RAZORCAKE
NUMBER 20
THREE DOLLARS

RANDY
THE FUCK YEAHS
THE SHEMPS
HASIL ADKINS (PART TWO)
PUNK ROCK ROLLERDERBY
slow down a bit. It didn’t. We walked through the slight drizzle and saw a line, four people wide and a block long, for the show we just left. We passed Beerland. That was our fatal flaw. Mere yards away was an almost silent, probably chunky, call for help. Clouded judgement and brains pickled with two-dollar Lone Stars tallboys prevented us from rescuing a friend.

Toby and I took a taxi (a one in two hundred chance. It was Chris, the drummer for J-Church. Go figure.) to Ben Snakepit’s home.

Two hours later, Norb was a wastrrel, passing out on the curb outside Beerland, our unofficial home away from home. It had just closed for the night. They pulled him inside. “Where are you staying?” Norb shrugged. “Who are you staying with?” Norb shrugged. They went through a litany of names. A lightbulb flickered. “Ben and Ben and Nick’s. That’s right, my good man!” he proclaimed, one finger on his nose, another finger pointing directly at the person talking to him. A phonebook was pulled out and last names were yanked out of thin air. That’s when the phone in the locked room started ringing. The message was left.

There’s so little time to celebrate when you work so hard. Toby’s an EMT. He’d driven the thirteen-plus hours from Atlanta. Norb had to time jockey his work just to get the days off. I put in an average of sixty hours a week on this magazine that, at best, breaks even. Stops have to be pulled out. Brains need to be drained, even if money is scarce. You’ve got to steal that time. And you know what the best part is? It’s no secret. Hanging out with friends, old and new. Sharing stories, kicking back beers, watching music and getting spastic and knowing, in the back of your brain, that if you’re left in a gutter and you haven’t been a dick, the chances increase that someone friendly might just come along and pick you up.

Contrary to popular belief, decency has its rewards.

–Todd
"You've got to know the truth before you say that you've got pride."  
-The Descendents, from the song "'Merican"

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It's been said that if Stern keeps up his anti-Bush drumbeat, he could have a greater impact on the presidential election than independent candidate Ralph Nader.

By now, I'm sure that a number of you folks have heard about Clear Channel and their plans of banishing (what they consider) not acceptable practices that go on over the airwaves, be it the radio or television stations they oversee. For those not in the know, Clear Channel is an unbelievably huge media and advertising outfit whose fingers are up a whole helluva lotta asses, economically speaking. But lately, the Clear Channel fingers are turning into quite an uncomfortable fist up the regular American's ass by self-appointing themselves as the decency police. Pardon me, but if the unbalanced jive the FCCpulls isn't bad enough these days, then we've got a substantially large company in the mix dictating a "what's what" of decency on the airwaves. Sounds as if Clear Channel should put on some of their old, familiar red armbands and brush up on techniques of the Gestapo.

Just what got all of this craziness started? Some say it was Janet Jackson's "accidental" boobage shot with Justin Timberlake on the halftime show broadcast of this past Superbowl. (And I still say that was the true event.) Did you see that thing covering her udder? If the film Excalibur was ever to have a burlesque scene in it, then that was the film. Medieval-looking Ninja throwing star covering her blob was the pasty. "Accidental"... hmmm... about as "accidental" as her brother Michael being "naturally light-skinned" these past years... pah-leeze.

An estimated 90 million people watched the Nipplegate half time show and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) received 500,000 complaints. Congress took note, amend- ing existing bills to increase indecency fines dramatically. In response, Clear Channel, which operates more than 1,200 radio stations, adopted a code of conduct called the "Responsible Broadcasting Initiative." Whatever spring-boarded the series of events to follow, all the focus on Janet Jackson was suddenly gone and it appears that Howard Stern is in the crosshairs of this decency feeding frenzy. He was recently suspended from six stations. No matter what you think of him, Howard Stern is one of the few voices that has a chance of changing Clear Channel's policies because the truth is he is too big to just ignore.

Now, I'm a Stern fan, but I'm not one to tell you whose side to rally on. So, in the mean time, here are some facts to keep in mind while making your educated decision. Don't say I never gave you anything, cocko.

Clear Channel was a major factor in putting George Bush in the President's chair, and it was Clear Channel's vice president Tom Hicks, who helped make good ol' George Dubbay a multimillionaire.

Questions about ethics have followed Clear Channel since it has become quite a monopoly. Its 1,200 radio stations make up one out of every ten in the United States, and in the process, has put a lot of local stations out of business. As corporations such as Clear Channel have bought up local radio stations, they have swept out hometown program directors that tended to reflect regional differences — or that, at the least, responded to local complaints — and imposed programming and personalities with no connection to the community. How can a huge company that spans the entire continent know exactly what community standards are? If there is only one voice, dictated by the governing body, run by a monopoly, that is a very shitty place to be in for freedom of speech.

A "freedom" that no one can afford to have, if they're not in Clear Channel's "pocket."

As far as the FCC is concerned, how about this: Colin Powell's son Michael Powell runs the FCC, and in the wake of our apparent need for decency guidelines created the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act of 2004. Given that the House recently voted 391-22 to pass a bill to increase indecency fines from $27,000 to $500,000 — and the Senate may follow, the First Amendment is literally at risk. “Congress shall make no law... prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press,” the First Amendment reads, but given that those hefty fines will be extended to licensees and radio personalities alike (with a cap of three million dollars a day)“free speech” could become extremely expensive especially since “indecency,” it seems, is whatever Senator Powell deems it to be.

Dated February 25th of this year, Clear Channel released the following press release: “Clear Channel today announced a strong new ‘Responsible Broadcasting Initiative’ to make sure the material aired by its radio stations conforms to the standards and sensibilities of the local communities they serve.” What happened to people in local communities making choices for themselves? Does anyone here in the country actually need to be told to switch off a radio or television program because it's deemed offensive by a media giant, much less the government? If you answer yes, ask them when it's okay to go to the bathroom and wipe your ass while you're at it.

“Clear Channel is serious about helping address the rising tide of indecency on the airwaves,” said Mark Mays, President and Chief Operating Officer of Clear Channel Communications. “As broadcast licensees, we are fully responsible for what our stations air, and we intend to make sure all our DJs and programmers understand what is and what is not appropriate on Clear Channel radio shows.” Check it out, Mays — you and your Clear Channel crew need to stop whining your hands and deal with the fact that you ain't Moses, okay? No beard. No burning bush. No stones. No Ten Commandments. No shit. Hell, even the wacky Charleton Heston knows he isn't Moses! He just played him in a movie, you dumbass.

Mays said the company will institute a zero tolerance policy for indecent content which will include company-wide training and automatic suspensions for anyone who the FCC alleges has violated indecency rules on the air. “If the FCC accuses us of wrongdoing by issuing a proposed fine, we will take immediate action,” Mays said. “We will suspend the DJ in question, and perform a swift investigation. If we or the government ultimately determine the offending broadcast is indecent, the DJ will be terminated without delay.” John Hogan, Chief Executive Officer of Clear Channel Radio added, “If a DJ is found to be in violation of FCC rules, there will be no appeals and no intermediate steps. If they break the law by broadcasting indecent material, they will not work for Clear Channel.” So, in a nutshell, if Clear Channel or the FCC ain't having what a DJ has got to say on the air, they're toast. That's a cool "with us or against us" attitude, guys. I thought the only dictating going on here in the States is the dictating machine a secretary uses for memos from their boss. Sieg fucking heil.

In addition, the company announced that all of its contracts with on-air performers are being modified to ensure that DJs share financial responsibility if they utter indecent material on the air. “From now on, every contract that Clear Channel enters into with on-air talent will include this provision,” said Hogan. “While that won’t relieve Clear Channel from our responsibility as a broadcast licensee, we believe it will have a significant deterrent effect on indecent content.” Let me try to get this straight — Clear Channel is saying that they can fire and get a so-called offending DJ to share a FCC fine? What a wonderful way for Clear Channel to say that their employees are readily expendable and unwillingly stuck helping foot the bill for something...
they shouldn’t be in debt for to
begin with. Nice.

Reiterating its call for a
“Decency Task Force,” Clear
Channel also has volunteered to
fully participate with other repre-
sentatives of the broadcast, cable
and satellite industries to develop an
industry-wide response to indecency
and violence in the media. (It
sounds like somebody’s looking for
allies. Didn’t Germany try doing
that with Japan in the 1940s?) “In
our view, industry-developed guide-
lines should be as effective as
Government-imposed regulations
without running afoul of the First
Amendment protections that we all
respect,” said Hogan. Hey, Hogan –
a little observation: any industry-
developed guideline is just that. It’s
not a government-imposed regula-
tion or law. Don’t go getting ahead
of yourself, ‘cause some other
morality mongers with ideas like
yours are gonna try to scratch their
itch of what’s wrong with this
world. And if you respected First
Amendment protections like you
say you do, then let them be. Laws
set boundaries, not business,
although it’s funny how often the
boundary line tends to blur with big
brother and money.

In the end, we’re left with no
clear understanding of just what is
“indecent” and worse yet, it seems
we will only find out when huge
fines are levied on broadcasters or
speakers. It’s been said that if Stern
keeps up his anti-Bush drumbeat, he
could have a greater impact on the
presidential election than indepen-
dent candidate Ralph Nader.
Although Stern did sign a contract
with Clear Channel and he makes a
shit-load of money off of their syn-
dication of his program, he is facing
a hybrid form of censorship: finan-
cial ruin. They aren’t telling him he
can’t say something — he can say
anything he wants, just not on their
airwaves — but they’re going to
impose ridiculously high fines for
things he says on air that aren’t
clearly defined as “indecent.”

The following press release
from Clear Channel was released
February 25th (later on that same
day the other press release regard-
ing their new initiative was
released): “Clear Channel Radio
has suspended the broadcast of
Viacom’s Howard Stern show, con-
sistent with its Responsible
Broadcasting Initiative announced
earlier today. After assessing the
content of yesterday’s Howard
Stern show, Clear Channel worked
with local market managers to take
swift and decisive action.” John
Hogan, president and CEO of Clear
Channel Radio said, “Clear
Channel drew a line in the sand
today with regard to protecting our
listeners from indecent content and
Howard Stern’s show blew right
through it. It was vulgar, offensive,
and insulting, not just to women
and African Americans but to any-
one with a sense of common decen-
cy. We will not air Howard Stern on
Clear Channel stations until we are
assured that his show will conform
to acceptable standards of responsi-
ble broadcasting.” So, because
Clear Channel finds a radio show
like Stern’s unfit to broadcast on
the stations they own, they go and
pull it off the air because Clear
Channel was trying to “protect its
listeners from indecent content”?
Later, when Clear Channel presi-
dent John Hogan appeared before
members of the House Committee
on Energy and Commerce, he open-
ly admitted that though Stern had
not committed any fresh sins.
The company decided to drop him any-
way. Howard Stern was brought up
on charges from a three-year-old
show.

Hey, Clear Channel, how about
the majority of your listeners who
choose to find Stern’s show an
entertaining part of their morning?
And not that it matters, but I’m
going to assume that it’s quite a
LARGE majority, otherwise mil-
lions wouldn’t be listening and
Stern’s show wouldn’t be where it’s
at — on top of morning radio all
these years. There are also folks
who don’t care for Stern’s show at
all, and everyone, including Stern’s
listeners, should respect other’s
DESIGNED DALE

opinions, just as they would like their opinions to be respected. But when you don’t like something that’s intruding your eardrums on a radio program, or some show that’s annoying your sight and hearing on the television, you simply change the channel or turn it off. How can a huge company that spans the entire continent know exactly what community standards are? Devise put it best with their song title, “Freedom of Choice,” and every single citizen living here in this country has that right. I’ve heard some say, “Well, fuck it, I don’t give a shit one way or another about what’s going on with this Clear Channel situation.” Anyone with an attitude like this should give a shit, because basic rights have and are being chipped away right under the American people’s noses.

For example, the whole automatic firearm ban ordeal that was going down a while back. The government wanted to put a ban on just about all automatic firearms, and a lot of firearm enthusiasts/collectors reacted with the same I-don’t-give-a-shit-attitude: “Who cares about automatic firearms? I’m not into ‘em anyway.” But the same firearm owners who were into the automatic genre needed some serious support, and because they didn’t get backed fully, the ban was put into law. Now, let’s say the government wants to go after high-powered deer rifles and/or shotguns next – you think the same folks who got their automatic pieces yanked feel like lending support to the same people who turned a cold shoulder on them? Think about it. Things could happen very rapidly if there’s a breakdown in the chain of support.

Another example is the 2 Live Crew when they fought a decency case with the state of Florida. Although the media was all over it, there was a whole lot of people who could give two shits less about what happened to 2 Live Crew, and it’s the same story all over again like I was talking about with the automatic firearms. Everyone should want to support the cause, be it the Cousin It look-a-likes into death metal, the gaudy, booty-shaking hip-hoppers, those rowdy shit-kicking city cowboys into (what they call now) country, free-flowing jazz purists, the traditional classical fans, or the most flailing, hardcore punk rockers. Yes, everyone should’ve been behind 2 Live Crew, no matter what they thought about their material. Why? Because instead of 2 Live Crew, it could’ve been the above-mentioned people’s music or the music you happen to love. And don’t go wiping your sweaty brow just yet. Things happen.

You think if Clear Channel owned the publishing company that printed these copies of Razorcake, that they would allow Dale’s colorful uses of his favored four-lettered syllables? It’s doubtful, but then again, it’s come to my attention recently that Clear Channel’s advertising depart, have run some rather racy billboard ads with some scantily clad girls. And it wasn’t the scantily clad types you see in a Sears catalog, either, you pervs. That said, I want to ask all our readers to make a note of any outside advert with the Clear Channel moniker slapped on it and check out what they’ve got on display for the whole world to see. If Clear Channel is so concerned with protecting its listening audience from “indecency,” then I’d like to see how many so-called “indecent” ads are out there that they’ve sold space to that the public can see. Even if these ads are unquestionably offensive to some (use common sense here, people), I’d totally dig some info on what you’ve seen. If possible, a pic sent along with your email would be fantastic, too. Just make sure you can see the Clear Channel logo in your pic. And, for the record, Clear Channel peddles more than just simple highway billboard space. Click here to see all the different mediums they offer to infiltrate the public with their outdoor advertising: <http://www.clearchanneloutdoor.com/product/default.asp>.

But, wait – why would a company contradict itself, especially a company trying to institute a “Responsible Broadcasting Initiative,” you ask? Besides money, I don’t have any other answer. Kind of like Michael Savage (a Republican talk show host) telling a “sodomite” caller to his now canceled MSNBC show, “You should only get AIDS and die, you pig.” No one heard about Savage being fined for “indecency.” There’s definitely a word for both of these scenarios, though: “double-standard.”

I’m Against It

–Designated Dale
DesignatedDale@aol.com
SHIZZVILLE!

CAN'T YA HEAR! I SAID.

I'M READY FOR MY STORY.

A'RIGHT ALREADY!

NOW WHERE WERE WE... OH, YEAH! SHIZZ-O-CHIO.

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A POOR DRUNK DUCK WHO WISHED HE HAD A SON TO CALL HIS OWN...

I WISH I HAD A SON TO CALL MY OWN.

HE COULD BONE ME BEERS, NO MY SWEETS, AND...

HE LED BONG BEERS, NO MY SWEETS, AND...

I'LL NAME YOU SHIZZ-O-CHIO!

ONE DAY, AFTER MIXING TOO MANY PILLS WITH TOO MUCH VODKA, HE MADE A BOY OUT OF SHIZZ AND NAMED HIM: SHIZZ-O-CHIO...

ONE DAY, AFTER MIXING TOO MANY PILLS WITH TOO MUCH VODKA, HE MADE A BOY OUT OF SHIZZ AND NAMED HIM: SHIZZ-O-CHIO...

FEH.

THAT NIGHT, THE BEAUTIFUL TOILET FAIR VISITED SHIZZ-O-CHIO AND TOLD HIM THAT IF HE WAS GOOD, SHE WOULD TURN HIM INTO A BEAU.

BUT HE WAS MADE OF SHIZZ, AFTER ALL. HE BEGAN TO DRINK HEAVILY...

HE FELL IN WITH THE WRONG CROWD...

OK! OK!

VE HAF SCHMITZEL, YA! DEN I SHOW YOU DE OOGS.

HE TURNED TO A LIFE OF CRIME...

FEH.

THE POOR DUCK HAD ENOUGH. HE KICKED SHIZZ-O-CHIO OUT ON THE STREET...

GET THA FEK OUT!!!

FEH.

SHIZZ-O-CHIO WAS SNUBBED BY THE FALSE KING WHO HAD HEARD ABOUT HIS EXPLOITS AND LOVED HIS STYLE...

SHIZZ-O-CHIO WAS SNUBBED BY THE FALSE KING WHO HAD HEARD ABOUT HIS EXPLOITS AND LOVED HIS STYLE...

GET ME HELP YA OUT THERE BOY!

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ECONOMY?

TELLING THE TRUTH?

FEH.

FEH.

HE IMPRESSED THE FALSE KING WITH HIS ELOCUTIO AND LACK OF RESPECT.

THE FALSE KING GAVE HIM THE HIGHEST POST IN HIS KINGDOM - POLITICAL ADVISOR.

AND THE FALSE KING AND SHIZZ-O-CHIO LIVED HAPPILY... EVER AFTER??!!!

WELL I CAN'T SLEEP.

ME NEITHER.
THE OBJECT HERE IS TO WIN TROPHIES, NOT LOOK LIKE A PUSSY.

PRACTICE (DUH)
This probably goes without saying, but the key to effective practice is to replicate tournament conditions. Like my Communications professor at Radford University once told me, “If you’re going to study stoned, then take the test stoned.” In other words, your practice session must be state specific. You can’t practice sober, get wasted at the tournament, and expect to succeed. The reverse is also true (and also really, really dumb). If you’re one of those shit-your-pants drunks, you’re pretty much on your own here, but don’t despair, there may be a spot on the Team Tiltwheel bus for you (see below). I’ve noticed that the best bowlers tend to be those who let you use at the alley aren’t going to cut it. One plastic balls are for pussies and the ones you stole from the bowling alley the last time you were there (I’m talking to you, Kid). They will grab your balls, and oh yes, they will squeeze them. Luckily, BYO makes sure Team Tiltwheel is always banished to the end of the alley to minimize offensive behavior. In between games it’s worth wandering down to their end of the bowling alley. You’ll know you’re getting close because of the throng of wastoids cheering them on. Forgive them Mel, they know not what they do.

STYLE
As in, it helps to have some. Unless your name is Peter “Howitzer” Hucklebuck, throwing the ball really, really hard not only decreases your accuracy and makes you look like a tool, it weakens your arm so won’t be able to jack off later, which is a bummer because no one is going to be taking your lame, trying-too-hard-to-look-cool-and-failing-miserably ass back to their lavish hotel room. My own bowling style, which cannot be duplicated, starts with a motion not cool-and-failing-miserably ass back to their lavish hotel room. My own bowling style, which cannot be duplicated, starts with a motion not cool-and-failing-miserably ass back to their lavish hotel room. Like my Communications professor at Radford University once told me, “If you’re going to study stoned, then take the test stoned.” In other words, your practice session must be state specific. You can’t practice sober, get wasted at the tournament, and expect to succeed. The reverse is also true (and also really, really dumb). If you’re one of those shit-your-pants drunks, you’re pretty much on your own here, but don’t despair, there may be a spot on the Team Tiltwheel bus for you (see below). I’ve noticed that the best bowlers tend to be those who let you use at the alley aren’t going to cut it. One plastic balls are for pussies and the ones you stole from the bowling alley the last time you were there (I’m talking to you, Kid). They will grab your balls, and oh yes, they will squeeze them. Luckily, BYO makes sure Team Tiltwheel is always banished to the end of the alley to minimize offensive behavior. In between games it’s worth wandering down to their end of the bowling alley. You’ll know you’re getting close because of the throng of wastoids cheering them on. Forgive them Mel, they know not what they do.

THE ART OF SELF-Congratulations
So you just rolled a strike: now what do you do? This is tricky. You don’t want to lose your fucking mind like you just won the lottery, but you don’t want to act all blasé like its your fucking birthright to be a good bowler. The trick is to expect – scratch that – demand a strike from
I'm laying down some ice in your lane. Cute the first time you do it, but keep it up and mentally retarded younger brother is really the math teacher to the starting quarterback's mental development. To show off your snatch to everyone from the bowling area. That cheerleader thing you used to do to...
Black Night
Stars

The sheer, dark curtains blew in slow and thick as water rippling through the room. That’s what I remember, as I walked into the party at my downstairs neighbor’s studio apartment. I was nineteen years old and on my own that night. It was only eleven o’clock, yet already tons of beer cans were caved in and scattered around the beige and speckled carpet. Laying there in the near dark, the cans looked fragile as insect shells, discarded metal skins. Several still bodies lay around the murky room as well, mimicking the cans, along with a half a dozen dirty points. Their glassy eyes were suspended in time. It was like stepping into a morgue.

There was a huge, blackened hole in the center of the carpet that looked as though a small spaceship had landed there. A weak red light hovered over the room. The one black-curtained window in the back of the room was open, the wind blowing in. A thin, ghostly boy perched on the sill in front of the sheer fabric. His body was little more than flesh covered bones, and shadows wove in and around his furiously pockmarked face. His eyes were half closed, the city glittering behind. He sat holding a Scooby Doo doll that was shaved of half its fur. Nuclear-Fallout Scooby.

I walked through the carpeted room, half-drunk from the whiskey I downed earlier, upstairs with my baby. But now he was gone. A morose girl in black slumped in the corner, her blue hair hanging over her face. I thought she was dead until I touched her hand. Then her eyes glided open, staring off into a world I would never know.

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Tyler scurried up to me, jerky and frantic – the Methamphetamine King in his tiny, trashy fortress. He had invited his heroin friends over that night and looked alive and purposeful in comparison, as he scurried from one end of the apartment to the other.

"Hey girl, where’s your boy?" he asked. I looked at his sagging brown Dickies and orange polyester shirt. The lapels were thicker than his arms. He handed me a beer and I flipped the can around in my hands.

"He couldn’t make it," I said. I opened the can and took a sip. "Actually, we were fighting earlier."

"That sucks," he said, sniffing and shifting from foot to foot. The truth was that an hour ago my baby had left the apartment in a rage, jumped in his pea-green Chevy, and drove straight into a tree, snapping it. Then screeched off to his friend’s house somewhere across the San Francisco Bay.

Tyler began shifting faster, left to right, left to right, while his head jerked to one side – like an odd chicken dance. “The other day,” he chattered, “I was trying to clean up the place and I started knocking my head into the wall, you know? Not trying to beat it or bust my head open or anything – just letting it fall, over and over, you know? Just letting it fall. It dropped over and over until a dent started to form in the plaster but I just couldn’t stop myself, you know? It just started to hurt like hell, you know? But it felt kinda good too. Later, I stared at it for an hour and the dent – it started to look like Gandhi. No shit! Freaking Gandhi head! It was the craziest thing and then…”

As Tyler rambled on, I thought of my boy over in Oakland. He looked like a prisoner – bald head, beefy, with tattoos running all over his skin. A thick, jagged scar between his eyes. He was a man whose life had been hard. You could see it in his eyes. We liked to go up to my roof with some cans of beer and sit and watch the sun go down, changing the sky to a bruised plum and red. We used to sit there at dusk, talking. Up there we were as close to something real as anyone could get. But later it wasn’t like that. We always ruined things.

“Want a line?” Tyler asked. “I was just going to do some.”

“Sure,” I said. It wasn’t really my thing but once in a while it was all right. I was just a lush who hung out with speed freaks who hung out with junkies. The party was a swarm of opposites, people moving around each other at different speeds in strange unison, like snakes writhing slowly through a room of mice.
Tyler tapped out the pile of crystals, separating them into four-inch lines with a rusty razor on the wooden table. A few of us sat on the couch, hunched over and sniffing. The second he inhaled the last one, Tyler jumped up off the couch, hopped over the morose girl, and ran out the front door. A few minutes later we could hear him running around outside, whooping and yelling on the sidewalk below. “Whoooooo! Hell yaaaaah!” he screamed up to the sky.

We felt a strange power as we killed them. It was so much easier than the rest of life.

I wandered into the kitchen. My feet stuck to the floor. Someone had ordered a clam pizza. A bunch of speed freaks and junkies had ordered a pizza. The box sat open on the counter, the pizza unopened, glistening circle. The clams, green, furry strawberries sat on the cheese. A single roach marched across the rim of the box. I felt sick.

I thought of the roaches in our apartment. The whole complex was infested. Every day was a cockroach festival. If you flicked on the lights they scattered like a bag of pinto beans spilled on the counter, on the floor, scrambling into the darkest, creepiest holes in the linoleum. My baby and I used to flick the lights on and off to watch the scuttling event. But after a while we grew sick of them – they burrowed into our food – and started to poison them with several jumbo cans of roach spray. We felt a strange power as we killed them. It was so much easier than the rest of life. All the bad things we could not stop.

We never got all of them. They regenerated tenfold, stronger, more resilient. I started to hack and wheeze every time I stepped into the apartment. My slipdresses started to reek of poison. A light, sticky film settled on the two leopard chairs. Under our refrigerator lay a thick blanket of tiny wings.

I turned to grab another beer. I opened Tyler’s refrigerator. A ghostly wind spilled out. A basket of green, furry strawberries sat on the bottom shelf. A small carton of thickened milk sat on the top, beneath the burnt-out light bulb. I shut the door.

“D-d-die! D-d-die!” a tiny, jerking Mexican boy stuttered from behind me, pointing to the variety of bugs scurrying about the kitchen. His fingers formed the shape of a miniature gun, his thumb working. A large pale boy, completely bald except for a tuft of hair on the front of his bloated scalp, took out his knife. He began slowly, methodically lighting all the roaches in the kitchen on fire. It started a chain reaction and soon several thin amphetamine boys were lighting up the bugs. Someone produced a can of Aqua Net and sprayed it while flicking a lighter so it blow-torched the roaches, melting them to blackened circles on the wall. The small, jerking guy kept shooting and yelling. “D-d-die! D-d-die!”

I wondered what my boy was doing. I thought of him stomping around our one-room apartment earlier. I could see the mirror splinter when he put his fist through it. He stood there afterwards. His hands were empty. The sheen fabric, tacked up, blew in slow and thick. The tiny English girl leaned out the window. She began to shriek. “Oh, hell! Oh fucking bloody hell!”

I knew it before I saw it. Most of us did. I raced with the others to the window. We peered over the ledge into the night and saw the ghostly boy, lying on the sidewalk in an angular shape. His arm was pulled backwards in a terrible, unnatural way. Tyler pulled back from the window, pinching his fingers together strangely, furiously. “Ohshit, ohshit, ohshit,” he muttered, then ducked back out the window again, swooping forward and back.

Within twenty minutes the police came. The blue lights and sirens streaked past the sky as we huddled by the open window, but not too close. I clamped my teeth together and started to grind, sliding slowly, just to maintain. The policeman walked in the apartment holding the bald Scooby Doo. “Whose is this?” he asked. We all stared at it with wide, dilated eyes. “Well, whose is it?”

For a moment we could hear all the noise rolling through the city outside. “It was his,” I finally said, tearing up the open window behind him. My baby was hundred, a million miles away now. I looked down at the huge dent in the plaster where Tyler had beaten his head against the wall. The policeman stuck his head out the window. “Fell asleep, huh?” He scribbled in a tiny notepad while we all stood around, trying to breathe.

Around me everyone had stopped moving. There was no time. Only the blue police lights outside, shifting. I wondered what that boy saw on his way down – if the city lights were like fake stars in the dark, rushing backwards through a black vein.

—Ayn Imperato

AYN IMPERATO

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THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

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

FIRED???? I’M FIRED???? How can you fire ME????!!! I’m the Rhythm Chicken!!!

(Okay, Chicken! First of all, let’s acknowledge the fact that we are still here! With every word typed here (assuming these words ever see print) you can be reassured that you are still on team Razorcake. I must admit that I can fully understand Todd and Sean’s intention to fire you. Let’s look at your last few Dinghole Reports: praising the Fleet Farm calendar, praising “stapmepe” as the new “ruckus,” pulling Robin Williams under your umbrella of enemies, declaring war on the state of Indiana???? Honestly, Rhythm Chicken, you really do seem to be diverting attention away from the fact that you really haven’t been the Rhythm Chicken since Mannettag in Germany last May! That’s TEN MONTHS, Chicken! Good God! What’s become of you? – F.F.)

[Indeed, Rhythm Chicken. I must admit I’m surprised we’re still here. Todd and Sean must be feeling merciful this issue. So do you have any new ruckus to report this time around or do you think you can squeak by with more of your rehashed hooshwash? – Dr. S.]

HOOSHWASH????!!! Listen here, Sicnarf! You’re lucky it’s Easter-time and I’m too busy sneaking baskets of Pabst and fecal wreaths into the unsuspecting homes of today’s punk rock youth to give you the proper verbal impaling YOU deserve. You pseudo-intellectual HOT-SNOT! That’s no typo! Yes, I called you a HOT-SNOT! Though, I do have to say that even I’m surprised to be here.

(Do you have any new ruckus for us or not? – F.F.)

Well, let’s look at that question a little closer. It seems to me that you are quite interested in hearing NEW ruckus. You must think that I’ve already submitted all possible reports of Chicken gigs from the past. Funyuns, being a Chicken roadie yourself you should know that for every wild, crazy beer-soaked and chaotic Chicken gig I share with the masses within these pages, there are scores of lower profile gigs played to sometimes less than one audience member! Would Blink-182 or Weezer go through the trouble to set up along the highway and play for that slight chance that another car might pass by? Would Face to Face call people up the phone to do a nationwide telephone tour from their northwoods woodshed and just leave rhythmic messages when no one’s home? Hello, Mrs. Richards. Is Paul home? Just one minute. I’ll go get him.

[Wait a second there, Mr. Chicken. I’m sure there are plenty of gigs left in your historic grab bag to report on. It’s just that some of us are getting worried about your current “recess” from performing live. Do you think you’re Prince or something? – Dr. S.]

Believe me, Sicnarf, I am by no means hanging up my drumsticks or my liver. Let’s see YOU move from hemisphere to hemisphere and try to keep your chaos free-flowing! The Chicken’s Second Coming of this continent is on the horizon. It may be on the front steps of Milwaukee’s city hall (most likely to continue in the Milwaukee County Jail with the current Crayon Color Coded Terrorism by Technicolor Alert Status Spectrum. As if other countries weren’t already laughable or even my roadie rolling his eyes in the car. I think it’s about time that I started sharing with you more of the “rags” from my “rags to riches” story.

(Riches? – F.F.)

Dinghole Report #35:
Happy Ruckusday Cameron!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting # 24)

It was Cameron’s sixth birthday and her mother Kim was throwing a small party at their small rural home just outside of Ellison Bay, WI. Ruckus Thomas and I pulled up quietly in front of their home on Highland Road. We set up the Chicken kit in the middle of the road at the end of their driveway. I pulled on the Chicken head and let loose my birthday-rock thunder. A few seconds later, Kameron and her brother Cole were running out to the street and just staring at the spectacle. During one of my breaks in the majestic monster rock ruckus, I raised my wings to the heavens and thrust my chicken breast out like a proud stallion. Just then, Kameron yells out “I know it’s you, <name withheld for mental security purposes>!” You could almost hear the needle scratch across the vinyl as the performance’s majesty and mystery were quickly deflated. End of show.

[I say, Mr. Chicken, I’m quite surprised to learn that your veritable steamroller of rock could be so easily stifled by a six-year-old girl. – Dr. S.]

Well, keep in mind that my ruckus was not completely without effect! While they were outside witnessing my dimension-warping chaos, their ice cream sat out in the living room MELTING! A-HAAAA! FEEL THE WRATH OF TRUE RUCKUS!!! My grass-roots ruckus is waged in mysterious ways! I exist to disrupt the natural order of things, baby!

(Uh...okay...maybe we can move on to another topic. You haven’t brought up any new additions to your definition of Wisconsinism. – F.F.)

Ah, Wisconsinism. It truly is pleasant to be back in the belly of the beast. You see, Wisconsinism is a constantly changing and growing entity. The most impressive example I’ve found lately is the menu at the Milwaukee south-side’s newest hipster tavern, the Palomino. The menu opens up with the phrase, “If it’s good, it’s better fried!” They’ve been known to dip Slim Jims in a beer batter and have them deep fried, creating the miraculous new food item known as “AWESOME STICKS!” Then I’ve also heard of a deep-fried Twinkies! Wisconsinism, like Hulkamania, is running wild!

Dinghole Report #2:
The OI’ Wipe ‘n’ Toss!

[It was my day off and I was driving down to Green Bay with the last month’s dirty laundry in the passenger seat. The previous night included a healthy intake of Pabst mixed in with a dangerous intake of some high-fiber “dark berry brown” nut and pine cone” beer. I’m pleading temporary insanity. Anyway, I felt a nice burning fart wafting its way out my back door. Despite my being alone in the car, I still felt the need to strike a cool “farting pose” and manipulate my sphincter in such a way to accentuate the bodily function, you know...being cool.]

THE WRATH OF TRUE RUCKUS!!! My grass-roots ruckus is waged in mysterious ways! I exist to disrupt the natural order of things, baby!
Song I ever made up. “HOT SNOT, WANNA POLKA DOT!” I was amused.
[You were truly destined to become a Rhythm Chicken, sir, but can a Rhythm Chicken you remain? – Dr. S.]

(HONESTLY, Chicken, when was the last time you even stretched a dinglehock, MUCH LESS YOUR OWN? I realize this is a campaign year and you are concentrating on certain issues, but dammit you still have a job to do here! – F.F.)

Dinghole Report #36: Playing to NO ONE is PUNK! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #61)

During the summer of ’99, Captain Foolhardy and I were in the middle of a drunken afternoon tour of Door County, WI. We decided to stop along the highway at the construction site of what was to become the geddyk and overpriced “Little Sweden Resort” just south of Fish Creek (and just north of Juddville!). It was a Sunday and no one was in sight. I set up while the Captain remained in the car pulling schwiggers off of the gin bottle. I played a spirited gig in the entranceway facing the highway. During the entire ten minute set NOT ONE car passed by. The audience count was a firm ZERO! Even my faithful roach Foolhardy opted to stay in the car and drink. No applause. No response. If a Rhythm Chicken plays in the woods and no one is there to witness the ruckus, is it indeed ruckus? I say YES! This is so extremely PUNK! Now, whenever I pass by the now bustling resort I can bring up to my companion, “Yeah, I was the first act to play at Little Sweden.” I dig the extremes, baby.

Dinghole Report #37: Playing to NO ONE is PUNK, part 2! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #84)

Later that same summer I was heading north on St. Hwy. 57 and decided to stop for a gig at one of my favorite venues, the waysides just south of Sturgeon Bay. The one thing that made this gig quite remarkable was that it was about 3:30 A.M., I had no alcohol in my system, and I was ready to dance with the devil! I set up facing the usually busy highway and played a wild five-minute set, always trying to notice any possible rolling audi-ence members going by. None! In a sweat, I tossed the kit back into my back seat and continued heading north on 57. Not even a cop! Damn. If I were all Pabsted up I’m sure the SWAT team and National Guard would’ve been called.

[So, if no one can bare witness, is it technically a Rhythm Chicken SIGHTING? – Dr. S.]

Dinghole Report #38: Playing to your neighbors is PUNK! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #24)

Still during the Chicken’s first summer, I had just finished a day’s work and went home to my woodshed. I set up the Chicken kit on the lawn just out front of the woodshed. The nearest neighbors are a Moravian church a quarter mile south and the elderly lesbian fish distributor ladies a quarter mile north. I couldn’t make this stuff up! No cars passed. No bikers or joggers. No response, but no worries. The next day at work we received a fish delivery from one of the fish ladies (buckets of whitefish for our Door County fish-bout. Only Wisconsinites will be familiar with this weak representation of Wisconsinism, them and the Chicago yuppies who pay through the nose for our bottom-feeder smorgasbord!). She asked, “So was that you pounding on the drums yesterday? Sounded good!” Later it occurred to me that she had no idea it was the much-celebrated Rhythm Chicken offering a performance, just some white trash punk rock hick drumming outside of his shack. I feel there is some con-ceptual significance there, but what do I know.

Oh! I almost forgot to mention the newest addition to the Wisconsin brewers family, LaCrosse Lager! Years ago, the original Old Style brewery in LaCrosse, WI was bought out by Miller or some other big name. Eventually, the actual brewing halted at the LaCrosse location. Now, someone has purchased the old brewery and revived the world’s largest six-pack with the original Old Style recipe even! The name Old Style belongs to some business suits in a skyscraper somewhere, while the original recipe is now available incognito as LaCrosse Lager! Now I simply walk along the dock from my Milwaukee home to Bert’s Bayview Liquor to pick up a 15-pack of this fine malt beverage for a mere $6.99! America, what a country! Your first sip will bring to mind images of ice-fishermen and deer hunters on a frozen Wisconsin landscape.

As a parting gesture, I would like to address any readers familiar with Polish tradition. I wish I could douse you all with gallons (or liters) of water while joyously bel- lowing, “SZMYNGUS DYN-GUS!!” Yup. It sounds just like it’s spelled. Rock over Krakow, Rock on Milwaukee. Red Wigglers, the Cadillac of worms!

--The Rhythm Chicken

www.rhythmchicken.com
Greetings from my den of sloth! Yes, I have only bothered taking off my (very cool) pink-and-gray-star pajamas ONCE in the past FIVE days! I have been sitting on the couch in my bedroom for about two hours, trying to motivate myself to review mediocr else pop CDs! What is wrong with me? Why do you cause your formerly out-going columnist to seep so far into the recesses of pajama-dom? The answer? A sprained ankle! The bruised, purple and green painful shame of it all! My writings depend on stupid things happening to me! And if I’m lying on a couch all day, what am I going to write about? How I feel about Jerry Springer’s new haircut? The lessons I learned from reading the Real Estate section of the NY Times? The horror that results from deciding that “it’s not worth it” to hobble to my kitchen to obtain coffee? However, I realize that, in every writer’s life, there comes a dry spell. A period of months during which one fails to be a) hit by a car, b) peed on or c) attacked by a wild animal. Add to that the fact that, believe it or not, a new issue of Tight Pants is in the works (thus stealing all my stories about meeting people who re-enact the French and Indian War, raisin’ hell in Chattanooga while on tour with the Modern Machines and taking yet another personality test to obtain temporary employment!). Luckily, I come prepared for such inevitabilities. I have started planning ahead and forcing myself into stupid situations in a desperate plea for writing material! And you thought Kerouac was devoted to his art!

In every city, there’s that strange place that, regardless of how long you live there, you never seem to find time to explore. In Milwaukee, on the freeway near Riverwest (the punk and black working class neighborhood), I always passed a sign for “America’s Black Holocaust Museum.”

Being a Milwaukee resident since the tender age of eight, one would assume I would have been to this museum in the general course of my grade school field-tripping. But no. We went to the Art Museum (where the guide, when asked what the abstract art hanging in the front room was supposed to be, said, “I have no idea.”), to the public museum (home to a ridiculously cool life-sized depiction of a T-Rex eating a Stegosaurus), and even to Old World Wisconsin (where obese, bratwurst-eating white Wisconsin residents go to learn about their obese, bratwurst-eating German heritage, complete with recreated log cabins and period butter churns).

The Black Holocaust museum had always remained a mystery. In one of the most segregated cities in the country (recently, a study found us to be #1 in terms of segregation, but then the local paper went on a crusade to prove the statistics were incorrect. Their verdict, which they optimistically proclaimed? #43 out of 100 major cities!), it’s still rare here to find an integrated neighborhood. The white people work either at Wal-Mart or in the few factories that haven’t closed, and live together in working class communities. And the black people work either at Wal-Mart or not at all (another fun statistic! Milwaukee has the highest racial income disparity in the nation! And some predominately black areas have 40% unemployment!), and live in the ghetto.

Growing up broke and white meant that I never, ever met someone who was broke and black. Or middle-class and black. Or, to use a very small building in a high crime area. Ah, America!

After the documentary, there was a question and answer period. Besides the three of us, there were a few white students from a nearby university who were there as part of some sort of academic requirement. After watching graphic footage of lynchings, I was hard-pressed to come up with questions. (Note: what do you ask after watching something like that? How much rope did they use? What was the weather like?)

After the students asked a few questions, we went into another
room to begin the tour. “The tour” was a roughly twenty-foot walk down a hallway and into a small room. The hallway had a poorly-drawn mural on the wall of a “typical African village.” The tour guide, a nice but totally-clueless middle-aged woman, proceeded to talk about how “African people lived.” She pointed to the mural and said, “Here we have an African woman carrying water in a jug on her head.” Then she pointed to a hut and said, “Here, we have an African hut.” Then, pointing at the mural in general, she said, “Africans lived in huts.” When pressed for details, she pointed once again to the mural, and said, “See, you can observe that the huts were made out of straw.” And with that, our knowledge of African cultures was complete. Scholarship!

Then, we walked about five feet forward, and stood in front of a ball of rope. “This represents the passage into slavery,” she said, and led us into a small room with bunks on either side, designed to represent the conditions in the ship’s hull where the slaves were kept while being transported to America. This room, done in the style of the concentration camp train car you can walk through at the D.C. (WWII) Holocaust Museum, clearly used up approximately 95% of the museum’s total budget. After standing in that room for a few minutes, we moved on to the next room – which was almost totally empty except for a few xeroxed slave auction flyers. And with that, approximately twelve minutes after it had begun, the tour abruptly ended.

In twelve minutes, the entire 500 (or so) year history of the African slave trade in the Americas had been depicted – using a few slabs of wood, a drawing of a woman carrying water, and some xeroxes! It was, without a doubt, the crappiest museum I had ever visited. But, it wasn’t over yet! After saying goodbye to our tour guide, who nervously confessed that she hadn’t done tours in awhile and needed to brush up on her information, we went to explore the gift shop. First of all, it bears noting that the gift shop was approximately half the size of the space covered on the tour – a disturbing 1:2 ratio!

But, you might think, perhaps the gift shop would have a lot of interesting books about slavery and racism in the U.S. Perhaps they would sell posters of prominent abolitionists and civil rights leaders. Perhaps they would sell postcards of the museum. No, no, and no! Instead, the gift shop contained the following: a Bob Marley tablecloth, a Lion King bubble maker, four used copies of Joseph Lieberman’s 2000 campaign biography and individually wrapped packages of Laffy Taffy! Time to roll out the following word: Inexplicable!

While we stood in the gift shop, trying to contemplate how Joe Lieberman’s political memoirs and Laffy Taffy demonstrated the struggle to end slavery, I had an idea. Why not go to Old World Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Art Museum, round up all the butter churns and expensive monochromatic paintings, sell everything on ebay, and turn the art museum into a Black Holocaust museum that does more than sell the public Lion King bubble makers and inform them that Africans lived in huts? Or would that be too radical? Sometimes I really hate this country!

P.S. Tight Pants #11 will be out sometime this summer. In the meantime, please send d.i.y. sprained ankle remedies (i.e. sour patch kids, Bruce Springsteen posters and cans of Blatz) to me at: PO Box 100882, Milwaukee, WI 53210. Thank you and goodnight!
Well, this is it, the last version of Strikeman and how our superhero gets taken for a ride, hence “The Death of Strikeman.” Okay, okay, so I cover the comics and sometimes I get carried away, but it’s not that far from the truth. This is the third and final article about the great Southern California supermarket strike. Actually, it was a lot like getting drunk. First you start drinking (call the strike), then you’re feeling good, having a swell time (the first couple of weeks carrying signs and acting crazy), then you start to get sick because you’ve had too much (dealing with both a fucked-up company and an equally fucked-up union and all the rest of the people you work with and can’t really stand [you know who you are]) and finally the hangover the next day (basically waking up to find all that time you were out picketing was all for naught because the union gave in and all the sheep followed the union and voted yes, basically cutting their own throats. [Maybe they’re not sheep. Maybe they’re lemmings.] All the while, they gave those of us who voted NO a big fucking headache). So how do you like that? We really did get screwed, and I’ll explain how.

First and foremost, the contract accepted the two-tier system. The two-tier system is where I, making $18 an hour, will keep making that wage, but anyone promoted after that will have to wait six-and-a-half years to top out at $15 an hour. Now, I ask you, will my work be scrutinized a little closer now if I can be replaced by cheaper labor? Is the union going to help me? I think I’ve been placed in the guillotine upside down so that I can see the blade coming.

The biggie was the medical that I, in all honesty, was really not hurt about, but that was the big cry in the beginning. A single person pays five dollars a week, an employee and children pay ten dollars, and the whole family pays fifteen dollars. There is a twenty-five dollar co-pay to see the doctor, $100 co-pay to be hospitalized and prescriptions were raised to twenty dollars. There was a whole lot more but those were the biggies.

Now that we’ve been slapped in the face, we are being assigned to go to a motivational speaker to pump up our morale and show us how to find enjoyment through adversity. Bullshit! This coming from the same machine that has lied to us ever since it swallowed Lucky market in its quest to be the biggest supermarket (via the lack of a strong government to swing its anti-trust dick around) and are still lying to us. Case in point – upon arriving back to work, the manager told us that what happened while we were out is to remain outside and is forgotten, water under the bridge. Yet, when the man was transferred to another store, his final act was screwing with
employees who stood up to him or who he did not get along with. He did things like taking night crew stockers and placing them in the register and giving certain employees shitty hours. What happened to water under the bridge? I understand that most grocery workers are in a slightly different boat than myself, but how can they not see that in times when American business is sending work to China – as Nabisco and Radio Flyer wagons and toys just did – how is it that the lemmings see so short term? I sure don't want to hear all that crying when I retire. I think the public in general needs to step it up and take responsibility, instead of letting someone else make a bad decision for them and complaining about it. Enough said. I'm cutting it off here. I've spit and hissed enough on this subject. I think people are tired of me and I've got comics to review.

SUBHUMANS LIVE IN A DIVE #5
Fat Wreck Chords $$-??

I always enjoy when these come out because they are accompanied by a disk and because each one has a unique story. The last one is going to be rather difficult to conquer because the art and the story were incredible. Then again, Sick Of It All has been doing that for awhile. So this issue it’s the Subhumans’ turn and they don’t disappoint. The cover is cool; the Subhumans icon skull is fully pronounced against a background of screaming hordes. The visual follows the lyrics to “Subvert City,” which is a song that details a rise against the system and what it changes. The art has that Trencher look to it, if any of you remember that comic of the same name. The great thing about these books is that it puts a face on songs and groups, kind of like when Batman, Spiderman or the Hulk get lifted from pulp to the big screen. I think Fat Wreck Chords has a good thing going here and if I ever bowl near them at Punk Rock Bowling, I’m gonna tell them so. I’m not real sure how Joe Public can get these, seeing that a good friend’s wife has been looking for the last copy high and low with no success now wants mine. I’m gonna tell them so. I’m not real sure how Joe Public can get these, seeing that a good friend’s wife has been looking for the last copy high and low with no success now wants mine. I’m gonna have to look into this for you all because they really are excellent reading and viewing. (“Subvert City” artwork by: simon.gane@virgin.net)

THE POGOSTICK #2
by Al Columbia & Ethan Persoff, $4.95 U.S., $7.95 Can.

This one is bizarre – good bizarre – like watching a murder mystery and kind of figuring it out, yet kind of not. It revolves around the character, Audrey, who is a small, quiet man who seems to be having troubles in life. In the end, after the police have checked the room and called it ultra tidy, we see blood oozing out from under the bed. Whose blood is it? I don’t know. That’s why I’m asking. We have an idea, but we never see anyone do the dirty deed. This is a sick comic. It’s short and pretty simply done, but it keeps you guessing. Find this one, read it, and drop me a line and tell me what you think.

LOVE AND ROCKETS #9
by The Hernandez Brothers $3.95 U.S., $5.95 Can.

Let me tell you why I like this one; the story, “The High Soft Lisp.” Once, when I purchased a grab bag of comics, I happened to get one of those comics that can only be found in that room with the saloon doors. It was funny that one of the girls had a lisp. It just so happens it’s the same girl. Now what’s funny is that this chick is hot – a curvy brunette with really big breasts, and, of course, she talks with this great lisp. As hot as this girl is she can never find a steady romance, and winds up with the likes of deadbeats and serial killers. Oh, and I feel for the girl! You just have to read this one as a primer for her full-length comics. Did I just say full-length? There are two other stories inside here. Both are kinda bizarre but fun to read, but the lisp story is the best. Sorry. My mind floats in the gutter.

APE: SON OF A VISION THING
By Theodoros Nikos Jouflas $4.95 U.S., $7.95 Can.

I loved this book! If you dislike the present federal governing body, then this one is gonna rock your world. The art is surreal and spectacular and the poetry is right on the money. When students go on acid trips, this must be what history class becomes. Yet, at the same time, this little diddy gets you thinking. This guy definitely does not carry the republican voter card. All I can say is ask the guy on the other side of the counter to get you a copy of this and if he says he doesn’t have a copy, give him the finger and high tail it to a distributor that does carry this fine work of art.

–Gary Hornberger
When I was in my teens, I always felt slightly annoyed by the Dead Kennedy’s song “Religious Vomit.” While I shared Jello Biafra’s rage at the Christian Right and the state of organized religions in America in general, as well as the annoyance of half-assed semi-acceptance of Judeo-Christian beliefs, I had a hard time agreeing that “all religions suck.” I didn’t know that much about the Dalai Lama at the time, but couldn’t see him “sucking” the way Jerry Falwell did.

This seemed a common issue I had with white American suburban punk culture, that it rejected more things than it knew about. If the religions of our parents were stupid, surely the concept of religion in itself is stupid as well, or at least that was the logic. I write this now after formally becoming Buddhist. I am a practicing Soto Zen Buddhist. I take that long to say that because when I said to people that I formally became Zen Buddhist, most balk at the idea of Zen being anything that can be called formal or official. This is also interesting, coming from counter cultural punk types because it shows how much as much as we reject mainstream media and corporate information, we only do so when we have the energy to consider what is officially corporate information.

My point is that it’s funny for scruffy kids who know of Zen Buddhism solely through Kerouac and Ginsberg to argue points told to me by Zen Buddhist priests and monks. I don’t take everything that even the most informed Buddhist Monk says as truth without some skepticism, but I suspect they might be a bit more informed than most.

Granted, in our culture, “Zen” is often meant to describe a product that has ginseng in it. I have seen Zen iced tea and Zen cereal. Strange, because you would never see Greek Orthodox Iced Tea. Zen is one of those weird things where it invokes positive thoughts from people who don’t really know about it and certainly would never seek to practice it. I think one of the closest comparisons is Voodoo, a real religion that has real practitioners but is better known for half-truths. Go to New Orleans and you will see myriad “Voodoo” dolls and trinkets composing a huge tourism business that I am sure dwarfs the financial intake of the actual Voodoo Spiritual Centers – which from what I have seen look more like a community center than the Satanic shrines tourists would like to take them for.

Some people think that it’s cool that I am a Zen Buddhist. And I have to say that making people think I am less cool isn’t a high priority, but while it’s cool that I am Zen and not very cool to be, say, Quaker, the coolness factor is pretty arbitrary – the Quakers I meet tend to act similarly, they just wear less black. I think perhaps that it’s a vicarious cool – like how many kids in high school liked my mohawk; they couldn’t get away with mohawks, but they liked having a friend with one. It doesn’t sound like fun to wake up and sit perfectly still in meditation for an hour, but it sounds cool to know someone who does.

One of the first questions people ask about my becoming Buddhist is if I am still a Reverend or not. Yes I am. The whole point of the Universal Life Church is that there is no dogma to it at all. I can functionally do whatever I want and believe whatever I believe as long as whatever I do does not impede on the rights of others to do the same. Actually, the two go very well in many ways.

Other questions I get about Buddhism are about Buddhist sects I know little or nothing about. Truth be told, I think a lot of beliefs of a lot of Buddhists are pretty weird and contradictory. I suppose this can be similar to asking a United Methodist about Catholicism. Sure, they’re both Christian, but there’s a big difference in style and belief. This also should be brought up when uninformed “Patriots” assume that all Moslems are represented by al Qaeda. Religious radicals have more in common with other radicals no matter what brand they attribute themselves to.

The Zen Center I go to is set up for lay practice, which means that for the most part its set up for “normal” people who have jobs and homes and lives outside, like writing columns for punk magazines and such. It’s Soto, as opposed to Rinzai, which are the main two schools of Zen. I don’t expect this to mean much to most people. More or less, a main difference is that Soto Zen is more about day to day activities as spiritual practice, while Rinzai is big into Koans – those questions and stories like “What was your true face before your parents were born?” or “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” and the idea of sudden enlightenment.

Actually, a word on the idea of enlightenment. Zen teacher Joko Beck, who runs the San Diego Zen Center, noted that people hear of the idea of enlightenment and assume it changes you so that you go through life in bliss forever. She notes that it’s usually more a feeling that lasts for a few hours. I was walking in the woods and it hit me that for most of history, a lot of the land that is now strip malls and parking lots was this beautiful, and over the years, our culture has removed itself from nature. You know how when you have something at the tip of your tongue, or you think of something, but forget what the name of it is... anything like that? You
know that you know something, but you forget what you know? How good does it feel when it dawns on you what that missing piece of information is? That is a minor form of enlightenment. Enlightenment isn’t an experience when we, as humans, find a new level of evolution based on religion and mystic experience which is beyond normal life. Enlightenment is a great and sudden remembering of what a person has forgotten as a result of being denied truth as a result of being part of this sick culture.

At one point, each person was as much a part of nature as the trees and grass and sky. Now we live compartmentalized. We live apart, ride in cars, work in cubes. Our lives are separate from one another and much of what we think of as nature. We don’t need to commune with nature, the world, the universe, so much as recall that we have always been part of it.

Enlightenment is a sort of mental and spiritual “OH YEAH! I REMEMBER NOW!”

Of course, I am not saying that me being Buddhist now makes me enlightened. It does mean that I had a day of “Vowing ‘N’ Bowing” (and yes, it was referred to as such) where I officially took the precepts and such. Interesting thing about the precepts of Buddhism, they are a lot like the Ten Commandments but less like orders and more like personal examinations. “Do not kill” and “Do not steal” are pretty straightforward (until you REALLY get into the philosophy, which often leads to unwitting vagueness and such) as is “Do not speak dishonestly,” but how about “Do not misuse sexuality”? (Other sects of Buddhism translate this different all one with everything, but it also means no shit-talking. “Do not be mean with Dharma (teaching) or wealth” means don’t be stingy, but that’s hard to chart.

Finally, “Do not defame the Three Treasures” is a mindful. The Three Treasures are Buddha – which can refer to the Shakayamuni Buddha, Siddharta Guatama, the guy who started it all, or the enlightened mine within us all; Dharma is teaching; Sangha is community, sometimes used to define all Buddhists, sometimes you refer to the people at the place you meditate as your Sangha, etc. So, the precept is to respect these ideas, but also it involves not making a self-parody of the ideas by self-righteousness or elitism.

It’s really odd, having been raised Christian, where so many people fight to decide who has THE correct message and rules for people to obey, to be in a religion where the idea is to throw open-ended abstracts at you and make you try to figure them out. Heck, by the time I finish writing this, I probably would have changed my personal definitions a few times.

One of the cool things I got by formally taking the precepts (besides cookies, the Zen center is all about cookies, and man, you haven’t enjoyed a cookie until you sit for hours in meditation and ritualistically have a cookie given for you to mindfully eat, but anyway) is a scroll that has the name of Shakayamuni – the Indian prince turned monk whose teachings are the core of Buddhism – the guy we call “THE Buddha,” and the lineage of who he taught, who they taught, all the way down to my teacher, to me. Stop and consider what Christianity would be like if there were something similar.

For example, my Sangha’s interpretation of Soto Zen Buddhism is just that and no more, and that we note that for almost everything we do, there are different versions, translations and interpretations. Every now and then, you hear a teacher say “In Tibetan Buddhism, this is called ‘...’ or “at such and such temple, they use the translation...” This is because we are aware that a lot of these teachings were originally written in Sanskrit in India 2500 years ago, and went from India to China to Japan to America, being translated from language to language, culture to culture. Yet the teachings of Jesus (assuming you believe such a fellow existed) were in Aramaic 2000 years ago in the Middle East. Yet, the teaching of the Biblical guy is THE DIRECT WORD of God. Nevermind that even if the Bible was such, it was written in a language with a totally different context and language family.

Consider, for instance, gender in language. In English, we have no gender-neutral term for a person (minor and disagreeing factions in favor of “ze” and such aside.) So, everything is him, her, or it. But some languages, many in that area where the Bible took place in, have an “it” word and a “person pronoun” that doesn’t depend on gender. Now imagine calling God by that term and then being the guy who has to decide what that’s translated as.

One of my favorite examples of translation in the Bible is one of the verses that in theory admonishes homosexuality. It says to not lie with a man the way a man does with a woman. One meaning of that is “don’t have sex with a man if you are a man.” Another might note that true and the “lie” not “be sexual with.” But I like the idea that it means “when you DO have sex with men, don’t do it the way you do with women.” Well, obviously, you can’t put your penis in a man’s vagina, but you can sodomize him. And while we can actually buy books and lubes to facilitate this these days, sodomy was likely a health hazard in dry areas without running water and stuff like that. So maybe it’s not homosexuality that Christians should take issue with, it’s hygiene about poop. Consider this might be why Leviticus and such talk about what foods not to eat. (And while I have seen “God hates Shrimp” signs at protests, they seem shouted down by the Christian homophobic front.)

Consider that today I can Google “punk rock” on my imac. Fifty years ago that would have made no sense whatsoever.

Consider that when my high school social studies class teacher said that in some parts of the world, it’s offensive to eat or touch people with your left hand. That’s silly, right? We have no issue with that, do we? But we have soap and running water and toilet paper. Consider that some people don’t, and they designate righty to be food and social hand and lefty to be poopy wipe hand. Now tell me that’s a weird taboo. Makes as much sense as the idea that it’s unlucky to conduct business unless you wear colored cloth around your neck. Or at least, it’s etiquette to wear a necklace.

But imagine, if we did have a record that said Jesus told one guy this, and he told that guy this, and had a full family tree that let us know where the Orthodox churches went one way and why, or how George W. Bush can push Christianity yet forgetting the parts about “Thou shalt not kill” or “it’s easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a wealthy man to enter heaven.”

Don’t get me wrong, while I think many of the most vocal Christians aren’t so smart or truthful, I still like most of what Jesus said, fictional character or historical figure or a bit of each. After all, at least one Zen master has said “that Christ fellow was well on his way towards becoming a Buddha.” But then again, at least Buddhist teacher I know applies this to the sheriff in Fargo as well.

—Rich Mackin
“Me da seis tacos de asada, and…. What do you want to drink, Dopey?”

I stared at the menu on the wall for a minute before telling Nacho, “Whatever’s clever.”

“Dos tamarindos,” he told the guy behind the counter before pulling his wallet from the Levi’s he wore under his dark blue muumuu to pay for the food. When the food was ready, we sat at one of the tables and divvied up the tacos between us.

Avalo’s Taco House on City Terrace Drive was a favorite hangout of the neighborhood punk kids. The food was both cheap and good, and the alleys and service streets in which we usually hung out weren’t too far away. Most importantly, they didn’t give a damn about how one looked, which came in handy when you’re ordering food with your hair spiked to the ceiling and the guy next to you is making a fashion statement usually reserved for elderly women.

Not that Nacho was gay, or even your average heterosexual with a kink for wearing women’s clothing. If he had been either, though, it wouldn’t have made a difference, ’cause he was cool enough to look damn sharp in the dresses he wore, big enough not to worry about homophobes fucking with him and mean enough to set right any who tried.

He had been my older brother’s best friend since kindergarten, but he had become something of a second brother to both Dennis and I over the years. Even our mother, who was usually very vocal in her assessments of our strange looking friends, treated him like family, always trying to feed him and even giving him a key to the house, “just in case one of these mensos forgets theirs.”

“So how was the gig at the Casa Blanca last Friday?” he asked between bites, not looking up at me.

“All right, I guess,” I said, staring at the straw I was spinning around in my glass of tamarindo. I knew where this was going. “Political Scandal were pretty good, Los Pulmones were kinda weird, Neto’s band were Neto’s band and the others were boring.”

“Yeah, Dennis said pretty much the same thing. Sounds like I didn’t miss much.” He took another bite from his taco. “He also said you got into your first full-on brawl. That where you got the black eye?”

“Yeah,” I said, still twirling the straw. “Can we skip this conversation, Nacho?”

He looked up at me for a moment, and then went back to his tacos. “No problem,” he said. “I was just concerned ‘cause that don’t sound like you, little brother.”

We sat there for what seemed like hours, him eating and me twirling the straw over and over. Finally I looked at him.

“What did Dennis say was the reason I jumped on that asshole?”

“He also said you got into your first full-on brawl. That where you got the black eye?”

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“What did Dennis say was the reason I jumped on that asshole?”

“Not much, other than the dude was drunk and snap-happy and, before anyone knew what was going on, you were all over the sorry fucker, screaming and kicking his face in. I think you freaked Dennis out a little,” he said. “Neto was a different story. He was going on about ‘there was blood everywhere’ and how he and Louie had to pull you off the guy ’cause they were afraid you were gonna kill him. He almost sounded like he was the one that fucked the dude up.”

“Yeah, well, Neto was part of the problem that night. And Dennis. And you.”

He stopped mid-bite and looked up at me. “Okay, now how do you figure I’m partly responsible for your lighting up some drunk prick at a gig I wasn’t even at?” he asked. I looked back at him for a moment, then went back to twirling the straw.

“It’s the little things that cut, and knowing that they’re done with the best intentions doesn’t make them hurt any less,” I said. “All my life I’ve been someone’s little brother. First I’m Dennis’s little brother, then yours, then all of your friends. Now that’s a cool position to be in, you know? I’ve got all these homies looking out for me, making sure I don’t fuck up or someone fucks me up. Someone’s always got my back and, believe me, I’m thankful that you all care enough to look after me. But at the same time, I’m sixteen, man, and sometimes it feels like all of you think I’m still nine or something.”

“Nah, it ain’t even like that,” he said. “We...”
I'm thinking how no one takes me seriously who fucks with me every time I go to that club. Marlboros. I'm thinking about that bartender breath, mixed in with cheap cologne and stale and, I swear, that's what I was smelled that was right next to me. I never forgot that smell. I ran round the door and I tried to hold my breath, but the blasted in the face by this smell when I opened... smell, so sweet it makes you want to vomit. I got smelled rotting meat before? It's a really sweet me that the freezer was broken and that we had meat she stored in there and came back in with mom had gone out to get one of the packages of we didn't know it for a couple of weeks. My time the freezer in our garage broke down and I notice this smell and I start thinking about the "Pardon me, little boy."

…blew up," Nacho finished.

"Yeah. I don't know if he got the shot off or not, but I guess the shiner on my eye means he did," I said. "One minute he’s getting ready to let fly and the next minute I’m covered in blood, Neto and Louie are off the stage and they’re"
even back then it was pretty obvious that home-boy was gay. I mean, he wasn’t prancing around in furs and makeup like some bullshit queen stereotype or anything, but it was clear that he was not a football-and-chicks kinda guy. Me and Dennis didn’t care, you know? He was funny and drew his own comics, and that’s an important skill when you’re thirteen, so we liked hanging around with him. Anyway, one Monday Richard didn’t come to school. Turned out that nine or ten guys jumped him after school the Friday before. They broke his teeth out on a curb, opened his head with a pipe and just left him lying there in his own blood. He never came back to school and we never saw him again. Everyone knew who did it, but, of course, no one was gonna tell on them. They were gonna get away with it, and it was fucked. So I thought about how screwed up and unfair the world was, how it eats up the weak and figured, if the world ain’t gonna make things right, fuck it, I will.

“The next day I showed up at school wearing one of my mom’s dresses. Dennis looked at me like I’m fucking nuts, but he figured out what was up pretty quick. First fucker that comes up talking shit, BOOM, I clock him square in the face. His homeboy moved up and, BOOM, he’s on his ass, too. I never even made it into the building. Teacher grabbed me from behind and, like that, I’m expelled. A few years later I passed the GED, but I never went back to school.

“I guess I’m wearing my reason,” he said. “It gives me the opportunity to teach the pricks of the world to reassess who they think is an easy mark. Some cultures teach their children that hitting someone else is bad. Really. They tell them that anger causes things like earthquakes and hurricanes, so when a disaster happens, there’s all these people running around, apologizing for being angry. Here, people like that get swallowed whole. I wish things could be another way, but they are what they are. And although I may not be able to change the world, I can change the world around me.”

“Only you can judge the reasons why you do what you do, Dopey. How do you feel about it?”

“I think I snapped,” I said. “No doubt that drunk guy had an ass kicking coming to him, but I don’t think my reasons had anything to do with him, and I guess that’s why I feel like shit.”

“Then you need to learn to put your anger in check, to know what you’re willing to fight for, and understand the danger that every fight puts you in. Going off once too often could get you killed, and I’d miss that ugly face of yours.”

He finished off the last beer and tossed the empty bottle down the hill with the others we’d already downed. It was still early and the boys would be just getting started in the alley, so we cruised through the hills on our way to the alley, I looked over at Nacho, who looked back at me and smiled.

As he was watching a band at a gig four years later, Nacho noticed a girl and her boyfriend arguing over by the bar. The guy looked like he was screaming at the top of his lungs and waving his arms around. Suddenly, he reached back, nailed the girl in the face and stormed off. Nacho ran over to the girl, helped her off of the floor and walked her over to the bar, where he got a damp bar towel.

According to the bartender, the boyfriend came back and saw Nacho, who was trying to stop the blood that was pouring out of the girl’s face. He grabbed Nacho’s shoulder and spun him around, yelling, “What the fuck are you doing?” at him.

And that was it. Before the bartender or anyone else could react, Nacho was on the floor, bleeding to death with three stab wounds in his chest and one in his neck. The girl and her boyfriend were long gone before the pigs showed up and, aside from the bartender, there were no witnesses.

The night Dennis called to let me know what happened, I grabbed a sixer from my refrigerator, hopped into my car and headed for City Terrace. I drove the twisted roads through the hills, eventually pulling over by the side of the cliff and putting the sixer of beer on the hood, pulling one out and cracking it open. I drank deep and looked out towards the west. As I stood under the water tower, watching the city lights twinkling below me, I thought about the night Nacho and I drank our first beer together, the first of what would be many over the years. I thought about the fight I’d had so long ago and the conversation he and I had about it in this same spot.

I emptied the bottle, dropped it down the side of the hill and took another from the pack. As I took my first drink from the second bottle, I pictured him in that dark blue muumuu and began to cry.

–Jimmy Alvarado
The Mardi Gras Mambo

Nine in the morning on Fat Tuesday. The image standing before me in the mirror was hardly recognizable. My entire face and neck was painted in red and black. A mask the same colors covered my eyes. My lips were coated in a deep purple. A straw hat with a fuchsia boa glued to it sat atop my head. Fishnet stockings covered my arms. A blood-red nylon Van Raalte nightly clung to my skinny bones.

I poured a quart of gin and tonic into a plastic jug and walked out the front door. The sky was overcast and colder than I expected, and the little gusts of wind that blew underneath the dress gave me the chills. The rumor was that there was going to be a torramental downpour at some point in the day. I think the high was supposed to be fifty degrees. I’m gonna freeze my ass off, I thought. I took a big sip and figured, hell, after half of this jug is gone I won’t feel a thing. Ah yes, it was the slutty drag queen from hell about to embark upon my first Mardi Gras...

All right, I’m not ashamed to admit it: this wasn’t the first time I’d worn the outfit. The previous Friday a friend of mine asked me if I wanted to go to a party with her. I had to dress up though. You can’t go to a party during Mardi Gras season without dressing up. Or so I thought. It started off with the hat and mask and a couple of beers. By midnight I was drinking whiskey, and paint and woman’s clothing were involved.

The two of us walked down a small alleyway into a backyard and noticed that hardly anyone at the party was dressed up. “Hah, now this is gonna be some fun.”

An hour into the party and I was making out with some girl who told me she was married but thought I was absolutely adorable. Shortly afterwards I had a full crowd singing “Happy Birthday” to Rosy, an older black neighborhood woman who didn’t know anyone there and had somehow stumbled upon the party. “Everyone, give it up for Rosy!” I shouted as I sashayed her and twirled her around in circles. Throughout the night, she kept asking me to hug her and kiss her on the cheek and told me I was the only person there she felt comfortable talking to.

Then sometime around five in the morning there was a large crowd out on St. Claude Ave. My friend Emilin was stumbling around playing harmonica for the first time. Some woman who didn’t know anyone there and had somehow stumbled upon the party. “Everyone, give it up for Rosy!” I shouted as I sashayed her and twirled her around in circles. Throughout the night, she kept asking me to hug her and kiss her on the cheek and told me I was the only person there she felt comfortable talking to.

People who’ve never been to New Orleans have their own perception of what Mardi Gras is. I’m sure hoards of drunken people on Bourbon St. screaming for beads, girls showing their tits, that whole Girls Gone Wild bit, might be what comes to mind. I know that’s what I thought before I ever came down here. And while these are aspects of the holiday, there’s so much more going on that one has to really live here to get any sense of the true spirit of Mardi Gras. There’s the forty some odd parades going on all over the city for two straight weeks. There are the Black Mardi Gras Indians who come wearing amazing, radiant costumes that weigh over a hundred pounds and take months to make. And I only know a small ounce of what Mardi Gras is all about. I’ve seen countless pictures from past Mardi Gras, but being a part of the experience is an entirely different thing. The thought that comes to my mind after going through my first Mardi Gras is simply, a fantastic releasing of the soul.

Often when I see people dance – and New Orleans has its own particular dance that I can’t even begin to try to put words to – I get this feeling that for a brief instance I’m witnessing freedom in its rawest form. And that’s what I see the carnival season as: a wild, beautiful dance, an insane and wonderful celebration of the human spirit.

The eve of Mardi Gras, on what is known as Lundi Gras, I heard about some sort of gathering taking place in a large alleyway about a mile from my house. I was told it involved people getting in shopping carts and banging into each other. After nearly a year living in this city I’ve stopped trying to understand anything that goes on here; this place is just as mystifying as the Mississippi River. I just go along with the flow and see where it ends up.

Sad to say, no shopping carts were involved, but instead, nestled between a couple of warehouses on a back street, I stumbled on something that can only be described as Mad Max meets Lord of the Flies. People were dancing and stomping chaotically as the drums built up. People screaming out war cries, a girl twirling a hula-hoop engulfed in flames around her body… a fat clown with a tutu banging on a bass drum… fireworks and firecrackers shooting into the air.

At one point a cop came and told everyone they were making too much noise. And whereas in any other city there’d be a number of arrests for “disturbing of the peace,” here it’s all fair game. The cop can tell everyone to go, but that’s about where it ends. So the crowd joined together and marched down the street, blocking traffic, ignoring lights, jumping on top of taxi vans, dancing in the middle of the street. Onlookers were suddenly in the mix of the parade.

Down into the Quarter, workers came out of the restaurants and joined alongside of us, yelling out “Yeah, yeah!” Defiantly splitting through the mass of frat boys and plastic princesses that infest Bourbon Street, I heard...
someone say, “Jesus, these people fuckin’ stink!” Back to Jackson Square and for hours, drums and dance and this overwhelmingly good feeling; you’d have to be absolutely devoid of human emotion not to move your limbs and smile. I’ve been to parades, I’ve been to crazy
flowered nightgowns waving from their porch-es. The tourists in plain clothes, with their cam-
eras out, awestruck, “Shit, hunny, we’re a long way from Nebraska.” I read the lips of one man saying, “This is fucking amazing.”

NEW ORLEANS IS A CITY DROWNING IN FICTION;
BESIDES, WHERE THE HELL DOES THE TRUTH EVER GET US ANYWAY?

I’m full of gin dancing the whole way, into the Quarter, the two miles up to Canal Street, the streets packed as the Zulu parade goes by and the crowds scream for beads. Tourists ask to take pictures with us. I see the Japanese kids again and ask if they’ve heard of Snuffy Smile records. I tell them how I was in Japan once with a punk band. They have no idea what I’m saying so I yell out, “Biru mo ipon onegai shimasu!” (“Please bring me another beer!”) Then I’m on my way. I see one young boy looking at me curiously, as if he can’t quite figure the costume out. “Hey boy!” I say to him in a gruff, manly voice. As I parade down the street I hear him say to his mom, “I thought that was a woman!”

Stumbling through the French Quarter, a pile of colorful beads cascading from balconies and choking me around the neck, one of my
dress straps now broken, my left nipple exposed. “You hairy slut,” people say joking-
ly as they walk by. On Frenchman Street where people have overtaken the street, drums blar-
ing, music every which way, cars attempt to get through as I do a freaky kangaroo dance to every one of them. Something about the guy wearing a dress thing works out in my favor because it seems like every hour I’m making out with a different girl. I come to the conclusion that every girl likes a Queen. One hippie chick even comes up to me and asks me if she can suck on my nipple. How can I say no? Being the gentleman that I am, I return her the favor. A girl dressed in bananas takes out a vibrator and sticks it in between my legs. She yells out, “I’m Banana Woman!” Ha ha, yes, it’s a day for perverness and insan-
y and doing all the things we’d probably get locked up for any other time of the year and I’m loving every minute of it.

Twelve hours after I’d first stepped out of my house I started to run out of gas. Every muscle in my
body was sore and I came to the realization that I hadn’t eaten all day. By this time the crowds had considerably thinned out. They were probably still going strong down in the Quarter, but I decided it’d be best to call it a night. I’d had about as good of a Mardi Gras as I could expect. I stumbled the thirty blocks back home and passed out on my couch with the dress and mask still on. And although I don’t have any plans of delving into the cross-dressing business, I have to admit, when I walked outside the following morning without the mask on, there was a part of me that felt a bit naked.

–Seth Swaaley
EXENE TWIRLED AND SPUN AROUND LIKE SHE WANTED TO BE SOME KIND OF PUNK ROCK STEVIE NICKS. CLEARLY SHE DIDN’T REALIZE WHAT A CONTRADICTION IT IS TO BE A PUNK ROCK STEVIE NICKS.

BEER AND LYING IN HIGH SOCIETY

There I was, bombarded out of my trick, blathering something into a microphone about porn stars and premature ejaculation and people with carrots up their ass. It was one of those beautifully ugly moments when I felt like a fool and an imposter and a guy on top of the world. And the bizarre thing was, I was supposed to be there. I was one of the opening acts for X.

Now, your first question, or at least the first question everyone I tell the story to asks is, “X? The X?” The answer is, yes, the X from Los Angeles. The band that we all saw giving each other bad tattoos and talking like they were the king shits in Decline of Western Civilization. The X who did “Johnny Hit and Run Pauline” and “White Girl” and “Sex and Dying in High Society.” Exene Cervenka. John Doe. Billy Zoom. DJ Bonebreak. That X.

If you know me, then your second question is, “But dude, you’re not in a band. What the fuck were you doing opening for X?”

Therein lies our story.

A few weeks earlier, I’d opened up for Tony from the Adolescents, but in a different context. Someone had started a new spoken word series over in West Hollywood, and they were inviting a bunch of old LA punk rockers to do spoken word performances. Tony seemed like a no-brainer choice to grace that stage. And Tony, being the good guy he is, shared the stage with a couple of local writers: me and Jim “Money” Ruland. The whole night was a pretty cool setup.

It was a nice bar with a cool little stage and a few free drinks for the folks who were reading. I got a chance to get up on that stage and tell a story and sell a couple of books. Ruland got a chance to do something, you owe them. And it goes deeper than that. The first time I spoke to Tony, we hung out, listened to music, and drank a whole lot of beer. When the first twelve-pack ran out, we bought more. We drank until a nice haze settled in. Somewhere during that haze, I told Ruland about this weird package I’d gotten in the mail from a friend of mine, Jason Willis.

Jason works in an internet porn company, and the company he used to work for had bought out another porn company, and therefore, they got that other company’s office supplies. So while Jason and his co-workers were raiding this defunct company’s offices, Jason came across a box of letters that guys had written to women in porn. The letters were seriously depraved. The guys genuinely thought that, if you simply write a good enough letter to a porn star, she will have sex with you. So they wrote their love letters. And the porn stars never opened them. They left them in a box in an office. No one touched the box until Jason came across it. At which point, Jason and his friends got a good laugh at these guys’ expense. Actually, everyone who read the letters seemed to go through the same stages: for the first dozen letters, they laughed at the guys who wrote the letters; for the next dozen letters, they sympathized – or pitied, even – the letter writers, as in, “Holy shit, this poor fucker is a thirty-five-year-old virgin who thinks he can have sex with a porn actress. How bad must his life suck?”; and, after another dozen letters, they go back to laughing, as in, “Dude, it’s his own fault he’s a thirty-five-year-old virgin. If he can’t figure out that dirty words written to a porn star aren’t gonna solve his problems, then I can have a guilt-free laugh at his expense.”

The next morning, I emerged from the drunken haze to realize that the letters to porn stars were my key to getting through this opening gig for X. The letters would slide me into that nice gray area where there are exceptions to rules, where you realize that the one thing besides punk rock that will fly at a punk rock show is a dirty joke. So I made up a story about how, when we started Razorcake, we rented a

“Sure,” I said, having no idea what I was agreeing to.

When I got home, I played the Adolescents blue album for the ten thousandth time and looked into what Beatfest was. From what I gathered, it was a grouping of LA bands and writers that would take place on two stages over the course of three nights. The big stage featured acts like Dee Dee Ramone, Steve Earle, and X. The smaller stage featured a bunch of writers who you’ve probably never heard of, and a bunch of people who you have heard of, but who probably aren’t writers, all of whom were doing some form of spoken word. I figured that Ruland and I would get ten minutes each on the small stage, and that was good enough for me. I quit looking into Beatfest and turned up the stereo.

A few days later, Tony called Ruland. As it turned out, Tony had tried to get us onto the small stage, but he wasn’t able to. No worries, though. He got us onto the big stage for the Friday night show, instead. Ruland and I would go on after the Starvations and before the Adz. X would headline. We’d have five minutes each to read something. “Would that be cool?” Tony asked.

“That sounds great,” Ruland said, because he was lying out his fucking ass.

The thing is, what Jim knew and what I knew was that only one thing flies on the stage of a punk rock show, and that’s a punk rock band. I’ve been to thousands of shows over the course of decades and I’ve seen people try all kinds of shit between bands at shows. I’ve seen someone try to show an independent film, and I’ve seen that movie screen get splattered in beer. I’ve seen the makeup punk stand up act who had to re-write his material so that his whole comedy routine is nothing more than dealing with hecklers. I’ve seen spoken word acts get it the worst. I’ve come to respect that the letters to porn stars were my key to getting through this opening gig for X. The letters would slide me into that nice gray area where there are exceptions to rules, where you realize that the one thing besides punk rock that will fly at a punk rock show is a dirty joke. So I made up a story about how, when we started Razorcake, we rented a
PO Box that used to belong to a porno magazine, and we got all these crazy letters to porn stars. I picked out my favorite letters: the one where the guy asks the German porn star for her opinion on the reunification of Germany; the one where the guy in prison talks about how, when he gets out, he’ll take the porn star horseback riding on the shores of Marina del Rey (which, as far as I can tell, has no “shores,” because it’s a fucking marina, not a beach); the one about the middle aged virgin who’s saving himself for the right porn star; the one that discusses how perfectly the photographer caught the picture just as Chloé’s tongue was about to touch Claire’s asshole, but before the tongue actually touched; and, of course, the one about the guy with the carrot in his ass (and no, he wasn’t the Rhythm Chicken). My plan was to tell my story and have Jim read the letters in between my discussion of the stages of reading the letters.

I called Jim with my plan. He liked it. We decided to meet up at his apartment and practice reading the piece. We did meet up at his apartment. We drank beer and listened to music. When the first twelve-pack ran out, we bought more. Somewhere in the haze of the second twelve-pack, we decided that a.) we didn’t need any fucking practice and b.) we should stop fooling ourselves and just buy a case to begin with.

Before too long, Beatfest came around, and ready or not, Ruland and me and Tony seemed glad to see Ruland and me. He packed up and headed out to it. Another fellow Razorcaker, Bradley Williams, lived across the street from the venue, so we left early, headed out to Hollywood, and met up with Bradley. We drank more beer and told stories with Bradley and, shortly before it was time for us to head to the show, Bradley put on his own show for us. He pulled out his washtub bass, which is a broomstick stuck into a round metal washtub, with a cord tied to the top of the broom stick and the edge of the tub. Bradley put on a pair of gardening gloves so the cord wouldn’t tear up his fingers, and ripped through a song on the washtub bass. It was too good. We made Bradley play another. And another. It just felt right. The beer was cold. The songs sounded good. We cheered Bradley on until finally he said, “I can’t play no more. My hands are tore up.”

That meant it was time to go to the show.

Tony seemed glad to see Ruland and me. He showed us around the backstage area, which was strangely free of beer, which didn’t matter because I had one in my hand anyway. We walked us by the room where the members of X were. There was a huge sign on the outside of the door that told anyone and everyone to not disturb the band. It seemed excessive, seeing as how there was no one backstage to except Ruland, Tony, and me, and we were more than content to just disturb each other.

After a few minutes, the Starvations wrapped up their set and it was time for Ruland and me. A big curtain closed at the front of the stage. The Starvations started breaking down behind the curtain. The Adz waited to set up their equipment. The sound guy pulled two microphones out in front of the curtain and told us to do our thing. Tony introduced us. I stepped up to the mic. It was weird. The stage was six feet high. Bouncers stood in front of me, poised to protect me from any stage divers or teeny boppers who wanted to storm the stage. As if that would happen. Literally hundreds of people milled around in front of me. I pulled my story out from my back pocket. I was so nervous and had had so much to drink that I couldn’t read the words on the paper. No worries, though, because this always happens to me when I get up on a stage to do a reading, so I memorized my story in advance. I laid in on my bullshit about how these letters had mysteriously appeared in my PO Box. As I paused, Jim read about the premature ejaculators and the marina cowboys. The crowd actually stopped to listen. Not the whole crowd, but a lot of them. Literally hundreds of them. They laughed at all the dick and ass jokes. It was pretty sweet: one of those moments when I was somewhere between a fool and king. Ruland seemed to dig it, too.

After we finished up, the Adz played a pretty fucking awesome set, and then it was time for X. Now, I’m like you. I have X’s Los Angeles album. I have Wild Gift. I’ve listened to them hundreds, if not thousands of times. There was a point in my life when those albums were my soundtrack. The songs from those albums bring back all the feelings from the times when I couldn’t hear them enough. I listen to them and feel years melt away and remember faces and things that I never think about anymore. I reserve those songs for special times when I want to feel like I’m back in some long forgotten era, hanging out with all the people I’ve long since lost touch with. So seeing X play was a pretty special thing for me. Until X took the stage, that is.

They started with one of their hits. I think I’d bought an even better version of “Johnny Hit and Run Pauline.” It was one of my favorites, but they played it a beat too slowly, and it wasn’t a fast song to begin with. Exene twirled and spun around like she wanted to be some kind of punk rock Stevie Nicks. Clearly she didn’t realize what a contradiction it is to be a punk rock electric guitarist. Billy Zoom took his cool guitar pose from twenty years earlier, but not like he was kid who thought he was cool. Like he was an aging comedian performing a Billy Zoom satire. I started drinking faster.

Four songs into the show, X played “We’re Desperate.” I watched John Doe sing out that he was desperate, and I should get used to it. And I thought, dude, I know that you’ve been in over forty movies and have a recurring role on a TV show. You’re not desperate. You’re fucking loaded. Tickets for that very show were something like thirty bucks, and X was getting almost all that money. And, at that moment, I felt like it wasn’t just John Doe. It was all of the members of X who were ruining their own music for me. They were destroying songs I used to love. They were so far removed from the passion that inspired their songs that they sounded like their own worst cover band. I had heard a current band like the Selby Tigers play an X song than hear X limp through their own tunes. It just seemed so fake.

And I realized that I wasn’t really one to talk. After all, I’d faked my way through a spoken word act. I skipped out on any attempts at honesty or depth and went for the cheap joke. What I’d done had been far less severe than becoming my own worst cover band, which is what X was doing to themselves. Still, it made me realize that everyone becomes a bit of an impostor and everyone sells himself a little short when he gets on the stage.

I walked out of the show before listening to the X butcher another of their old tunes, thinking about Bradley’s washtub bass and about Tony’s Electric Frankenstien tour story and all the tales that Ruland and I swilled our way through twelve packs, because that’s the stuff of real life. That’s the shit that means something. And all this business on a big stage with hundreds of fans: it’s just a diversion.

–Sean Carswell
Most bands, when they go out on tour, compile some sort of a tour diary. We Evaporators are no different; although, all we write down is what we eat! In order to fill in the gaps of what actually happened, we have asked our friends, tourmates, and various audience members to say a few words.

Jan. 21, 2004, Twilight Lounge, Portland, Oregon

“Stay Awake All Night” was the theme song for the Evaporators’ unholy hootenanny in Portland. That’s booking guy Dave Twilight at the far right, with Pat from the PDX band The High and the Mighty on the other side of me, Christeen Aebi (aka Canada Jones), the one in the Stretch Marks t-shirt. I got that shirt when I ordered their 7-inch through Maximum Rock’n’roll, when I was doing my scene reports in 1983 or so. The Pointed Sticks flyer in back of us was given to me way back when, before I was allowed to go see bands like the Subhumans (B.C.) and D.O.A. ‘Course, now I would KILL to see that lineup: Pointed Sticks, the Wipers, and the infamous Cleavers? Holy moly! I LOVE rock and roll. And Canada rules, okay! Waiting for the beer to get cold...

—Love, Christeen Aebi (Canada Jones Jett), Portland, OR

Jan. 23rd, 2004, 904 Gilman Street, Berkeley, California

The Evaporators, along with System and Station, Clarendon Hills, Harold Ray Live in Concert, and the Rock N Roll Adventure Kids put on a great show. Nardwuar gave history lessons between songs, had a couple of audience members hold his microphone during one song while he sang into it, had the audience hold him and his keyboard up over their heads while he played, and had the audience hold hands and skip around and around in a circle. During the last song, he had the whole place squat down (including me while I was videotaping the show) and jump up at the proper times in the song three times. The rest of the band was tight, both musically and during the choreographed parts of the show. All and all, it’s what I would call a complete, fun, great, professional, raw rock’n’roll show. I even got to interview Nardwuar (on the same videotape as the show) after the show. Nardwuar loved my questions and told me that my research was great and that that was how he would interview himself. He, like myself, was glad to finally meet up in person (he had been receiving my comic book, Super Shark in the mail for a couple of years). The band members were all friendly. What else can I say but Canadian rock and Canadian rockers rule! Oh yeah, I saw the girl in the middle of this picture during the show and wondered if she was Carrie from Sleater-Kinney. Now, after seeing this picture, I am almost convinced it is. I hope all is well. —Caw-ruff: caw-ruff, Robert A. Medeiros, www.supershark.net, SF, CA

Multiple Reflections, from Harold Ray Live in Concert

WOW! What an honor to have shared the stage with the Evaporators – doubtless, one of the most entertaining bands on the planet. If we had the socialized health care that those wily Canadians have, one-third of the band would’ve been admitted for mild neck injuries, the byproduct of having been a human keyboard stand – ailments, that ultimately, were alleviated by the aural ointment that is The Evaporators.

Who knew the crowd at 924 Gilman in San Francisco would’ve given a hoot about the Harold Ray sound? It was the most receptive, energetic audience of the tour. The Evaporators fed off this energy, like, uh, Ontario feeds off of Niagara Falls. (Sorry. I’m stretching for metaphors here. Like most of us ignoramii, I don’t know much about the Canadizzuuh.) It was marvelous to hear Nardwuar’s most verbose set-ups for each song before they played ‘em.

In LA, we played in an aptly named venue called The Smell. It was in skid row, and we weren’t sure we had the right place! Thee Goblins from Canada were fantastic, and the Nardwuar vids were amazing. The crowd didn’t know what to make of us. It was awkward. The Evaporators, using their supernatural powers, were able to crack this tough nut of a crowd.

Spaceland in Silverlake was run with Swiss precision and, as the opening band, starting on official time, we began playing to... uh... two people. Literally. Two people. Thankfully, the crowd quickly amassed, and about five songs into our set, a man enthusiastically emptied the currency from his wallet onto the stage. Upon conclusion of our set, Nardwuar asked me: “DO YOU KNOW WHO THAT WAS?!” “No...?” “That was Daniel Lanois, the record producer!” Daniel produced U2, the mighty Brian Eno, and many, many other things. Charlie (sax player/HRLIC co-founder with me) went to talk to
Nard vids on the big screen while I worked the merch table and scored myself one of those highly-coveted Evaps tote bags in the process. A mighty fine time was had by all!

On Monday, we reconvened for eats at Philippe The Original, across from beautiful Union Station. The eternally delightful Séñor Amor added to our merry band of discerning diners. As an ongoing honorary member of The Evaporators and a participant in many a Tomahawk pig-out, I knew I had to provide my boys with a legendary local dining experience. Philippe The Original has been serving up the French dip for almost 100 years, claiming to have invented this tasty treat when a beef sandwich accidentally fell into a vat of soup!

About two miles away, on skid row, Cole’s Buffet also claims to have invented the French dip sandwich and the owner will kick your ass if you dare even whisper the word “Philippe” in there! As someone who’s sampled the wares at both establishments, I can’t say which is the true original originator, but I can tell you that Philippe’s food is most delicious. After your French dip (cheese: twenty-five cents extra), try the banana cream pie (mmmmm!) and then weigh in at over ten dollars. I gained five pounds? Yep, I thought I was throwing hundreds of bucks at us, but it turned out to be $41. HAH! It still helped. Oh, the other funny part about playing in Silverlake: We saw Ben Stiller at the 7-11.

San Diego for us was a breath of fresh air – drunken hipsters, just dying to shake their handsomely preened booties. It was awesome. Props to the Licorice Quartet and the Viewmasters. I crave San Diego-style Mexican food. Mmmmmmmmm.

Thee Parkside was our homecoming. We love Thee Parkside. Thee Parkside loves us. Thee Parkside loves The Evaporators. It was a love-fest.

Can’t wait to see these guys again in Austin! We can’t wait to play in Vancouver with them some night.

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Eat at Phillipe’s

Whenever Nard, Dave, John and Scott come to town, this is the agenda: RAWK and EATS. On Saturday night, The Goblins, Dublins, and Evaporators RAWKED The Smell like nobody’s business! The kids were chanting along to “United Empire Loyalists” (“Civil War! Not Rev-o-luuuuu-tion!”) and the sneaky costume change blew everyone’s mind! The Smell is located behind a mysterious Japanese movie theater in the heart of downtown LA with the world’s most articulate homeless people working the alley entranceway. Mr. Paolo Davanzo of The Echo Park Film Center projected

Dorothy's (mmmmm!) and then weigh in at over ten dollars. I gained five pounds? Yep, I thought I was throwing hundreds of bucks at us, but it turned out to be $41. HAH! It still helped. Oh, the other funny part about playing in Silverlake: We saw Ben Stiller at the 7-11.

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Can’t wait to see these guys again in Austin! We can’t wait to play in Vancouver with them some night! –Cheers, Jack, Harold Ray Live in Concert

The entire gang at Thee Parkside • Nardwuar Vs. In-n-Out

Nardwuar THE HUMAN SERVIETTE

fired up about producing pop music when I was a teen. So I thought to myself, he’s at my show and he isn’t even talking to anyone right now; maybe he’d even like some company. So I made my move.

I went up to the poolroom/lounge when he was sitting and shook his hand. I will attempt to recreate some of our conversation.

JC: Are you Daniel Lanois?
DL: Yes.
JC: My name’s John. I just thought I’d come and say hello. I’m a fan of your work.
DL: Thank you.
JC: Actually, I’m a musician and my band the Evaporators is playing tonight.
DL: That’s great. Are you guys from L.A.?
JC: No, we’re from Vancouver!
DL: Ah! You’re on tour!
JC: Yep.
DL: How much do you guys make?
JC: Uh... not that much. I guess the band is pulling in about a hundred bucks a night on average. It’s really just kind of a hobby, not so much a way of earning income, but we’ve been at it since high school and now we can’t stop.
DL: How old are you?
JC: I’m thirty-five. But it’s not the only thing I do. I’m a record producer, too!
DL: Like me!
JC: Yes! And I’m also in another band that is a bit more of a money earner. We’re called the New Pornographers. Maybe you’ve heard of us?
DL: That’s great!
JC: Maybe you’ve heard of the lady who sings with us: Neko Case? She has like a country career too.
DL: I don’t know...
JC: Actually, my partner Dave and I are going to be working as pro-
JC: So you live in L.A.?
DL: Not far from here.
JC: Are you working on anything?
DL: I’m always working on stuff.
JC: Your own stuff? Cool!
DL: Yeah, it’s pretty heavy stuff. Really cutting edge...

And with that, Daniel bolted to his feet. Going from neutral to overdrive, he went to the pair of people who were playing pool and engaged them both, animatedly showing the woman, whose turn it was, how he thought she should play the next few shots. It was clear that he wanted to get in on the next game with the winner of that game and thusly put an end to the boring part of his evening. He was charming and a little weird and I didn’t feel too snubbed.

Later that night I found out that he had watched our show and I thought that was cool. I also found out that before I went up and talked to him, when Harold Ray Live was playing their set, Daniel walked up to the stage and dumped all the cash from his wallet at their feet! So that explained a lot! When he asked me how old I was and how much we made every night, he was just feeling my pain! Dumping cash on the stage was a very concrete show of support for the touring band. And they were playing first and to a very small crowd. I overheard that he thought that they were the Canadian band so he must have been surprised when I told him that we were from Vancouver. Anyway, I hope I get another chance to talk to him some time, as he was charming and a little weird and I didn’t feel too snubbed.

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**Roscoe’s Chicken and Waffles**

When the Evaporators stopped by the office and said they needed to eat something substantial for their long haul to Tacoma, I knew just the place – Juan’s, which is the best Mexican joint in Berkeley, hands down. I knew that they appreciate good food (Roscoe’s, anyone?) so yes, Juan’s it was. (Except with my California-ized pronunciation, Nardwuar thought that we were going to “Wan’s.” So please make sure to emulate the J.) We partook in gigantic portions of enchiladas and burritos, a pitcher of beer, and – probably the most memorable of all – chips made from flour tortillas. Oh so tender, crisp and flaky. These flour tortilla chips definitely put Juan’s at the top of Mexican eateries in Berkeley. Plus, the Evaporators took me out to lunch, which was one of the nicest things an AT band has done for me. I thanked my lucky stars that the Evaporators signed to Alternative Tentacles and that Juan’s makes those tortilla chips. –Maiko Hara, Alternative Tentacles, San Francisco, CA

**Food Highlights**

(for the full list, email retdood@razorcake.com)

**The Smell, Los Angeles, CA**

Banana and Cream Sandwich (Nard)

**Roscoe’s Chicken and Waffles, LA, CA**

2 Waffles and Chicken (everyone)

**Phillipe’s, LA, CA**

Beef French Dip w/ American Cheese, Coleslaw, Pickle, Banana Cream Pie (Nard)

**Der Kaiserhoff, San Diego, CA**

Paprika Meatball and Potato Wedges (Everyone!)

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Endnote 1 from Nardwuar: No gut bombs this time! Endnote 2 from David Carswell: I’d just like to say it’s “bean” (pollo, porko) another great experience eating our way down the west coast. Maybe next time we’ll eat more seafood (thanks to Patrick in San Diego for the delicious lobster tacos).

--Nardwuar

More pics at

www.nardwuar.com

www.theevaporators.com
No, seriously, I got a new computer, and I’m typing this column in Word. HEY! The blame thing is capitalizing all my lower-case I’s! Who does this thing think I’m not, e.e. cummings??? Fucker! Stop it! I hate you! Doesn’t Isaac Asimov’s First Law of Robotics specifically preclude this type of monkeyshines from occurring???. There. I fixed it. I think. Or broke it, depending on your lifestyle. Now I have to think of a sentence exhibiting my dominance over the robots! Ha! I did it! Word! i i i i i i i i i Ha again! Man triumphs over machine! (i dunno exactly why it is i never capitalize my i’s [unless i am quoting someone else, in which case i am capitalizing their i’s, i reckon). I actually think it’s just because i kind of like the dot on top. I am the Amazing and Dangerous Mr. Dot, and i shall not be denied!!!(?) (actually, one of many brilliant ideas [which, as i’m sure you know, are legion] which never came to fruition [which, as i’m sure you know, is pretty much all of them] was to write, direct, and produce a full-length musical about the life, times, trials and tribulations of a young letter Q and letter F, who found themselves kinda outcasts of more decent members of society like E, R, and S. I had some of the songs in the head, but, naturally, i only remember the titles now [“Lonely Q (Without U)” and “I’m the F!”] coming most immediately to mind] OH FUCK MY COMPUTER’S GOING OFF!!! ... yea, that’s right, this column is written in real time, by a real Reverend Nørb! Hey, here’s a little advice for those of you who relentless turn to this column for all your advising needs: If you have a big glass Groovie Ghoulies candle in your bathroom [kinda like the ones it used to cost a buck-and-a-quarter donation to light at St. Matthew’s in the ’70s] that you occasionally light to mitigate the stench of your anal vapors because you’re too much of an airhead to remember to buy a new can of Wizard™, don’t get all cute and spit mouthwash in it to put it out. Mouthwash is, apparently, highly flammable!!! Inflammable Material swishing in my mouth!!! It’s a Suspect Device that’s left two thousand south!!! Uh... where was i? Oh yeah, lower case i’s. Well, anyway, the one line of the one song i do remember from my failed children’s alphanumeric rock opera was from the scene where Q and F [actually, i think Q might have spelled his name “q”, not “Q”... or am i confusing him with the guy from James Bond?] sort of stumble across this wild juice joint in the bad part of town, the song being titled “The Joint Is Jumpin’ (with Lowercase j’s Tonight!),” where q and F would, of course, witness all manner of shocking, libidinous cavorting and dancing and car- ryings-on perpetrated by a roadhouse populated almost exclusively by lowercase j’s {or, now, work with me on this one: Could one say “Lowercase j’s” when one is referring to j’s, since the lowercaseness of the J/ is explicit in the statement? Or is “Lowercase j” (and, alternately, “Capital j”) an oxymoron? Or am i the oxymoron?? Hey, fuck you! Who kicked the robots’ asses for you?? MOI!!!? ANYWAY! The one line of the entire project i remember is “lowercase j’s got hooks and got size / (in faux-Eddie-Cochran-as-black-dude baritone) If we didn’t have hooks, we’d be lowercase i’s!”... which, now that i look at it is APROPOS OF NOTHING, AND WHY AM I TELLING YOU THIS???. Oh, because i thought the line had something to do with the dots on the tops of lowercase i’s and j’s. Which, apparently, it doesn’t. Well excusaaaaaanme me! [Word says i should “consider revising” the “Which, apparently, it doesn’t” statement. Critical analysis from the robo-peanut gallery i asked for? There’s also a little cartoon of a computer with legs doing weird things to itself in my monitor’s lower-right-hand corner. I am beginning to fear for my personal safety! I’d better end these parenthases at once!!!}] But, as i was saying, today is the deadline for columns: April 1st (now my computer just made that “st” into superscript. I find this border- line gay [in an asexual, computer sort of way, of course]. I like the little red wavy lines under the misspelled words, however. Todd, could you see your way clear to add red wavy lines here and there, for added visual stimula- tion?). As the more grizzled old salts amongst ye might recall, April Fools’ Day has a rather storied place in punk-mag-column-dom, courtesy of Mykel Board’s legendary annual April Fools columns for MRR (Mykel, of course, would probably bristle at the fact that i just referred to his April Fools columns as “legendary,” simply because that would imply that some of his other columns and some of the other things he’s done in his life are slightly less legendary than the maximum possible legendaryness. Heresy! Black treason!). You know, every year he’d write some wanged-out col- umn about how he was gonna undergo plastic surgery to “make” him “Asian,” or how he killed a skinhead with his bare hands in the bathroom at Gilman Street, or how a girl shoved a carrot up his butt (wait... that last one was true. Razorcake regrets the error) (actually, now that i think about it, i once went out on a date with the girl who shoved the carrot up Mykel Board’s butt) (actually, now that i think about it some more, i once made out with the girl who shoved the carrot up Mykel Board’s butt) (actually, now that i’m really thinking about it, i once made out on my bed with the girl who shoved the carrot up Mykel Board’s butt... and sent her home shortly thereafter! What could i do? I was out of carrots, man! What am i pissed to do, let her anally violate me with a celery stalk or something? “Sorry, baby... you hot and all, but i plumb outta carrots tonight!” Typewriter: OHHH CHRIST NOW MY MOM’S HERE!!! What the fuck, start writing about girls shoving carrots up peoples asses and the Mom Radar kicks in. Quick! Turn on the fan! Wait! Wrong violation! ANYWAY! ANYWAY! ANY- WAY!!! In tribute to the legendary Mykel Board April Fools columns of yore, i have decided that i, Rev. Nørb, will write an April Fools’ column of my own. The Editor of this publication has “suggested” that writing an April Fools’ column that will first see print in mid-May is, how you say, “something other than brilliant” in nature. He has also pointed out that most extended attempts at parody in punk mags fail miserably because, simply put, you people reading this are all a bunch of fucking nincom- poops who cannot be reasonably expected to “get it” due to your walnut- sized brains and armored, spiky tails. The Man™ says it won’t play in the Midwest, man! The Man™ says you rubes are too dim to get hip to my cerebral and highly sophisticated brand of button-down humor! I, Rev. Nørb, say “NERTS TO THE MAN™!” That’s right! Nerts to the powers- that-be!!! If Sludgeworth wants his Gobstopper™ then, by God, he’ll have it!!! (and, by extension, thee) shall press on, undaunted, with or without the blessings of The Man™! THIS CAGE MATCH IS TOO VILE AND BARBARIC TO BE SANCTIONED BY ANY PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ASSOCIATION, ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD!!! We shall have our April Fools’ Column, and we shall do it in GRAND STYLE, as befits our latent greatness. THE APRIL FOOLS’ COLUMN SHALL BE ENACTED AS FOLLOWS: I will, forthwith, lay out a brief recap of (what i remember of) this year’s SXSW Music Festival in Austin, unto which Razorcake was represented with two duly licensed press agents (myself and Todd “The Man™” Taylor), one unduly unlicensed press agent (The Rockin’ Tobester), and Nardwuar was there too but we didn’t see him so for all we know it was one of the Nardwuar Robots, down from the Fortress of Solitude for the weekend (in an unrelated note, the little computer with feet which has, for no reason i am aware of, appeared in the lower-right-hand corner of my monitor screen, suddenly had a huge yellow lighthouse pop over its head when i typed the word “robot.” Whoo. It didn’t do it that time. Let me try capitalizing it: Robot. WHOA!!! When i type “Robot” with a capital “R” – that is to say, as if i were typing a prop-
er name – a lighthearted appears over the computer cartoon’s head and it looks at what i’m doing! it’s getting ideas! it’s getting ideas! this is becoming legitimately unsettling!). i will start said essay in either a) april fool’s mode, or b) non-april fool’s mode (the mode will be yours to speculate upon). since i am now, for the first time, typing a column in word™ (word!), i am under the (perhaps completely misguided) assumption that, for once, my column will transmit over to razoreye world enterprises with italics and bolding intact. therefore! i shall differentiate between april fool’s mode and non-april fool’s mode by typing one mode in plain text, and the other in italics, because, as i understand it, you are too much of a backwoods schmuck to understand what i’m doing unless you are continually reminded of my intentions. christ, i can’t take you anywhere! to further alert you to my paradigm shifts of april fool’s mode-itude, the plain text portions and italicized text portions shall be separated by the buffer item of “bzzzt!”, which should serve to clue even the dimmest of wits that some manner of hijinx and tomfoolery is afoot (“hang down your head tom foolery, hang down your head and crwy...”). i assure you that it’s either this or listen to me babble about the dots on the tops of i’s and j’s for four pages. very well then! with all undue fanfare, please welcome the dimly lit memoir-lapse men call...

my trip to sxsww 2004

by little revvie nørb, age 6

after a good night’s sleep, i caught my bzzzt! 5:30 am flight to texas (via cincinnati), falling into a brief fit of droolful slumber somewhere along the way and arriving in austin slightly before 11 am, their time (which, oddly enough, is the same as my time. go figure). i have booked a flight at this ridiculous hour so that my arrival from wisconsin roughly coincides with todd’s arrival from california, which he, initially, told me would be around 10 am, local time. shortly after my ticket purchase, todd’s revised figures placed him at the arrival gate at more like 1 pm, which, essentially, meant that i had booked a flight with a 5:30 am departure time in order to sit in the bar in the austin airport and drink big frosted mugs of bzzzt! carrott juice garnished with celery stalks for two hours whilst awaiting the coming of the todd. as i placidly munch my riboflavin and wheat germ, speculating only briefly on the potential orifices my carrot juice’s parent vegetables may or may not have been erotically inserted into and, above all, not noticing the undercover bartender’s tight t-shirt and pert young breasts, i cannot help but notice that the outside world, about one-carrot-juice-mug-floated-through-an-airport-window away, looks cold, harsh and uninviting – especially given the balmy march neo-paradise-ical conditions i left behind in wisconsin. jeezus, i sure hope looks cold, harsh and uninviting – especially given the balmy march neo-paradise-ical conditions i left behind in wisconsin. jeezus, i sure hope

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drive the gag home, i keep addressing Todd as “Captain,” which BZZZT! doesn’t get old, no matter how many times i do it. We wind up sipping champagne tea at a place called BZZZT! Beerland, which will be the BZZZT! last of our scant trips there during the week, and BZZZT! i think we see the Ponys or someone, who feature that guy who used to have the brown guitar when he was in the Guilty Pleasures, and sound kinda like Television or something, from what i remember (which isn’t much). As i observe the Rock Malarkey going on around me, i cannot help but think it is all rather disgusting, and somewhat like seeing someone eyeing up the press pass worn dutifully on the lanyard about my neck, as required by law. THAT’S RIGHT, BABY!!! COME ON AND CHECK OUT THE SCIENCE OFFICER!!! HAIL NO, MY PHONE NUMBER’S NOT ON MY PASS, BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU MY COMMUNICA-
TOR IS TUNED TO YOUR FREQUENCY 24/7!!! BABY, LET’S VIO-
LATE THE PRIME DIRECTIVE!!! FAILING THAT, LET’S VIOLATE OTHER THINGS!!! VULCAN KIELBASA IS GOOD KIELBASA!!!
...after staring intently at my badge for quite some time, she apparently finds the informational nugget she had been looking for: “Press!” she exclaims triumphantly, retrieving and then handing me a copy of her band’s CD. “We are Japanese girls band! We play Saturday!” she blurs. All precincts are in: SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST IS THE GREATEST MUSIC FESTIVAL IN THE FEDERATION!!! GOD BLESS ROCK-
WRITER-CREDENTIA-GLASS WIRE-TRICKER!! ELIZABETH DERZCO AND ALL SHE STANDS FOR!!! I attempt to engage the dishe Japanese Girls representative in question in further airy persiflage, but the only incoherent message she appears to emanate is “It’s that thing The Thursday-bound statements are attributed to “We are Japanese Girls Band!” and “We play Saturday!” Darlin’, you had me at “Japanese!” The name of the band is Gito Gito Hustler; their CD cover further restates the fact that they “are Japanese (sic) Girls Band!”:, fleshing the concept out with declarations such as “All are produced for oneself itself!” “I want to wonderful music!!” and “There is no border in music.” I take it back. You had me at “Hustler!” Needless to say, first and foremost on my mind is BZZZT! getting away from Beerland, lest i be led into sin by some saltry, sloe-eyed vixen so i wired up BZZZT! somewhere else, where Vancouver’s Rotten Apples are playing a set BZZZT! completely dominated by their drummer, Heather Jane, whom, as a direct result of my Razorcake review of their “Real-Tuff” CD, are now billed as “Heather Jane and the Rotten Apples,” with the aforementioned Heather Jane now slamming the skins from a 3-meter (10.5 foot) high drum riser loosely based on the gigantic robotic tarantula from the “Wild Wild West” movie, as well as operating the rest of the instruments remotely via a series of robotic arms attached to the periphery of her drum kit and operated by her mental command. Former frontperson Dejha has now been reduced to dancing half-naked to the periphery of her drum kit and operated by her mental command. The robot tarantula from the “Wild Wild West” movie, as well as operating the rest of the instruments remotely via a series of robotic arms attached to the periphery of her drum kit and operated by her mental command. Our Lord kindly sopped up mankind’ s sins in perpetuity like a gigantic sponge, eventually comatose by dint of strong drink, i decide that, much like Christ sober as a judge. Viewing the pathetic wretches around me vir-
BZZZT! i’m
tually comatose by dint of strong drink, i decide that, much like Christ sober as a judge. Viewing the pathetic wretches around me vir-
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mean to tell me most Texans, revolving around those with a "strong sense of personal style." What, you lady stops me in the street and asks to take my picture for a website "Rock Against Bush" show at Emo’s. On the way to the club, a young Strawbery Quik™ BZZZT! a pair of Good’n’Plenty™ pajamas??? What are you gonna tell me next, BZZZT! description of the conversation much as he says our insipid background yammering will help in later transcribing of the conversation. For some reason (possibly due to our pass—es which promised to set us up with BZZZT! free chocolate milk and Strawberry Quik™ BZZZT! until 7 PM), we leave Beerland to take in the "Rock Against Bush" show at Emo’s. On the way to the club, a young lady stops me in the street and asks to take my picture for a website revolving around those with a “strong sense of personal style.” What, you mean to tell me most Texans don’t parade around town on Friday night in a pair of Good’n’Plenty™ pajamas?!? What are you gonna tell me next, that the bar patrons here don’t watch Sesame Street? We arrive at Emo’s. While i find myself quickly BZZZT! enamored of the “Big Gig” atmosphere, BZZZT! the one complimentary bottle of BZZZT! chocolate milk BZZZT! i score before the free drinks expire strikes me as a dirty, filthy, unclean bottle of BZZZT! chocolate milk indeed BZZZT! (and not merely in the “Texas is inherently—dirty” dirty, filthy, unclean sense [which is not to be confused with the “broken beer bottles in the street” type dirtiness of, say, Memphis or Detroit or somewhere, but is, in fact, reflective of the actual surplus-of-dirt-and-pulverized-organic-materials type of inherent dirtiness which Texas is, at least to me, noteworthy dirty for]. I mean, this isn’t a good, honest free beer BZZZT! i mean, chocolate milk BZZZT! i’m drinking, like a free beer at a party or a free beer at a bar they gave you because they like you or even a free beer the club put backstage in your dressing room along with some bottled water and Sprite™, this free beer is, like, WRONG (i realize the concept of un-right free beer requires a tremendous leap of faith to even contemplate, but, then again, you owe it to me to do so: I am Rev. Norb! I inhaled your puke to keep you free of sin!). This free beer is, like, some type of lame putz-bait someone (i.e. “THEY”) is using to get us to stay here and watch some stoopid bands which they think they have a vested interest in convincing us to go see (i dunno about you, but if i’m at a show where NOFX are playing and the free drinks get cut off at 7 PM, i better see their roadie hauling the last of their equipment off the stage at 7:01). Like, whoever heard of punk rockers having to be bought off with an hour or two of free BZZZT! milk BZZZT! to get them to go to a punk show? The very concept is absurd and gross. Todd, as a Los Angeles resident and thus At Peace With Absurd Grossness, orders himself two BZZZT! milks BZZZT! at a time, which, to me, just underscores the icky “outta my way, i gotta get mine!” cattle-call—ism that the whole ordeal seems to engender (but, that said, wasn’t a bad f’n idea at all). I shoot the shit with Pat from Dillinger 4 for a while (well, technically, Pat shot most of the shit, as one might expect). He tells me, in his usual BZZZT! quiet, understated BZZZT! manner, that he “knows exactly!” what i’m trying to do on my solo records (“You’re trying to do like the Dickies and the Rezillos first albums!” – which was actually what i was trying to do like eight years ago, but thanks for playing), and i should be in a band with him and some drummer from Minneapolis who owns a studio, but i have to find a “guitar hero” first (not a bad idea, provided the only song we learn is “Rubber Biscuit” by the Blues Brothers [possibly not orig. artists], and Pat’s Jake and i’m Elwood). The free BZZZT! milk BZZZT! quickly runs dry. I suck on my empty bottle in a placeboistic sense until keynote speaker J. Biafra arrives on stage to deliver one of his usual BZZZT! rousing BZZZT! speeches. I like Jello. “Jello is a good shit” – quote me on that if you’d like. Yes, the guy wants to be a “rock star” in every sense of the term – but he also wants to be the “good” rock star. Like, if Rolling Stone or Spin or similar dippy mag published a list of the Top 100 or 500 or (whatever the appropriate number would be) “Personalities Of Rock” (or whatever phrase they would think of that would mean “rock star” without actually coming out and saying “rock star,” which would be too good a fate for us), Jello...
would want to be the last guy on the list. Rock Star #100 out of 100, or #500 out of 500, or whatever the case may be. He basically wants to score as low as possible, but still be hailed by the World At Large as an Officially Recognized Rock Personality™. If we can couch this in the bald arget of the Sheephed table, the guy is more or less playing a perpetual Leaster – wants to score as low as possible while still taking that one trick to keep him off the Schneid. That said, his speeches (or whatever you wanna call them) are pretty frickin’ corny. I mean, it’s not that I disagree with him – it’s just that THE GUY PAUSES FOR APPLAUSE at times when NOBODY IN THE AUDIENCE WOULD THINK TO APPLAUD he had NOT PAUSED IN THE FIRST PLACE. I mean, it’s just stupid. It’s not like the masses just start in with a spontaneous, thundering round of claps and cheers that forces him to pause his delivery until they subside and he can be heard again, he actually solicits the applause by stopping cold, thereby instigating a period of complete and utter silence which provokes reflexive bursts of applause from the audience, who are initially confused as to why he isn’t saying anything, then realize “oh, shit, i guess i’m supposed to be clapping now!” and start belatedly applauding more out of a guilty sense of not having been paying attention and possibly missing something that must’ve been important than from any legitimately heartfelt impulse to spontaneously erupt into cheers. I mean, it’s like he gets people to applaud him almost out of pure reflex action. Not me, daddy, i got me a BZZZT! milk BZZZT! bottle to hold! When it becomes apparent that I am not going to have the chance to say hey to Jello, i return to my friends, who are in the midst of discussing the BZZZT! power and majesty BZZZT! of Jello’s speech. When the air in my BZZZT! milk BZZZT! bottle ceases to satisfy my cravings for BZZZT! dairy products, I let it be known that, while i generally enjoy hanging around big rock venues like Emo’s, and am as big a NOFX fan as they come, and have never seen Dillinger 4 before, in my life, ever, I think the love i feel for Emo’s, were it allowed to grow unchecked, might surpass the love i feel for Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, and therefore i need to go to Beerland, where the staff are a pack of surly knaves who are sure to flog me repeatedly with rubber truncheons the moment i step foot in their establishment, and will therefore provide no legitimate competition to the love i feel for Christ Our Lord, Amen. At Beerland, I BZZZT! remember the Spits playing again, this time in rather disconcerting rubber Reagan (i think?) masks. I also remember going down the street to see the Briefs. Following that, there exists an approximately three-hour window where I don’t remember a goddamn thing at all, except i looking at my left arm, and seeing that a broad swath of flesh looked “kinda mushy” (later yielding a huge scab patch as if my arm had been welded to the back of a loose muffler on a 1976 Olds Omega™ and dragged around the periphery of a gravel pit beer party for an evening) which I found disturbing, since I was BZZZT! way drunker BZZZT! than I had been the two previous nights. I was so flipped out by this whole three-hour Brain Watergate that I thought that perhaps I had been roofied, except a quick check of my finances and anus revealed nothing overly amiss, and my wits returned. Unfortunately, I was blissfully unaware that this was a different day?!, so fuck it.Boy, me let me tell ya: Dirt Bike Annie really BZZZT! suck, and standing in front of Dirt Bike Jeannie for 45 minutes is such a chore that I thought I was gonna hafta hunch over the wastebasket again and inhale more puke. I mean, those understated ’72 Corvette™ curves of hers, fucking repulsive! Even her lipstick is atrociously grossifying! Following DBA’s lame BZZZT! set (which I think I forgot to request “Grape Crush” during, although that might just be the roofies talking), I rock-tailed my way over to the Briefs’ high-tack’s, since Todd and the Tobester had yet to return to the friendly confines of Beerland. I hike my Good’n’Plenty™ clad ass hither ‘n yon around downtown Austin, but Todd and Rockin’ Tobester seem to have up and vamoosed. Knowing in my heart of hearts that BZZZT! they would never take off without me, regardless of the circumstances, I BZZZT! resume my patrol on foot, eventually encountering the Briefs as they load out. They duct tape a copy of the “The Joy Of Killing” 45 to the front of my Good’n’Plenty™ suit, and send me back on The Hunt For My Posse quite well-decorated. They tuck, and tip, and bet is the BZZZT! there is a brief sit on the sidewalk in front of Beerland (taking great pains to make it apparent that tonight I am neither comatose nor vomiting) and wait for Todd and Tobester (or a few philanthropic and/or homespun Japanese Girl Bands) to return to the all-powerful magnetic womb of Beerland and pick me up. Eventually, the BZZZT! surly and unhelpful BZZZT! doorman invites me into the closed-up club, and attempts to help me sort out my destination BZZZT! as he flogs the soles of my feet with bamboo canes. BZZZT! Using a marvel of the Information Age I believe he referred to as a “phone book,” the intrepid Beerland staff is able to secure enough data to call me a cab, though not before leaving an imperishable answering machine at Ben, Ben & Nick’s including the now-immortal phrase “Reverend Norb is sitting here with a 45 taped to the front of his Good’n’Plenty suit and he STILL can’t find a ride home.” (my posse’s flight from the Austin downtown area was apparently due to Toby’s continuously falling BZZZT! awake BZZZT! and tipping over in the Emo’s bleachers). I wake up Saturday morning with the Briefs single still taped to (below) Nerb, with his lanyard dutifully around his neck, passing out at the Sweethearts show. Chicks dig him. the dulcet strains of Noddy Holder & Co.! BZZZT! worst jukebox in Austin, I mean, holy fuck, they’ve even got a SLADE CD on there! I can’t stand for that! I surely can’t be expected to pump dollar after dollar into it, playing SLADE track after SLADE track, even if I know I’m leaving, just so’s those remaining can be serenaded by the dulcet strains of Noddy Holder & Co.! BZZZT! with my stated intention being to see The Sons Of Hercules. I wind up seeing the Green Hornes, who I don’t even realize are the Green Hornes owing to the fact that they’ve got about 40% less members than all the other times I’ve seen them (and, considering that one of the depart-ed members was the Jabba Jr. keyboardist with the Robbie the Robot arms, by weight the band is likely at about 50% of their former strength). Following the Green Hornes (BZZZT! sucked, as always) we are treated to the brainy, button-down routines of BZZZT! the legendary Mr. Lifto (from the Jim Rose Carnival of Freakitude or whatever it was called, but, more importantly, also a bartender there), who dangles beer kegs from hooks in his nipples, weights from his weenie, and other heady shenanigans. I find myself simultaneously compelled to both press
forward for a better view and to retreat in complete and utter squeamishness. Consequently, I don’t see much, but I see enough to be both fascinated and repulsed. And that was just from seeing his stretch marks!

**BZZZT!** I trump his tawdry stichet by dangling Mr. Lito, a pony keg of Lone Star, and the old keyboardist from the Green Hornes from one of my three testicle piercings. Following this triumphant upstaging, we are joyfully informed that **BZZZT!** The Sons of Hercules will not be playing, as the singer appears to have a twinge of the ol’ alcohol poisoning, and is vomiting blood even as we speak. **BZZZT!** I blame myself. If only I thought to inhale blood and vomit back at Beerland, I could have saved Christmas! The replacement band is **BZZZT!** The Bloody Tears (they could not get the Bloody Vomits to play instead, I am unsure), who feature the bartender from Beerland on harmonica, and culminate their set of Completely Adequate™ rockness with a cover of “Ain’t Nothin’ But a House Party,” which I know as a Tremeloes song, they know as a J. Geils song, and I am sure they got it from someone who did it for free. I know they bought the instrumental part, so I’m going to go ahead and call it a pop hit. I am a rustic dork who actually believes that cut-paste is better than recorders. Anyhow, I manage to drag Todd out to the Jackalope to theoretically see the Bloody Hollies. Unfortunately, our trip is in vain, as I have mis-remembered their start time by two hours, and we trudge back whence we came.

**I don’t see much, but I see enough to be both fascinated and repulsed.**

And, while Todd is **BZZZT!** completely sold on the merits of my homies, the Mystery Girls, whose Beerland set is impending, I try my best to convince him he should temper his boundless enthusiasm for their band. Todd remains **BZZZT!** skeptical as we return to Beerland, but Japanese Girls Band Night is commencing at the nameless place next door (well, I mean, it had a name... I just don’t have it HAN-day, Mr. Kotter!) and I can no longer spare any Asian Girl Oiling Time attempting to convince him of the Mystery Girls’ **BZZZT!** utter lack of **BZZZT!** worth. Needless to say, the Japanese Girls Band Night is a predictably **BZZZT!** repugnant **BZZZT!** experience, and I am quite **BZZZT!** overjoyed when duty calls and I am required to leave this **BZZZT!** hotbed of naughtiness for the Mystery Girls set, which, as a fellow Green Bay resident, I am required by law, to attend (it says so on my property tax bills). Naturally, the Mystery Girls completely **BZZZT!** rock. They make believers of the heathens; fans of the skeptics; Aye-sayers of the nay-sayers. They frickin’ REPRESENT! After the first three (attempts at) songs, I walk back triumphantly to where Todd is sitting, and, with palms outstretched, admit that he is right. They Rock. **BZZZT!** But both agree that the band is **BZZZT!** rocking **BZZZT!** so hard that night (pretty much everybody I talked to compared them to the Doors, whom I, like you, **BZZZT!** love **BZZZT!**) that we don’t really need to stick around any further, and I drag Todd back to the Jackalope to see the Bloody Hollies for real. Trudging Jackalopeward for the second time in as many hours, I cannot help but feel that my status as Finely Tuned Rock’n’Roll Divining Rod is now **BZZZT!** cemented beyond question. I mean, in the space of the last 90 minutes, I have **BZZZT!** dragged Todd out to see a band that wasn’t playing, then attempted to convince him the most of a band that wound up delivering an inarguably B**BZZZT!** acceptable **BZZZT!** BZZZT! experience. By the time Beerland starts the night, they are playing at in time to witness their set, and we have already used any “favors” we might conceivably ask to be extended to us in recognition of our almost round-the-clock patronage at Beerland should we wish to return. I am impressed by **BZZZT!** all **BZZZT!** of the bands at Beerland that night, but, as I state to Todd, I am happy as shit to be there, just because, fuck, it’s Beerland! We wake on Sunday—our last day in town—and, not surprisingly, **BZZZT!** don’t **BZZZT!** head directly to Beerland, where I am informed that myself, Todd and Toby—“The Fellowship of the Beer,” as it were—are officially part of “the Beerland Family.” I decide that makes it all right for me to spend some of the money my grandmother hid in a safety deposit box for me and the other grandsons before she got sick and died and the government took all her money and her house on a Beerland jersey and some stickers. I mean, hey, we’re FAMILY, right? By the time all has been said and done, I have seen Les Baton Rouge from Portugal (the mention of their Chloe Yurtz CD still causes me to uncontrollably quote the line “after listening to this CD all the way through, my Chloe Yurtz a bit as well” from its review in Razorcake), rocked heartily to the Marked Men, watched New York’s Some Action standing next to a girl whom I once kind of got Some Action from (through not ALL the Action—just enough Action to discover that the shades don’t match the drapes, nudge nudge, wink wink), and watched some band from Denmark’s entire set under the mistaken impression that I was watching the Forty-Fives (!). We stock up on barbeque from Ruby’s and, tragically, the Fellowship Of The Beer is broken when Rockin’ Totestor departs back to Atlanta. Todd and I mope around for a while, and then Todd somehow magically procures Tim Kerr’s phone number and uses another Jedi Mind Trick to get Tim to pick us up and bring us over to his house, which features a lovely exhibit of Halloween items in the living room, another superb collection of deep-sea-diver bric-a-brac in the bathroom, and **BZZZT!** a bowling alley in the basement! They play us a few songs, and I’m sure Todd’s quarter isn’t out of the Bloody robbers, and has his Jedi Mind-Tricking ass ambles right up to the **BZZZT!** Love, **Nørb**...
MY FOURTH COLUMN FOR

WHILE I'M DRAWING THIS
COMIC, I'M ALSO MAKING
A MIX TAPE FOR A GIRL
I LIKE.

RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

MIX TAPES ARE THE MOST
PERFECT FORM OF COURT-
SHIP FOR PUNK ROCKERS.

FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE
THEY'RE TAPES...

HEY CUTE PUNK
BOY, I MADE YOU
THIS MIX CD.

OH THANKS, BUT I
ONLY HAVE A WALK-
MAN THAT I FOUND
IN A DUMSTER.

SECONDLY, BECAUSE ALL
PUNK ROCKERS LIKE
MUSIC!

DUDE, HE PUT A PLEASURES
SONG ON HERE, HE MUST
REALLY LIKE ME!!

WHEN YOU MAKE A MIX TAPE
FOR SOMEBODY SPECIAL, YOU
HAVE TO DO A GOOD JOB.

AN EXCELLENT
GUIDE TO MAKING
GOOD MIX TAPES
IS IN THE
STEVEN FREARS
MOVIE 'HIGH
FIDELITY'.

BUT YOU SHOULDN'T TRY
TOO HARD...

I'LL MAKE IT SO THAT THE
FIRST LETTER OF EACH SONG
TITLE SPELLS OUT "I WILL
LOVE YOU FOREVER!"

OR IT MIGHT COME ACROSS
AS TOO CREEPY.

SHE DID WHAT!??

IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO
MAKE SURE YOUR EDITS
AND LEVELS ARE CLEAN
AND CONSISTENT.

IT'S A LOT OF WORK,
BUT IT SHOWS YOU CARE.

AND IT'S ALWAYS A GOOD
IDEA TO CHECK YOUR WORK
LETS TAKE THIS BABY
FOR A SPIN....

AND DON'T HOLD BACK WHEN
YOU'RE MAKING THE COVER...

DRAW, PAINT, COLLAGE,
WHATEVER, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE
MAKING A TINY LITTLE
ZINE.

IT MAY SEEM LIKE A LOT
OF WORK, BUT REMEMBER,
IF YOU DO IT RIGHT...

YOU MIGHT FALL IN LOVE!!

BEN SNAKEPIT P.O. BOX 49447 ATX 78765 THREE INVERTED9 @ HOTMAIL.COM
“Tell your children they have to die.”

The Observers
In asking people if they had ever heard the Shemps, I got all kinds of responses, everything from “That’s kind of a dumb name,” all the way to “I heard they suck a mean dick.” Whether those statements are true or not remains a mystery to me, but after hearing the Shemps, it’s not really that important. Naysayers among you are probably saying, “Ah, they’re nothing special. They’re no match for Le Tigre, etc.” They may not be reinventing anything, but in the words of a wiser man than myself, they are rolling around quite successfully using wheels of prior invention! They’re debatably the best New York-based Devil Dogs-sounding band since, well, the Devil Dogs, I guess. And besides, they’re fun. You remember fun, don’t you? Or has your brain been completely demolished by the seemingly endless parade of supposedly wheel-reinventing bands and their “stand in awe as we grandiose rock gods reinvent the wheel before your very eyes” attitude? Fuck all that. Listen to the Shemps. They’ll fuck your shit up.
Artie: They just started getting thrown... by me, just had them, and they were laying around only ate, like, half of them. Then everybody they weren't really that good, so people inside and I had a burrito, and, you know, Burritos, so all these kids had burritos "Place."

Petite: Escapades with a burrito.

Artie: There's a burrito stand next to that store, or "records?"

Artie: I smelled horrible. I showed up at the hospital smelling like a homeless person vomited on me. So he takes a look at the X-rays and he says, "Oh, this is really old. This was broken." And I'm like, "Oh, I didn't know. I guess I better fix it now that I'm insured." And he's like, "Alright, but it's already almost totally healed and it's healed out of alignment." He puts the new cast on and

swells up, and they need to let the swelling go down before they can set it and put a cast on it. So I went home on a plane with my arm in a splint, and I had to shower in fucking Floyd's shitty fucking bathroom with one arm. Like, I'm trying to keep the filth away with one arm and I can't use the other arm and it's horrible. I should have made Floyd come in and bathe me.

Bill: He did clean that bathroom regularly.

Artie: I don't believe that. He cleaned it with his own feces if he cleaned it with anything. So anyway, I get home and then I go to the fucking ghetto hospital and lie about my identity and try to get my arm fixed up. Such an involved story, it's so lame. The original doctor put the cast on so my arm was bent, and he told me to keep it elevated. And the second doctor was like, "It looks like your arm is really stiff up here," and I'm like, "Oh, I don't know why." And he's like, "I want you to keep extending your arm, it's not good to keep it bent like that with this kind of injury." Basically, the first doctor fucked me up and I can't sue him because I used a fake identity. And I asked the second doctor, "Would I ever want to get an external fixator put on this?" And he says, "No, not for this kind of injury. That would be ridiculous. That's for an old person." So now, for life, I have an arm that doesn't really work well.

Bill: And if they had made a better burrito, we wouldn't have this problem.

Todd: Didn't you get into a fight over ketchup packets?

Bill: That sounds familiar.

Artie: That sounds like something Jim would tell you about.

Todd: Like you were throwing ketchup packets out into the crowd and someone got ketchup on them and went to strike you back.

Bill: I think that's a Bugout Society story. We got hurt much worse than Artie so we should shut up. And as Artie
called people for help in New York, people made Bugout Society cracks, like, "Oh, you're moving up in the world, throwing healthier things."

Artie: Instead of throwing White Castle, we were throwing bean burritos. Bill: I mean, Artie was in horrible pain, but we were actually laughing the whole time in the hospital.

Artie: I was actually calling all my friends at home to see if I could lie about my identity and use their names and their insurance because they all have straight jobs instead of working for Go-Kart Records.

Bill: Do you really want to give them that much advertising? They probably don't even pay for the advertising that's in this magazine.

Artie: Well, I'm still working for them. But yeah, my arm. I can't lift heavy things too often and it hurts.

Bill: That's a lie. He just doesn't want to help us.

Artie: Like when I move furniture it's like, "Ah, shit." It's hard to explain. It's just everyday things that you take for granted.

Petite: You do a lot of ball-grabbing with that hand, though.

Artie: I can do that.

Petite: So what happened in Olympia? Fat girls, c'mon Olympa.

Artie: Spill the beans.

Todd: Which you sing about... Artie: I do sing about fat girls. Somebody has to.

Todd: Share a lyric.

Artie: "I coming to your party/You're letting me in/I'll find a fat girl/desperate like a hungry pig/I'll take her in the back/For some romance/If she's lucky, I won't shit my pants." It's called Rob from Dick Army.

Bill: Yeah, Rob made out with a fat girl in San Diego and crapped his pants. And wait, even better, he left the crappy pants in the van with him while he slept there so the rest of the trip we had a great aromatic experience.

Todd: Alright, so Olympia.

Artie: Oh, some fat girl was walking by... it was Neal who started it.

Petite: Blame it on someone who's not here, right?

Artie: It was Callahan who started it. I just finished it. We're at a bar and this girl's all in high school and she's, "I'm under twenty-one and I'll go in there anyway. I don't care," and Neal's like, "Yeah, you're a real rebel," and she's like, "That's right, I am a rebel." So I'm like, "Wanna make out?" Because fat girls are usually down for making out. So she's like, "No, I have a boyfriend," and I'm like, "Okay, fine." And the joke's over. [long pause] And anyway, that's how a bill becomes a law. What was I talking about?

Petite: The van in Olympia.

Todd: Under twenty-one, has a boyfriend... Artie: Right. So we walk away and this kid comes over and I'm sitting in the van trying to write a set list, which is a joke, and we're sitting in the van and this kid walks up and looks in the window. I make eye contact with him and he walks away real fast. And the kid's like, "You fuckin' bitch!" So I jump out of the van and run after him. I run up to the fucking guy, and I'm like, "What the fuck did you just say?" And he's like, "You're asking girls to make out with you and you don't even know them." And he's got like twenty friends around him and it's just me and Neal. You know, the combined might of both of us couldn't curl a ten-pound weight. And I'm like, "We're just joking around, dude," and he's like, "Alright, you better be," and that was the extent of it. And he left, and I watched him leave because he know where the van is, so it did cross my mind, but then he left, so we were like "fuck it." We went in and we played and everything else. At the end of the night, we came out and all four tires and the back window were gone, and he was nowhere to be found.

Bill: Actually, three of the tires were gone, and when the tow truck pulled up, the other one went "pssshhh."

Bill: My grandpa died in a concentration camp.

Artie: Yeah, he fell out of a guard tower.

Bill: Either me or Artie have done similar things.

Artie: I did the same shit to Down By Law. I'm not going to get into it.

Bill: You don't want to tell him about that? You might as well publish it since it didn't work.

Artie: I'm not saying anything.

Bill: I'm going to say it since it was my idea. We played with Down By Law at CBGB. Originally, they booked the whole tour as Dag Nasty so they were able to get a very high guarantee. It was like a $1,500 guarantee and it got knocked down to $1,200. So, there was $1,200 made at the door, and mostly it was for Vision, from New Jersey. There were about ten people there to see Down By Law. So at the end of the show, since we had helped this band, the Amazombies, fly in from Seattle and play shows, we went up to Dave Smalley and we were like, "Hey, you think you can give the Amazombies $50 since you took the whole door and nobody got paid?" And he was like, "Hey, man, I got three kids to support." So screw him. If he's got three kids to support and he's going on tour and he thinks he can make a living off it and ten people show up, he deserves it. We decided that if he needed gas money we would give it to him, so we filled up his gas tank with sugar and followed them to their hotel room.

Artie: In all defense, he didn't say that. It was his tour manager, because he has a tour manager as a buffer so that he doesn't have to interact with other people – someone who can kiss his ass because he's a fucking asshole. His tour manager's all like, "He has three kids to support," or whatever.

Bill: We know it's alimony payments anyway.

Artie: He just wants to act like a fading rock star instead of getting a job at Starbucks's like a fucking honest dad.

Bill: And he was the one who started all of that, "Hey, we've got to have a scene here," and all of that crap. We never had that kind of message, so screw him.

Artie: He made a big speech about, "Oh, we've got to help each other's bands. This
is what a scene is about,” that night on stage, and then he got offstage and took all the money from the door. A hundred percent of the money. He’s just a total prick. Fuck him, he should just stay at home and be a dad.

Bill: Yeah, get job at UPS, dude.

Todd: Alright, a band name question: Did you name the band the Shemps after the failed pre-Soundgarden Shemps?

Bill: Dave the Spazz came up with that name.

Artie: He’ll sue us if we don’t give him credit.

Bill: He has this book with hundreds of band names in it, and the only good one in it was the Shemps. And he said, “There was another Shemps, but they were on Mystic,” and I was like, “Ah, they don’t count.” There was like a Led Zeppelin cover band that the guy from Soundgarden was in but that doesn’t count either.

Todd: There was a Wisconsin Shemps.

Bill: Yeah, they have like one track on a Mystic comp. Reverend Norb yelled at me about that, and I told him they don’t count. They’re from the Midwest, for one thing, and they only had one song on Mystic. And it was bad.

Artie: I want to go on record and say I lobbied really hard for us to change our name to the Negro Spirituals. Bill explained the name the Shemps to me as when you watch “The Three Stooges” and it’s an episode with Shemp, you get real disappointed. That sold me on the name.

Todd: So, Bill, you’re a wedding photographer?

Bill: Yeah, I’m an editor, actually.

Todd: How did you get into the wedding business?

Bill: When I was fourteen, my dad collected toy trains, and a friend of his in the train club was like, “Hey, you want to hold a light for me on the weekends?” After six months, he was like, “Holy crap, this job stinks. I’m not doing this anymore.” But the people he worked for were like, “Hey, we want you to help other people,” so all through high school I was making sure that all these morons that they hired for $100 to film a wedding wouldn’t disappear and smoke crack or anything. And then I got a car and I’ve been doing it ever since. I make more money than my parents editing wedding videos and I’ve been doing it since I was fifteen.

Todd: What was the most embarrassing moment that you had to watch at a wedding?

Bill: The embarrassing stuff actually happens in a studio, not at the wedding. My boss’s husband is a psychopath and he thinks he’s a wrestler, and he used to run people’s old home movies, like run them to videotape, convert them, and for some people, for ten dollars, he would put some music on the video. He had a great idea that if he just put one of the blank cable channels on where they just play this easy listening music, he could just put that music over their movies. Unfortunately, at 8:00, that channel turned into the Playboy Channel, so someone’s watching their kids at the Christmas tree with the sound of someone getting double penetrated over it. That’s my favorite.

Artie: I wish they had double penetration on the Playboy Channel.

Bill: In one issue of my fanzine I wrote this tour diary and I just listed everything I ate for the whole week instead of where I went or what I did. I got tired of writing “Diet Pepsi” every third word, so I put, “DP, DP, DP.” Squeaky worked in a video store. He’s like, “Hey, didn’t you know ‘DP’ means ‘double penetration’ when you’re talking about porno films?”

Todd: So, Bill, what’s the biggest ruse you’ve pulled as Anne R. Key, the gossip columnist for Maximum Rock ‘n’ roll?

Artie: Norm Arenas almost beat me up because he thought it was me.

Bill: He thought it was you?

Artie: Yeah.

Bill: Did I tell you he’s gay?

Artie: No, but he made a reference to the white power band he was in.

Bill: You know what? I got in more trouble for printing stuff that was true than making things up, but the thing that did me in was saying that the fat Donna was pregnant. That’s all I wrote, and there were phone calls and law suits and…

Todd: Real law suits?

Bill: I don’t know. All I know is I went to Maximum a couple months afterwards and I was reading a San Francisco newspaper where somebody interviewed Lookout! Records, and all they talked about was the fat Donna and how Maximum Rock ‘n’ roll is wrong. Unfortunately, Tim died and he wasn’t there to defend me. But yeah, that’s what did me in. I caused a lot of problems. Adrienne Droogas quit Maximum because I said she slept with everyone in Minneapolis because, oh, that wasn’t true, and I said she gave everyone the clap, which I guess isn’t true, I don’t know. Brett Matthews threatened me in a club once, but I don’t care.

Todd: So what’s the most impressive thing you’ve ever thrown up?

Artie: Thrown up? I don’t know what I haven’t thrown up. I’ve thrown up everything.

Bill: He threw up on the first night of our tour, right on stage as soon as we started playing.

Artie: It was the second time I’ve ever thrown up on stage. I threw up on an American flag once. Not as any kind of statement. It was on the floor and I vomited it and it went on the flag. Next thing you know, Ebulition’s trying to sign me.

Todd: What do your parents do, Artie?

Bill: Can I say something? Artie’s mom, for some reason, has horse noises on her answering machine.

Artie: My mom lives on a farm. She’s an accountant. She just collects animals.

Todd: Why isn’t she allowed to be on your website?

Bill: She kept leaving messages on the guestbook, like, “Artie’s so cute.”

Artie: “Good job, Artie!”

Bill: Artie got caught shoplifting veggie burgers in Long Island at Pathmark, and I made a funny hat that said “Pathmark Hall of Fame” and had a picture of Artie, and his mom bought three.

Artie: When I met Bill, it was when Bugout Society played Long Island and I had a learner’s permit to drive, and I drove my car through the wall of the club because I was looking at a girl. My mom saw where he mentioned that story online and my mom was like, “You did what with the Buick?” This is like ten years after the fact. And then I wrote an article for Rockpile where I mentioned that I spent a weekend in jail in Kentucky for shoplifting, and she was like, “You were in jail!” I had to convince her that I just wrote that to seem cool.

Bill: And now she’s going to read this. What were you shoplifting that time?

Artie: [rejected] Gatorade. Gatorade. It was me and the guys from AFI and the Hot Water Music guys at this gas station, and I didn’t want to wait in line because I wanted to go to this party after Krazy Fest, and I didn’t make it out of the gas station.
Petite: So I hear you have a pretty interesting family history. Tell us about your grandpa.

Bill: My grandpa died in a concentration camp. No, not really.

Artie: Yeah, he fell out of a guard tower [laughs]. But seriously, Jim’s grandpa was a war criminal, an SS dude.

Bill: He massacred 2,500 Italian soldiers after Italy went the other way. In Sicily, I think. Jim will tell you it was like 250,000, but I looked it up.

Petite: Jim?

Bill: How many Italians did your grandpa kill?

Jim: [walking by] Two thousand.

Artie: That’s only a few hundred more than girls Jim’s killed by sleeping with them.

Jim: You want to know about my Nazi history? Chicks dig it. Chicks love the fact that my grandparents were Nazis.

Artie: I know I get off on it. [Jim walks off.] And there he goes.

Todd: How come you guys have a 7” on a French label, and then you have a split 7” on a hardcore label?

Artie: Well, that first single came out with Spazz singing

Bill: It’s because Dave the Spazz is a big star in France. He’s like Jerry Lewis.

Artie: In France and Belgium. He’s like David Hasselhoff.

Bill: Actually, when we were in Japan, we went to this ‘60s garage record store, and this guy named Pinky was behind the counter. We were like, “Hey, we’re from New York,” and he goes, “Oh, WFMU?” And Dave’s like, “Yes, I’m a DJ there.” And then he tried to pick us all up.

Artie: And that hardcore label thing is just that me and Nate from Gloom are really good friends from shows and stuff, and he’s been coming to see the Shemps since I started playing in the band.

Bill: We inspired him to beat up a guidos.

Artie: He went from one of our shows and beat the shit out of some guidos outside who was making fun of his girlfriend, who’s Asian. It was really funny.

Bill: Let’s stop talking about him.

Todd: How big of a transition was it to go from Millhouse and Indecision to singing for the Shemps?

Bill: I think I should answer this question.

Artie: It wasn’t as big of a transition as you’d think because nobody liked me in any band. It was just a new set of people who didn’t like me.

Bill: We love Artie, for the record. We don’t care.

Artie: It wasn’t that much of a transition. I just had to figure out how to scream a little bit less.

Bill: I’ll tell the story.

Artie: I hate your version of the story.

Bill: Artie wanted to audition, so I gave him our recording. He’s like, “Hey, I’ll sing for your band. I’m moving back to New York.” And I’m like, “But you suck. You have a horrible voice.” I gave him the single and he came up and he sounded like crap. He sounded like a hardcore singer. So then we tried the James Brown cover and he sang it great. He sang it as good as James Brown.

Artie: I could copy James Brown, I just couldn’t copy Dave Spazz.

Bill: I gave him a CD with like 500 Sonics songs and two weeks later he was all ready. He’s very professional.

Artie: And they got this guy from Puerto Rico who was a fuckin’ monkey organ-grinder guy.

Bill: He could play keyboards and drink a martini at the same time, but we were like, “What bands do you like?” And he said the time that they were around. And Neal, our guitar player, roadied for them also, and we won’t let Matt come on tour with us as a roadie.

Todd: What’s Matt doing now? Does he have another band?

Bill: Matt has a band called Four Deadly Questions and they’re really good. He stands up very straight while he plays guitar, very good posture. Sometimes he’s loud.

Todd: What happened to Sue?

Bill: Sue owes us a lot of money. That’s all I’ve got to say.

Todd: What was she on probation for?

Bill: We made that up.

Artie: We would do that to all our friends at home, we would say, “Sue’s locked up, we don’t know what to do. We’ve got this.”
On the old Addams Family TV show, Morticia Addams used to clip off the flowery end of her roses and keep a vase full of prickly stems. In a similar manner, the hang-over I'm feeling right now is going to prevent me from getting too flowery as I write this little intro to the midget wrestler kings of Minneapolis pop punk, the Fuck Yeahs. Even without my handy little hangover, waxing philosophical about the Fuck Yeahs would be like Joseph Campbell mythologizing about the Hamm's bear or a White Castle hamburger. It would be like wearing a bee-keeper suit to an orgy or breaking into an interpretive dance at a barroom brawl. There is nothing flowery about the Fuck Yeahs; they are as simple and effective as a toilet plunger. They play uncomplicated, uncluttered good-time punk pop that attacks the feel good points on your body like a Dim Mak master hopped up on Mike 'n' Iikes and Slim Jims. Curious parties, Doubting Thomases and thrill seekers are advised to consult the Fuck Yeah's new 7 inch entitled, “No Farts, No Glory” for proof of what I say.

Here are a few informational tidbits to help you make at least a little bit of sense out of the stew of drunken dialogue the comprises this interview:

**Part One:**
Interviewees: Jeremy (guitar, vocals,) Carlin (bass,) Takashi (guitar,) Shawn (drummer extraordinaire.)
Takashi, who is Japanese, is also in the band Sweet J.A.P. Interesting questions provided by Paddy Costello. Asinine questions provided by yours truly. Interview took place at an undisclosed downtown Minneapolis watering hole and was hosted by the ever-amiable Mr. Costello. Drinks: Various brands of beer and bloody marys.

**Part Two:**
Interviewees: Jeremy, Carlin and Shawn.
Interview took place at the Fuck Yeahs/Sweet J.A.P./Abusers practice space/drinking emporium. Special Note: Periodic gaps in dialogue are due to the crashing noise of “Arrowroot” baby cook-ies being thrown like fast balls by certain members of the Fuck Yeahs into the drum set and cymbals. I brought the baby cook-ies. I thought it was a good idea. Maybe it wasn’t. Drinks: kind of warm PBRs.

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Jeremy: The point of the Fuck Yeahs is to have fun. And fart. [laughter]

Aphid: Do you agree with the reviewer that said you have a sort of “new testament religiosity”?

Jeremy: Wha…? Our religion? Takashi’s the only religious one.

Takashi: I started my own religion. My own religion is “have a good time, no matter what.”

Jeremy: He’s really a Hari Krishna. But he tries to keep it under wraps.

Paddy: Let’s cut to the chase: how the fuck have you guys been around for like eight years and you just come out with your first record now?

Jeremy: Not really, though. ‘Cause we started the band and it was the Fuck Yeahs and then we did a different band called the Collins and now we’re doing the Fuck Yeahs again. So yeah, me and Takashi and Joel and Colin started and we played for, what, two years or something, until 1998 I think, and then we quit. And then we didn’t do anything forever again. And then me and Carlin started doing some shit and then Shawn called me from Iowa one day and he’s like, “Dude, you wanna start a band?” I was ready to quit doing the shit altogether. And me and Carlin started doing some shit and then we thought it was a good idea. Maybe it wasn’t. Drinks: kind of warm PBRs.

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Paddy: Where was this?

Jeremy: Up on the North Shore. I was camping and all the sudden this thing showed up in the sky and then another one and another one and another one. They were moving closer and then going away. The area where we were camping was lit up like a football field.

Paddy: Did that provide you with any sort of life-long epiphany?

Jeremy: No, it just scared the shit out of me. [laughter]

Paddy: You didn’t get a life lesson out of that?

Jeremy: Nope.
Aphid: How could you not?
Jeremy: ’Cause. It was just scary. It made my knees knock.
Aphid: So how is it that you guys didn’t wind up on the No Hold Back Twin Cities punk comp?

Jeremy: ‘Cause it was just scary. It made my knees knock.

Aphid: So how is it that you guys didn’t wind up on the No Hold Back Twin Cities punk comp?
Jeremy: ’Cause it was just scary. It made my knees knock.

Aphid: How many different t-shirt designs have the Fuck Yeahs had?
Paddy: Like seriously. All tallied up.

Jeremy: I don’t know.
Paddy: I smell money to be made.
Paddy: We’ll have to do the box set.
Jeremy: [laughter]

Jeremy: I don’t even remember any of the songs that were on there. Those are like the secret Elvis recordings and shit.

Aphid: But how did you wind up on Learning Curve?

Jeremy: to Paddy] Do you know exactly? How’d it happened?
Paddy: Well, because I wanted to do it.
Jeremy: Yeah, I think Paddy wanted to do it really bad and then Rainer kind of...
Paddy: And I was doing Learning Curve with Rainer so it ended up on that.

Jeremy: So yeah, that’s kinda how it ended up, I guess.
Carlin: ’Cause Paddy said so. [laughter]
Paddy: It was because you guys were bored, homeless, and you looked sad.

Paddy: Yeah!
Jeremy: I don’t know.

Appid: That’s fucked up. You guys should’ve been on there, in one form or another.

Aphid: It’s because everybody hates us. [laughter]
Paddy: See, that’s the funny thing. It’s the opposite. And that’s why I couldn’t figure out how you guys didn’t wind up on the comp. ’Cause you guys are one of those weird bands — everybody loves you. Everyone who’s ever seen you, loves you.
Aphid: It’s a little sickening, really.
Jeremy: We didn’t have anything record-
ed, though. Except our old demo tape from before.

Shawn: How many different t-shirt designs have the Fuck Yeahs had?
Paddy: Like seriously. All tallied up.

Jeremy: Uh... a hundred? [laughter]
Aphid: How did you guys wind up on Learning Curve and not something like Nice & Neat?
Jeremy: How did we wind up on Learning Curve, Paddy?
Aphid: I remember a few years back, you guys were considered a Blue Worm band.
Paddy: Blue Worm? Like Brett’s label?
Jeremy: Yeah. He was gonna do a 7" of our first one a long, long time ago.
Paddy: You’re kidding me.
Jeremy: And we recorded it. Dude, there’s lost Fuck Yeahs recordings. I forgot about that.

Paddy: Well, we’re crust punks.
Paddy: We’re living in a time where it’s pretty easy — you know, you play some shows, meet some people, eventually you end up with a booking agent and maybe you meet somebody from a label and you get some glossy photos taken and they end up in fanzines. When do you figure an ugly fucking band like you guys are gonna figure it all out? [laughter] I’ve never heard you guys mention two words about a band that has existed in the last fifteen years. Well, I take that back — the Hard-Ons. What do you guys want to do with the band?
Carlin: Play. [laughter] I don’t know. I’d like to play more house parties.
Jeremy: Yeah, I’d like to go back to the old roots of doing some crappy shit shows, instead of normal shows. I mean, we obviously aren’t like the most serious band.
Aphid: I know that at least one of you hates living in this state. Has the band ever considered making a big career move and relocating to some warmer rock’n’roll hotbed?
Jeremy: If we do relocate, we’ll relocate somebody else to play as us. We’re gonna start a franchise. We’re gonna find some look-a-likes so we can actually play six towns in one night. [laughter]
Paddy: There’s actually two Gallaghers. They tour at the same time.

Carlin: I think that’s exactly what he’s gonna say, “Fuck those nerds.” [laughter]
Aphid: What’s your least favorite description of your band?
Carlin: Pop punk.
Aphid: So how would you describe it?
Jeremy: I don’t know how to describe it exactly myself. It’s not anything original by any means.
Carlin: Well, it is pop punk – but it’s faster and stupider.
Jeremy: Pop punk is stupid as hell, well, most of it is. It’s just cheesy typical “whine about your girlfriend.” I guess if they were whining about it that they’d be some emo band. Actually, yeah, everybody calls us an emo band!
Takashi: We are emo!

Paddy: You guys are emo if stupid is an emotion. [laughter]
Takashi: I think that’s it. We are emo.
Paddy: I can’t lie. I’ve been sitting on that line for two days. [laughter]
Jeremy: That’s the funny thing. We actually are all totally intelligent people. But with the music we just dumb ourselves down.
Carlin: How can you go wrong when you take yourself to the very bottom? What the fuck? What are people gonna say? [laughter]
Aphid: When you guys eventually break up, what do you think it’ll be over?
Jeremy: We’ll never break up.
Aphid: Gee, I think I’ve heard girlfriends say that before....
Jeremy: No, we’re like stupid brothers that can’t get away from each other. We’ve already had stuff happen that would break up normal bands.
Takashi: If I get deported.
Jeremy: Well, we’ll just get you a really long cord. [laughter] So yeah, even if we’re world-wide, we’ll still play. We don’t have anything to fight about. We’re gonna be geriatric guys sitting in wheelchairs saying, “You remember that one song?” “No, I don’t remember.” But then again, we don’t remember them now anyway.
Paddy: So, in this band, who’s the Lennon and who’s the McCartney?
Jeremy: I don’t even know the Beatles, so I don’t know what we’re talking about with that.
Paddy: John Lennon played drums.
Aphid: How about the Oasis brothers – who’s Noel and who’s Liam?
Shawn: I think when you have those two people, then you have a reason to break up.
Paddy: So Takashi.... what band do you like being in more, the Fuck Yeahs or Sweet JAP? Or do you like either of them?
Takashi: I don’t like both. [laughter]
Aphid: If you guys were at a pot luck picnic and GG Allin showed up with a jello salad, would you eat it? [laughter]
Takashi: I like GG Allin.
Jeremy: I would eat his jello salad if he ate my carp casserole.
Aphid: That seems reasonable enough. So who’s your favorite regional giant: Paul Bunyan, Randy Bruer or Big Gust?
Jeremy: I don’t know who Randy Bruer is. Takashi doesn’t know who Paul Bunyan is. I like Andre the Giant, even though he’s not a regional giant. But I prefer him over Paul Bunyan.
Aphid: How come you guys have no songs about giants?
Takashi: That’s a good question.
Carlin: Hey, give us time.
Takashi: We didn’t think of it.
Jeremy: Because we’re all medium and we aren’t giant. So we just write songs about medium.
Paddy: Who’s gotten the worst injury on stage with the Fuck Yeahs?
Jeremy: We don’t really get injured. But we break stuff a lot. Takashi breaks a lot of equipment. I threw my guitar at Colin once and broke it. It got broken pretty good.
Aphid: Why is it none of you have beards or mustaches?
Carlin: I don’t think any of us can grow beards or mustaches.
Takashi: That’s a good question.
Carlin: Hey, give us time.

Aphid: Are there any bitter ex-band members that might someday sue you guys over the use of the band name?
Jeremy: There might be one in Seattle. Our buddy Colin. A super good guy. But he was actually trying to get us to get the band back together a whole bunch of times. But nobody had any interest in it at the time, so....
Carlin: [under his breath] He’s gonna kill us.... [laughter]
Jeremy: Although, he came to our show and still liked it a lot. But that would be the only bitter former member.
Paddy: Wait. Who’s a bitter former member?
Jeremy: Colin.
Paddy: Oh. He’s in Seattle now. That’s a hot scene. He could be bagging on you guys out there. When this interview comes out he’s gonna be like “Fuck those nerds! I used to be in that shit!” [laughter]
Carlin: We’re gonna have a Fuck Yeahs grow-a-mustache contest. [laughter]
Aphid: So it’s not like when Crucial Youth say, “If you don’t shave clean, You’re not part of the scene”, or whatever?
Jeremy: I kind of agree with their philosophy. I don’t like bands that have beards or mustaches. Hair’s over-rated. We have a very strict image we stick to.
Carlin: That’s in the contract: no mustaches.
Jeremy: That’s the one thing that would break our band up if someone doesn’t follow the band image and grows a mustache.

Carlin: Jeremy’s the only one who has anything to do with any of that. [cookie attack]
Jeremy: There are still songs that we play live that I’m just like “Blah, blah, blah.”
Carlin: I think that’s our secret little trick that makes us write songs faster than some people. ‘Cause Jeremy can fake…
Jeremy: Oh, I fake a lot of them. [laughter]
Carlin: He can fake lyrics in time, like impromptu. Which is like a weird skill.
Jeremy: I’ll just think up words that don’t even mean anything. Eventually, we have lyrics for songs.

Aphid: The late breaking news, of course, is that since the first interview Paddy has joined the band. Just how did that all work out?
Shawn: Who? Christmas pancakes?
Aphid: What? Christmas pancakes?
Jeremy: Yeah, that’s Paddy’s name. Christmas Pancakes. [laughter] But anyway, he kept asking me or asking Carlin “Dude, I wanna play with you guys, blah, blah, blah.”
Carlin: He’s got a big mouth. He talks about a lot of things. But after a while it started to be like more than a drunken…
Shawn: Well, he came up at one show...
Aphid: Who would you rather do a show we’ll represent?

Shawn: Problems ‘cause we’ll take care of them.

Shawn: But no, we don’t have ninja problems at our shows. Hopefully we will though. But actually, we play shows and we sneak up on stage so quick that nobody even sees us and then we jump out of the shadows.

Shawn: Dude, we play shows and we sneak up on stage so quick that nobody even sees us and then we jump out of the shadows.

Jeremy: Sweet JAP.

Aphid: Felix Havoc’s band. And Ben from Agony Column.

Shawn: Who the hell’s Damage Deposit?

Aphid: Felix Havoc’s band. And Ben from Sweet JAP.

Jeremy: Yeah, everybody knows we’re real ninjas. Dude, we play shows and we sneak up on stage so quick that nobody even sees us and then we jump out of the shadows. But no, we don’t have ninja problems at our shows. Hopefully we will though. But actually, I don’t think we’ll ever have ninja problems ‘cause we’ll take care of them.

Shawn: We’ll represent.

Aphid: Who would you rather do a show with: Venom or Agony Column?

Jeremy: Agony Column.

Shawn: Carlin: Agony Column for sure, dude.

Jeremy: I would definitely want to play a show with Devil Chicken and Bat Lord!

Jeremy: But Devil Chicken and Bat Lord are way better. Agony Column was one of the best I’ve ever seen for how bad they sucked.

Jeremy: Well actually, Mantis, Abaddon and Cronos are pretty badass too. But Devil Chicken and Bat Lord are way better. Agony Column was one of the best I’ve ever seen for how bad they sucked.

Jeremy: [sings] “God, guns and guts!”

Aphid: That’s awesome.

Jeremy: For me.

Shawn: Are they black? [laughter]

Aphid: I don’t know. I haven’t bought them. Just seen them in stores. But they have the Misfits skull on the front of the package. They’re real life punk rock guitar strings. I’m surprised you guys don’t know this shit.

Jeremy: Well, we aren’t punk rock though. We’re a folk group. [laughter] I only play strings that are endorsed by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

Carlin: It’s nine o’clock. I gotta go to work.

Aphid: I guess my questions about Objectivist Epistemology and Karl Popper and Logical Positivism are gonna have to wait.

Jeremy: Actually, we’re very positive. We’re more positive than Crucial Youth. The Post-Machine looks like a negative record compared to our shit.

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Welcome to the second half of the Hasil Adkins interview. In this installment you’ll find crookedness, drunkeness, some driving, jokes, Halloween in the hills and much more! Put the politics down. Turn off the tube, and grab a beer while I think about what needs to be said...

Hasil is a true genius, and there is none other like him. He has inspired many people in all parts of the county, the Earth, the moon, and Mars. I didn’t want to give them all a chance to say something about Hasil in this intro, but that would have gone on for pages. With a little searching you can most likely find a tale, into the mind and the life of the most overlooked living country music legend, and with that I’ll let this one lose.

This interview only gets started, a little…

Bradley: What’s that called?
Hasil: Jim wouldn’t wear one. He said, “Now, you see these old t-shirts I got? I don’t wear nothing over these old ones, but I am gonna put one of youm on now.” And I said, “That’s good, it’s about time.” He’s starting his own company. He’s always figured, and didn’t say nothing, then I said that sounds pretty good. He said, “You think that’d sound alright?” I said, “Yeah, that’d sound alright.” He smokes that pot.

Bradley: Do what now?
Hasil: He’s trying to get off of it. He’s slow man. I am gonna put one of yourn on now.” And I didn’t say nothing, then I said, “I don’t play nothing. He can, but he mostly sings. He takes that overcoat off in that movie and throws it away and throws his hat away and gets with it. He’s crazy, I tell you. He’s from down in North Carolina, down in that country down in there. He’s pretty well known. A lot people like him. Whatchacallit – Bob Log was talking about him. He said that sucker man took a mop handle and pitched it and entertained people for thirty minutes, and he said, “I know I can get out there and do stuff to entertain people,” and he started up what he started.

Bradley: Yeah.
Hasil: Have you ever seen Jessco?
Bradley: I’ve never seen him but on video. On TV.
Hasil: What do you think of him? [pause] He’s crazy as hell. He is, [laughter] He’s a good feller, he is. He don’t get out but once every 10,000 years or so.
Bradley: Really? [laughter]
Hasil: He just puts on a show every now and then.
Bradley: Is it just him and a guitar player?

Hasil: I used to play with his daddy. His daddy could tap dance. Jessco’s pretty good, but… why he’ll tell you he couldn’t do nothin’ what his daddy could do. His daddy could dance, man, you talkin’ about dancing. We used to go out and play and he’d get up and dance, On shows. And high school. But he could dance, his daddy could. Jessco can do all right, but nothin’ like his daddy. He knows it, too. He said, “I can’t do nothing like him, but I can do pretty good.” I said, “Well, right.”

Matt: Was there a dance hall or anything to perform in that you guys would play at?
Hasil: I don’t play there no more. I quit that a long time ago. I wore them all out, I think! [laughter] No. They want you to but they can’t pay the money. So I ain’t playing. You see them t-shirts? I got about four or five. You see this last one here? Come out with. See what you think of it. Got my big white hat and me right on it.

Bradley: [Reading the front of the shirt] “Hunch that thing, shake that thing.”
Hasil: I ain’t been wearing that hat in a long time and they put that hat right on there. Pretty good ain’t they?
Matt: Yeah. These are nice.
Hasil: Jim wouldn’t wear one. He said, “Now, you see these old t-shirts I got? I don’t wear nothing over these old ones, but I am gonna put one of youm on now.” And I said, “That’s good, it’s about time.” He done a pretty good job on it, didn’t he?
Bradley: What else does Jim do?
Hasil: Do what now?
Bradley: What else does he do?
Hasil: He’s managing me is what he’s doing now. I put him to work! He’s got more than a handful. I said, “You ain’t crazy. You’ll be crazy before I get through with you.”

Bradley: He seems like he’s doing pretty good with it.
Hasil: He is. He’s doing good at it, he is, for no longer than he been at it.
Bradley: Does he want to put records out or anything like that?
Hasil: Yeah. He’s starting his own company now and everything.
Bradley: What’s his company?
Hasil: A Hunchkin Label. He’s always figured, and didn’t say nothing, then I said that sounds pretty good. He said, “You think that’d sound alright?” I said, “Yeah, that’d sound alright.” He smokes that pot. He’s trying to get off of it. He’s slow man.

[laughter]
Bradley: So, do you smoke pot?
Hasil: No. I tried it. I can’t smoke that.
Bradley: Why not?
Hasil: It shakes me apart. Had to got to the hospital four or five times and I said, “I ain’t foolin’ with that no more.” A lot of people loves it. I know everybody smokes it. I can’t smoke it. I tried it, I can’t. I ain’t like Clinton. I tried 18, 15, 20 times. [laughter] It tears me up, it does. I can drink, but I can’t smoke that pot.

Bradley: I know what you’re saying.
Hasil: Do you smoke it?
Bradley: No, I don’t like the shit.
Hasil: It tears me all to pieces – it does, man. I can’t smoke that. I never would get nothin’ done.
Bradley: If I need to pass out and I’ve been drinking, every now and then I’ll take a pull to knock me out, but if I’m hanging out, like coming over here today, there’d be no way. I’d be running to hide across the creek.
Hasil: It gets me like that. I can’t go with that. I’ve tried it. I give it a hard try, but no. Over the years, I can’t smoke it. I’ve tried all kinds of it. They offer it to me. I say, “I can’t smoke that.” I can drink, but I can’t smoke that.
Bradley: Yeah. Beer don’t bother me either, but that stuff does.
Matt: I bet it gets dark out here at night.
Bradley: Most nights it’s as quiet as can be. They got all them mines up in there, but they ain’t too noisy. They got a lot of people going in and out trying to get that money out there, but other than that, it’s pretty quiet. You know, pretty still. Amy (Hasil’s girlfriend) said, “I can’t wait to get out of this city.” She was raised in the city.
“Car horns blowing twenty-four hours a day.” I said, “Well, you can sing this song [in a high voice] “Oooh, I hear car horns ‘a blowing night and day.” [laughter] She’s trying to get away from the city. Her people’s rich, she said. [raising his voice] “I don’t want to live this way.” They bought her a big Jaguar, and she said, “I sold it and got me a little ‘ol small car.” She said, “I didn’t feel right running in that, people just looking at me. I sold it. I took it in and traded it in. They got mad, her daddy and mother did. “Well I got a real good deal on it. He didn’t change me too much to move it.” The Jaguar was worth more than the car that she got and she had to get it moved. I said, “You done good.” She said, “I don’t like this kind of life.” I said, “That’s good.” She said, “You gone make me a hillbilly?” I said, “That’s right. I’m gonna tear you up and you gonna have to make one.” She said, “Well I…” I said, “Just hold in there, you’ll make one sooner or later.”
Matt: Where does she live?
Hasil: Huh?
Matt: Where does she live?
Bradley: Minnesota.
Hasil: She wanted to make a hillbilly. She’s off in Minnesota, a Yankee. I said, “Well, you go up to New York and you see one them Yankees up there, and look right straight at him.” They’re supposed to be smart. Say “Man I’m more ignorant than what you are.” Then watch ’em look at you. They say, “Well, there must be something wrong with him.” Just meetin’ one of ’em up on the streets in New York. “Man, I’m ignorant than what you are.”
Hasil: Why don’t ya’ll go down to Tooters and get me something to eat? Save me from cooking. I’ve been cooking so much.
Bradley: Tooters?
Hasil: Tooters Biscuit World. You ever eat there?
Matt: No, I never have.
Hasil: Amy wanted to put one of them in up in Minnesota. They ain’t got one up there. Oh, they got good food, anything you want. Bradley: How far away is that?
Hasil: Tooters Biscuit World. They got anything you want. They fix it the way you want it. There’s no other way you can get it. If it don’t suit you, they fix it the way you want it. You tell them and they fix it right there. They have got good food. Everybody eats there, here. They got one down there in Danville, below Madison there. It’s been there about twelve of fifteen years now. It’s doing real good. But they got the good food. But they’re good at it, the way they fix it. They got good cooks. They’re known for that, you know? Have they got any of them in Washington, D.C., do you know?
Matt: No, they don’t have a one.
Hasil: Tooters. That’s the name of it there. Tooters Biscuit World.
Matt: I think we passed one coming in.
Bradley: How far back was it?
Matt: It was a while back that way.
Hasil: They got them in LA, ain’t they?
Bradley: Oh, hell no. A biscuit in LA? You mean a taco? No biscuit. You mean a piece of bread?
Hasil: Yeah, them biscuits are good man. They make them real big ones and small ones, and every which way you want. Then they put eggs and bacon and sausage. Man, I mean it’s that high, (sizes it out with his hands) the way they fix them. And everybody that go in there say, “Well, one’s all I could eat. Can’t eat no more than one.”
Bradley: What they got to eat back there in Madison?
Hasil: Well, that’s right here. Danville and Madison are both in together. You come through that a way didn’t you?
Bradley: We came the long way. We didn’t know where the hell we were. We’re going through towns that say Glennandel…
Matt: Unincorporated.
Bradley: Unincorporated.
Hasil: What’d it say?
Bradley: Unincorporated. It’d be like Glennandel Unincorporated, Uneda Unincorporated. We keep drivin’ and following the creek and the train tracks all the way up. We thought we were going the short way. Because on the map it was closer.
Matt: It’s kind of a…
Matt: Long way.
Bradley: It’s curvy. Real curvy.
Hasil: They got them. They call it a Big Tater Dinner. Man, it’s good you get all you can eat. They got hash brown taters, gravy and eggs and bacon and sausage and everything mixed together. Boy, you talkin’ about good. They are good. You get a big plate of it.
Bradley: miles down the road there.
Hasil: plate of it.
Bradley: about good. They are good. You get a big thing mixed together. Boy, you talkin’ and eggs and bacon and sausage and everything. You can eat. They got hash brown taters, gravy Tater Dinner. Man, it’s good you get all you can eat. They got hash brown taters, gravy and eggs and bacon and sausage and everything mixed together. Boy, you talkin’ and eggs and bacon and sausage and everything.
Bradley: There’s one in Madison?
Hasil: Madison, Danville, it’s all there together.
Hasil: They got Dairy Queen and Tooters and Taco Bell.
Bradley: If we go get biscuits, you gonna ride with us?
[Pause]
Hasil: Yes, I guess I could. You like to, we could go up to Danville up there where they have a lot of parties. They probably got a party going on now if you want to go up. That’s down there in Uneda, way back, if you want to go up that way. We can go up in a few minutes if you want to. You’ll probably like it up there.
Bradley: [to Hasil] You want to go eat?
Hasil: I want to bring it home with me. I eat at night. I don’t eat it all at one time. Just eat a bit alone. I’ve eat that’a way all my life. I eat me a bite or two then work a while, then eat me a bite or two, and drink another beer and work a while. [Excited] We’ll go if you want to. I’ll go with you. Let’s ride up to Davis awhile and see what’s going on. It’s just right up the road there. Just a little ways off the road. It’s hard top. It’s a good road.
Bradley: We ain’t got no pick up truck so we can’t hit no big runs.
Hasil: Oh, no, no.
Bradley: I’ll walk a hill.
Hasil: It’s hard top. Did you drag coming over.
Bradley: Huh?
Hasil: Did you drag in that car coming over?
Bradley: A little bit. When we started coming down.
Hasil: You gotta watch out for them ditchers. Get up on the side of them ditchers and hold on. On your right or left one. If you go right down through the middle, you will drag. That’s where that water come down off the highway and wash’em all out.
Bradley: So you gotta hit the edges.
Hasil: Let’s go down there and see what’s going on. They’ll fix it to go or whichever way you want to do. But they’ll fix it to take out with you. Or anything, you know? Let me get one of them beers. I want to take that with me.
[Getting up to go to the car.]
Bradley: You want me to put these in the fridge?
Hasil: No. You can’t get nothing in there. It’s full.
[We drive on back in towards Madison or Danville. I don’t know which. Maybe we hit both, but when we got to Tooters we found it was really called Tatums and they were think so.” Freddy Krueger put out some movies. He made a lot of money, he did. I like his movies, I do. She don’t like ’em. I said, “What do you mean you don’t like ’em? He may be some kin to you, and worth you something.” She said, “I don’t like scary movies.” I said, “Well, good.”
Matt: What’s your favorite scary movie?
Hasil: Huh?
Matt: What’s your favorite scary movie?
Hasil: They got so many. I like ’em all, really. I like Boris Karloff’s doings. Buddy, he made some good ones. I thought he did. [To Matt] You like Boris Karloff movies?
Matt: I like Vincent Price.
Hasil: Boris really tried to invent a human being. He tried to make one, but he couldn’t get it made.
Got this old fella, Jamie. He was out in the country, stuck in the mud. In a thirty-seven Chevy. Reeeehhheeeheee and haaaaaa.
[Truck sounds] He couldn’t get out. He looked up over the mountain and there’s a castle up there and the lights was on. There weren’t no other place to go, and it’s just pouring down rain, and he said, “Well, I just got’a get some help.” So he went up there and knocked on the door [Hasil knocks on the dashboard] Eheeeehhheeeheeeheee [Hasil sounds out the cracking of the door.] Boris Karloff said, “Why, Amy!” I mean “Jamie.” He said, “Ha. I never thought I’d see you up here.” “Oh, oh, no,” he said. “You know when we went to college and they thought I was crazy? You didn’t think…” He said, “Oh, no, no, no, I didn’t think you was crazy.” [Aside] He was scared to death and trying to get away. He said, “Oh, no, no. A little bit unusual, but not crazy.” [Aside] He was making all kinds of little inventions. He tried to invent a human being. He tried to make one, but he couldn’t get it made. I thought he did. [To Matt] You want to hit the gas on this thing and drive on? He said, “Oh, oh, oh. Not crazy, just a little bit unusual. I didn’t say you was crazy. Just a little bit unusual, I didn’t say you was crazy, just a little bit unusual, man.” [Laughter] He had to get out of it someway.
One time, this ’ol drunk was going down the road on Sunday mornin’, and this ’ol preacher was behind him. And he was a-awavin’ across the lines back and forth in a pickup truck, and he said, “That poor soul up there. He’s gonna wreck and kill him- self.” Then he thought out loud. He said, “Boy, I better hit the gas on this thing and get out around that drunk before he runs me
off the road and kills me.” So he hits the gas and goes out there, and hits a slick spot, flip over, and go over the mountain. Bang. Crash. Boom. All the way to the bottom. And that drunk backs up in that pickup truck and looks out over the mountain and says, “Are you hurt, preacher?” “Nooo. Thank you. I’ve got the lord ridin’ with me.” And he the drunk said, “Well, you better let him ride with me cause you gonna kill him the way you doin’.” [laughter]

Bradley: Shit.

Hasil: One time, this ‘ol man, he went out – he was way back, you know old age – he had to figure it out somehow to make money. He said, “Well, go out there and put up signs on billboards.” And they put a big sign up; “It’s a comin.” He left it up about two weeks. People just kept ah lookin’ at it around that town. He put up another sign about two weeks later; “It’s ah coming.” They were wonderin’ what that was, you know, just kept lookin’ up wonderin’ what that’s gonna be. He come back about another month later and put up another sign. It said, “It’s ah coming and it’s gonna be right here in your town and everybody wants to see it.”
Well, everybody got interested started wonderin’ what it is. The night of the show, he come back and told what it was gonna be on the sign. Oh, the place was packed. He was takin’ up all the money. He just had two people workin’ with him. Said, “Well, the show’s about ready to go on. You better go back there and pull the curtains so the people can see the show.” Well, he went back and told what it was gonna be on the sign. It’s ah coming and it’s gonna be right here in your town and everybody wants to see it.”

Bradley: What do you do for food and water here?

Hasil: Sometimes. It ain’t been in the last few years, but we’ll probably get it this year – a big one the way, they’re talkin’. Yeah, it used to get four feet deep back here. Everything’s blocked. You can’t move or do nothin’.

Bradley: What do you do for food and water here?

Hasil: You stay in. Hold off till it lets off, then go out.

Bradley: In Robinson they got these big towers that the coal come dropping out of...

Hasil: Yeah. Them temple things?

Bradley: Yeah.

Hasil: Yeah. They pull coal out of all them mountains with them things. They quit haulin’ and went to pullin’ with them things – back over the ground and stuff. It goes all the way back over here, back past where I live and ever’thing.

Bradley: They’ve got a lot of coal piled up out here.

Hasil: I know. Oh they’ll get it all before they quit. There won’t be none left. Too much money in it.

Bradley: Do people get pissed about that?

Hasil: Oh yea. They wanted to take the tops of the mountains off and take it out that way.

Bradley: I guess it’s a lot of people’s livelihood. A lot of people’s jobs are at stake.

Hasil: Progress, they call it. I say, “Yeah. Go. progress. We ain’t gonna have nothin’, just level it all off.” It’ll be all level before you know it.

Bradley: Right up here. Slow down now or you’ll drag. Slow down or you’ll drag. Hold it over here as close as you can. There you go. Now don’t get too far or we’ll go over the hill. I’m on this side. Most people come down right. You see where ever’body drives? I say you ain’t supposed to do that. You go up one way and come out another. That’s the way you keep it patted down. When they run in the same tracks, that’ll raise that middle up. It’ll keep comin’ up when it gets wet. Bowing up. Before you know it, you ain’t got no mufflers or anything.

Bradley: With a mouth full of chicken

Matt: What goes on for Halloween around here?

Hasil: They block the road. They block the road.

Bradley: Let tires and coffins and set ‘em on fire with gasoline. Law’s got to get out – fire department and everything’s got to get out – and put it out. They do!

Bradley: They’re raising some hell on Halloween.

Hasil: I been out there on Halloween I know how it goes. You can’t...
Bradley: They up in the woods?
Hasil: Yeah, up in the rocks and the mountains, where they can see you. I’ve seen them burn the highway up – they did – and you have to turn around and go back the old way. They couldn’t get close. They had a bunch of boys and girls throwin’ rocks, and they tried to get in there to put it out and they wouldn’t let ‘em. They just kept throwin’ rocks at ‘em. “You come out of them woods!” They wouldn’t come out. I was there. I had to back up and go the other way. Rocks was flyin’ ever’which way. They had the whole, big, wide bridge, man. Half of this trailer and over the wall there, the whole highway up. Tires and stuff. They had everything piled up. Logs and everything burnin’.

Bradley: You get a lot of people coming down here?
Hasil: Yeah. I stopped it, though. Too many. They run you crazy. Coming all hours of the night and day. I say, “I cain’t put up with this.” ‘Bout time you sobered up, here comes another bunch. “You want to drink?” “Awh, I quit.”

Bradley: I hope we didn’t mess you up coming by.
Hasil: No, no, no. I love for you all to come. A lot of ‘em around, just want to come. I said, “Don’t do that. Let me know before you come.” And I tell ‘em, “No, you cain’t come. I’m busy. I’m workin’ on tons of stuff. Tryin’ to.” It was awful – blowin’ on the horns, knockin’ on the doors, beatin’ on the windows, and beatin’ everything. And I said, “Hey! I’m tryin’ to sleep some.” They don’t pay no attention to that. They didn’t, but they do now.

Bradley: Did you get the baseball bat after them?
Hasil: Yeah. I had to get everything after ‘em. Matt: You got a new record coming out pretty soon?
Hasil: Just any day. Matt: All right. I’ve seen the Demolition Doll Rods.
Hasil: I put on a lot of shows with them. They’re crazy. You like ‘em?
Matt: Yeah.

Hasil: You got videos of ‘em?
Matt: I took some photos of them.
Matt: With you?
Hasil: Yeah same show.
Matt: You gonna be in New Orleans for Halloween?
Bradley: And you hit the keyboard with your elbow?
Hasil: Yeah. I set that up on this side and I got an accordion I’m playin’ with my left foot when I’m playin’ the high hat. I gotta nail it to the floor. Woohoo. And the saxophone. And, oh, I got a flute and lord, I know, I got a whole pool of instruments. I’m blowin’ in at the same time, put ‘em back where you can get to ‘em and keep playin’. Oh, it’ll come out pretty good before I get done.

Bradley: I want to see how you play that saxophone and still play guitar. I can figure maybe you take that saxophone, hit the strings and chord with this hand and blow and play with one, but that’s just a guess. There’s a guy down in LA who plays a drum on his back and he’s got a bass guitar and he’s barefooted and he stands on the bass.
Hasil: I kick my shoes off most of the time, man, ‘cause them shoes is heavy to pick up and down. You can go faster if you take your shoes off.

Bradley: That makes sense. (Time dragged by as the popcorn chicken settled with the beer in our stomachs. It was getting time to check out.)
Hasil: Good to meet ya’ll.
Matt: Nice meeting you Mr. Adkins.
Hasil: Watch that highway. They’ll run over you and kill you. Then you won’t be here no more!
Bradley: Mr. Adkins, I appreciate you lettin’ us come by.
Hasil: Thank you. Write me a good story. Don’t write anything bad. I know everything’s bad, but you can figure out some kind of good stuff to put in there, cain’t you?

Bradley: I’ll see if I can find one or two good little things to say.
Hasil: [laughing] You all take care of yourselves, okay?
For more information on Hasil Adkins, visit: <www.hasiladkins.com>.
Randy CD was playing at Razorcake HQ on the first day that Todd and I got to work founding this magazine. I wrote about Randy for the editorial of the last issue of Razorcake. In between that time, I’ve listened to the band relentlessly. I’ve watched them grow and develop, come to what seemed like a zenith with the album Human Atom Bombs, then follow it up with the equally-great-but-different album, Welfare Problems. I’ve gotten a little protective of the band. When The Hives made it big a couple of years ago, my first thought was, oh shit, Randy is gonna be next. For a long time, I thought of The Hives as a bargain bin version of Randy; a band that had all the energy and tightness of Randy, but without the same complexity to their songs and lyrics. Plus, both bands are from Sweden and play together a lot. I couldn’t imagine that Warner Brothers could be so close to Randy and not recognize that these guys could be huge. Their songs are so bouncy, so infectious. They’ve learned to go back to the roots of rock’n’roll and take the best from musicians like Little Richard, Woody Guthrie, and Lee “Scratch” Perry and blend all of that with healthy doses of fast and vicious punk rock. They throw in a little bit of Turbonegro-style big rock sound, and they top it with intelligent lyrics. When it’s all put together and it’s so tight and so fast and so catchy, Randy is a band that could be the next Clash. Hell, give them enough time, enough shows, enough room to grow and Randy could be bigger than the Clash. So I thought about all of this when Warner Brothers signed The Hives. I braced myself to lose another of my favorite bands to the bowels of large corporations. Luckily, though, Warner Brothers kept their heads in the bowels of their large corporation and passed right by Randy. We’re all better off for it. So, instead of wasting time complaining about great bands that sold out, Todd and I were able to catch up with one of the great bands that didn’t.
Randy is:

Stefan Granberg: guitar, vocals
Johan Bränström: guitar, vocals
Johan Gustafsson: bass, vocals (not present for the interview)
Fredrik Granberg: drums (not present for the interview)

Sean: I’ve got kind of a weird question to start off with. Why do you guys sing in English?
Johan: I don’t know, actually. We’ve been singing in English for ten years now. It’s just the way it’s always been with Randy. We’ve always been singing in English.

Sean: Do you have Swedish versions of any songs?
Johan: No.
Stefan: It’s like, all the music we started listening to was all in English, and we wanted to be like the other bands.

Todd: What’s in the name? I don’t even know why you guys are called Randy.
Johan: Just a name. It doesn’t mean anything for us.
Stefan: We took it from the dictionary because it meant “horny.”

Todd: On more serious levels, what made you do a song about the anarchists in Spain in the 1930’s, “Proletarian Hop”? I think a lot of people don’t really know what the context of that is. Can you just give us a short explanation of that?
Stefan: I see it as a war against fascism. The meaning of the song is that I think that the Spanish Revolution still exists because we still fight fascists every day. The meaning of that song is that it’s not over, we’re still fighting it. There’s still people that believe it’s worth fighting. We read a lot about the Spanish Revolution, and it’s been a big influence for us.

Sean: How much do you guys read? It comes across in your lyrics that you’re pretty well-read. How much time do you guys spend reading about history, or just other books?
Johan: I read more earlier. I don’t read as much now.
Todd: Would there be an author that was really influential in your thought, that kind of politicized you?
Johan: I like George Orwell a lot.
Stefan: Karl Marx.
Johan: Yeah, Karl Marx.
Stefan: Reading Das Kapital was, for me, the biggest revelation of the world. It tells it like it is. It’s just an explanation of what

I think that the Spanish Revolution still exists because we still fight fascists every day.
capitalism is and how it works, so reading it, you get to know what a machine is and why salary is what it is. I think it’s just very, very, very hard to read, though. We had a book study, doing it together with some friends, talk about it every chapter. I fell asleep every time I read it. Unbelievable. Just open the book and three pages later…[makes snoring noise].

Todd: You both have to answer this question. Since you’re both Swedish, what is the best Swedish invention?

Johan: I think it has to be the ball bearings for skateboards.

Stefan: I don’t know, actually. I don’t know any Swedish inventions.

Todd: I came up with the adjustable wrench, and…

Johan: The ballpoint pen?

Todd: They made the ballpoint pen, too, and the flame torch.

Johan: What about dynamite?

Sean: Since you’re Swedish and you mention him in one of your songs, do you think Joe Hill was guilty of that murder?

Stefan: I don’t know. I haven’t read so much about him.

Johan: I don’t think so, no.

Sean: What do you know about him?

Johan: Not too much, but what I read, I think he’s not guilty. I don’t know too much about the circumstances surrounding.

Sean: How did he find his way into your song? Because, I mean, he was a Swedish revolutionary.

Stefan: It’s just a name you come across when you read books about stuff like that in America, just we were just trying to be a little bit fancy, use big words like Joe Hill. [laughs]

Johan: He’s probably more famous in America than he was in Sweden.

( Joe Hill was a Swedish immigrant, a songwriter, and an influential member of the Industrial Workers of the World. He was famous for writing a lot of popular, proletarian and anti-corporate songs. He was accused of murder in Utah in 1914. He was convicted on flimsy evidence and killed by a firing squad in 1915. Most evidence suggests that Hill was sleeping with a married woman at the time of the murder, and he refused to use her as an alibi. –Sean)

Todd: If you could get x-ray eyes for one day and be transported anywhere in the world to look at one thing, what would you look at?

Johan: It would have to be George Bush’s brain. I’d like to see what’s going on in there.

Stefan: He’s the most dangerous thing to happen to the world in modern day.

Johan: Maybe your governor.

Todd: I think you’d need two sets of goggles for that. He’s got a really thick skull.

Sean: Just so we can get a different perspective, an out-of-the-US perspective, explain what’s so weird to you about George W. Bush.

Johan: Everything. It’s like a fucking joke. There was an interview on the TV the other day, and I couldn’t even watch. I just started laughing.

Sean: Do you remember what he was saying?

Johan: He said the same answer to every question, just the same terrorist words.

Stefan: If you go back in history, you have all these people who were president in different countries, like Lenin. They wrote books about politics, and they were politicians for real. They knew stuff. It’s become less and less like that here in America. Like in Sweden, our guy…he’s a dumb asshole, but he knows a lot about politics, and you could have a debate with him and he could answer all the questions. George Bush is probably not going to be able to answer one question about politics at all. He’s just a face, and that’s scary, because he’s still like the leader of the world.

Sean: You guys remember when we had a
president named Reagan?

Stefan: That was the same way. I think that started somewhere there.

Johan: I think George Bush is worse, actually, than Reagan as I remember him, but I was not too old back then.

Todd: I think that George Bush has been able to reverse so many things so quickly, as opposed to Reagan having eight years. It’s amazing how quickly things that you thought were set were turned around. On a different note, you guys got nominated for a Grammy in Sweden, is that correct?

Johan: Yeah.

Todd: Has anybody wanted to get a piece of Randy that you didn’t want to give them? Has someone come up to you and saying, “If you wear these really fancy pants, we’ll give you ten thousand dollars,” or has it just been pretty okay?

Johan: I think it’s been okay.

Stefan: Yeah, nobody wants us. We get some clothes from different companies, but we don’t even have to wear them if we don’t like, and it’s not that much at all.

Todd: So no one’s come up to you and said, “Can you advertise this fried chicken for us?”

Stefan: It’s more like our record company wants us to do a tour with a band we don’t like and we say, “No, we don’t want to do it.” They’re not okay with it, but they know that it’s gonna be that way.

Sean: Talking about the music, you guys kind of seem to have shifted from some of your earlier sounds you brought in Queen influences and things like that, and the last couple of albums have been more like ‘50s rock and roll, ‘60s rock and roll. What led to that shift?

Stefan: I think we discovered that if we took one more step back in musical history, we could take one step forward. It’s a cliché answer, but it’s true. We started going back really far, like ‘40s and ‘50s, just discovering how rock and roll started and what happened with that. We got into a lot of the New Orleans music, Fats Domino and Little Richard, and when we tried to put it into punk, we discovered that we sounded more like the Clash than we ever did before. It made sense, though, because they were also interested in music history and stuff like that. We even had to stop and say, “Oh my God, this is too much Clash,” and it wasn’t really supposed to be that so we had to change it. But I think we have to have something challenging to do if we’re going to write a record or else we won’t be able to do it good. We still put so much energy and heart into every record. We could do another Human Atom Bombs, like everybody seems to want to hear that record more, but we can’t enjoy it if it’s not a challenge.

Todd: Do you fear it’ll become a job if that happens?

Stefan: I think so, and it’s just no fun making those songs again.

Todd: You’ve covered Prince on a compilation. Are you going to cover Dolly Parton or Motorhead anytime soon?

Stefan: They’re too close to our hearts.

Todd: Are any other covers floating around, anything that you’d kind of like to stretch your brain around?

Stefan: I have one country song that I’m thinking about trying.

Sean: What’s that?

Stefan: I don’t know the name of it. Willie Nelson does it, and Merle Haggard, too. [singing] “Dance all night, dance a little longer.” (“Stay All Night (Stay a Little Longer)” It has a good riff and I think it would work, but we write so many songs that we almost don’t need to. Those are the only songs that we’ve actually played besides some Bruce Springsteen songs. That’s about it.

Todd: Johan, is it true that you almost died delivering stuff?

Johan: Yeah.

Todd: How did that happen? You were working for a delivery service, and what happened? Was there a big accident?

Johan: There was a car that crashed into mine. I fainted and then woke up in the hospital a day later.

Todd: Did anything get broken?

Johan: I got a hole in my head, but it got fixed. It’s kind of scary.

Todd: Have you ever written a song about that?

Johan: No, but maybe I will sometime.

Todd: Swedish people like to drink, is that correct? Do you guys have any drinking rules? I don’t know if this is an international rule, but no matter where you are in America, if you’re drinking and you don’t want to get fucked with, you take your...
shoes off. That way, when you fall asleep, people can’t mark you up.

**Stefan:** We had a rule when we came here, because the last shows we played in Sweden, we got a little too drunk, because we’re on the Weight Watcher program...

**Todd:** You’re on the Weight Watcher program?

**Stefan:** Yeah, but not like following it. Actually, I lost like sixteen, seventeen kilos in the last couple of months or so.

**Johan:** And we got too drunk.

**Stefan:** And we got too drunk before we played and fucked up a show. After that we said, “Oh, we can only drink five real beers before the show and ten mental beers,” so if you really want one more beer, you can just think about it. But now, we don’t care about that. We fucked it up.

**Johan:** We did it for one show.

**Sean:** Damn. I only have serious questions, I don’t have any drinking questions. What happened in Sweden to inspire that song “Dirty and Cheap”?

**Stefan:** Sweden was a country that believed in the welfare program, building up hospitals, good schools, good roads. Everybody was for that and working with that. We didn’t have commercial television until about ten years ago, and we didn’t have commercial radio like that, either. And it was like all kinds of music had to be played all the time. It was supposed to be good for different cultures, like jazz and stuff like that had to be on the radio, too. And now they’re selling it out, selling out hospitals and schools and everything. It’s just becoming like here. And all this stuff, even though it’s not as radical as I’d want it to be, but at least it’s good because you can go in school, you can get a meal at school, you get free dental care until you’re eighteen years old, and all this stuff is better than nothing. It just made me angry, thinking about all the neo-liberals fucking selling out our country and everything that our fathers and everybody built for everybody.

**Todd:** On the same token as that, Sweden’s number one export besides stuff like iron or wood is music. Doesn’t the Swedish government give stipends or money to bands?

**Johan:** They do, but it’s not for us, anyway. We don’t get extra shit.

**Stefan:** They have to fill out a form to ask for it, and we’ve gotten it once, I think.

**Johan:** They do, but it’s not for us, anyway. We don’t get extra shit.

**Stefan:** They have to fill out a form to ask for it, and we’ve gotten it once, I think.

**Johan:** They do, but it’s not for us, anyway. We don’t get extra shit.

**Stefan:** A lot of our friends get it, though, and we know a guy who plays jazz and makes his own records. He got a lot of money from that.

**Todd:** Are you guys well-liked in Sweden? Because in America, you’re not very well known. I mean, you haven’t
played California before this weekend, but you’ve toured Canada twice. Why do you think that is? Have you ever tried to do a full American tour?

Stefan: We wanted to do it all the time. It wasn’t like we had anything against it, but like in Quebec, they said, “Oh, these people like you. They want you to play,” and then they fixed everything. Nobody ever did that in America. We felt like, getting older now, we don’t want to go on a tour by ourselves just playing for twenty people every day. We’d rather wait around for a good opportunity to play like this for more people every day than we would on a whole tour. We waited for that and the opportunity didn’t come along for fucking years and years. We were supposed to come here before Christmas, I think, but we didn’t get the tour support that we needed.

Johan: It’s kind of expensive. We’d have to borrow a lot of money from the record company.

Todd: What’s the last revolution, either in a movie or a book or anywhere, that you saw and said, “Man, that looks like a lot of fun”?  

Stefan: I would say The Matrix, but the last two movies sucked it up. The first Matrix, I thought it was mind-blowingly good; it was a serious movie. The last two were just bad action movies.

Todd: What’s the longest distance you’ve gone to a show in a taxi because your van broke down?

Johan: It’s gotta be when we smashed a car in the northern part of Canada where actually didn’t go in a taxi, we went by police car.

Stefan: Actually in Sweden, our van broke down and we don’t even know where. That was about fifty miles.

Todd: Do you guys get in a lot of accidents?

Johan: It seems like it. [laughs]

Todd: What’s the most baffling high-tech device you’ve seen in recent history? Something that you see somebody with and you don’t understand why they have that.

Stefan: Electric guitars. [laughs]

Todd: What’s the most baffling high-tech device you’ve seen in recent history? Something that you see somebody with and you don’t understand why they have that.

Stefan: Electric guitars. [laughs]

Todd: DS-13, who you guys sound nothing like, gives you guys props in a song. Is the Swedish music scene smaller because of geographic reasons? Do you think that in Sweden, differences within the punk scene are more accepted?

Johan: Very much so.

Stefan: We know pretty much every band in Sweden. Fireside, the Hives, all those bands are good friends. We know DS-13. They’re from the same town.

Todd: Umea?

Stefan: Yeah. I think they wrote a song about the scene and the town, and we’re a part of that.

Todd: That’s kind of nice that it’s not fractured within such a small scene.

Stefan: It’s kind of just stupid musicians hanging out with musicians.

Todd: Do you think that reflects in what you do? Like, Bad Religion is not afraid to make the same record over and over again. Your earlier stuff is good, but it’s not half as interesting as your last two records, which are extremely interesting, because you’re going from so many directions, but you have a good punk rock foundation. You’re exploring these different things without losing that foundation. Do you think that you have a good punk rock foundation?

Todd: You recorded the ska single for free. How did you get it for free?

Stefan: It’s a big studio where all the students work in the town where we grew up, and they have these projects they have to do, like record some stuff and play it for the teachers. They asked us if we wanted to record because it’s a big studio. We had to be there for two days, I think. Everything that came out of that studio sounded like fucking crap, though. But it’s a really good studio.

Todd: In what ways would you think that you yourself are fucked up, more or less?

Stefan: You’d have to ask him about that.

Todd: This is personal reflection time.

Stefan: We drink too much alcohol.

Johan: That song’s not just about us, it’s about everybody. It’s kind of hard to be making a change because everybody seems to be fucked up, more or less.
If you think Roller Derby is an archaic, 1970s-era sport, think again. A new generation has emerged in cities across the USA, fueling the rebirth of Roller Derby. This time, the women are in charge of their own game; most have backgrounds in punk rock and are steeped in DIY and are making it happen themselves, with huge success. Arizona is one such scene. In about six months, the women went from nothing to hosting a 600-person crowd out for blood, and the league now has five teams (in Phoenix and Tucson). The bouts are a spectacle: there’s no denying the sexiness factor (c’mon, short skirts, tattoos, frilly underwear, and girlfights – and if those don’t turn you on, you ain’t American) but there’s also the can-do factor (an excellent example for others), the athleticism (if you think it’s easy, you try it), and the overall fun factor. The bouts are fueled by loud music and beer (and bands in between skating) and the teams are already developing cult followings. I recently spoke with the three Phoenix teams’ captains (Mayhemily of the French Kiss Army, Brown Fury of the Smash Squad, and Ivanna Spankin of the Bruisers) to get the story behind AZ Roller Derby. More info can be found at <http://azrollerderby.com>.

Wez:

Going back to basics, how did RDAZ start?

Ivanna: It started when I posted a message to AZpunk.com to see if people wanted to join my roller derby team, which was all I was really going for at first. And Fury showed up, and Bam Bam, and Kick Start and another girl who actually quit all showed up, all hungover, and started talking about doing it, having beers at Long Wongs, just making up the team name and daydreamed about what we were going to do. It took us about three weeks before we actually started skating.

Mayhemily: I came in about a month after they had already started. Mostly through word of mouth, I heard about it from random people talking about it. This girl came into the restaurant where I work and said her sister did it, so I got the information from her friend. I didn’t roller skate before.

Wez: Did you start skating here (at the roller rink)? When they had open skating?

Brown Fury: Yeah, we got a schedule and came down here.

Ivanna: She couldn’t skate at all when she came down here, and now she’s one of the best skaters.

Brown Fury: I wouldn’t go that far…

Wez: Must be the disciplined training that pays off.

Ivanna: The real difference is that the people who have heart get good fast. Just like anything. People who are putting their asses into it are the ones getting good. For some people it comes easy…

Wez: When was this taking place?


Wez: When was the first bout?

Brown Fury: November 22…

Wez: After only five months?

Ivanna: I think we actually started scrimmaging a month before that. We were cheeky bitches. We had no idea what we were doing, we just said “fuck it” – we’ll just do it and see what happens. We maxed out on who we knew by word of mouth to join, so we just decided to have an exhibition bout.

Brown Fury: We only had five girls per team. That wasn’t good.

Wez: I was here. It seemed like you guys had
your act together.

Ivanna: That’s why we were selling the beer for cheap, so nobody could tell that we didn’t really know what we were doing at first.

Wez: How many people showed up at the first one?

Brown Fury: Six hundred, sixty-five.

Wez: That’s a huge crowd.

Brown Fury: There was a huge line outside.

Ivanna: It was insane. We weren’t getting people in here fast enough. We heard from so many people that they left because of the line, so we fixed that for the next time.

Wez: So there were ten girls doing it then, how many are there now?

Ivanna: We have forty-three. Plus we have a sister league that started out as part of ours, in Tucson. I think they have about thirty. We went down there and nobody knew what she was doing, just like when we started, and we got some drills that we learned from the Texas girls, and we had it on paper, so we were just reading it and making it up as we went along.

Wez: Reading the rules of a game and actually playing it are two very different things… Let’s back up to the second bout, in January. At that point, the third team here had already formed. Explain this process a little.

Ivanna: Emily, from the time she came in, wanted her own team from pretty early on. We talked about it. She brought in a couple of her friends and they filled out our teams for the second bout, and as soon as that bout was over, the third team, French Kiss Army, started practicing on their own. Every bout we have gotten a lot more girls joining, so with the newer girls, we just put them into the older teams. So we have more people than we need for three teams right now. We are already talking about a fourth.

Mayhemily: There were a lot of girls, and I had thought about the idea of the French Kiss Army. I wanted to do that. That would be a great team, the uniforms could be rad. And there some friends of mine who I skateboarded with and wanted them to join, so I convinced them.

Wez: What about the second event? How many people showed up for that?

Brown Fury: Around 800 or 900.

Ivanna: Not counting all the people we let in for free.

Wez: And you got bands to play at the events. What’s the reasoning behind that?

Ivanna: Because we’re fucking punk rockers! Everywhere we go, we want bands to play. Plus it’s cool, a lot of our friends’ bands, local bands, don’t get the opportunity to play for 900 people.

Wez: It’s a lot bigger of a show than a weekend local gig.

Ivanna: And it’s not some shitty event, like they’d have to play that touring thing in the summer, Warped Tour. Your boyfriend’s band played last time…

Brown Fury: And they had a roller derby themed song! They formed a roller derby themed band called the Dukes of AZRD.

Wez: When you started it, what formed the original idea? Did you see other teams? How did you settle on the idea of roller derby.

Ivanna: How far back to start? When I was a freshman in high school? This friend gave me this poster of a German B-movie about roller derby with a Playboy Bunny. It was a painting, not a photo, and she was jamming and there were all of these chicks flying out of her way. And I daydreamed about me being the Playboy Bunny and knockin’ all of these chicks out of my way. So I decided to do a painting about that, because I’m a painter. So I started doing a roller derby painting, and it was looking really good, but I started to get mad at myself for only painting the stuff I wanted to do, instead of actually doing it.

Wez: How did you get in contact with other teams? How many other teams are there, nationwide?

Brown Fury: They’re everywhere.

Ivanna: When we first started there were two leagues in Texas, then one girl from the Texas leagues moved to the Cayman Islands. She started a league there too…

Wez: My friend’s building a skatepark there! What the fuck is the deal with the Cayman Islands?

Ivanna: That’s where all the bankers put their drug money! I guess they want to see roller derby. We want to get out there for vacation. It’s funny, now when I think about a vacation it’s like, “Where can I skate?” One of
my neighbor’s friends was in the bank track league in Austin. From there, since then, we were the fourth league to start up, and then the LA derby dolls, and then a girl in North Carolina just started about a month ago...


Ivanna: That’s a New York league. This girl, Roxy, was with a band called the Loud Pipes. Did you see them?


Ivanna: Which is fine, but what they’re doing is totally different. What they do is choreographed, more like gymnastics or wrestling, with trainers.

Brown Fury: They’re all great skaters…

Ivanna: But it’s not competitive. They have moves planned out in advance. Have you ever seen any of the old movies?

Wez: I’ve seen Rollerball…

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**IF SOMEONE TOLD US TO WEAR THESE OUTFITS, WE’D SAY F*CK NO. BUT NO ONE TOLD US TO.**

Wez: Yeah, they’re from Vegas. They’re going to play the benefit too, right?

Ivanna: Yeah, and she’s gonna start up a league in Vegas. So there’s about eight leagues now.

Wez: No Seattle, San Francisco, or Portland?

Ivanna: Not yet.

Brown Fury: Plus some people still have the spandex thing goin’ on.

Ivanna: Yeah, it’s San Mateo or somewhere like that, the LA Bombers, and an LA team, the Thunderbirds, of the old spandex leagues.

Wez: What are the spandex leagues?

Brown Fury: They wear spandex, and it’s like seriously big hair, skating. It’s choreographed, like a big money, TV, wrestling-style roller derby.

Ivanna: They think we’re doing it all wrong. But there are still scattered spandex leagues out there, but they are all watching to see what happens with us, since people are starting to get excited about roller derby again.

Wez: To ride your success maybe?

Ivanna: Okay, that’s not the same. But the eighties’ roller derby where they had the figure eight thing.

Wez: Oh yeah, I remember seeing that.

Ivanna: They have all of these planned moves, and someone will come out and everything will stop, and someone will jump the whole pack. It’s exciting, it’s fun, but it’s not what we’re doing. The primary difference is where the money is coming from. We’re all punk rockers, we get our money from the local bars that we drink at, the local record stores – those are our sponsors. And they have one guy who has all the fucking money who is the owner, and they have to have TV sponsorship, or else they don’t do a game.

Wez: How did you get your crew of assistants together?

Ivanna: They came to us. We called them the sharks for a while but they didn’t like that, so they started calling themselves the monkeys.

Brown Fury: They’re just friends or boyfriends.

Ivanna: Actually, none of the boyfriends stuck. Half of the boyfriends are at my house right now, in the carport, drinking beer with my husband and complaining.

Mayhemily: Everyone kind of knows one another, and one guy gets involved, and then everyone helps each other out.

Wez: What does it take to pull off a bout?

Ivanna: Going into it the first time, we didn’t know what the fuck we were doing, so we just made it up as we went along. My former job was as a project manager, so I guess it comes naturally thinking up what the problems would be and thinking up how to solve them. So, we had so many girls and so many people who wanted to help we just made a list of what we needed to get done. Like, nobody’s gonna come if we don’t have beer. It seems like a miracle now that we ever pulled it off. The whole thing runs on enthusiasm.

Wez: What about this place, the roller rink? It seems really conservative. You walk in the door, and it struck me the first bout. There are signs that say stuff like, “Your hair must be combed neatly, no hats allowed, your clothes must not be unkempt.” Stuff like that.

Brown Fury: They looked at us like we were nuts when we first came here.

Ivanna: Rich’s wife didn’t care for us when we first came in. She’s a figure skater. And they took one look at us and said “No.” We asked if
we could have private practice time, and they told us it would be, like, a million dollars an hour. So we went to a rink in Chandler and got it for $250 for two hours.

Wez: What did they say here? How did you get them to sell beer here? They have “no loitering” signs. You can’t hang out in the parking lot. And all of a sudden there are all these people with piercings and tattoos showing up for roller derby.

Brown Fury: But there’s also a lot of grandmas and kids. It’s totally mixed.

Ivanna: It was easy doing what we wanted to do here. By the time we decided to have a bout, we had already talked a lot about what we needed to do to get people to come. We had done bake sales and car washes and talking to a lot of people, so we knew we had to have beer. When we told Rich, “If we could sell beer here, we could make a fortune.” And we’ll give him part of it. And we did, too. We sold a lot of beer at two dollars a cup. We make a lot of money off of beer.

Mayhemily: They treat us differently. That is for the general public. No one has told us that you can’t wear a hat, or your tights are ripped. We pay the up front costs.

Brown Fury: We go through a lot of kegs. Wez: I’ll contribute to that.

Ivanna: People appreciate that it’s not seven dollars for a beer.

Wez: Like the Marquee!

Ivanna: That’s just one of the many things that when we were putting this together, it gave us a chance to be on the other side of the fence for once. And we weren’t going to fuck it up. It’s our friends who are coming, who we’re inviting to come and see us.

Wez: That’s what it seems like at bouts, a lot of friends. But there’s also a bunch of other people. I was telling Emily that I saw a bunch of creepy guys with cameras trying to take incognito shots. That’ll be on some website.

Ivanna: Like of our asses? Seriously, those website guys are doing as much as anybody else to get the word out about roller derby. I mean, sure if they’re looking for a titty shot or whatever, but, y’know…

Brown Fury: Well, we’re already walking around like hookers…

Wez: There’s a certain sex appeal that is hard to peg from a guy’s point of view. “It’s a bunch of girls skating around in short skirts knockin’ the shit out of each other in frilly panties, shit, sign me up!” My wife thinks it’s rad, too. You can’t deny that aspect of it.

Ivanna: If someone told us to wear these outfits, we’d say fuck no. But no one told us to. We sat around and thought about it, and we want freedom of movement. And we gotta have frilly underpants! There’s something really cool about it that appeals to guys in one way and girls in another. And it appeals to my grandma. She loves roller derby. Even the old timers who come here say, “It’s great what you’re doing, but do all of those girls have to have tattoos?” And the little kids are stoked.

Wez: What about girls who drop out? Why do they do it?

Brown Fury: Money, or time, or having to do fundraisers every weekend.

Ivanna: You have to have insurance. Have to. You have to be able to commit to two team practices a week.

Brown Fury: And attend meetings.

Ivanna: We’re starting a book of rules and regulations with committees, like the event committee who figures out what events we should be flyering at. It’s like having a band, times a thousand.

Wez: How much do the skills differ between the girls?

Ivanna: We have girls who show up, who have never, ever skated. And then we have other girls who show up, like Liz, one of the brand new girls – she’s super, super fast. She’s been a jam skater her whole life. She’s gonna fucking smoke ‘em today.

Mayhemily: There are some beginners. For the most part, no one was really a roller skater. I think some people roller skated as a kid, but I don’t think anyone has been hanging out in the roller rinks for the past fifteen years. Some people catch on quick.

Wez: What about injuries?

Ivanna: At first, we had a bunch of injuries, mostly knee injuries.

Wez: My mom told me when I was about sixteen that girls would never like me because I always had scabs on my knee.

Ivanna: We like scabs! We always have rink burn.

Brown Fury: We don’t have too many broken bones. Emily’s always injured from skateboarding. We have one girl who got a concussion, so we wear helmets all the time.

Ivanna: Just the ref who got tackled on his birthday. The girls wanted to give him a spank-
I daydreamed about me being the Playboy Bunny and knockin’ all of these chicks out of my way.
Dan Monick's Photo Page

North Carolina, 2003

Indiana, 2002

North Carolina, 2003

Florida, 2003

Fine Line, Big Difference
324: Across the Black Wings: CDEP

If you are a fan of the grind band Terrorizer, this is in your ballpark. Listed as a three-song EP, there actually is a fourth song. Once a three piece, 324 now has expanded to four. Singer Masao no longer handles bass duties and focuses strictly in the yelling. Sakata, the drummer, is the other remaining solid piece of this confusing puzzle. He provides intricate drumming that sometimes seems so out of control but well-calculated. It seems like every release the band takes out a new guitarist. It is true once again here. With the addition of Shinji, the band takes their Terrorizer worship and infuses hardcore and crust to the mix for a faster, more varied blend but do not sacrifice the intensity. If you are not a fan of metal, you need to walk away here. This band leaves tire marks like a bad ass muscle car with a turbo-boocharger. Aggression, speed, and it is all here. This band leaves tire marks around the mix. The tempos are more varied on this release. I watched this more than a few times and that says a lot. It just makes me want to go out and see them again.

–Donofthedead (Kung Fu)

AGAINST ME!

As the Eternal Cowboy: CD

I’m poorly ripping off Replay Dave (Graham Charleston) right here. We talked about this album at length. This is, secretly, Against Me’s third album. Zig and zag as you may, there are certain inevitable mistakes on a band’s second album. Everything from growing self-consciousness, “improved” playing technique, and the availability of a better studio can distract bands (“What does that knob do?” “Can we do solos?” “You got a theramin?”), especially if the bands had a modicum of success with their first full-length (Against Me! did, well, much more than a modicum). I’m not suggesting that there’s a wholly unreleased, in-the-vaults Against Me! album, I’m just floored at how much different yet the same this album is compared to Reinventing Axl Rose. The mistakes I’m so used to hearing in sophomore jinx albums just aren’t there. Here’s the unmelodest template for Against Me! Acoustics are the core, wrapped around voices, strings, and honed, with a lot of what could be done at a punk barbecue, all revved up and written impeccably. Anthems that you’re not ashamed to sing, that sort of thing. Differences: overt politics are redirected to powerful personal political and inflection. Rally cries seem to be coming from the inside, not just part of a small group. There’s a lot more singing on the Eternal Cowboy. Fucking-a Tom and Andrew can sing and I’m glad they’re given more of a chance. There are a lot of subtle differences in the music, too. Although there’s been some minor backlash with Against Me!, this Bike Is a Pipebomb, and the Hair Beard Combo as being jamboree punk, picking up the Young Pioneers banner that some wish would have remained buried, I just hear a great band, not afraid to listen to a broad swath of music. They let it ripple the waters just a little bit. In the corners, of all things, in the guitars I hear early ‘80s underground pop, especially the Cure. Hats off. –Todd (Fat)

AGENTS OF SATAN:
The Old Testament: CD

Pseudo-satanic grind that manages to invoke the memories of both Intense Mutilation and early Cryptic Slaughter, which means it isn’t particularly accomplished and the joke ran out of steam somewhere around the middle. –Jimmy Alvarado (Intolerant Messiah)

ALTaira:
Weigh Your Conscience: CD EP

I really should recuse myself from reviewing this record, but since Antonin Scalia doesn’t have a problem adjudicating his conflicts of interest and his decisions have far-reaching implications which substantially affect the lives of myself and others, I’ll happily assess the virtues and merits of these seven songs, especially since I became friends with these people largely because I’m a fan of the band. First of all, certain bits of California and Florida punk are so similar that the regions sound like they’re separated by a county, not a country. I’m not talking about the bro hymns from HB or combat-wounded hardcore, I’m thinking of the drunken, anemic, heroic gestures of defiance offered by bands which live in vans. don’t bother to replace broken strings in the middle of the set because they didn’t need that one anyway and simply strive to do something that most horse race handicappers would put beyond their reach. It’s quixotic and noble, something more realistic than futile but far less practical than most people will ever be capable of understanding. Sure, people used to more polished and less nourishing fare may find it rough around the edges, but this is the shit that always has me dancing, that makes me forget about the small and large insults and indignities that tomorrow will inevitably bring because, at least for these moments, anything seems possible all over again.
–Puckett (ADD)

ANGELVILLE:
Can’t Go Home: CDEP

Straight edge hardcore that plays like a soundtrack to an Oversight attack, or going through the day with a high level of anxiety. Metallic riffing and the screaming vocals keeps things aggressive. If you have little penis syndrome, like me, and bands like this are a good remedy. Weird name for a label. –Donofthedead (Happy Couples Never Last)

ARROGANT SONS of BITCHES:
All the Little Ones Are Rotting:

just your classic midwest sk-punk outfit. What points they may have earned by maintaining their DIY status they lost the moment the first song started. There was an “enlarged” portion to this disc, but I wasn’t feeling masochistic enough to subject myself to it. –Jimmy Alvarado (www.asobrock.com)

ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE:
Hair: Debatable: CD/DVD

Final show from the outsider artist (and certified high school teacher), who sings and plays guitar to songs he wrote on sequencers. The current Atari-Nintendo restructure dance scene probably owes him some tip of the hat, lyrical and – as evidenced in the bonus DVD – entirely humble. With songs about friends, street hockey, parties at the North Pole, how stupid the team name of the Washington Redskins is, the efficiency of the metric system, and moving, Atom is the high-pitched bedroom nerd who plays his punk anthems through his own tight universe. It’s infectious. I challenge you to not sing along to “Happy Birthday, Ralph, I love you, even though you are fucking disgusting.” High quality DVD also includes a couple of documentaries and a music video. –Speedway Randy (Hopeless)

AUTOMATIC:
Black Ink Rising: CD

Had a real tough time with this release, cause there was a completely new sound in their sound that I really like. It’s almost like they’ve taken a nugget of Hüsker Dü drone, wrapped it in sandpaper and fired it right behind the guitars. The problem is there’s all this emo sludge surrounding it and keeping it just out of reach. Look, you don’t have to front, guys. Drop any and all arty pretenses and just rock the fuck out.
–Jimmy Alvarado (sonautomatic@yahoo.com)

AVSKUM: Punkista: CD

This band is from Sweden and has been playing on various labels since the early ‘80s. It’s fast and furious, like Discharge, but some of the songs are a little slow, too. There are a total of fifteen songs on here. These guys are not happy with all the war, capitalism, and injustice in the world. Although the lyrics are in broken English, you know exactly where they are coming from. If you are a fan of Prank, you will love this CD.
–Mike Beer (Prank)

AWAY FROM NOW:
Sio Semper Tyrannis: CDEP

Mixture of Hot Water Music and Thursday meets tough guy hardcore from Australia. Fit your profile? Do you need this? –Donofthedead (Pee)
AXES OF EVIL: Married to America: CD
A politically astute punk band mired in a bog of cliched metal riffage. Really, really wanted to like this, but overt headbangin’ fodder makes me stomach churn.
–Jimmy Alvarado (New Regard Media)

BANG! BANG! Do You Like It?: CD
Did you know that back in the ’70s the Alice Cooper Band were forced at gunpoint by Mick Jagger to write and record an album with the lippy Glimmer Twin? I didn’t either. But here it is. And if one listen isn’t enough to convince you of the verity of this recently come-to-light facetofo, then just check out the lead vox on this disc who coyly goes by the moniker “Jack Flash.” Like that isn’t a total give away. But wait a minute... now he sounds like Richard Hell. Man, after that first song I was certain it was Mick Jagger. I guess it doesn’t matter ‘cause I never liked either one of those over-cherished suckwads. So to answer the original question, no, I don’t like it. But the hot blond chick bass player on the other hand... – Aphid Fecewt (Heads Up)

BBQ: Self-titled: CD
As a fan of both the Spaceshifts and one man bands I can’t even begin to tell you how low down I was by this. The guitars have a pretty cool sixties garage sound to them, but then the guy goes and facks it all up by his mouth. No matter how open-minded I may be about music, I cannot and will not embrace sock hop music. Ever. –Josh (Alien Snatch)

BEFORE BRAILLE: Cattle Punching on a Jack Rabbit: CD
Some really cool cover art of a cowboy wrangling a calf while riding a jack rabbit (and you though it was just a cooler album title), all of which is totally wast- ed on bad post-emol art rock. It’s crim- inal, I tell you. –Jimmy Alvarado (Sunset Alliance)

BIZARROS: Can’t Fight Your Way Up Town from Here: CD
A new release here from one of Akron’s more obscure proto-punk bands. Nearly thirty years after they first plugged in, the tunes along still sound like a product of that time, yet also seem more like an expansion of the sounds they began mining back in the day when they were publishing songs like “Lady Dubonette” and “Laser Boys.” There’s still that schizophrenic quality to their set list, swishing back and forth from arty bar rock to growling rockers with ease. If you have no preconceived notions of what “punk” should sound like, are musically adventurous, and can appreci- ate when a band has obviously put in some good work, this is recommended ‘cause these guys remain at the top of their game. –Jimmy Alvarado (Clone)

BLACK COUGAR SHOCK UNIT: Self-titled: CDEP
Another tough review to write, I know this band’s pedigree. The core is Alex Ulloa – Panthor UK United 13 and House on Fire (if you need barns to burn, or do a lineup of who are your best friends are, put Sound of a Gun on. Whoever remains has passed that test properly). It’s Alex’s dominant voice and guitar work that punctuates the bar. That’s the good news. The voice is still commanding. The lyrics still penetrate like the smell of gas and the flaming sound of a lighter (“bring out the dead who fill your head”). The bad news is that gone are the intricate

BOLIDES, THE: Science under Treassure: CD
Sixties-inspired trash rock, with maybe the slightest dash of Devo thrown in for color. The songs go on a bit longer than maybe they should, but otherwise the ride is relatively rockin’. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dionysus)

BREAK THE SILENCE: Near Life Experience: CD
It’s not that this predictable, metallic, Fat-styled punk featuring former mem- bers of Rise Against and 88 Fingers Louie is bad – it just isn’t interesting. Sure, it’s melodic. Sure, it sounds like No Use For A Name and Lagwagon (so much so that I wondered if Boss had started making a Fat effects stombox). Sure, it has an At The Gates cover. However, there is very little here to dis- tinguish this album as something new, to fix it at any point in time other than the mid-90s and at any place other than Southern California. If you’re young and want to reminisce about how mainstream punk sounded ten years ago while still purchasing something new, this album is perfect. If you’re anything like me, you should skip to the next review which, for the record, is exactly what I’m doing. –Puckett (Hopeless)

BROKEN BOTTLES: In the Bottles: CD
Broken Bottles is one of my favorite bands right now. I love to see them live, and I can’t listen to their seven inches and EP enough. So I was really excited to get this, their first full album. Now that I have it, I have to say, it’s pretty cool, but I’m not blown away. I think this is probably one of the best albums of the year, but it’s not as impressive as Broken Bottles’ previous releases. They’ve included some of their best songs from the EPs on this, like “Gothic Chicks,” “Kelly Osbourne,” and “Bobby Mary,” but the new versions of these songs are a little slower and a little cleaner. To be honest, though, I prefer them faster and dirtier. Some of the new songs are really cool, too, like “Drinking in the Rain” and “Sixteen Forever.” And “Pink Swastika” is pretty funny. As a whole, these guys have taken the best of Southern California bands like Social Distortion, TSOL, and the US Bombs and devel- oped a rad new sound with it. I highly recommend this album. I just know that these guys have more punk rock in them than this album shows. –Sean (TKO)

BURY THE LIVING: Burn This Fucking Nightmare: LP
Wow, I could’ve sworn I heard that these guys had called it quits, but here’s another album from ‘em. Same drill as on previous releases, meaning you get super- fast, super-pissed hardcore and oodles of tunes spread over both sides of this disc.

Vinyl:
It’s not just for pants anymore.

Underground Medicine Mailorder, Connecticut
1. Kidnappers, Spanish Girls (Zaxxon Virile Action)
2. A-Frames, Crutches (Royal)
4. Helen Keller, 2x7” (Dead Ear)
5. Flakes, Talk About You (Dollar Record)
6. Diskords, Pink Palace (Dirtnap)
7. Winks, Spoil Me (Super Secret)
8. Butt冲锋ers, Cigarettes (R Styles)
9. Deadly Weapons, You’re So Selfish (Rapid Pulse)
10. Lost Sounds, No Control (Holy Cobra Society)

K now Cr ap M ailorder, Oreg on
1. Suburban Reptiles, self-titled (Raw Power)
2. Mr. California, Annoy Your Neighbor, (Armpit Toast)
3. D-Cup, Shark Attack (Hostage)
4. The Drips, Mexico (Hostage)
5. The Indigents, Brain Dead World (Hostage)
6. The Pegs, self-titled (Hostage)
7. The Butt冲锋ers, Cigarettes (R Style)
8. Skip Jensen & His Shakin’ Feet, Evil Weirdos (Yakikasana)
9. The Bags, Disco’s Dead (Artix Films)
10. The Cheeraks, Cheeraks Are No. 1 (Yakikasana Records)

Disgruntle d Mailorder, California
1. Real Losers, Go Nuzzoid (Wrench)
2. Clocks, Time Is On My Side (Shake Your Ass)
3. Diffs, Living Chaos (Headline)
4. Smut Peddler, End Plan (Ransom)
5. Texas Terri/The Speed Kings, split (Devils Shibumer)
6. Hunns, Time Has Come Today (Disaster)
7. Broken Bottles, Bloody Mary (Revenge)
8. BellRays, Warhead (Bronx Cheer)
9. Red Onions, Live Wire (Revenge)
10. Holly Tree, Anytime, Anywhere (Headline)
Does it rock? You know it, daddy-o. –Jimmy Alvarado (Soul Is Cheap)

CASUALTIES, THE: On The Front Line: CD

Members of The Casualties, we need to talk about your flour. We want to express yourself, don’t you? I know that it is up to you whether you want to just wear the bare minimum of buttons, patches, colored hair, mohawks, liberty spikes, chunky shoes, painted skin and leather or not. Now if you feel that the bare minimum is enough, then, OK, but some bands choose to wear more. We encourage you to come up with a unique sound and listen to music anywhere, they listen to punk for the atmosphere and the attitude. That’s what flour’s about. It’s about fun. You want to express yourself, don’t you? OK, great. That is all I ask. And for those of you paying attention, if you have heard one Casualties album, you have heard them all. –Toby (Side One Dummy)

CAUSTIC CHRIST: Can’t Relate: LP

I was really feelin’ their gallop-speed, pissed off hardcore sound, and would venture to say that I would easily consider mud slaps. The EP’s “Ha Ha Ha” was a mistake. What’s next, a cover of “Xanadu”? You simply should not mess with perfection, kids. “Call Me” I never knew what it’ll happen. Next thing you know, the earth shifts on its axis, chaos ensues, and Bush gets a second term. In short, my friends, play loud, play often, but never, NEVER play the last song on side two. –Jimmy Alvarado (Havoc)

CAVE 4: Sheena Was Right: CD

A potpourri of punk, garage rock, and surf instrumentalists. The singer sometimes sounds like Javier Escovedo’s German love child. Some solid tunes sure to spice up your summer bash quite nicely. –Jimmy Alvarado (Swindlevia)


I love the Cheifs. They were a defining moment in punk music for me. Not very widely known, they were Hollywood punks who played in LA and OC punk’s initial waves in ’80 and ’81, gigging and bending two poles together that aren’t currently joined. Without a so-far great band. The best thing I was really feelin’ their gallop-speed, and bend two poles together that aren’t currently joined.次, I was really feelin’ their gallop-speed, and bend two poles together that aren’t currently joined. I definitely would buy this record and see these guys if they ever come to the town. A great record by a great band. The best thing I reviewed this month! –Mike Beer (Slab O Wax)

CRIME IN STEREO: A So-Far Great Band: CD

This is your cup of tea you won’t be disappointed. –Mike Beer (A-F Records)

COMPLETE CONTROL: Powerpearls: CD

As the Roots Undo: CD

The lyrics seem to be about life and surviving. No, I don’t really recommend this. At first glance, I’m truly scared that this is your cup of tea you won’t be disappointed. –Jimmy Alvarado (Swindlevia)

CODE, THE/WHATEVER CODE: Explosives: CD

Loud, fast, and whiny. A little bit o’ punk that some youth crew equals a lotta boredom. So utterly lacking in originality that I find myself at a loss for words. –Jimmy Alvarado (blackoutrecords.com)

CROWPATH: Old Cuts

We’ve Come for Your Daughter: CD

This is a lot less tonelier than their earlier caustic collection, Living Dead. I have a feeling there was a lot of drinking while they were recording. I keep thinking it’s broken neck rock–n’-roll, but it just the hurtin’ punk thing that means. There’s a cover of the Muppets’ “Movin’ Right Along,” though I don’t remember “I like to eat brains because they taste like real fucking good” being a part of the lyrics. I think this album will be reserved for party o’ clock listening, while Lamentations will hold its place in my high rotation.

CREEPERS: Old Cuts and Blunt Knives: CD

It never ceases to amaze me when a group of obviously proficient musicians get together and consciously opt to make bland, faceless dreck like this. Pick a grind metal band, any grind metal band. Nothing gets more EXACTLY like them. –Jimmy Alvarado (Robotic Empire)

CRYPKICKERS, THE: We’ve Come for Your Daughter: CD

This is a lot less tonelier than their earlier caustic collection, Living Dead. I have a feeling there was a lot of drinking while they were recording. I keep thinking it’s broken neck rock–n’-roll, but it just the hurtin’ punk thing that means. There’s a cover of the Muppets’ “Movin’ Right Along,” though I don’t remember “I like to eat brains because they taste like real fucking good” being a part of the lyrics. I think this album will be reserved for party o’ clock listening, while Lamentations will hold its place in my high rotation.

–Megan (CrypKickers)

DAKAR AND GRINSER: Are You Really Satisfied?: CD

Some sounds do not die. Rather, they lay deep beneath a musical surface wait- ing for the right time to emerge. Take Dakar and Grinner, for instance. From a quick scan of the CD jacket, it appears that the German label, Disko B, released their album Are You Really Satisfied? back in 1996. I can only imagine that this piece has reached American shores. As for the music, think of something you might have heard in 1989. New wave was dead and Nine Inch Nails had yet to introduce the mainstream to boys in nail polish and the metal-cold four-to-the-floor of industrial music. Dancing, the pop of the front 242 were churning out single after single of brutal rhythms that seemed the antithe- sis of the era’s dance music fodder. Dakar and Grinner seemed that sound, seemingly at a time when it had fallen completely out of fashion. Witness the unholy animal lust of “Take Me Naked” and the urban decay of “Walking in Acid Rain,” two tracks that sound as if they were culled from Al Jourgensen’s repertoire. Even the decid- edly more mod tracks, “Stay with Me” and “Professional Slackers” have a def- inite black-lipstick-and-dog-collar vibe.

Of course, if you really are feeling the minor dada spirit, you can always do the duos’s cover of “I Wanna Be Your Dog,” which reminds me of 1000 Homo DJs cover of Black Sabbath’s “Supernaut,” where the dance and rock elements bal- ance perfectly. The aforementioned track is the albums underground hit, so chances are you may have heard it in a club or at least online recently. Regardless, check out this album if you are feeling a bit nostalgic for your old Wax Trax collection. –Liz O (Disko B)

DAMAGE DEPOSIT: Stray to the Bottom: CD

There’s no denying Damage Deposit’s post-crow-crews – more solid and mas- sive than a battleship, all cannons a- blazing, with Youth of Today providing the shells with flying through the orders. What keeps them in check – for me – is that too-often-fucked-up barbed wire highwire act of getting a message across (12151) that shows how so dumb, globalization creates more human slavishness than the plant system, don’t buy a puppy if you’re not in for a life-long amount of injections of humor (the oft over- looked connection between hardwood and
DAYS LIKE THESE: Charity.Burns.Green: CD
I wish I didn’t grab this. I didn’t look at the label. I was trying to weed out and lessen the amount of CDs in the mystery pile for which I was responsible. I had been asked to play because I simply don’t know any better. That’s also why I listened to it more easily (easy enough to do since the record is only ten minutes long) and eventually, these spastic, blistering songs to make sense. Sure, it sounds like a wolf fucking a cat that’s caught in a steel trap and bled to death, but that was just a bad thing. –Puckett (Robotic Empire)

DECAPITADO: Blacked: CD
I’m new to the Danish band the Defectors, so I don’t have the previous full-lengths to go on. They are a mix of 60s Nuggets bands and the Scandinavian ROCK! sound that seems to really catch some attention in 1998. The strongest song is “It’s Gonna Take Some Time,” where they really do come across with what could be an obscure song from 1968. Sadly, some of the tracks fall back on lazy rock clichés. They do come across as a band that is still experimenting. –Wanda Sprag (Bad Afro)

DECEITFUL, THE: The Turn On: CD
I’m a fan of the Danish band the Defectors, so I don’t have the previous full-lengths to go on. They are a mix of 60s Nuggets bands and the Scandinavian ROCK! sound that seems to really catch some attention in 1998. The strongest song is “It’s Gonna Take Some Time,” where they really do come across with what could be an obscure song from 1968. Sadly, some of the tracks fall back on lazy rock clichés. They do come across as a band that is still experimenting. –Wanda Sprag (Bad Afro)

DESTRUCTION, THE: Cool to Be You: CD
I was one of those awkward kids in school. Punk rock gave me an identity for over twenty years. When I first bought the Milo Goes to College LP, I felt instant validation. It connected to me then as it does now. I’ve never had to change a thing. The formula remains the same. A teaser EP, ‘Merican, came out first this year and blew me away. They’re one of the few bands that I was listening to early 90s that still kick out jams. Anticipation was high after hearing that. Retord told me that the full length is “fucking good!” I was excited. When I left HQ to pick up review material, I popped the sucker in the CD changer in my car. I rarely ever do that. I started the car and the CD played up. I’m no total punk rocker. I have to have a 200-watt stereo system with some booming subwoofers that cost me a pretty penny in my truck to play my punk rock. Oh, here I am in familiar territory. That oh-so-familiar bass playing of Karl Shakes speaks out of the speakers. Milo’s voice provides me the comfort that things are still happening. They’re going to be all right. Bill’s intricate lead drumming bang away in a positive heartbeat. Stephen continues on with a drum beat that is solid in front but will bite you in the ass if you aren’t paying attention. My highlight track has to be “Mass Nerder.” In describing the lyrics’ “Must Bleed” to “We Must Read” is fucking classic! I hate to say it, but this is better than the last three albums combined. That is no small change. Those albums are great, but this one is so much better. Jimmy Alvarado and I are kinda the old goats of this cooperative. They still experiment. –Wanda Sprag (Bad Afro)

DIE STINKIN’: JMFU: 7”
I liked their Smell in the air EP and there’s enough solid, mid-tempo punkin’ going on here to keep these ears satisfied. While nothing here reaches the lofty heights of “Beer,” “Soft ‘N Love Dove” comes pretty darn close. –Jimmy Alvarado (Die Stinkin’)

DIFFS, THE: Self-titled: 7”
It’s telling that some kids who can’t even be out of high school (maybe even junior high) are trumping the newest freshest bands. Anaheim’s Differs have an LP and maybe a 7-inch or two, they were gone, and I heard nothing more of them until the day Todd popped this into my box. I’m no typical kid who wants to be stuck in the past, so I thought I’d give this a try. Todd (TKO) is no small chump change. That is no small chump change. Those albums are great, but this one is so much better. Jimmy Alvarado and I are kinda the old goats of this cooperative. They still experiment. –Wanda Sprag (Bad Afro)

DISCORDS, THE: Blame It on the Kids: CD
I’ve been hearing a bit about the Discords. The rumor mill says that one of their albums is for sale in a large Breeders store (they’re only fourteen) and fixes them dinner. That endears to them me. Heavy Ramones influence, especially on “Covered In Blood.” The most impressive thing is the fact that they only created this at the Morgue,” mixed with heavy doses of the Heartbreakers. They haven’t really established their own sound, but it’s super catchy and done well. Plus, when I think about what I was doing my fresh- man year of high school, this just blows me away. –Megan (Vinyl Warning)

DISTRACTION, THE: ...More Trouble at the V…: 12” EP
Man, I tried and tried to like the last Distraction full-length, and I sat on the fence with it for a long time, finally falling off, coming to the ultimate conclusion that it was a simpler Stitches. And, due to geographic proximity of the two bands (thirty miles, tops), I figured that that subdivision needed only one Stitches. This EP has got me thinking that the Distraction was doing going. Gone are the “Is that Mike Lohrman singing?” vocals, replaced by none other than Le Shok and Neo King Kong’s Hot Rod Tod. They’ve got the biggest fucking lumpy paint and slurring simultaneously. Also greatly whipping this thing into another shape are the keyboards, which roam from the drum machine to the proper boa constrictor, gently sliding in and out, squeezing and bulging unexpected bits and pieces to the front. I never had a problem with the Distraction’s string working, and it all comes into focus on this EP. The whole enterprise makes a hell of a lot more sense when it stands on its own two mics, rather than supports, also to the 3-D cover (with Distraction-logo’d glasses) and the fact that this is a one-sided 12” EP makes it almost impossible for these guys to break even, so you know this thing’s from the heart and not just the wallet. –Todd (TKO)

DIVINE RIGHT OF MEANS: Self-titled: CD
This comes on a razor’s edge between trash rock and AmRep skronk, lagging a bit when the latter but shining bright when they pull out all the stops and raise a ruckus. Clip off four or five full lengths of this and we’ll have a proper band. Suits me just fine, and I’ll try a CD that I really like, I talk to people about. Here’s what’s come up in discussion. 1.) When they sing about love, it’s not boyfriend/girlfriend, not ex-wife. The stakes are higher and more grave, the emotions less polar. 2.) The guitar, as with Jughead of Screeching Weasel, the growl in the front, it’s not the bickering, frosty, fuzzy bunny, and sunshine but underneath, it’s all sharpened blades sticking in deep, churning nuts and bolts. 3.) The Discs are still the consummate outsiders. Through the relative isolation of living in Colorado while wean out and get his Ph.D., they weren’t concerned with keeping up with all of the little punk rock ghettos that have formed. They were and were drumming with a punk rock rooted inside. Then they decided to make a album; they don’t need the money. They needed the fuel that comes with execution can’t I can accept that. 4.) True Pioneers don’t just have one trick up their sleeves. The best of the breed are the ultimate survivors. I’ll be watching you, and you are the only two obstacles: remaining relevant past their mid-to-late thirties in a genre of music that treats bands like Logan’s Run. 5.) Any band that yard- rocks, the Haymarket Riot, and the line “I’m gonna kick their asses in class/ Gonna get good grades!” will usually exclude my list, impossible for this album to be kicked off my top ten for 2004. –Todd (Fat)

DISMANTLE: Cool to Be You: CD
I was one of those awkward kids in school. Punk rock gave me an identity for over twenty years. When I first bought the Milo Goes to College LP, I felt instant validation. It connected to me then as it does now. I’ve never had to change a thing. The formula remains the same. A teaser EP, ‘Merican, came out first this year and blew me away. They’re one of the few bands that I was listening to early 90s that still kick out jams. Anticipation was high after hearing that. Retord told me that the full length is “fucking good!” I was excited. When I left HQ to pick up review material, I popped the sucker in the CD changer in my car. I rarely ever do that. I started the car and the CD played up. I’m no total punk rocker. I have to have a 200-watt stereo system with some booming subwoofers that cost me a pretty penny in my truck to play my punk rock. Oh, here I am in familiar territory. That oh-so-familiar bass playing of Karl Shakes speaks out of the speakers. Milo’s voice provides me the comfort that things are still happening. They’re going to be all right. Bill’s intricate lead drumming bang away in a positive heartbeat. Stephen continues on with a drum beat that is solid in front but will bite you in the ass if you aren’t paying attention. My highlight track has to be “Mass Nerder.” In describing the lyrics’ “Must Bleed” to “We Must Read” is fucking classic! I hate to say it, but this is better than the last three albums combined. That is no small change. Those albums are great, but this one is so much better. Jimmy Alvarado and I are kinda the old goats of this cooperative. They still experiment. –Wanda Sprag (Bad Afro)

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This comes on a razor’s edge between trash rock and AmRep skronk, lagging a bit when the latter but shining bright when they pull out all the stops and raise a ruckus. Clip off four or five full lengths of this and we’ll have a proper band. Suits me just fine, and I’ll try

It’s a rare thing indeed when I go see a band almost cold, with only the slightest of expectations and recommendations, and I have to wipe the concrete dust off my jacket from getting blown through the back of the club by the first song and remaining there for the rest of the set. That was the case with The Drips when I caught them at the Doll Hut last year. Monstrously catchy (and not in easy ways that I’m well prepared for), anthemic (in the “we’re all sick and we’re all in this together” way: “More pills! More wine!”), headed by a spazz (and he’s in a much better known band. Dig a little and you’ll find out), armed with one of the most powerful drum punishers I’ve seen in ages. I can’t quite put my finger on what makes The Drips get my pulse all erratic and makes me listen to each song twice before I flip the record over. They’ve got the x-factor in spades. The charisma that although you’ve heard all the pieces scattered about, they glued that fucker tight and you find out that it’s got more missiles to deploy than you first thought possible. Much like how the GCS updated street punk without betraying it or being a slave to it, how the GC5 updated street punk without there being a complete transformation, and does a fine recreation, then decimating it. The Drips take a shit-ton of OC punk out and don’t annihilate itself in the next few years, they’ll be drilling to your cranial torment. My prediction: if the album and don’t betraying it or being a slave to it, how the GC5 updated street punk without there being a complete transformation, and does a fine recreation, then decimating it. The Drips take a shit-ton of OC punk out and don’t annihilate itself in the next few years, they’ll be drilling to your cranial torment. My prediction: if the band doesn’t annihilate itself in the next year, they’ll be drilling to your cranium, like those oil wells spread out through the residential neighborhoods of Huntington Beach. Mark it, dude. This one’s a bonafide punk rock master stroke. –Todd (Hostage)

DT’S, THE: Mexico: 7”

DRIPS, THE: Dusk of an Ancient Age: CD

By-the-numbers black metal, interesting at best and not very innovative. The band members’ names, particularly drummer Rudimentary Eli, cracked me up, though. –Jimmy Alvarado (Intolerant Messiah)

FALL-OUTS, THE: Summertime: CD

...while a zippy-but-uncute slammer like “All In My Mind” provides a swift and effective refresher course on why we all liked this band in the ‘90s, and “Shortcut” yields an at least marginally serviceable mutation of Donovan’s take on Al Kooper’s “Season of the Witch,” and the album’s entire peculiar Mod Meat Puppets vibe is, if nothing else, un-completely-played-out, I can’t help but live in mortal fear that some bastard rock critic somewhere is going to make the joke that this album really oughtta be called There We Go And Other Misses. Ooooooops. BEST SONG: “All In My Mind” BEST SONG TITLE: “One Thought Too Much” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: “Staring at the Sun” is not the Angry Samoans song (but I wouldn’t mind if it was). –Rev. Norb (Estrus)

FIFTH HOUR HERO/ THE SAINTE CATHERINES: Split, 7”

Fifth Hour Hero: I still can’t shake the Discount comparison. It’s especially evident on their second song, “A Map Within.” It’s strange, since Discount was from Florida and Fifth Hour Hero is Canadian; I thought accents would change the vocals up a bit more. That said, since Allison of Discount is now
busy smoking cigarettes on stage in an effort to remain mysterious and changed her name to Building or Eraser or something. It was in the Kills and has slipped into designer jeans, Fifth Hour Hero is slowly getting more spins on my record player. Past loyalties die hard. I’m just like Fifth Hour Hero and more. The Sainte Catherines: take the first two Small Brown Bike albums, toss in Lemmy of Motorhead’s basic bass sensibilities, rought up in a cement mixer for some extra dizziness, and there you have it. “The International Badminton Championship: La P’ Tite Grise Vs. Jef” is one of their best-executed songs about confused sexuality I’ve come across in a long time. Immaculate packaging, to boot. – Todd (1-2-3-4-Go!)

FIFTH HOUR HERO: You Have Hurt My Business and My Reputation Too: CD
I love this band! Quebeçois punk rock! Girl and boy vocals! (I wish we were at the point in punk rock where I didn’t have to point out when there are girl vocals, but, unfortunately, this is still mostly a boy band scene! Just look at the Backstreet Boys! NO girls at ALL!) Anyway, three songs of great melodic punk, plus one other more folky number! Think Discount! If you haven’t already bought their LP, Scattered Sentences, what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? If this were a cerebral, it’d be Marshmallow Alpha what’s wrong with you? 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GIBBONS, THE: Self-titled: 7”
Young kids from the east side of Detroit. Pop punk mixed with politics has seen a much worse fate, but this isn’t yet crucial listening. The nasal vocals and pretty standard beats remind me of a less compelling Powerwolf-era Digger mixed with a less lyrically savvy Connie Dungs. Still, they give it a shot, don’t go for the cheapest of shots and riffs, and spark some promise to their next release. –Todd (Salinas)

GIVE UPS/ RADIO BEATS: Split: 7” EP
Give Ups: Some catchy stuff here if you like your punk with a Killed By Death slant. Radio Beats: Eight-bar blues-based rock/punk, not as immediately interesting as the Radio Beats stuff, but I ain’t exactly knockin’ it, either. In all, not a bad listen. –Jimmy Alvarado (www.thegiveups.com)

GIVE UPS/VM Collision: Split 7” EP
Give Ups: Straightforward thud punk that manages to hit that sweet spot not once but twice. Kinda like the Rip Offs but cleaner production. VM Collision: once but twice. Kinda like the Rip Offs that manages to hit that sweet spot not either. In all, not a bad listen. –Jimmy Alvarado (www.thegiveups.com)

GO BETTY GO:
Worst Enemy: CDEP
I was pretty excited when this came. Go Betty Go is a female quartet that was the staple Tuesday band at the only bar within walking distance a year ago. They alternate between English and Spanish lyrics and are on the aggressive side of pop-punk. But man, is this release slick. They thank their drum tech and name what equipment they use. It was mastered at Capitol Records. The worst is that it’s heavily produced and a lot of the edge is lost. The third of four tracks, “Son Mis Locuras,” is the best on here, but I doubt I’ll be heading out to the Warped Tour to see them these days. (Two weeks after writing this, I saw a deodorant ad with one of their songs playing in it – something smells like sell-out and it’s not my pits!) –Megan (Side One Dummy)

GOONS, THE:
Nation in Distress: CD
Wow, this was a surprise. Solid hardcore tunes here that don’t merely rely on speed to mask incompetence like so many others do. Hell, a couple of tunes are downright anemic. The lyrics manage to be topical and political without sounding like a pamphlet and the singer has an atypical timbre to his vocals but still manages to elicit the requisite pissed-offness required for the genre. In short, some rockin’ stuff here. –Jimmy Alvarado (Reptilian)

GREEN DAY: 1,039/Smoothed Out Slappy Hours: CD
I am a dork! I have always loved Green Day! Usually, being a dork also means that you are so musically and technically inept that you can’t tell the difference when a CD gets remastered. But, in this case, I could actually tell the difference – more clear and loud and all of that. Plus there’s some stupid bonus CD-rom crap. (End: “Technical” Part of Review) But the important thing is, if for some reason, you’ve managed to go through your life without owning this, you, sir or ma’am, have some explaining to do. Some of the best pop songs ever. Yes, pop songs! Yes, love songs! If this were a cereal, it’d be Lucky Charms! One of my favorite albums! –Maddy (Lookout)

GUADRON: Raw Voltage: CD
After approximately ten full length listens to Raw Voltage, the debut album from Guadron (aka Detroit-based artist/musician Ron Zakin), I’m still at a loss for a proper review. “Why?” you ask. Is it that awful? No, quite the contrary. For some reason, it seems to be far easier to write a five-page essay on the ghastly performances of American Idol wannabes than to write a few lines describing the electronic intricacies that keep this album on repeat. It becomes difficult to verbalize the hyper dance beats and the constant-ly fluctuating tempos that make my head spin and cause me to see, for some odd reason, looped car chases when I shut my eyes. The task becomes more arduous when, upon each consecutive listen, new sounds emerge – a snip of a tribal drum here, a lick of a guitar there and are those spoons clicking in the background or am I imagining things again? After awhile, the tracks begin to fade into each other. The starts and stops of specific pieces become irrelevant and it seems clear that Raw Voltage is not a work divided into eleven parts, but one full body of electronic madness that will keep this listener dancing in her bedroom for a long time. –Liz O. (Ersatz Audio)

GUN CRAZY: Dropping Like Flies: CD
Some rippin’ punk rock’n’roll from Austin, struttin’, swaggerin’ and slannin’ its charm like a high-end call girl in the midst of a ship full of horny sailors. I’ve been a bit burned out on this genre for a while now, but when something this cool comes along, you can’t help but pay attention, and this is worthy of frequent listens. –Jimmy Alvarado (Mortville)

HAIR BEARD COMBO: Complete Discography (So Far...): CD
When I said that the new Leatherface was going to be the best album of the year, I may have spoke too soon. On the twenty-two songs on this retrospective, the Hair Beard Combo triumphantly prove time and again that they are leaps and bounds better than any other acoustic-based band out there, especially Even in Blackouts, who totally suck. And it’s not just some mellow Leonard Cohen rip that you’d only put on when you’re trying to get laid, they tackle subject matter more vital than anything else I can think of off the top of my head. Do you really want to get bogged down with left-wing rhetoric when you listen to music? Of course not. You want to listen to songs about stuff like grape jelly, monster trucks, and Magnum, PI, arguably the greatest Hawaii-based cop show ever. But for those of you who just HAVE to have politics invading every aspect of your life, they also address the current situation in the Middle East by saying, “I know we’re totally bombing you but it’s totally not my fault, ’cause I totally voted for Dan Marino.” Really, who needs Discharge when you’ve got the Hair Beard Combo? –Josh (Pro Dudes USA)
Grayed wickedness. Swedes with radioactive fluids coursing through their veins. Plagues and their fingertips and in their throats. The antidote to any “Employee of the Week,” a rabid, mistreated Dachshund to the balls of all the bands too busy stretching for the brass ring to notice before teeth are clamped on tight. It’s downhill a comfort to hear such fight, fuck, fight, fuck me, fuck you, fuck us all on record. Do the math of twenty-five songs on an LP and you know they don’t dick around. Yep, recommended. –Todd (Raw Deluxe)

HOLLOW POINTS: Annihilation: CD
I don’t get it. Everything about this band screams that I should loathe them. Shades of later Bad Religion abound, they’re sick with pop hooks, and yet I’ve adored them since the first time I heard “POW” on the Dirtnap Across the Northwest comp and I’ve spent the last year trying to figure out why. Aside from the fact that they manage to punch all the right buttons for me, I think what gets me more than anything else is that they sound authentic in ways that even bands like Bad Religion don’t anymore. The lyrics are solid, they sound like they mean it, man, and they play with a level of conviction that’s rare these days. I have little doubt this’ll make a few top ten lists this year, and rightly so. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

HOLLY TREE: Anytime, Anywhere: 7”
Brazilian band, transplanted to the LA area, give it their all. The title track is where it’s at. Prototypical Hostage-style OC punk rock. It’s a snotty, swaggerly, weird-eyed and knowing smirk of a song with great hooks and my favorite of the three. The second song, “Boom Box,” tips a hat to the Dead Boys, where even though it’s not the fastest track in the land, there’s danger on the edges. The b-side, “Drugstore,” starts off as a surf rocker – with echoes of the Blasters of all things – then leaps onto the concrete, knocks out some teeth, and does a good job of being epic and adventurous (read being over three minutes) without being wanky or pretentious (even though there is a drum solo, it fits). Worth keeping an eye out for. Only 300 made. –Todd (Headline)

HOREHOUNDS: No Time for You: LP
These guys are up to their eyeballs in Dolks influence and sex obsession, but they rock the fuck outta punk rock-n-roll template. This one’s a keeper. –Jimmy Alvarado (Rockin’ Bones)

Looks like entire recorded history of the band plus twenty-eight live tunes. Lesser Dead Milkmen that’s pretty painless. –Speedway Randy (Sacramento)

HOW WE LOST THE WAR: Self-titled: 7” EP
This sounds like one o’ them insta-grow bands that make up tunes, practice ’em and then hit the record button all in the same day. Protes Bengt they are not. –Jimmy Alvarado (www.howwelostthewar.com)

I’m not sure if the band is no longer Duane Peters and the Hunns. Are they now the Hunns or Die Hunns? I have to admit that I have not followed Duane Peters or his other band, the U.S. Bombs. I know I liked one song from the latter band. But I sure like this band or the line-up of this band on this release. For me, the highlight is the additional vocal duties of the ex-Nashville Pussy amazon, Corey Parks. Her vocals dueling with Duane’s adds additional character to the songs, especially when she dominates most of vocals on certain songs. Great choice of cover songs that start off the CD like “Time Has Come Today” by the Chamber Brothers. Also included are covers of the Undertones, the Wipers, and the Sex Pistols. The originals are no slackers either. Straight-up punk with a late ’70s, early ’80s So Cal sound. Cool as shit, hot as ice. –Donofthedead (Disaster)

HUSBANDS, THE: Daniel b/w You Need Hands: 7”
These three ladies from the San Francisco area haven’t failed me yet. They’re like the little sister gone wrong of the Detroit Cobras. The one that’s not afraid to get a little dirty and break curfew. Raw rock and roll at its best. –Megan (Blue Bus)

I F ARM: Two Selected Works: CD
This CD definitely kept me on my toes. Just when I settled into one rhythm, it changed musical styles immediately and would continue to do so again and again. The majority of what they played was pretty damn good, going from mostly melody-oriented upbeat punk, to hardcore, to something without much melody at all. All within each song. Most of the CD kept my attention. However, some of the quick changes in...
INDIGENTS, THEE:  
*Brain Dead World: 7"* 
The first time I heard Thee Indigents on the *Tower 13* comp, the band was one of my favorites. My initial dislike had to do with the ridiculously snoty vocals. I mean ridiculously snoty. This guy’s voice sounds like he just blew his nose. Thee Indigents’ singer makes the Stitches’ Mike Lohrman sound like goddamn Frank Sinatra. Just to be clear, this isn’t bad. But the band that backs him up is so tight that they propel you through the songs. They get you tapping your toes and actually pin it in your living room. They keep you interested so long that you’ll start to like the vocals. Then, you’ll start to love them. What can I say? They’re like the world on me. This is another ringer from Hostage. –Sean (Hostage)

JEFFE GENETIC AND HIS CLONES:  
*Need a Wave: CD* 
Jeff from the New Town Animals playing all the instruments, making all the vocals, and doing all the mixing. The melodies in all the way through, straight-shootin’ early ‘80s black-and-white new wavy rock. But the lyrics are fun, as the title track questions the difference between the army and kids looking for today’s new wave to follow, “Scooter Queen” about a guy who’s girlfriend scooted into the army, and “Quadruphonia all day, and the obligatory lobotomy song. –Speedway Randy (Dirtmop)

JERRY SPIDER GANG:  
*Exile on Mainstream: CD* 
Like every other punk rock aficionado stuck to this planet in the year 2004, I’m up to the cut of my jib with Hella-copy cats, Jerry Spider Gang seem like mere mediocrities constructed of some of the best aspects of fusional punk rock decorum. And let’s be honest: I don’t give a shit, and it seems, from at least one angle, to fly right up to the cut of my jib with Hella-copy cats like he just blew his nose. Thee Indigents’ singer makes the Stitches’ Mike Lohrman sound like goddamn Frank Sinatra. Just to be clear, this isn’t bad. But the band that backs him up is so tight that they propel you through the songs. They get you tapping your toes and actually pin it in your living room. They keep you interested so long that you’ll start to like the vocals. Then, you’ll start to love them. What can I say? They’re like the world on me. This is another ringer from Hostage. –Sean (Hostage)

JOHN HOLMES:  
*Everything Went Blacker: CD* 
New York thugs metal bites, even if the band in question hails from England. Press material says they’re toured with Poison Idea and it’s too bad they learned nothing from the experience. Look kids, you wanna up the brutality level? Forget all this thick-necked metal crap and take the three words to heart: PICK YOUR KING. With that template you can’t go wrong and you’re guaranteed to put the fear of God into any. The A-side, “Spanish Quadrophenia all day, and the obligatory lobotomy song. –Speedway Randy (Dirtmop)

KIDNAPPERS, THE:  
*Self-titled: 7"* 
I have yet to meet a Zaxxon Virile Action release I haven’t dug, and this is no exception. The A-side, “Flying Baby Chick” has this great “Inferno”-era SLF meets the mods thing goin’ for it that just makes it immediate crucial listening. The other two tunes on this are more in the garage-informed punk vein you expect from bands on this label, which are no less good, but up against some tough competition when it put up against that stunner on the other side. Let’s pray to the god of rock’n’roll that these kids manage to squeeze out an LP before the night was through. I love them, and if there’s not a good reason for a band member to not have shoes on (like a broken foot), no matter what comes into play. –Todd (Lance Rock)

KICKZ, THE:  
*One Day/ b/w Don’t Ask Why: 7"* 
I saw these seventeen-year-olds in Austin and something didn’t sit quite right with me. I have a lot of quirks myself, but I have standards. And if there’s not a good reason for a band member to not have shoes on (like a broken foot), no matter what comes into play. –Todd (Lance Rock)

KILLER SQUIRREL:  
*Self-released (And Loving It): CD* 
Says it was recorded in someone’s garage and “they’ve listened to more than a few Grumpies records, but instead of hiding those songs behind fuzzed-out punk rock, they duct tape it to some Fleshies-style trainwrecking rock and roll. They also whoop as real good. –Josh (Kapow)

KILWATTHOURS/ THE RUM DIARY Split CD 
Either your pet just died in the alley or you’re trying to score with a girl you picked up at Orange Circle. In either case, you’ll be along for the ride. The band that backs up is so tight that they propel you through the songs. They get you tapping your toes and actually pin it in your living room. They keep you interested so long that you’ll start to like the vocals. Then, you’ll start to love them. What can I say? They’re like the world on me. This is another ringer from Hostage. –Sean (Hostage)

KRYLIA:  
*Extro: 7"* 
It’s not so far to think of Criminal IQ Records as building a house in the Dangerhouse, early Posh Boy, early Frontier subdivision of music. They haven’t yet released anything’s that bad, it’s strangely all in the same ballpark, but their bands are definitely not retreaded riffs of one another. The Krunchies are no exception – dual male/female vocals – the lady is an acquired voice (I like it), almost like if you put a microphone up to a fuzzy, baby chick (as in just-born chicken), amplified its voice, and made it angry and couple it with spastic bass lines and guitar work that sounds like it’s hooked up to a cozy portable epidural machine (just-born chickens, blend, gallop). The music behind the vocals reminds me of the debut Red Cross EP mixed with early Plugz, if that. And nothing better than being bad about ‘em. Rock solid EP. Look forward to more. –Todd (Criminal IQ)

KYLESA:  
*No Endings/ A 110 Degree Heat Index: 7"* 
Extremely depressing blend of progressive, virtuosic math metal mixed with a...
dirge of punk energy. From the ashes of Damad, this band continues on with a bombastic din of white noise that may well chench your teeth to point of cracking. Not for the timid or meek. When happy just won’t do. This is a perfect accessory to one’s overabundant life or divinity with life. The riffs are heavy and intricate. The layers accent the mood. Bass tones are on the low end to deliver a pounding to drive the feeling of helplessness. Great stuff.

Collector nerd features include Pushead artwork, title of band in gold leaf, and colored vinyl (for mailorder only). My copy came on purple vinyl swirled with white. Pushead.com also put out a double 7” version with a different cover, Pushead signature, beige vinyl with white swirls, and two extra tracks that I bought. –Donofthedead (Prank)

LAST VEGAS, THE:
Lick ‘Em and Leave ‘Em: CD
Whoo, good thing it’s the last one. When they set this down and shut up and smoke their nicely and play their – Molly Hatcher/Van Halen “Hot For Teacher” riffs, i guess things aren’t really a complete and utter embarrassment for all parties concerned. –Jimmy Nec; when the riffs kick in – “you wanna love mashaayay, you wanna be obsaaayyne” etc. – this condition no longer holds. It’s pretty fucking sad when grown adults can’t think of a better album title than this. P.S. Tell your graphic designer to stop wasting his time designing your CD covers and to get behind the drums, because America needs a new (mumble mumble mumble) band album now more than ever!

BEST SONG: “I Got What You Need” – I like how they manage to sound like they’re ripping off “Heartbreaker” by Led Zeppelin AND the Donnas AND the first Motley Crue album simultaneously. It’s me art! WORST SONG TITLE: “You Want To Know How To Love Me” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: “No matter how pretty she is, somebody, somewhere, is sick of her shit” – Spanish Tony. –Rev. Norb (Get Hip)

LEATHERFACE:
Dog Disco: CD
Goomphumps. Leatherface’s Mash is a masterpiece. One of the top ten punk records ever recorded. Listening to it is one experience. Listening to it and reading along to the lyrics: goomehumps. I can’t think of another band that combines torm literacy, bunched passion, spilled pints, and stained car paint altogether so well in songs. Leatherface is sneaky, too. I knew barely one of their rabid fans that dug them on the first couple of listens. This isn’t for the musical equivalent to pornography – not everything’s lit up like neon with the tasty bits readily exposed. It’s hearing a stalking, revolving, and shimmering terpoint. Interlocked, sure, but always playing the exact same song, aren’t they? They’re in near-constant counterpoint. Interlocked, sure, but always stalking, revolving, and shimmering around one another. It’s hearing a drummer never stop, never get too loose, never get lazy, never showboat. I like it how when I read along to Leatherface, the world seems as containable as a small yellow chair or as massive and mysterious as the sea floor of a high and mighty ocean. Dog Disco’s different from their latest, Horsebox. It’s more content. The wanderer has found some solace, partnership, and stability. It’s also more from the chest – growled and mouthed instead of yelled and rupturing. I’m not talking a toothless mellowing, but an unqualified gracefulness of being fully aware of your situation, and exploring the good bits that have come your way. As of this writing, I’ve listened to this over fifty times. Great stuff.

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and even the voice are all almost just like them. However, it seems like every now and then the singer would lose the microphone, at least for a moment and suddenly sound like a gravelly throaty death metal singer. What killed me was later in the CD, it sounds like the gay falsetto from The Darkness sneaks into the studio and throws in his god awful wails sporadically. With the CD totaling 23 tracks and the vocals taking a turn for the worse in later in the CD, it sounds like the gay death metal singer. What killed me was the microphone down his throat and suddenly the singer would lose the sense of humor has become over the years. I get over hating these guys remind me of Ignite – a singer who is actually a singer that yells to make things aggressive. Musically, they’ve got melodic, metal overtones with the chugga sound that Pennywise is famous for. If these guys aren’t on the Warped Tour in a couple of years, they are not marketing themselves hard enough and have to need to fire their record label.

-Donothefhead (Red Leader)

MARKED MEN, THE: On the Outside: CD

The second full length by the Marked Men is awe inspiring – fantastic power punk. It is blown out to 70s New Wave, The Ventures or The Reds, but being delivered by 3/4 of The Reds. Jeff Burke has truly captured me, beyond anything accomplished by The Reds or The Chop-Sakis. His storytelling and delivery are over and above any copycat Killed by Death braking band. This is not to say that Mark Ryan and Bill Sorrell don’t sound like another person on the planet. I loved The Reds and they had a chopp style that was always interesting, but this is different. Everything sounds more organic, less forced. Mike Throneberry’s drumming seems to find a more natural pace and with the addition of a new bass player, it just clicks. Sadly, most people buying punk records will say it’s too pop and people buying pop will think it’s too punk. That’s the thing you can’t get in a great punk band and write a good hook. Easily one of the best records I have heard this year. –Wanda Sprag (Dirtnap)

MASTER PLAN, THE: Colossus of Destiny: CD

One of the more noteworthy Crimes Against Rock™ – which have been astonishingly plentiful – was, at age 18, I heard it and though so unorthodox by my copy of the Dictators Go Girl Crazy LP that I actually unloaded it back down at the record store within a few weeks of its release. At the time, the band had been formed twenty years ago, and the original and with the addition of a new bassist, it just clicks. Sadly, most people buying punk records will say it’s too pop and people buying pop will think it’s too punk. That’s the thing you can’t get in a great punk band and write a good hook. Easily one of the best records I have heard this year. –Wanda Sprag (Dirtnap)

MINISTRY BLUES BAND: Capitalized Suffering: CD

I reviewed the songs on this CD for the last time a year ago and, for some unexplained reason, I put the title of the Minority Blues Band’s first album, that was a mistake on my part. Sorry about that. But my gut is telling me that I have yet to say enough about Capitalized Suffering. Rule number one: Japanese punk rockers play their instruments better than American punk rockers. Rule number two: every song on this album is more Snuffy Smile Records releases is fucking awesome. Rule number three: we can not say enough, but pick up this fucking album already. If you like Leatherface, Hüsker Dü, and the Replacements, you won’t be disappointed. If you like the Exploited or Hüsker Dü, and the Replacements don’t have that much in common with each other, but Minority Blues Band has a lot more in common with all three. –Sean (Snuffy Smile)

MISSCONDUCT: Untitled, CD

These guys come from Sweden. It contains twelve tracks of fast Pennywise-style punk. The stuff is fast but has a lot of changes and it has some slow parts, too. The lyrics are very positive and about doing the right thing. This also reminds me of old Southern California punk rockers, and for me, the vocalist is good, too. A worthy release and worth the money for fans of this style. –Mike Beer (Union 2122)
MR. T EXPERIENCE:  
Yesterday Rules: CD
Why? Why? Why? Sure, it’s not as bad as Alcatraz, but the lyrics keep getting worse. And I’m not some punk rock vigilante. I, much to the dismay of many friends, think late-period Minor Threat is great, and I like a fair amount of Bob Mould’s post-Huṣker Dü projects. But some bands do one thing well – and any deviation from that results in the dreaded comparisons to Captain Crunch’s Oops! Chocolate Donuts with Sprinkles – a cereal that is just trying too hard. Too much crooning, too much seriousness, too many “affected” vocals. Gimme Lucky Charms! –Maddy (Lookout)

NEULANDER:  
Smoke + Fire: CD
Sometimes, it just takes one line from one song to drag a listener into an album. For this listener and this album, the line was “I’ve lived in funeral cities/ and I’ve lived in golden towns,” from the song “Flying.” While this listener still has no idea what it is that is so captivating about that line, she confesses that it sucked her deep into Smoke + Fire and she has yet to be able to escape. This debut album from New York-based duo Korinna Knoll and Adam Peters (ex-Echo and the Bunnymen), is filled with lyrics that are sort of vague and lovely and make you sit around and wonder if this is all just some kind of protest song? Musically, Neulander has the minimal electronic sound. Knoll has the vocals – the husky, accented vocals that are distinctly European, although it is difficult to tell exactly whereabouts. Or, it could be that she isn’t European at all, but an American who listened to too much Neu while growing up. Alas, a press sheet check confirmed that Knoll is Austrian. Accents, Krautrock, electronic pop – isn’t this all like Stereolab? Perhaps, in parts there seems to be a similarity between the two, but Neulander really has developed its own sound. Given it a listen and you might end up caught in the smoke and fire as well. –Liz O (Disko B)

NEW WAVE HOOKERS:  
Ass & Frederic: LP
Okay, I’ll admit that their tunes have an infectious quality to them and that they obviously know how to string chords together in a pleasant manner. I’ll even go so far as to admit that I was impressed that they had the chutzpah to cover both the Dictators and Marginal Man on the same release. BUT, despite these plusses, the pop punk feel inherent in so many places here suddenly leaves me feelin’ limp just when I start to get hot and bothered. –Jimmy Alvarado (Oblivion)

NORTH LINCOLN:  
Self-titled: 7”
Much in the same way that young bands like Mea Culpa and Rivethead sound very well-realized, this band sounds totally confident on this 7”. I even go so far as to admit that I was impressed that they had the chutzpah to cover both the Dictators and Marginal Man on the same release. BUT, despite these plusses, the pop punk feel inherent in so many places here suddenly leaves me feelin’ limp just when I start to get hot and bothered. –Jimmy Alvarado (Wanker)

ORPHANS, THE:  
Everybody Loves You When You’re Dead: LP
“Fuck you, I just took a whole shitload of coke,” Wade screamed. Something was muttered from the soundman. “Fuck ‘one more song.’ Two songs. Let’s go!” Typical Orphans fare, right after someone got gored by the bass neck and took a microphone to the top of the head, they played what they wanted, no more, no less. At first, it’s the firestorm that attracted me to the Orphans. Play it fast, mix it up, and I’m usually a sucker for it. The obvious stuff is great; Jenny’s a vixen, equal parts rolling-in-glass punk sweetheart and back-arching public displays of drunken fuckitosity. Wade at bass – I’ve never, ever seen someone simulta- neously unplug from both ends – the guitar and the amp – and then play for a good forty-five seconds before he realized he was unplugged. There is all that on the criminally well recorded Everybody Loves You When You’re Dead. That danger, that people who don’t go out that much, claim to have left punk rock, is here in spades. But then I continued to listen to this LP, and not to get all mystical and shit on you, but there’s a complete other side to the Orphans. If Brandon wasn’t drumming, it’d be mush. If Dann wasn’t guitaring – Wade’s pitbull would still be lunging – but Dan provides the teeth and neck strength for those teeth to really sink in. Just as any half-assed karate movie has the head, they played what they remembered. I shouldn’t have worried. Cribbing notes from prime Avail (it’s earnest and energetic) and Tiltwheel (the light instrumental interlock), they sound pretty fucking good right about now. Recommended for fans of gruff-voiced melodic punk. –Josh (The Support Group)

OBLIVION:  
The Garden of the Machine: CD
Put the bong down, college boy. –Liz O (Disko B)

OIL!:  
The Glory of Honor: LP
Simultaneously ridiculous (lyric-wise) and spot-on (music-wise), this is one of the best homages and deflators of oi culture I’ve heard in long time. Much like JewDriver takes the undeniable musical power of Skrewdriver and turned it on its head (racism, for starters), Oil! spins tales of skinhead glory on its rubberized, metal-tipped boots, both commending the best of the culture (hey, at its best, it’s a definable belief system where beer’s involved and hippies are hated) and making fun of its over-used clichés (calling ladies “birds,” spending gross amounts for fashionable clothing that was once made for the working class, and not knowing how to cry.) In the end, yeah, it’s pretty damn good. Oil could be lyrical, but it’s hidden in the middle of the first Blitz record, classic 4-Skins, and the Cockney Rejects, and few people would be the wiser. It’s leagues better than that last Business record that Epitaph put out. At least these guys know there’s a joke involved. First 300 have sixteen-page booklet and silkscreened cover. –Todd (Noma Beach)

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ORPHANS, THE:  
Everybody Loves You When You’re Dead: LP
“Fuck you, I just took a whole shitload of coke,” Wade screamed. Something was muttered from the soundman. “Fuck ‘one more song.’ Two songs. Let’s go!” Typical Orphans fare, right after someone got gored by the bass neck and took a microphone to the top of the head, they played what they wanted, no more, no less. At first, it’s the firestorm that attracted me to the Orphans. Play it fast, mix it up, and I’m usually a sucker for it. The obvious stuff is great; Jenny’s a vixen, equal parts rolling-in-glass punk sweetheart and back-arching public displays of drunken fuckitosity. Wade at bass – I’ve never, ever seen someone simulta- neously unplug from both ends – the guitar and the amp – and then play for a good forty-five seconds before he realized he was unplugged. There is all that on the criminally well recorded Everybody Loves You When You’re Dead. That danger, that people who don’t go out that much, claim to have left punk rock, is here in spades. But then I continued to listen to this LP, and not to get all mystical and shit on you, but there’s a complete other side to the Orphans. If Brandon wasn’t drumming, it’d be mush. If Dann wasn’t guitaring – Wade’s pitbull would still be lunging – but Dan provides the teeth and neck strength for those teeth to really sink in. Just as any half-assed karate movie has the head, they played what they remembered. I shouldn’t have worried. Cribbing notes from prime Avail (it’s earnest and energetic) and Tiltwheel (the light instrumental interlock), they sound pretty fucking good right about now. Recommended for fans of gruff-voiced melodic punk. –Josh (The Support Group)
Converse ink stomps on the inserts, orange vinyl, the works.

–Todd (Unity Squad)

PAIN OF SALVATION: 12:5: CD
I plopped this in and, I shit you not, suddenly... and it's fairies dancing around my living room. I stopped the disc and they disappeared. Intrigued, I started it again and, lo and behold, there they were, prancing and singing and carryin' on. Darnnest thing. I pulled the nearest one aside and they were, prancing and singing again and, lo and behold, there they disappeared. Intrigued, I started it again and, I shit you not, bivouac, bivouac in my home. I plopped this in and, I shit you not, bivouac, bivouac in my home. I plopped this in and, I shit you not, bivouac, bivouac in my home.

–Jimmy Alvarado (Inside Out)

PAINTBOX: Cry of the Sheeps: 7”
This is a pressing that was previously released on CD by HG Fact out of Japan back in 2001. Paintbox are one of the most original and powerful current bands out of Japan. Pignoherooled, they are not. They mix it up and swing their mighty but with their blend of punk and metal, they don’t remember what issue my review of the CD was in, but I definitely have more to add. For starters, the vinyl version that I thought was pressed on red. The collector geek in me is giddy about that! The minus is that it does not include a lyric sheet. Not that there’s only a small percentage of the world’s population reads Japanese besides the Japanese. That includes me, who was raised by immigrant Japanese parents who do not speak English and was forced to attend Japanese school for three years. I spent a month and a half in Japan-glish. When spoken to, I understand certain words as long as the person is speaking slowly. But what you miss out on and I will provide here are the cool English choruses. The title track has the wonderful chorus that goes like this: “Cry of the sheep, fly on the ship.” With all that is sung in Japanese, I really want to know how the chorus plays into the song. Track 2, “Big Ant,” has the chorus that goes “Viva la viva la viva la traversing go, Viva la viva la viva la traversing good!” Is the song really about an ant? The third track, “Booom,” translated into “Alternative Future.” I didn’t know for the longest what the title of the third track was called since it was written in Japanese on the CD version. Another thing you don’t get on the 7” that is on the CD is the song that I have no idea what it’s called. “Viva la viva la viva the Pole and then put together Pulley. I used to know and hang out with a guy named Rorie. This punk band that he played pro baseball. That was an interesting three years of my life a little more interesting. –Jimmy Alvarado (HCNL)

PEPPER: In with the Old: CD
If you yearn for another Sublime related there is another band that is so similar that you might not notice that Sublime is gone.

–Donothedhead (Prank)

PERSISTERS/ THE BLACKS: Split: 7”
Persisters: One lo-fi punk tune and one sludgy instrumental. The Blacks: They manage to do with their reggae song that has their vocals manipulated to sound like Japanese that is a bonus track. It's called since it's written in Japanese, I really want to know what it is. What's it sound like? Imagine the Butthole Surfers as a French one-man band with an overt swamp blues influence. What’s the name of the track? It has its moments.

–Jimmy Alvarado (www.chez.com/lollipopprecords)

PETITE VODO: A Little Big Pig with a Pink Lonely Heart: CD
I went back and figured out this ‘un, one moment praising its inspired brilliance, and the next railing against the self-indulgent crap that it is. What’s it sound like? Imagine the Butthole Surfers as a French one-man band with an overt swamp blues influence. What’s the name of the track? It has its moments.

–Jimmy Alvarado

PIEBALD: All Ears, All Eyes, All the Time: CD
You know, I could say that this record makes “She’s Like the Wind” by Patrick Swayze sound like “Whole Lotta Rosie,” but I don’t think anybody who listens to PiebalD would ever hear “Whole Lotta Rosie.” Thanks for the jewel case.

–Josh (Side One Dummy)

PLOT TO BLOW UP THE EIFFEL TOWER: If You Cut Us We Bleed: CDEP
Skronk rock, strangely reminiscent of a less jazzy Saccharine Trust in a pissers of a mood. Can’t decide whether I thought it was the bee’s knees or not, but it did make the past seven minutes of my life a little more interesting.

–Jimmy Alvarado (Ionik)

POSTHASTE: Untitled: CD
One of those bands that sound interesting enough to pay attention when you hear 'em on the radio but not interesting enough to find out who they are.

–Jimmy Alvarado

PULLEY: Matters: CD
I used to know and hang out with the singer of this EP, when he was singing in Scarred Straight while he was still in high school and before he played pro baseball. That was fifteen years ago or so and I haven’t seen him since. Afterwards, he was in Ten Foot Pole and then put together Pulley.

–Josh (Side One Dummy)
don't have the first Pulley record and haven't seen the band but I do have the rest of the releases. This, being their fifth full-length, shows that they have come a long way from their initial 1996 release. Every new release that comes this way, I hear a comfortable and familiar sound that is always palatable. If you haven't heard them before, they are kindred spirits to Bad Religion, infusing thoughtful lyrics with a melodic backbone. I have nothing bad to say and can always count on this band to provide me with enough energy to not bore me. They always include enough pop overtones to keep my toes tapping.

--Donofthedead (Epitaph)

RADIO BEATS:  
**Blow You Up?**  
Rambunctious Rip Off rock’n’roll. A much better song selection than the split with the Give Ups mentioned elsewhere. S’cuse me while I get the air guitar a twangin’.–Jimmy Alvarado (Big Neck)

RADIO REEPLERS:  
**Shakin’ at the Party: CD**  
One part Weird Lovemakers and one part The Fells should make a better than standard band, right? I don’t know if it’s the water, but San Francisco can really make good players go bad.  
--Wanda Sprag (Dead Beat)

RAINY DAY SAINTS:  
**Saturday’s Haze: CD**  
Excellently executed solo project from the Keystone State (Pennsylvania ought to sue that weak-ass beer with this th’ mountains on the can for character defamation) that makes me touch the doll in the same spots as 20/20, the Jesus & Mary Chain and the one good Pixies album (i.e. the fourth one) did... and i kinda like it, so don’t tell anyone about what happened. Of course, i didn’t really like it when he was touching my Paul Simon unit, but the guitars were always up good’n’loud was rubbing my Paul Simon unit, but the vocals were always up good’n’loud in the mix, so what the fuck did i care? Owing to the stylistic mish-mosh in place here – although the album has a certain beefy uniformity to it, things run the gamut from minor-chord laden ballads to things like “Lookout,” which sorta sound like “Electric” era Cult playing Hollies covers (which is good) (and definitely on the correct side of the Graham Nash timeline) (implying that the side where he leaves the Hollies to be in a band with Neil Young would be the wrong side) (which is right) – a whole hog recommendation would be a bit like passing off Neapolitan ice cream as Strawberry, so i’ll just state for the official ledger that about a third of this record is great, and another third isn’t half bad. Which i guess makes it three-sixths great? I think i’ll listen to “Lookout” again. You can check the math independently. BEST SONG:  
“Lookout”  
**BEST SONG TITLE:**  
“YOU!”  
**FANTASTIC, AMAZING, TRIVIA FACT:** I was flipping through a free issue of Rolling Stone last week and on that little chart in the back where they list the Top Ten in record sales at one random record store somewhere in America each issue, this CD was #10. I still say it’s pretty good, though.–Rev. Norb (Get Hip!)

RAJOITUS: Discography: CD  
If you thought the only thing Scandinavia was good for anymore was black metal and bad ‘70s rock, here’s some mind-blowing, crucial fjordcore madness here in the classic mold of bands like Mob 47 and Protes Bengt that’ll slap that notion right outta your head. A total of forty-one tracks, from three 7-inchers and songs spanning the years 1995-’98, are here for your aural enjoyment and the displeasure of all the fake-ass punker wannabes at your school. Best news of all is that this band is apparently still going strong. You can bet your sweet patootie this is recommended. –Jimmy Alvarado (Hardcore Holocaust)

RAMBLER 454:  
**No Name Cafe: CD**  
I didn’t like this kind of stuff when it was put out by Johnny Cougar. Or John Cougar Mellencamp for that matter.  
--Megan (Readyfiredam)

RESIDUALS, THE:  
**Atom Bomb: 7” EP**  
On the back they’re wearin’ TSOL and Black Flag shirts, but their reliance on the same Discharge-worshippin’ cloneisms you get from so many spiky-headed punker bands these days belies considerably less creative spark and originality than their T-shirt heroes.  
--Jimmy Alvarado (Pair O Docs)

RIPPERS, THE:  
**Pudor Cronica: 7”**  
Side one is a raucous rock anthem and side two is a rippin’ version of ”I Wanna Be Your Dog,” both of which are sung in what sounds like Portuguese, but might be a Spanish dialect I don’t recognize. If you’re smart enough to already own their No More CD, this compliments it nicely. –Jimmy Alvarado (Ripper)

RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS/THROW RAG: A Tribute to the Big Boys: 7”  
To be completely honest, I’m a huge fan of almost everyone involved in this. I realize this 7” is a ripoff to their respective works, which I’d suggest you seek out if you haven’t head yet. The Riverboat Gamblers cover “Fun, Fun, Fun,” and, in comparison to Something to Crow About (which former Big Boy, current Now Time Delegation-er Tim Kerr helped out on), their cover isn’t as Fourth of July in your gut the way they did. The vocals are a tad muddled, and the energy isn’t as crackling. A very good cover, just not quite up to the A+ bar I’ve set for the Gamblers. Throw Rag: Biscuit’s chesty wail is replaced by more of a twang and a dented country/sailor feel, which is right up Throw Rag’s crooked alley. They set a controlled fire through “Red/Green” with chops to spare. The silk-screened cover art of three-headed skeletons by Lindsey Kuhn sweetens the deal. Not essential, but a very cool artifact that I’m glad I got, nonetheless. –Todd (Dateshake)

ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS: Rocket Redux: CD  
Considering there’s precious little info here, I have no idea if this was recorded, although my guess would be sometime during their recent spate of reunion gigs. No matter, as it’s just peachy to finally have a clear, coherent document of these guys finally available, and to hear David Thomas’ inimitable warble on classics like “Sonic Reducer,” “What Love Is,” “Ain’t It Fun,” “30 Seconds Over Tokyo,” and “Final Solution” is more than worth the price of admission. What may be lacking in rawness and youthful energy they more than make up for with hard swagger, as evidenced in a seriously rockin’ “Never Gonna Kill Myself Again.” Put...
more succinctly, I’m fuggin’ stoked I own a copy of this. –Jimmy Alvarado (Smog Veil)

RODRIGUEZ: Self-titled: CD
Overdriven distorto-trash punk here that manages to hit all the right buttons. Lowery’s a retard if he doesn’t hunt these kids down and give them anything they want to record for him, ‘cause if any band screamed “Rip Off Fodder,” these guys do. Recommended, and haw. –Jimmy Alvarado (Swindlebra)

SAINT WILLY: Meat: CD
Rare is it when a release renders me completely speechless. This, my friends, is just such a release and it managed to do so with the first two tracks alone. The songs in question, “All of God’s Creatures Are Delicious with Beer” and the ode to bacon “You Picked A Swine Time to Eat Me and Squal”, are just so goddamned WRONG in these hyper-sensitive, post-PC times, where even thinking about a ham sandwich relegates you to the lower echelons of inter-dickdom. Saint Willy and his cohorts are headed straight to H-E- of ünter-dickdom. S’aint Willy and his cohort’s been around for ten years and I can’t quite pin down who the singer sounds like other than the singer for Lucero. It’s that acoustic rock with a folk influence rather than folk rock. Madeline: The warbles of Joan Baez meets the cadence of Tori Amos. I’m ashamed I can compare anything to them. –Megan (Hill Billy Stew)

SBV FEELIN’ FINE: Split: 7”
SBV: Imagine Uniform Choice minus the straight edge pose and sped way the hell up. Better than I expected, actually. Feelin’ Fine: Grunt, grunt, bleat, grunt, bleat, yawn, yawn, yawn. –Jimmy Alvarado (www.retardedrecords.com)

SCRAWL, LE: Eager to Please: CDEP
I had the pleasure of experiencing this band in a live setting here in jolly old LA recently. I can’t believe this band from Germany is playing in LA! They have been around for ten years and I believe they are stepping on these shores for the first time. I’m wasn’t going to miss it for the world! It’s truly amazing to see a band play with so much precision and pull off what is produced in a studio. I purposely waited until after the gig to listen to this CD. I wanted to be charged when I got to preview the new songs. I was not disappointed. Thirteen songs of Cookie Monster-induced grindcore mixed with acid jazz, keyboard, sax, and sheerly ingenious song structures. Who knows what the hell these guys actually sing about? The singer could be mumbling about how he got his cat to toss his salad. No one would know. But the songs are infectious and truly outside of nursery rhymes. I grin like a flannel man after a good round of expelling fumes of unknown digestive nature while listening to their music. I highly recommend this band when you need to be challenged or want to see what a commercial band like System of a Down would sound like if they took their weirdness to a level of LSD-induced Disney reality. I do have to make my whiny cry, though. Why did I have to get a CD-R instead of the real thing? The label sent the real packaging. –Donofthedead (Life is Abuse)

SEX POSITIONS: Self-titled: CD
Okay, so I hate damn near everything I hear these days. So I hate on pretty much everything with equal (and, I might add, well deserved and honestly earned) malice and loathing. So I’d as soon flay most bands as listen to even one song on their shitty fucking records. So what? There are some albums that are so gleefully destructive that I forget that I hate almost everything and, for my money, Deathwish is well on its way to being my favorite label of the year. I’ll spare you the bullshit about saving hardcore and punk from itself, but in 2004, Deathwish seems to be bringing Hostage bands. This record would come in everything they do. –Puckett (Deathwish)

SHOCKWAVE: The Ultimate Doom: CD
Growly-voiced, tough guy eunuch metal. –Jimmy Alvarado (Triple Crown)

SHOWOFFS, THE: Shocker: 7”
The Showoffs have a lot in common with bands I really like. This is fast and raw and fucked up enough to sound like it could’ve been on the legendary Beach Blvd. comp. These songs have a lot to do with the early Crowd songs, but also sound a lot like the Bodies and other Hostage bands. This record would come heavily recommended, but the lyrics are just too repetitive. Shocker is one of those records that you listen to and you can guess the names of all the songs on the first listen because “Psycho Girl” goes, “She’s a psycho girl/ psycho girl/ (repeat indefinitely)” and “Pyromaniac” goes “Pyromaniac/ pyro-
maniac/ pyromaniac (repeat indefinitely).” There’s also a naked lady on the cover, too. I just thought that would be a good thing to mention. –Sean (Noma Beach)

SIDEKICK: So Far Away: CD

Not exciting. Not too bad. When you think of SoCal punk in its latest incarnation, this is what it would sound like. Very palatable with a melodic surf background. They are in and of themselves naturally inter- 
tive Siamese twins out of bands that are too similar. Too many splits attempt to make seduc- 
tive SoCal punk out of bands that are just too damn similar to make it really interesting. Admittedly, Siamese twins are in and of themselves naturally inter- 
estive. There are definitely rem-
bers and sweat and shake new wave, all 
sound from each other. But I digress. If it’s a grade-A hardcore onslaught you’re looking to punish your ears with, Skit System is one of the goods. –Jimmy Alvarado (Havoc)

SMACKMADAM: Self-titled: 7"

The little propaganda sheet that came with this record compares Smackmadam to a “head-on collision between Elastica and the Supersuckers. I guess I can kind of see that, but to my waxy ears they sound more like a cross between the Fat Boys and a low-cab version of the Midnight Evils. Either way, this is the type of gubby, white trash, snoozing race-car rawk that seems to irk the orthodox ‘77- 
style punk constituency to no end these days. For me, well, it makes me want to drink beer naked in the farmland with a farmer tape for all the neighborhood to see. And that’s a good thing. –Aphid Peewit (Fonzie Town)

SMOGTOWN: All Wiped Out: CD

The first couple of times I listened to this, my basic reaction was, yes, this is Smogtown. Nothing new. Nothing unexpected. It rocks hard enough to knock my dick in the dirt, but I expect- ed that. Then something happened the third time through. As the third, seventeen songs are surfacing. Supposedly, they played a big show down in southern Orange County in March. Who knows if they’ll keep it together. Who knows if this is one last, great slab of music from Smogtown or if there’s more to come. Either way, it’s another fine, fine CD. –Sean (TKO)

SMUT PEDDLERS: Exit Plan: 7"

In the spirit of full disclosure, Julia, the drummer for the Smut Peddlers, helps us out with making sure our covers are correctly prepared for print, so there may be an illegal advantage. This isn’t a band of the fancy looking Plan-It-X packag- ing I’ve seen. It’s campy in that way that 
me, but it did about three years too late. The Sissies broke up about two years ago. This is their discography, 
years ago. This is their discography,

"I could very well see this band 
you think of SoCal punk in its latest 
wick a midriff over is that his vocals seem more intentionally tat- tered and roughed-up on this 7” than be- fore. But his lyrics are a fascinating glimpse into the inner workings of a frontman with bad balance. If you ever want to know how paranoid, how lonely, how else of ways of life in a beach culture, and an obsession with skating pools works out in punk songs, look no further. Although I really liked Roger Jamieson’s guitar work when he was in the band, the addition of Sean and Scott, both at guitar, really ratchets up the melodies and energy. Also, most secretly, behind all the obvious stuff, Julia’s drumming cement these three songs, like a per- fectly poured and groomed transition in a deep bowl, giving them the perfect, perfectly poured and groomed transition in 
recorded, engineered, and produced by X’s Billy Zoom. Turns up. –Todd (Ransom)

SNGS, THE: Self-titled: CD

Another UK three-piece with a jones for ‘60s garage rock. While there may be zillions of bands doing this these days, for me, well, it makes me want to drink beer naked in the farmland with a farmer tape for all the neighborhood to see. And that’s a good thing. –Aphid Peewit (Fonzie Town)

SO FOX: Self-titled: 7"

It was a shitty time when the Selby 

wasn’t the case, as this whole album pretty much rules. It’s a lot different from the original Sultans, Shipwrecked: CD

The sadistic bastard responsible for it. –Jimmy Alvarado (World Eater)

TALK, THE: It’s Like Magic in Reverse: CD

Punky power pop in a Vapors vein. I’m 

wondering if they were indeed running out of ideas. Apparently, that’s the case in point. You will have no trouble telling the two groups on this split apart. 

I think the Big Obelisk is really a case in point. You will have no trouble telling the two groups on this split apart. 

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SULTANS, THE: Shipwrecked: CD

These guys are from the east coast and play a combination of hardcore and punk. Out of the four songs, three of them are unabashedly hardcore and one is mid- paced. They are all good. The lyrics are about perseverance and sticking things out and doing what you want regardless of what others think. These guys are scheduled to tour the east coast this spring and the west coast in late summer. So if they are coming to your area, check them out. –Mike Beer (ENS)

STREET TRASH: Self-titled: 12” EP

I haven’t a clue who they are or where they come from, but this is by far the funnest record I’ve heard in a while. Amped up hardcore is the order of the day here, with lyrics covering incest, child abuse, drug abuse, isolation and other very real problems. This isn’t some ‘60s garage band that helped me to feel a little bit more at home. Spitting Teeth, on the other hand, is more like castoffs from a RFTC album. No 

in the sound. A very good, very wel- 

amongst those who could carry the torch. Uh, more like Chip’s chaotic bass. Tim’s drum 

hot snarky, cool, angry, and oddly insightful. The only thing a veteran Smut Peddlers fan 

’d want that by itself), while Wes’ lyrics seem like picking scabs off self-inflicted knife wounds. However, I wouldn’t expect anything too challenging from the people involved with this album. –Puckett (Deathwish)

SPLITTING TEETH: 12-GO! CREW

Fear of a Mossel Planet: split 7”

Too many splits attempt to make seduc- 

tive SoCal punk out of bands that are 

just too damn similar to make it really interesting. Admittedly, Siamese twins are in and of themselves naturally inter- 
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TAMION 12 INCH: Let’s Suffer: CD

Listening to Tamion 12 Inch’s latest full-length, Let’s Suffer, is like being
THOUGHT RIOT: Sketches of the Unlying Will: CD

Another sophomore release to review. This band has progressed smoothly to this release. The song writing and musicalship is much stronger. This is much more engaging and exciting than previous release. Equal parts Anti-Flag, Rise Against, and AFI is what comes to mind while I listen. Social/political lyrics are a continuous strength that would be the stronger use of choral background vocals and using more subtle ambient guitar notes to electrify their songs. I can’t wait to see what the next time the band comes to town to play a show. –Donofbedhead (A-F)

THREATENING VERSE: Time for War: 7” EI

I remember seeing these guys a few years back and not thinking much about them. Now that they’re just your average backyard hardcore band providing the perfect music to get drunk by. Well, that assessment’s changed thanks to this. Smokin’! These sounds are steeped in the hardcore sounds found east of the LA river, fast and furious with no bullshit delivery. This sounds like it could’ve easily come out in the mid-80s, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Messrs. Jake Smith (TV git-twasher and former Crucifix punk hero) and Mike Vallejo (ex-Circle Jerks, and current Decay baby magnet), who do a great job with the producing and engineering, respectively. and inside, it’s all rubber bands of elast, a hacksaw, there’s a hard shell to crack, louder, faster moving, and mixed up. Like a golf ball in a vice, split open with a hacksaw, there’s a hard shell to crack, and inside, it’s all rubber bands of elastic bass lines and snapping guitars and drum punishment that’ll put an eye out if you’re not careful. It is obvious that bands like this constitute good hardcore. To the contrary, it is obvious that bands like this have a firm grasp and respect for the past and they allow it to influence, rather than dominate, their present musical sheets. From the title track, which is basically a rehash band. Sure, all requisite hardcore identifiers are met with ease, meaning the songs are short, fast, and the boys play ‘em like they are royally pissed, but there’s enough original spark and more, importantly, a sense that their efforts are genuine in order to allow them to stand tall over the teeming masses of generic cactus heads and nouveau punk heroes. It is wholly gratifying to hear others of like mind who revere rather than disparage the music. I recommend that you buy a copy of this and indulge in a little smashbag while it blares in the background. –Jimmy Alvarado (Havoc)

TEXAS THIEVES: Forest Vacation: CD

Mid-to-gallop-tempo punk here, mining the old OC stuff as well as Northern Cali skater punk sound of bands like the Faction, etc. –Jimmy Alvarado

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VARIous ARTISTS: Hardcore from the East Coast CD
A collection of tunes from three old Connecticut hardcore bands. Target Artists:
VARIOUS ARTISTS: –Jimmy Alvarado (Coldsweat)

old enough to remember when all this stuff here is good, but when they thrash
ways, you get seven blasts of obnoxious noise and songs that are as easy to like and
understand. It harkens back to an era that most of the tracks here have been previously released, but the flow from tune to tune is good, with little dead air between tracks to harsh your
Next up is the Fingers from New Haven, who I've had a soft spot for since the early '80s. –Jimmy Alvarado

Super Speedway

VARIous ARTISTS: Humans Most Dic Core: CD
Rough, loud, and not-very-rare tracks by the likes of Ill Repute, Minor Threat, Sex Pistols, Anti-Heroes, COC, Circle Jerks, Attitude Adjustment, Bob Marley, Temple Pilots, Avail and others. There's a nice cross section of sounds here, but unless you've just fallen off the turnip wagon, you're gonna be hard pressed to find anything here you haven't heard before. I wonder how long it'll take before the guy doing this is slapped with a "cease and desist" order. –Jimmy Alvarado

(Bastard Radio)

VARIous ARTISTS: Me and My Six-Stings Club: One Man Band Compilation/ Contest: 10" with 7"
Rotechnologies: "One Man Band! Encyclopedia" defines a one-man band by what it is not, i.e. "the only solo musicians that aren't even considered as One Man Bands are acoustic guitar-wielding singer-songwriters..." (a singer-songwriter is the antithesis of the most inventive, unique spirit, a self-parody-celebration that is a classic One Man Band! If you have any further questions, it will be easy for you to pick up this 10" with a 7" accompaniment. Rockin' Bones have put together a well-placed display of this broad and diverse method. The comp features the likes of Sexon Ming (Billy Childish collaborator), Hasil Adkins (the greatest), Lightning Beatinman, and a bunch of other guys I've never heard of that makes it all the better. All different. All worth your attention. –BD Williams

(Rockin' Bones)

VARIous ARTISTS: Punched Drunk V: CD
This is the fifth in this series of Punched Drunk comp CDs. As always, they feature a great mix of what TKO has to offer. This time around you get twenty-eight songs by twenty-eight bands! Check out some of the tracks by Boils, Adolp & the Piss Artists, the Wretched Ones, Antiseen, Limecell, Bonerusher, the US Bombs, plus more. I shouldn't have to tell you that I'm known for putting out some high quality street punk, so this comp is not going to disappoint! As a bonus, it's only $5! –Mike Beer (TKO)

VARIous ARTISTS: The War on Terrorism: 7" EP
There are four tracks on this one: Manic Suicide, Mumbled, The Gibbons, and Megan Kott, respectively. While I can't say I'm particularly enthused by the shades of pop-punk that King Can, etc. are offering, the TKO trio extends their streak, a dubious accomplishment at best. It's more boring guitar rock, which not only sounds dated now but sucked when it was in vogue the first time. In this case, the old adage of dancing with the one who brought you doesn't hold true; this record is some of the best music yet presented for ditching your date in favor of someone better at the hoedown. –Puckett (Learning Curve)

Vee Dee: Fuckin' CD
Vee Dee mix some of the lighter-hearted, dark-stained pop overtones of early Replacements, the crunch of early 80s, mid-tempo middle America punk - the kind of thing that sounds like they just discovered this shit when they speed up, I hear clips of early Freeze guitar. When they slow down, out comes a "Bloodstain"-era Agent Orange surf/secret agent man guitar, counter pointed by a healthy Cramps-like addiction to zombies and vampires. You'll find a lot of cool stuff here. –Maddy (Worm Quartet)

World Burns to Death: The Sucking of the Missile Cock: CD
Some straight-up peace punk/pacifist type stuff here. This band is my favorite, akin to a bastard child of Crucifix and some fjord-dwelling thrash unit circa 1984. The lyric sheet was a pleasant surprise, with obvi- ous references to the gay, predominantly male nature of the music. None of the songs are as easy to like and understand. It harkens back to an era when punk's best art was xeroxed flyers stapled to telephone poles. –Tod (Criminal IQ)

VeiNS: THE: Hollywoodvill: CD
I hate wimpy rock. the solution? More Thin Lizzy. –Wanda Sprag (Garage-Pop)

Vindictives: THE: Unplugged: CD
Okay, this is either a) one of the funniest jokes ever, b) one of the worst albums ever, or c) both! Vindictives songs performed by the band, with pan flutes, chimes, xylophones, violins, and acoustic guitars! Vocals sung in a plainspoken manner. The comp features hearing acoustic versions of "I'm in Trouble Now" and "Ugly America!" If you could describe a punk rock band (one of my favorite bands of all time!), this will mean nothing to you. But for the rest of you, I must say: Holy Crap! Love these guys. If there were a cereal, it'd be Urkel O's. You just gotta HOPE it's a joke! Insane! –Maddy (Teat Productions)

Political garage rock, kind of like a lowered共 low-speed version of a Pink Floyd show, which I'm sure you'd like. –Wanda Sprag

Voodoo Organist: The Return of CD
The name says it all: just a guy and his organ belting out odes to pithforks and men and snakes in the eyes. Great for your next summer roadtrip –Jimmy Alvarado (www.deadteenagerrecords.com)

We invented Tornadoes: Self-titled: CD
I only care about ex-members of which bands got together because I didn't like any of their previous groups (Thin Lizzy, Vee Dee, etc.). This LP that The Voodoo Organist has produced for this actSmall fan, I'm not saying it. –Josh (Alien Snatch)

White Liar, THE: Pharmacia: CD
This had the look of radio pop punk, but it's by chance a very nice folk Arcadia with echo/reverb/vocals. Woo hoo! –Megan (24 Carrot)

World Burns to Death: The Sucking of the Missile Cock: CD
Some straight-up peace punk/pacifist type stuff here. This band is my favorite, akin to a bastard child of Crucifix and some fjord-dwelling thrash unit circa 1984. The lyric sheet was a pleasant surprise, with obvious references to the gay, predominantly male nature of the music. None of the songs are as easy to like and understand. It harkens back to an era when punk's best art was xeroxed flyers stapled to telephone poles. –Tod (Criminal IQ)

ZERO DOWN: Pound for Pound: CD
The hardcore-style boxing photo on the cover fooled me, like it may end up fooling a lot of people. I think this is what it would sound like if the Stone Temple Pilots and their record company found this band, got together and figured out a way of making the band even more bland than they already are. Sorry, but pound for pound, none of this is bad enough to be funny. If anything, it's just a little sad. If this were a cereal, it'd be 5'0. Why revive something that could have sounded so good as it was? (And by the way, what's up with chang- ing the name to Smorz?) –Maddy (Trend is Dead!)
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, #26, $4 or 2.77 euros, 8 ½ x 11, offset, glossy cover, 70 pgs.

This zine, written mostly in German (which, unfortunately, means I can’t read most of it), is mostly focused on older punk bands – interviews with the Undertones, Agent Orange, Channel 3, etc. There’s a pretty decent Turbonegro interview in English, and a ton of reviews and columns in German. I’d say this most resembles a shorter, German, rock-and-roll-based Big Takeover. Am I making any sense? Nein! Maddy (Ralf Hundeck, Grenzweg 66, 47877 Willich, Germany)

AD INFINITUM, #7, free, 8 ½ x 11, newsprint, 47 pgs.

So, I keep up-to-date on right-wing politics, I listen to Rush, O’Reilly, Hannity, et. al. I’m not one of those people who just dismisses all right-wingers as being wrong even though I disagree with them. Anyway, I’m guessing that this zine fits in with the whole conservative punk movement (i.e. “No punks are conservative. We’re conservative, and since no one else is, that makes us punk.”). This zine contains rants on why affirmative action is wrong, why Bush is right, and why political correctness is harming our society. You get the idea. According to one article, “If you assume minorities are all in need to [the] majority, you’re as racist as traditional racists who assume whites are naturally superior.” The author’s idea – that we should not assume blacks need additional help because they are poor – is ridiculous. Most blacks are poorer than most whites. The income gap between whites and blacks has not narrowed significantly since the ’60s. (There’s a great study about this by United for a Fair Economy released this past MLK day.) There’s little doubt here and you are bound to that’ll help stave off a bout of diarrhea. Or a case of the cheap beer shits. —Greg Barbera (Cash Flagg, 258 Main St., Apt. 3, Danbury, CT 06810; cashflagg13@hotmail.com)

CASH FLAGG, #2, 8 ½ x 11, xeroxed, stapled

Pretty much a one-man show of a zine for movie go’ers. Lots of movie reviews. The editor should spend less money buying tickets to big budget movies and more on content, layout and design. Appealing in an old school, pre-Film Threat kind of way, but far too mainstream in its coverage (Matrix, Willard, Cabin Fever) but [editor] Brian Marshall’s reviews are funny as hell. Movies are rated on a Don Knotts scale of 1 - 5 (five Don Knotts heads being the best). Add excessive use of the word “turd” throughout and you get a zine that’ll help stave off a bout of diarrhea. Or a case of the cheap beer shits. —Greg Barbera (Cash Flagg, 258 Main St., Apt. 3, Danbury, CT 06810; cashflagg13@hotmail.com)

CHAIRMEN OF THE BORED, #17 & 18, 8 ½ x 11, xeroxed, 20-26 pgs.

A prison zine made by incarcerated punk rockers. Lots of stories about the establishment, the sad state of television, getting drunk on fermented fruit, “How-I-got-to-where-I-am” pieces and more nihilism than a bed of nails. —Maddy (PO Box 3950, San Diego, CA 92175)

CLAMOR, #25, $4.50, 8 ½ x 11, glossy, 68 pgs.

This theme of this issue is “Death,” which is always cheerful. There are articles that are literally about death: layout and design. Appealing in an old school, pre-Film Threat kind of way, but far too mainstream in its coverage (Matrix, Willard, Cabin Fever) but [editor] Brian Marshall’s reviews are funny as hell. Movies are rated on a Don Knotts scale of 1 - 5 (five Don Knotts heads being the best). Add excessive use of the word “turd” throughout and you get a zine that’ll help stave off a bout of diarrhea. Or a case of the cheap beer shits. —Greg Barbera (Cash Flagg, 258 Main St., Apt. 3, Danbury, CT 06810; cashflagg13@hotmail.com)

DRUNKEN MASTER, #7, $5, 8 ½ x 11, 48 pgs.

Awesome. The artwork in this zine is really impressive, really rough and scratchy, but really intricate and detailed at the same time. I tend to like bands for that same reason, so it would kind of make sense that I would like that style applied to art. There’s also a lot of really stark contrast, to the point where some of the drawings could almost pass for stencil art if they weren’t so detailed. The rest of the zine has some short interviews with the Immortal Lee Louis, the Slanderin, and a couple of cool pictures of the Japanese band Electric Eel Shock, but that stuff is just icing on the cake. I’d recommend this on the strength of the artwork alone. —Josh (knakazawa@earthlink.net)

GENETIC DISORDER #17, $3, 9 x 6, newsprint with glossy cover, 80 pgs.

Punk rock! The cover of the zine is just icing on the cake after drawing a girl holding two guns. And the zine comes with 3-D glasses! So cool! Plus, there’s a special feature on the store where the Menendez brothers bought their 12-gauge shotguns, a reprinted pamphlet apparently written as a guide for parents concerned about dangerous youth subcultures (divided into mods, new wave, new romanticics, punks, soul, heavy metalists, rockers,stoners and black metalists, and containing sentences like “The more they are under the influence of the Black Arts (Satanism), the more difficult they become to communicate with.”) and a filled-in questionnaire about how to tell if you have a drinking problem. (“Question: Have you tried switching brands or drinks, or following different plans to control your drinking? Answer: As a matter of fact, I recently switched from Guinness to Miller High Life, but it was for strictly financial reasons.”)”

GREEN ANARCHY, #4, free to prisoners, 8 x 10 ½, glossy cover, bound, newsprint (recycled I hope?)

More thought provoking than the rest the of anarchists literature I received from Razorcake HQ this month, Green Anarchy offers up the usual lot of book reviews, support systems info (where like-minded individuals can find more of the same), a handful of columns from international perspectives (“Rock Versus Rifle” and “Within the Dying Sun” address Palestine and Iraq respectively), an interview with political activist Chellis Glendinning (“her friends call her
HEY WHAT’S UP?, #1 & 2, $1, 5 ½ x 8 ½, photocopied
Looking at this, I thought it was done by the same merry pranksters that brought the world The Millenium Falcon Comic Book and The Brown Mouth, but alas, this is markedly inferior to such zines as those. The crude art just looks like really bad drawings instead of really funny bad drawings, and the stories just seem like they were thrown together at the last minute without bothering to even try and make sense. There’s also a whole lot of blank space on every page. Not recommended. –Josh (T. Gallagher, 4 Legend Ct., Cincinnati, OH 45244)

INCENDIARY WORDS, $1, Vol. IV, #21, 8 ½ x 11, copies, 9 pgs.
This is a very DIY newsletter about professional soccer. It mostly focuses around the Chicago Fire, the team that has up-and-coming US national players like DeMarcus Beasley, Chris Armas, and Ante Razov. Now that there’s no longer a Tampa Bay Mutiny in the MLS (and I therefore no longer have a favorite team), I like the Chicago Fire as much as any other team. I get the feeling that this is actually the print version of an email newsletter that you can sign up to for free. They cover things like the new Chicago Fire stadium, what’s going on in the Major Indoor Soccer League, what happens when Fire players go to Europe, and there are schedules of televised major international matches (which would be helpful if I had cable or got more than two channels on my TV). I’m not sure why they sent it to Razorcake, but, as you can probably guess, I really like soccer and I appreciate this little newsletter. –Sean (Steve “Pudgy” De Rose, 4821 W. Fletcher St. #2, Chicago, IL 60641)

LIBRARY BONNET #6, $2.00, 5 ½ x 8 ½, photocopied, 32 pgs.
Okay, you caught me. I’m a nerd. I love books, and I love libraries. So, when I saw this come in I grabbed it. Library Bonnet is put together by Tommy and Julie, who both work in libraries. This is not likely to be in my local branch anytime soon, with the slogan, “Now packed with more LIBRARY in the butt and up your ass!” emblazoned across the front cover. They combine stories from their experiences both in and out of the library, interviews, short fiction, lists, some great cut-and-paste art, cartoons and comics, and package it all up in a lavender cover with stick-ers. Tommy Kovac also does the comics Stitch and Skelebunnies, published by Slave Labor Graphics. (Skelebunnies happens to be my favorite comic of the past five years.) Both Tommy and Julie seem to use this as a space to vent some frustrations towards their co-workers, people in the library, and life in general, which, in lesser zines, can come off as a depressing bitch-fest. Library Bonnet has a way about it that makes it funny instead of whiny and those comments that could seem catty always feel well deserved. Within minutes of finishing this issue, I ordered their whole back catalog. –Megan (Library Bonnet, 1315-I N. Tustin #259, Orange, CA 92867)

MICRO-FILM, #6, $4, 8 ½ x 11, glossy, 56 pgs.
Finally, the long awaited issue of Micro-Film. I’ve read each issue of this zine, cover to cover, right from the issue #1. In a lot of ways, Micro-Film is exactly what a magazine should be: a publication that knows its field inside and out, yet is still enthusiastic enough about it to make even the casual reader excited. This issue has more features on films I’ve never heard of, like Kwik Stop, I Am Trying to Break Your Heart (a Wilco documentary), The Independent, and a few others. I have to admit that, after reading about them, I now want to see all of the movies. Yes, even the Wilco documentary. It sounds interesting enough to make it worth having to sit through an hour and a half of indie rock. There’s a pretty lengthy criticism of Bowling for Columbine that doesn’t really work as an expose of the factual manipulations in the film (most of the author’s points boil down to someone saying Michael Moore is lying and Michael Moore saying he’s not and not enough evidence for the reader to judge one way or another), but it does work as an intelligent kid on
the verge of understanding that there’s a difference between facts and the truth. Beyond the features, there’s the always-entertaining editorial by Jason Pankoke, solid film reviews, and some practical independent-filmmaking advice. –Sean (Micro-Film, PO Box 45, Champaign, IL 61824)

MY FAT IRISH ASS!, No. -5, $2, 8 ½ x 11, xeroxed, stapled, 38 pgs. You can always find some sort of saving grace with zines, and with My Fat Irish Ass it comes in the form of Handwritten Notes to the Menace and Family Circus comics – here mocked up with phony text. D.C. 20035)

‘Looking a lot like the bastard kid and that marriage/motherhood doesn’t equal love – this magazine has gotten better since the last issue I saw/reviewed. Really, the only downside to this issue of No. 13 is the reprinted interview with The Freeze from MaximumRock’n’Roll circa 1984. I thought Ume Reader and Reader’s Digest had cornered the market on reviewing content to make yer own magazine. That aside, it’s a nice blast from the past – and true to the publication’s mission – to carry on the torch for NE hardcore. Alert! No. 13 claims it will branch out to national/international acts in upcoming issues. Good news? Bad news? The jury is still deliberating... but while you’re waiting, be sure and check out FNS’s Boston flyers issue and their recently published collection of tour diaries titled In the Van, featuring road stories from Blanks 77, The Virus, Crimson Ghosts and more. As if that isn’t enough, Pat the FNS guy, has also released a 7-inch by his band The Struggle. When does this guy sleep? –Greg Barbera (PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130; fn5_publishing@msn.com)

REV. RICH MACKIN’S BOOK OF LETTERS, #18, $3, 8 x 5 ½, xeroxed, 38 pgs. You! Another Book of Letters! How many times have I wished that I had this idea of thought of this issue? Of course, you’d expect that Rich will get a good review here. He’s a Razorcake columnist, after all. But I remember the first time I ever saw Rich, long before Razorcake existed. It was in a small, crowded room in Milwaukee. People were getting drunk, yelling, and Rich was standing on a small stage reading his letters to Lever 2000, asking, “Can you name all the ‘2000 Parts’ of the body?” I walked away thinking Rich was not only hilarious, he also was a born performer. Many years later, he’s still keeping at it. This issue includes a letter to a data company asking why the hold music says the company “delivers the promise of technology.” Rich writes, “I find it odd that you don’t seem concerned about actually delivering technology, merely the promise of it. The issue for me is that promises are often broken. If you don’t believe me, ask the Germans in American.” Also: letters to McDonald’s asking if Ronald McDonald is “some sort of Michael Jackson-like creature,” why Red Baron pizza’s namesake is a German Flying Ace (“What’s next, Hitler brand sausage? Saddam Hussein egg rolls? Ayatollah Khomeni brand French bread pizza?”), and more! Good! –Maddy (Rich Mackin, PO Box 1462, Portland, OR 97293-0642)

SHREDDING PAPER, #17, $2.95, 8 ½ x 11, glossy cover, newsprint inside Not much has changed since last issue – Shredding Paper is still all about disseminating the glutinous mountain of new releases. But the cover, with its illustration comparing Gov. Arnold to Frankensteen, and Mel C.’s column hint that there may be a home in the future for investigative journalism besides endless CD reviews. And indeed this issue does include a piece by Jason Bracelin taking on the age-old question of “to download or not to download.” The answer? I fall on Mel C.’s side of things andMel C.’s column hint that there may be a home in the future for investigative journalism besides endless CD reviews.
that, deep down, she’s a skin and should hang out with the zine editor. A promise to never be soft and wear sweatpants outside. An open solicitation to me to engage in a shirtless fight in Minneapolis. (Sure, why not.) An ode to his knife: “Knife/ I am sorry I left you at home. Knife/I am sorry you didn’t get to party.” A poem titled “Everyday Should Start with Painness.” Such astute comments as, “As a parent/ it pisses me off/ that kids books/ are weak/ my son doesn’t need/ some fuzzy tiger/ teaching him/ how to be/ a fag.” A tender skinhead rant against immigrants, “except hot girls cuz they should get taken care of. I volunteer me.” All of these elements add up to one of the funniest takes on racist skinhead culture I’ve ever read. Just as great as the first issue. Not for the faint of heart or those who can’t take a fucking joke. My only question to “anonymous”: Toughass, how’d your cursive get so frilly on “The Real Truth About Love”? –Todd (Skin Deep, PO Box 13093, Minneapolis, MN 55414)

SLEEPWALK, Volume 2, #1, 8 ½ x 11, free, newsprint

What do you know, a literary magazine that doesn’t suck. Sleepwalk is a magazine out of Chicago that collects really good stories from area writers. It’s a cool thing to check out if you’re in the mood for some non-pretentious writing that’s easy to relate to. I’d be lying if I said that my favorite part of this wasn’t the story by Joe Meno (who, for all his bravado, failed to beat my high score at Galaga). It’s about trying to find the right song to play for a girl that you want to make out with, a dilemma that I’m sure many guys have gone through at some point (my advice: it’s not going to be “Fix Some Food, Bitch” by the Didjits). The layout is well-designed also, by no less a graphic design luminary than Jon Resh, author of Amped. I know it says free, but make a donation and feel good about yourself. –Josh (Sleepwalkmag@aol.com)

SUGAR NEEDLE #24, $1 plus a stamp, 11 x 4, xeroxed and hand-colored, 14 pgs.

Yay! Of COURSE I’m going to like this! A zine all about candy! Includes reviews of the insane “Junk Mouth Spray and Stain Tongue Stainer,” the bite-size licorice “Snaps,” “Airwaves Spicy Cocktail” gum, and even “Sinfully Delicious Candy Bites” (in flavors like peach cobbler and banana creme pie)! There’s also a short interview with Roxy Epoxy and info on Serbian and Chinese candy! Yes! My only complaint is that, since this is all hand-written, there’s not a lot of writing on each page. More, please! –Maddy (Corina, PO Box 300152, Minneapolis, MN 55403)

THE MATTIE STORIES, $3, 5 ½ x 8 ½, copied, 44 pgs.

This is a short story zine by Canadian writer Jennifer Whiteford, who does the zine Matilda. All four stories are day-in-the-life type stuff about a young woman walking a tightrope between hope and disenfranchisement, with the long Canadian winter looming in the background. The stories are honest and heartfelt. It’s easy to get lost in them. And the writing itself is tighter and more complete than what I’ve come to expect from personal zines. This one comes highly recommended. –Sean (www.matildazine.org)

UGLY PLANET #1, Free, odd sized, glossy cover, bound, 42 pgs.

The best things about the premiere issue of Ugly Planet are the clean, crisp format and the publication’s dedication to covering “diverse” subjects. The story on graphic artist Winston Smith (of Dead Kennedys album cover art fame) is a must-read. Anti-Flag, Ministry, and Antibalas are interesting subjects and lend to decent interviews but Dead Prez, S.T.U.N. and Bitch & Animal dish out average, predictable fare. Very promising first effort. Can’t wait to see this publication kicking ass a year from now... but they still need to work out some kinks. –Greg Barbera (Ugly Planet, PO Box 205, New York, NY 10012, www.uglyplanet.com)

WORLD FAMOUS CRAZY WILD #2, no price given, 8 ½ x 7, xeroxed, 16 pgs.

This issue is all about everything, yes, world famous, crazy and wild in L.A. – including a feature on a burlesque dancing duo, bar recommendations, “Top 5 L.A. Bands” and more. I liked the burlesque dancing article. Let’s hear it for pasties! The rest of this stuff seemed more like something you’d see in a Jane or Sassy-type magazine. Plus, I’ve never been to L.A., but nothing in this issue seemed truly crazy. I wish there had been more ridiculous! –Maddy (wfcw-mag@yahoo.com)
The Best of Intentions: The Avow Anthology
No page numbers, but it looks like it's over 300, by Keith Rosson

First and foremost, Keith Rosson is one of the last great punk rock culture. Keith is a gifted artist, a vehement smoker, a Northwestern night owl, and a guy who has never visited a gym. This book is a collection of the first sixteen issues of Avow zine, which is mostly Keith and a revolving cast of contributors. Although roughly ninety-eight percent of The Best of Intentions is told from the first person, Keith skirts the trap of self-indulgence by mixing in constant self-effacement. I mean, shit, if someone goes into detail about his zits and tells you about his mom, whose response was to laugh at “The Grind” and got caught naked, with boner, he admits final defeat, he continued aligning to his core belief in anarchism. “There is nothing more corrupting than compromise,” he states. “One step in that direction calls for another, makes it necessary and compelling, and soon it swamps you for the force of a rolling snowball becoming a landslide.”

So, there you have it in a nutshell. Anarchism is a beautiful, crushable ideal with a lot of great theories that have yet to be put into practice on any national level. Berkman provides a book, equal parts depressing, enlightening, and full of future hope. Worthy of a close read if anyone every grills you about anarchism or when a political band pleads you to “go read a book.” – Todd (AK Press, 674A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612; www.akpress.org)

Weapons of Mass Instruction, Live by Greg Palast Audio Book CD

In politics, the second most important thing you can have is information. Unfortunately, the number one thing is money, so access to numbers two often proves difficult. It's no surprise that there are no central numbers that can be used to determine how modern politics is. I came across this through his excellent book The Best Democracy Can Buy, which I also highly recommend. The thing that's great about Palast is that he's not much of a theorist. You can't call something a conspiracy theory when he has the documents in his hands, documents that should have been destroyed. Documents that should never have dropped out of the loop. He's the guy with the data, the lists, the evidence. Were Black Floridian voters “scrubbed” off the election lists? Yes. A scan of portions of those lists accompany this CD.

Further on in the book, Berkman goes into great detail of how the Bolsheviks, and later the Communist Party, were able to clothes themselves in anarchist rhetoric in order to hijack the Russian Revolution. Basically, for centuries, the Tsars (think, roughly, kings and queens and their aristocratic cronies) ruled all of Russia. People got pissed, and for one of the first documented times in human history, millions of people rose up and effectively took back their factories and fields, killing the Tsars and ending their rule. The problem was that there were several parties vying for power to fill the vacuum. Berkman posits that the Bolsheviks clothed themselves in many of anarchism’s principles (self-government, self-reliance) then slowly, and on the sly, installed a dictatorship more crushing than the Tsar rule.

It’s here where, for the first time in my life, I realized that anarchism is like a spinning top. It’s weighted with a load of great ideas with just the tip of it scraping a mark on the world. However, with one deft push or interruption — such as Stalin’s iron fist — its course was disrupted and its potential lost to Russia.

Berkman was aware of this, too. Instead of admitting final defeat, he continued aligning to his core belief in anarchism. “There is nothing more corrupting than compromise,” he states. “One step in that direction calls for another, makes it necessary and compelling, and soon it swamps you for the force of a rolling snowball becoming a landslide.”

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The Best of Intentions: The Avow Anthology
No page numbers, but it looks like it’s over 300, by Keith Rosson

First and foremost, Keith Rosson is one of the last great punk rock culture. Keith is a gifted artist, a vehement smoker, a Northwestern night owl, and a guy who has never visited a gym. This book is a collection of the first sixteen issues of Avow zine, which is mostly Keith and a revolving cast of contributors. Although roughly ninety-eight percent of The Best of Intentions is told from the first person, Keith skirts the trap of self-indulgence by mixing in constant self-effacement. I mean, shit, if someone goes into detail about his zits and tells you about his mom, whose response was to laugh at “The Grind” and got caught naked, with boner, he admits final defeat, he continued aligning to his core belief in anarchism. “There is nothing more corrupting than compromise,” he states. “One step in that direction calls for another, makes it necessary and compelling, and soon it swamps you for the force of a rolling snowball becoming a landslide.”

So, there you have it in a nutshell. Anarchism is a beautiful, crushable ideal with a lot of great theories that have yet to be put into practice on any national level. Berkman provides a book, equal parts depressing, enlightening, and full of future hope. Worthy of a close read if anyone ever grills you about anarchism or when a political band pleads you to “go read a book.” – Todd (AK Press, 674A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612; www.akpress.org)

Weapons of Mass Instruction, Live by Greg Palast Audio Book CD

In politics, the second most important thing you can have is information. Unfortunately, the number one thing is money, so access to numbers two often proves difficult. It's no surprise that there are no central numbers that can be used to determine how modern politics is. I came across this through his excellent book The Best Democracy Can Buy, which I also highly recommend. The thing that's great about Palast is that he's not much of a theorist. You can't call something a conspiracy theory when he has the documents in his hands, documents that should have been destroyed. Documents that should never have dropped out of the loop. He's the guy with the data, the lists, the evidence. Were Black Floridian voters “scrubbed” off the election lists? Yes. A scan of portions of those lists accompany this CD.
We Ain’t Got No Car! #7
By Jack Saturn, 251 pgs.

This book was a struggle to finish. I’ve read instructional manuals on hooking up my VCR with more chutzpah, but I wanted to give it time to redeem itself and had to put off reading about anarchism and wrestling to see if Jack could pull some magic off at the end. Nope. In the kindest light, WAGNC! is a treatise on being down. The protagonist is vapor locked in depression, which could be a poignant, sober look a viable, crippling disorder. It’s not. Granted, there is a smattering of well-written sentences, paragraphs, and sections. The best section of the book is where Jack goes to visit one of his dying grandmothers, who had previously been giving him grief about his beard.

There’s a tender exchange where she calls him her “beautiful, beautiful boy.” That passage aside, it’s difficult to recommend this book because it’s, ultimately, whiny, ineffectual, horribly self-absorbed, and woefully delusional. How, at the end, Jack fancies himself as a rugged individualist is laughable.

Right before I picked up WAGNC!, I read A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a fantastic, succinct book that follows the surprise to sunset activity of a man who is in a Siberian concentration camp. The book, although horrifying by the situation of subzero temperatures, watery gruel, and being in prison, is ultimately redemptive. Ivan never complains.

He has to stitch extra bread into his mattress so it won’t get stolen. During the day, he masterfully makes a perfectly level wall to his own prison. In the evening, he’s stoked that it won’t get stolen. The protagonist is vapor locked in depression, which could be a poignant, sober look a viable, crippling disorder. It’s not.

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Playing Right Field: A Jew Grows in Greenwich
by George Tabb, 140 pgs.

When I first started reading George Tabb’s column in Maximum Rocknroll about ten years ago, I thought he was great. He’s a natural storyteller, and compared to the overabundance of lame MRR columnists, Tabb really stood out. To be honest, I picked up MRR back in those days just to read the columns by Tabb, Norb, and Mykel Board. Then MRR kicked Norb out for using the phrase “cadillac of vaginas.” Tabb started re-running his columns, and Mykel Board started sending his columns out in email updates, and MRR became useless to me. Still, I’d check out the occasional issue, just to see what Tabb was writing about. It seemed like every time I looked at his column, it was either something I’d read before or something about his cute little lapdog. Either way, it would burn me out. For the first few years I read Tabb, I really wanted to have all of his columns in one collection. After seeing that he ran the same column sometimes three times in MRR, my desire for a Tabb book waned.

Still, when I saw this book in the review pile, I was a little bit crazed because all critics have Tabb’s still funny as hell and a great storyteller. Reading Playing Right Field is an interesting experience. Even though some of the stories in this book ran as columns, they’re in a different context here. The stories can build on themselves, and you can see a more complete picture of a young George Tabb. All the stories deal with his childhood in Greenwich, Connecticut, where he was raised in the only Jewish family in a very anti-Semitic community. Tabb and his brothers were constantly in fights (and usually losing) and picked on for being Jewish. To top it off, they had an abusive father and stepmother at home. This collection of stories does a good job of showing the complexity of growing up ostracized, tortured, and abused. Tabb handles the subject with dark humor, hopeful moments, and honest brutality. Reading this collection renewed my respect for Tabb as a writer. He has a natural way of grabbing my attention and holding it. Once I started reading this book, I didn’t want to put it down. I literally carried it with me for two days, read it as often as I could – at work, during meals, on the can. Any time I could get a couple of minutes, I stuck my nose back in the book. It’s rare that a writer can grab me like that. I really enjoyed this book.

I do have one big complaint, though. While Tabb seems to be a natural writer, he relies too much on being a natural. For some writers, sounding natural is an agonizingly slow process. It requires writing and re-writing and struggling with phrases to make them sound effortless. With Tabb, he seems to just type it out and not worry about it. This is fine for a column, but in a book, it makes for some uneven reading. The tone fluctuates, he repeats himself, and his writing and phrasing are so likeable and so real that you really come to care about them. Reading this collection, you feel as though you’re right there with Tabb and Bornwell. They’re both young, Black men with a legal name and being in the only Jewish family in a very anti-Semitic community. Tabb and his brothers were constantly in fights (and usually losing) and picked on for being Jewish. To top it off, they had an abusive father and stepmother at home. This collection of stories does a good job of showing the complexity of growing up.

On the Road with The Dropkick Murphys, DVD
Working class classic h-a-r-d. The ultimate DVD for the DM fan – live St Patrick’s Day concert, every single music video, behind the scenes on tour, etc, etc, shot well and sounds great. And they don’t just sing it, they do it: playing a Boston Bruins game and on a strike picket line. –Speedway Randy (Epitaph)

Preparty the Movie, DVD
You had to be there. –Speedway Randy (Cartel)

The Real OC, DVD
Neanderthals videotape pounds of silicone flesh when they would rather be fistig each other. –Speedway Randy (Cartel)

Season of Ash
By Justin Bryant, 212 pgs.
In George Orwell’s essay “Shooting an Elephant,” Orwell says, “a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes.” It’s good to keep this quote in mind when looking at world politics. It always seems so simple from our armchairs. Like, we can look at the Israel/Palestine situation and say, “They should divide the country in half, each take their half, and stay the hell away from each other.” As you get closer, though, the situation gets so complex. Read Joe Sacco’s Palestine and you’ll realize that there are no easy answers. And here, in the spirit of Orwell and Sacco, Justin Bryant has written a beautifully complex novel about South Africa at the time when apartheid ended and Mandela was elected president. The principle characters in the novel are two cousins, Chanda and Bornwell. They’re both young, Black men from the Soweto ghetto. Bornwell has tried to escape the ghetto and politics completely by becoming a game ranger in the northern part of South Africa. Chanda has tried to escape by setting on a barstool in Soweto. As the political climate heats up, both cousins are drawn into the dangers and politics surrounding them. Adding to the difficulty of the situation are David Thamba (a volatile revolutionary) and Alex Stanzis (a White American lost in Soweto). I just don’t want to give away too much about the story, but the four characters becoming wrapped up in each other’s lives, and trouble ensues. Bryant does a good job of keeping the novel tense. The characters of Chanda and Bornwell are so likeable and so real that you really come to care about them, and David will really surprise you in the end. Reading Season of Ash is kind of like going to Busch Gardens when you’re a little kid: you get to go on a vicarious African safari and ride a roller coaster and try to make sense of it all as you clunk your way up to the top of the coaster, then fly off into a wild ride. –Sean (Emperor’s New Clothes, www.encpress.com)