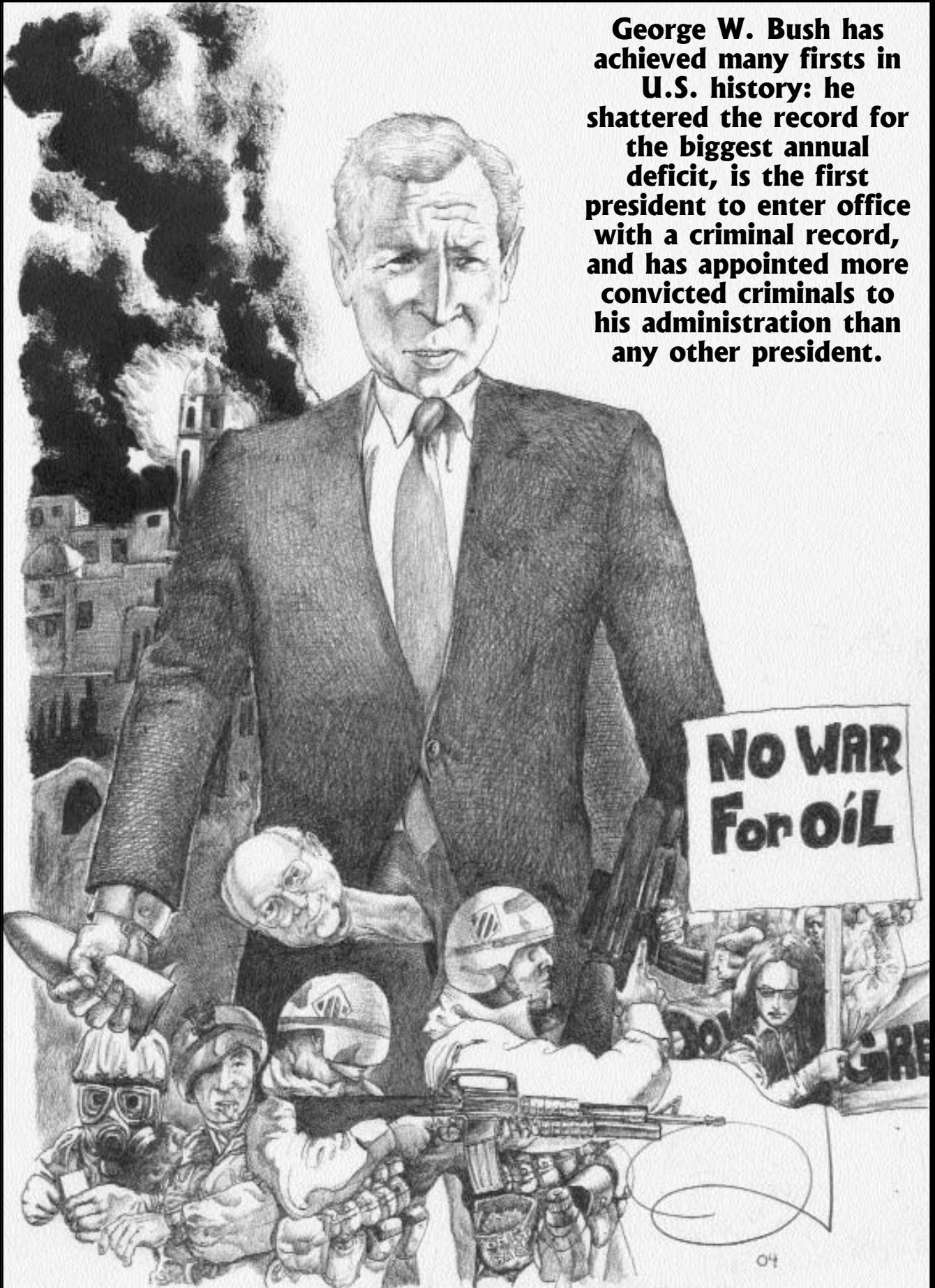
The Reagan and first Bush administrations wreaked havoc on American society for twelve years and were the official object of ire for punks in the '80s. "Cowboy Ronnie," as the Dead Kennedys called him, and his motley crew of white-collar criminals served as punk's reason for being, with hundreds of bands calling for either his removal from office or his head on a stick.

Living through the tenure of wretched presidents, however, is not unique to '80s punk. The current Bush administration is at best just as toxic, and at worst far more dangerous than his recent Republican predecessors ever were.

George W. Bush has achieved many firsts in U.S. history: he shattered the record for the biggest annual deficit, is the first president to enter office with a criminal record, and has appointed more convicted criminals (who served under his father and Reagan) to his administration than any other president. He enacted Executive Order 13233, which allows a sitting president to block the release of a former president's records and requires anyone seeking that information to go to court to get it—making his administration the most secretive in history. He refused to ratify the treaty that created the International Criminal Court, which Clinton had signed, and thus aligned the U.S. with China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq and Turkey in opposition to an organization created to try individuals for crimes against humanity. He has tried desperately to end the ban on nuclear weapons research and manufacturing so that new classes of nuclear weapons, including "bunker busters" and "mini-nukes" can be developed. He has declared war on women's and gay rights, reinstated the global gag rule and backed attempts to amend the Constitution to ban gay marriages. He has rolled back pollution controls, eased clean air standards, threatened Europe with economic sanctions if they did not drop safety tests designed to protect the public from toxic chemicals, and backed out of the Kyoto treaty, which commits industrialized nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. His administration pushed through the PATRIOT Act, which, in addition to allowing the government access to an individual's private records through wiretapping and breaking into homes and offices, broadened the definition of "terrorism" to potentially include any domestic group that disagrees with the administration, circumvents attorney-client privilege, and allows for the detention of immigrants for mere *suspicion* of illegal activity. Moreover, Bush has called for an extension of the PATRIOT Act, empowering authorities in terrorist investigations to issue subpoenas without going to grand juries, hold suspects without bail, and more aggressively pursue the death penalty. He pushed through two tax cuts that most favor the

George W. Bush has achieved many firsts in U.S. history: he shattered the record for the biggest annual deficit, is the first president to enter office with a criminal record, and has appointed more convicted criminals to his administration than any other president.

JIMMY ALVARADO



ultra-rich and is seeking to make the cuts permanent, a baffling move when you take into consideration that under his watch the nation finds itself working at a deficit and engaged in two wars.

And then there's the issue of his wars on the Taliban and Iraq. He used the September 11 attacks and cited patently false information to justify waging two wars, one of which was a preemptive strike and invasion (thus setting a precedent for other countries to do the same) of a country not involved in the 9/11 attack. When he was caught lying to the American public, he feigned ignorance and faulted the CIA for flawed investigations, then cited a whole new set of reasons for waging his war. His administration has disregarded international law and dismissed the protocols of the Geneva Convention with regards to the treatment of the prisoners of both the wars. His actions have alienated the U.S. from many of its allies and resulted in the widespread belief that the U.S. is the biggest threat to world peace and freedom. In three and a half years, Bush has managed a level of mayhem of which Reagan could only dream.

The country is at an even more critical juncture now than at any time in the 1980s. For three years, those who oppose Bush's policies have battled an arrogant president who regards them as godless, ignorant, unpatriotic, un-American tree-huggers who would much rather protect the home of a polar bear than the United States of America itself. To wit, Bush called ten million war protesters a "focus group" not worthy of his time or contemplation.

Modern day punks must face not only Bush's condescension, but also the dismissal of old punks, who tell them that they are nothing but kids aping a scene of which they have no real understanding, that they are clueless, that they don't matter. While it may be true in some cases (as it was equally true in some cases in the 1980s) that some, indeed, are ignorant of the punk ethos, a number of today's punks not even alive in the 1980s are living a more "punk" lifestyle than many of their predecessors, plugging into and trying to make a positive contribution to the world around them.

Nonetheless, both sides of the political spectrum are paying much attention to the punk population in this election, as evidenced by PunkVoter.com and conservativepunk.com. Why the effort? The answer is simple: numbers. Thanks to the breakthrough success of Nirvana, NOFX, Green Day, Offspring, No Doubt, Face to Face, Rage Against the Machine and a bevy of others, punk as a musical genre has become lucrative. The Buzzcocks, Iggy Pop, Stiff Little Fingers, the Muffs and Blink 182 provide the soundtrack to commercials selling everything from SUVs to soft drinks. Smashmouth can be heard both in cartoons and on the Democratic Convention floor. Like it or not, the segment of the punk scene these bands pander to is now entrenched in the mainstream culture.

While sidestepping the argument of whether these bands are indeed, "punk," few can argue that the fanbase that these bands enjoy is vast. Where once it was considered a rousing success if a punk band cleared 10,000 copies of a release, many bands now regularly sell 10 million.

Punks were a small, albeit vocal, minority in the politics of 1980s America. Even if every single one of them had voted in 1980, '84, or '88, the result would have been a minor blip when set against the Republican juggernaut that steamrolled its way through three elections. The number of voting-age fans at the disposal of today's punk rock stars can easily sway an election, especially one that many are predicting will be one of the closest in history. The sheer size of today's punk community is the most important difference between punks old and new, because it means the current generation potentially wields more power than any that came before it.

Whereas punk was previously just a small, rabbleroising musical niche, it now has the potential to make or break a presidency, especially if it chooses to throw its lot in with those who already oppose the current administration and its global agenda, and if ever there were a presidency that needed breaking, the Bush administration is it. For once, punks potentially hold the deciding ballot.

For both today's punk and the political climate of the country, nostalgia is wholly unnecessary. We are living in an era to which the '80s, and almost any decade before it, pale in comparison. Now is the time to put away those Dead Kennedys records, give the finger to those who cling to the past, take to the street, pick up a guitar and make noise focused on the present rather than on times long gone. Now is the time for punks to realize the power at their disposal.

-Jimmy Alvarado



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SUNDAY MORNING EINSTEINS
"KANGNAVE" LP/CD

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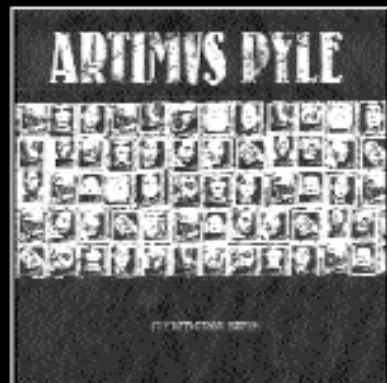
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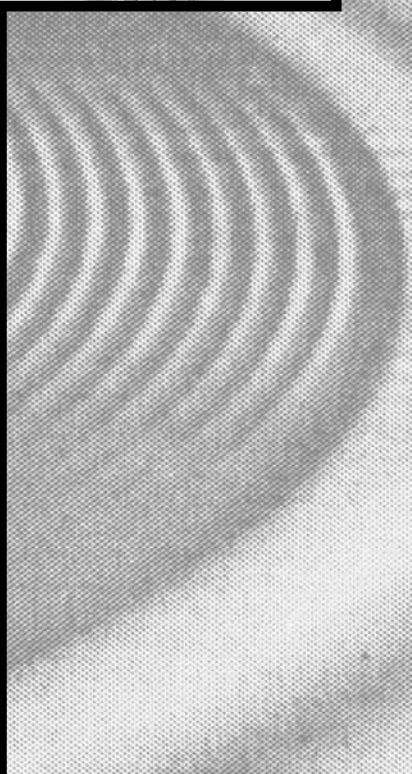
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Photo Page

The
Exploding
Hearts





TV CARNAGE



An Interview with TV Carnage by Ben Snakepit.

My friend Mike Rodriguez has turned me on to a lot of cool stuff: I first heard the Epoxies because of him, I first read Tight Pants because he lent it to me, he was the first person to play me the Floor LP, the list goes on and on. Anyway, one day Mike came over to my house and was like, "Oh my fucking god, dude, you have to watch this video I got." Mike's never steered me wrong, so we popped it in the VCR, and my life changed forever.

What Mike showed me was called TV Carnage. It was amazing: short clips of the worst parts of the worst TV shows I'd ever seen in my life, all edited together to create a piece of art altogether new. A guy dressed like Scooby Doo, doing a choreographed gymnastics routine to the song "Who Let the Dogs Out?" immediately followed by a cable access talent show with the saddest, lamest dance routine ever, immediately followed by a monkey dressed in a cowboy suit riding on the back of a dog. It just kept going, each clip more excruciating and amazing than the next. It was like listening to a Negativland album, but with visuals to go along with it. I was floored. I had to see more.

There were no credits listed at the end of the tape, just a website, so I went to tvcarnage.com and investigated. They described their work as "hundreds of hours of exceptionally bad TV lovingly fused together into an hour-plus glorious cesspool of retardation." I had to find the people who made this stuff; it was too awesome. I sent them an email, asking for an interview. A few weeks later I was on the phone with the man behind TV Carnage, mysteriously only known as "Pinky."

Ben: Where'd you first come up with this idea to start making these tapes?

Pinky: It was me and this guy I used to know named Jesse. We used to do them and send them back and forth to each other. They were never really intended for public viewing, but Gavin from *Vice* magazine—he's an old friend—he talked us into putting them out for public consumption. At first I was like, "I dunno, they're a bit esoteric," and he was like, "No, no, trust me." So he was the first person to talk me into it, and it just kinda grew from there and took on a life of its own.

Ben: So it just started as a hobby, basically?

Pinky: Yeah, we all made films and went to film school and shit. It actually started when we were still in high school, but we just started becoming obsessed with how shitty stuff on TV was, and it just became a "what not to do" manual. It was just so evident that, you know, no one was minding the cash register or watching the store or whatever.

Ben: So the carnage crew is just two people?

Pinky: It used to be, but it's basically just me now. Me and Jesse did the third one, *When Television Attacks*, together. He had a lot of stuff to contribute to that one, but that was the last time we did one together. Then the last one, *Casual Fridays*, I did on my own, and the two before that (*Ouch Television My Brain Hurts* and *A Rich Tradition of Magic*) I basically did on my own. The first one I did was just with two VCRs and I was fucked up on these painkillers all week, so I just stayed up to all hours just taping shit, but it was a labor of love. And hate.

Ben: That was in '96?

Pinky: Yeah.

Ben: Before that, had you done any kind of shit like that?

Pinky: Yeah, we would just tape stuff, just whatever ridiculous shit that we'd see on TV, and that was in the early '90s, or late '80s even, back in high school.

Ben: So you went to film school?

Pinky: Yeah, I went to film school at Concordia in Montreal. I make documentaries and work on other small projects like that. I'm currently working with *Vice* magazine. They're doing this thing called *Vice TV* pretty soon and David Cross is the executive producer. We've been working with him on some shit and it's pretty funny.

Ben: Well, it's obvious from watching your TV Carnage tapes that all that stuff didn't just come straight off the TV, because you've got stuff like Orson Welles all drunk and people eating poop and stuff. Where do you find that kind of shit?

Pinky: Well, the poop eating was given to me by my friend Adam in Montreal years ago, and he wrote *The Sound of Music* on the tape. I was like, why did you send me this?

Ben: But the real genius of it was editing it together with *Three's Company*.

Pinky: Yeah, because with *Three's Company*, when I was looking at Mr. Furlley's face, I was like, "Whoa, that dude's face looks like he just watched somebody eat some shit." And then I thought to myself, "Wait a second, I have a tape of people eating some shit," but I never got past the stuff I actually put on the tape. I just rolled to a part of some poop eating and didn't really look at it because it was so gross, and after I got what I needed I threw the tape away.

...we just started becoming obsessed with how shitty stuff on TV was, and it just became a "what not to do" manual. It was just so evident that, you know, no one was minding the cash register or watching the store or whatever.

Ben: Do you ever worry about getting sued?

Pinky: Yeah. Well, I mean... yeah. I just try not to think about it too much.

Ben: It seems like you're starting to reach a level of notoriety where people are gonna start noticing it.

Pinky: Yeah, I'd really rather it just kinda be on the down low 'cause it's aimed at a particular type of audience, and a particular type of mentality, and I don't really wanna go huge with it. They did a write up in *MTV Magazine* about it, which kinda freaked me out, but I don't think anybody reads that magazine, so it's cool.

Ben: Tell me about *Strip Club DJs*.

Pinky: It's this documentary I made that did fairly well. It's about forty-five minutes long. It was supposed to be just the guys introducing the girls, you know, just a short movie about that, but I started talking to these guys and they all had these stories. They just went off, like, some of the stuff they were telling me I just couldn't believe they were saying on camera.

One of the dudes who was in it, this guy named Scott, he's actually a pretty awesome guy but he was pretty fucked up. He had a really bad coke habit and stuff. I followed him to rehab for part of it and he kind of ends up being like the main character in it. It's not really the kind of documentary where you learn anything. It was supposed to be kind of a dark film with a dark humor to it. When it showed at the Hot Doc film festival in Toronto, it sold out at the theater, and all of these strip club DJs showed up. I thought they were all just gonna kick the shit out of me after the movie, but they were like, "Aww, that's fuckin' awesome! That's us! It's how fucked up our lives are!" and then they took me out to a strip club and got me loaded.

Ben: Are you planning on doing any other documentaries in the future?

Pinky: Yeah, I got a few ideas for things I wanna do. I actually just started with the National Film Board of Canada, and they want me to do one about the psychology of guns and gun ownership and stuff. Not to make a *Bowling for Columbine* type thing, but I just wanna make something that has really interesting characters in it, and make it pretty cinematic looking. Not to be biased either way, but it's the only machine that's made for one purpose, you know, to kill people. It's a pretty unique device that humans decided to invent. Canadians are way more utilitarian with guns, even though Toronto has had a shitload of gun issues lately, compared to what we used to have, but by and large it's just farmers and hunters who have them. I don't know anyone that has a gun.

Ben: It's not like here in America, where it's a "tough guy" status thing.

Pinky: Yeah, the people here who do have them, they don't brag about it. They're almost kind of embarrassed about it. Like if some old weird dude has one 'cause he's all old and paranoid and thinks one day a gang of Jamaicans is gonna come and rape his dog, before he'll admit it to anyone he has to be three sheets to the wind, and he'll be like [slurred], "Yeah, I have some guns in my basement," and everyone usually gets all freaked out like, "WHAT!?" It's pretty hard to get a gun here and everybody is kind of out of touch with them. We just have good old-fashioned fist-fights and knifings up here.

Ben: Yeah, a knifing is good 'cause it's more personal.

Pinky: Exactly. When you knife somebody, you really have to put some work into it. So we're kind of behind the times with killing technology, but that's probably better. I figure that if I lived in America, I'd have been shot, like, fifty times by now. We just tend to have bigger mouths, I guess.

Ben: So anyway, what is your favorite thing you've ever seen a video of?

Pinky: Well, the *Huntress* thing is pretty amazing. That's an obvious one. But there are more subtle things, like on one of the earlier tapes there's this men's talk show or something with a set with a basketball court in the background, and they're talking about men's issues, and this guy who kinda reminds me of Michael Keaton, and he's like, "Oh, I just like to go to a café and smoke a joint."

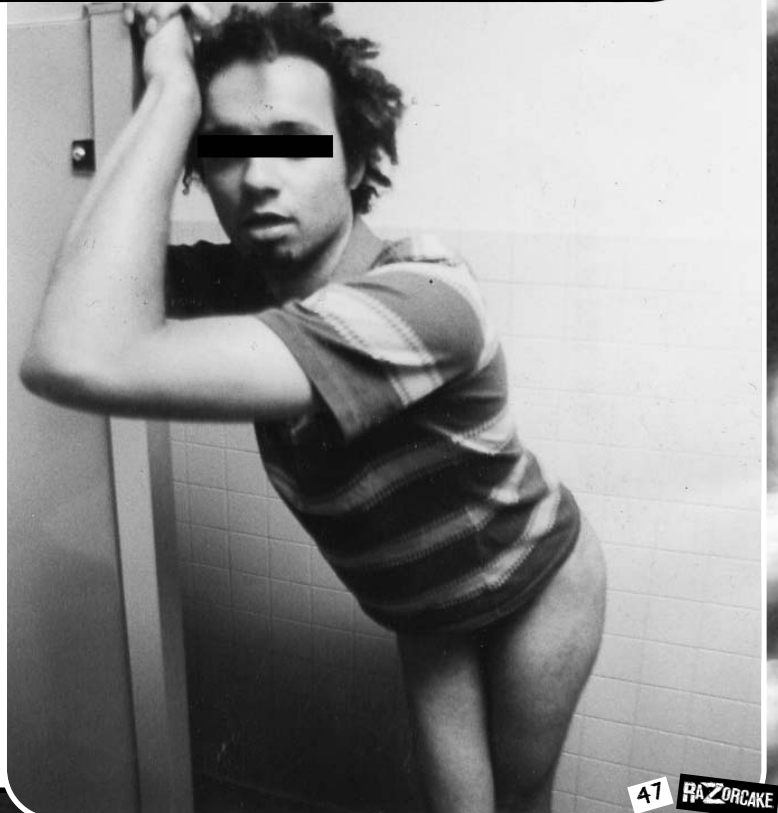
Ben: Yeah, that guy is hilarious.

Pinky: A bunch of my friends are constantly quoting that guy. He's one of those characters who I'm just totally in love with. Another one is this guy at an anger management seminar or something, and he's like, "Look at me! See me! SEE ME ALREADY!" What the fuck is that? There's just tons of shit like that. Infomercials: everyone likes those. I can't even believe they still make them.

Ben: My personal favorite is Flash the rodeo monkey. Every time you watch it, everyone in the room is just erupting with laughter, and it's only after you see it a few times do you realize they're playing the Monkees' theme song in the background.

Pinky: Yeah, exactly, like the guy dancing to "Who Let the Dogs Out?" and he's dressed like Scooby Doo. That blew my fucking mind. The grunge figure skater, all that kind of shit. I just recently got this amazing tape. It's a commercial for Sealy mattresses. It's called the "Sealy roll test" and it's this chubby middle class American woman just rolling back and forth on this mattress. They video mix it so she's just rolling back and forth while this saleswoman just smiles at her like "Mm hmm, of course you love

The first one I did was just with two VCRs and I was fucked up on these painkillers all week, so I just stayed up to all hours just taping shit, but it was a labor of love. And hate.



TV CARNAGE

the mattress,” just smug as hell. And they’re playing this terrible ‘90s club music. It’s awful and then they stop and yell “REMIX!” and it goes into this rap about Sealy mattresses. Whenever I see something like that all I can do is picture the person in the studio having to record that song. You know, showing up for this “gig” where they’re gonna rap about a mattress. Somebody also sent me this Jenny Craig video, where I guess the Jenny Craig people were just like, “Fuck it, it isn’t working. These people are fat and they need to start exercising, but this approach we have isn’t working.

We need to simplify the whole process of people understanding our Jenny Craig products. Let’s make it a sitcom, but no, let’s not just make it a sitcom, let’s rip off *Seinfeld*.” So there’s this woman who plays the Jerry Seinfeld character, and she’s a stand-up comedian. The video starts with

her doing a stand-up comedy act about being fat. And there’s a George Costanza character, and this Kramer-ish guy who just comes in and falls down and stuff, but it’s all about losing weight. It’s fucking unbelievable.

Ben: So it looks like you put out a new TV Carnage tape every two years or so. How long does it take to put one together?

Pinky: I always have a tape in a VCR ready to go, but I’m actually sick to death of watching TV. I mean, it’s actually on right now. I was a latchkey kid so the TV is like a comfort to me. It’s kinda sick but it’s true. But I’m still skinny and have all my hair. So when I’m 400 pounds and gone completely bald maybe it’ll be a problem, but anyway, I always have a tape in a VCR and I’ve just got these fucking massive amounts of tapes. I just cringe when I look at them. Like, part of me wants to just go, “FUCK THIS!” and throw them all at a garbage truck, but I know one day I’m gonna start going through them. Usually, about a year and a half after I finish a tape, I start to get the itch and I start loading more videos onto my computer, but it takes for-fucking-ever. The actual process of editing and everything takes like six months, easily. And I’m always trying to top the last one, so it just gets more and more crazy.

Ben: It’s really obvious that each tape gets progressively better.

Pinky: I have no idea what to do next. I want to start fucking with things more, in terms of Photoshopping shit and adding computer effects and stuff, but that’s gonna add even more time on, so it’s like, holy fuck, I have no idea when the next one will be done.

Ben: Wow. Do you make any money from this or do you have to have a day job?

Pinky: I have a day job. I definitely don’t live off it. I sell a good amount of tapes, and I’ve had people ask me about distributing them, but I like to keep it under the radar. Like, if somebody sees that I’ve put a three-second clip of the most embarrassing moment of their lives on it, it’s like, “Why did you even bring it up? Why not just let sleeping dogs lie?” Because then they know who I am and everything. I think if anyone ever came after me to sue me or whatever, I think they’d be pretty underwhelmed as to the amount of money they could get out of me. But it does generate a little bit of money; it helped pay to make *Strip Club DJ’s*. More and more people are getting into it, and I’m starting to get fan emails and

stuff, which is cool, ‘cause everybody seems to get it and understand that it’s just a piss-take on our culture. And I can’t stop doing it. It just totally fascinates me, because to the average person walking down the street, all this ridiculous stuff is perfectly acceptable to them.

Ben: Yeah, the squares don’t even understand what’s funny about it.

Pinky: Totally, I just couldn’t imagine being fine with everything on that tape.

I was a latchkey kid so the TV is like a comfort to me. It’s kinda sick but it’s true. But I’m still skinny and have all my hair. So when I’m 400 pounds and gone completely bald maybe it’ll be a problem.

Ben: So the commentary track on *Casual Fridays*, is that you?

Pinky: Yeah.

Ben: And did you slow your voice down to disguise it?

Pinky: Yeah, I pitched it down. It’s an homage to that movie *Ransom*, there’s a part where Gary Sinise is talking to Mel Gibson, and he’s got that slowed-down pitch shift on his voice, and it goes from him being all sinister and saying, “I’ve got your kid, I’m gonna fuck up your kid if you don’t give me the money,” which is kind of intimidating, and then they get into this regular conversation, and it’s like, “Well, I dunno, the way I look at life is....” That just kills it and makes it so fucking ridiculous. It’s one of the funniest things I’ve ever seen in my life, because it’s supposed to heighten the tension, and it’s all, “We should go get a burger sometime” or something. “Yeah, I’ve got an extra pair of skis. Why don’t we go skiing?”

Ben: I love it. Why didn’t you slow it down for the commentary on *When Television Attacks*?

Pinky: Because I did the commentary on that one with Gavin from *Vice*, and he said it was too distracting, so he convinced me not to use it. I didn’t think so.

Ben: Me neither. When is the next one coming out?

Pinky: Well, I’m working on it now. I’m doing other stuff, too, like I’m putting the first two tapes out on DVD. I’m cutting them down into one thing, because there’s a lot of stuff that repeats on those and it’s kind of messy, but I’m gonna make a brand new one hopefully by around Christmas or so, or the new year at least. I’ve been collecting some pretty awesome shit. Lately I’ve been really obsessed with those self-help tapes from the ‘80s about how to be more successful in the office and make more money. There’s such a coked-up feel to them like, “Go right up to those fuckers and let them know you’re in charge! Fuck them, you’re the only one that matters!” I just found this Richard Simmons exercise tape for handicapped children. I’m not sure what I’m gonna do with it. I don’t wanna be too cruel, but it is kinda funny on a certain level.

There are four different volumes of TV Carnage available from www.tvcarnage.com



VOTING AIN'T WRONG

BY TODD TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KEITH ROSSON
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"...whenever any form of government becomes destructive ... it is the right of the people to alter it or abolish it, and to institute new government."

—United States Declaration of Independence

Voting's a tricky subject. On one side, it's pretty much a standard in high school civics classes that Americans' right to vote is what keeps us—the common folk—so damned powerful. We have to elect those who govern us. Admittedly, we don't live in a dictatorship. We accept certain rules. If there is someone we don't want elected, we can't lop their heads off with a machete. We get to punch holes in a very specific piece of paper that a machine reads, and when all the little pieces of paper are tallied, there's a winner. That's citizenship, pure and simple. What we've been led to believe is that a vote is our voice. We're told it can be our grievance and card-stock revolution. I don't quite believe this.

After I turned eighteen, I voted in a national election. The person I cast a ballot for didn't win. As a matter of fact, he didn't come close. I lost interest because my vote seemed ineffectual, almost invalid. Politics seemed to be very far away from me. I moved out of one state and never re-registered in the new one.

As I write this, I'm thirty-two, and I just got around to re-registering to vote. Why did it take so long? At first, I was at a loss for a reason for not wanting to vote beyond avoiding jury duty. Then I found a quote from Father Hagerty, the 1912 spokesman for the Industrial Workers of the World who said, "Dropping pieces of paper into a hole in a box never did achieve emancipation of the working class."

The person I had the most detailed talks about voting was Sara. Sara's awesome. We were dating at the time. "Todd, we're talking about voting for President, not emancipation." She was right. I needed to pick a better battle. Then I came up with, "If a vote for President is a choice between the lesser of two evils, you're still dealing with evil, and I've chosen not to." She replied, "Then you can't complain. You can't change anything by not voting."

Then I told her there's a big difference between apathy and disaffection. Apathy's just not caring. ("Fuck it.") Disaffection is conscientious. ("Fuck them.") Which was the approach I was taking. Dillinger Four, sages that they are, backed my sentiment: "Saying that someone doesn't have a right to complain if they don't vote is like punishing the hungry persons disappointed at being offered either the piss soup or the shit cake." I spend a lot of time thinking and researching the ways the current government creatively strips the Declaration of Independence. I, actively for years on end, did not vote.

Sara wanted more and didn't think that stating "don't vote" was a very positive message to today's youth. She was right. People should make choices on their own.

Slowly, over the last several years, I've come up with an amendment to my own reply, and this comes from realizing that George W. Bush is a very non-nice guy who affects my life adversely every day. I just look at my friends—a majority of them who are now unemployed—to the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, to the worldwide attempt to reverse the legalization of abortion. I think that although Al Gore was the lesser of two evils, he's still the

lesser. I've also come to the conclusion that by regis-

tering to vote doesn't mean I divorce myself from simultaneously working on deeper, more fundamental change, like dismantling the Electoral College. Voting means I can try to avoid getting less screwed in the present. The two activities aren't mutually exclusive. Do I think Al Gore was the answer? No. Do I think he'd be better than Bush? Yes.

In retrospect, I understand that Sara and I were expressing almost the exact sentiment on the imperfect voting situation in wildly different ways. She voted for Nader, only when she was certain that Gore would take California. Otherwise she would have voted for Gore to curtail the possibility of Bush taking the state. She knew Bush would be dangerous, yet she had no love for Gore. She's pragmatic like that.

Going back to civics class; one thing that had been instilled in me was that each and every vote counted. That assertion was backed by reminding us that Hitler came into power by a ridiculously small number of votes. If we didn't vote, we could run the risk of some really nasty people running the country.

I'm not one to take too much stock in my own cultural heritage, but I'm half Polish. During the beginning of World War I, the Polish cavalry underestimated the power of these things the Germans had called "tanks." On horses, swords held high, entire battalions of Poles in fancy uniforms were killed. When many of them ran out of bullets trying to pierce the tanks' armor, after their swords broke, they resorted to throwing rocks. This activity ultimately resulted in them being slaughtered. Why'd they stay and fight? Mostly because they couldn't comprehend that their form of warfare had become obsolete. Their pride and interpretation of heritage kept them from backing down. They went with what they knew, didn't adapt after it was discovered their tactics were horribly ineffective, and they were consequently destroyed.

There's this thing in America that not a lot of people truly understand. It's called the Electoral College. Although it doesn't reflect a true and direct national vote, both major political parties in America are doing their best to keep it in place.

It's the Electoral College that finally rusted up my motivation to vote in the 2000 election. No matter how much I wanted to "make a difference," I felt I was doing little more than hucking a rock at a tank that could crush me like a grape if it decided to turn towards me. I understand I have a semi-romantic vision of working for a change in the world, of being subversive. It would be great if a vote was like throwing rocks in an upper class nudist colony, and that every toss could result in some rich person getting a big, fat bruise to make them stop raping the lower class. I think of it this way, if it really is true that two percent of Americans own ninety percent of the wealth (or some ratio similarly unbalanced), there's ninety-eight percent of "us" who could truly change how America operated, or, at the very least, vote who gets to lead us. Sure, it's optimistic. No matter how democratic elections are, they're just fleeting, four-year apart peaks of popular participation. In the four years between elections most people really don't pay too much attention to politics, unless the President's getting his dick sucked or if we're bombing the hell out of another country and they happen to kill some of our troops in return.

But, elections aren't democratic.

Let me repeat that. A one-to-one ratio, what's called a "direct vote," doesn't exist in America, when voting for the President.

The procedure in the United States is you sign up to vote, and in the event you've got hole punching techniques mastered, you show up on voting day, select a President, and go home, satisfied that you've done your part to support a Presidential hopeful. You've been told that you directly participated in what's been touted as one of the greatest philosophical and political triumphs in the past couple of centuries. Democracy. If you're extremely lucky, you get an "I Voted" sticker.

The Electoral College, as it's set up now, is a decoy; a shrewd, effective control of mass society.

Recently, I began to wonder why I have such an aversion to participate in national politics, yet follow it so closely. Someone said it way before me: "If voting changed anything, it'd be illegal." On a personal voting level, many people feel that for me to be "realistic" about participating in one of the nation's biggest decisions, I'm going to have to punch my card for a donkey or an elephant, the two icons which the most powerful in society have put forth as my choice. Sometimes there's a tiny, tiny third party candidate—like a Nader—but no other real alternatives. Maybe I'm guilty of wanting more out of my government, that I still feel that it can be a very real tool "of the people and by the people." By no happy accident, American society, although it has more freedom of expression than many societies in the world, sets limits beyond which respectable people (i.e. experts, newscasters, political candidates) are not supposed to think, speak, and, ultimately, vote.

"Even as late as 1912 A.D., the great mass of the people still persisted in the belief that they ruled the country by virtue of their ballots. In reality, the country was ruled by what were called political machines." —Jack London, The Iron Heel

Let's set some terms. The common understanding of a democracy is that it's a government by the common people (the primary source of political power): majority rule. However, the United States isn't a democracy. It's a republic: a political order in which supreme power lies with a small body of citizens who are entitled to vote.

What's the difference between the two terms? In a republic, ordinary citizens are excluded from the final process.

Although I have what George du Maurier phrased as, "a proper democratic scorn for bloated dukes and lords,"—a basic mistrust of people with money and power—let me state that I love America. It's a great place. Toilets flush, roads are paved, stores are open twenty-four hours a day, libraries are stocked with books, bridges span waterways, I can push down a lever and get delicious toast, and electricity's pretty standard. All these things are great but that doesn't stop me from believing that evil and powerful puppets represent by asses and elephants are still running the country.

Now some history.

The Electoral College was put into place by the framers of the Constitution. It's officially in Article 2, Section 1 and is also in the Twelfth Amendment. The founding fathers were smart guys, no doubt. Smart enough to know to not let power get away from themselves and into the hands of the "tyranny of the majority." These articles and amendments were safeguards against the uneducated

and slave masses voting them out of their positions. The founders were wary of giving people the power to directly elect the President. They knew that voting—truly democratic, widespread, national elections—was the central problem to their continued control. So, they set up a system that looked a little more like Athens and a little less like the regime they just declared independence from: England and its monarchy.

The Electoral College was partially set up in response to the geographic necessities of the time. They lived without cell phones, without private jets, without fax machines, without satellites. Horses were used for travelling across huge landmasses. The teletype machine hadn't been invented. Being so, it could take months to collect all of the Presidential ballots from all the citizenry and get them to one centralized place to be counted. It would take too long. Accordingly, the founders decided to pool the votes together. It's kind of like wads of cash that are bundled into stacks of a hundred and bound with a paper band. The Elector took the role of simplifier and cast his vote in reflection of his state's political choice. That Elector would get on his steed and gallop his votes up to the seat of the national government (at that time, Philadelphia). To make the math simpler and take a lot of 00,000s out of the equation, states were given Electoral votes. The number was equal to the total number

of representatives and senators that state had. There's no denying that the Electoral College was a clean and relatively easy way to get an election over with. For an example, take Kentucky. It now has six representatives in the House and two senators. Kentucky gets eight electoral votes. That takes considerably less resources and legwork to tally the votes of the actual number of people living in Kentucky of legal voting age (approximately 3.7 million people according to the 1992 census).

This two-tiered process (popular vote gets mashed into an Elector's pocket, Elector casts vote in the Electoral College) resulted in an election exercise that gave the power to an elite echelon of politicians whose one vote, quite literally, stood in for

thousands of their constituents'. The framers were happy. They got a representation of a popular vote and a populace that wouldn't get unruly.

To distill this to its purest form, the state's right to choose a President eclipsed a single voter's cast ballot. Under this federal system, the nation-wide popular vote had no legal significance. It still doesn't. On paper, it was golden. The founding fathers figured that the presidential elections in each state would be decisive, and that the state's electoral votes would directly mirror the state's popular vote. The Electoral College insulates the election of the President from the people by having the people elect not the person of the President, but the person of the Elector, who is pledged to vote for a specific person for President. Though the ballot may read "Presidential Candidate X," you're really voting for "Elector X," who's a Presidential Candidate X supporter. The framers supposed that everything would remain nice and easy. Not so.

However brilliant this nation's fathers were, they had no way of foreseeing some major factors that would forever hamstring and antique their streamlined process. These two things were political parties, and the concept that non-white, non-male, non-landowners would actually one day get to vote.



As strange as it seems now, it's difficult to imagine an America without Republicans and Democrats at each other's throats. It wasn't always so. In fact, the framers of the Constitution didn't even consider the absolute might of one or two parties. Instead, they thought that each state—not party—would want their own home-grown candidate to run for President. The opposite occurred. The Electoral College became the cornerstone and guardian of the two-party system.

As a bit of background, the Republican and Democratic parties started, ironically, as one. It was called the Republican-Democratic Party, founded by Thomas Jefferson. They were opposed to the Federalist Party in 1792. It split in 1828, and dropped the Republican part of its name. The Republican Party came back into prominence in 1854 upon the platform of opposing slavery. It wasn't until 1856—eighty years after the ink had dried on the Constitution—that both major parties started having national con-

ventions and began cinching down their now-suffocating power. Millard Fillmore, a Whig who served from 1850-1853, was the last United States President who was neither a Republican nor a Democrat.

Electurally speaking, elections were relatively clean until 1824. Things got hairy when the election was split four ways between Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, William Crawford, and Henry Clay. Although Andrew Jackson got more popular votes and a plurality of the Electoral College (a plurality is if none of the candidates receive more than 50% of the vote), he lost the presidential election to Adams. (Adams won in the House of Representatives. For a bit of historical trivia, The House has chosen two Presidents: Thomas Jefferson in 1800 and John Quincy Adams in 1825.)

There are presently 538 electoral votes to be had, and since there are only two parties that can get electoral votes, the magic number to win an election is 270 (one more than half). The mathematics of the Electoral College is alluring. A tie for the presidential race is a statistically remote possibility, even with the smaller states chiming in.

The question must be asked: Do you want an "easy" form of government or a more true form of representation? Put another way, do you want your vote to count directly, or do you want someone else to cast your vote for you?

Although the framers of the Constitution put a lot of time and effort into setting up the structure of the Electoral College, it's quite possible that famed brewer and patriot, Samuel Adams, encouraged the founding fathers to say, "Blast it. Leave it where it stands," and they called an early end to a session instead of fleshing out rudimentary details on how the Electoral College would operate. That could help explain why absolutely zippo effort was put into setting up the process of selecting Electors beyond saying, "Let the states decide as long as the Elector is not an employee or an elected representative of the federal government." Much later, the Fourteenth Amendment added that Electors couldn't be "state officials who have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the U.S., or given aid or comfort to its enemies." It's also relatively safe to assume that many of the founding fathers, hesitant to make their new form of government look like England's monarchy, were state's rights advocates—figuring that each state could figure out its own rules concerning the appointment of Electors. Being so, they didn't write it down that Electors, by law, had to cast their votes according to their constituents' popular vote. In 2000, only twenty-four states (and D.C.) required it. The founders passed the authority along to each state to decide how its citizens would choose Electors, who in turn would cast their decisive ballots.

Following such broad guidelines, the states have pretty much chosen whomever and however they've wished. Electors are usually state elected officials, party leaders, someone who's ingratiated

themselves by giving campaign funding to the party, or someone who has a personal relationship with the Presidential candidate. There remains a nagging, yet moot question: "What happens if an Elector 'defects' and casts their vote for the other candidate, thus changing the outcome of an entire election?" Although, it's a slap in the face of the tens of thousands of voters who cast their vote for a specific candidate that an Elector reverses on a whim, "defective electors," in their breach of trust, haven't changed the outcome of an election.

There have been about 16,000 Electors in the history of the United States. A few more than a dozen have defected. The first defections occurred in 1796 when a Federalist Elector voted for Thomas Jefferson (a Republican), and in 1820 Senator Abner Lacock deprived James Monroe of a unanimous vote in the Electoral College by giving John Quincy Adams—who wasn't even a candidate—his vote. Every time Richard Nixon was a candidate,

LET'S TAKE A QUICK LOOK AT THIS. STATES ARE ARTIFICIAL, LEGAL CONSTRUCTS. THEY ARE PLOTS OF LAND... THEY DON'T HAVE MINDS AND DON'T HAVE OPINIONS. A GRASSY FIELD CAN'T VOTE.

one of his Electors betrayed him. (Harry Byrd, a Virginian Democrat was quoted as saying "I can't stomach Nixon.") Just in case you're playing Trivial Pursuit, the most unique switcharoo was in 1972. Roger Mac Bride, co-producer of *Little House on the Prairie*, used his Electoral vote for a third-party candidate, Toni Nathan, who was the first woman to ever receive one.

"Hey, wait, what about third-party people like that big-eared wingnut Perot? Didn't he get some of the Electoral College?" Nope. Since the Electoral College has very little to do with the overall national vote, there are no third party Electors at all. Although Perot received nineteen percent of the popular vote—almost one in five votes cast in the United States—his total votes were spread out over many states. He didn't register a single Electoral vote. The last third party candidate to actually dent the Electoral College was Teddy Roosevelt and the Bull Moose Party. He got eighty-eight in 1912.

The most disconcerting and obvious flaw in the Electoral College is that Presidential candidates who win the popular vote have lost the election. In 1876 Rutheford B. Hayes had fewer popular votes, yet beat Samuel J. Tilden in the Electoral College and in 1888 the same happened when Benjamin Harrison beat Grover Cleveland.

In 2000, there was little contention that Al Gore won the popular vote by 300,000 votes, yet lost the popular vote in Florida by less than a thousand votes. (This national popular vote is far from the slimmest margin in a Presidential popular vote. In 1880, James Garfield won the by only .1%—only 9,457 votes.) This brings up another flaw in the smaller print of the Electoral College. Namely, most states have a rule that says whichever candidate gets a plurality of the vote in a state, gets all of the Electoral votes of that state. The one with the highest percentage takes all of the Electoral votes for that state. Just for the sake of argument, say that a candidate in a two-party race won a state election by 51% percent. The twenty-five Electoral votes of Florida aren't divvied up 51% and 49% percent, to approximate the popular vote. Whoever gets that 1% margin wins 100% of the Electoral vote. Forty-eight states in the nation have adopted this "winner takes all" mode of aggregating votes. Nebraska (five E.C. votes) and Maine (four E.C. votes) are the only two that are geared to split their Electoral votes.

To simplify this: due to the math system of the Electoral College, the less than a thousand votes in Florida beat out 300,000 nationwide votes. How is that even pretending to be a democracy?

It's been asserted that dismantling the Electoral College would take away a lot of power from the smaller states (which now have a larger voice, per capita of constituents, than bigger states), that politicians would cater to the larger states and ignore places like Vermont and Nevada. Let's take a quick look at this. States are artificial, legal constructs. They are plots of land. As any other abstract entity or inanimate object, they don't have minds and don't have

opinions. A grassy field can't vote. A skatepark can't vote. The mind and opinion of a state belongs solely to the people who happen to live within the geographic confines of that state. With that in mind, it would make much more sense to give the power to those with minds—the people of the state—instead of giving it to an artificial construct. Logically speaking, entitling one person to one vote would give all states equal power because it would represent the people living in those states more closely.

As it stands now, it's theoretically possible for a candidate to capture the eleven largest states, plus D.C., to win an Electoral majority, leaving thirty-nine states without a voice, even if all thirty-nine are unanimously against the candidate. Currently in the Electoral College, small states are interesting in a strategic sense, but they truly are merely pawns in the bigger chess match.

Although it is rarely verbalized or articulated by politicians, there's the fear that anarchy and mass confusion would result from a popular vote. If that were universally true, both Finland and France—two countries that have popular elections—would have long since burned to the ground. Excepting the fictional character, Bullworth, politicians secretly think that the populace is a bunch of idiots who need to be led to. "Presidential election experts" assert that ordinary people don't know a good President from a bad one, and need to be guided by people who know better. They point to two examples, arguably two of America's worst Presidents: Warren G. Harding and Richard Nixon. They both gleaned more than sixty percent of the popular vote, while great Presidents like Abraham Lincoln, were unable to pull in a majority (39.8% in 1860). All I'm asserting is that they shouldn't have it both ways. They shouldn't be able to say, "Your vote counts" and then count it only when it fits their plan.

Why does the Electoral College still exist? Maybe because both Democrats and Republicans know they're sitting pretty. They've got the only two clubs in the country that allow their chosen candidate to become the most powerful person on the planet.

The system, as designed, puts them square on the top of the heap. They aren't just going to roll out the red carpet to their challengers. A fundamental change, one that truly needs to be made, keeps on sliding by. I'm not too stupid to understand why. Why vote yourself out of office? Why give true power to the people when they believe they already have it? Magicians never reveal their tricks.

"The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be exercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all. I like a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the atmosphere."
—Thomas Jefferson, to Abigail Adams

I'm not the first to have this hair up my ass about dismantling the Electoral College. Over seven hundred proposals have been introduced in Congress to reform or eliminate it. It's not just politi-

cal types, either. In 1968, the American Bar Association in a Judiciary Subcommittee stated that, "The Electoral College method of electing a President is archaic, undemocratic, complex, ambiguous, indirect, and dangerous." Furthermore, the Bar went on to cite that in fifteen elections, a shift of less than one percent of the national vote would have made the popular vote loser the President. Clearly, and beyond a reasonable doubt, there's a problem with the Electoral College.

Currently, there's some buzz about reforming the Electoral College, but it's an uphill battle. What's needed is a formal Article V Amendment to the Constitution, which requires what's called a super majority—passing votes in both houses of Congress. Again, why are Republicans and Democrats going to risk their hold on power? They're not going to unless there's extreme outside pressure from the populace, like there was for term limits.

Let's take a breather and take a step back for a second to get this all in perspective. Voting is one direct method of activism. Surely, there are many other methods of dissent, but this one is free, legal, and encouraged by most Americans. It's something ordinary,

hard-working Americans can understand and are comfortable with. That said, in 2004 there's a brand new wrinkle for the punk rockers reading this. First off, high fives all around. Welcome to the national political arena for the first time ever. You are now part of a national political force to be reckoned with. I'd like to tip the hat to PunkVoter.com, who has not only done a great job energizing punk rockers through their website and *Rock Against Bush* compilation CD/DVDs, but also extending a bevy of information to punk rockers' families, too. By extending a firm handshake to the populace at large and providing reason after reason why George W. Bush is a god awful President, they have helped lead the charge. If it takes a crappy, popular band like Yellowcard on a *Rock Against Bush Vol. 2* comp. to sway some folks to vote,

that's a bitter pill I'm willing to swallow if I can wake up in November and realize that there won't be any more Bush.

Would it help if I put it in terms of *Star Wars*? George Bush is well on his way to making a Death Star. Give him four years, and it'll be completed. Remember what the Death Star is designed for? Destroying entire planets. George W. Bush is a gigantic, ever-increasing threat to all American people who aren't millionaires and ingratiating themselves to him. I'm really having a difficult time thinking how anyone, even through this hugely flawed election process, could be any worse.

Now that you've registered, how are you going to cast that vote? I only ask that you use your brain. Be smart about it.

I think I've finally come to grips with what Sara meant when she said she believes in voting. It's not that she believes the entire system is golden, but it's the only system that we have and we have to work within it to change it. She wants to speak its own language of checks and balances, change its tires once in



awhile, and give it a tune-up. While I believe the system itself needs to be dismantled in many ways. I still—deep down—agree with The Feederz's Frank Discussion who said, "If you think it's humiliating to be ruled, how much more degrading is it to have to choose your masters?" However, I'm going to vote not because I think it's going to change a damn thing, but partially because it really bothered Sara and my parents (who are really nice, really rational people) that I didn't vote.

Sara said she would vote for Nader only if the Democratic candidate had a lock on the state in 2000. The more I considered this, the wiser it became. You've probably heard the line that a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush. Not one hundred percent correct. Due to the nuances in the Electoral College, if a state is overwhelmingly voting either Republican or Democrat, your vote doesn't amount to squat. For instance, it's pretty much a foregone conclusion that California's fifty-four electoral votes are going to Kerry. On election day, I'll wake up, turn on the television or the radio, and study the exit polls. (An exit poll is a telling barometer of actual voting. People are asked whom they voted for after they've exited the voting booths.) You can vote later in the day. Be patient. If my hunch

ideas. This election could very well be the first tentative step to dissolving the idea that there is and will always be a two-party system in America. These things take time. With a little voter-driven help, other parties like the Libertarians and the Peace and Freedom Party may also be able to blip into America's national political radar. Wildcards could start looking like threats to the two-party system. To me, that's a good thing.

In the spirit of not just bitching, I've come up with a two-tiered resolution for voting. First are the immediate steps I think would work within our current voting system, and second are steps beyond the Electoral College.

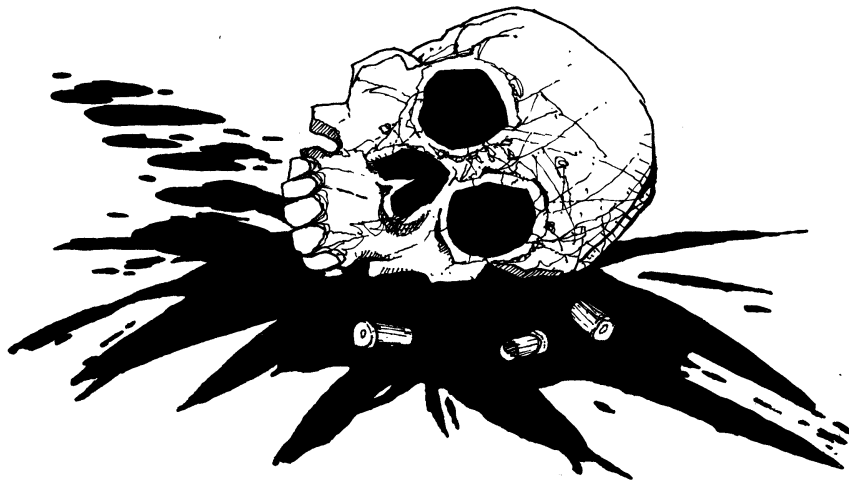
Popular elections for President should be spread out over several days. I say a working day and a weekend day, at least. Most people work the exact time the polls are open, making it really hard to get there on time. Hell, why not just make election day a national holiday, so everyone will be off work?

On a more philosophical level, the United States is a technological dynamo of a country. Wouldn't it be great that instead of "spreading freedom" by constantly devising more devastating

THAT SAID, IN 2004 THERE'S A BRAND NEW WRINKLE FOR THE PUNK ROCKERS READING THIS... YOU ARE NOW PART OF A NATIONAL POLITICAL FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

is correct and Kerry has indisputably won California before I head off to the polls, another vote for him just won't matter. A vote for Nader *in this instance* isn't a waste. (The same goes if you live in Texas. Like it or not, Texas is going to fall to Bush. Your vote for Kerry will be electorally null and void.) A vote for Nader in Texas and California are direct votes towards a nationally recognized third party system. However, if you live in a swing state or a state where the exit polls are indecisive or teetering back and forth, I suggest a vote for Kerry.

Why is it important to vote for a third party candidate if it's safe? As with all of the other considerations in this essay, voting for an third party candidate isn't the end-all, be-all to a participatory democracy. It is the first step in a long march towards putting a crack in the Electoral College's absolute control by allowing more than just two political parties to shape our national political future. It is a small step in the right direction to a true democracy. One way to establish a third party candidate into the national psyche is to have those candidates in national political debates. Unfortunately, for an overwhelming portion of Americans, if something's not on TV, it doesn't exist. If a third party candidate gets five percent of the popular vote, they'll be able to receive matching federal funds. (In the 2000 election, Nader garnered 2,882,728 votes, 2.7% of the popular vote. A little over half of what he was gunning for.) With five percent, the government will double the amount of money third party candidates can spend on their campaigns. It could lead to some face time on the boob tube for folks like Ralph Nader, who, although he looks like a disheveled marmot and could work on not talking like a college professor all the time, has many solid policy



weaponry, to kill more people in foreign lands we just pissed off, if a mere fraction of the defense budget could be reinvested on a very simple principle called voting? What if a mere trace of the enthusiasm used in "the name of democracy" was invested in a nation-wide, beefy voting network that would enable each and every eligible voter in this land a palpable hand in selecting their leaders, both local and national? Instead of

the U.S. government spending fourteen billion dollars on trying to improve the Osprey—a helicopter/plane hybrid that's adept at killing U.S. Marines by dropping out of the sky on repeated occasion—I suggest putting that money towards a standardized voting machine that's like an ATM. More importantly, a non-profit, non-affiliated voting foundation or league should run the machines. Votes are tallied electronically, the citizen gets a printout of how they voted, and if a recount is needed, everyone has their receipts. You get one when you buy a bag of jellybeans, why not get one when you cast a vote for President?

When and if the Electoral College is dismantled, it would be much easier to count one person, one vote because a sophisticated system would already be in place. This is how it should have been from the start. I bet you anything that if people actually see their vote meaning something—instead of being transferred, processed, demeaned by pundits, and quite possibly lost—that a nice chunk of apathy would erode.

Mine sure would.



THE MARKED MEN

Interview and pictures
by Todd Taylor
Introduction by Josh



Mark: Vocals and Guitar • Jeff: Vocals and Guitar • Mike: Drums • Joe: Bass

I think the beauty of small town punk rock is its purity. Yeah, it's scarce, and sometimes you really have to search for it, but for the most part, it's stripped of all the typical "rock" behavior of larger cities. There's no comb-flailing pretty boy bands trying to affect this pose or that pose, no squawking managers speaking on behalf of the band, nobody whispering in your ear, just plenty of time to refine what you're doing. Don't believe me? How about Scared of Chaka from Albuquerque, New Mexico, or the New Bomb Turks from Columbus, Ohio? Two of the best bands of the last decade, and neither of them came from anywhere near some over-hyped rock mecca.

What does all this have to do with anything? The Marked Men are from a small town in Texas, and all they do is play music. No artifice, no bullshit, just slashing rock and roll, unaffected by trends. It's pop, but with daggers for melodies and their fingers jammed in a light socket. In their own low-key, unassuming way, they've released two unbelievable albums that are both waiting to glue themselves to your record player.

Todd: Mark, take me through the scenario where you're driving through Los Angeles and you hit a pedestrian.

Mark: Well, that was a real bad day. The Reds were supposed to play at the Garage and we showed up and the place was closed and nobody knew why or what was going on and the whole show got cancelled and nobody told us. We went and ate at this terrible Mexican food restaurant and I'm pulling out and I just run into this guy. I swear, I barely hit him. It wasn't even a big deal.

Jeff: Just kind of bumped him and he fell over.

Mark: And he's like threatening to call the police and wanting us to give him money and he kept going on and on. I was like, "I don't care. I'm going to call the police," so I did. He left and then limped back with his brother who spoke better English, I guess. We filed a report, and the cops didn't even want to do it. I had lawyers calling me for like a year after that trying to get money out of me. The guy was fine. It was just stupid. That was my first LA experience.

Todd: What's the background of the band? A couple of you guys were in the Reds?

Mike: All three of us (Mark, Mike, and Jeff).

Mark: We were a three piece for a while right after the Reds split up because our old bass player, Chris, moved away to Japan.

Todd: Why'd he do that?

Mark: He lived in a small town, Denton, his whole life. He

was just tired of that place and he wanted to do something else. Then it kind of fizzled out and we knew it was over. The rest of us kept wanting to play so we did. Chris and I, who started the Reds, it was our thing, so I didn't feel right about continuing.

Mike: I think that three piece line-up was the first Marked Men seven-inch we did, on Mortville. There are only three people on that.

Todd: Confirm or deny this assessment of the Marked Men sound: You guys "make music for grease monkeys and people who work with retarded."

Jeff: You were reading an old Reds interview. That's our friend Dillon who interviewed us. At the time, all of us except for Joe worked with the mentally retarded as a job.

Todd: For somebody who doesn't know about the Marked Men, can you kind of season them to it a little bit? From my perspective, you're kind of hard to explain, and that's a benefit. I hear a lot of Dils, I hear a lot of Buzzcocks, but that's just kind of starting points, not the end points of the band. I've read a ton of reviews and very few of them carry the same reference points.

Mike: I figure the less words you put to it, the better, because I've heard people talk about hearing stuff that I've never heard, bands that I'm not familiar with. I think that's cool, people get a "you get out of it what you put into it" kind of thing.

Todd: Is there a band that gets mentioned that you just don't agree with? Like, "Oh, you guys sound like Yes."

Joe: That would be a dream come true.

Mark: It's kind of strange, because we did a real short tour of Europe, but a lot of the places, since we did the first record on Rip Off, most of the people were expecting the rock and roll, punk, garage rock stuff, which I don't really think we are. I want us to be a pop band, but really fast and a lot of energy. I want the songs to be catchy so people will still be singing them after they leave.

Mike: We don't want to be a carbon copy of '77 punk. You want to bring something different to the table, because that's obviously been done.

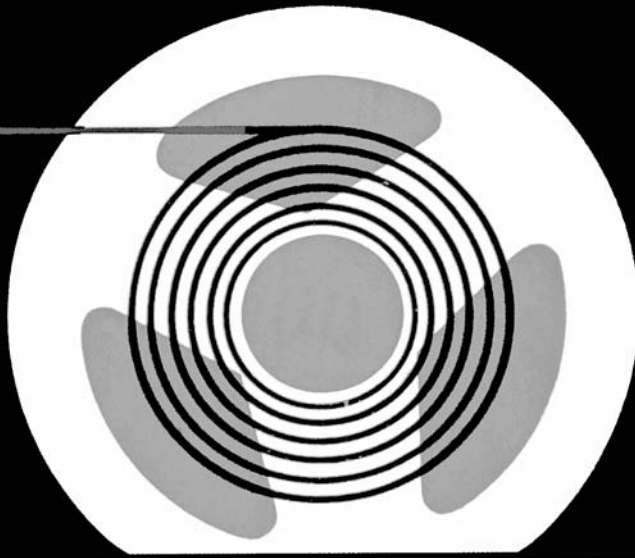
Todd: How did Greg Lowery find out about you guys? It doesn't seem like a natural thing that he would put out.

Jeff: We did two records with him as the Reds, and I didn't even think he would like it at all. I didn't think we fit on the label, but it worked out for us because he was the one to do it right then and we were ready to do it.

Todd: Did he have any stipulations that you were kind of leery about?

Jeff: Not really, 'cause he's known us for a while. He's made a lot of bands re-record and stuff like that. The only thing he





really requires is that the band has to be on the cover in some way, shape, or form. But other than that, he lets us do whatever we want.

Todd: Would you ever grow a beard?

Mark: Personally, I don't like facial hair. Joe has a moustache every once in a while.

Joe: I shaved it last night.

Mark: It makes him look real creepy. Driving a van around and talking to girls and stuff.

Mike: Greg Lowery's asked people to change their names before.

Jeff: The Atomsmashers used to be called something else... So anyway, we have a new record out.

Todd: Is it on Dirtnap?

Jeff: Yeah, it came out in May.

Todd: So why the switch of labels?

Mark: I don't know. Greg's a big teddy bear. He's a nice guy. We love him to death. When the Reds broke up, we hugged and cried and stuff. It works out better for us.

Mike: For one thing, there's a stigma that follows some Rip Off bands around. You go to places and people automatically think "punk rock assholes" and they wouldn't want us to stay with them. We're pretty quiet people, for the most part, so it's nice to get away from that, to a degree.

Jeff: Dirtnap's my favorite label going right now.

Todd: Mike, you were in a surf band, is that right?

Mike: Yeah, he and I were in a surf band together. We've been playing music together since we were like eighteen.

Todd: How did you get one of your tracks onto a documentary?

Mike: Oh, our friend Kevin Harrison made the documentary.

Todd: What was the name of it?

Mike: *The Locals*. It's cool because we did some recordings before we broke up that never made it out. We still have the reels and we might remix it and put it out someday. Anyway, Kevin gave a home to that, so that was really cool.

Todd: Have you had to adjust your drumming at all to be in this band?

Mike: Yeah, it's real linear. I'm too hyperactive to sit still and play real boring stuff, but there's always been a lot of surf in my playing. I do a lot of double backbeats and stuff like that.

Todd: Everyone has to add to this. What do you think is the blueprint or the skeleton key for the band?

Jeff: I think it's just since the Reds and since we've been playing with each other for so long, we trust each other what with what we're going to do, and we work real hard on writing songs.

Mike: I think a common point of departure for us is that we want to have a good time. We all get along pretty easily.

Mark: We're pretty boring. We're not like rock and roll guys.

We don't do crazy shit and get drunk constantly.

Joe: We're still all a little bit off in our own way. We're not average people. Above average. [laughs]

Todd: Outside of music, where do you get most of your inspiration? Not necessarily playing—what inspires you to continue to be an above average person?

Joe: Anytime my hair looks all right and I think my hair's growing thicker from the thickening shampoo. When a girl kisses me... I don't know.

Todd: Were you ever picked on as a kid?

Joe: Yes. I was a chubby kid and I was really shy and really timid. I've never really been the kind of person to stand up to anybody, so I was picked on because I would take it, being a little fat kid. At the same time, I don't have too many horror stories. I've got whore stories, though.

Mark: I bought Joe a whore.

Joe: You're clean over there, though. And she said I was her first one ever.

Mark: Basically, it was a joke of mine. I kept saying I was going to buy him a whore because he's the only one who doesn't have a girlfriend. When we got there, I pulled out fifty Euros and he took it and went and did it. I didn't think he would but he did.

Joe: I proved everyone wrong that night.

Todd: Can you give me some Marked Men lyrics?

Mark: No. [laughs] Actually, on the songs that I sing, you can probably understand them pretty easily, but with Jeff, you can't understand anything.

Mike: There's a lot of bands that you can't understand what the hell they're saying and you can make up your own lyrics. Teengenerate's a really great example of that.

Jeff: One of the songs on the new album was titled by my friend's four-year-old. She had a demo CD and she would sing along with her own lyrics, so we just used some of her words for the title.

Mark: "Master Wicked." That's what she titled it.

Mike: You'll actually be able to understand the lyrics a little better on the new record because it's a little cleaner produced.

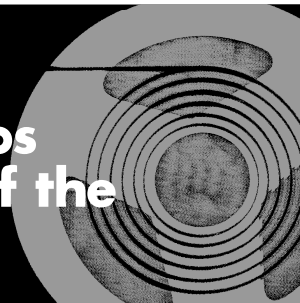
Mark: We just don't really care about that part very much. Like we were talking about with Teengenerate and the Registrators, those bands are incredibly poppy and you can sing along, but you don't know what the hell they're singing about.

Mike: Sweet JAP's the same way. I've got to say, they're God's gift to punk rock. Every time I see them, it's just a blessing.

Todd: What's the most creative act of vandalism you've seen lately?

Joe: I saw this guy who showed me digital photos of him stealing the Texas flag that's on top of the Alamo. Seriously. That's federal and stuff.

I saw this guy who showed me digital photos of him stealing the Texas flag that's on top of the Alamo. Seriously. That's federal and stuff.



Mark: What was one band that they played at the Hard Rock Café in Dallas and they smashed the case where...

Joe: That was at South By Southwest. The Icarus Line.

Mark: Yeah, that was pretty cool. He ran out with Stevie Ray Vaughn's guitar.

Joe: The Motards from Austin did the cardinal sin. They have a seven-inch cover, it might be a Rip Off seven inch, where they're all pissing on a statue of Stevie Ray Vaughn, which in Austin is the ultimate sin, which is ridiculous.

Todd: What's the best part about being from Denton, Texas? Are you all from Denton?

Mark: Pretty much. Joe's originally from El Paso.

Todd: How does it shape you, though?

Mark: It's a college town and it's really insular, like everybody plays in everybody else's band. It's pretty much just been a really tight knit scene and we just keep doing it and we love it. For a long time, there wasn't much as far as places to play, but it's getting a lot better right now. One thing that happened that was real cool was that the (Riverboat) Gamblers played a high school, and now a bunch of high school kids are coming out to see the Marked Men and the Gamblers and stuff.

Mike: There's really nothing to do in Denton, so that really helped foster the music scene. There was one point where there were a lot of really cool house parties.

Todd: What about the geography of Texas as a whole? It's kind of isolated just because of the mass of the state, but also, you're oddly centralized.

Mike: Yeah, a lot of bands, if they're touring the west coast or east coast, they'll often make Austin their first or last spot. That's good. It's only a three-hour drive to come down here.

Mark: I like being isolated. I like not being in the big scenes or whatever, just because I feel like I can look at it more objectively. We just do what we like, and fuck everything else.

Joe: I think what's crazy about Texas is there are small towns right now that you would never think of, like Odessa, which is just oil derricks. They're catching on and having shows. Three hundred kids are showing up for pretty big indie bands. Places that you wouldn't even expect people to live, there are kids there who are getting something started.

Mike: One thing that was cool about Denton was that the community was really supportive of the scene and Dallas was getting shittier and shittier. It's really corporate and real pop. Basically, every band wants to be Weezer. Weezer's cool, but it's been done. A lot of shows would skip Dallas and play Denton. There's been a couple of places that have done that, have kind of stolen the thunder of Dallas as far as cool indie bands and punk bands, and that helped the Denton scene for sure.

Jeff: It's always more fun to play Denton than Ft. Worth or Dallas.

Mark: I used to really hate Denton and think, "Oh, I live in this shitty small town and there's nothing cool here," but then the more I travel, the more I like home. I appreciate it more.

Joe: It has its problems like everywhere else. I wish that there were cooler bars or something, but we're lucky to even have venues, because there's towns that size that have nothing. I find that I meet more people who know a lot about music and are really open minded about music than where it is to be cool.

Jeff: We got an Olive Garden now.

Joe: Texas Roadhouse.

Mark: We got a Popeye's recently, which I was really happy about.

Todd: What's the best heckle you've heard?

Joe: Usually it's just friends making inside jokes or stuff that embarrasses me.

Todd: Did any of you actually come to blows with the guys from the Promise Ring? Is there any validity to that?

Mark: No. I think we made up some story about how we got into a fight with them or something. We were mad that they were doing so well and we weren't.

Todd: Can you tell people about the phenomenon of Time Bomb Tom?

Mark: For a while, when the Reds would go up there (to Green Bay, Wisconsin), it was just so fun. It's kind of like Denton now, where you have kids coming out to the shows. It was his record store and his club, Rock and Roll High School, that made that town. That one guy made such a huge difference. He's crazy, too.

Mike: That club was all ages, and somebody was drinking out in the parking lot and it attracted the cops or something like that. In the middle of our set, Tom came up on stage and just screamed into the PA, scaring the shit out of everybody. He said, "Hey, I need your attention," and people weren't paying attention, so he just goes, "SHUT UP! SHUT THE FUCK UP!" You could hear crickets chirping, and he basically just laid it out. In order for something like that to work, they can't have any alcohol. They can't attract attention from The Man or whatever, because that's how all those places get shut down. In that respect, I think that's where the "Time Bomb" part of it comes up.

Jeff: One time, he couldn't pay us or something, so he was like, "I'll give you some candy bars or something. I'm sorry I can't pay you enough." He would fly in bands just because he liked them and he would have other bigger shows to pay for that kind of stuff.

Todd: Yeah, he flew the Humpers in one time.

Mike: It was cool because fourteen-year-old kids had an environment where they could see cool punk rock bands that didn't play everywhere, and there were so many kids in Green Bay that got to see cool shows at such a young age and went on to start bands like the Mystery Girls and the Catholic Boys. I'm real jealous. I didn't get into punk until my late teens. There was a scene in Dallas, but it was pretty isolated. They got lucky.

Todd: Why were there only 500 copies of the 7" made? Was it a self-esteem issue?

Joe: That's like the best-selling Mortville 7".

Jeff: That's what he said. I don't know if it's true, though.

Joe: I like to think so [laughs]. I thought it was great [laughs].

Todd: You guys record yourselves, too, is that correct?

Mark: It's mostly Jeff.

Todd: All right, Jeff, you're going to have to answer a question. Is it out of necessity or do you like the entire process of making music and recording music?

Jeff: It's cheaper. We're very picky about sound, and we couldn't afford to spend a lot of time getting the mix right. Doing it ourselves, we can work as much as we want on it and make it sound the way we want it to.

Todd: How involved is that? Did you make a studio?

Jeff: Oh, it's not like a studio.

Mike: A shed.

Mark: There's a shed in the back of his house, and I think between Mike and Jeff and I, we put together enough stuff to have pretty good equipment.

Jeff: We're lucky, especially recently.

Mark: I don't know if other bands do this, like how much time they spend on recordings. I mean, it's still kind of lo-fi, but that's our most important thing in the world—to make recordings sound





We just do what we like, and fuck everything else.



them, I felt like a girl at a Beatles concert or something. I was so excited to see them.

Mike: I was amazed how down to earth they were and how they were just all about keeping the rock alive. They've been through so much and they just keep on playing and they seem to respect that in other bands who do the same. Just doing it for the sake of doing it, having fun. When we got compliments from them, I didn't know how to take it.

Todd: What was the biggest culture shock for going to Japan?

Joe: It was my first time. I've never been in such a huge city with so many people. I thought I was going to flip out. I would get anxiety attacks just thinking about it, but I was so comfortable. I guess just seeing a million people everywhere...

Mark: And they're all Japanese [laughs].

Todd: They got a different word for everything.

Joe: Also, just the language barrier. I didn't even try talking to anyone, 'cause it was just like, "Well, you're not going to know."

Mark: They don't like to heat and air condition things very well, either.

Mike: The toilet seats are heated. Oh, man, I don't really care about the bidet feature, but they had three types of bidets.

Todd: I take it you get it through connections with the Reds, but you've toured Europe, too, is that correct?

Mark: The Marked Men did, yeah. That was one of the best things Greg did was hook us up with this guy named Robert, who lives in Holland.

Mike: He plays in the Hot Pockets.

Mark: Yeah, he's real cool. He does a good job booking shows and stuff like that, so having him book our shows was awesome. We had a really great time. It was beautiful weather, beautiful girls everywhere. Real nice.

Todd: What's the most mismatched bill you've been on?

Joe: I wasn't in the band when this happened, but in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, they played with a Stevie Ray Vaughn blues band. That's pretty mismatched. In Hamburg, we played with a metal band.

Mike: Somewhere between cock rock and black metal.

Joe: The singer was really influenced by Ozzy.

Mike: It was cool playing in Hamburg, though, because it was right by the red light district. I've never seen anything like that, all the girls in the windows.

Mark: We almost got attacked by a prostitute.

Todd: What's the strangest thing someone's tried to pay you with? Like, "Oh, you did a good show, here's a Twinkie."

Mike: We told you about Tom giving us candy bars and emptying out the change drawer of the register. It was like forty bucks in change. He gave us a case of Mountain Dew.

Todd: Has anybody tried to back out of paying you?

Mark: It's been pretty cool. I mean, we don't get paid shit as it is, so it's not usually that big of an issue. We had some problems with the clubs in Denton a lot. They were real shitty, Rubber Gloves. It's

been a lot better lately.

Mike: On tour, we usually set stuff up through other people, friends, and the friends take care of us.

Todd: What is the worst job you've ever had?

Joe: Telemarketer for a day.

Todd: What did you telemarket?

Joe: Selling cable packages, like there's a silver package, a gold package, whatever. I think what I hated so much about it was the first day I did it, they put me on the phones, and I didn't care. I just

worked the phones for a couple of hours, and then the next day was just terrible. This one guy, who I'd never met, scared the crap out of me, he said, "Don't. Ever. Call. Me. Again." I took off my headphones and went home. My roommates had a bet going about how long I was going to last.

Mike: My first job, when I was fifteen, I worked at a Braum's for like two or three weeks, and it was just hell.

Joe: What's a Braum's?

Mike: For those of you who aren't from the South, it's an ice cream shop, basically. They sell baked stuff and burgers. Man, it was just misery. They were all militant about the ice cream had to weigh the exact amount or whatever. The people I worked with were total slackers, though. The managers needed work so badly that they would let people get away with murder. They would just sit in the back and inhale the Reddi-Wip whippets.

Jeff: I didn't have anything that bad. I had a couple temp jobs in factories and stuff, assembly line stuff, but I've been doing the same thing for about eight years now.

Todd: What have you been doing?

Jeff: Just working with people with mental retardation. I'm tired of that, but it's not terrible.

Mark: I was a case manager for mentally retarded people and I've worked with them forever. I make jokes, but it's a cool job, actually.

Mike: You've got to blow off steam because it's so intense. It takes a lot of patience.

Joe: You've got to hit them sometimes. [laughs]

Mark: Slap them around.

Mike: Actually, now that I think about it, I had a job that I did for a couple weeks. I was disposing toxic waste. Seriously. There's this stuff called PCB's that are in fluorescent lights, and we had to break these lights down and put them in these huge ton-and-a-half barrels. Looking back, it was so dangerous. We were supposed to wear these big spacesuits, radiation suits, and of course we just wore gloves. I didn't even wear goggles. My hands would be all arthritic and crippled by the end of the day, and god knows what I exposed myself to, cause the EPA still puts out stuff about how crazy PCB's are.

Todd: Name one thing that you have no reverence for whatsoever.

Mark: The Riverboat Gamblers. [laughs. Mike Wiebe of the Gamblers is standing nearby.] Stevie Ray Vaughn.

Mike: People who are militantly religious really bother me. I think spirituality is cool, but if you're going to try to cram your beliefs down my throat, I don't hang there.

Jeff: I think Joe's is celibacy.

Joe: True. I'm vegan *and* straight edge.

Marked Men, 3504 Primrose Ave., Fort Worth,
TX 76111; www.themarkedmen.com



geisha girls

Interview by Kat Jetson
Live pictures by Kat Jetson
Head Shots by Geisha Girls



Not long ago I saw Geisha Girls for the first time and was immediately taken with their solid and true punk sound. Within thirty seconds of hearing their music I thought three things: 1.) Why is this the first time I'm hearing this band? 2.) They sound a helluva lot like the Alley Cats; and 3.) They had better have some music for me to buy. And so they did/do—the self-released, it's-available-on-three-different-colors-of-wax five song EP. Buy it now.

Since that glorious evening of Geisha Girls introduction I've had the mighty pleasure of becoming their MySpace.com friend. Yeah, yeah, I know—MySpace. But listen up, membership has its privileges and I'm hearing new Geisha Girls songs and you're not.

One night in between recording a song at Radio Beat Records for their upcoming 7" and playing a show at midnight in LA, these three OC boys were sweet and awake enough to join me at my abode in the Valley to sit down and talk about *Captain Eo*, eBay, Zoloft, and of course, Hanson.

Kat: I hear KOCE-TV is interested in using a portion of your song, "Retaining Water" as the intro/theme song for some business affairs show. What's up with that?

Shawn: I dunno. This guy called me up and he was like, "We don't have any money to pay you..."

Kat: Of course not.

Shawn: "...but would you be interested in doing it?" I told him we'd do it and he said he was going to send me a release form. That was a month and a half ago and we just got it in the mail today. But then Damian's friend called him up and told him she heard us on one of the commercials for it. We didn't even release a song to them!

Damian: Our friend said the song she heard was "Terminal."

Shawn: The guy told me it was going to air on July 16, but I don't think it did.

Kat: And you didn't sign anything?

Damian: We were reading it today. Now he may or may not give us credit.

Shawn: When I talked to him that's the one thing I said—that we were going to need some credit at the end like our website and band name and whatever.

Kat: You can get that guy in trouble. That's your music.

Damian: In the release form it also says he can use it whenever he wants.

Kat: I'll bet he's being less than honest about the not having any money to pay you anything.

Shawn: He told me he was going to use a Bob Dylan song but wanted to use our song instead.

Kat: So do you think he called up Bob and told him he didn't have any money to give him?

Shawn: It's been a mess, but we'll get it figured out.

Kat [to Damian]: Do you really work at Disneyland?

Damian: Yes, I really do.

Kat: You've got to have some awesome stories relating to that. Well first, what do you do?

Damian: Basically what I do is I stand there and I say, "Excuse me, ma'am (or sir), would like chicken or ribs? And if you'd like chicken, would you like a breast, leg or thigh?" And then some guy will say, "Well, you know, I'm a breast man. You should give me a breast. A-ha-ha-ha!"

John: Stupid!

Damian: Like I've never heard that one before. Take your damn chicken and leave!

Kat: Was it difficult to get a job there?

Damian: Actually, I got turned down twice. I had to apply three times. I applied to Disneyland because you can have a mustache and... I don't wanna shave off my mustache because my nostrils are just big...

Shawn [laughing]: Shut up, man. Come on.

Damian: No, I'm serious. When I was in college I shaved off my mustache and everyone was like, "Damn, I can drive my Cadillac up your nostrils." So anyhow, it was my third attempt to get the job there and they asked me, "So Damian, why did you come to Disneyland?" I told them 1.) so I can have a mus-

tache, and 2.) so I can see *Captain Eo* every day. And they all started laughing at me, but I was like, "I'm not trying to be funny." So they said, "Well, the funny thing is, *Captain Eo* has been cancelled for eight years now."

[Everyone is in complete hysterics at this time.]

Kat: And they still gave you a job? Awesome!

Damian: Well, I think the reason I got the job is because the guy who interviewed me was gay and thought I was cute.

John: Damian's cute. Delicious.

Kat: And you get to go anytime you want, right?

Damian: Definitely, but why would you want to do that?

Kat [to John]: So you are the king eBay.

John: Yeah.

Kat: Do you have a job or...

John: No, that's kinda what I do.

Kat: It's brilliant what people will spend their money on, isn't it?

John: Yeah, it's nice. The funny thing to me is the people who hound you thinking you're going to rip them off.

Kat: Do you buy anything, or are you just the seller guy?

John: I'm pretty much just the seller.

Kat: Is there something you put up that you thought was nothing but got a lot of money for?

John: Someone—this was a long time ago and stuff like this doesn't happen really anymore—paid \$125 for a \$2 tape.

Damian: What tape was it? Was it Menudo's first album?

John: It might have been a Bad Brains show.

Damian: A hundred dollars for a cassette! What condition was the cassette tape?

John: I just remember we were laughing about it. So I sent them a bunch of other stuff, too.

Kat: You know there's some lawyer with lots of money to spend, sitting in his office just trying to win back parts of his past.

Damian: You'd be amazed what you can find in the dumpster.

All: What?

Damian: My friend found his whole punk collection in the dumpster. Why do you think gutter punks go dumpster diving!

Kat: They smell but they have

\$5000 worth of records under their arms.

Damian: They're not stupid.

Kat [to Shawn]: Are you still playing bass in the Checkers?

Shawn: Yeah. I play in the Von Steins, too.

Kat: So you're not sleeping much, are you?

Shawn: Not really, no.

Kat: Do you have a job? Damian's Disney, John's eBay...

Shawn: Yeah, I work on used cars and fix rims.

Kat: That's awesome! So I'll bet you're good at spotting rims. I only know the spin-y kind.

Shawn [laughing]: Yeah, the spinners.

Kat: How do you feel about the word "retro"? It's used a lot these days. I see that word in almost every review.

John: We got called "jumping someone else's train!"

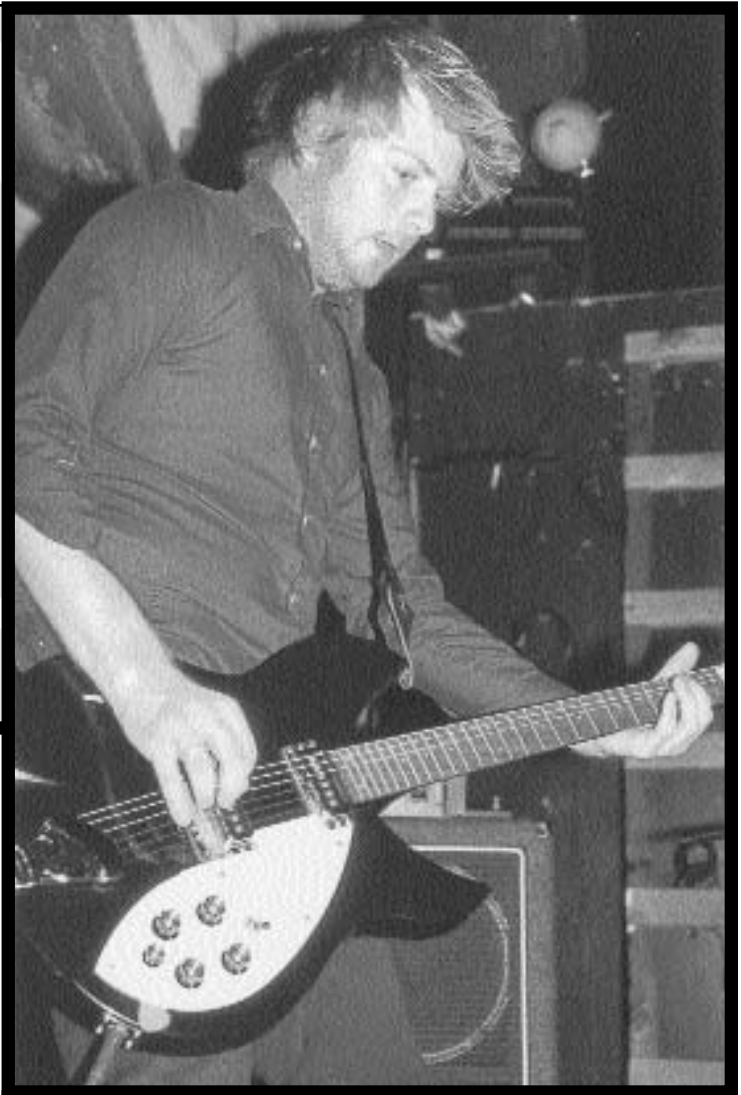
**Why
don't
you just go
smoke some
weed,
masturbate,
and relax?**

Kat: That's tough because obviously you feel like you're creating something unique. It's nice to be associated with something else good, but...

Damian: Personally, I haven't heard anything like that. I don't give a damn! Bad press is good press. They can call it soul, country... I don't care. As long as you buy the album.

John: I think the best groups that are around today—you can hear the influences, you know what I mean? I don't think anyone's come out with anything fresh and great in the past twenty years.

Kat: There's a tour happening right now with the Cure called the Curiosa Festival which is basically a bunch of bands that sound like the Cure! With The Rapture, Hot Hot Heat, Interpol...



Damian: Interpol! Good Lord! I'd rather go see Hanson than the Interpol.

Kat: You just got the quote of the interview.

Damian: I'm actually looking forward to seeing Hanson when they come down.

Shawn: Do they still play?

Damian: Mmmhmm. They got a new album out. I just haven't bought it yet. I was watching VH-1...

Shawn: How old are they now?

Damian: One is twenty-one and he just got married and has a kid, then the oldest—the guitar player—is twenty-four and the drummer is eighteen or nineteen. Yeah, I watch *Behind the Music*.

Kat: Thing is, I don't even know if you're being honest right now.

Damian: I'm being serious.

John: He has a t-shirt and wears it.

Kat: Do you all hang out together?

Damian: We go get some 40s together. Some Charles Shaw, you know.

Shawn: We're pretty tight.

Damian: I call them every day even though they don't answer the phone half the damn time. Either that or I gotta text message these bitches.

John: I've got that social anxiety. Zoloft, baby.

Kat: That commercial...

Damian: Yeah, with the bouncing ball. One of the side effects is constipation and dry heaves.

Shawn: Really?

Damian: No, I don't know. But have you ever seen those things? It's supposed to help you with one thing, but then you've got five other things you gotta deal with. It's like what the hell is the point of taking that pill when you got five other problems you gotta buy pills for? Why don't you just go smoke some weed, masturbate, and relax?

Kat: If you could interview anyone, who would it be and what would you ask?

Damian: I'd interview Prince and Robert Smith.

Kat: What would you ask? Or what would you do with them if you could hang out with them?

Damian: Are we talking like, tomorrow? If Prince was here tomorrow? I would go ask him if I could frolic around his big ass house.

Kat: In his Paisley Park.

Damian: I would ask him so many questions, but mostly, at the age of sixteen, seventeen coming up with that first album and playing everything. It's amazing! I wanna know where it comes from. I also want to know why he decided to stand over his grave for the *Come* album, which is the worst Prince album I have ever heard. Oh, and why he's a Jehovah's Witness now.

Kat [to John]: Can you think of anyone?

John [laughing]: I'd like to talk to Rikk Agnew more. He seems kinda weird.

Kat: Who is that?

John: He's in Christian Death. (Also the Adolescents.)

Damian: I played drums in his warehouse/drum studio once and he slept in the

coffin. That guy is weird!

Shawn: I'd wanna talk to Darby Crash. I'd love to...

John: I knew it!

Shawn: I'm obsessed.

Kat: What was the last CD you bought, the last book you read, and the last movie you saw?

Shawn: Last CD was a greatest hits Dead Can Dance. Last book was *Lexicon Devil*. And the last movie I saw was [laughing] *Dodgeball*.

Kat: I saw that movie just for the tagline, "Grab Life by the Ball."

Shawn: I don't remember much of it.

Damian: I bought PJ Harvey's *Rid of Me* and De La Soul at the same time. I don't read books; I read the *OC Weekly*. Last movie I saw the other night was *Black Knight*.

Shawn: Have you ever seen *Black Knight*? You gotta see it.

Damian: It's not as good as *Pootie Tang* but it's up there.

John: The last CD I bought was Bad Brains and I guess the last book I read was *Rumblefish*.

Problem Child was probably the last movie I saw.

Kat: What's that?

Damian: You haven't seen *Problem Child*?

John: It's with John Ritter.

Damian: I like John Ritter, fool.

He's dead, but...

Kat: Do you have any good celebrity sightings?

John: I saw Britney Spears recently at El Coyote on Beverly. I didn't recognize her...

Kat: Tell me!

John: Her and her boyfriend and their bodyguard walked in. I just thought that the guy was really big and that maybe he's famous. I wasn't even looking at the girl. Anyhow, they were there for awhile. I was too scared to ask for an autograph.

Damian: I see celebrities all the time at my work.

Kat: Buyin' chicken...

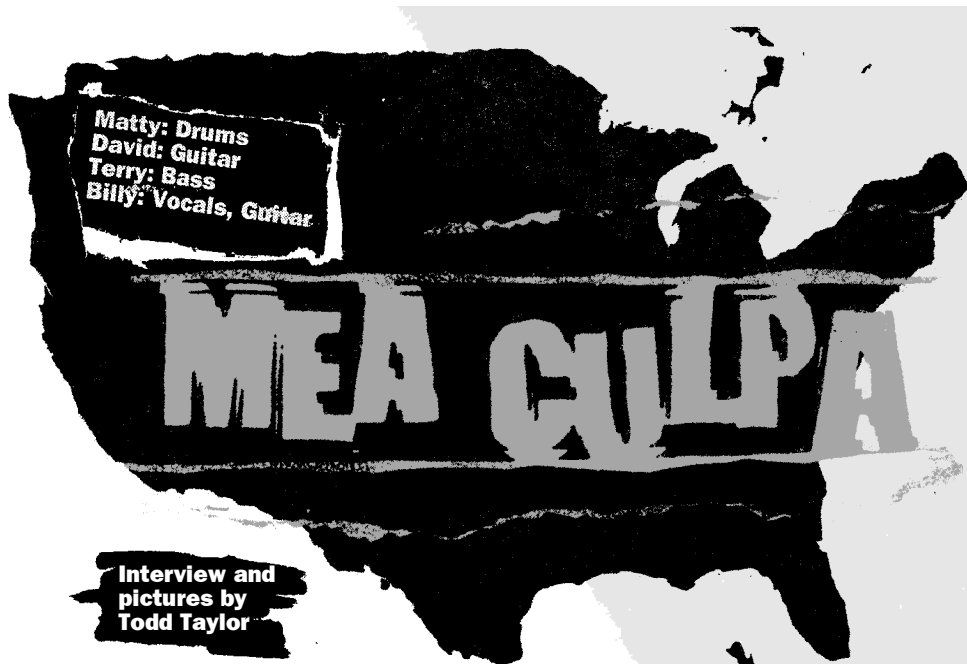
Damian: I also do Fantasmic and people will pay \$50 just to sit in a chair and get these fancy desserts and drinks. It's a waste of money. Anyhow, I've seen Jon Lovitz, the Wayans Brothers buying some corn dogs, Tyra Banks in some sweats showing off her booty...

Kat: Did they say Mickey Mouse on the ass?

John: Delicious.

Interpol!
Good Lord!
I'd rather
go see
Hanson
than the
Interpol.





Great punk protest songs are an endangered species.

On one hand, there are extremely articulate bands that, really, should instead write books because their music's boring and mediocre. No matter how good the message is, if listening to a band is as fun as swatting flies off of potato salad at a picnic, why bother? On the other end of the spectrum are musically crankin' bands that dumb down their message into chorus-short slogans. It's overly simple stuff that any punk with an ounce of arts and crafts in them can distill then shove pyramids into leather to make letters that spell out their disdain. "Fuck the Pigs!" "Unity Now!" "Stop War!" You know the deal. It's fine as a first step, but as a long-time music fan, I'm always looking to be challenged politically. Amongst the throngs, where brains, hard-earned ideals, and busted knuckles aren't mutually exclusive, is a small tribe of contemporary bands. Mea Culpa's a perfect example of one of them. They've got the full arsenal with lyrics that drip blood off of the whip held by the oppressors in American society. Mea Culpa comes across as much smarter than purely book learning and their music is simultaneously explosive as an unmarked minefield and as beautiful as any meaningful act of civil disobedience. Picture a mix between the Clash, early Rancid, the GC5, and the Swingin' Utters. What's better is that their musical machine's fueled by four down-to-earth, funny, insightful guys who haven't forgotten the meaning of either hard work or hard play. I can't suggest their debut LP, *They Put You in a Mask*, highly enough.

Todd: What do you do for a living and what's the biggest obstacle you have to overcome to be part of this band?

Matty: I sell drums for a living. I have to not buy drums so I can have a paycheck to pay for the band.

David: I'm a production manager. I tell everybody what to do. It's a graphics company. Make signs, point of sale.

Todd: You're talking French to me. What does that mean?

David: Like a video game, when you go buy it, you see the pretty sign there. All of band's stickers and stuff are materials from projects that weren't accepted or acceptable and I just save them and use the other side and keep stuff out of the dumpster.

Terry: I'm sauté chef and a professional gambler. [laughter]

Billy: I feel incredibly lucky that I had parents who raised me in a certain way that was a good balance of freedom and responsibility. I was an upper middle class kid. My mom was lower working class and my dad

was tobacco road, poorest of the poor, trapping raccoons to buy supper. My grandparents on my dad's side, they were the caretakers of Valley Forge cemetery. My parents went to college so they could send their kids to college and I feel a remarkable sense of responsibility because of that. I work at Tower Records in Seattle. I'm a pricer and a consignments buyer. I do some freelance writing on the side.

Todd: Is it difficult being in this band, traveling? Do you have to push a lot of stuff aside?

Matty: My job, I can take five years off, as long as I have the days covered.

David: My biggest obstacle is getting out of work to be in the band. It's always difficult, even to get to practice sometimes.

Terry: It's about hardest for me because I have to work at night. I was going to school for the last five years. I had to go to school all day and then work full-time at night. I'm still working at nights, so it's kind of a hard transition because we can only play on cer-

tain nights. The business I work in, it's really hard to get a night off, even if you give a lot of notice.

Todd: How did you become a sauté chef?

Terry: Worked my way up. I work at one of the nicest restaurants in Seattle. I make pretty good money doing what I do. But it's not really what I want to do. It's hard to transition because you make enough money to live happily but then you want to do something else and you know you're not going to make as much money with the band. I pretty much had to tell my job that I was going to quit to go on tour. "I know you're going to need me when I come back." So they just made it my vacation instead of making me quit. "Alright," they said. "If you're going to be like that, then you can go." I was kind of like, "Screw you guys. I've done so much for you."

Billy: Getting time off for the tour, I basically took all of the vacation time that I've saved up over the last three years working there. I've actually been waiting to do the tour to try to find a different job. It's shit pay. I really like the people I work with. It's pretty easy work, but it's not what I want to do at all. The hardest thing for me, being in the band is that I, unfortunately, have a naturally overwhelming personality. I'm trying to make sure that I don't steamroller over everybody else, which I've had problems with in the past. I'm working on that now.

Todd: Was that a problem in a previous band you were in, the Horn Rims?

Billy: Yeah, probably part of the problem was that with the Horn Rims was that I wrote everything. I wrote the horn lines and the bass lines and gave it to people. Sometimes, my natural inclination is to be "Oh, I have this thing in my head! You should play this!" Then I realized, "Okay, wait. It's a band. Everybody's going to come up with their own thing and it's going to sound as good or better than that. And it's going to sound a lot more cool because it's limited when it's just one person.

Todd: Look to the person to your left, who's in the band, and describe them for somebody who has never met them.

Terry: This is Jean-Luc Picard.

David: Indeed!

Terry: I'm glad to navigate under this captain. He's mastered the art of diplomacy. This is David Byers. Silent genius. He only speaks when there's something really important... or he's on medication.

David: To my left is this cute little hunk of teddy bear, Terry, who also has problems with opening his mouth unless it's very important. But it's usually, generally pretty seriously profound... or very stupid. He spoons well, as we've learned in the van. One hell of a bass player, that's for sure.

Terry: This is Billy Fiction and he's an enigma. No one really knows Billy Fiction very well. I know Bill Bullock pretty well. He's a great songwriter and a sweetheart.

Billy: This is Matt. He's one of the most fuckin' spot-on drummers I've ever worked with and I've worked with quite a few. He's

incredibly fuckin' business-like and to the point. He's great to have in the band in terms of decision making. Basically, I'll start talking out my ass. David and Terry, 'cause they're a little more quiet, are like, "What the fuck are you talking about?" Matt will be like, "Alright, we've got to make a decision. What are we going to do here?" He gets everybody to some sort of working point. He's incredibly committed. It's a great combination of friend, artistic co-worker, and somebody you can depend on.

Todd: What's the most hurt you've been hurt while in this band?

Matty: Physically, when I broke my foot in

cut out. Transmission ended. Collapsed. Everybody was freaking out. I'm was just really fuckin' sick.

Todd: Going into more of the topicality of the band, what's the most disturbing form of corporatization that you've come across lately?

Billy: One thing that really gets on nut sack is, even as screwed up as the public school system is—and I understand what people are trying to do with charter schools in Washington—it's the little genie that it lets out of the bottle. I worry about the concept of corporations buying up those schools. For poor kids, high school becomes a technical school, where they're just program-

"free market Stalinism." It should be just as terrifying to people who consider themselves conservative as it is to people who consider themselves liberal or left.

David: With corporatization, I would say the war in Iraq. They want to turn it into an open market society where all of us foreign countries can come in and make money from their entire country by trying to force the corporate democratic structure. The other thing that I'm even more afraid of is the WTO and the fact that an organization has the ability to make laws of nations void. They have more power than nations when it comes to what's good for business. What's good for business isn't good for society. It



I GO TO WORK EVERY DAY SO I CAN GO GET LOUD AND MAKE NOISE AND JUMP AROUND LIKE AN IDIOT.

eight anywhere else. So, I drank about four of those before last call. Ended up in West Seattle. My friend and I crawled down this cliff to a beach. I was so loaded and I hadn't seen the ocean in so long because I'm lazy. I'm running and tripped over a log or stepped in a hole and that was that. It's still fucked up to this day.

Terry: Being a sauté chef, I get a lot of burns. Sometimes, I'll be rubbing against the guitar and the skin will pop off.

Todd: Have you ever lost your eyebrows?

Terry: No, but my arms are surprisingly hairless. Matt hurt my feelings once when we were playing but I don't know if emotional damage counts.

Todd: Billy, didn't you pass out when you had a cold?

Billy: I had this awful cold. We played this show at the Vera Project and we were doing "Beauty and Wrath," that total fuckin' screamer, the second-to-last song on *They Put You in a Mask*. A combination of all of the pressure in my head, screaming like that, and being as sick as a dog—end of the song, everything from the neck down just

That really disturbs me. Then you get into the situation of when a corporation is educating our children—and as slanted as history books already are—they're going to be even more slanted when there's a vested interest in defining what the history of this country is and what's important.

My politics have evolved over the course of the band a lot. I don't consider myself a socialist or a Marxist. I don't consider myself an anything "ist." A real, functioning democracy is something that's really important to me. Capitalism actually has its merits. For some people, it is the best attempt that they can make at having some kind of a system in which individuals aren't stifled and they can pursue things freely. But keep it out of my government. Keep that out of the ability to have some kind of popular decision-making process. I'm worried that America is becoming one big version of the company town in the Depression, like in the *Grapes of Wrath*. The company owns your school. The company owns your housing block. In "Corporate Nation," that's why I call it

Billy: It becomes a giant, international version of those bum fights videos. [laughter] Seriously. It's funny but I'm not meaning to be crass. For instance, you've got Alabama and another state that's really poor. And they say, "Okay, I've got twenty bucks here. Which one of you is going embarrass yourself the most, lay down, and stick your ass up into the air for us? Which one of you is going to degrade your environmental laws and your labor laws the most so that we can make a few bucks more an hour?" It gets everybody fired up at each other. The bums end up fighting one another instead of being, "No. Fuck you. We're going to kick your ass and we're going to take your money."

Todd: Musically, what have you outright stolen and put into Mea Culpa?

Matty: Not me. You can't trademark drumbeats. [laughter]

David: You wrote a song, though.

Matty: I actually did write a song. I was staring at a Motörhead poster and Lemmy was like, "You're okay, kid."

How about note for note, **67**

"Love Me Like a Reptile." I pretty much did that.

David: Pretty much all of the Who. The verse parts.

Terry: I guess I stole some bass lines from Bill because he wrote those songs before I was in the band. People will come up to me and say, "That was an awesome bass line," and I'd say, "Thanks!"

Billy: Everything I've ever written has been ripped off. Honestly, in my own mind, when it comes down to it, I really not that great of a songwriter. I'm just a very talented mimic. I'm like a fucking mynah bird. Every single song I've ever written, I can pinpoint exactly who I'm ripping off.

Todd: "My Own Private Weimar." Who'd you rip off there?

Billy: That's *Entertainment!* Gang of Four right up the wazoo. It sounds a lot like "Damaged Goods." It has that same kind of quality about it. "Waiting for America," the solo part, I have nightmares that Mick Jones is going to hunt me as food, just as revenge for that song. When we first started, a lot of it was the Clash. I think I'm good at ripping people off because I don't ever just do a

David: Look at the monorail. It's been voted for three times and they're still trying to put it down.

Terry: I think we have a really good music scene. I'm not familiar with other music scenes, but I know that a lot of people can just come together and start a band. There are places where they can play shows. Even though the band may suck, there will be clubs that will let them play and give them free beer. That's all kids need to start a band. Just some place to start out and work from there. I think a lot of other cities don't have that kind of encouragement, where you basically have to be great to get anything out. In Seattle, you can really suck and get a lot of shows.

Matty: I finally remembered what I liked about Seattle. Portland's only three hours away. [laughter]

Terry: We've got smoked salmon.

Matty: Actually, go see the EMP, the Experience Music Project, just once. Go and check out the inside.

Billy: When you eat a bunch of Skittles, then you puke 'em out, that's what the Experience Music Project looks like.

between act-machismo and real machismo comes in. In "Last Caress," I say "I fucked your daddy today," because it's funnier that way, but I would never sing, "I raped your mom." Somewhere in there is the Rosetta Stone of comedy. Why is it funny that he said, "I killed your baby today"? Hilarious. But when he said, "I raped your mother today," I'm kind of like, that's not really funny, right? Right? That's my one thing, as far as humor goes. Rape equals not funny. Killing the baby, though. Joke your ass off about that.

The Misfits had this streak of machismo—I'm taking that and taking all of the good stuff out of it and subverting the other stuff a little bit by having people in drag. It was just fun. When I first wanted to do it, I had done a straight-forward Misfits tribute. We got the name from Terry. It was Double Hand, Devil Head. I wanted to do it again and I'd just seen *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and I thought it would be fun to do something that was a gender twist. Originally, I was going to be boy Glenn and I wanted to get a female singer to be girl Glenn. I originally wanted to get Andrea Zollo. She's all

"TERRY, I'M TRUSTING YOU. DON'T LET BILL FUCK MY CUTOUT." I SAID, "I'LL DO WHAT I CAN BUT I CAN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES."

whole song. I just make it sound like somebody else. I still feel like I'm trying to figure out what my music is. That's the gnawing thing at the back of my head. It's always; "You're no good. You just rip everybody off. You can't really write songs."

Matty: My favorite is your description of "Three Drinks." The reaction on people's faces when you're like, "It sounds like anything Andrew W.K. mixed with Springsteen's 'Born to Run,' man."

Billy: Seriously.

Terry: Just to fuck with people, we should say, "You've got to check out this new song. Sounds like a cross between Howlin' Wolf and Sade."

Todd: Name something local in Seattle, which doesn't exist anywhere else in the United States, that you endorse and enjoy.

David: When I have a day off, I go to Golden Gardens Park and burn stuff on the beach. Oh, The Vera Project. It's an all-ages venue. It's kind of like a youth outreach—arts in general. The city actually supported it, which is ironic because they kind of have problems with kids in Seattle for some reason. They don't like them. Also, the Ballard Bowl (a skate bowl), we helped get that built, too. We played a benefit for that and now they want to remove it 'cause, "It's too noisy and we'd rather have the kids out screaming and doing drugs."

Todd: They're more dispersed that way.

David: Exactly. You don't see them.

Billy: "We'll build another one. We promise."

Matty: Singles Going Steady. Best record store in Seattle.

David: Almost every business space of any sort is a gallery, which is kind of cool. Lots and lots of art.

Todd: Billy, did you ask Andrea of Pretty Girls Make Graves to be the first singer for Glenn or Glenna?

Billy: Yeah.

Todd: Explain Glenn or Glenna and explain about your external ovaries and how you're worried about them.

Billy: I do this Misfits tribute every Halloween and the last two years it's been with Benny from the Hollowpoints and Justin from The Authorities, who used to be the drummer for the Stuck-Ups, and Nora, who's the keyboard player for the Stuck-Ups. It's called Glenn or Glenna because it's a gender bender thing. I'm split down the middle. I'm half Glenn Danzig and half Glenna Danzig. I fucking love the Misfits. The first time I heard them, I was probably about sixteen. "This is fucking brilliant." Some of the biggest hooks you have ever heard in your life. *Walk Among Us* is probably one of the top ten pop albums ever written, in terms of simple hooks that are really sharp and you can't get them out of your head. They're not cheap poppy. The combination of that with the horror movie imagery, I love it. But the Misfits have this really fucking nasty misogynist, weird undertone.

Todd: Wah?

Billy: It's hard to say where the line

tiny and fuckin' tough and she can sing her ass off. She's really cool. The times I've met her, she's been incredibly fuckin' nice. I emailed her and she said she was really into it, but the night we were going to do it was the night of the Murder City Devils last show. She's really good friends with those guys. Then, also, her house burned to the ground and she had to go on tour, and that's when they started to get big, so she didn't have time to do it.

Then I was like, fuck it, I can split it down the middle and make a costume like that. *Hedwig*—that's probably one of the few movies that has actually changed my life in that a lot of the things I had been dealing with for a long time before that came to the forefront. I was at a really weird, fucked-up point in my life anyway, dealing with the issues that come with masculinity and sexuality. It was sort of like therapy to do that.

Todd: So, the nurse outfit you wear is just for fun?

Billy: The nurse outfit is just for fun and because I look fuckin' hot.

David: According to you. I'm a man and I did not think you looked hot.

Billy: A few guys came up to me and said, "Bill, I just saw you from behind in that thing and I was like, "Damn!" then, "Wait a minute. That's Bill!"

Terry: Bill likes to dress like a woman. If there's an excuse...

Billy: At the drop of a hat... Here's the external ovaries thing. You want to hear it?

Todd: Sure.

Billy: Every single mammalian organism on the face of the planet starts out in the womb. They start as a female. Through the introduction of hormones, they become male, their ovaries drop, their clit gets really big, their vulva turn into their nut sack, and they don't have mammary glands that do anything. It seems so weird that people don't know that. That line between man and woman falls right away and it doesn't really mean anything anymore. It's been liberating. I guess, maybe, if somebody pressed me on it, I might consider myself queer. I've made out with boys before. I enjoy it. It's got to be the right guy under the right circumstances. I'm not into the sex so much, but if I like somebody, I'm a physi-

ers. What happened was my wife and I were going to Mexico. It was something we planned ten years ago and the band got offered a killer show with the Briefs and the New Town Animals and I couldn't be there. Immediately, they're like, "Well, then we can't do it." I said, "Fuck you guys. You've got to play." "All right. Fine. We'll play without you." Then started the inter-band argument of, "No. If we play without Dave, we play as a three piece." Then, "No, if Dave's not here, we don't have all of those little weird things he does so we need somebody else who does all of those little weird things." The little weird things won out, so I taught Scott, Matt's roommate, my parts and I just didn't want people to forget that I was in the band so I made a cheesy rock'n'roll

Megan: Wait, you were naked on the cutout?

David: No.

Terry: His wife might be sitting at home with it.

Todd: If you come back and she has paper cuts all over her, be suspicious... Since you guys seem a little older and you've experienced music for a long time, who was the person who's image deflated the most for you when you realized they weren't really a rebel, that they were just a cog in a machine?

Matty: I guess my day was the devastating day I found out that Raffi ("The Children's Troubadour") was just in it for the paycheck. [laughter] I don't know how I did that with a straight face. [to Billy] I know



cally expressive person. I like to be able to do a little kissy kissy. I don't think that should be such a big deal. It's too limiting even to say that you're bi. So, now that I'm outed... [laughter] Gimme some of the rough man skin. Rub that stubble against me. Unngh.

Todd: Damn, that's good stuff. That's hard to follow up... Who in the band has played with a cutout?

All: We all did.

Todd: Who was the cutout of?

Terry: Dave.

Todd: How does one go about getting a life-size cutout of one's self?

David: One works at a place where you have digital cameras and large format print-

cutout of myself.

Todd: Do you still have it?

David: No, the guy who booked the show took it. I could have it if I wanted to, but why would I want myself? I'm already stuck with me. I've been trying to get away my whole life... Some of the pictures of that show were a little disturbing. People seemed to like my genitals. I specifically asked that nobody touched my privates. No respect.

Terry: He came up to me and was like, "Terry, I'm trusting you. Don't let Bill fuck my cutout." I said, "I'll do what I can but I can't make any promises."

Billy: I think your cutout was getting more action than I ever was.


you were pissed when Rancid signed.

Todd: And you named *Indestructible* as album of the year for a major label for 2003. Explain that, then.

Billy: You've been looking at my clips?

Todd: It's on the internet. (Billy writes for *The Stranger*, a weekly in Seattle.)

Billy: Well, I wouldn't exactly say as an answer to the question of somebody who's a cog in the machine, necessarily. When I was a kid, I grew up in Blackfoot, Idaho. Tiny little town. Four thousand people. The first time I heard the Clash, I freaked out. Now, I wouldn't have been able to hear the Clash if they weren't on Epic because of the time-frame that they came out in.

I've always felt like I was  69

born too late because there have been very few bands that have emerged in my lifetime that I've really gotten excited about and completist about in the way of "I want to own everything this band has ever done because I fucking love it." I never got into NOFX. I never got into any of the other stuff anywhere near my teenage years, but for some reason, there was something that was so honest about Rancid. It was such a great combination of being so melodic but really rough and tied to something old, but still seeming like it was something that was for me, from my generation. The lyrics, especially when I was sixteen or seventeen, seemed so sharp and poetic. They were a really huge inspiration to me. They still fucking have that. I got that album. I thought that it was 90% brilliant.

Distribution deals are weird and tricky and sometimes a game that you have to play for people to hear your music. But it just seems so odd. Rancid already have their own houses and more money than the Pope from all of the records they've sold. The

distribution, we don't get money.

Todd: Can you think of any exceptions to that?

David: I couldn't say because I'm ignorant.

Matty: Everyone who I know or enjoy going to see is in some way tied down to some contract and have been assimilated, basically.

Todd: This is a two-part question. How does America break your heart and how does it redeem your heart?

David: "This country breaks my heart each day/ But somehow I still believe/ For all the contradictions of our past/ There's something more we could be." To quote Bill. I believe it, though. I feel that way. I don't sing on the mic on that part, but every time we get to that part of the song, I sing it as loud and honestly as I can. I tear up sometimes singing it. America can be whatever you want to see in it, 'cause you can find whatever you're looking for. If it was done right, it could be the greatest thing in the world. It's not and if you think it is, you're obviously living with your head in the sand.

song]. We have "One hand soaked in blood, while the other offers hope." Beyond the founding the country, there are four hundred years of horror and blood, massacring the shit out everybody we could get our hands on, and cutting people to ribbons. But still, so many people would like to get the fuck out of where ever they're at and come here. There's got to be something to that. I know it's got to be bigger than "the capitalist system has made this country the greatest nation on the earth. Because of the freedom of enterprise, you have the ability to own your own shop and sell dry goods." But it gets so difficult to see sometimes. Anybody who knows anything has a part of them that is the raving lunatic conspiracy theorist. You get this feeling that the vast majority of people who have ever run this country will never be touched by the horrors that the rest of us have to live with daily.

David: We're ruled by elitists.

Billy: Beyond that. Somebody like Bush—his family can sew the seeds of monsters all over the world and when those monsters

AMERICA... IF IT WAS DONE RIGHT, IT COULD BE THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD.

biggest thing for me was I didn't understand why. I was reading interviews with them like crazy around the time that album came out, just to see if there was some answer as to why they went there and there was never an answer to that.

David: Rancid was a cog from the day their first full-length came out. They've never been anything but a cog, as far as the industry's concerned. I was just old enough to know that people who do things get stuck in a position so they can do the things that they do. And they are part of something that they don't necessarily support. They don't have a choice if they want to do what they want to do. Not to say anything against the band, I like the band. I like the music. If we actually—and not that this will probably ever happen—got approached by anybody to get signed, we would immediately be a cog, even though we're trying to say we're against that kind of thing. They would go around behind us and do that because, like you said, the trickiness of distribution. They'll tell you what you want to hear and do what they do. I'm a lot older than everybody else is and I know that. I knew that even before Rancid was a band.

To continue, I realized back in the seventies that everybody I liked, musically, is just, basically, serving The Man. Not intentionally, but so they can play music. A lot of times, they even alter their music so they can play music. It's not a disparagement against anybody, but that's the way the system works. If you're in the position where you get distribution—you get money, you get used. Even in our case, where we've got

Matty: This country is just over two hundred years old. Everyone's just so coddled. Apathy. Seriously, people take so much shit for granted. They've got everything they want and they want more. In some ways, it's kind of redeeming because you do have some freedom to a certain extent.

Terry: It's the potential. You see the potential. It's so amazing. Then you see it's not fulfilled. It's so disappointing, just like anything else in life when you see an enormous amount of potential. It's within your grasp but at the same time it's so far away. Sometimes you just think that you're never gonna even get there. It's a shame and it just pisses you off, pretty much.

David: You're bringing me into the Seattle thing again. You've gotta come drive in Seattle, rush-hour traffic. It's the best thing in the world. It is so entertaining, unless you have to be somewhere. The clouds will come. It'll rain. Something will happen and it's just amazing.

Billy: I think I'm cribbing Kurt Vonnegut in *Breakfast of Champions* where he was talking about the defining aspect of America is that our greatest theoretician on liberty, Thomas Jefferson, owned human beings as slaves. It's this incredible idea poisoned right at the root. But the idea is still something to fight for, hope for, and strive for. There are so many people who are like, "We're fucked. Nothing you can do about it. Whole damn country's fucked."

David: It's what you make it. If it's fucked, you're fucked.

Billy: It's like the song says [slightly embarrassed that he's quoting his own

hatch, they don't have to worry for one second if that horror is going to touch them or their preppy-assed kids. That pisses me off, just to be able to run rampant across the world to make a few bucks for your friends. Maybe that's even scarier than the conspiracy theories. Maybe it's just a few guys with a whole lot of power and money and there is no big conspiracy.

David: You mentioned Bush. This is an individual who didn't have the appropriate grades to get into Yale, but he went to Yale. His professor said he wasn't intelligent enough to pass, yet somehow he passed. He couldn't run a business and make a profit, yet he never took a loss. He danced around insider trading.

Billy: He's still dancing around the Saudis.

Terry: There was this country. Afghanis-something.

David: Apparently, that went away. Born in privilege. Americans allow themselves to be led. They allow this elitist class, which is the political class. It doesn't matter which side you're on. They don't know what people go through to make the money for the corporations and their friends. Yet, almost everybody I know who's all pissed off about their job or taxes or the systems available to them from the government—even the way the government uses our money—don't even vote. They won't vote. They don't care to vote. There's no reason to even have the government we have anymore because we could all vote every month. Go home, on the phone, on the computer, write a letter, fill out a ballot and mail it. Vote for these things that these people

are getting paid billions and billions and billions of our dollars to fly all over the world and suck each other's penises for, if you want to get crass. And we all set it up and we keep it going and then we bitch about it. Does anybody really, actually care? I do. I get sick of going in a circle, fighting against everybody because even the people who are pissed or who have a similar mentality still want to fight me because I don't want to do what they want to do or I don't say it the way they want to say it. It's ridiculous. There's no reason that people shouldn't get paid a living wage to do any job, no matter what it is. And the fact that Bush wants to open up the borders. "We can use illegal immigrants so that we can get our yards taken care of cheaper. We can keep more of our money and can have two Hummers

we're owed. We shouldn't have to earn it." I wasn't raised that way. I don't live that way. I'm sure that my job's a lot easier than what my relatives had to do, but I have to work damn hard to make a living. It almost takes away my ability to do what I work to do. I work to play music. I work to make art. That's why I work. I go to work every day so I can go get loud and make noise and jump around like an idiot.

Billy: I worked in potato processing plants from when I was fifteen to twenty in Idaho. I was working twelve-hour night shifts from 7PM to 7AM in either ninety-five degree heat or minus ten degree cold. So every time I'm at Tower and am like, "Oh, god, my feet hurt," or "These CDs are so dirty," or, "Oh, god, why do I have to deal with irritating customers?" I'm like, wait a

ly going to win anybody over because we already know how fucked up it is, but Mr. and Mrs. Middle America, they're the ones who really need to know how fucked up this thing is." You just can't say, "Fuck you, pig." Then so many protesters went to "Us versus the pigs," instead of us versus whatever it was we were trying to fight in the first place.

David: The aftermath of the WTO is that the police and the city got way more intense. It got way more fascist. It gave them a lot more leeway to be more oppressive in things that would have not even normally been on the news. People are getting pepper sprayed and beat up by the cops.

Billy: I'm not writing a clean bill of health for the cops. I'm just saying don't give them an excuse right off the bat. Have a little bit



instead of one."

Billy: Everybody's bitching about immigration. "All of these people want to come over here and they want to take my job." You know, maybe if we did something about making sure there were decent wage standard. There's also the whole one, big union idea. Unions are just as fucked as everybody else. The ideal that if everybody's unionized, we can all say, "No, we're not going to lower our wages for you. In fact, we're all going to ask for just about the same wage and there's nowhere for you to run anymore." They can't run off to any other country. They can't run off to some other state. It's fucking impossible. But it's like nobody even cares about the ideal. The ideal's important.

David: Even now, our society is "We don't want to work now. We want to get what

minute. You were working in a fucking potato factory. You had dehydrated potatoes blown into your eyes on a nightly basis. It crusted over like this eyeliner paste shit.

It's impossible and horribly difficult to run almost anything by committee. I can't even imagine running a whole country by committee. Part of the reason I wanted to do this band in the first place was because I've been involved in activism for two and a half years at the University of Washington and dealing with activists. All of the didactic, simplistic fucking rhetorical, sloganeering, "You cannot question"-ing got to be a bit much. And I love 'em. They're trying to do something. That's better than a lot of people.

When we did the WTO protest, all of these people were like, "Fuck the WTO. Yeah!" It's like, "You know, that's not real-

of strategic sense.

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The Midnight Evils



INTERVIEW BY APHID PEEWIT

PHOTOS BY TODD TAYLOR

The Nuge, as everyone knows, has transmogrified himself into a Neanderthal radio talkshow host/glib “reality TV” personality that no one really takes seriously anymore – but if he ever had the sonic yarbles to back up his ever-flapping pie hole, he might’ve wound up sounding like Minneapolis’s Midnight Evils. Their latest record *Straight ‘Til Morning* – which was produced by the legendary Tim Kerr – is a blast of turbo-charged, no bullshit rock that would blow the balls off a charging Motor City Madman at sixty paces. It is unapologetic, punked up rawk’n’roll without the slightest trace of affectation and it breaths with the spirit of a Big Daddy Roth cartoon come to life; complete with smoking tires, flaming tailpipes and an amphibious fiend at the wheel with a demonic grin and a long warty tongue flapping in the wind. Though they boast no studded leather jackets or carefully teased mohawks, they pack a wallop that would reduce most tough-guy street punk bands to quivering piles of lutefisk. And that’s just on record. Live, even their bushy sideburns seem ready to burst into flames from a scary, primal energy. Without question, the Midnight Evils have tapped into something wild and unwieldy, a sinister something that threatens to swallow the band and the audience members whole and then crack a shit-eating grin. And that’s a beautiful thing. Let there be rawk.

Curan: Bass, Vocals
Jesse: Drums
Steve: Guitar, Vocals
Brian: Guitar, Vocals

Drunken Assistants:
Jeremy from the Fuck Yeahs
Konko from the Abusers

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Aphid: Let’s start with some ancient history. Whatever became of the mysterious member named “Joel Evil”?

Curan: What about Joel? He’s a former member. He was one of the founding members.

Jeremy: Is he like Glenn Danzig?

Jesse: Yeah, very much like Glenn Danzig. [laughter]

Curan: No, he’s the opposite of Glenn

Danzig. It’s weird cuz the whole band got started by three guys – Steve the guitar player started with two guys who aren’t in the band anymore. Joel Evil played guitar and another guy named Nate played drums. Nate and Joel lived together.

Jeremy: Were they all St. Cloud dorks?

Curan: Yep. We all lived in St. Cloud. So they started the band and other members kept joining and other guys kept leaving and

here we are, I guess.

Jesse: Joel had too good a thing going with designing pace makers.

Aphid: For real? Fuck, I'd be a little uneasy if I knew the pacemaker inside me was made by someone who calls himself "Joel Evil." [laughter]

Curan: He designed them for Medtronic.

Jesse: So he said, "Fuck it, I'll take the money over being in a band."

Aphid: Is he really evil?

Jesse: He's the nicest guy you'll ever fucking meet. Just the most Average Joe.

Curan: He's the most average guy I've ever met in my life.

Aphid: So he's more like Average Joel than Joel Evil. [laughter]

Curan: He's a great guy. But come to think of it, when

Konko: [to Jesse] Give me your best Val Venis impersonation.

Jesse: [laughing] I ain't got any Val Venis impersonation.

Konko: [doing his own drunken Val Venis impersonation] "Helloooo Ladies!" [laughter]

Curan: [to Konko] So dude, do you like Val's yourself? Is that the best burgers you've ever had?

Konko: I've never been there.

Aphid: I love Val's. But I only get to eat it maybe once a year.

Curan: Serious. The fries will chap your fucking lips. They use popcorn salt on the fucking fries. And by the time you're done, you have to put

Chapstick on your fucking lips.

Konko: Next question. Did you start this band for the love of money or chicks?

Jesse: I joined it for the music. But I started playing in bands for the chicks. And I soon figured out that that doesn't fucking work, so you just gotta do something else.

Aphid: So what steered you away from joining the Hostages and made you join the Midnight Evils?

Jesse: I just moved back to town. I wasn't even in town a week and I set up an audition with these guys and like the next week I was gonna do one with the Hostages. But the one

I STARTED PLAYING IN BANDS FOR THE CHICKS. AND I SOON FIGURED OUT THAT THAT DOESN'T FUCKING WORK, SO YOU JUST GOTTA DO SOMETHING ELSE.

he was in the band at the time, nobody really called him "Joel Evil" 'cause it never really fit.

Jesse: Joel Anderson is the most fitting name for him.

Aphid: So are you still in contact with Mr. Evil?

Curan: Yeah, he comes to our shows every once in a while.

Aphid: So then the "evils" part of your band name was some sort of tie-in to his stage name or something? Was it his band concept?

Curan: Well, no. What happened is Steve, Nate the drummer, and Joel started the band. They wanted a bass player, so they got this one guy and they had him for a while. Then one day at practice he said he wanted to turn the lights off and jam with the strobe light on. So they kicked him out immediately after that. [laughter] So I knew Nate and I never played bass in my life, never played a note and he's like "Hey man, we're jamming. You wanna play in this band?" And I'm like "I don't know. I don't play bass." So he's like, "Dude, you don't even need to know how to play the bass. All we do is get fucked up and fuckin play in this basement." So when I joined the band I didn't even own a bass. I used Joel's brother's bass and every time I'd come to practice Joel would say "You bought a bass yet?" Anyway, Jonny [ex-lead singer] joined around the same time I did. And then Nate got married and moved to Colorado. Then Lee, this friend of ours, told us about this guy Jesse who was looking for a band. He said he was thinking about joining the Hostages but maybe we could get him to come practice with us.

Jeremy: The Hostages ended up sucking, by the way.

Aphid: So most of you are from St. Cloud originally. I gotta ask. Have you ever eaten at Val's?

Konko: What the hell is Val's? A strip club?

Aphid: It's this little throw-back hamburger joint on the eastside of St. Cloud. It's like you go there and you're walking back in time, to the '50s or something. It's dirt cheap but the food's pretty good, in a shitty fast food way.

Curan: Let me just say this: I don't even live in St. Cloud anymore and I still eat a Val's once a week. I promise you.

Konko: Do you know Val Venis (an ex-professional wrestler)?

Jesse: [laughing] Yeah...

Aphid: Val Venis is a twit. He stopped being funny a long fucking time ago. Plus, I guess he's some über-Republican putz, in real life. So fuck him.





HE'S LIKE, "DUDE, YOU DON'T EVEN NEED TO KNOW HOW TO PLAY THE BASS. ALL WE DO IS GET FUCKED UP AND FUCKIN PLAY IN THIS BASEMENT."

with these guys went well enough that I just said, "Fuck the Hostages."

Curan: He said, "Fuck the Hostages." [laughter] Sorry Brad.

Jeremy: So do you guys consider yourselves a punk rock band or an AC/DC metal band?

Jesse: None of that shit. Punk is bogus.

Curan: I don't know, man. I like what I like. I like punk rock and I like rock and I like old country, for godsakes. I like old Johnny Horton and Ferron Young.

Aphid: But a lot of people who review you guys mention AC/DC – which I can definitely see as an influence. But no more than an influence. Personally, I think you sound more like one of those late '90s Scandinavian bands like the Hellacopters or something.

Brian: Definitely we all love AC/DC. It comes through, but it's not all we're about. Obviously, Jesse doesn't drum like Phil Rudd and I don't play guitar

like Angus or Malcolm.

Curan: I just think that we all like rock'n'roll, man. And that's all that we try to play, you know?

Jesse: Keep it intense.

Curan: I mean, rock'n'roll for us is back to the basics. It's Chuck Berry, it's Little Richard...

Aphid: Please don't say the Beatles.

Curan: [laughs] No. But it's all those guys.

Jesse: Keep it simple and stupid. Three chords and you're out. But sometimes we play it so fast and so hard that I can see how people would take it as Scandinavian rock, like you said. Whatever the hell it is that we're doing. Three chord blues rock.

Curan: Sped-up rock'n'roll.

Jesse: Yeah. That's real general, but yeah.

Brian: I've had people ask me, "What do you play?" and I say, "Rock'n'roll." But every band does that. But I think we play rock'n'roll as

we know it, whereas other bands that say that aren't really rock'n'roll – you know what I mean?

Aphid: What's your least favorite description of your band?

Curan: Well, I was once told that we sounded a little bit like Jethro Tull. [laughter]

Aphid: You're kidding.

Curan: That's the weirdest thing I've ever heard.

Aphid: But you guys need a flute. [laughter]

Curan: Yeah, a rock'n'roll flute. I guess we're Jethro Tull minus the rock'n'roll flute. [laughter] Yeah, you know, I don't really care what they say.

Aphid: Well, speaking of that, aside from *Razorcake*, which of the major punk zines has reviewed the *Midnight Evils*?

Curan: *Maximum Rocknroll*. *Punk Planet*, I guess, gave us a pretty good review.

Aphid: Really? That kinda surprises me. I thought they'd think you guys were too low-brow.

Curan: It surprised me too 'cause the last two reviews we got were just, well, they weren't bad reviews, but like "This band's okay, but I wouldn't buy it."

Aphid: What'd *MRR* have to say?

Curan: Basically like "they're ugly dudes who like to drink." [laughter] Yeah, we get that all the time.

Jesse: That really does a lot for your ego, man. [laughter]

Curan: Chicks just love that shit! [more laughter] You get laid so much, I can't even tell you guys!

Aphid: Did *Hitlist* ever review you?

Curan: Our first 7 inch got reviewed in *Hitlist* and they told us we needed to quit sounding like Social Distortion.

Jeremy: Shut up!

Jesse: When that shit was recorded, I was only in the band for three weeks, at that point.

Curan: So you're bailing out and saying it was the rest of our faults and not yours. [laughter]

Jesse: Totally. Personally, I hate fucking Social Distortion. But that's just me. I hate that dude's voice.

Jeremy: Okay, how many times do you guys get laid when you play a show in town here?

Jesse: Never. The ladies hate us in this fucking town.

Curan: You go to a *Midnight Evils* show, you'll notice it's one big sausage party. [laughter]

Jesse: Dude, the chicks don't dig us, man. That's a well-known fact.

Aphid: Maybe it's because you don't have a website where you can put up steamy photos of each band member. Maybe you need to get a "rock star makeover" like you see on MTV or VH1 or whatever. Have any of you considered that?

Brian: No.

Curan: Can't say that I have.

Jesse: I don't know what you're talking about.

Aphid: Good. That's the correct answer. And by the way, seriously, why the hell don't you have a website?



Brian: I'm working on it right now. Part of it is like people who have offered to do it so many times, never fucking do it. But I have the software at home and I'm doing it.

Curan: What Brian is trying to say is that everybody is to blame for it but us. [laughter]

Aphid: Who would you rather punch in the mouth – Paris Hilton or Jessica Simpson?

Jesse: I'd like to donkey punch both. [laughter]

Brian: I can't wait until your parents read that. [laughter]

Jesse: No, no. Strike that from the record. I'm gonna plead the fifth.

Aphid: So what's the official story on Jonny's departure from the band?

Curan: We recorded our last record, it was two weeks before the record came out, and we were starting to book and stuff and he just finally came to the point where he just said, "Look, I'm not gonna tour with you guys." And we said we're going, either way.

Aphid: Was it job-related or what was his problem with touring?

Curan: He just didn't like it. He didn't like going in the van, he didn't like sleeping on floors, you know, just all that stuff. I mean, I can respect that. But the new record came out and he just said he was gonna quit. So he quit two weeks before our CD release show. So we're like, "Should we break up?

Should we look for another singer? Should we – could we – even do it ourselves? Is that even a possibility?" So I think everything worked out, on his part and ours. I think he's happy doing whatever he's doing.

Aphid: Do you see him at all? Do you bump into him?

Brian: No, he doesn't really go out too much.

Curan: Me and Jesse bumped into him once since he's been outta the band and he walked right by us.

Brian: I wouldn't talk to him. I was at the Darkness show and he was there. But I don't have anything against Jon. Whatever.

Curan: I don't either, man. I think he's happy and we're a lot happier.

Brian: I think it's gonna be pretty cool to hear us all sing.

Curan: Yeah. We're excited about the new record.

Aphid: So tell us about the new record. Is it gonna be on Estrus again?

Brian: Yep.

Aphid: Full length?

Brian: Yep. We're going to record it in Austin. I think it's gonna be CD/LP this time.

Curan: I think it's probably gonna come out in springtime.

Aphid: So when do you actually do the recording?

Curan: October first through the seventh, down in Austin. I mean, we really

like the way that last record turned out. I think with or without Jon, it turned out pretty good.

Brian: I think now we know a little bit more and we'll be a little bit more relaxed. I just know we know the process of recording and with Tim Kerr – we didn't meet him at all before we went down there. I mean we emailed and spoke to him a few times, but we didn't really know what to expect. But now we have an understanding of how he works.

Curan: And he knows his shit, man.

Brian: Yeah, he actually crafted the record, how it sounds. A lot of the shit we would've never thought of ever doing.

Aphid: All right, here's a standard but important and revealing question. What's your favorite beer?

Jesse: Budweiser.

Curan: Pabst.

Jesse: Anything crappy. Light beer. Nothing darker than pee.

Curan: No light beer.

Jeremy: What's your favorite drink?

Curan: Wanderer's Punch at the Dragon. I don't recommend driving after two of them. One is drivable, two is not drivable.

Jesse: Bombay Sapphire gin and tonic. I just like liquor, man. You can't pick a favorite. It's like picking your favorite kid.

Aphid: [to Curan] So do your mutton chops get a lot of attention?

Curan: I guess so. The ladies like to tug on 'em... the out of town ladies. None of the Minneapolis ladies. But every time we play a show out of town, someone will be like, "Can I touch your sideburns?"

Jeremy: But you don't even have sideburns anymore. You've got a big ol' beard.

Curan: Yeah. They grew in. I'll have sideburns again though.

Jeremy: Do you ever get compared to Grizzly Adams?

Curan: [laughs] Yes, all the fucking time.

Aphid: Okay, now you guys have obviously played around the Twin Cities an awful lot and have done shows with a lot of local bands. Who's dink have you seen more of, Rob's from Vaseline Alley or Paddy's from Dillinger Four?

Curan/Jesse: [in unison] Rob's from Vaseline Alley.

Aphid: Is it because there's more of it to see? [laughter]

Jesse: No, it's because I've only seen Dillinger Four once back in like 1994 and I've seen Vaseline Alley on a number occasions.

Curan: I've seen Dillinger Four, but I think all the shows I go to, for some reason, Paddy doesn't get naked. And every Vaseline Alley show I go to, Rob gets naked.

Aphid: Maybe Paddy's shy around you. It might have something to do with the giant sideburns.

Curan: [laughing] Yeah, maybe.

Aphid: All right, here's a question I asked the Fuck Yeahs when I interviewed them a few months ago, but I'm gonna ask you guys, too. How did the Midnight Evils wind up not being on the Twin Cities punk comp, *No Hold Back... All Attack*?

Curan: No one asked us.

Aphid: Why the hell not?

Jesse: We're not punk enough. [laughter] Maybe they think we're still from St. Cloud.

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RAZORCAKE 77

THE BAD VIBES

Interview by Jeff Clayton
Pictures by Larry Kay



Even though I've known Geoff Gavin for a few years now, I had no idea what to expect when I listened to the demo version of The Bad Vibes' debut album for the first time back in 2001. The only things I'd ever heard from Philly, other than Todd Rundgren and Hall & Oates, were Limecell and Rancid Vat, and those groups are so different and diverse I was about ready for anything. I was glad to hear the band didn't jump on any current trends—for example, being from Philly, they weren't playing Southern punk. I knew if their stage presence matched what I was hearing, they'd be a band to reckon with live. I was very surprised the first time I saw them because they did more than match that intensity. I'd never seen a band that was so oblivious to the fact that there was an audience watching them. It was like they didn't care, like they were playing for themselves, to themselves. Not in a snobbish way; like musical group therapy instead of entertainment. When they ended their set by destroying all of the equipment they owned, it kinda capped the whole thing off. Their sound draws heavily from early '80s hardcore—leaning more toward Negative Approach, but not in a retro way, just influenced by it; it still sounds very modern. If you're aware that Philly has earned itself the nickname "Hostile City," it should be no surprise that's where these guys are from.

Jeff: Why don't you give us a brief band history, for those who don't know.

Geoff: We started in January of 2000. We played our first show in March of that year and we've been playing ever since.

Jeff: You've got two things out, right? A track on one of the *Carbon 14* compilation 45s and your full length—if you wanna call it that—CD, *Hate Your Everything*.

Geoff: [laughs] Yeah.

Jeff: How had the disc been received?

Geoff: I've heard pretty positive things about it; a couple negatives here and there, but for the most part positive. *Punk Planet* gave us a bad review but that was really the only negative one we got.

Jeff: What did they say?

Geoff: Something like, "Thug, tough-guy hardcore that you could hear in any bar in any city in the country."

Jeff: I guess that's because you weren't down on your knees crying.

[laughter]

Geoff: I actually liked the "thug, tough-guy" part, I thought that was pretty cool.

Jeff: Well, any kind of negative feedback you get from *Punk Planet* can always be considered a positive in some other circles. Tell me who all is in the band other than yourself.

Geoff: Jesse Cole plays guitar, Mark Doyle plays bass and Pat Durkin plays drums.

Jeff: Pat also was, and is, the drummer for Limecell.

Geoff: Yeah, he's been in Limecell forever.

Jeff: The one man drum show.

Geoff: Absolutely. No doubt.

Jeff: I'll say something about the Bad **RAZORCAKE** 78 Vibes' bass player, for those

of you reading this, he is one strange specimen.

Geoff: [laughs] Me and Jesse and Mark have known each other for years, since we were about sixteen or seventeen. Mark is... he's a personality, definitely.

Jeff: Now, I don't mean that in a bad way. I want people reading this to understand what I mean. You're talking about a guy who can come onstage looking like one of The Knack or Elvis Costello or something, and it's not a pose, man. You can tell people who are posing, and this dude ain't; he's just doing his thing. Then, at the end of the set—I don't know who does it, you or him—someone flips a switch and this motherfucker goes off. Imagine this guy taking the one and only bass he owns and throwing it through the front window of the club! You guys have that self-destruct thing going on at the end of some of your sets.

Geoff: Yeah. We definitely did that, especially in the very beginning. We started playing out a month or two into being a band so we didn't have a lot of... the first show we played, I think we played four songs. So for the first year, I'd say, we would get through maybe four or five songs and then just break shit; that was pretty much what we did. We didn't start getting more serious about the music until we had our second drummer, then we started to concentrate more on the songs. Before we were just looking to cause a little bit of a ruckus.

Jeff: I've been listening to music for many, many, many years and your lyrics are among the most negative I've ever heard.

Geoff: That's probably the coolest thing

anybody's said to me about the band so far.

Jeff: I mean, I thought I had it bad. And I do.

[laughter]

Geoff: People who can relate, get it. Other people don't seem to understand.

Jeff: I don't know, I think it's hard for some people—especially these pseudo-journalists, and especially in the cyberworld—to understand how frustrating normal life is when you're on your own. Especially when you're raising a family.

Geoff: Yeah. It's all about working, paying fuckin' bills. Everyday shit like going and waiting in line at a fuckin' store—that's my slant on all that; just everyday frustrations and annoyances.

Jeff: I've known you for quite a while and we've had a lot of late night conversations over the telephone about these normal everyday occurrences that make you want to pull out an automatic weapon and waste every fucking living thing within twenty miles.

Geoff: Yeah. The older I get, fewer people understand that. When you do find a couple people who get it, it does kinda make you feel better about being crazy or whatever. [laughs] When you can talk to somebody who'll chuckle with you and not think you're nuts for saying the shit you say.

Jeff: For years people would argue to the death that rock'n'roll is a young man's game but I don't buy that anymore. It seems to me all the real anger and the angst is coming from the older bands. The people who have actually lived life, not the people who get mad because the big three-hole white belt got sold out at the thrift store

before they got to it or something.

Geoff: I just think there's a definite difference between teen angst and adult, real life anger. I guess everybody goes through phases when they're a teenager, and it's sort of a phase that I never got out of. It's something I've accepted at this point; it's the way I am and it's the way I see things. I can't paint a rosy picture of something that's not worth painting in the first place—for the most part anyway.

Jeff: So the album had been out for over a year now, what's in the works for some new shit?

Geoff: We're planning now to go in and record a whole new CD in August.

Jeff: And how long will this one be?

Geoff: Maybe three or four minutes longer than the first one, I don't know. We've matured to the level where we have extended jams now, so it'll probably be up to about twenty minutes.

Jeff: Some people might complain about the first album—which, by the way, is fifteen minutes long—being so short, but to me it's like seeing the band live. You don't want to see you guys play for an hour and a half. You're not that kind of band.

Geoff: True.

Jeff: Seeing you guys play is like waiting for this big time bomb to go off. I'm always standing around making sure no shit's gonna be flying and clock me in the head.

Geoff: I don't have much of a desire to play longer. I think the longest set we've ever played was twenty-five minutes or a half-hour, and that's factoring in equipment problems. I can't keep that pace up for a long amount of time and I don't think anybody else can either.

Jeff: You mean equipment problems other than having them pushed out into the street?

Geoff: [laughing] With us, who knows. To me, playing the kind of stuff we do, if it goes over a half-hour max it's pushing it. Because if your energy level is up that high, you should burn out quick.

Jeff: All I know is, when I see you guys it brings me back to the days when I first started going to clubs and seeing Black Flag, Crucial Truth, bands like that. I guess the first big go-round of hardcore—American hardcore that is.

Geoff: That's definitely where we're drawing from. I was a little bit too young to catch the first wave of it, but that was always the stuff I was into. When we were going to shows—me and Jesse and Jesse's brother, Nate—it was more '86, around that era. We were seeing a lot of New York hardcore bands, the second wave of stuff. We kinda missed the boat on bands like Black Flag, Fear, the Circle Jerks and all that stuff just being the age we were. But when I started this band, I specifically wanted to do this kind of band. I don't want to progress into anything. I don't want to outgrow punk rock. I'm thirty-two, I never outgrew it; I love it as much now as I did then. I guess it's a phase for a lot of people but it just wasn't for me. Trying to go to shows

now, there's only a handful of bands I'd even leave the house to go see at this point, y'know? I always wanted to be in a band that I would liked to have seen. And there's so little of that going on now.

Jeff: For me it did become a phase. Because I got into it (hardcore) when it was happening. I couldn't stand too much of the DC stuff or the Boston stuff and, after a while, the whole straightedge thing just took over. I was done with it by the time it evolved into what became New York hardcore. But later on, when that stuff wasn't around anymore, I started to miss it. Seeing groups like you guys made me realize how much I really did like Black Flag and Fear. That's really good stuff. What you're doing I think fits right in there I think; Negative Approach, stuff like that.

Geoff: I still listen to that stuff. Not as much, but I still put it on and appreciate it as much as when I first heard it. Especially with the amount of shit bands that are coming out now. Where else do you look? If you wanna listen to something that's punk rock you've gotta go back because there's certainly not a whole lot coming out now.

Jeff: Do you have a title for the new album?

Geoff: Yeah, it's gonna be called *All the Right Ways to Do You Wrong*.

Jeff: And what label's gonna have the pleasure of putting this out?

Geoff: Steel Cage. They've done right by us; I have no complaints about what they did the first time and I definitely want to work with them again. Larry and Leslie are great people and we're definitely loyal to the people who are loyal to us. That's another thing that I think has kind of gotten lost somewhere, other bands you can depend on and people doing shit for each other just doesn't happen as much.

Jeff: Staying with Steel Cage doesn't have anything to do with the fact that Larry Kay looks like Frank Zappa?

Geoff: Maybe a little.

Jeff: Any time frame for this? You said you're gonna go in the studio in the next few months.

Geoff: Yeah, August. I was talking to Larry and Leslie about it the other day. They said that as soon as we were done recording it they'd start working on getting it out, so I imagine it'll be out before the end of the year.

Jeff: You know the next thing you need to work on, don't you?

Geoff: What's that?

Jeff: A website.

Geoff: [laughing] Yeah, that's something we've been talking about for four years and haven't done. This is a band of slackers; me and Pat are married and both have kids—Pat's got three and I have two. Just getting everybody together is such a pain in the ass sometimes. We took a little time off and now we're getting back to the swing of it.

Jeff: You guys have played quite a bit in Philly, and down in Charlotte with us (ANTI SEEN) once. Where else have you played? New Jersey?

Geoff: No. So far, we've really only played Philly and Charlotte.

Jeff: What a jump. Well, for people reading this, if you're a club owner or a band that wants to have a group that'll light a fire under your ass to open for you, you need to get in touch with these guys.

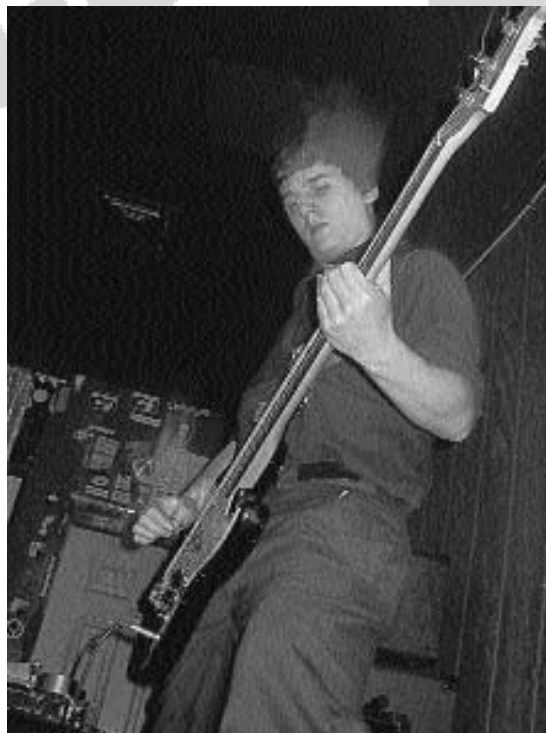
Geoff: That's another thing we're talking about, playing more shows; maybe finding another band that wants to go out on the road with us for a little bit.

Jeff: Any final words?

Geoff: No.



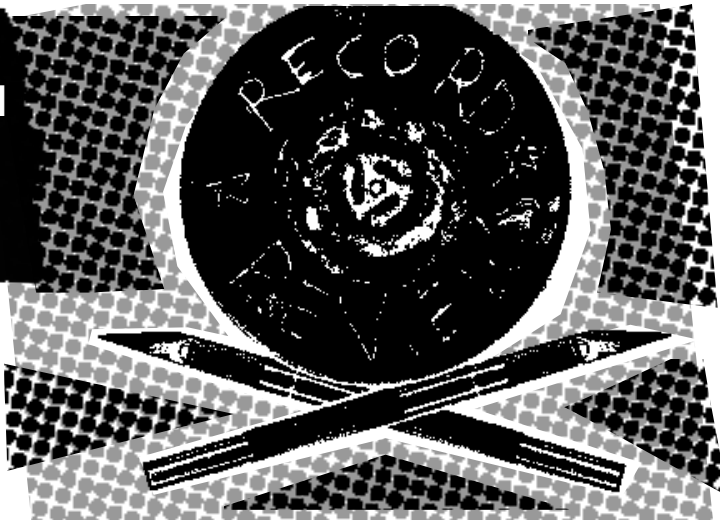
I don't want to progress into anything. I don't want to outgrow punk rock. I'm thirty-two, I never outgrew it; I love it as much now as I did then. I guess it's a phase for a lot of people but it just wasn't for me.



Dan Monick's Photo Page



Please note: Full album art is required for review. Pre releases go into the trash.



12 SUMMERS OLD: *When the Romance Ends*: CD

12 Summers Old? What the crap does that mean? Is that your target audience age? I'm sure they hired some pro-market asshole to come up with this brilliant idea. It's a good thing they listed their legal council in their liner notes (email and all). I'm thinking of suing them for their attack on my sensibilities and good taste. —Megan (Anomer)

800 OCTANE: *Rise Again*: CD

Is "Never Sleep Again" seriously about *Freddy Vs. Jason*? I mean, I like horror as much as the next guy. Okay, I probably like it a bit more than the next guy. But a song about that movie? It became a pivotal point of the album. Up until that point I thought it was pretty uninspired rock blah. Then I thought the song was about Jason, and was intrigued. Then I figured out the truth, that it was a *Freddy Vs. Jason* tribute song. So, then I decided that they had to be a joke band, since no one would seriously write a *Freddy Vs. Jason* song, and the next two songs were much more enjoyable. Then they surpass themselves and go to unbearably played-out phrases, chords, and lyrical patterns on the last song. —Megan (New School)

ACTION TOOLBELT: Self-titled: CD

College-radio friendly pop from the Gin Blossoms/Wallflowers school, without the overly slick production. Singer/songwriter Owen Briggs is a bit too sincere, and the songs are fairly typical English major stuff. Still, not bad if you're a fan of this sort of thing. —Brian Mosher (Fastmusic)

ADICTS, THE: *Rollercoaster*: CD

The Adicts are the longest running punk band with the original lineup in the world. First starting out as Afterbirth and the Pinz in 1975, then changing their names to the Adicts in '76, they seemed intent on zagging when the rest of the English punk hordes zigged. Opting for fun, humorous, and ironic songs (a la the Toy Dolls) instead of politics and class war, they were able to carve out a unique smiley face on punk's back. Their history could easily be a *Spinal Tap* of punk rock. Early success. They got signed by a major. Got sucked dry. Released a new wave record. Got back on their own two feet, and keep plugging away. Almost thirty years down the road, they release an album of entirely new material. How is it? Okay. Instead of the fire in the belly of their first record, *Songs of Praise*, it seems that they're more opting for a living room full of votive candles. The setting's mostly subdued; the tempos are relaxed. There are even hints of ELO ("Men in Black") and Lou Reed ("Cheese Tomato Man"). My favorite songs are very close to what the modern day Skulls are hammering out. Sure, the songs are still strange

An unnamed source has just wagered you five dollars American that you will be quite unable to procure a gayer band photo this year than that which is depicted on this disc's booklet's interior. —Rev. Nørb

and wacky, but with a little tweak here and there, most of them could be used for Saturday morning cartoons. It isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it's not exactly tweaking my nipples and making me want to smash parking meters, either. —Todd (SOS)

ADULT/ THE DIRTBOMBS: *Split/Split/Split 7"*: 7"

Ah, the cover split 7". Two bands joining forces to take on one song from each other's catalogues. This is the sort of release that record junkies dream about while digging through dusty crates, knowing full well that the first time the gem is spotted might be the last. Limited to 3000 copies, *Split/Split/Split 7"* brings together Detroit-based groups Adult. and The Dirtbombs to carry on in this punk tradition. Not merely a split between the two bands, this record also serves as a split between Adult.'s Ersatz Audio and The Dirtbombs Cass Records, as well as a split between two photographers. (Nicola Kuperus of Adult. snapped The Dirtbombs while Dirtbomb Patrick Pantano photographed Adult.) For this release, The Dirtbombs chose to cover "Lost Love," which Adult. released back in 1999. With two drummers and two bassists, The Dirtbombs turn this into rhythmic flurry so raw that it sounds as if it were recorded live in concert. If this is a good indication of The Dirtbomb's live set, then the band's next tour is not to be missed. Meanwhile, Adult. takes on The Dirtbombs "Pray for Pills." As with the last full length, *Anxiety Always*, Adult. seems to have pushed the rock element in front of the band's dance element. In this instance, the result is a short, heavy track filled with anguished screams and panicked electronics guaranteed to instill only the best kind of madness in the listener. —Liz Ohanesian (Ersatz/ Cass)

AMPS II ELEVEN: Self-titled: CD

Ornery, ass-kicking, snoose-spitting rock that falls somewhere between early Hookers and the Midnight Evils. This is

scruffy facial-haired, beer bellied, slam-a-shot-of-Jack, pit-stained wifebeater rock that has a certain beehive-in-the-outhouse charm that I tend to cotton to. I like. Now just come up with a less lame band name and we can begin start discussing what sort of membership gifts I'll receive for joining the band-formally-known-as Amps II Eleven's official Fan Club. —Aphid Peewit (Smog Veil)

ANTS, THE: *Victory Side*: CD

Very mellow, sort of Pavement-meets-Daniel-Johnston-at-naptime quietness with pretty interesting lyrics. Hard to believe it took seven people to make it, though. —Cuss Baxter (Sickroom)

ARMY OF FRESHMAN: *Beg, Borrow, Steal*: CD

Keyboard-heavy pop punk that sounds like Reggie & the Full Effect on a really bad day. Honestly, this isn't my cup of tea. They seem to have their songwriting down pat; I just can't seem to get past those keyboards and singer. —Jason K (33rd Street)

ARMY OF FRESHMEN: *Beg, Borrow, Steal*: CD

Watch your steps, kiddos. Dance Dance Revolution looks like it's got a new soundtrack band. —Megan (33rd Street)

ARSONS, THE: *Bridges Down*: CD

Boy howdy, do I like the Arson's first record, *Full Life Crisis*. Anthemic, melodic, and almost flawless in a *Strong Reaction* Pegboy sort of way. With *Bridges Down*, there are flashes of their early work, but two elements have put flies in the taffy. 1.) Guitar solos all over the fucking place. Ungh. Go Yngwie Malmsteen on your own time. 2.) The desire to mix hardcore tempos into Jawbox-like breakdowns and prettiness. Both of these elements drag the songs out, dilute the initial impact, and ultimately give off the impression of a band not quite sure what they want to do as a cohesive unit. Unfortunately, my lasting

impression of *Bridges Down*—which I listened to fifteen times over two months to see if it'd grow on me—was this: it's just boring. I wanted to like this. —Todd (Mad at the World)

ASHTRAY: Self-titled: 7" EP

Crude, effective, and funny DIY punk rock that has a spirit akin to Blatz. You know, beer-along punk with songs about the problems of drinking Tussin, the virtues of 40oz salvation, and of being a meatatarian. The dual male/ female vocals work well. The lady's screechy, like Kirsten of Naked Aggression, but endearing. The recording's a little off. It sounds like someone's learning Pro Tools. There's a weird echo during some of the guitar parts. With simple stick figure punk rock, where the instruments are the sonic equivalent to crayons, bands have done much worse. —Todd (Ashtray)

ATOMIC 7: *...en Hillbilly Caliente*: CD

Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet will forever have a special place in my heart as the band that, along with a few other musical luminaries like Rod Torfelson's Armada and Mississippi Gary, provided the musical accompaniment for my all-time favorite television show, *The Kids in the Hall*. Former Shadowy Man Brian Connelly resurfaces here with more instrumental twang and hilarious song titles ("Various Rats Get Whacked," "Funeral Hotpants"). It's well-crafted, entertaining, and pleasant, but I seldom look for pleasantness in music. It's a personal thing, I know, but I'm looking for that visceral charge of mistreated instruments and flailing limbs. I can't even say that it's good rainy day music because it never rains out here. Sorry. —Josh (Mint)

ATTACK FORMATION, THE: *Let the Notes Drip from Our Lips to Yours*: CD

I don't know what the hell's going on here. I mean, the music's pretty reasonable, with elements of screamo dynamics, sonic youthful discord, contemplative self-absorption and found-sound manipulation, but the packaging is mind-gouging. First, there's a silver ziploc bag, then in addition to the standard jewel case, there's a sticker and a newsprint poster where Ben Snakepit presents portraits of 135 people. The booklet and tray card of the CD are just covered in writing but most of it doesn't say much (well, to me, anyway). I think I found a list of people in the band, but I only think that because there's one I recognize (Tim Kerr). Can't even find an address (though perhaps Tim Kerr = Austin?), and I'm speculating on the name of the label. Brain-conking weirdness that sometimes seems a little forced. —Cuss Baxter (Die Die Diamond)

AUDIO INFIDELS: *Rock, Paper, Scissors*: CDEP

I guess that's what it is; appears to be a pre-release sampler with six songs. Rather, "songs." Mostly songs, with an amount of non-metal heaviness, and another amount of experimentation. I suppose that makes it prog rock. The real problem, however, is that the final track (which runs to about twenty percent of the disc's total time, mind you) sounds like a computer-generated simulation of someone walking around the house throwing everything on the floor. And the thing is, I can get a Wanda-generated, non-simulated ACTUAL PERSON walking around the house throwing everything on the floor, and all I have to do is drink two bottles of

Thunderbird, or crap on the sofa again. —Cuss Baxter (www.audio-infidels.com)

BABY STRANGE: Put Out: CD Largely fuckin' irrelevant. **BEST SONG:** I'll take any of the tracks where they sound like the Figgs trying to sound like '80s Stones over any of the tracks that sound like Richard Marx in criminal possession of a Mooney Suzuki album, thanks. **WORST SONG TITLE:** "Suicide Girl" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** An unnamed source has just wagered you five dollars American that you will be quite unable to procure a gayer band photo this year than that which is depicted on this disc's booklet's interior. —Rev. Nørb (Primary Voltage)

BATHTUB SHITTER: Fertilizer: 7"

Bathtub Shitter shits high-intensity grind (though their leaden Sore Throat cover on the *Murderous Grind Attack* comp is the only song on that record that I consistently skip), and here's some of said shit from 1999, both studio and live: seven pieces of not-letting-up that does not let down. And lyrics, thank god: "The fly is to be crazy for the smell of my excrement/The insect is to roll it/I may be sort of a creator," then some stuff that makes even less sense, and then, "In short, they may call you 'BROWN FINGER'/Be fine." Long live non-sequitur scat metal! —Cuss Baxter (First Blood Family)

BLACK DICE: Miles of Smiles CDEP / Creature Comforts CD / Wolf Eyes Split: CD

Black Dice is an unusual entity—it doesn't make music so much as shapes noise, as it guides seemingly random sounds into something resembling order and structure. It has more in common with avant-garde composers like Philip Glass and Steve Reich than it does with indie or punk, although most of the people who listen to Black Dice likely wouldn't bother with listening to the band's predecessors. These songs bubble, pulse, throb and sometime squawk with noise; usually they sound like modulated whale songs with arpeggiated guitar notes played in reverse. You get the idea. It's noisy shit that isn't always easy to listen to. The *Miles of Smiles* EP is almost thirty minutes long and consists of two songs. The *Creature Comforts* full-length is less soothing than *Beaches and Canyons*, but still utterly fascinating. The *Wolf Eyes* split (honestly, with the lack of liner notes, it's tough to tell who does what or is involved with it) is more of the same, with more thrashing noise in the vein of Black Dice's earlier work, as well as audio terrorists like John Zorn. —Puckett (DFA; <dfaweb@dfarecords.com>/Fusetron)

BLACK FURIES: Self-titled: CD

I instantly liked this CD, from the stuttering drum intro and insistent one-note piano of the opening track, "Offer Resistance," right through 'til the closing "Handout," with its almost Social Distortion-worthy blues melody. Thirteen songs in just over thirty minutes of hard rockin' punk fun that'll leave you begging for more. There was something familiar about the sound of this record which I couldn't quite place at first, until I turned it off and found myself singing Deep Purple's "Woman from Tokyo." Not that the Black Furies sound like Deep Purple—there are no twenty-minute guitar solos, for instance—but there is something similar in the way they reinterpret three-chord rock'n'roll for the 21st century. The singer delivers with plenty of

testosterone-powered passion, without trying to sound like he's been gargling with gravel. He actually sings. What a concept. The guitar playing is both slithering and powerful, and works with the pounding rhythm of the drums to force you to get up out of your seat and start shaking. Highly recommended. —Brian Mosher (Take Root)

BLACK MARKET FETUS/ DISCIDER: Split CD

Black Market Fetus: Politically oriented grind here. Found it difficult not to laugh out loud after reading the line, "Resources are running out/the sky is turning grey/so use something twice before throwing it away." Just doesn't seem to fit in the context of a band with a drawing of a rotting corpse accompanying their half of the lyric sheet. Discider: Hardcore punk with apocalyptic lyrics and cookie monster vocals. —Jimmy Alvarado (First Blood Family)

BOMBHELLS, THE: Self-titled: CD

Oh my god, so punk rock that one wears his belt—get this—sideways! I know, unbelievable. Then I put this on and they sing about doing dirty things with sluts. And fights in bathrooms. Of course, one wears stripes too. I read a review that said that this is a must-have if you live in Silverlake (the over-priced, hipster-haven of LA). I can't agree more. —Megan (Bombshells)

BONECRUSHER: Tomorrow Is Too Late: CD

I never thought I'd put the word "subtlety" and Bonecrusher in the same sentence. For a blue collar, simple and heavy-as-concrete band that bases its reputation on hard work for little pay and gigs for beer, it's the little things that make this CD stand head and shoulders above the street punk and oi throngs. Usually, this type of music doesn't age gracefully (see current day Cock Sparrer). To avoid being a parody of their former selves, they've mixed things up ever so slightly. There are some songs about loneliness and despair on this record. This works well for them. Bonecrusher's still got the blunt force power of a band like the Anti-Heroes, the prison-strong muscling of the debut *Discontent's Who Killed Vinyl? 7"*, and they could probably take any other band down in a no-holds-barred belt fight. That's been established, but it's the guitar work and drumming on *Tomorrow Is Too Late* that's keeping me reaching back to this CD. I can't help but snap my fingers along to the songs. For some reason, this record's much better than their last effort, *The Good Life*, and on par with their best work, circa *Working for a Living*. Happily surprised. —Todd (Knock Out)

BONELESS CHILDREN FOUNDATION, THE: Self-titled: CD

Quirky college alt-rock. Club owners might find it a very useful tool when they want to clear the club out after a show. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.bonelesschildren.com)

BRIEFS, THE: Sex Objects: CD

One of the hundreds of cool things about the Briefs is that even through they have a sound that's unmistakably their own, their songs don't sound the same. Maybe it's because there's no true frontman, and Lance, Daniel, Steve E and Chris all share in the fun. Although *Hit After Hit* is still the album I foist on Briefs virgins, this release is a damn sight better than the last

RAZZORCAKE

It's, like, art, dude.

THESE ARE THE TOP 7's SINCE THE LAST MAG.



Underground Medicine Mailorder, Connecticut

1. Real Losers, *Don't Leave Me Now* (Bancroft)
2. Tokyo Electron, *Make Me Bleed* (Solid Sex Lovie Dolls)
3. Intelligence, *Test* (SS)
4. Okmoniks, *Compact 33* (In-Fi)
5. Dirty Fingers, *RocknRoll Ain't Easy* (Riff Raff)
6. Savage Lucy, *Dead Boys Stay Dead* (Squirrel)
7. Lili Z., *Leatherlution* (SS)
8. New Town Animals, *Cori Street* (Longshot)
9. 10-4 Back Door, *I Fucked a Prostitute* (Solid Sex Lovie Doll)
10. Limes, *Goddamn You Honey* (Solid Sex Lovie Dolls)

Know Crap Mailorder, Oregon

1. No Hope for the Kids, *Das Reich* (Backwards Masking)
2. Lili Z., *Leatherlution* (SS)
3. Horrorcomic, *I Don't Mind* (Lightning)
4. Intelligence, *Test* (SS)
5. Carpettes, *No Chance* (Last Year's Youth)
6. Kill-A-Watts, *New Things* (Goodbye Boozy)
7. X, *Delta 88* (Dangerhouse)
8. Vee Dee, *Blood Zombie* (Goodbye Boozy)
9. Point Line Plane, *Shhhh Boom* (SS)
10. Sons of Cyrus, *Tired of This Time* (Fandango)

Disgruntled Mailorder, California

1. Briefs/Shocks, split (Dirty Faces)
2. Leeches, *Integration* (Kapow)
3. Vom, *Live at Surf City* (Kryptonite)
4. Feelers, *Fuhrer's New Miniskirt* (Death by Noise)
5. Lost Sounds, 3x7" box set (Rockin Bones)
6. Taxi, *Who's to Blame* (Deadbeat)
7. Starvations, *One Way to Remind* (GSL)
8. Diffs, self-titled (Headline)
9. BellRays, *Warhead* (Bronx Cheer)
10. Die Hunns/Radio 1 split (Disaster)

one. Fans will recognize songs from their live set and seven inches. What I love best about this band is they write and record music as if it was 1978 and they need a song that will knock the Undertones off the top of the charts. Mission accomplished. —Jim Ruland (BYO)

**BROKEN BONES:
No-One Survives: 7"**

On these three songs, "Dead Inside," "No One Survives," and "Systematic Abuse," Broken Bones deliver serious hardcore with screaming guitars and screamed vocals. No melody to speak of, and if it weren't for the fact that I had to flip the disc over, I probably wouldn't have noticed the change from one song to the next. Still, very powerful. Also, if you're interested in packaging, this one is very nice. A fold out sleeve with lyrics and band photos, and the disc itself is white vinyl. —Brian Mosher (Dr. Strange)

**BURNING IMAGE:
1983-87: CD**

I kept looking at this and wondering why I knew the band name, and when I pressed play they sounded so goddamned familiar, but I just couldn't place 'em. And then "Hives" came on and the memories came flooding in. The aforementioned "Hives" was one of the better tracks on Mystic Record's would-be death rock comp, *Let's Die*. Lots of gloominess and weird time changes, with enough punk pumped into the sound to keep things edgy. That also pretty much sums up the sound here as well. There's a lot of diversity in the music, but they managed to keep everything pretty well amped up to prevent it all from dissolving into one big arty mess of pretentious sludge. Nice to finally hear more from these guys than their single and that lone comp track, and word is they're out playing again, which hopefully means they'll be back in the studio soon. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

C.AARME: Self-titled: CD

I wish I knew the names of more bands that are doing this sound right now, because I know there are a lot, but the only one I can think of is the Mean Reds. Punk that's loud without being harsh. Swedish without being thrash. Fun without being stupid. Makes you want to dance without punching. Loaded with energy that you can tell comes from exuberance rather than a can. Real great stuff. —Cuss Baxter (Burning Heart)

**CALIFORNIA REDEMPTION:
This Time It's
for the Money: CD**

I hear the potential for a good band buried in there somewhere, but the mix kinda zaps what power they're able to muster right out of some songs that are pretty overwrought and underwhelming to begin with. My suggestion is to sack anyone in the band who is able to play their instrument with any proficiency, get real pissed off at the world, and then unleash that rage on the world via your punk band. Need some inspiration? Listen to Ill Repute's *Oxnard, Land of No Toilets* EP, paying special attention to "Fuck with My Head." That should set you in the right direction. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.careemption.com)

**CAREER SUICIDE/
JED WHITEY: Split LP**

Career Suicide have a savant-like intuition around classic hardcore. They know which buttons to push to keep it flying and running smoothly without resorting

to auto pilot and solely flying over well-covered ground. It's manic, gnashing, vital, exciting stuff that I can say, without reservation, stands shoulder to shoulder with not only DS-13 and Fucked Up, but Minor Threat and Negative Approach. If you like your hardcore with teeth and smarts, look no further. Jackhammers of songs. Jed Whitey, an Australian band who have a ton in common with the Supersuckers' most straight forward, driving songs, crunch out six songs of non-suck punk rock'n'roll on par with "Born with a Tail." Toss in some Lazy Cowgirls for good measure. On the cover, if you just see the two names, it's kind of an enigma. "How does this work?" In the end, it just shows that punk's a much bigger tribe than many of the uptight scene police would like to admit. Bitchin' split. —Todd (Deranged)

**CARI CLARA: Miniature
American Model Society: CD**

Odd, shambling, quirky indie rock which veers from flanged distortion to gentle melodies. To get an idea of the kind of broad, sweeping musical spectrum this record covers, it incorporates elements of psychedelia, power pop, rock, electronica—and that's literally the tip of this iceberg. I can hear Big Star, Primal Scream, the Butthole Surfers, Pavement... this list could go on, but what it boils down to is that there are only a handful of contemporary artists that are this ambitious and diverse (two that spring to mind are The Beta Band and Simian). When most songs start, I haven't the slightest clue where they're going because, as Cari Clara proves in "We're the Pollution," they can transform a song that wouldn't have sounded out of place on a lo-fi Guided By Voices record to a soothing, droning, indie rock gem which reminds me of Radiohead in one beat. I won't even bother with classifications (except to tell you that this isn't even close to punk or emo or anything like them), because the only way I can really explain this is noting that it's perfect for a long summer drive through the desert with the top down and the radio up when no other cars are around. It's expansive enough to fill that space. Chalk this disc up as a hugely unexpected surprise, which is surprisingly good. —Puckett (Tiberius)

**CHASMA: Kathe for a Pou
Allos Ginome: CDEP**

When I think of world music that isn't merely a soundtrack for yuppies to feng shui their apartments to, a band like Chasma is what comes to mind. They're Russian. Although their musical approach from song to song takes a little bit of getting used to, they explore ska, metal, rock, art, and roadhouse blues, all under the loose, huge umbrella of punk. The good news is that they somehow fearlessly pull it all together. It's interesting, listenable, and not easily scrunched into a tiny pigeonhole. Other bands which come to mind that are similarly unclassifiable would be Scotland's Oi Polloi, Italy's I Refuse It!, or America's Tchkgung! All collective amalgamations that come across as pan-world and otherworldly. Chasma's lyrics are in Cyrillic, so I have no idea what they're singing about. The paintings in the album artwork are dark, broad-stroked, and filled with barbed wire, which fits the music very well. Obscure yet very satisfying. —Todd (xasma@punk.gr)

CHERRY LANE: 30: CDEP
Reviewing this record is little more than influence train-spotting—Hot Water Music. Small Brown Bike. You get the idea. —Puckett (Thinker Thought)

**CHEVAL DE FRISE:
Self-titled: CD**

Some musical rapsallions impress us with their musical prowess by raising a big, arty, instrumental cacophony with drums, bass and ACOUSTIC GUITARS. Boy, oh boy, I for one am impressed, you hallelujas you. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sickroom)

**CINCH, THE:
Shake If You Got It: CD**

I liked the EP fine, but the formerly impending full-length is so meandering and ethereal that I'm pretty sure you could conjure up a more Gripping Rock Experience by listening thru the walls to the chick who lives in the apartment above you singing along to her Dream Syndicate album. Only thing shaking here is my head, and that's due to the veritable Parkinson's Disease of disdain I have just now been stricken with. BEST SONG: "Forwards & Backwards" BEST SONG TITLE: "I Feel Strange" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Mystery Train" is not the Sun-era Elvis number of identical nomenclature. Also, the "A" in "FAde Out" is capitalized. —Rev. Nørð (Dirtnap/Stutter)

**COMPLETE CONTROL:
Reaction: CD/ LP**

I'm always a little suspicious of bands named after classic punk songs ("Complete Control" was the Clash's fourth single), but hot damn, these guys unabashedly rip. They have less in common with '77 punk and more of a mix between the ball-bearing tight musicianship of Funeral Oration mixed in with the force and the no-nonsense charge of The Effigies, and the undeniable energy of the Bodies. It's almost as if the pop punk flag has been expertly folded into what would be usually considered a street punk box and then the whole deal is burned. New, dangerous flames jumping from old ideas. The lead singer's voice makes it easy for the speed to digest when he sings about rotting flesh and America's foreign policy woes. He doesn't seem in a hurry, can carry a note, and there are guitar melodies dancing and weaving all over the place. For a debut LP, this is absolutely incredible. This sounds like a band that's been playing for over five years. I'd put them on par with The Boils and Wednesday Night Heroes. —Todd (TKO: CD, Slab-o-Wax: LP)

**COPEATER:
Wisconsin Grindcore: CD**

The title says about all you need to know about them, for "Wisconsin grindcore" is, indeed, exactly what they are. I have no doubt that the legendary Mike Thrashead will be in fuckin' nirvana the moment he slaps this onto his player. Purty artwork of zombie-like corpses. —Jimmy Alvarado (First Blood Family)

COUGARS: Manhandler: CDEP

I happened to see the Cougars by sheer coincidence about two days before this CD came in the mail. I didn't know anything about them, and I was standing there moving my head up and down in that way some folks do when enjoying music, and thinking (aside from, "man, that singer is quite a showman, grinning and leering and bobbing like that") that it COULDN'T be an accident that they

sounded THAT MUCH like Rocket from the Crypt (Horns and tempo. Mostly horns.), and here they were playing in Rocket's home town with about nineteen people watching, and nobody from Rocket there to approve or disapprove. Then someone from Rocket did show up, but he was just there to drop off his girlfriend who was in one of the other bands, and I think he watched the Cougars for around one minute. Having now heard the CD, I can state that they sound more like Nazareth than I noticed at the show. They're from Chicago and have some of that Midwest (Jesus Lizard) goofiness, and the man says, "Good luck with your big pants" in the song "Cookietown." Good enough for me. —Cuss Baxter (Thick)

**COUNTERCLOCKWISE, THE:
Self-titled: CD**

Lo-fi, down home creepiness in the best possible sense. It's equal parts reckless Mummies slop, Hasil Adkins porch stomp, and something very bizarre that I can't quite put my finger on. It'll grow on you like some weird fungus, and then the next thing you know, you'll be weaving down the sidewalk with half a jug of wine in your hands and these songs in your head. Embrace the madness. —Josh (Nation of Kids)

**CZOLGOSZ/CRITICA
RADICALA: Split: CD**

Critica Radicala: Romanian punk rock that makes up for its lack of intensity with unique vocals. Homeboy doesn't scream so much as try to sing in rich baritone what's on his mind. Interesting introduction for these ears to how some punks in Romania approach punk. Czolgosz: Holy shit, what happened with these guys? Last I heard from them was their full-length on Rodent Popsicle, which was good, but these six songs are something else entirely. Each song approaches the hardcore equation from a different angle and some very pointed lyrics take to task Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko, America's complacent Left, police and Boston's hardcore scene, among other topics. Damn fine punk rock from these guys can be found here. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.czolgosz.com)

**DARLINGTON:
Euthanize Me: CD**

A lot of different influences here (Ramones/Social Distortion). Nothing complicated or necessarily good, just straight, low-fi, old school pop punk recorded the old fashioned way, with all the catchy hooks and lyrics I care to tolerate. "F-em" and "Destroy All Lines" are the standout tracks on this release, but the rest was quickly forgotten. —Jason K (Disaster)

**DAUNTLESS ELITE, THE:
Security?: CD**

Is Plan-It-X entering No Idea melodic-punk territory? Dauntless Elite play music that sounds a little like Dillinger Four and a little like American Steel, which means that YOU ALL KNOW HOW THEY SOUND ALREADY. But, hey, this is good nonetheless, if a little on the generic side. This is Kix. Dependable—and after reviewing the Gamits, this sounds like genius. I can't complain. And I bet they could be amazing live! Good! —Maddy (Plan-it-X)

**DEAD STOP:
Done with You: CD**

The label describes them as a mix of Negative Approach and early Agnostic

Front with a dash of Cro-Mags, and I really can't argue with that assessment. This is some pretty danged good east coast-oriented hardcore firmly rooted in the '80s, but with enough chops to shake off any accumulated dust. Good, good shit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

DEADLOCK FREQUENCY:

Traffic: CD

Here is a band that sounds so much like Oi Polloi that I could easily fool many into thinking that this could be them. The singer here sounds so much like Degsy from Oi Polloi at times that it was hard to figure out who it sounded like since I had a preconceived idea that this band was going to be hardcore. If there were no screamo parts, the masquerade would be carried out. With a strong singer established, the backing band has to have the chops and this one does. The songs are punk-driven with light metallic overtones delivering mid tempo blasts of anger that are raw and engaging. If the lyrics were more focused and detailed on more political topics, this would be Oi Polloi's equivalent here in the states. —Donofthedeath (Not Bad)

DECONDITIONED:

Overpopulation Begins and Ends with You: 7"

Spastic hardcore, musically along the lines of a slower Deep Wound. Contains the first bikes vs. autos-themed song I think I've ever heard. Good stuff if you like it short, fast and sloppy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Banal Existence)

DECONTROL:

The Final War: CD

Great, loud hardcore, but two things really bug me about both this release: a) Why are the vocals buried so far back in the mix? Does the singer sound like a six-year-old girl or something? b) If you're gonna put so much effort into being a band, why opt to ape Discharge instead of doing your own thing? Seems like such a cop out, you know? To be honest, I've got the same gripe with the whole "D-beat" thang: "Yeah, we've got a band, but we can't think of a single original thought of our own, so we'll just put some extra effort into sounding EXACTLY like some long-dead English punk band." This is as bad as a Xerox reproduction. Yeah, tons of "classic" bands took their cues from Discharge, too, but the best of 'em, including Mob 47, Krigshot and even the Fartz were able to put their own stamp on the template. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hardcore Holocaust)

DEMONS, THE:

Demonology: CD

Stockholm rock'n'roll band that has compiled a bunch of songs that apparently weren't available before. There are a few rockin' songs on here, but what stood out are some annoyingly repetitive choruses with very cheesy lyrics. For example, "Demons gonna punch you out," "You're just a fucking asshole," and "Kiss me where the sun don't shine," repeated over and over. The whole CD isn't like this, but it's enough to bug me. To top it off, they do a terrible cover of the Misfits "She." This is one of those CDs you just rip the good songs off of and sell back for something better. —Toby (Gearhead)

DEREK LYN PLASTIC:

Invisible Skin: 7"

Todd has a conversation with himself.
T1: It's one-man new wave band?
T2: Yes. It says it was written, per-

formed, and produced by one dude.

T1: Is it any good?

T2: Better than that.

T1: It smacks of novelty.

T2: Sure it does.

T1: It doesn't look like a new wave record.

T2: Nope, it sure doesn't. Skulls aren't heavily incorporated into new wave. Not as much as stripes.

T1: Does he wear a skinny tie, at least?

T2: There's no picture of him. Just of someone passed out on the cover, but I don't think it's a picture of him.

T1: What's so good about it?

T2: It's surprising, when new wave doesn't have that many surprises. It's like ska. The mode's set. It really depends on how well the songs are written. For christ sake, "Hardcore Addicts" sounds like Ministry minced with New Town Animals, but it's really good. Demented, even.

T1: Get out.

T2: No, it's like he found a new gateway through the trapped universe of new wave. It's still catchy, the keyboards are still there, but the guitars and drums are turned up and hit hard. Nothing wrong with that.

T1: From the Northwest, at least?

T2: Atlanta of all places. Damn, it's manic stuff. Mind if I flip it over again?

T1: Not at all.

T2: Folks who dig Dirtnap'll lap this shit up. Left field surprise of the issue for me.

—Todd (Derek Lyn Plastic)

DETONATIONS:

Static Vision: CD

Sounds to me as if somebody imported Seduce or Danzig or The Cult or some other bullshit late '80s music into Adobe® Photoshop™ as a tiff file, then, from the drop-down "Filters" menu, selected and applied the "Garage" filter a couple of times. To reside in whatever city this band hails from is now certainly a source of great dishonor. BEST SONG: Well, I thought they did a half-decent cover of T. Rex's "The Slider." Oh, wait, we're still talking about Seduce, aren't we? BEST SONG TITLE: "Speakereater" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Science has now uncovered a direct correspondence between usage of the Aarco font and inability to distinguish between the correct contexts for the words "your" and "you're." —Rev. Nørb (Alive)

DIGBY: Falling Up: CD

Words cannot describe how much this record sucks. I happen to believe that Del Amitri wrote a few catchy songs; not necessarily anything to write home about, but catchy. This band apparently worshipped at the Altar of the Glaswegians. It's so utterly generic that both the tray card and liner notes are white with little adornment; during the interminable solos, I kept expecting to hear someone *sincerely* say, "Dude, sweet licks!" This might well play in Peoria to office workers who still want to feel cool and support live music and bar bands even though the last record they bought was by Michelle Branch. My ears must be fucking bleeding by now. —Puckett (Toucan Cove)

DINAH CANCER

AND THE GRAVEROBBER: Self-titled: CDEP

Yep, it's *that* Dinah Cancer, all right, and she's giving 45 Grave fans far and wide a second chance to get their respective undead jollies with this latest band of hers. Included on this four-song disc are 2004 remakes of "Dream Hits," "Evil,"



"Riboflavin..." and "Procession." Although Dinah is the only member of the band who originally haunted the stages here in L.A. with 45 Grave, her band of cohorts here do a damn good job here. Those included are past/present members of: guitarist Daniel De Leon (Calavera/Lobo Negro), bassist Lisa Pifer (Snap-Her, Lisafer, Faghags), and drummer Hal Satan (Penis Flytrap). Word has it that besides this being the second offering of 45 Grave, the band has full intentions of letting their originals come into being in the near future. Keep your ear to the headstone, boys and ghouls. —Designated Dale (www.dinahcancer.com)

DIRECT CONTROL:

Self-titled: 7"

Man, what I wouldn't give to see these guys on a double bill with Out Cold. Balls-on hardcore here with lyrics touching upon familiar subjects: corrupt politicians, drug abuse (the smokin' "Hardcore for Heroin") and life in a shitty town. The next time someone asks me why I insist on subjecting myself to bad music month after month, I'm gonna pop this on the turntable to illustrate how sweet it is when a really good record comes along, 'cause although it may not be wholly original in concept, this one is nonetheless a stunner. —Jimmy Alvarado (Kangaroo)

DIRTY FINGERS, THE: Rock & Roll Ain't Easy b/w Still Want It & Wake Up Dead: 7"

If Rock & Roll is a tattoo parlor (wait! Am I saying that there is a chance that it's *not*??), the Dirty Fingers are flash. Hey, at least they're *workin'*! BEST SONG: "Wake Up Dead" BEST SONG

TITLE: n/a FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Crazy Stevie Baise plays bass on this record, and I wouldn't've guessed that in a billion years had I not peeked at the back cover. —Rev. Nørb (Riff Raff)

DOOR-KEYS, THE:

Greenwood Park Mall: CD

Rhino recently reissued pretty much every album X ever recorded with bonus tracks at \$11.99 list. That's not to say that this record is bad, but you really should listen to *Wild Gift* or *Under the Big Black Sun* before picking this up so you know where it comes from. —Puckett (Plan-It-X)

ESCAPED, THE:

Rose City Hardcore: CD

Thuggish hardcore with the subtlety of a slab of concrete falling fifteen stories. Sorry, but I prefer my 'core to be just a smidge wittier. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.blackoutrecords.com)

EXPLOITED, THE:

Horror Epics: CD

This album marks the point when Wattie and I parted ways, he going on to be exploited by New York metal labels, and I to my next band of choice. There's still quite a bit of the old fire to be found on this album, with the anti-authoritarian/anti-war slant to the lyrics and hardcore overdrive still intact, and the vast majority of the songs are mighty swell, but something felt like they were on the cusp of change, and listening to this nearly twenty years after my first listen, I still get that feeling. It's there, buried somewhere in the electronic-sounding drums. They were losing focus and, after listening recently to their most

recent effort, it seems that Wattie has, in the ensuing years, chosen to tilt at vague windmills rather than resort to pointed attacks at those in power as he did in days of yore. Damn shame, 'cause when they were at the top of their game, as evidenced here on thrashers like "Maggie" and "Don't Forget the Chaos," and on the title tack, an interesting foray into the world of post-punk, few could touch 'em. With so much of the current generation of parrot punks mired in style, a misguided glorification of poverty and bland, safe and pointless sloganeering, one of their heroes illustrating how to use their moment on stage to lob bombs at the power structure instead of wasting it on singing odes to beer and screaming "fuck you" would be essential. Sadly, it looks like it ain't gonna come from the current incarnation of this band. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

EXTINCTION OF MANKIND: The Nightmare Seconds... LP

I read that this is the second full-length from this band. I thought they had put out more records since their first LP because of all the patches I see on the kids. I think the first LP was *Baptised in Shit* that Skuld out of Germany put out. I have that record and I believe it came out in 1995 or 1996. That is an eight or nine year gap between full lengths. Hiatus? Break-up? Looking at the line-ups of the two records, the only remaining members are Ste on vocals and Ginny on bass. I haven't listened to previous record in sometime. The new record is absolutely incredible. I don't know if they have reformed, but they sound like they have continued to write and get stronger. It's only fitting that this band does a cover of "Arise" by Amebix. A mighty damn good one to boot. It's crust that is heavy on the metallic guitars and is a natural progression of what Amebix started—music that is dark and has the power of a bulldozer. This record should become one that many will refer to as a classic in the future. —Donofthead (Profane Existence)

FAGHAGS, THE: Self-titled: CDEP

I'm sure these fine So. Cal. folks were doing dog wheelies inside that big Mickey Mouse head-shaped flowerbed at Disneyland before giving the finger to their Anaheim home and shoving off to Long Beach. God bless 'em. Creepy, sleazy, stumbling rockin' and rollin' spinning 'round on this EP, the same way that first Humpers LP, *My Machine* made you feel, but with more of a Darby Crash kick in the pants. From what I'm gathering, the Faghags seem to be a side-gig for members of Lisafer, Throttle, Whiskey Dick, and the Lipstick Pickups. That said, if you're moving your ass to go see these bands, you need to get that ass moving some more and go buy the 'Hags a round at their next show. Better yet, make it a double. —Designated Dale (Booking/Info: (714) 222-9240)

FALLOUT, THE: Turning Revolution into Money: CD

This band has the speed and energy of good '80s punk. They do have a hint of oi to them but I don't think they can be classified as such. The oi shows up in just the right spots, keeping the energy going and making me want to jump around my apartment like the dork I am. Check 'em out. Very cool. —Toby (Longshot)

FEELERS, THE: Fuhrer's New Miniskirt b/w Special/Next Boy: 7"

Great, raw 1980-style lo-fi punk that makes me think of the Zero Boys, but that's probably because the Feelers are from Ohio, and I haven't heard the Zero Boys in a really long time. —Cuss Baxter (Death by Noise)

FICTION, THE/ BIRTHDAY BOYS: Split 7"

The Fiction: This is emotional hardcore without emotion. Oh wait, is screaming an emotion? Birthday Boys: It's a song about Michael Jordan. C'mon now, what year is this? You know what is a good basketball song? That Red Hot Chili Pepper's song off of *Uplift Mofo Party Plan*. And no, I'm not kidding. You know the one. "LA Lakers/fast break makers/kings on the court/shake'n' bake all takers." —Megan (McCarthyism)

FIRESTARTER: Livin' on the Heat: CD

Here's the rumor and I think it's true. When Japan's Teengenerate, arguably one of the best trashy garage bands ever to grace our planet, finished *Get Action!* for Crypt in '94, it was too clean, too poppy. They were told to re-record it in its all lo-fi, scratchy sock, ripped jean, tight shirt deviant glory. Years passed. Members splintered off, then got back together. This time, they kept the initial recording direction. Melodies and harmonies reign supreme. *Livin' on the Heat* is a genuinely stellar power pop album of the highest magnitude. This proves two things. These dudes are no one-trick ponies and they're in it for the right reasons. Why start all over again with a new name when the fanbase is there? Because the music itself is important. Good is good, no matter what the style. Fifi, Fink, Sammy, and Jimbo've gotta protect the rock, you know what I mean? Don't let the kindergarten hymn book-looking cover, the dubious name of the band, or the fifteen dollars you'll have to spend since it's currently only available on import sway you. Think of all the time it's going to be spinning in your player. Brilliance for pennies on the dollar. Definitely in my top twenty for the year. It may even rise higher. It's one of those albums that reveals itself slowly. —Todd (Mangrove, in the US, get it via Nice and Neat)

FLAKES, THE: Straight Jacket: 7"

Out of Sweden, Cheap Trick in one hand, Elvis Costello in the other, The Flakes play guitar-driven power pop with an organ. It's a no brainer to enjoy because it's pulled off with natural finesse, warm ease, and true-aim hooks. To place them amongst their contemporaries, they also have a ton in common with another Swedish band, Psychotic Youth, where the melodies almost sound telepathic and bubble over with oodles of enthusiasm. It's something I imagine Rodney Bingenheimer losing his shit over in the early '80s that would stand the test of time today. I'd place this right at peak top of this hard-to-conquer genre. —Todd (Evergreen Terrace)

FOUR DEADLY QUESTIONS: Self-titled: 7"

I can't say enough good things about Dick Army. Yeah, maybe they were just a cheap, goofy Black Flag knockoff, but damnit, they had that underdog charm and you've just gotta love that. Matt

from Dick Army started this band, and to say that I was looking forward to it would be a huge understatement. It lived up to my expectations. Where Dick Army mostly played simple, sloppy three-chord punk, Four Deadly Questions sound a lot more original and hard-to-pin-down. It's still fun and scrappy, to be sure, and it's not like they turned into Hawkwind or anything, but the choppy rhythms and female backups make this stand out a whole lot. Me likey. —Josh (Geykido Comet)

FOUR: Discography: CD

Pop punk as it was done back in the day. Every song sounds like a cranked-up cover of a particularly snotty Grimple or Screaming Weasel song; as I listen to them, all I really hear is Ben Weasel screaming. This takes me back to the early 1990s, cops shutting down house parties, bar shows that only lasted until the bar owner started screaming at the band to get out... in 1991, this probably would have been on Allied and I would have been in love. As it is, it's a nice reminder of cramming fifty people into a show space built for twenty and then fitting a band into the room to play fifteen songs in ten minutes. Sometimes, nostalgia ain't so bad. —Puckett (Paco Garden)

FREEZE, THE: Freak Show/Crawling Blind: CD

A reissue of two later albums by the best Boston hardcore band ever. While most of their contemporaries were slowing down to play bad bar rock complete with hair-shaking guitar solos (SSD, Gang Green, Jerry's Kids, DYS), the Freeze kept plugging away with albums full of paranoia and frustration. I'm not saying they were devoid of metal; the guitars were always very prevalent, more so than most other bands of that era. By the time they recorded these two albums, the solos had become longer and more technical, but this stuff will never be confused with ass like *How We Rock or Older... Bud-Weiser*, or even a band like Propagandhi. If you've never heard them, imagine a more intense, drug-addled Adolescents. —Josh (Dr. Strange)

FROM ASHES RISE: Nightmares: LP

In no small way, *Nightmares* reminds me of a condensed version of *Through Silver in Blood* by Neurosis. Both albums have the same apocalyptic worldview, the same kind of epic heaviness, and the same complex landscapes of sound. But where Neurosis just kind of plods along, pausing for bong hits along the way, From Ashes Rise is constantly on the attack, occasionally relenting, but always menacing. This whole album sounds like the world is ending right outside your window, mushroom clouds blooming, shock waves leveling everything around you. From Ashes Rise has the ability to make music that is simultaneously awe-inspiringly beautiful, uncompromising, and knife-at-your-throat dangerous, a rare thing indeed. —Josh (Havoc/Jade Tree)

FUCKED UP/ HAYMAKER: Split 7"

People deal with anger differently. Most people will let loose at the drop of a hat, and whether it's because they're stuck in traffic or because their toast is burnt, it rings kind of hollow. If they're yelling about something meaningless, they probably get pissed off about all kinds of meaningless crap. But have you ever

seen people who, instead of just flailing in frustration, just clench their teeth and hold it all back? You can see their eyes bulging and their blood boiling just beneath the surface, steam coming out of their ears just like in the cartoons. What's my point? This is what drives Fucked Up's music. It's not particularly fast or "fuck the system"-y, but what they lack in speed and stereotypical punk rhetoric, they more than make up for in seething anger. It seems to pour out of them like sweat. Reference points are meaningless; they play the music that I've always wanted punk rock bands to play without actually realizing that I wanted punk rock bands to sound like this, if that makes any sense. And I don't mean to slight Haymaker. They're really good, more of a thrash band than Fucked Up, but I'd be lying if I said I was going to listen to them as much as Fucked Up. —Josh (Deep Six)

GAMITS, THE: Antidote: CD

This wins the official Worst Album of the Reviewing Cycle award! Over-produced, nasal vocals, sung like the way MTV punk bands sing, "poetic" lyrics like, "I'll invite you all to my pity party/I'm the host tonight/ Serving up my pride." For real! Luckily, I had my friend and music critic extraordinaire Nate Paisano helping me out with reviews this time, or I would have either killed myself or OD'ed on Lucky Charms in a panic of confusion and ear death! I heard these guys threatened legal action against another Gamits from Madison, Wisconsin. Interesting, because I think Grant Hart could go after 'em for stealing the "Pink Turns to Blue" riff on one of their tunes. In fact, given the circumstances, I would encourage it! If this were a cereal, it'd be Lucky Charms with no marshmallows. —Maddy (Suburban Home)

GAMMITS MW, THE / MEMBERS OF THE YELLOW PRESS: Teetering on the Edge of Destruction: Split CD

Apparently, it's important to note that this band has a similar name (with a slightly different spelling) as another band in Colorado. I can only hope the band from Denver isn't this boring and generic. These songs are simply punk by numbers, possessing all the creativity, vitality and insight of the second Lars Frederiksen album, but played at half the speed. Sure, there's a sort of burgeoning political consciousness here, but it's rudimentary, consisting of little more than run-of-the-mill kvetching about TV and the ubiquitous "they" lying to the people and resisting the media's indoctrination and shit (but it's a significant dumbing down of an overly simplified summary of an overview offered in passing of Ben Bagdikian's *Media Monopoly*). While I wouldn't presume to assign an ideology to this, it offers about the same level of analysis as your average Fox News commentator. Members Of The Yellow Press are different in that they seem to take their cues from post-punk, screamo and spastic instrumentals. That doesn't mean that they're any more interesting. —Puckett (Big Action)

GARMONBOZIA: Self-titled: LP

This is, hands down, the most interesting release I have to review for this issue. The main instrument of focus here is not the guitar but the cello. That does not fit into the norm of what is considered punk these days. All the basic

instruments are represented here: guitars, bass and drums. But the cello is pulled a hair above the rest of the mix. This creates a unique sound that fits in well due to the bass-heavy tone of the instrument. Add a haunting female vocal that screams with a piercing shriek to yells of rage. Backing the vocals is another female vocalist whose voice interplays with the horror of it all. The slow, moody music that appears to be enchanting can turn in a second, going full force with d-beat rage with crust overtones. The cellist does not back down when things rage forth. She kicks it into high gear with the rest of the band. Reminded me heavily of what is being played by the Norwegian black metal bands. —Donofthedeat (Profane Existence)

GBH: *Cruel & Unusual*: CD
Goddamn, how many times are they gonna keep releasing "Punk Rock Ambulance" on assorted discs until they realize it just ain't meant to be a hit? A reissue with six pedestrian songs recorded between 1987 and 2000, including a pointless cover of the Rezillos' "No," are put together with live versions of four of their classic tunes to illustrate on one disc how good their songs once were and how utterly uninteresting they've become. —Jimmy Alvarado (Idol)

GENDERS, THE: *Self-titled*: CDEP
...this may be my favorite thing i got to review this month (which ain't saying much, lemme tell ya). The Genders lunge and dart thru everything from Tel Aviv Cock Rock ("Horatio") [*hey mama, my name is Horatio / I perform*

cunnilingus in return for fellatio]) to Troggs-pound ("When I Grow Up [I wanna be a fuckin' stoner])" to what the Goo Goo Dolls used to sound like when they were actually good ("Scream") to very drunken Tommy James & the Shondells ("Sharlene") to Israeli Figgsism ("We Awright") to flat-out-tell-it-like-it-is-Jack-ism ("[They Wouldn't Let Ya In the] KKK"), all with a certain amount of both mastery and irreverence, but, to my forward-thinking mind, the best thing about this EP is that you can not only download it for free off the band's website, but you can also download the minimal cover art, which can be faithfully reproduced on a simple hunk of pink copy paper—WHICH MEANS, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, that you know how in various science fictional tales, the advanced futuristic and/or alien society which the generally backward protagonist finds himself thrust into shocking contact with almost always has some sort of "matter synthesizer" where they can program their 30th Century Microwave or whatever to output any manner of food or drink or consumer good possible? DIG IT, BROTHERS: THE FUTURE IS NOW! Using your "matter synthesizer," you can now, AMAZINGLY, replicate The Genders EP from half a world away, in the privacy of your own home! No salesman will call! Unfortunately, i can no longer sustain this review as i am hard at work attempting to calibrate my "matter synthesizer" to ready a Korean all-girl high school field hockey team for home delivery. *Tel Aviva Las Vegas!* BEST SONG: "Scream" BEST SONG TITLE: "We Awright" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Whoever put the lipstick kissy-mark on my copy

has a really small mouth. —Rev. Nørb (The Genders; <www.thegenders.com>)

GREAT REDNECK HOPE, THE: *Behold the Fuck Thunder*: CD
One of the best album titles in a long time. I've been seeing ads for this everywhere. I thought it would be rock 'n' roll. I was wrong. Arty screamo with some pretty technical metal parts, kind of in the vein of Dillinger Escape Plan. —Megan (Thinker Thought)

GUTTERMOUTH: *Eat Your Face*: CD
Welcome back Guttermouth! After an identity crisis, they are back to the band I remember listening to and not being able to put down in the early '90s. Fast, snotty, smart-assed and goofy as hell. This is such an improvement and such a relief from the direction they were heading. Guess they got their fill of teenaged girls riding the coattails of insipid Blink 182 style bands. Statutory rape litigation is no fun to go through, is it? There are just a couple of mediocre songs, but this is just about as solid as any Guttermouth album from the early '90s. There are some songs that very well could be placed on their first album and fit right in. Very nice turn around indeed. Thanks Guttermouth. —Toby (Epitaph)

HATEWORK: *Thrash n' Roll*: CD
Dude! It's time to bust out your long hair wig, squeeze your fat ass into those super-tight, pegged black jeans, polish the bullet belt and grow out your mustache. It's 1985 again and it's time to bang your head for some thrashin'. These Italian metal dudes have forgot-

ten that twenty years have flown by and this style of metal is not popular anymore. But for this old geezer, it's refreshing to hear this. I admit that I bit on the crossover bug back in the day and I ate this shit up. This reminds me of metal bands from back in the day like Possessed, Metal Church or Celtic Frost. Speed metal played in the traditional sense. —Donofthedeat (Beer City)

HELLSTOMPER: *The Real Hillbilly Motherfucker*: CD
Dixie-fried rock/punk centered on cock fightin', whiskey drinkin', barroom fightin' and, of course, drinkin'. Can't say these guys were the best thing I've heard all week or anything, but they did have their merits, primarily the fact that they aren't above not taking themselves too seriously. —Jimmy Alvarado (Steel Cage)

HORRIBLE ODDS, THE: *Underground*: LP
You've got three of the Jack Palance Band with Iggy Scam on drums for a flash-in-the-pan Chattanooga band from 2002 that sounds like anything but. Tightly wound, desperate yet hopeful. Unmarked graves next to feelings of invincibility. Estranged but warm. Looking at rivers of piss, yet still throwing coins in and making a wish. Eric Nelson sounds like a drill sergeant and the entire band sounds like they're operating eight limbs from the exact same brain. They've got that almost untraceable, magical quality that attaches bands like the Bananas, The Riverboat Gamblers, The Tim Version, and Tiltwheel to some unseen, unknown wellspring. No, those bands sound nothing alike, but if you like one, the odds

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are that you'll like the others. It's the spirit's what I'm talking about. Basement and back yard shows. Duct tape and cheap beer economics rarely sounds this great. A DIY punk checkmate. -Todd (Onion Flavored)

HOT DAMN!:
The Girl Can't Help It: CD

Female sleaze-punk, fast, lean, and obsessed with sex. I can think of worse ways to view the world. Unfortunate cover of "The Girl Can't Help It," though. -Jimmy Alvarado (Steel Cage)

HUNCHES, THE:
Hobo Sunrise: CD

Well, it's certainly *loud* enough. And it's certainly *fucked up* enough. But that which a record must be enough of besides loud enough and fucked up enough it is not enough of. I mean, if I can throw out a couple of probably weird-seeming examples here, when bands like the Jesus & Mary Chain or Guided By Voices—WHO, ADMITTEDLY, THE HUNCHES SOUND NOTHING LIKE—were really on their shit, they could throw as much chaos ("bullshit," if you like) on top of their songs as modern science would allow, and, even the first time you listened to said song, BAM, there it was. The songs were strong and direct and immediately RIGHT THERE. It didn't matter how many tables and chairs were hurtling through the air—metaphorically or literally—when you heard 'em, they struck you as clearly and plainly as anything off the Ramones first album or anything Chuck Berry ever did; no small feat given the levels of art-pooof-flip-out-ery in play. The Hunches? I dunno... a man with Marky Ramone hair encased in a suit composed of 212 mostly unused maxi-pads just mentally increased his specific gravity to the point where he made the roof cave in? *Okay, great. Now whadda we do? Amuse ourselves by playing in the rubble?* I don't hear any songs here. I hear people giving titles to things they came up with in practice. The record sounds nominally amazing for the first few numbers, but by about track #4, it is blatantly obvious that this is a band who cannot quite make up their minds as to whether they want to blow things up or just get high; to me, this makes them less conceptually pure than *Pinky & The Brain* (who, of course, ALWAYS knew what they were going to do today), therefore unworthy of my endorsement. So be it. **BEST SONG:** "Compression" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Droning Fades On" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Despite the album title, the packaging's typography is mainly in the Gill Sans font, not the hated Hobo. -Rev. Nørb (In the Red)

IMPULSE MANSLAUGHTER:
Live at WFMU: CD

Can't say that I remember much from this band in the past. Here is what I can pick out of this peanut-sized brain of mine. I remember them being a mid-'80s crossover band. Didn't buy anything specifically by this band and I think they had stuff pressed by Nuclear Blast in Germany. I remember them on the *Complete Death II* comp., but I haven't listened to that record in over fifteen years. That is about it. Well, Mike from Beer City was obviously a fan since he compiled tracks from a live radio show, LPs, EPs, a split and a comp. That's love right there. Another release that is not only an economical way of getting this band's music but is an easy way to get a taste before you start collecting the actual releases. This reminds me that I still haven't bought a copy of DRI's *Dealing With It* that Beer City re-released. -Donofthead (Beer City)

ISKRA: Self-titled: LP

If screaming is what you want, this puppy is your dream come true. An extreme black metal experience that veers into the grindcore and powerviolence realms, all done with intricate guitar playing that is heavy on the riffing and squeezes enough notes in one song that equals the note count on ten regular punk songs. The vocals are carried out by what I assume are the main singer and the person doing back ups. Man, do these boys scream. They scream so hard, I am getting a sore throat. Too bad the vocals overplay the lyrics and thank whoever you pray to that there is a lyric sheet. The lyrics are thought provoking, intelligent, and backed up with additional information to prove their point. Not easy on the ears but it does connect to the emotion of rage. -Donofthead (Profane Existence)

JERK APPEAL: 36 Cents
b/w New City & I Don't Think So: 7"

Fair-to-middlin' early effort by a Montreal band that might wax, wane, mutate or destruct utterly prior to emitting a full-length. The toolbox of the Dropkick Murphys and/or Rancid is, apparently, open and available to them—which is fine—however, in numerous spots on this 45, it seemed to me as if the band were manufacturing their would-be bombastic street anthems out of more or less nothing but non-load-bearing structural elements. Like, you know, where's the fucking BEEF, jack? Everything can be rocking along mightily one second, and, the next, one gets the distinct impression that nothing dwells beneath the surface of these songs—like a well-crafted piñata that somehow didn't get packed with anywhere near as many SweetTarts™ as would be right and just. I mean, they have the outer form of the music they wish to play down cold (dig those air-raid-siren Clash guitars on "36 Cents"), but, in other spots, the singer howls "IIIII DAUUUUNNNNNNT T H A A A N N N N N K K SOOOOOOO!!!" in his dorky fake British accent (which, BTW, I have no problem with) like sixty-four (or something) times in a row, like he REALLY thinks he just invented either a) a cure for cancer, or b.) the best Rock Hook since "NOooooo FUUUUUU-CHAH! NOooooo FUUUUU-CHAH! NOooooo FUUU-CHAH FO' YOUUUUUU!!!" ... it's like, dude, get over yourself—"I Don't Think So" is NOT a rock masterpiece—so plan your assaults on Planet

I WALK THE LINE:
Badlands: CD

A band with a Johnny Cash name and a Bruce Springsteen album title. Cool! Unfortunately, record-critic-at-large Nate correctly deduced it when he said that this band's song structure goes as follows: Start with a clear, good intro, then pause, and start a new, boring song. Seriously! This also could best be described as a poppier Murder City Devils, and I think they are from Finland. Facts! But in the end, all that matters is what kind of cereal it is, and it's definitely Mueslix. Heavy, complicated, with promise, but when you get right down to it, there's only so much of it you can take before you want to eat something else! Extended metaphors are go! -Maddy (Combat Rock/Boss Tuneage)

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Earth with this in mind. At this early stage in their career, I am reserving judgment on Jerk Appeal—the one X-Factor on their side being that this band contains an ex-member of the Radicts. The Radicts were one of those bands that even I, as a guy who maybe kinda might occasionally slide into Music-Snob-ism, could appreciate—I mean, you'd hear like the first ten seconds of a song and be like "oh, fuck, I listened to this music when I was sixteen, who needs it?"—but then you'd keep listening and be like, "fuck, these guys know their shit, totally!" The Radicts were probably the best American band, ever (unless we're counting like Rancid and the Dropkick Murphys), to be able to handle those sort of English street punk clichés and use 'em and spit 'em back out as damn fine tunes—I mean, it was just something they could do, perhaps without even thinking about it. I hereby "suggest" that the guy from the Radicts take over the band, and everybody else listen to what the fuck he says. Unless there is some manner of French-English language barrier, in which case let the best Esperanton win! **BEST SONG:** "36 Cents" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "I Don't Think So," which is not that great of a song title **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** I already said it: That one guy was in the Radicts. That's all ya get! —Rev. Nørþ (Sonik's Chicken Shrimp; <Jerkappeal@hotmail.com>)

JULIA SETS PRESENT: An Alternative to Extinction: CDEP

It looks like a CDEP until you look at the running time—then it seems more like an album (two songs go on for 37 minutes and 14 seconds). Drawing from influences like Red House Painters (fitting, since Mark Kozelek was a Midwesterner before he lived in the Bay Area) and shoegazers like Slowdive as well as hints of mid-'80s college rock, these five songs are actually quite a pleasant surprise. Instead of being the useless emo shit that I typically get to review, this is an unexpected and well-done throwback to a more innocent time when indie bands merely hoped to get their single played on the local college station and didn't look much beyond that. —Puckett (Julia Sets Present)

JULIA SETS: Yes-Wave: CD

It's music like this that makes me wish everyone received an inner-city education. That way no one would be able to attend college and develop embarrassing levels of pretentiousness and they'd all be full of angst 'n' shit and their songs would have balls instead of whining along in arty abandon. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.juliasets.com)

KARST: Vision of Insane Hope: CD

Cookie monster metal with some pretty good lyrics and a surprisingly effective gloomy moodiness. More impressed with 'em than I thought I would be, which I imagine is tantamount to a grudging recommendation. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hater of God)

KNOCKOUT PILLS: 1 + 1 = Ate: CD

The first time I heard the Knockout Pills—an unreleased pre-mastered version—I was kinda doubtful. See, I love, love, loved the Weird Lovemakers and when they split up, the lead singer and one of the main song writers went to different corners (a bookstore and SF, to be exact.) Jason "Part of the Problem"

Willis, the guitarist, and Gerrard (otherwise known as "Wallaby, Wallaby Dingo") of the Weird Lovemakers joined up with Travis "the Archie Bunker of Punk Rock" Spillers of Los Federales, and Matt ("the secret brain" of the Resonars). The demo was so-so. I craved the type of musical punishment and reward that the Weird Lovemakers heaped high on my plate. Melodic mania. Rough knuckled, oddly voiced dork rock that kicked ass over throw-back, cutout punk. Then out came the first Knockout Pills self-titled record. Through some magic of mastering or re-recording, songs like "Reject Button" leg swept me. I'd stare at the ceiling and sing along in praise that the magical sand and grit of Tucson punk rock was once again on the ascension. With each successive spin of that record, it became apparent that I wasn't dealing with a band with just a chop or two or a band with a couple of good songs in a cat box of turds. The whole record was chops layered on top of one another, rhythms hidden in the cupboard, melodies in the gutter, choruses flying from the heavens like Lawn Darts to right between my eyes. I'd just have to sit and listen to that album, and it never failed to drop another veil. "Oh, la, la, what a voluptuous motherfucker of sound," I said. Then *1+1=Ate* comes out. Take all of the "you've got to listen for 'em" stealth chops and, somehow, polish 'em so they're right there—luminescent gems on first listen, yet deep and dazzling enough to warrant compulsive playing—like you're listening to something that makes you feel musically richer. They added more power. They added more confidence, and what you've got is one of the unabashedly best records to come out of 2004 that won't be toppled from my top ten list. I don't even want compare them to other bands. I'll just say if you like what *Razorcake* covers as a whole, trust me on this. —Todd (Estrus)

LARS FREDERIKSEN AND THE BASTARDS: Viking: CD

If the promise displayed by Lars Frederiksen's first album was a surprise, then this sophomore release is more shocking for all the wrong reasons. The first record, much like Rancid's best work, demonstrated an acute understanding of the stresses that working second or third shift carry and making do as a struggling punk. And then this hit. I barely know what to say. We can begin with the liner notes, because the censored pictures of semi-attractive women are the best part of this release. It's true that a picture says a thousand words and the generic images of women affecting lustful expressions pretty much say it all. This is half-assed punk by numbers with few melodies, few hooks and little insight. It's all about posturing—Lars doesn't go anywhere without his switchblade. He's a tough streetwise punk. He's had threesomes in... well, pretty much every city he can seem to think of. He's had sex with hookers. So what? What, in the end, does all this boasting and bragging signify? How does this relate in any way to anything which provides any sort of insight into the human condition, the loneliness and sorrow that most punks are all too intimately familiar with and which Frederiksen captured on his debut? The short answer is that it doesn't relate at all, that it signifies fuck all and that this has more in common with a bling-bling era hip hop record than it does with punk... except that most rappers talking about their money, bitches,

and Cristal can find a hook to save their lives. —Puckett (Hellcat)

LISAFAER: Version 10.0: CDEP

More pissed-off, snot-flinging punk rock fun from L.A.'s favorite female power trio. And when I say pissed off, it don't mean in the least that there's not a whimsical element laying underneath it all, you jaded fuck. Lookie here at the lyrics from "Patty Loved Lucy": "Linus hung himself/Schroeder broke his keys/Sally slit her wrists/And Woodstock fell from the tree/When they found out Patty loved Lucy... Snoopy went to the pound/A train ran over Marcy/Pig Pen drank some gas/And they locked up Charlie Brown/When they found out..." Because of this pneumatic rib-tickler, you'd think Charles Schultz is probably spinning in his grave, but his dusty corpse should be spinning for better reasons, like how Knott's Berry Farm is rolling in a huge pile of money with all that *Peanuts* merch they sell. Whatever, Chuck... just lighten the fuck up and get your rock on, Lisafer style. This goes for all of you amongst the living, too. —Designated Dale (www.lisafer.com)

LONG DONG SILVER/ FILTHY JIM: Split 7"

If you like a more "YAY-UH!" version of Led Zeppelin, you'll prefer the Long Dong Silver side. If you're more about an "ah-EEEE-yaaaaa-AH!" (note: That was "The Immigrant Song") version of Led Zep, you'll like Filthy Jim. Me? Well, if this record was a breakfast cereal, it'd be a bowl of diarrhea with some of that new green Mountain Dew™ poured over the top. *Taste the rainbow!* **BEST SONG:** That kind of "Rock & Roll" one **BEST SONG TITLE:** Geez, that's a four-way tie for first between "Junkie Cinderella" "Spank My Ass" "Tied to the Needle" and "Teenage Witch." I am frozen in the presence of such circuit-frying brilliance! **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Somebody, somewhere, involved, knowingly or unknowingly, with this record, has the license plate 498-54L. Shun it. —Rev. Nørþ (Scarey)

LOVE ME DESTROYER: Black Heart Affair: CD

I'm going to invent a new genre with this review: "punk noir," or would "noir punk" be better? Stylish, moderately melodic, straight-ahead, three-chord punk songs about widows crawling out of the bottle and switchblades and infidelity and domestic violence. If Phillip Marlowe hooked up with Social Distortion and did songs written by Billy Joe from Green Day, this is what it would sound like. Not bad at all. —Brian Mosher (Suburban Home)

LOVE SONGS: All Branches, No Trunk: CD

Don't let the name fool you, unless your idea of a love song is an ode to shaving your balls. Various Bay Area punk rock miscreants, including that one guy from Your Mother, join forces here for a goofy, fun album that sounds like punk rock without falling into a predetermined musical niche. It's a lot like Toys That Kill, but less skewed and with lots of little guitar parts that make me think that somebody in the band is *really* into Iron Maiden. I love the artwork, too. Good stuff. —Josh (New Disorder)

M.O.T.O.: Single File: CD
Oh, the magical salve of Masters of the

Obvious. At its essence, M.O.T.O. has two basic modes. Ultra catchy, low-fi power pop and ultra catchy children's songs for adults. Hooks as sneaky and barbed as the Jam's. Stealth bomb melodies that rival the Beatles. I can't say if *Single File* is as essential as the Buzzcocks' *Singles Going Steady*, but it's real fuckin' close. Think of bubble gum left on a hot sidewalk and your ear as the bottom of a shoe. It's almost impossible for these songs not to stick, no matter how hard to you try to rub them off. This collection is the ultimate comp tape of M.O.T.O.'s widely scattered bests from tapes, 7"s, imports, and out-of-print gems over the past twenty years. Even if haven't heard one of these songs before popping this CD in, you'll be singing "Crystallize My Penis" in the grocery store, or "I'm Infected" when you're holding up a bank, in no time. It's not an anorexic collection, either, and totals a beefy twenty-eight tracks. Essential listening. —Todd (Criminal I.Q.)

MARKED MEN, THE: On the Outside: CD

Does the world need another "I don't care" song? Are you fucking stupid? Of course it does! And if there was a single sliver of doubt flickering through your so-called consciousness, the Marked Men will remind you why. Dirtnap delivers again in this rip-roaring record. —Jim Ruland (Dirtnap)

MARKED MEN, THE: On the Outside: CD

Some people find God! Some people find Communism! Other people find the Marked Men! This album is so good that it makes you fall to your knees and BELIEVE IN THE HEALING POWER OF ROCK AND ROLL! I cannot possibly sound cheery enough! I fucking love this album! If another band wrote even ONE of these songs, they could retire, happy, to a life of reality-TV-watching and Cheetos consumption. When I saw them live in Minneapolis a few weeks ago, I was overcome! Overjoyed! Dancing like a fool and singing along at the top of my lungs! How does it feel to be a genius? Ask the Marked Men. The best band in the world right now! One of the best albums in the history of albums, including all genres of music, from cavemen banging on drums to Woody Guthrie to the Ramones! I almost never say this, but I think this might be BETTER THAN LUCKY CHARMS! There is no cereal good enough to describe this! Ahhhh!!!!!! —Maddy (Dirtnap)

MARKED MEN: On the Outside: CD

The tempos are a tad less frenetic than their previous release, but they're still mining some monster fucking hooks, and I hear more than a tinge of Dickies influence this time around. They remain one of the best punk bands that aren't museum pieces. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

MENTALITY ILL: Gacy's Place: CD

Late night L.A. radio show, some Saturday circa 1982. Through the mist comes this completely insane individual screaming "Don't leave me here to DIE!/Don't leave me here to DIIIEE!" over what sounds like some other nutjob bashing cardboard boxes to the rhythm of some sort of static pattern. Naturally, I'm intrigued, and thankfully, I'm recording the whole thing. Over the

course of the next two weeks, I play this track over and over again, eventually coming to the conclusion that a) the boxes were drums, b) what I thought was static was actually the guitar, c) these guys are outta their fucking minds, d) these guys are the best thing I've ever heard in my short life. Of course, I summarily lose the tape and forget the band's name before I can find anything on vinyl. That song, however, managed to permanently etch itself into my brain. Fast forward six years, wherein I randomly pick out some compilation called *Killed By Death* at some record store because it has the Cheifs' "Blues" on it and I love that song. The song that follows it, "Gacy's Place," comes on and I find myself jumping up and down in absolute glee as the aforementioned completely insane individual is again bellowing at me, warning me that "they're fucking your kids!" Not having any kids, I take his concern for my progeny with a grain of salt, yet remain stoked that I finally have something by this elusive band to call my own. Fast forward another sixteen years, and I find myself with a copy of a new CD with twenty—count 'em—twenty tracks from one of the greatest, most deranged, PUNKEST goddamn bands I've ever heard in my now not-as-short-as-it-used-to-be life. In some Mansonesque twist of fate, I see the parallels between the band and my own life—a) they: a tune called "Doggie Sex," me: writer of a song called "A Boy and His Dog;" which roughly covered the same subject matter, b) they: a song called "Tumor Boy," me: my last band was the Tumors; c) they: a song called "Dry Heave," me: anyone who knows of my former love of malt beverages can spell out the correlation on this one—and realize that they have been trying to send me a message for quite some time, but due to some cruel twist of fate, I haven't been able to receive it. I plop it on the stereo, not coincidentally in the middle of the night on some Saturday circa 2004, fast forward it to track number five, "Padded Cell," and the insane individual is screaming, "Don't leave me here to DIE! Don't leave me here to DIE!" at me again, just like he did twenty-two years ago. I kneel down, pick up one of the speakers blaring away on the floor, caress it and softly tell him no, I won't ever leave him again. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

MIDNITE SNAKE: **Self-titled: CD**

Hey ma, bring me some more drugs! Seriously stoned instrumental fuzz with so many noodles... I was gonna say if you sold your first pressing of *Vincebus Eruptum* and spent all the money on ramen, cooked it all, and dumped it on yourself from the roof, it'd be like that, but then I looked on eBay and apparently you can barely get ten bucks for a mint one, so my analogy's all shot to fuck. Anyway, eight songs, forty-six minutes, Pittsburgh, gong. —Cuss Baxter (Birdman)

MORNING 40 FEDERATION: **Self-titled: CD**

I looked at the members list and winced when I saw all the brass instruments listed, thinking I was in for another dose of really bad ska. Thankfully, that was not the case. Instead, what is wafting through the air at me is more akin to what the Butthole Surfers might have sounded like had they been born and raised in New Orleans and listened to a lot of Tom Waits—funky, sludgy party music steeped in the blues and proto-jazz. Not

for everyone, but it is a fun listen and I bet their live shows rip. —Jimmy Alvarado (M80)

MOTHER'S ANGER, THE: **Self-titled: CD**

Funny what a decade can change. This sounds a lot like *Bleach* to *Nevermind*—era Nirvana (especially the voice), and it sounds good. Perhaps it has to do with it being a two-piece from Israel. Perhaps it has to do with grunge, over-saturating the airwaves, exploding like a Zeppelin filled with mustard gas, and becoming such a dirty word in a relatively short amount of time that most bands still won't attempt it because it still has a touch of the plague. So, it feels like they're doing it for the right reasons. Making good music. Mother's Anger also has bits of the more roaming Mudhoney, the less experimental Kent 3, and a bunch of "you're older, grow out of punk" music that I'd don't know too much about but recognize from my more genteel friends who play it when I'm at their houses. For something I'm not predisposed to liking, this isn't bad at all. It's a good middle ground between punk and indie. —Todd (Dionysus)

MUGGERS, THE: **Self-titled: CD**

Ten study-at-home lessons right out of the Punk Rock 101 curriculum. The Muggers play sneery, energetic '77 style ham-and-egger punk with vocals that bend nicely out of tune in spots. The emphasis here seems to be more on having fun than trying to be dangerous. They sound a little bit like Green Day before they became MTV darlings. Probably a lot of fun live. —Aphid Peewit (Radio)

MY DAD IS A DINOSAUR: **Self-titled: CD**

I knew that I should've avoided this at all costs when I saw that it involved two people and a harmonica, but *nooooo*, I had to go and be mister nosy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Prison Jazz)

MY SO-CALLED BAND:

Weapons of Mass Distortion: CD

If the Chris Peigler who plays bass in this band is the same Chris Peigler whose been preaching reason to *MRR* editors about the whole Rich Mackin saga, then, Chris Peigler of My So-Called Band, I salute you! *MRR*-letters-to-the-editor-based-compliments aside, I couldn't get into this. Power chords, standard punk rock thing, with not that great political lyrics about Rachel Corrie (an activist who died in Palestine), the Patriot Act, and even my favorite kind of war—class war! I really wanted to like this, but, unfortunately, it's just Oh's. I like honey-based crunchy stuff. I like Honey Nut Cheerios. In theory, it sounds so good, but then, you eat it. —Maddy (SW Records)

MYSTERY GIRLS: **Something in the Water: CD**

Bluesy, ash tray-smelling, roots rock that falls somewhere between the Yardbirds and the Catheters. Nay-sayers could certainly make a case for the Mystery Girls being just yet another band aping Jet and hoping to follow their path to wealth and fame, but this stuff has a certain rawness to it that doesn't seem cooked up, and plus, it's pretty catchy. Try as you might, there's not much here to hate. —Aphid Peewit (In the Red)

NAILED DOWN: **Resurrection: CD**

Obnoxious hardcore/grind from a band that's been around for a while. The songs have enough twists and turns in 'em to keep things interesting, and no doubt some of the lyrics will piss off a few people, as they should. —Jimmy Alvarado (First Blood Family)

NEINS, THE: Self-titled: 7"

The Ventures-styled Mosrite guitar that the Visible Woman is holding on the cover is a tip off here. Simple, good-timey, '50s-influenced garage rock with friendly guitars and perky organs and goldarnitall if it doesn't make me want to play beach blanket bingo. This record's not going to make me sell my Dick Dale and His Deltones records, but I like it. My only gripe is that, at two songs, it's too short. —Aphid Peewit (www.theneins.com)

NERDS, THE: A Black Star Burning Trails to Nowhere: CD

Here's punk and roll with some Motorhead worship via Italy that not only sounds good but kicks some ass. Loud, obnoxious, and most likely a drunken mess when they get together. This band has parts of Antiseen and Electric Frankenstein meets GG Allin. Scum rockers take note of this bastard offspring out of Italy. —Donofthead (Scarey)

NEW TOWN ANIMALS:

Cori Street b/w Spin So Fast: 7"

Since new wave and punk rock have been stitched so closely together to wonderful results in the past several years, the banner has been effectively raised to new heights and keeps fluttering in the wind by greats like the Epoxies, the Briefs, The Spits, and The Minds. You've gotta have chops, more hooks than what's hanging in a slaughterhouse, and impeccable songwriting to stay on the playing field. This 7" delivers. It's a dramatic splicing of the Forgotten Rebels meet all-songs-on-the-Vapors-first-LP-except-"Turning Japanese" meets the *Get the Knack*. Bouncy, elastic spasms of good time, no-brain Canadian fun. And they've been doing it since 1998. —Todd (Longshot)

NICK CAVE:

Abbattoir Blues: 2x CD

Gone is the deranged growl of a man with blood on his hands and the dead body of an ex-lover in the trunk of his car. My guess is that he found religion and invested in some throat lozenges, two things that definitely didn't need to happen to Nick Cave. It's not really a bad listen, and it has a few curveballs here and there, but it's just waaaaay too restrained coming from the man behind records like *Prayers on Fire* and *Your Funeral... My Trial*. —Josh (Mute)

NO CHOICE:

Dry River Fishing: CD

When you first look at this CD, you think, "Oh great, another pop punk band." But on further inspection, you see this is the original early '80s Brit punk band that had an EP on Riot City. My first thoughts are that another old band is jumping back on the bandwagon, but this band's notoriety was pretty limited to their first single. They had a song from that single on the *Riot City Punk Singles Collection* CD that came out in the early '90s and they were on the *Have a Rotten Christmas Volume Two* comp LP that I have seen at my brother's house.

There've been no patches or t-shirts to really keep their name going after all these years. So it looks like they are banging it out for the true love of playing. The first thing I noticed was that they have progressed musically from their first 7". The sound I hear is a mixture of Goober Patrol mixed with Consumed on the UK side, and I hear a Pegboy meets Hüsker Dü meets modern day Hot Water Music, if you need a reference using bands from the states. Lyrically, they have not strayed from the issue-related lyrics of the past, yet have further progressed them with more thought and introspect. The old guys can still bang out a tune. No sooner are you ready to throw a CD into the bag that you take to the record store for trade, you find that needle in the haystack. —Donofthead (No Idea)

NORTH LINCOLN: **Self-titled: CDEP**

This isn't a slight to Hot Water Music, but I really miss their early to mid-period work. Hummable anthems, complex-to-play, easy-to-listen-to, gruffly delivered, emotionally involved, honest punk. And although it may seem like a slight to North Lincoln to mention another band in the first two sentences of a review of their CD, it's not. I'm flat-out enjoying the flag they're flying. It sounds less a contrivance or mimicry of HWM and more of an exploration of musical ground that hasn't been fully exploited. Kicking over new rocks. Seeing new life squirming in near-darkness in the details. And they aren't just kicking around dying embers. They've got a bonfire raging with undeniably catchy, rough power all fueled by rock-solid songwriting. They even lay waste to Fifteen's "Notion." And I actively dislike Fifteen. Recommended. —Todd (North Lincoln/Salinas)

NSA:

The Captain Future: CDEP

Bad college bar band rock best left to the sad sacks who cheer 'em on between swigs of Newkie. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.the-nsa.com)

OATH, DAS: Self-titled: CD

For the uninitiated, the Oath play wild, fast, unhinged hardcore with a little post-punk noise-mongering thrown in for good measure, meaning that a good aural scrubbing can be expected from the moment you press "play." Fans of the band can rest assured, this is everything you were hoping for, and then some. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dim Mak)

OKMONIKS, THE: **Compact 33: 7"**

The Okmoniks are a female fronted garage rock band that I can honestly say four things about: 1) they're the only Sonics-sounding band that I can listen to without getting impatient and just putting on a Sonics record; 2) it is physically impossible to listen to this seven inch (or their other two seven inches) without dancing around your living room at least a little bit; 3) seeing as how they've been around for about three years, it's really about time that they released a full-length; and 4) Dirtnap should put that full-length out because The Okmoniks and Dirtnap seem like a match just waiting to happen. In the meantime, this record has seven songs and all of them rock. Highly recommended. —Sean (Okmoniks)

OMAR A. RODRIGUEZ-LOPEZ: A Manual Dexterity—Soundtrack Volume One: CD

Gotta admit, I was never much of an At the Drive-In fan, but this wasn't too bad a listen. This is a collection of primarily instrumental music Rodriguez-Lopez has put together for an unfinished film project he's been working on. On its own, the music is a hodge-podge of space rock-styled jams, samples, static patterns, synth noodling and the like layered over one another. Perfect listening for your next brownie and tea party, if you catch my drift. —Jimmy Alvarado (GSL)

ONELINEDRAWING: The Volunteers: CD

Well, Jade Tree finally stopped sending advance releases and started sending totally thrashed promo copies. For the life of me, I couldn't get the liner notes out of the digipak... but that's okay, because the tray in the digipak was shattered anyway. I consider these things to be fucking shames because I actually like this. It's nothing fancy, nor is it new. It's just well done, introspective, melodic indie rock which will fit perfectly into the record collections of people who like the Kinsellas' work (see: American Football, Owen, etc.). While all of these songs are pretty, drifting musical pieces which frequently feature breathy vocals and most seem like the perfect thing to put on when putting on the moves on that special someone for the very first time, some of them are just slightly too energetic (see: New End Original) to serve as background music. With all of that said, these songs are simply too immediately catchy to think that this is a record that I would still like in a year or two—they're too immediately present and enjoyable; as most of us know, the albums we like best are the ones that we have to fight with for a while. This record is simply too genial to take a swing at me on the first listen. While that speaks well of its craft, it doesn't say much about its staying power or whether it will mean much to me in the future. —Puckett (Jade Tree)

ONLY CRIME: To the Nines: CD

A new all-star hybrid has been created. Russ Rankin of Good Riddance fame searches for an outlet to express himself when an impending hiatus of his band is imminent. He first finds a taker in Aaron Dalbec of the band Bane. There is the first guitarist. Next, the brothers, Zach and Donivan, from Hagfish add another guitarist and bassist. So while a band is being created, Russ has a conversation with Bill Stevenson about his project. Biff, bam, boom! He is interested and now the project is complete with the addition of Bill on drums. I was apprehensive of this record at first. High expectations can taint the first listen. So I held back for awhile before listening. On first listen, this band sounds very similar to later period Good Riddance. I was expecting more of a metal, hardcore sound from the guitars. But, the thought here is

more of a Black Flag meets Bl'ast! sound that Good Riddance was gravitating to. Heavy, without going into the trappings of playing metal. If you pay attention to drumming in recordings, the drumming is amazing. Bill is a banger, and at the same time, a technician. The rest of the band has the sound of a band playing together for many years even though they have been together for less than one. My thinking is now that Good Riddance is no more, this new band will carry on, leaving no regrets for the demise of its past music. —Donofthead (Fat)

ORANGES BAND, THE: Two Thousands: CD

Art rock. No, really—there's a guy named Art in the band. —Jimmy Alvarado (Morphius)

PARTISANS, THE: Idiot Nation: CD

Dr. Strange has the uncanny knack of picking out older bands from the brink of obscurity and releasing top notch material that stands up to their classics. The Partisans are a perfect example. Formed in 1978 by fourteen-year-old kids and English label mates with the newly formed Blitz, the Partisans sounded like an amalgamation of the Professionals, Sex Pistols, Peter and the Test Tube Babies, the Buzzcocks, and most obviously, The Clash. Their first album, self-titled, came out in 1983 (It's been re-released as *Police Story*.) The summer of '84 saw their second LP, *Time Was Right*. Then, pow, aside from reissues, nothing until they self-released an EP in 2002. The only strange thing that happened in the interim is that the bassist, Dave Parsons, went on to form Transvision Vamp, then joined Bush, of all bands. 2004's *Idiot Nation* pulls it off right. No stutter steps. Nothing tentative. Their roots are solidly in place (it's punk, not an assy form or new wave or a cringing version of metal), and they don't sound like geezers with their eyes on a brass check. This record sounds like '77 well spring punk. Great melodies, singalongs, and appropriate amounts of coarseness and abrasions. All in all, an extremely satisfying listen. How the hell does Dr. Strange keep doing this? —Todd (Dr. Strange)

PAULSON: Variations: CD

Initial's normal year offers about one decent release—this year offers two with the forthcoming *Guilt* collection and Black Cross' *Widows Bloody Widows* compilation. Paulson thus presents an interesting problem because, while it's better than normal Initial fare like the Harkonen release which came out earlier this year and the Ultimate Fakebook record which was really completely unnecessary, it isn't even close to the awe-inspiring sonic brutality of Black Cross. Paulson veers between skittering drumbeats which wouldn't sound out of place on a jazzy jungle 12", moody keyboard-driven atmospheric music which dribs from Three Mile Pilot / Black Heart Procession and unusual electronic effects which fill in the gaps between post-core riffing and attempts at more

experimental fare. Ultimately, this record sounds like it was made by a band that had too many musical and stylistic ideas to blend and wanted to try to do too many different and irreconcilable things at the same time. While this is a criticism of sorts, it is—at worst—a gentle one because at least Paulson is attempting to do something that is creative, somewhat innovative, and unexpected. That is something to be praised, not scolded, particularly considering how many bands seem to take the easy, three-chord path out of the muse's woods. —Puckett (Initial)

PERVZ, THE: Pieces of You: 7"

Saw this band recently and I was probably the only one impressed with this Las Vegas trio. They had the terrible option of opening to a total of six people, but they rocked harder than anyone on the bill that night. That took a lot of cajones to do. They play punk that is equal parts Dead Boys and Iggy Pop from the past, to modern day bands like the Stitches or the Briefs. When you see them live you expect you are going to hear a Green Day cover band because of how young they look. But before you blink, they kick you in the groin to bring you back to reality and rock you a new hole. —Donofthead (Wood Shampoo)

PLANESMISTAKEN-FORSTARS: Up in Them Guts: CD

More just heavy than metal, more Sabbath than Maiden, more doom, cataclysm, and urgency than pussy, pills, bottles, and a cheap fix. More darkness of twilight than the light of dawn. More bruises and welts and slashes than clear skin and perfect teeth. Unkempt hair, viking style. I'd admit that I don't listen to this type of stuff that often, but I've got to hand it to Planes Mistaken For Stars for creating their own non-ironic ecosystem of songs. Everything fits—from the whispy, nail-punctured screaming to the atmospheric (instead of needlessly intricate) guitar to the booming of the drums. It all sounds so big picture and scorched earth. Much like an epic movie is effected by scenery, the entire tone—every note—of this album is spot-on and reinforces the initial drive and theme. I can't say that it's really my bag, but you've got to hand it to them for following their own vision and making a powerful record that doesn't reek of a wispy fad or mere style. —Todd (No Idea)

PLEASE MR. GRAVEDIGGER: Here's to the Life of the Party: CD

The singer of this band seems to have some sort of glandular dysfunction which causes his mouth to produce too much saliva, which in turn comes flying out of his mouth into the microphone as he screams his atonal lyrics. It's kind of like that drunk guy you stood next to in that club the other day, who was trying to shout something in your ear, but all you got out of it was a wet ear. It's too bad, 'cause the rest of the band has got some really interesting stuff going on, including an

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occasional farfisa organ bleeding through the fuzzed-out guitars and the pounding drums and bass. I gotta think one of the other guys in this band could do the singing, they'd each get a larger cut, and they'd be a decent hardcore band. —Brian Mosher (Pluto)

PLEBE, LA:
Exploited People: CDEP
PLEBE, LA:
Conquista 21: CDEP

Hardcore punk from la Misi3n, with a wholly unnecessary horn section. While I can totally relate to some of the sentiments expressed here (being a Chicano raised in abject poverty in East Los, I find myself nodding in agreement when they speak of barrio and lower class hardships), I have a hard time swallowing lines like "don't call me addict 'cause the drugs help me heal." I've seen too many good people, including myself, fall for those lies and end up embodying the stereotypes that others have created to pigeonhole us (Chicanos and punks alike). Which is not to say that I'm some fuckin' teetotaler who walks a straight line or anything, but there's a fine line between having a beer or a toko with the boys and using alcohol and drugs to drown out life's pain. My suggestion is to take a little time and read Rudolfo Acuña's *Occupied America* and learn why you are in the position you're in instead of focusing too much time on "healing." —Jimmy Alvarado (www.laplebe.com)

POISON IDEA:
Feel the Darkness: LP

This is a reissue of Poison Idea's classic 1990 album. If you're a fan of the band, you know you need this album. If you don't know Poison Idea, *Feel the Darkness* is a good introduction. It shows the band at their best—blending straight ahead rock 'n' roll elements (like being able to play their instruments amazingly well and texturing songs with guitar parts that flirt with the idea of a solo without once wanking off) and punk rock (in the gruff vocals and raw honesty of the lyrics). On a first listen, *Feel the Darkness* gives you a lucid insight into where bands like Turbonegro and the New Bomb Turks got so many good ideas. On repeated listens, you'll just think, man, I need to own more stuff by Poison Idea. —Sean (Farewell)

PRACTICE/ SMALLTOWN:
Split 7"

What a perfect idea for a split—to combine a Japanese band with a Swedish one who're both approaching music in similar ways. Practice wear the Clash influence a bit more obviously, but it doesn't matter. They come across neither as an extended Clash medley nor do they sound like they're just rearranging the ashes of long-ago written songs. Great stuff. Fourteen songs down, from a slew of 7"s and splits, Smalltown has done no wrong. They make water-tight unpretentious, instantly likeable yet stronger on repeated listens songs. "Fifteen" is an ode to turning off the TV and going for a walk and "Jimmy" is a cover of the neo-mod band, The Purple Hearts. Great stuff that fans of prime Jam and Stiff Little Fingers would sit up and pay immediate attention to. What's odd about Smalltown is that they don't come off as a revival band. They've studied the past and sheared off the best parts, but have their fingers on a map that's leading them into places few bands have ever found. I'm not sure how they do it. —Todd (Snuffy Smile)

RAMONES: Acid Eaters: CD

A bit of a diversion, this is a collection of covers of psychedelic '60s tunes originally done by the Amboy Dukes, the Who, the Byrds, Love, The Jefferson Airplane and others. I remember not thinking all that much of this upon its initial release, but it sounds a lot more interesting upon hearing it again, and some of them, like "Somebody to Love" and "My Back Pages" are actually pretty rockin'. Also included is an outtake of them doin' "Surfin' Safari." —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

RAMONES: Adios Amigos: CD

It was a bit tough listening to this, the last studio album the Ramones will ever release. I've been living in a little bubble of denial for years now, avoiding buying this or listening to any of it, as if my ignoring it would change the fact that one of my favorite bands of all time is now but a beer-soaked memory. But you gotta face everything sooner or later, I guess, and this is as good as any to say goodbye to one of the musical pillars upon which was built my youth and subsequent adulthood. By the time this album hit the stores in 1995, the band members had had about enough of each other. Joey and Johnny hadn't talked to each other in years, and CJ and Marky had apparently developed a rift of their own (as evidenced in the bonus track, a cover of Motorhead's "R.A.M.O.N.E.S.," wherein CJ changes one line to "Marky takes it up the ass"). Still, they managed to crank out one last album of new tunes. Some really good work is put down here—a cover of Tom Waits' "I Don't Wanna Grow Up," the bittersweet (and evermore poignant considering he lost his battle with cancer a few years after this was released) Joey-penned "Life's a Gas," "Scattergun," and "Making Monsters of My Friends"—and CJ gets even more involved in the proceedings, penning a couple and singing roughly half the songs on the album. While it may not be the greatest album they ever recorded, it is one of the better ones of the latter period of their run, and definitely a nice way for them to head noisily off into the sunset. I loved 'em and I will truly miss 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

RAMONES: Brain Drain: CD

As the 1980s came to a close, it seems the brudders had pretty much run out of both steam and ideas, as evidenced by this album, which is eighty percent filler with some true Ramones gems imbedded here and there. The proceedings start off on a high note, with "I Believe in Miracles," one of the best tracks they managed during Reagan's tenure. From there, however, it's a five-song trudge to the next oasis, "Pet Sematary," written for the Stephen King movie of the same name. Three songs later, up pops one of the thrashers they developed a fondness for writing during the period, "Ignorance Is Bliss," followed by a rather pedestrian rocker, "Come Back, Baby," and then it's over. Ironically, it's a novelty bonus track tacked onto this reissue, "Merry Christmas (I Don't Want to Fight Tonight)," that provides the most Ramonesy song on the last release to feature three of the four original members. It would've been a sad ending, indeed, if this has been their last word, but after this was recorded, Dee Dee was out (although he continued to write for the band right up to the end), CJ was in and the '90s were on the horizon. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

RAMONES:

Mondo Bizarro: CD

Dunno if it was the arrival on the scene of the young CJ or the promise of a new decade, but after the lackluster *Brain Drain*, the boys came roaring back with this album to suckerpunch those who began mumbling that maybe the Ramones had reached the end of the road. Like a mirror image of the preceding album, this release is a solid effort, short on filler and long on ball-on-rock-'n-roll, not to mention some class-A songwriting. Joey offers up the opening salvo, "Censorshit," a bomb leveled at former Mrs. Vice-President Tipper Gore and her gaggle of Washington wives, the PMRC, who in the late '80s/early '90s were out to impose limits on free speech under the guise of little "parental advisory" stickers on music releases deemed "objectionable" (in one of history's great ironies, the stickers actually *helped* the releases tagged by giving them "taboo" credibility and boosting their sales). From there it's a veritable grab bag of late-period classics: "The Job that Ate My Brain," "Poison Heart," "It's Gonna Be Alright" (a thank you to their fans), "Main Man," "Tomorrow She Goes Away," "Heidi Is a Headcase," and "Touring," a nod to both where the band had been, musically and literally, and how they got there. Added on here as a bonus track is their take on the "Spiderman" theme, icing on an already amazing cake. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

RAT BASTARDS:

Self-titled: 7"

I'm mad, you're mad, we are all mad! When you are feeling that way, the only complement to that emotion is some

good ol' thrash. Something that makes you clench your teeth and makes your jaws cramp. Something that will make you tighten your forehead so hard that your eyebrows connect as one. This band from Chicago is the prescription for those needs. Fast and angry music that pummels its way out of the speakers. No pretend anger here. Fast bursts with stop-on-a-dime tempos that change with out a moment's notice. Six songs that go by so fast that you barely sit down before you have to get back up to flip the record over. —Donofthedeath (Kangaroo)

RAW POWER:

The Hit List: CD

Italy's most famous hardcore unit, who continue to slog on after more than twenty years in the game, take a moment to stop and reflect on where they've been. All the hits from most of their albums are here (although there's a noticeable dearth of tuneage from their awe-inspiring 1983 demo), and it will no doubt serve as a nice introduction to those who may have missed them first time 'round. It's also nice to hear the band's sound progression take place in the span of one CD. This is highly recommended listening for any fan of hardcore and its assorted offshoots, and a good way for old fans to catch up with 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

REAL LOSERS, THE:

Time to Lose: CD

I remember reading an issue of *Creem* at the library when I was a kid and a reviewer raped the hell out of the Saints' first record, saying that it sounded like it was recorded in a cavern of tin foil. And I remember getting that record years later and thinking, "Man, you're a fucking snob. That record sounds great." I'm not

a fidelity whore by any stretch of the imagination. Give me Supercharger on a barely working tape deck over Rush on a audiophile's hard-on stereo system any day. That said, this record made me almost go deaf. It's incredibly tinny and recorded so hot it makes me cringe. We're talking physiology—the body's natural reaction to stimuli—not the music. The music, from what I can tell, is pretty damn great. Manic, pure bred energy that reminds me of a mix between the Saints and the Kill-a-Watts. Lightning bolts, cars with dire exhaust problems, thrown pint glasses with bloody fingerprints, close hugs with bad breath and shitty amps. That type of thing. In a good way. I wish my ears would stop ringing, though. —Todd (Wrench)

REPLICATOR: *You Are Under Surveillance: CD*

Reminds me of Jeff Pezzati fronting Girls Against Boys or some other bass-driven D.C. post-core unit. Yes, there are sound clips, odd effects, etc. It's reminiscent of Rage Against the Machine in that respect... but only in the number of gadgets Tom Morello would fuck around with to make a noise. This is really pretty boring because there just isn't much to say before it's all said and done. —Puckett (Substandard)

RESTARTS, THE:

System Error: CD

Mid-tempo English punk rock with all the requisite sing-along parts and defiance that has become a bit of a stereotype these days. So what's so special about these guys, then? They sound sincere about what they are singing about, the songs are well-written and catchy as hell, and that, my dear friends, makes all the

difference. If this was released twenty years ago, you'd gleefully be paying through the nose for a copy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Havoc)

REVENGE IS: Self-titled: CDEP

Holy. Fucking. Shit. They did *not* just introduce a guitar solo on the record by saying the guitarist's name, did they? You must be fucking kidding me. And that's just the first song. Generic, unmemorable, hopefully quickly forgotten rock-'n-roll. If a cutout bin still exists somewhere, this disc will find its way there. —Puckett (Morphius)

RF7:

Addictions & Heartache: CD

Getting old not only sucks, it's also just plain weird, which is cool: For instance, the interval between this album's release and the release of *RF7 '87*—the last *RF7* album I recall myself being in possession of, although I'm not so sure there wasn't another one after that—doesn't seem any more longer and ridiculous than the interval between *RF7 '87* and the *Fortunate Son 45* was, even though we're talking about one interval of like four years and another one of like seventeen years. Further, although I will state without fear or favor that *RF7* were never a big favorite of mine (lots of my friends liked 'em though) back in The Day, they don't sound a goddamn measurable micron worse twenty-two years later—at least not to these punk-ravaged eardrums. We still gotz the two-guitar-punk-rock-plus-occasional-dark-surface-rock-and-or-metal-isms attack of the *Way Back When*, we still gotz unsung L.A. punk hero Felix Alanis' feces-sweet Lemmy-burgers on the vocal grill... hell, I can't honestly say that I've played this

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back to back with "Fall In," but, i mean, honestly, this certainly seems like it's within the ballpark of their best material. The title track (with a Screeching Weaselish riff and everything!) is, in all likelihood, my favorite RF7 song of all time (not including "Fortunate Son," which is cheating as it's my favorite CCR tune) Y'all whom dunno who RF7 be, y'all go to some night classes or somethin' and straighten up your conception of the punk rock framework. This man's name is MR. Felix, and he's got more *SICK TEENS* than you. BEST SONG: "Addictions & Heartache" BEST SONG TITLE: "Where Have All The Qualudes Gone?" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Unless reality shifted in the last two decades and i don't remember what the fuck was going on, Felix Alanis' Smoke 7 label released the first album by the band then known as Red Cross, *Born Innocent*. —Rev. Nørb (Puke 'n' Vomit)

ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT: *Circa Now!* + 4: CD

This album was originally my introduction to RFTC back in the early '90s, and it's the standard that I've held all of their later albums up to. As far as I'm concerned, RFTC didn't release anything as good as *Circa Now!* until last year's *Live from Camp X-Ray*. I don't know if it's just sentimental on my part, or if this album is really as great as I think it is. I will say this, though: I taped this off of a friend in 1993. When the tape wore out, I bought the CD. That CD was stolen from me sometime around '96, and a year later, I bought a new copy. So this reissue is the fourth time I've gone out of my way to obtain a copy of this album. It has been in my car, in my wife's car, or in heavy rotation at home for the majority of the last twelve years. I can't think of many other albums that I can say that about. Originally, Interscope released this album, and there's an interesting story all about how RFTC got signed and recorded this in L.A. during the L.A. riots in 1992, and how John Reis got the rights back and re-released it himself (it's all in the liner notes, I'm not gonna rehash it here). Press releases aside, though, this is one of my all-time favorites and it's essential listening. There are four extra songs on this re-issue. They're really good songs, but I can understand why they didn't make the original cut. They just don't have the same intensity and feel of the rest of the album. They'd fit better with RFTC's *Scream Dracula Scream* (which is a pretty good album, too). —Sean (Swami)

SAFES, THE:

Boogie Woogie Rumble: CDEP
Sounds like a quarter-century-younger version of the Angelic Upstarts all cracked up on those energy drinks so popular with our nation's youth singing Undertones songs that aren't about girls, except for "Mental Wheelchair," which kind of sounds like it could have come from somewhere in the middle of the second side of the Adolescents first album. *If this record gets you on the floor, watch out for your brisket!* BEST SONG: "Mind Meltdown" BEST SONG TITLE: "Mind Meltdown" i guess FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: 75% of this band appear to be brethren. —Rev. Nørb (Pro-Vel)

SBV/FEELIN' FINE!: Split 7"

SBV (no indication for what it stands) from SD (stands for San Diego) play very very fast most of the time, espe-

cially on the Ripcord cover, and the singer has a high youthcrew voice. I can't even figure out what speed the Feelin' Fine! side goes on, but they both sound great! At both speeds, they're heavier and scarier than SBV, and they get five songs, two more than SBV. They're from Fresno, but they sound like some of the radder Japanese thrash-grinders of today. Who's feeling fine now? Me! —Cuss Baxter (Retarded; <retardedrecords@hotmail.com>)

SCARLET LETTER, THE: *How Is Your Heart?:* CD

Sincere, well-intentioned hardcore. Sadly, heart only takes a band so far; memorable music needs to carry the music for the remainder of the journey and that's where this stumbles. It's not bad, but it isn't memorable. Besides, I've had an issue with the idea of writing an essay about what a song means that's longer than the song is for some time now. —Puckett (Black Matter)

SEDACED: Self-titled: CDEP

Melodic post punk out of the UK that sounds like Leatherface meets Hot Water Music. —Donofthedeat (Newest Industry)

SEGER LIBERATION ARMY: *2+2=? b/w East Side Story:* 7"

I suppose the fact that I was never a big Bob Seger fan explains the fact that I JUST DON'T GET WHY THIS BAND EXISTS. Adequate garage rock. —Cuss Baxter (Big Neck)

SIGNAL LOST:

Children of the Wasteland: CD

Something different from Prank Records this time around. A label that specializes more in the thrash variety, they diversify with this one. This is a female-led band that is more Vice Squad than the Distillers. Moody and atmospheric like the band Proletariat, or dissonant at times like early Sonic Youth. I find a lot of what I hear this band doing to be similar to the latest Harum Scaram LP by reaching out past the cookie cutter parameters of punk and trying to achieve the anger of the genre without having to play a million miles a minute. Dark and gloomy songs that are well done. —Donofthedeat (Prank)

SK8 OR DIE:

Not in My Skatepark: CD

Barely competent hardcore with a love of skateboarding and a hatred of rollerbladers as its overarching theme. It was funny and witty in its simplicity, and I doubt I'll ever listen to it again. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hill Billy Stew)

SKY SAXON & THE SEEDS: *Red Planet:* CD

...i am really not a Seedsologist—i'll cop to owning a copy of *Web of Sound* and, of course, familiarity with the hits ("Pushing Too Hard," "No Escape," etc.), but that's pretty much it—so i surely hope i didn't wind up getting assigned this record in the hopes that i had this vast wealth of information that i could just strew hither 'n' yon. I mean, i respect them '60s punk bands, and i even respect the '60s drug culture, and i especially respect a full-time cartoon nut like Sky Saxon, because, quite frankly, That Is What I Want To Be When I Grow Up—but, ultimately, although i was drooling and wearing a diaper for much of the portion of the '60s i was alive in, i was able to form some pretty strong opinions regarding the Popular Music Of The Time: Painted

in broad strokes, my feeling always was "Bubblegum Good, Psychedelic Bad." And, of course, i realize that these are the thoughts of an infant—but, then again, so what? I'm pretty sure i had a better-formed idea of what was "cool" or "uncool" at age three or four than most dopes i meet in the street will ever have in their entire adult lives. But, of course, i also realize that my utopian dream at age four (owning a jukebox and a lot of quarters so i could dance with my cousins all night to "Yummy Yummy Yummy" and "Bang-Shang-A-Lang") doesn't really work in a world where you have to beat people in the head just to be allowed to survive, so, uh... what's my point? My point, i guess, is that i cannot be reasonably expected to be overly excited about a new Seeds album. Were this a new Ohio Express or Archies or Lancelot Link & The Evolution Revolution or Banana Splits record, i'd be fucking pissing my pants (note: i have been toilet trained in the interim). I am, as regards the late '60s, somewhat of a counter-revolutionary, and i maintain my right to this position by the fact that i actually remember a fair amount of data about the four years and four months i existed in that decade, so there. ANYWAY. *About The Seeds, yes? How does this brain-purge involve The Seeds?* Well, see, the thing about The Seeds is that they've obviously got the one foot in That Which Man Would Call The '60s Punk, which is advantageous and good. On the other hand—or, more correctly, foot—they've also got one foot in That Which Might Be Psychedelic, which can occasionally be problematic. Now, "psychedelic" music, to me, is great, in theory. If you have, say, The Byrds giving you this

occasional lush sonic tapestry to enjoy, that's cool. If you have, say, the Bees giving you total brain-rot like "Voices Green and Purple," that's cool too. However, you take a case like the Jefferson Airplane, on the other hand, and... well... generally not my bag, in a big way. By dint of relatively crude instrumentation and production (blast that Farfisa and yell! Fuck yes!), The Seeds sidestep an immediate chuck into The Pit Of Psychedelic Hell—but, yet, i can't help but be edgy, feeling the band is eternally treading seductively on the periphery of a genre i do not and will not approve of. Realistically, anyone like three years older or younger than myself would probably have a totally different opinion on these matters, but that is pure speculation on my part. Very nice silk-screened cover art. *I take back half those things i just said about your mothers!* BEST SONG: "Let Her Sting" BEST SONG TITLE: "Let Her Sting," although that seems grossly unfair FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The Seeds' keyboard player is now the guy from the Finks/Bomboras/etc... and the new bass player used to be in Decry????????!!!! —Rev. Nørb (Rogue)

SLATER: Self-titled: CD

Sensitive rock. Oh, and they sing through a bullhorn filter just like STP. AC Slater would be disappointed. —Megan (Fork In Hand)

SLEEPING DOGS:

Beware: CD

A reissue of a Crass-related band's recorded output. Sludgy rhythms, monotone vocals, anarchist lyrics—this is what Flipper would've sounded like if

they had been from England and had Penny Rimbaud on drums. —Jimmy Alvarado (Broken Rekids)

SLOW JETS:
Remain in Ether: CD

There's really not much for me to care about here—at times it sounds like Sonic Youth channeling Dick Dale, at others it's as if Pavement really was The Fall. In the grand tradition of reviewers who really have nothing of merit to say about an artistic work besides dropping the names of seminal bands and trying to show off their musical knowledge (come on motherfucker, whip it out and get a ruler—we'll see who's bigger), I will offer that fans of indie rock might find this appealing. However, it doesn't really do shit for me. —Puckett (Morphius)

SOLIDARITY PACT, THE:
Concrete Don't Give a Fuck: CD

They seem to mean well. The DIY press release insert is a rambling, stream-of-consciousness rant about how we're all one big family, and we need to stick together and scream together, so that we can rise up together. Very uplifting. But the music is dark and throbbing, with hardcore screaming vocals and thunderous drums. Not exactly my thing, but well done. —Brian Mosher (Solidarity Pact)

SONIC LOVE AFFAIR:
Self-titled: 2 X 7"

This is broken up into the two sides of the band's personality, I guess, with the first disc showcasing a more fuzzed-out psychedelic influence and the second leaning more toward a Detroit rock bent. There's one original and one cover on each slab o' wax and all are done quite well. Dunno if they can pull off a full-length, but this ain't too bad. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dollar Record)

SOVIETTES, THE:
Alright b/w Plus One: 7"

Add two more feathers into the Sovietettes' cap. Flawless, urgent, fun punk rock with vocals that rotate easily through all four members like hot oil pumping through a big, powerful engine. If you've ever entertained liking a completely modern Go Go's-style of verve, insufferable hooks, hard-working sweat, contagious melodies, and smarts, The Sovietettes are a sure-fire bet. Hell yeah, it's great. They're the musical equivalent to having a cotton candy machine in your house. —Todd (Dirtnap)

STAGGERS, THE: One
Heartbeat Away from Hell: CD

Sturdy but samey-sounding hardcore-punkabilly, complete with Brian Setzer sideburns, hollow body guitars and a Hank Williams cover. Antiseen Lite? Molly Hatchet gone punk? Meat Loaf fronting Molly Hatchet doing Antiseen covers? Fuck if I know. Though it had its moments, it never quite cinched me into that skull-popping headlock that I like to find myself in when I listen to this kind of music. And the milquetoast version of "Snoopy vs. the Red Baron" didn't help matters. —Aphid Peewit (Haunted Town)

STALKERS: Sun's Coming Up
b/w I Couldn't Wait to Get Home: 7"

This band and record appear to bear at least superficial resemblance to the Crowd's *A World Apart* album, but, in the cold hard reality of my piercing critical gaze, I have decided that they're

more like ultra-early Misfits (just after "Cough/Cool") playing Sweet Baby songs. Both tunes are fairly strong, and, at my advanced age, that's what I like to see in a new band. I hereby declare myself in wait for the band's next record, before I throw the raw meat to the masses. We have all been warned. **BEST SONG:** "Sun's Coming Up" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "I Couldn't Wait to Get Home" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** That lead singer dude sure looks a fucking scary lot like my buddy's ex-girlfriend. **GO HOME. TANIA, YOU'RE DRUNK.** —Rev. Nörb (Dollar Record)

STRUNG UP:
Society Rot in Hell: LP

Holy shit, fuck and goddamn if this ain't one sweet motherfuckin' release. Fifteen tracks of flying fingers, stop/go tempos and attitude up the wazoo, all wrapped up in the accoutrements of a Bay Area hardcore band. In their tunes one can hear a mishmash of influences, from Bad Posture (who they cover here), Verbal Abuse, Negative Approach and a host of others, all blended perfectly and spat back out like a finely crafted margarita. If you have even a passing interest in hardcore and believe that there ain't been anything good that's come out of that scene in more than a decade, I suggest you get a hold of this by any means necessary, 'cause it'll give you that curb job you so desperately need, smart guy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Blazing Guns/Kangaroo)

SUNDAY DRUNKS:
On the Prowl: CD

When bluesy punk is done right it can be a beautiful thing, and these guys most definitely do it right, managing to reference the Stooges, the Dolls, the Heartbreakers and the first Damned album without sounding either dated or like worshipping geek clones. They stomp and swagger with the best of 'em, crank out one blues-encrusted tune after another, and leave you wantin' more. Good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Beat)

SWINGIN' UTTERS:
Live in a Dive: CD

I don't need to explain what this band sounds like, do I? These guys have been around for a while. My question is, why they are not as big as Rancid, Dropkick Murphys or, say, Flogging Molly? They came up around the same time period. I don't think they have to open for anyone anymore. But I guess because their videos aren't really on MTV and their counterparts' channels. But I would figure their popularity is at the level of the Casualties. Another release on the *Live in the Dive* series, a series that shows with such great recording production, you almost forget that it's a live set. So if you like the Utters, this is another one to add to the collection. —Donofthedeath (Fat)

TIM VERSION, THE:
Prohibition Starts Tomorrow: CD

Don't let these bastards sneak up on you. They'll break into your house, take all your records, and stash them in an undisclosed location, or at least it will feel that way because once this record makes its way onto your turntable, it's not coming off for a long-ass time. This is one of the few punk rock records that make me ask myself, "There's whiskey in the hutch, how come I'm not drinking it?" which is not necessarily a good thing when I have to be at work in an hour and I'm looking

for something, anything to take the edge off. I got news for you: the Tim Version ain't it. If anything, they make the edge edgier. What else is punk rock good for? —Jim Ruland (ADD)

TOTAL CHAOS:
Punk Invasion: CD

To this day, malignant rumors swirl about the punk community that Total Chaos is nothing more than a pre-fab street punk band cooked up in the mid-'90s by the Epitaph execs for the sole purpose of pumping a little badly needed crust and snarl into their otherwise "safe" label roster. There was even a rumor that Rob Chaos was, in reality, Nikki Sixx's little brother—and judging by the photos, you had to wonder; under all the spiky, colored hair and studded leather there was what appeared to be a "pretty boy" of sorts. And just how likely is it, the rumor continued, that a Rob Lowe-type is going to chuck it all for the gutter punk life of squatting and sporting around-the-clock b.o.? More likely that our Rob Lowe/Chaos character would wind up in some cheeseball hair metal band where his chiseled good looks and nice package can be more appropriately worshipped. Well, I don't have any insider poop on the true identity of Mr. Chaos, but what is certain is that, whether his dissent is manufactured or not, he is indeed in a hair punk band and they have managed to put out several albums worth of boldly cliché and cartoony street punk in the Exploited/Discharge/GBH tradition. And happily, some of it has actually been pretty good. Their latest, *Punk Invasion* (which apparently is a re-release of the same record that originally came out in '01 on Reject) is a pretty typical T.C. release with mostly revved up hardcore street punk and some slower, less snarly, dumb punk anthems. As good as this is in spots, it's equally bad in other spots (see Dumb Punk Anthems), so I'd still steer people towards their older, more consistent stuff like *Pledge of Defiance* and *Patriotic Shock*. But on the other hand, I'd definitely recommend this one over the one they did after *Patriotic Shock* with "Wilma Wifebeater" or whatever her name was. I guess I just miss the old line-up; I miss Ronald McMurder because he had a funny name and an even funnier haircut and I miss Joe Bastard, just because I think every punk band should have a fat guy. Now we have characters like "Todd Trash" and "Sean Smash" and it's just not the same. All in all, *Punk Invasion* has a bit of a punk-by-numbers stink to it, but for the most part, it manages to rock dumbly, despite all the glummy gutter punk posturing. —Aphid Peewit (SOS)

TRAILERPARK TORNADOS:
Don't Mind the Maggots: 7" EP

For some reason, Buffalo's proving to be one of the epicenters of disintegration for hard working, no luck punk bands. The Trailerpark Tornados sound like if Motorhead's Lemmy Kilmeister and two of his clones were thrown out of a van and run over by a retard bus then forced to go through an entire set before receiving any medical attention. It's bloody, bruised, pained rock, void of catchy choruses, one hell of a roughed up recording, and full of "life fucking sucks"-isms. The outsider's outsiders. Hey, it's loads better than a bunch of rock star pricks whose songs are as interesting as reading the ingredients in hair gel, that's for damn sure. —Todd (Big Neck)

TYCKER DU?: Close to It
b/w No Leaves Yet: 5"

Man, five-inch records are so fuckin' dumb: it takes six tries to get the goddamn needle on there without a rejection or dropping it on the mat, and then you get, at best, two minutes playtime before you gotta go through the whole thing again. And so, Tycker Du, you get one listen, you and your Hüsker-copped logo. Sounds more like Articles of Faith than Hüsker Dü, but in olden times the two had more in common than they would later, including Reflex Records, here echoed in the somewhat mysterious placement of the anagram Ferlex on the label, but not in such a way as to suggest, exactly, that that's the name of the label, and since there's no label or address listed, I guess it'll remain a mystery. —Cuss Baxter (no label, like I said)

U.S. ROUGHNECKS: Twenty
Bucks and Two Black Eyes: CD

I'll admit that when I saw this was on Hellcat, my underwear bunched up on me a little bit. But when I looked at the back cover and saw all the skeletons, I got my hopes up. I thought maybe it would end up being some decent, Misfits-y schlock punk; something obviously derivative, but certainly listenable—like Bobby Steele's Undead. Was I off! The skeletons on the back cover are the only thing Misfits-y about these guys. No one's hairdo in this band is anything close to a devilock. These are loud 'n' proud skinheads who play weightlifting street punk with a singer who sounds like a pro wrassler in a cranky mood. They prefer to call themselves "short haired rock-n-roll." I'm sure these guys would probably beat me into jelly with baseball bats if they ever saw those old pictures of me with Robert Plant hair, but I like them anyway. Like so many bands from this particular subgenre, this is meaty and menacing and just plain hard not to like, in spite of it's cartoony, pit-bull-like earnestness. —Aphid Peewit (Hellcat)

UNLOVABLES, THE: Crush,
Boyfriend, Heartbreak: CD

It's getting to the point where I know I've got to make a conscious effort *not* to listen to this CD any more, at least not for a few days. At first, I thought, What harm would come of me listening to it twice in a row? It's not a bad CD. The songs are definitely more pop than punk, but the lyrics are catchy and you can't help but tap your toe a bit in time with the music, bop your head, maybe shimmy and jiggle your shoulders a little. You start listening to the album at least once every day. Pretty soon, at random moments you find yourself absentmindedly humming a little tune, singing a couple of lyrics. In no time, you're waking up with an Unlovables song in your head, every morning, seven days in a row, and you know you're hooked. There's something addictive about this album, I swear. Don't start listening to it unless you're perfectly immune to infectious girl-fronted, pop punk rock. —Felizon (Whoah Oh)

V.P.R.: Aural Assault: CD

The cover reminded me of a cross between Green Day and the classic Peter Sellers movie *Dr. Strangelove*. But it's nowhere near as good as that. I imagine that they had a checklist of punk clichés in the studio with them: Tattoos? Check. Mohawks? Check. Nihilistic lyrics? Check. Fast guitars and faster drums? Check. Multiple piercings? Check. They

only forgot one thing: Songs. Not a good one to be found. —Brian Mosher (Squirrel Heart)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Advanced Calculus: CD

First of all, the last time I saw packaging this gorgeous was when Independent Project Records was still around. If you remember any of the 10" releases that label did, you know exactly how this looks and, by proxy, how incredible it looks. Honestly, I can't remember the bands that were on IPR—I just remember that the records all looked incredible. The music is what you might expect from a good free-form college radio station at the turn of the millennium—mathy, complex, noisy. For the most part, it's challenging, like a good college station should be. There are, of course, low points—generic hardcore which sounds like someone who so worshipped Kevin Seconds that they stole his life outright. Generic ska-metal which managed to crib from both Voodoo Glow Skulls and Hot Water Music. Generic pop punk which borrows liberally (if you can use liberal borrowing to mean robbing at gunpoint) from All. You get the idea. Despite these shortcomings, there's still a lot here to enjoy. —Puckett (These Bricks Are Mine)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Death by Salt: 3XCD

Subtitled "A Slug Magazine Compilation," it's a massive package with a beautifully letterpress-printed box, a booklet the size of my ham collection, with photos and short writeups for most or all of the probably fifty-nine bands (I can't count high enough or for long enough to check that fact), and three CDs full of what I'd imagine to be just about everything going on in Salt Lake City, which, of course, brings up a problem almost universal to scene comps: they can be really hard to listen to, even when some of the stuff is good, when you have to switch gears from sweet pop to chunk metal to folk to white rap to screamo every three minutes and forty seconds. (For what it's worth, I had the same problem with the only Victim's Family record I ever owned.) It's hard work, and I can't be the only one lazy enough not to want to do it. And I'm not even saying I want the stuff grouped better so I can skip genres; I guess I just like to cultivate a mood, and that's impossible when you're bounced out of Cosm's ambient techno into Bob Moss' weird and somber murder ballad, and then back up into the Vexations' French new wave and so forth. In fact, I probably actually dislike less than ten songs (mostly of the singer/songwriter or post-Pearl Jam variety), and really like quite a few, including: Red Bennies (Who-ey rock), Purr Bats (techno, and featuring Paul Butterfield who I think is a bigshot in some circle or other), the Cronies (Melvins-style), Dead in the Womb (death metal), Mental Midgets (thrashy hardcore), Switch (stoner), Form of Rocket (energetic treble punk), Debonnairs, Books About UFOs, Stilleto and the above-mentioned Bob Moss. Nice package, nice roster, knock down the editor. —Cuss Baxter (Eighteen Percent Gray)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Montreal
Spirite: A Dare to Care Records
Family Compilation: CD

Look, I know there's nothing I can say about this that's going to make you want to buy it. I have never met anyone who actively seeks out comp CDs, especially

when the mix tape serves the same purpose with much greater flexibility and much less cost. Making no sense! Anyway, there are some great bands on here—Fifth Hour Hero, Speakeasy, the Insurgent, and Suck La Marde—who sound like a weirded-out Dillinger Four. Good stuff! Unfortunately, one band, La Descente du Coude, starts out with a rockin' old Lemonheads sound, and then... becomes ska! Oh, the shame! Oh, the horror! This CD is one of those cereal packs with one-serving boxes, including everything from Speakeasy (Corn Pops!) to ska rockers The Planet Smashers (Berry Berry Kix! No thanks!). (Dare to the ska, good! —Maddy (Dare to Care)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Radio Clamor: CD

In the interest of full disclosure, I will offer that I, like some other *Razorcake* folks, periodically write for *Clamor* and am one of the proofreaders for each issue. With that said, this isn't typical fare because it's much closer to an audio collage of life than it is to the records that most of us listen to. Spoken word, the most analogous genre, doesn't even come close because these are clearly stories that cleave fairly closely to radio journalism. In theory, this is an hour-long program suitable for broadcasting in its entirety by a radio station. In that sense, the content is much like listening to NPR's *Morning Edition* or *All Things Considered*, only much farther off the beaten path. As one example, one of the most affecting stories focuses on a young man who died after being struck by lightning while dancing on a rooftop in a storm. However, it also makes for an interesting listen outside of radio's context if you approach it as listening to sound portraits of different lives and stories that fall outside typical media outlets. —Puckett (Clamor)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Rock
Against Bush Vol. II: CD/ DVD

Thumbs up to Punkvoter.com. They've mobilized the punks like no other force in punk rock's history. To show that we're not blowing cheap publicity smoke up their asses, both Jimmy Alvarado and I go a little bit more in depth about them in our columns and articles in this issue. To tell you the truth, with the notable exception of the blazing new Dillinger Four song, "Like Sprewells on a Wheelchair," Green Day's surprisingly good "Favorite Son," and The Dwarves "Kids Today," there is very little new on this comp that twisted my ear up and glued me to the stereo. (I like but already have the Bad Religion, Flogging Molly, Hot Water Music, Operation Ivy, and Jawbreaker cuts.) I honestly feel dirty and shameful listening to such built-in-the-laboratory-for-the-Warped-Tour bands as Autopilot Off and Yellowcard. Ick. Really. Fuck your violin and your sugar-voiced slime. But that's such a small quibble when I know that hundreds of thousands of kids are going to take this home, sit in their front rooms with their parents, and pop in the DVD. To know non-punks will hear why Patton Oswalt thinks it'd be fuckin' cool to die in the Apocalypse sidled next to a great dissection of the importance of independent media in a time of war, featuring Amy Goodman, makes my heart warm. People on the fence will get at least a dollop of information from a non-conservative viewpoint. The packaging is informative, rational, and well aware of its audience. —Todd (Fat)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Saved by Punk Rock: CD

It's odd how a compilation from Texas sounds like an overview of prime OC beach punk. I'm no expert, but I'd wager that most of these bands could go toe-to-toe with many of the bands on Hostage Records and hold their own. It's good stuff. —Josh (Rezist)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Shakin' in My Boots: CD

Assorted '60s slop, lo-fi and surfy instrumentals to turn out your next party. Features the Golden Boys, the Crack Pipes, the Deadites, The Ugly Beats, White Heat, and others, many of which feature Mr. Hank Tosh on drums, who seems to get around quite a bit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Licorice Tree)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
To the Bitter End: CD

Crispy Nuts! In all honesty, the song on here by Crispy Nuts is the only reason I picked this up. At one point in my life they were my favorite Japanese punk band, and they continue to rule in a Supersnazz-covering-Flag-of-Democracy way. The rest of this international compilation (including two bands from Estonia and one from Slovakia) is mostly either shouty Stiff Little Fingers stuff or crusty metal in the vein of Totalitar. Nothing on here is bad or anything, but very little stands out. —Josh (Vinehell)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Toronto City Omnibus: LP

Toronto is one of the hot scenes on the planet right now in punk rock. Here is a great sampler that shows why people are currently going gaga over the music coming out that region. First off are the Class Assassins, who play real catchy street punk that is equally tough and melodic. Their first 7" is on Soap and Spike Records and a full length is on TKO. Not sure if they put out anything else. Haymaker is another band that has put out a good amount of material. Angry-as-fuck punk that is not pretty to the ears. They even throw in a Reagan Youth cover for good measure. Legion 666 is equal parts black metal mixed with crust. The name alone evokes heaviness. Career Suicide is a fave at the Razorcake HQ. See the interview in issue 21. Pure old school punk purity. Riot 99 has put out a couple of CDs in the last few years and put their name on the map. You've probably heard the current punks on a pedestal, Fucked Up. Just like a scene report, this record has some heavy hitters. Scare Tactic, Murder Squad T.O. and the Blue Demons round this out. In a time when comps are usually really bad, it's surprising to get one that is actually good. —Donofthead (Schizophrenic)

VIBRATORS: Pure Mania: CD

This, the boys' first full-length, features much of their "classic" repertoire, including, "Whips and Furs," "London Girls," "Stiff Little Fingers" and, of course, "Baby Baby," which L.A. punkers Shattered Faith covered way back when, and there are bonus live and singles cuts as well, including "We Vibrate." Considerably more nuanced and prone to openly dancing on the fine line between punk and pub rock than many of their peers, these guys still delivered the goods with the best of 'em. Rumor has it they're still out and about. Hopefully they'll do us the courtesy of cranking out an album of new "classics"

rather than rest on their past efforts. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

VODKA JUNIORS:
Suburban Core: CD

Strung Out meets Bad Town Boys with a dash of Youth of Today. It's positive, skate boarder friendly, derivative, professionally tight, and didn't do anything for me. If we were still in the mid-'90s, they'd fit opening a bill for No Use For A Name and Lagwagon. Melodicore is like this fifty-foot long sheet cake. The first few slices can be awesome, but if you have to try to eat the whole thing, that's a fuckin' chore. Sorry. It came all the way from Greece, too. —Todd (Playfalse/ Cannonball 666)

WOLFBRIGADE:
A D-Beat Odyssey: 12" EP

Swedish fjordcore, which means this is heavy on Discharge influence, but not so much that they sound like copycats. This is supposedly this band's last release. —Jimmy Alvarado (Havoc)

WOLFGANG BANG:
Working Class Zero: CD-R EP

Title track sounds like "Deprogram" by Suburban Mutilation (but slower) crossed with the first False Prophets 45 (but slower). The other two songs sound the same, but not as good (but, then again, not slower, either). It's kinda cool they keep the tempo at the same quasi-plot for the duration instead of jacking it up here and there in the attempts to captivate antsy audiences—but, that said, i'm willing to wager that the band can't come up with enough top-flight tunes at this tempo to make things work to any great extent. Might i suggest a reworking of Sweet's "Wig Wam Bam" as "Wolfgang Bang?" Granted, the only way i see the chorus going on such a song is "Wolfgang Bang, gonna make you my wang," but i'm likely not as given over to deep thinking as these folks are. BEST SONG: "Working Class Zero" BEST SONG TITLE: "Head" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Cover art so bad it rules!!! —Rev. Nørþ (Wolfgang Bang)

WORKIN' STIFFS, THE:
My Ghetto: 7" EP

The Workin' Stiffs have always seemed to me to be a thrasher, more chaotic Swingin' Utters. (Both bands are great in my book.) With this four-songer, I hear a lot of what the Ends are pulling off. On the outside, it may look just like blue collar, working class punk—no denying that—but with close listens are little gems inside all of the songs. Johnny Thunder guitaring is butted up against thin slices of AC/DC, and it's all delivered up by a cocksure singer, who sounds like he'd spit right in your eye, but do it with a little bit of a smile. Fiery punk rock not afraid of rock'n'roll. These tracks don't disappoint. —Todd (Radio)

WRECKAGE:
This Is America: cassette

Crucial old-style thrash tape—six songs, eight-point-seven-five minutes, xeroxed insert, full lyrics, band logo incorporates a circle-A, et cetera. And it's really fuckin' good! Reminds me of the most intense points of NOTA and, like NOTA among others, Wreckage uses two guitars to proper advantage. One's down low and one's up high, like they split a pack of strings and each one got three. Get them some decent production and I think they'll blossom into a beautiful hardcore flower. —Cuss Baxter (Wreckage)



CONTACT ADDRESSES

to bands and labels that were reviewed either in this issue or posted on www.razorcake.com in the last two months.



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•**Alive**, PO Box 7112, Burbank CA 91510
•**Alternative Tentacles**, PO Box 419092, S.F., CA 94141
•**Amp**, 92 Kenilworth Ave. So., Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K-2S9
•**Anomer**, 45 Oak Hill Drive Apt. 11, Belleville, IL 62223
•**Ashtray**, PO Box 4216 Santa Rosa, CA 95402
•**Asian Man**, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030
•**Bad Taste**, Box 1243, 221 05 Lund, Sweden
•**Banal Existence**, 2706 Harvard Ave. E, Seattle, WA 98102
•**Beer City**, PO Box 26035, Milwaukee, WI 53266-0035
•**Big Action**, 217 East King St., Winona, MN 55987
•**Big Neck**, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195
•**Birdman**, PO Box 50777, LA, CA 90050
•**Black Matter**, PO Box 666, Troy, NY 12181
•**Blackout**, PO Box 610, Hoboken, NJ 07030
•**Blazing Guns**, PO Box 40236, Downey, CA 90239
•**Bombshells**, PO Box 3361, Burbank, CA 91508-3361
•**Boss Tuneage**, PO Box 74, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK
•**Broken Rekids**, PO Box 460402, SF, CA 94146-0402
•**Broken Spoke**, 19983 Lexington, Redford, MI 48240
•**Buddyhead**, PO Box 1268, Hollywood, CA 90078
•**Burning Heart**, 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026
•**BYO**, PO Box 67609, LA, CA 90067
•**Cannonball 666**, PO Box 52817 N. Erithea, 14671 Athens, Greece
•**Captain Oi**, PO Box 501, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 8QA
•**Combat Rock**, PO Box 65, 11101 Rmk, Finland
•**Criminal IQ**, 3540 N. Southport, Chicago, IL 60657
•**Dare to Care**, PO Box 463, Stn C, Montreal, QC, H2L 4K4, Canada
•**Dead Beat**, PO Box 283, LA, CA 90078
•**Death by Noise**, Jon G, 255 E. 3rd Ave., Columbus, OH 43201
•**Dee Minus**, PO Box 1954, Paducah, KY 42002
•**Deep Six**, PO Box 6911, Burbank, CA, 91510
•**Deranged**, PO Box 543 Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T1, Canada
•**Derek Lyn Plastic**, 691 Wesley Dobbs Ave. Unit M, Atlanta, GA 30312
•**Destroyed**, 12 Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143
•**Dim Mak**, PO Box 348, Hollywood, CA 90078
•**Dirtnap**, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111
•**Disaster**, PO Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510
•**Dollar**, 332 Fell St. #2, SF, CA 94102

•**Dr. Strange**, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701
•**Eighteen Percent Gray**, 2225 S. 500 East #206, SLC, UT 84106
•**Epitaph**, 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026
•**Ersatz Audio**, PO Box 02713, Detroit, MI 48202
•**Estrus**, PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227
•**Evergreen Terrace**, Wahlbergsgatan 10, 121 38 Johanneshov, Sweden
•**Excursion**, PO Box 20224, Seattle, WA 98102
•**Farewell**, PO Box 100205, 47002 Duisburg, Germany
•**Fastmusic**, Yale Station, PO Box 206512, New Haven, CT 06520
•**Fat**, PO Box 193690, S.F., CA 94119-3690
•**First Blood Family**, PO Box 1766, Madison, WI 53701
•**Fork In Hand**, PO Box 230023, Boston, MA 02123
•**Gearhead**, PO Box 421219, SF, CA 94142
•**Gern Blandsten**, PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661
•**Geykido Comet**, PO Box 3806, Fullerton, CA 92834
•**Go Kart**, PO Box 20, Prince Street Station, NY, NY 10012
•**GSL**, PO Box 65091, LA, CA 90065
•**Hardcore Holocaust**, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261-6742
•**Hater of God**, PO Box 666, Troy, NY 12181
•**Haunted Town**, 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave. #169, Chicago, IL 60647
•**Havoc**, PO Box 8585, Minneapolis, MN 55408
•**Hell Bent**, PO Box 1529, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742
•**Hellcat**, 2798 Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026
•**Hill Billy Stew**, PO Box 82625, San Diego, CA 92138-2625
•**Household Name**, PO Box 12286, London, SW9 6FE, UK
•**Idol**, PO Box 720043, Dallas, TX 75372
•**Impacto**, PO Box 620370, San Diego, CA 92162
•**In the Red**, PO Box 50777, LA, CA 90050
•**Initial**, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217
•**Ipecac**, PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563
•**Jade Tree**, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810
•**J-Shirt**, PO Box 85133, Seattle, WA 98145
•**Julia Sets Present**, PO Box 39012, St. Louis, MO 63139
•**Jump Start**, PO Box 10296, State College, PA 16805
•**Kangaroo**, Middenweg 13, 1098 AA, Amsterdam, Holland
•**Kapow**, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836
•**Knockout**, Postfach 100716, 46527 Dinslaken, Germany
•**Know**, PO Box 90579, Long Beach, CA 90809
•**Kommy Elektra**, PO Box 48, Pigeon, MI 48755
•**Licorice Tree**, PO Box 92783, Austin, TX 78709

•**Lollipop**, 7 Impasse Monségur, 13016 Marseille, France
•**Longshot**, PMB #72 - 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211
•**M80**, 2400 Hyperion Ave., LA, CA 90027
•**Mad at the World**, PO Box 20227, Tompkins Square Station, NY, NY 10009
•**Mangrove**, ACP Bldg 3F, 4-23-5 Kouenji Minami, Sugunami-ku, Tokyo 166-0003, Japan
•**McCarthyism**, 7209 25th Ave., Hyattsville, MD 20783-2752
•**Mint**, PO Box 3613, Main Post Office, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Y6, Canada
•**Morphius**, PO Box 13474, Baltimore, MD 21203
•**Nation of Kids**, 4443 Millvale Dr., Huntsville, AL 35805
•**New Disorder**, 115 Bartlett St., SF, CA 94110
•**New School**, PO Box 2094, Oregon City, OR 97045
•**Newest Industry**, Unit 100, 61 Wellfield Rd., Cardiff, CF24 3DG, UK
•**No Idea**, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604
•**Nodak**, PO Box 478885, Chicago, IL 60647
•**North Lincoln**, PO Box 6891, Grand Rapids, MI 49516
•**Not Bad**, PO Box 371292, Denver, CO 80237
•**Nuts and Bolts**, 4043 Piedmont Ave. #24, Oakland, CA 94611
•**Okmoniks**, 722 E. 9th St., Tucson, AZ 85719
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•**Onion Flavored**, PO Box 190054, SF, CA 94119
•**Plan-It-X**, PO Box 3521, Bloomington, IN 47404
•**Platfalse**, PO Box 62021, Halandri, 15201 Athens, Greece
•**Pluto**, PO Box 1201, McKinney, TX 75070
•**Pop Quiz**, 2005 Saber Ct., League City, TX 77573
•**Pop Smear**, 2269 Chestnut St. #970, SF, CA 94123
•**Prank**, PO Box 410892, SF, CA 94141-9021
•**Primary Voltage**, PO Box 382221, Cambridge, MA 02238
•**Prison Jazz**, 431 Birch St., Scranton, PA 18505
•**Pro-Vel**, PO Box 5182, St. Louis, MO 63139
•**Profane Existence**, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408
•**Puke 'n' Vomit**, PO Box 3435, Fullerton, CA 92834
•**Radio**, PO Box 1452, Sonoma, CA 95476
•**Reason Y**, 747 Barnett St. NE #4, Atlanta, GA 30306
•**Revelation**, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232
•**Rezist**, 4300 Price Ln., Longview, TX 75605
•**Riff Raff**, 12004 Robin Dr., Catharpin, VA 20143
•**Rockin' Bones**, c/o Gualtiero Pagani, Borgo Palmia 3a, 43100 Parma, Italy
•**Rogue**, 6701 W 87th Place, LA, CA 90045

•**Salinas**, PO Box 20996, Ferndale, MI 48220
•**Scarey**, c/o Carlo Calemme, Casella Postale 516, Succ. 76, 10121 Torino, Italy
•**Schizophrenic**, 17 West 4th, Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 3M2 Canada
•**Sickroom**, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647
•**Ski Mask**, PO Box 41753, Mesa, AZ 85274-1753
•**Slab O Wax**, PO Box 461082, San Antonio, TX 78246
•**Smog Veil**, 550 W. Plumb Ln. #8501, Reno, NV 89509
•**Snuffy Smile**, 4-1-16-201 Daita Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo, 155-0033 Japan
•**Solidarity Pact**, 153 East 17th St., Huntington Station, NY 11746
•**SOS**, PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92878
•**Spook City**, PO Box 34891, Philadelphia, PA 19101
•**Squirrel Heart**, PO Box 5871, Arlington, VA 22205
•**Steel Cage**, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125
•**Substandard**, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701
•**Suburban Home**, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204
•**Sudden Death**, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5G 3H0
•**SW**, PO Box 9599, Charlotte, NC 28299
•**Swami**, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162
•**Take Root**, 250 Napoleon St. Suite H, S.F., CA 94124
•**Target Earth**, 505 Lupinas Hiranuma, 1-1-15 Hiranuma, Nishi-ku, Yokohama 220-0023, Japan
•**These Bricks Are Mine**, 5001 Baum Blvd., Suite 630, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
•**Thick**, PO Box 351899, LA, CA 90035
•**Thinker Thought**, 1002 Devonshire Rd., Washington, IL 61571
•**Tiberius**, 4280 Catalpa Dr., Independence, KY 41051
•**TKO**, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221
•**Tom Perkins Entertainment**, 7233 Lamphere, Detroit, MI 48239
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•**Trashfish**, PO Box 56497, Little Rock, AR 72215
•**Tsunami**, 231 Emery Mills Rd., Shapleigh, ME 04076
•**Thuned To You**, 1026 De La Voie Oest L...Vis, Q G6Z J19 Canada
•**Union Label Group**, 78 Rachel E. Montreal, QC H2W 1C6, Canada
•**Vinehell**, PO Box 36131, San Jose, CA 95158
•**Whoah Oh**, 21-36 43rd St., Astoria, NY 11105
•**Wood Shampoo**, PO Box 27801, Las Vegas, NV 89126
•**Worlddealer**, PO Box 42728, Philadelphia, PA 19101
•**Wreckage**, 24-75 38th St #4B, Astoria, NY 11103
•**Wrench**, BCM Box 4049, London, WC1N 3XX, England



Send all zines for review to Razorcake, PO Box 42129, LA, CA 90042. Please include a contact address, the number of pages, the price, and whether or not you accept trades.



3RD GENERATION NATION, #27, \$4, 8 x 11 xerox, 68 pgs.

This zine has been reviewed a lot and everyone says, "Oh shit, it's in German." True, it is in German, but there are some English interviews with The Wasps, Hollywood Hate, Trashcan Darlings and more. And quite a few record reviews are in English as well. But this brings me to a more important point. Americans are stupid and only speak English. —Gabe Rock (Third Generation Nation, Grenzweg 66, 4787 Willich, Germany; <www.3rdgenerationnation.de>)

ANTI-PANTS, # 8,

\$1 or trade, photocopied, 35 pgs. Record reviews. Interviews. Comics. When I first picked this up, I thought, "Oh neat-o, the cover rips off *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*." Then I looked inside and saw that some girls put together a zine reminiscent of a middle school yearbook. Complete with a first-page gothic poem, "Ode to Jimmy Buffet." The zine sucked like most of the bands they chose for their record reviews. They even stole most of the *Razorcake* Shemps interview, which might make it worth reading. Usually, I would say something like, "Still, you have to give them credit." But then I think to myself, "No, I don't." —Gabe Rock (Anti-Pants, PO Box 3950, San Dimas, CA 91773)

CHAIRMEN OF THE BORED,

#20, 8 1/2 x 11, photocopied, 24 pgs. Distributed by Fanorama Society, this cut and paste extravaganza is created by two prison inmates, one in the legendary Folsom Prison, the other a guest of the Ohio state correctional department. A few hand drawn cartoons and several typed (on a typewriter, not a computer or a word processor) essays and short stories kept me entertained from cover to cover. No music reviews, but reviews of several other zines. You've got to give it up to these guys for putting this together while incarcerated. One of them actually spent time in solitary as punishment for using the prison's paper and photocopier without authorization. Now that's suffering for your art. —Brian Mosher (Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI, 02905; <fanoramal@aol.com>)

CONCRETE WAVE, \$4.95, Vol 3., No.1, 9 x 11, full color cover, glossy insides, 90 pgs.

In the spirit of full disclosure, *Concrete Wave* reprinted part of my book in their pages. That said, I'm under no obligation to write about this mag, but it's one that I constantly read cover-to-cover. This Canadian skate magazine is doing a great job of bridging many gaps that

have existed in skating for years. Contrary to popular belief, there isn't just one type of skating and it isn't solely enjoyed by the young. *Concrete Wave* takes great pains to give equal time to the forms of skating that aren't as financially lucrative as street skating or the world according to some advertising executive's hard-on at the X Games. I totally applaud that they cover pool skating, ditch riding, hill bombing, freestyle, slalom, and all the more soulful, life-affirming nuances that skating can bring. It's a far cry from a hyperkinetic "extreme" soda advertisement, and that's a great thing. At thirty-two, I try to skate at least once a week. I go to a semi-local park, pad up, and work my favorite bowl. It's a fun time. More times than not, I meet some cool people, swap some stories between turns, and get a nice workout. *Concrete Wave* seems true to this type of skating—a lifestyle that's not all branding and new tricks. Not only have they been able to focus on aspects of skating that are usually overlooked—which has long been the realm of many a fantastic photocopied skate zine—the photography and layout are gorgeous. It looks like no expenses have been spared. It's great to see classic shots from the '70s, like Boyd Harnell's incredible photo of Jerry Valdez inside a clear, skateable dome that's hovering above a family fun park. But *Concrete Wave* isn't just part of the wayback machine, pinning over skating's lost golden era. They also cover up-and-coming rippers like Ronnie O'Neil, a nine-year-old girl who can pull tricks that would cripple me. This issue also includes an interview with longboard skateboard manufacturers, Sector 9 and an interview with Vernon Johnson, the man responsible for drawing the famous skeletons of Powell Peralta and the Bones Brigade that adorned countless jean jackets during my high school years. Wrapping it up is Chris Gilligan's essential treatise against modular parks and for concrete parks. I've been wrangling with the City of LA for over a year to make a non-ass concrete park in my town (an ongoing and frustrating process, to be sure). Gilligan's essay is so essential that I downloaded the PDFs of his file and handed it out to community members, who learned a lot from it. Excellent stuff. —Todd (1054 Center St. Ste. 293, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 8E5, Canada)

CRACKS IN THE WALL

#5, 4 1/4 X 5 1/2, photocopied, 46 pgs. All cut and paste throughout, some typed, some handwritten. Also, lots of cartoons, both original and modified versions of other people's work. A very creative look, well

written and often humorous, but much too long considering there's only one idea in here. The only thing he talks about is how modern society is too obsessed with materialism and the need for instant gratification; and how, even though we have access to unprecedented amounts of information, thanks to the internet, we're still a bunch of ignorant jerks. All of which is true, but could have been covered in about two pages. —Brian Mosher (Andy, somewhere in western Massachusetts; <andy_939@hotmail.com>)

DO-IT-YOURSELF SILKSCREENING: HOW TO TURN YOUR HOME INTO A T-SHIRT FACTORY:

\$2, 7 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 18 pgs. Having never silkscreened my own t-shirts, but always being intrigued by the process, this is a neat introduction. It's a comic book made by a guy who's been silkscreening for over ten years. It's a breezy and well-drawn. You get a good overview of the entire process, from making the frames, stretching the silk, to burning the image onto the screen—all of the basic steps, through clean up. All of that is awesome, and in that respect, the zine succeeds. Yet, there are a couple of things that I think the zine overlooks or assumes, especially for a neophyte to the squeegee arts. He doesn't say, exactly, what a transparency is, how to buy one, or how to make one. (Again, since this is a zine aimed at someone—such as myself—who has never put ink to a t-shirt, being as basic as possible is key.) Also, with the transparency, he tells you after it's getting burned what type of transparencies work best. I'd be better if that information was flipped around. John also assumes that everybody knows what a squeegee is (I can almost see someone using one designed to clean windshields instead of one made more specifically for silkscreening). So, my suggestion, if you're looking into silkscreening your own t-shirts is picking this up as a rough guide, then checking your local library or online to see if there are some more technical manuals to fill in some of the gaps with this zine. With a couple of tweaks, additions, and a tighter consideration to audience, this could be an invaluable DIY resource. —Todd (John Isaacson, 3022 Fulton St., Berkeley, CA 94705)

ELK #7, \$4, 5 1/2 X 8 1/2, photocopied, color photocopy cover, 66 pgs.

Art. It's a conundrum. Some of it's great. Some of it's shit, and very rarely can two people agree on what's what. This zine's arty. It's

mostly photocopied pictures of photos, all juxtaposed together—like a picture of “Political Friends of Washington Irving” next to a Discharge 7” cover and a picture of Jodie Foster skating adjacent to a picture of an expensive car surrounded by a big building and an expansive parking lot. Sade sings next to a Bukowski poem. Part of me just kinda shrugs. Part of me wishes that the credit and explanations to the images were on the same page instead of all compiled in endnotes at the back of the book. Overall, *Elk* smacks a little of Davy Rothbart’s *Found* zine, but a little more deliberate in the sourcing and less playful. It’s worth flipping through, seeing if it piques your interest, and guessing where the pictures came from. –Todd (Jocko Weyland, 195 Powers St., Brooklyn, NY 11211)

FRAN, #6, free in Los Angeles, \$3 by mail, 8 1/2 x 11, 58 pgs. New-to-me zine about the city I’m calling home these days. Some of it comes off as “you should’ve been there...” jokes that I showed up about five minutes late for. Jokes about anything “entertainment,” while very LA, go nowhere with me. What can I say? I don’t have cable and I don’t really know who Hillary Duff is. Big points to cover-

ing the Orphans and LA’s most over-looked and interesting landmarks—The Watts Towers. They’re incredible. Simon Rodia emigrated from Italy, worked as a cement mason, drank, went crazy, moved to Watts, sobered up, and started building. The towers stand ninety-nine feet tall at the highest point. He sculpted them with no scaffolding, welding, bolts, or plans. It is the largest single work of art made by one man. Not only are the towers themselves amazing, but the history around it is equally fascinating. Watts had been a racially mixed neighborhood until after the first World War. During WW II, Japanese citizens were sent off to internment camps and their homes were sold as low income housing for the growing defense industry, which drew an even larger black population to the area. Once the war was over, defense jobs vanished and unemployment rose drastically in the area, leaving a struggling black ghetto. During the racially spurred Watts riots, while most of the city was in flames, neighbors gathered around the towers to protect them. The community saw past racial boundaries to salvage not homes, nor businesses, but art. You just might understand why if you get the chance to see it. Back to the zine,

though. I wish they had gone more in depth on the Watts Towers, and the Orphans interview comes off as a “What should I ask you?” “I don’t know, what do you want to ask me?” kind of thing. I was hoping to read about the little hole-in-the-wall places I know are out there, or to find out more about the places I walk by every day. I was kind of let down, but hey, for free I know I’ll pick it up again. –Megan (Fran Magazine, 511 N. Kenmore Ave, Suite #103, LA, CA 90004)

GHOSTS OF READY REFERENCE, THE, #2, 3 stamps or trade, 4 1/4 x 5 1/2, 32 pgs.

This is the second library-related zine I came across, the first being *Library Bonnet*. This one just left a nasty taste in my mouth. (Fuck you, Dale.) Similarly to *Library Bonnet*, *Ghosts* tells the stories of the many interesting characters that come through the library on a regular basis. *Ghosts* seems to take a slightly haughty approach to this. All the instances seem to be looked on from a cold and condescending perspective. They introduce the zine with a Cast of Characters that pigeonholes a woman suffering from the effects of a stroke as “B-O-B,” Bitter Old Bitch. Instead of funny anecdotes of the craziness that comes with working with the

public, *Ghosts* follows their “characters” through a variety of situations which in the end made me feel sorry for the characters and disappointed in the author. –Megan (Love Bunni Press, 2622 Princeton Rd, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118)

GO METRIC!, #18, \$2, 8 x 11, newsprint, 70 pgs. This zine is boobytitties. It has all the typical shit in a zine and more. There are clever articles contrasting the *Daredevil* and *Scooby Doo* movies and a brilliant comparison of Hamlet and *Strange Brew*. This zine has a pop culture feel to it because of all the comic book and movie articles. It also features interviews with Sgt. Major, the Fevers, and the Rock’n’roll Adventure Kids. But my favorite article by far was the personal account of Dan Paquin from Dirt Bike Annie remembering Dirtnap labelmates, the Exploding Hearts. –Gabe Rock (Go Metric, 801 Eagles Ridge Rd, Brewster, NY 10509)

GRACKLE #2, \$1, 4 x 5 1/2, photocopied, silkscreened cover, 28 pgs. *Grackle* is a thoughtful, unassuming, and quick zine to read. Malinda, twenty-seven, goes to college, faces her fears straight on, and discovers a considerable amount of



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inner strength. What I like about *Grackle* is the lack of self-absorption (it is a personal zine, but it's more like stories told to a circle of friends instead of diary entries) and the lack of complaining and whining. It's a mature, but by no means sterile, read. It's scary being thrust into new situations, not knowing if you're going to fail miserably. Malinda captures this feeling well and she shares the opening of a new chapter in her life. She finds herself not only doing extremely well in school, finding an affinity for algebra, and she continues working on the things in life that give her solace and reward. The cost? Time and dedication. The clincher about this zine is that if someone handed it to me and said, "It's zine's about a lady who gets into weightlifting and then decides to join a cycling team," I'd be suspicious. But by reading such an earnest and steady account—and seeing that, at the edges, this is a treatise on finding your own path in life—*Grackle's* a great read. —Todd (Malinda, 1703 Southwest Pkwy., Wichita Falls, TX 76302)

IT'S ALL GRAVY, #6, \$1.00, 4 1/4 x 5 1/2, photocopied, 26 pgs.

Complete with plenty of pics and show reviews, this is an interesting glimpse into the ska/punk scene in South/Central LA. Articles about backyard concerts and shows in Tijuana, an interview with local ska band ONK, some CD reviews, and an article about the FBI's mistreatment of activist/revolutionary Sherman Austin are all interesting reads. The best bit of all is a piece by a girl complaining that she can't go to a show without somebody grabbing her ass. After ranting about what she perceives as the death of feminism, she tells all the guys, "being a boy-feminist is still cool. The chicks still dig it. And it still gets you mad pussy." Now that's some good advice if I ever heard it. —Brian Mosher (Nick G, c/o Libros Rev., 312 W. 8th St., LA, CA 90014; <gravyzine@hotmail.com>)

LIBRARY BONNET, #7, \$2, 8 1/2 x 5 1/2, 32 pgs.

If you like your literary humor mixed with cartoons of teacups full of diarrhea, then this is for you. One of my favorite zines to see in the mail, all dolled up in its sticker-y, glittery-ness. Once again Tommy and Julie give you a behind-the-scene look at the world of libraries that I want to be part of. Psshaw to tightly wrapped buns and saggy pantyhose! I want to read the left-behind reports to learn "What Happens to Your Head When You Fall at 20mph." (Which apparently is that "you can go retarded.") I want to make bags of beads all day and pass it off as work, nay, as necessary work. This issue also has an interview by Julie of Tommy, which is both endearing and funny. Plus, there's oodles of Tommy's comics, which always make me happy. (Tommy Kovac is a Slave Labor Graphics artist who has a new series, *Autumn*, out now, too.) If they didn't put their own gold stars on this one, I just may have had the mind to do it myself. —Megan (Library Bonnet, 1315-I N. Tustin Ave #259, Orange, CA 92867)

LULULAND, #3 and 4, \$3 for both, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, 96 pgs. total for both.

Bear with me, it makes sense. The first part is a screenplay about a girl making a zine. The second part is the zine that said girl in said screenplay made. Apparently I got it all wrong, because I read the zine-that's-a-zine, not the

zine-that's-a-screenplay first. Does it matter? I don't know. I felt like I got it. Either way I liked it. In #3, there is a little bit of overlap that was just a tad redundant, but by #4, it seems like she hits the balance dead-on. The two perspectives of the actual zine versus the screenplay of the events of the zine-making makes for some interesting out-of-body experience-type shit where you read events through both an outsider's eyes, then through the eyes of the person who went through it. The stories are awesome, like getting dressed in office clothes and going to a building looking for an unsupervised copy machine to steal copies from, only to end up getting hooked on elevator rides. Another is about getting fired from a toy store for making her own advertising stickers for toys (i.e. "When I grow up, I wanna get knocked up!"). Plus, Amy Adoyzie knows when you walk into a bar in skid row and order a beer, if the bartender asks if it's to go, you hold back your confusion and order that beer to go just because you can. —Megan (Amy Adoyzie, PO Box 356, Van Nuys, CA 91408-0356)

SLUG, Vol. 15, issue 185,

Free, 8 x 11, color/news print, 39 pgs.

Slug's a fifteen-year veteran of the SLC underground featuring interviews with Willem Dafoe (one of my favorite actors [*Wild at Heart*]), the Rapture, and Cattle Decapitation, book reviews, lots of local stuff, and the interview with T-model Ford is worth reading. If you sift through the Salt Lake bong ads and shit like that, you got some decent articles. Only thing is I can't figure out if I like or hate the CD reviews. —Gabe Rock (Salt Lake Under Ground, 2225 S. 500 East Ste. 206 SLC, UT 84106; <15yrs@slugmag.com>)

SLUG AND LETTUCE, #79,

Free, 11 x 14 1/2, printed on pulp, 19 pgs.

First of all, the print is way too small. I'm getting a headache just thinking about reading this zine. On the other hand, there are lots of high quality drawings and cartoons. In addition to reviews of underground music, *Slug and Lettuce* continues to focus on eco-friendly lifestyles. There are no articles in this issue that were particularly interesting to me, but they are well written. At least I think they are; my eyes can't quite make out all the tiny little letters. —Brian Mosher (PO Box 26632, Richmond, VA 23261-6632)

RANCID NEWS, # 6, 1 pound, 8 x 11, glossy color cover, newsprint, 112 pgs.

This zine features interviews with twenty-one bands, including Planes Mistaken for Stars, Dillinger Escape Plan, Give Up the Ghost, and Leatherface. Also music/zine reviews and several columns. This zine also features articles about shoplifting, graffiti, CCTV, direct action and a protest guide. Judging by the cover, to look at it you would think it was your typical southern California zine, but it isn't. Sure, the ads and layout look exactly the same but the content is very Euro, you bloody stink palm. I would recommend it. Even though it looks lame, it isn't. —Gabe Rock (Rancid News, PO Box 382, 456-458 the strand, London, WC2R ODZ, England)

RIOT 77, #7, 3 Euros, 8 1/2 x 12, glossy, 50 pgs.

The look and production quality of this are more "magazine" than "zine", but the writing and subject matter are much less polished. With Marky Ramone as cover boy and interviews with the Supersuckers, Leatherface, punk graph-

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Lot's of other new stuff and re-stocks too...like the Winds LP on Alien Snatch!, will there be one left for you? And coming in very soon will be the Impossible to get No Hope for the Kids 7" "Das Reich" and you better hurry if you want to get that one!

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SILLY LITTLE TROUSER MONKEES, #20,

8 x 11, newsprint, 50 pgs. I want to read a story about two kids who get drunk and try to make out with girls. *SLTM*'s got it. It's also got a record label profile of Hand Made Records, "Street Team Defined," and "Bad Pick Up Lines" that weren't funny. At first, I started reviewing this zine and I thought, "This is a crappy version of the *Onion*," but parts of it were funny, so I take it back. I liked the reviews of fan groups (email lists, website and message boards) because I am a fucking dork. There was some article called "Betsy Ross Thinks You're a Bitch," and I liked it. So now I want to fuck Betsy Ross. I don't

know how old these fuckers are but they sent me a note on the back of a chemistry cheat sheet, therefore I say they win the "Baddest Dudes Who Took the Chemistry Exam" award. —Gabe Rock (<www.sltmonkees.com>)

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS WORTH OF JAW, 4 x 6, 48 pgs.

This zine's more of a short story about jerking off. It begins with the author's memories of masturbating at the age of six and ending with masturbating in his grandma's shower with his thumb up his ass. Perfect for somebody who likes "pee and poo-poo jokes" on a short bus ride somewhere. If you have a sense of humor or have ever masturbated, you will find this story pretty funny and entertaining, so get your thumb out of your ass and check out the website. —Gabe Rock (Clint Heidorn, PO Box 6488, Burbank, CA 91510; <www.lettersfromnowhere.com>)

THOUGHTWORM #11, \$2, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, linoleum block print cover, 28 pgs.

Thoughtworm is a quiet and strong zine, written at a measured pace. Although that may not sound like a huge recommendation, it is. The author of it, Sean, is exploring the realms of isolation (both social and

geographical) and solitude. He's a librarian in Wichita Falls, TX, slowly coming to grips and peace with his surroundings without giving in to them. Perhaps I have an affinity to what he's writing, since my life happened in reverse to his, in the respect that I was raised in a small desert town and moved to a big city, and he moved from civilization to a desolate burg full of right wing Christians. His outlook on his two years there, after the shock of realizing that he's almost all alone wears off, is illuminating. In small town life, there are two main paths to take. Giving in, getting an SUV, frequenting chain restaurants, and praising God and the GOP with bumper stickers or remaining open to the bits of beauty that the place doesn't reveal easily. Thankfully, Sean sees the good, takes the rest with a huge hunk of salt, and continues to write. This issue of *Thoughtworm* holds even more resonance for me because there's an essay where his memory's failing him—even if he looks at pictures of himself—yet he has palpable reactions and floods of memories by listening to older albums. There's also a great essay about his bold attempt to toilet train his cats. It ends in shambles, but I admire his methodic tenaci-

ty and research chops. Who would have thought that the jazz bassist, Charles Mingus had an essay on the topic, too? All in all, *Thoughtworm* seems much larger than twenty-eight pages and is the perfect antidote to all of those poorly edited and hastily tossed together zines. Recommended. —Todd (Sean Stewart, 1703 Southwest Pkwy., Wichita Falls, TX 76302; <www.thoughtworm.com>)

TONES + NOTES, #1, \$1 or trade, 4 x 8 photocopied, 15 pgs.

This zine is dedicated to "making your own music: composing, arranging, notating, playing, recording etc." This is an intelligent, nerdy, and intricate zine geared towards other musicians. It reminds me of a textbook because of its focus on subjects like "How to Improve Letter Notation." It also takes an interesting look at copyright laws, reminding us that "Happy Birthday to You" is protected by law. If you are an anal retentive musician looking to geek out with other serious musicians, I strongly suggest you check this zine out. —Gabe Rock (Light Living Library, PO Box 190-tn, Philomath, OR 97370)



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Beggars of Life: A Hobo Autobiography

by Jim Tully, 170 pages

Years ago, I was living in Atlanta, working nights in a bar and spending most of my days reading and writing stories. One rainy day, I went down to the local library to get something to read. The library was full of homeless people. I guess they were there to get out of the rain, but the librarian would kick out anyone who wasn't actively using the library. So all these guys had books, and they were reading. I walked around the tables of homeless guys, and some of those guys had some pretty heavy books—I remember one was reading Sartre—and their eyes were roaming back and forth over the lines of the books. It was a cool sight. I wanted to talk to them, to find the literature professor in the rough, to find the one homeless dude who knew more about the classics than a hundred grad students put together.

When I got this review copy of *Beggars of Life*, I thought back to that rainy Atlanta day because the author, Jim Tully, was a "library bum." He hopped trains and wandered around the Midwest, having some wild adventures and always staying on top of his reading. His writing reflects that. In some ways, he's got that classic nineteenth-century way of pinning philosophy on a bum the way Thoreau would find a depth of thought in a lake in the woods. In other ways, he's a Steven Crane knock-off, always going for the raw, gritty, and real to nail home his themes. Mostly, though, Tully is a great storyteller. He started hopping trains when he was fourteen, and *Beggars of Life*, which was originally published in 1924, follows his early years. Tully writes about working for a 500 lb. sideshow dancer, "Amy, the Beautiful Fat Girl," who kept him in booze and food as long as he operated her spotlight and told her stories. He writes about the time he was travelling with a kid who'd had way too hard of a time in juvie, and they got jumped by two railroad cops. Tully and his friend left the cops handcuffed to a tree, and, for the rest of the summer, hobos had a hell of a time travelling by train through those parts. Tully also talks about the clever ways he'd make money, like the time when he and his buddy were hired to vote repeatedly in a local Chicago election. Tully has a funny style to his description, too. He'll say things like, "she poured me the drink. I tossed it down like a politician." In that way, you can see him as the predecessor to John Fante or Charles Bukowski. The best parts of the book, though, come when Tully is just honest, like when he tells the story of a prostitute with whom he had a long affair, and who supported him for a while. She up and left one day, and all Tully can do is write out his story and end up by saying, "I hope greatly that she may read these lines."

Apparently, *Beggars of Life* is the first of five books that Tully wrote about his hobo days. AK Press has done us all a great service by putting this back into print. I only hope that they follow it up with his other four books. —Sean (AK Press, 674 A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612)

The Complete Peanuts: 1950-1952

by Charles M. Schultz, 343 pages.

On October 2, 1950, a new comic strip appeared in the funny pages of newspapers all over America. It was called *Peanuts*, and at first glance, it was a typical four-panel comic strip about some little kids jumping rope and playing jacks and going swimming and stuff. But upon closer inspection, these kids were some pretty serious characters, telling little jokes that spoke volumes about humanity and humility. *Peanuts*, of course, became world-famous over the next half century, and over time the characters became homogenized parodies of themselves, and now you can't go anywhere in the world without seeing Snoopy toothbrushes and Charlie Brown Christmas sweaters. But when you go back to the strip's humble beginnings, you can see what an incredible genius Schultz was. His characters could convey deep, powerful messages often expressed in metaphors, sometimes presented bluntly at face value. Charlie Brown was a lovable anti-hero who always failed at whatever he attempted, and people everywhere could relate and sympathize. In a way, Charles Schultz invented emo kids five years before rock and roll even came along. This book chronicles every *Peanuts* comic ever drawn during the first two years of its existence, in chronological order. It's hilarious. It's heart-



ful, honest art that anyone has ever produced. Ever. The people at Fantagraphics recognize this, and present the strips in this book with a great deal of respect and an understanding that no publisher has ever given to Schultz. The cover alone illustrates this, with a dark, brooding picture of a grumpy Charlie Brown. The layout and graphic choices are excellent, giving the book a much darker feel than the *Peanuts* collections printed on cheap newsprint that you could get at the drugstore when you were a kid. Also included are a great introduction by Garrison Keillor and a lengthy and informative essay about Schultz's life by David Michaelis. This book is an absolute necessity for anyone who has a heart and a brain. —Ben Snakepit (Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle WA 98115)

Girls Who Bite Back: Witches, Mutants, Slayers and Freaks

edited by Emily Pohl-Weary, 358 pages,

If you are really into *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, this is the book for you. A compilation of essays, fiction, and comics about female superheroes and other characters, *Girls Who Bite Back* includes everything from commentary on possible Buffy racism (with sentences like, "It is worth noting that though Mr. Trick is a vampire, he maintains his Black identity.") to fictional instant message conversations between girls with special powers

("MoodyGr1: Have you met any other mutants on this site? Bullettrain69: not so much muties as—well, this one girl's kinda a mutant. She's an astral projector down in wisconsin. That's as far as it goes—powers-wise—but she can do it every night.").

The basic theme here is feminist empowerment through the redefining of female superheroes, which isn't the worst idea, but it's definitely a post-modern, cultural studies sort of thing. For example, one of the essays refers to Angelina Jolie as someone who has "forced a reconsideration of what it means to be a valuable person." (While reading this, I kept thinking of possible college courses: Superwoman: Slut or Hero? Exploring the Female Action Figure, or Post-Modern Theories of Identity: Storm vs. the X-Men Patriarchy).

In fairness, few of these essays are that over the top. And there is some good stuff in here, especially Elizabeth Walker's essay on the history of girls in comics, which is the only piece in the book to take an in-depth look at alternative comics, like *Love & Rockets*.

Unfortunately, the book meanders a bit too much for its own good, and after several essays about personal experiences with fatness and mental illness, plus some insults thrown at *Annie* (my childhood favorite movie), the theme starts to disintegrate—which is unfortunate, because a few of these essays put together could make one decent zine. —Maddy (Sumach Press, 1415 Bathurst St., Suite 202, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 3H8)

Hairstyles of the Damned

by Joe Meno, 270 pages

When you have a novel about an angry, disenfranchised white kid coming of age, it's impossible to avoid comparing it to *Catcher in the Rye*. So here goes. *Hairstyles of the Damned* is similar to *Catcher* in the sense that the main character is a witty, tough and vulnerable anti-hero who you come to love by the end of the book. Unlike *Catcher*, though, you can be over the age of twenty and still love *Hairstyles of the Damned*. The novel tells the story of Brian, an outcast who's desperately in love with his best friend, Gretchen, but also afraid to let her know. Gretchen is a mean and lovable punk rock girl, and I spent most of the novel wavering between hoping she and Brian would get together and hoping Brian would stay as far away from her as possible. Beyond the crush, the novel goes into all the relevant themes of growing up in modern times: sex, sexuality, race relations, family breakdowns, and the overwhelming feeling of being all alone. The events of the second half of the novel revolve around a segregated prom at a Chicago high school in 1991—something that really happened, and Meno deals with the issue in an insightful and sophisticated manner. Mostly, though, this book is like group therapy for anyone who was a disaffected loner in high school, and for anyone who found a way out through punk rock. This book will crack you up and break your heart. It's highly recommended. —Sean (Punk Planet Books, 4229 N. Honore, Chicago, IL 60613)



American Punk, VHS

directed by Dave Lawler

Fun stories and good times with archive footage and talking heads speaking about the bands Triple Bypass, The Shy Guys, and New York pop punk in general. I'll check out the music from the bands then I might be more into it, as it's a lot of the usual stories for 122 minutes. Already-fans should jump on it right away. Other bands in there include Dirt Bike Annie and The Ergs. -Speedway Randy (KLM Ltd., <www.klmltd.com>)



fact that Bad Religion's take on the punk template, which was what made them unique, has been beaten into the fucking ground by tons of lesser bands (some on Bad Religion's own label) in the fifteen years since the performances here occurred. They were a good band, and it's a damn shame that the new kids to the scene will never fully understand why they were so special. Ah, but even if their luster has been diminished by countless clones, the ferocity of this band at its best still packs a mean wallop. -Jimmy Alvarado (Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026)

Antiseen, 20th Year Anniversary Show, DVD

Self-described "destructo rock" has present and past members of the band performing live. Thirty-four songs and solid video production. You can hear the bones cracking on stage from age not fury. I kept waiting unfulfilled for a body slam or at least a cage match. -Speedway Randy (TKO Records)

Bad Religion: Along the Way, DVD

Way back when, back before they and their hairlines went "into the unknown," I really liked Bad Religion. Their *How Could Hell Be Any Worse* LP (hereafter referred to as *HCHBAW*) remains, in my opinion, one of the best hardcore albums ever released and decades after I first heard it, it has managed to remain on my playlist. After they sank into prog rock hell for one album (which could've easily been titled *How Could Emerson, Lake and Palmer Be Any Worse?*) and returned with two members intact to record another, mediocre "punk" EP, they finally wrangled the remaining stray members

together and unleashed their full return to their hardcore roots, the album *Suffer*. While that album paled in comparison to *HCHBAW*, it did show promise (a promise I think they have never quite fully realized in the ensuing years, but hey, they're rich now and I digress) and it gave them an excuse to go out and tear shit up live once again. Living in their hometown, I saw them many times during the *Suffer* period, and they were quite the rejuvenated unit during that period, as evidenced in this collection of twenty-six tunes, recorded in fourteen European cities during that era of the band's career. Once you get past the annoying cuts from one performance to the next that occur unrelentingly throughout each song, you see a band in their prime, blasting through each song with precision and conviction. The tunes, both old and new, blend seamlessly into a solid set of rapid fire, driving hardcore that isn't afraid of a good pop hook and the clear, "off the board" sound ensures every syllable uttered can be comprehended. Watching this, one can't help but feel a little sad about the

Chicago Blackout, DVD

Awesome video comp of the 2003 show. Most of the time the video and audio are both great. Yeah, it's more fun to be there, but you weren't. And now it's done but saved for posterity. In general, two to three songs are shown for the opening bands and seven or more for the headliners over the three day "fest." Chicago's own Functional Blackouts live up to their recording, dirty garage with power, a band that should have good things coming to them. The Black Lips go junior high nuts for three songs, including impressive vomiting while playing, leading to hitting the strings with the ol' dick. Good times, good times. The snake charming of the Lips is the precursor to the church of The Lost Sounds, who might be the hardest working band today. Alicja, Jay, and crew swap instruments and bang out some of their best songs. There is always hope for rock and roll while the Sounds are active. The Hunches do a beautiful show of falling apart, and the Tyrades destroy whatever

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is left over, in one of the few downers of the disc—not enough Tyrades. But there is enough of The Spits, the world's first, last, and funnest rock band. Now I do wish I was there. At least they're my action figures now, playing whenever I want them to. Only bad performances are from FM Knives and A-Frames, because the audio is crappy on their parts. Other good performances are Feast of Snakes, Hot Machines, Hard Feelings, Little Killers, The Penetrators, and Clone Defects. —Speedway Randy (Todd Killings c/o Horizontal Action, 2222 Main St. Evanston, IL 60202)

The Michigan Independent, DVD

You know, I'm all for scene documenting, but sometimes it just seems like the effort is a bit pointless when the result seems more like an afterthought than a labor of love. Let's use this DVD as an example. On the front cover is a huge list of bands and organizations, all of whom are ostensibly from Michigan. I'm looking at said list and I'm thinkin', "Wow, they sure crammed a lot of stuff onto this. I wonder how they pulled it off." Then I popped the disc into the player and saw how they did it: there's not one complete performance to be found anywhere on this. Interspersed between the performance snippets are interviews with assorted musicians and scenesters, which provide little, if any, insight into what the Michigan scene being documented is like. Add onto this some pretty terrible sound, some pointless "bonus footage" and a trailer and you've got yerself fifty wasted minutes. The people responsible for this could've taken one of two routes and the resulting film would've been infinitely more interesting: a) the *Urgh! A Music War* route, with each

band presented performs one song (hopefully their best) in a live setting to give the viewer a chance to see said band in action; b) the *Decline of Western Civilization* route, wherein a small cross section of bands/scenesters typical of the Michigan underground music scene are showcased, with enough performance time and insightful interviewing allotted for each to provide some insight into what makes the band/scene tick. Sadly, neither was chosen, nor was any other possible option that would've made this better, and the viewer is worse off for it. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.acutestrecords.com)

Rock'n'Roll B-Movie Monsters, VHS

"Go Go Johnny Kill!"

Man, I'm fucking *telling* you, the state of Texas (not counting the Bush family) never ceases to amaze me with the fantastic things it continues to churn out. I happened to bump into a super nice guy online from Austin recently, Eugene Romero, who has been creating his own brand of cartoons for a while now, the *Rock'n'Roll B-Movie Monsters*. This episode features the monsters overthrowing a now-evil Clint Howard, who's attempting to take over dance halls and turn the patrons into mindless dance zombies. And just how do our monsters wage war with the Eaglebauer has-been? By creating a superhuman Johnny Ramone in the lab, whose loud guitar will lay waste to those who cross him. Without ruining the whole episode, I must give big props to Eugene and declare him the king of all that is cartoon cool for a few reasons: He works images of the Ramones, Motörhead, Black Flag, and Social D. into a cartoon. That's plain badass. But someone who includes references to Clint Howard's inclusion in films such

as *Rock'n'Roll High School*, or the even more obscure *Ice Cream Man*? That's fucking brilliant, man. The clincher as to why I came to this conclusion? Word has it that Eugene is in development of his next episode, featuring a character that goes by the name of "Lembot." And yeah, it's exactly what you're thinking it is. Here's hoping the Cartoon Network gets its shit together and gets in touch with Eugene sometime soon. Bloody Holly Lives! —Designated Dale (eugen-eromero@yahoo.com)

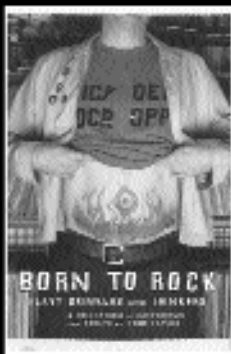
Scumrock, VHS

directed by Jon Moritsugu

If you know Jon Moritsugu's name, you know you're in for good shit. He's directed films like *Fame Whore*, *Mod Fuck Explosion*, *Terminal U.S.A.* and *Der Elvis*. His productions live up to truly underground DIY expectations. *Scumrock* uses low-end equipment to achieve an old school atmosphere without irony, as the story calls for it. Following an earnest filmmaker, his ultra-cute assistant and a "scumrock" band, Moritsugu uses analog Hi8 video and VHS editing to explore the art/film/music world of no-budget existence dreaming of punk immortality. The people are ones you know, talented and motivated, searching for a way to get noticed or fit into the big picture. The shots are sometimes spacey—close-ups of those little shiny things that attract your attention and make you have crushes. The home movie feel fits so well I thought I was actually at the party. Deservedly won best feature at the 2002 Chicago Underground and 2003 New York Underground film fests. —Speedway Randy (Apathy Productions, PO Box 62015, Honolulu, HI 96839)



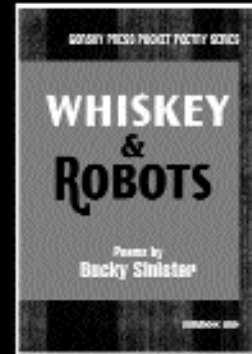
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