

ISSUE #21 \$4

RAZORCAKE

RIVERBOAT
GAMBLERS

CLOROX
GIRLS

THE
ENDS

CAREER
SUICIDE

all
INDIE
BOOKS



Sean Carswell is trying to kill me. Maybe he doesn't know it. First, it was sun poisoning. According to his version of the story, he was just trying to teach me to surf. We just happened to forget to apply sun block. It was cloudy. I thought, what the heck. I had a full suit on, so only my head, hands, and feet were exposed. My special lady friend, Megan, had just shaved my head.

As I was bobbing in the ocean, trying not to fall off a piece of foam shaped in fiberglass, I got to see some dolphins up real close. Like four feet away. And they were wrestling. I also caught my first-ever wave and rode it for quite a long time. That made me feel really good. It's not a "dude-brah, gnarly" good. Just a feeling of accomplishment and the thought, of yeah, I'd like to do this again and again.

Not to hammer this point too often, but the people who make this magazine aren't rich. I can't think of one of our contributors who isn't blue collar or working class poor. We have no benefactors. The magazine doesn't pay us any sort of salary. Both Sean and I constantly have to find work. So when I stood up on a surfboard and rode a wave in, while hanging out with one of my best friends, that was really cool.

At first I thought the pain in my chest was from wolfing down the burrito after surfing. My second thought was that maybe it was the nachos and some vengeful jalapenos. I couldn't fully catch my breath, even when I went to sleep that night, over ten hours later. My third thought, about five hours later, was that my body was poorly digesting all the sun it had absorbed.

The next morning, my head was sticking to my pillow. I had to peel it slowly from the pillowcase. When I looked in the bathroom mirror, it was pretty alarming. Imagine the tip of a hotdog the size of a human head. Imagine that rounded tip split at the seams and flayed open from over-boiling. That's what my head looked like. A clear yellow liquid oozed from my skull. Super. Over the next several days, my head morphed into an angry patchwork of dry lakebed scabs circumscribed by reddened scars.

I called Sean up sometime during the next week. We talked magazine. Then I asked him if he'd been sunburned too. No. Just a little bit more of a tan, he said.

About a month later, after my head had fully healed, Sean came down to LA. We went to skate before we dropped off copies of Bucky Sinister's new book at the distributor.

Sean's a sneaky bastard. He brought up the existential void. Right in the middle of skating a bowl. See, Nørb mentions it in his column in this issue, though he doesn't use fruity terms like "existential void."

We talked a lot about Nørb's column and how it applies to us. I was thinking about it when I dropped in, carved the deep end, then sketched in a place I'd never sketched before, and smashed into a transition wall. Stunned, I crawled out of the bowl and caught my breath. "I'll admit," I told Sean, "there are times when I wondered why I'm so interested in making magazines when it seems like, as Nørb put it, it 'is merely another specific instance of an ongoingly generic activity.'" That no matter what the activity, no matter how fulfilling and wished for, there's still a large part of us striving for something to fill a blaring, permanent nothingness. Instead of giving up, that's why we continue. And if I think about it all the time, I go crazy. So I skate, learn how to surf, and read.

I dropped in again, a little sore. As I slashed the top of the bowl, my rear trucks hung up, I fell about ten feet, landed awkwardly, and had a hard time standing. Sean slid down and picked up my board as I gingerly pulled myself up.

Ten days later, I learned that I cracked my rib with my own hand. I know it's not his fault. By this time, I hope you know I'm joking about that Sean Carswell dude – and Nørb and all of these Razorcake folks. But they are killing me. By helping me question every victory and every fall.

–Todd

AD DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #22

August 1st, 2004

AD DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #23

October 1st, 2004

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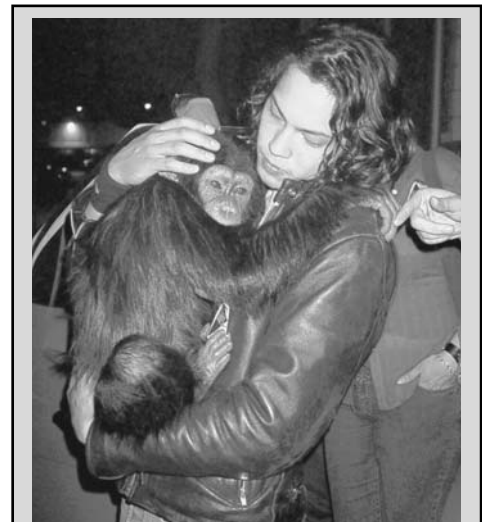
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Freddy, of the Riverboat Gamblers,
and a sleepy friend, April.

RAZORCAKE



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

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Razorcake is bi-monthly. Issues are \$3.00 ppd. in the US. Yearly subscriptions (six issues) are \$15.00 bulk rate or \$21.00 first class mail. Plus you get some free shit. These prices are only valid for people who live in the US and are not in prison. Issues and subs are more for everyone else (because we have to pay more in postage). Write us and we'll give you a price. Prisoners may receive free single issues of Razorcake solely via Left Bank Books, 92 Pike St., Seattle, WA 98101, who have a book-for-prisoners program. Want to distribute Razorcake in the United States? The minimum order is five issues. You have to prepay. For \$7.50, you'll receive five copies of the same issue, sent to you when we do our mailout to all of our distros, big and small. Email <sean@razorcake.com> for all the details.



With each passing minute, the crowd grows in size until it eventually reaches 5,000 protesters. Bikers march alongside church ladies and high school boys in System of Down t-shirts march with college girls in stiletto heels.

MARCHING FOR THE NEW ARMENIA

"I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia." –William Saroyan

This passage has become something of a mantra for Armenians living in the Diaspora, of which there are several million. Walk into an Armenian store and you may just see Saroyan's words posted on a wall next to a print of Mount Ararat. Talk to an Armenian for just five minutes and you may just realize that this is not just something to be recited at will, but a sentiment by which many of us live.

As a third-generation Ameriguhye (Armenian by blood, American by nationality), I am more familiar with the sound of an 808 than a dumb-eg, more familiar with the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald than Gostan Zarian. Yet, if I meet another Armenian at a party, we will almost certainly become friends. We will bond over new world lives that are never quite free of the old world. Marriages may no longer be arranged and girls may no longer be expected to roll the perfect grape leaf, but we may still grow up in families where everyone is auntie or uncle, regardless of whether the person is a parent's sibling, distant cousin or family friend. We may share stories about what it was we said at the dinner table that caused our grandmothers to clutch their chests and gasp "Amot (shame)!;" joke about how Armenian vegetarianism means choosing chicken kebab over lamb kebab; and, of course, swap insults in a language that few others will be able to understand.

However, the greatest bond between Armenians, no matter where we now live, is that we are the descendants of those who escaped the historical homeland on Ancient Anatolia and Cilicia (Eastern Turkey) with little more than their lives. Nowhere is this more evident than it is annually on the Twenty-fourth of April. Referred to as Martyrs' Day by Armenians in every part of the world, April 24 was the date in 1915 when two hundred and fifty leaders of the

Armenian community in Constantinople – from intellectuals to journalists to politicians – were expelled from the city by the Turkish regime and later murdered. While Armenians had suffered at the hands of Ottoman Turks since the late 1800s in the form of scattered massacres and other abuses, this date marks the beginning of what we now call the Armenian Genocide. The first of its kind in the twentieth Century, in which a dying empire, attempting to retain some sense of power, held a minority group responsible for its problems and then engaged in the systematic purging of said group from its system.

Martyrs' Day takes on a special significance in Los Angeles, California, as the city is home to the world's largest Armenian community outside of Armenia. Armenian-owned establishments, ranging from the Zankou Chicken chain, to Armenian markets scattered across the city, close their doors. The signs in the windows note that this is in remembrance of the Armenian Genocide, where 1.5 million perished at the hands of Ottoman Turks. Generally, the signs also mention that this Genocide is not officially recognized by the United States and is flatly denied by Turkey, who claims that the amount of Armenians lost during this period of time was a simple consequence of World War I. Across town, several events commemorate the date. In Montebello, solemn services are conducted at the Armenian Martyrs' Monument, while two rallies are held on Hollywood Boulevard in East Hollywood and an annual protest takes place at the Turkish Consulate, located on a section of Wilshire Boulevard adjacent to the ritzy Hancock Park neighborhood.

In the Armenian language class I attend every Saturday afternoon, the instructor handed out flyers for the latter event, sponsored by the AYP (Armenian Youth Federation), a subsidiary of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which was founded for the primary purpose of creating a free, independent Armenia. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and subsequent emergence of the Armenian Nation, the group's mission has evolved to keeping Armenia free and independent, preserving Armenian culture in the Diaspora and fighting for recognition of the Genocide. They also include the lofty goals of reparations and return of the land lost as a consequence of this atrocity. The march at the Consulate dates back to the early 1970s, when my father and his friends, college students at the time, participated in the event.

My friend, Alice, and I decided that we had to

attend the protest. In truth, I was a bit nervous about waving a picket sign in public for the first time, given my mother's ravings, "Don't get yourself arrested. Don't let anyone take your picture. Remember the Patriot Act." Despite this, however, I felt compelled to shout out demands at a building that may be nearly empty, given that Martyrs' Day fell on a weekend this year. Close to ninety years ago, my great-grandfathers left their homeland for life before they could be gathered by Ottoman troops to allegedly serve in the military, a call that meant certain death at the hands of an army that was supposed to protect these citizens of the Empire. My great-grandmothers, no more than fifteen or sixteen at the time, were led into the brutal desert of the Middle East. All saw family, friends and neighbors brutalized or killed. All were reluctant to speak of these events afterward. My grandmother, the first-born child of Armenian immigrants, did not even know about the Genocide until she was in her twenties. Even then, everything she heard was told in vague terms. With all this, I felt that I had to march for the great-grandparents I never met, whose stories are untold and whose pain has been denied.

Alice, on the other hand, is not Armenian. She is an Irish-Scottish-Cherokee mix reared between Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio, who had never heard the term Armenian before moving to Los Angeles two years ago. Alice's introduction to the Armenian community was by happenstance. She was driving around town one night when a group of Armenian guys in the car next to her waved. The guys pulled over, as did she, and a conversation ensued. Alice became friends with the group, such good friends in fact, that when her neighbors started to harass the guys by breaking windows and otherwise vandalizing their cars, she moved. Through friendship, Alice became more interested in Armenian culture. She watched Armenian movies and listened to Armenian music. She enrolled in language lessons at the local community college (where we met) and began to research the history of this ancient people, particularly the Genocide. The more she read, the more she knew that she, too, had to march.

It is 2:00 p.m. when we arrive on the corner of Wilshire and June and the sun is blazing as though it is August instead of April. Already, we have had a pretty full day and the heat seems to drain any energy we have left as it burns our skin. That morning, we drove to the Armenian Martyrs' Monument, a structure that looks like a

frame for the Washington Monument and is situated in the middle of a golf course. We had the wrong time and, thus, arrived five hours prior to the start of the services. Thinking that we were on time and everyone else was desperately late, we sat around and watched the Armenian Scouts rehearse the flag ceremony for a bit. When we finally realized how early we were for the ceremony, and how late we were for class, we left. We made it to school on Armenian time, that is, approximately one hour behind schedule, only to realize that our teacher was letting class out early.

As we round the corner at June, we notice that a crowd is already forming in front of the Consulate. Like the bulk of Los Angeles proper, this neighborhood straddles the urban and the suburban. The main stretch of Wilshire boasts one office building after another, but the side on which we congregate has the crisp façade of an upscale suburb – large homes marked by rich green grass, gardens and driveways lined with soccer mom cars. We walk around looking for shade and people to watch when we meet the requisite Lyndon LaRouche crew, distributing newspaper print handouts describing the Middle East policy of the perennial presidential candidate. We engage in a brief conversation with one of the LaRouche volunteers, a conversation involving copious use of the word paradigm, as I look out of the corner of my eye and notice a woman peering out of a Consulate window. Her face is stern and she slowly shakes her head as if to say, “Damn, it’s those Armenians again. Why can’t they just get over it?” I smirk.

After managing to get away from the LaRouche crowd (nice guys, but it’s starting to sound too much like a Poli Sci class), we move along to a shady sidewalk haven, where two young guys wearing friendship bracelets in the colors of the Armenian flag – red, blue and orange – sit around fiddling with a video camera.

Alice mentions something about sticking out in the crowd. She has a point. In a crowd of dark-haired, olive-skinned Armenians, Alice is easy to spot, mostly because her hair is so blonde that it looks like real butter and her accent is as Southern as bluegrass. Here in Los Angeles, one does not encounter many Armenians with naturally blonde hair and Southern accents. Alice wonders if people find it odd that someone who is not Armenian had joined the march.

“Why is that odd?” I ask. “More *odars* [non-Armenians], should march. It shows solidarity.” Alice says something else and I offer to ask the guys next to us for an opinion. She giggles.

“Hey, do you think it’s weird to see an *odar* at the march?”

“Nah, dude,” answers one. “It’s way cool.”

I give Alice the see-I-told-you nudge and the guys start talking to us about Genocide, the march, and how Alice and I really need to see Armenia.

It looks as though the demonstration is about to begin, so Alice and I get up and walk over to a van where we can grab protest signs. We dig through a deep crate of signs, trying to choose the slogan that best fits what we want to say. Alice finds one with Hitler’s famed quote, “Who now remembers the Armenians?” his justification of the Holocaust and one of many pieces of evidence that helps prove that the Genocide did happen. I choose a sign that reads, “Denial is the greatest crime against humanity.” The signs are



Armenian relief poster, by Douglas Volk, 1918

tall, reaching to about chin-level, and so top-heavy that as we begin to walk, I fear that the gusts of hot, dry wind gradually growing in strength and speed, will knock the signs back and clobber the kids behind us.

On the wide expanse of boulevard next to us, a line of cars moves steadily, as though it is Saturday night on the Sunset Strip and cruising is still legal. The motorcade follows a pattern of circling the blocks, with each driver’s heavy hand firmly implanted on the horn while passing the protesters every ten minutes. Ranging from Hondas to Mercedes, the cars glide down the street as a symbol of survival and remembrance. Armenian flags hang from hoods and out of windows. Some have soaped “1915 Never Forget”

onto the windows. Others have gone a step further, painting the slogan on doors and adding red, blue and orange pinstripes and trims for the rims. An elderly woman sticks her head out of the passenger window of one car. With her hair pulled tightly into a bun and her face revealing the weathered appearance of a long, hard life, Alice and I think that she must have been in Turkey at the time of the Genocide, although she may be too young to remember. She smiles wide and waves the flag out of the window as the line of cars continues its procession.

With each passing minute, the crowd grows in size until it eventually reaches 5,000 protesters. Bikers march alongside church ladies and high school boys in System of **5**

LIZ 0

Down t-shirts march with college girls in stiletto heels. The path we follow extends in quarter-block increments upon the nod of approval from the LAPD, who stand on the sidelines with arms crossed over chests as though they are fairly certain that nothing out-of-the-ordinary will happen here. The volume of the crowd increases drastically, like at an Armenian wedding, where the words and phrases begin to overlap and each speaker pushes the vocal chords louder, trying to be heard. The end result is something of a cacophony of voices.

"Turkey run! Turkey hide! Turkey's guilty of Genocide!"

"Shame on Turkey!"

"Eastern Turkey is Western Armenia!"

We are no longer moving in a single-file fashion. Friends are trying to keep track of each other. I am trying to find Alice. Grandmothers are trying to keep up with families. Parents are trying to grab the hands of small children. One pigtailed girl, no more than five, skips far ahead of her parents, rubbing her index fingers together as if they are sticks and she is trying to start a fire as she screams "Shame on Turkey" louder than anyone else. Hers is the only voice that is distinct and it looks as though her parents are trying to catch up with her. I am reminded of my own childhood, of being dragged to Armenian functions and trying to run through tightly packed crowds as my dad yelled, "Lizzie, get back her. Grab my tatic (hand)."

As Alice and I catch up with each other, we realize that we have been stomping feet and hollering for nearly two hours. We decide that when we can actually maneuver our way out of the crowd, we will find a place to sit. In the meantime, however, we are resigned to emitting hoarse yelps as our picket signs knock branches off of nearly every tree we pass.

When we finally sit down on a bed of newly watered grass, we realize that we might not actually be able to stand up again. We prop up our signs, lean back and just watch. The chant leader in front of us is a portrait of rage. He is a tall, skinny guy in his late-teens or early-twenties with short, curly hair and eyebrows lacking anything resembling an arch. Despite his height, he stands on his toes and cranes his neck as his fist thrusts into the air. His cries are so intense that we can see his arms tense. His jaw contorts into a position that is simultaneously dropped and clenched. His eyes narrow to a point where it seems as though they have simply disappeared between the furrowed brow and crinkled nose. It is the sort of face and posture that does not belong here, in Los Angeles, where suburban kids leading relatively comfortable lives are demonstrating to right an age-old wrong. It is the face of some other place and some other time, of some sort of injustice and pain so great it just is not in our experience. His is the face that belongs on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*, in an attempt to again sweep the Pulitzer.

I stretch out as Alice slowly started to rise to her feet. An older woman taps her on the shoulder and I, too, stand. The woman is at least sixty, auburn-haired and

enveloped in a fragrance distinctly French. She seems a bit overdressed for a protest in her silk blouse and ladylike heels, but then again, many of the elders in attendance are attired more for church than a three-hour march in 100-degree weather.

statements about the Genocide with the word "alleged," where people make flippant remarks about there being too many Armenians in the city, not realizing that you are one of them, it's nice to see someone who was not born into this culture embrace it so fully.

As I drive back to the San Fernando Valley through winding freeway patterns, I think about the Genocide. I do not remember when or where I first heard about it. My guess is that the subject probably came up while quizzing my family on our roots for a social studies project. I think about the images that popped into my head once I was old enough to read my mother's ragged copy of Franz Werfel's *Forty Days of Musagh Dagh*, how the violence was so gruesome that I could not even grasp it. Even now, at the age of twenty-seven, I cannot comprehend Genocide. I can tell you about earthquakes, wildfires, riots – the sorts of disasters that are at home in Los Angeles, but pale in comparison to the world outside our borders – but I cannot explain Genocide. I cannot explain how it happens or why it happens and I cannot describe what it is like. After all, I was not there.

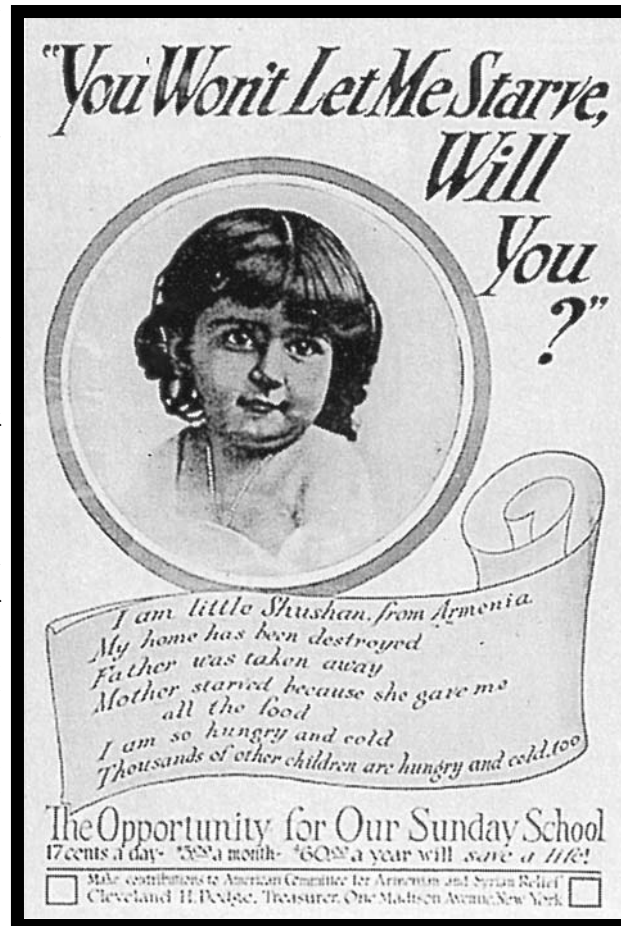
Sometimes I try to understand what happened to my great-grandparents by putting it into the context of my hometown. I try to imagine if something like this could happen in Los Angeles – citizens brutalized by an army paid for with our taxes. Able-bodied men and intellectuals are round up under the guise of a draft only to be slaughtered on the outskirts of town – their bodies dumped in shallow graves along the dark canyon roads that connect the series of valleys that make up our city. When this is done, they move from neighborhood to neighborhood, collecting women and children, telling

them to leave behind possessions before sending them out towards the Mojave. The young and the pretty are kidnapped and sold to the highest bidder, the others slowly follow desert roads for weeks, forced to scavenge for food like wild dogs as bodies drop like possum. Family will perish, as will friends, and if, by chance one does survive, it is with nothing more than what remains of the clothes on one's back and memories that a lifetime cannot erase.

Even now, with the specter of 9/11 looming above us, it does not seem possible. Not here at least. However, Genocide lies in wait at the corners of the world, hidden behind war and civil unrest. Just as the Armenian Genocide has been carefully tucked away between the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the Treaty of Versailles, so will other governments use war as a convenient cover-up for ethnic cleansing.

I do not care about reparations. Nor do I long for a return of the land that was once my ancestors, but is not my own. My home, my New Armenia, is Los Angeles and, while we may never get that simple "We know what happened and we are sorry" from the Turkish government, at least by marching, I can help our neighbors in this city understand our culture and history.

–Liz Ohanesian



From the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

"I just want to thank you for supporting our people," she says in the thickly-accented, low pitched voice of someone who grew up speaking one of the world's most guttural languages.

Alice beams. "That's okay," she drawls. "I have a lot of Armenian friends, so it means a lot to me." She pats me on the head. "Here's one of my Armenian friends now."

Slowly, the group disassembles on Wilshire and reconvenes in front of the Consulate entrance on June Street, where an AYF leader rallies the crowd from on top of a van with chants of "*Baikar, baikar, meechev hakhtanag.*" (Roughly translated to "Struggle, struggle until we succeed.") He praises Canada for joining the list of nations that have acknowledged the Genocide and shows his dismay with our own country for, once again, offering vague regards of sympathy without ever mentioning the word Genocide. The protesters join in a rendition of Armenia's national anthem, a song that Alice and I can neither sing nor translate. We stand mute.

As the crowd disperses and we walk back to my car, Alice mentions the auburn-haired lady. The story comes up again several times as we drive into Hollywood, get some dinner and head home. She is proud of herself, and I am proud of her as well. In a city where reporters qualify



Rummy Duck's FUN PAGE!

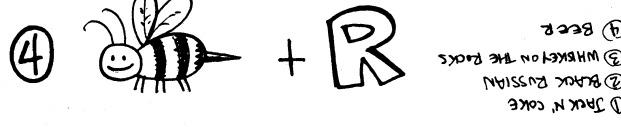
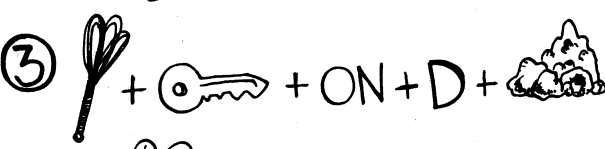
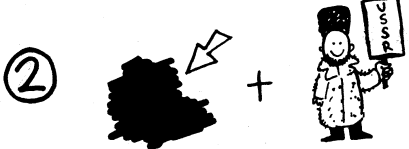
I NEED A DRINK.



REMEMBER THE COOL REBUSES ON THE BOTTOM OF OLYMPIA BEER CAPS? WELL THESE 'AINT NUTHIN' LIKE 'EM! SO FIGGER 'EM OUT AND BUY ME ONE OF EACH! BRRRRRP!!!

YOU TOO CAN BE A SHIZZY ARTIST! DRAW THE MEAN SMOKIN' POO!

1. DRAW A TRIANGLE.
2. ADD EYEBALLS AND FEET.
3. ADD A CIGGY.
4. ADD SMOKE, STINK LINES AND... VOILA!



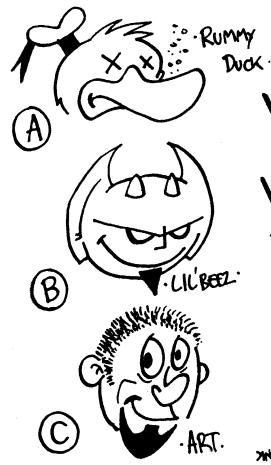
- ① BEER
- ② BLACK RUSSIAN
- ③ WHISKY ON THE ROCKS
- ④ TRUCK N' COKE

Rummy Duck's DRUNK-O-METER!

WONDERIN' HOW DRUNK YOU ARE? HOW MANY RUMMY DUCKS DO YOU SEE?



- 1 RUMMY — HAVE ANOTHER BEER, TOUGH GUY!!
- 2 RUMMIES — YER GETTIN' THERE! YER THE LIFE OF THE PARTY!
- 3 RUMMIES — YER INVINCIBLE! GO PICK A FIGHT!
- Ø RUMMIES — CALL AN AMBULANCE AND WATCH YER WALLET.



WHO'S DRINKIN' WHAT!!
DRAW A LINE FROM THE DRINKER TO THE DRINKY!



CONNECT THE DOTS AND SEE WHAT LIL' BEEZ IS LAFFIN' AT!



LILBEEZCOMIX@YAHOO.COM



JIM RULAND

LAZY MICK

CORE VALUES

While the U.S. Army continues to go about the work of determining how far human rights violations go in the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal – both up the chain of command and laterally to other prisons and detention centers in Iraq as well as in other theaters of operations – the administration assures us the actions are largely the result of bad apples. But as every veteran knows, the thing about bad apples is every bushel has one.

I met my first bad apple five seconds after my arrival the In-Processing Center at the United States Navy Recruit Training Command at Great Lakes, Illinois. I'll never forget him. He was a beady-eyed brute who wore a black turtleneck and a cop's mustache – a Cpl. Graner look-alike. He didn't display any insignia or a nametag, and as the son of a naval officer, this made me more than a little nervous. I don't want to write the words he used to dress me down that chilly October evening in 1986, but suffice to say they included derogatory slang for homosexuals, euphemisms for the female anatomy, and unwarranted characterization of my girlfriend as un-handsome female dog.

The second was my Company Commander, the Navy's version of a drill sergeant, a racist alcoholic who would show up at our barracks late at night, put us in formation, and dance around with a boom box on his shoulder. When Janet Jackson asked us what we'd done for her lately, he'd confront the African Americans in our company and ask them if they "liked that black bitch."

A third encounter with a bad actor was perpetrated by my supervisor in the galley, a government contract employee (read: cook) who invited me to engage in carnal relations with a roast beef. When I declined the offer, he tried to coerce me by insinuating my reason for abstaining must have something to do with my sexual preference. According to his perverted logic, anyone who wouldn't have sexual intercourse with a cow carcass must be gay.

I could go on – I'm only up to week four of my two-year hitch, and I haven't addressed any of the hazing, physical assaults, and vigilante-style retribution that I, um, "witnessed" – but I would be belaboring the point. In a harsh, hostile environment like the military, a few bad apples don't just slip into the mix, they are a big slice of the pie, and they represent a substantial part of the orchard from which the armed services actively recruit. It has been this way since Romans enlisted their

slaves to wage war and England conscripted convicts to man Her Majesty's ships. It is simply how it is done.

So I am more than a little chagrined by the Senate's Armed Service Committee's obsession with the Geneva Convention as a teaching tool. At a time when testimony about romper room style interrogations and after hours prison porno dominates the headlines, inquiries into when and where the soldiers were briefed on the articles and annexes of the Fourth Geneva Convention seems more than a little out of touch. What is more troubling to me is the pervasive belief, both in the administration and in our armed forces, that because we are dealing with a different kind of enemy, they deserve a different kind of punishment – even if it violates their human rights.

To understand why this belief is so commonplace, one need look no further than the core values that are drilled into every Army recruit throughout basic training. There are seven of them: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honesty, integrity, and personal courage. Taken together, the first letters form a crude acronym for "leadership." Cute, until you get to the dangerously vague definition for "respect," which reads: "to treat people as they should be treated."

The problem with this definition is that invites interpretation. It may make sense in the classroom as a ideal akin to the Golden Rule, but in places where soldiers are tasked with keeping order, fighting an insurgency, and combating terrorism, the definition begs the questions: How should a terrorist be treated? How should an extremist insurgent be treated? (Which leads us to the still thornier problem of the treatment of those who sympathize with them, their families, etc). One could make the argument that the members of the military police who perpetrated grave atrocities on Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib, the majority of whom were civilians and may not have been guilty of anything more serious than being angry with Americans, were simply treating these people the way they felt they should be treated. The Army's definition of respect has been perverted.

* * *

When I first heard of the atrocities of Abu Ghraib, I thought of that nightmarish scene in *Apocalypse Now* where Martin Sheen, he of the presidential mien, disembarks his boat at Lo Dung Bridge. When he asks a stoned soldier "Who's in charge here?" he gets "Ain't you?" for an answer. There is comfort in this scenario, because it suggests that if the

prison guards at Abu Ghraib had not been so poorly supervised, the atrocities might never have happened. This explanation keeps the notion alive that these abuses were exceptional, like a hazing ritual gone too far, a party that got out of hand. This, of course, is a lie.

What we are dealing with is a crisis of leadership. The Army's expertise isn't killing, but supervision. Human beings do not require training to kill; they require training to kill conditionally and on command (and then to stop and put their weapons away). An unsupervised army isn't an army, but the cast of a *Mad Max* movie. Operations go badly, things go wrong, but the Army is very, very good at training, supervision, and oversight – all of which was missing from Abu Ghraib.

Clearly, the prison was not staffed with the kind of seasoned Army professionals capable of running the prison the way it ought to have been run. It was run by reservists who were so uncertain of their place in the chain-of-command that military intelligence personnel and contract employees could manipulate them without much difficulty. It now appears that these individuals bypassed and/or ignored the chain-of-command and encouraged unsupervised guards to participate in the torture of Iraqi citizens. Army officials have testified that the prison guards behaved atrociously. At the other end of the chain-of-command, the President told Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld he performed superbly. What this scandal is really about then is not the abuse of prisoners, but the abuse of power.

Of all the abuses I voluntarily endured while I was in the Navy, those first five seconds off the bus are the most memorable. To be honest, I was almost grateful when the man started shouting at me, because it broke the tension, the awful anxious hours of wondering what boot camp was going to be like. Dealing with the bad was better than waiting for it to happen. I was not so naïve as to expect that I wouldn't be screamed at and insulted. I was the son of a naval officer, after all. I suppose I thought it was inevitable.

After eight weeks of boot camp, while most of my shipmates went on to one school or another, I stuck around Great Lakes for a month of apprenticeship training. Toward the end of my stint, I bumped into someone I knew in the mess hall. He had been temporarily assigned to the In-Processing Center while he waited for a spot to open up at his next billet. He invited me down to the center that night to "mess around" with the new arrivals. The novelty of being one of the first people these recruits would meet was too rich to pass up, so I went.

JIM RULAND

These were my instructions, my training, if you will:

"You can do anything you want to them."

"Anything?"

"Anything. Just don't touch them."

I discovered very quickly that I lacked the despot gene that makes screaming at strangers for no good reason an entertaining way to spend the evening. It slowly started to dawn on me that the man who'd made such a strong impression on me when I first stepped off the

recruit drink cup after cup of water because he'd been unable to provide a urine sample, most likely because he was scared out of his mind. I sat him down at a desk and told him to put his head down for a few minutes. Whenever one of the screamers came over to threaten him with some form of exquisite torture, I angrily chased him off. I was determined to make a favorable impression on this recruit, to dispense some measure of kindness, to let him know not everyone in the

were processed. Perhaps first impressions *did* count for something. The Navy changed virtually everything about the recruit training experience, from its motto, to the professionalism of those charged with training recruits. They figured, quite correctly, that when you improve the quality of training, supervision and oversight, you improve the sailor. As a result, the abuse I encountered when I was in boot camp is far less likely to occur today.

Mr. Bush, Mr. Rumsfeld and the rest of

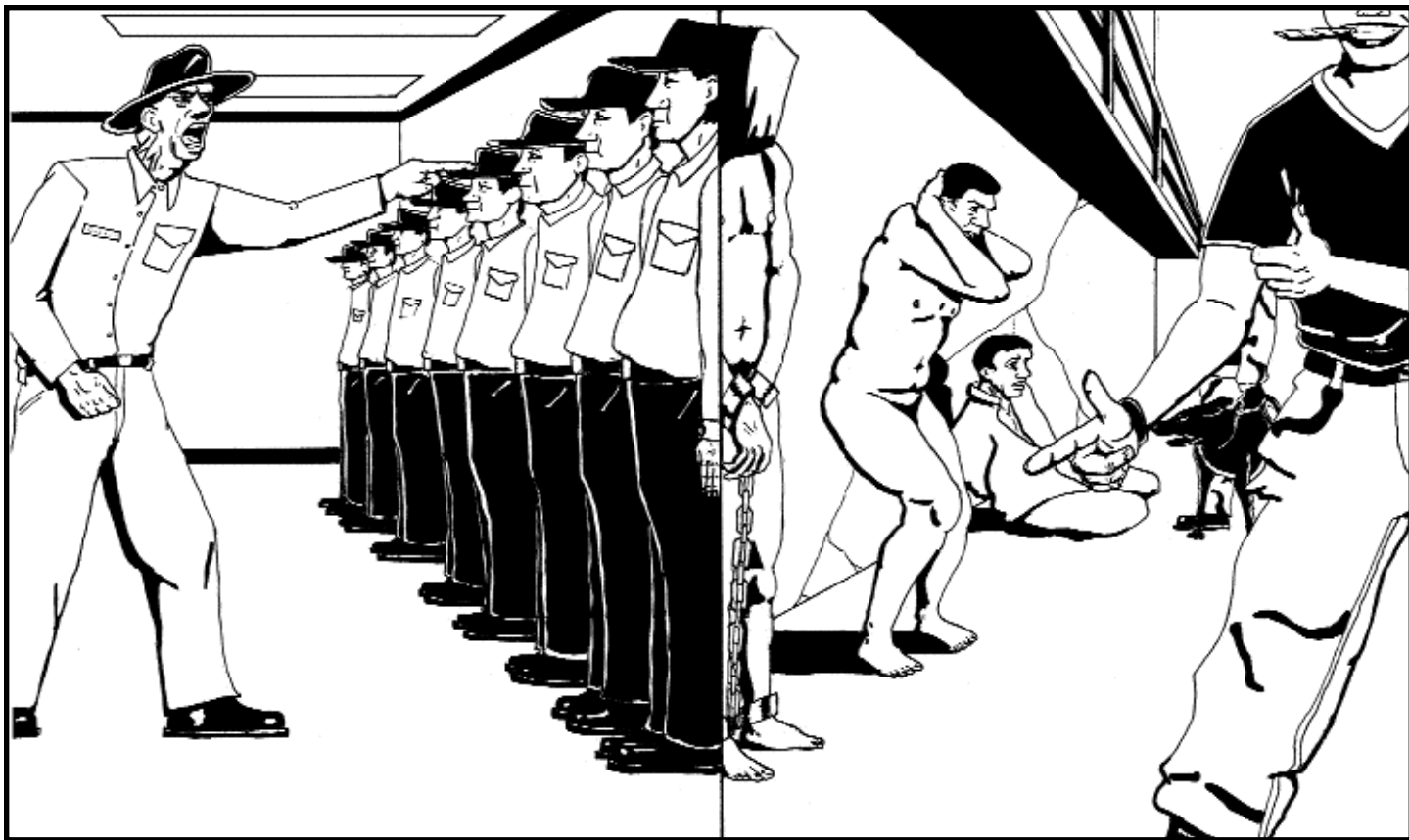


Illustration by: Chris Larsen, ChrisFingaz@aol.com; www.thefing.com

I DISCOVERED VERY QUICKLY THAT I LACKED THE DESPOT GENE THAT MAKES SCREAMING AT STRANGERS FOR NO GOOD REASON AN ENTERTAINING WAY TO SPEND THE EVENING.

bus hadn't been an officer or a Company Commander or anyone with any kind of legitimate authority, but a cretin who got his rocks off hurling insults at people who couldn't hurl them back. My first impression of the organization I'd signed away six years of my life to (two years of active duty, four years of active reserve) was defined by someone with anger issues who'd probably been in the Navy less than 100 days. It was ritualized verbal abuse, plain and simple, left in the hands of an unsupervised individual whose sole qualification for the job was the strength of his desire to do unto others as others had done unto him. I wanted nothing to do with this, but found it impossible to walk away.

Some poor kid was getting a double dose of verbal abuse because he'd puked on the deck. Two sailors were making the sick

Navy was as interested in tearing off heads and defecating down windpipes as my cohorts professed to be.

Maybe the Senate's Armed Services Committee is on to something. Perhaps the values the Army is asking the defenders of our country to embrace are worth another look. Revisiting and, if necessary, rewriting the core values of the world's best-trained fighting force does not seem like such a bad idea when the perception around the world is that it has none.

This type of revision has been done before, and with great success. In 1993, the U.S. Navy re-evaluated the way they trained its sailors. Perhaps fear and loathing were not the best emotions to be associated with one's Company Commander. Maybe they should pay closer attention to the way new recruits

their swaggering fellowship are right: a few bad apples can besmirch the reputations of many, and we need look no farther than the White House to find the source of the rot. But if the U.S. Army is truly committed to weeding out the bad apples, and I believe they are, they must revisit their core values. The things we ask our soldiers to do are more complicated than ever before; the attributes we demand of every man and woman who puts on the uniform cannot and should not be simplified to fit an easy-to-remember acronym that looks good on a training aid or a barracks wall. The values we instill must reflect the behavior we expect. Nothing less than the character of our country and the safety of our troops depend on it.

-Jim Ruland

JIM RULAND



SHIFTLESS WHEN IDLE

I SAT IN AN OFFICE CHAIR, COMPLETELY NAKED, POPPING VICODIN, AND FIELDING REQUESTS FOR HMONG INTERPRETERS! NOT PUNK!

Attention *Razorcake* readers! By the time you read this, I'll probably have been struck by lightning, attacked by killer bees (or, as the American media likes to call them "Africanized bees"! Oh the horror of TWCFAs [That Which Comes From Africa]!), or had my collection of cereal-themed merchandise set on fire, Lucky Charms bobblehead and all!

Why am I anticipating such disaster? It's simple! There is a pox on my house, a curse on my being. Someone, somewhere, in a dark corner has somehow created a Maddy voodoo doll (complete with Rip Offs shirt, tight pants, and pink Converse shoes, and clutching a copy of Trotsky's *My Life!* Oh, the horrible ACCURACY of it all!), and they have been repeatedly torturing this doll for the last five months.

If you are, by chance, the person holding this doll, I beg of thee, STOP! We can negotiate! I have a number of rare early '80s hardcore records to appease your blood lust!

If you are not the torturer in question, then read below to hear a monstrous tale of consecutive woes! And, if you have any problems of your own you've been meaning to get rid of, just send 'em my way. I've got so many others, I won't even notice! Address your head wounds, allergic reactions to poison ivy, and unemployment to me, c/o *Razorcake*!

Now, time for the tales!

First! As I probably previously mentioned in an issue of *Razorcake*, my apartment in Brooklyn was broken into while I was gone over Christmas, and the most expensive item I own was stolen - my laptop computer - taken, no doubt, by some devious French labor historian, who found my paper detailing the motivations behind the June 1936 general strike dangerously revolutionary - not to mention my account of the development of Communist cells in the Parisian metal-workers' union! If only I could have delivered this information to the American



public! Bush wouldn't stand a chance! Sadly, my plans were thwarted.

However, at the time, I thought nothing of it, figuring that this was just a freak occurrence. I filed the necessary police paperwork and purchased a sub-par replacement. Little did I know that it was just the opening salvo in a long line of abuses, akin to when a computer hacker releases a crappy virus, only to unleash the real one later, after proper testing. Why am I making hacker references? I don't know!

Second! So, several weeks later, I moved from Brooklyn back to the Midwest. Normally, this would be a cause for great rejoicing, as I am welcomed home by all my old friends, complete with drunken partying and Black Flag dance parties. The problem? Mere days after arriving home, I started to develop a strange pain in my lower back. Then, a day later, the pain became sharp, horrible, and completely beyond anything I had experienced before. By the time I went to the doctor, I was almost unable to walk. The diagnosis? Shingles!

For those of you not in The Know, shingles is what you get when the chicken pox virus re-activates itself, from deep in your nervous system. The virus then works its way to the surface, damaging your nerves along the way, and causing a pain that I can only describe as CFA (Completely Fucking Awful!). If anything touched the area, it would result in a searing rush of pain not even Sour Patch Kids or repeated Bananas-listening could alleviate. So, in the cruelest rub of all, I could not wear pants, or even underwear, for a week!

At the time, I was running the family business (a foreign language interpretation service with headquarters in my mom's basement) by myself, while my sister and mom were in southern France. So, while they explored ancient Roman ruins, I sat in an office chair, completely naked, popping Vicodin, and fielding requests for Hmong inter-

MADDY

preters! Not punk!

Third! At this point, I acknowledged that I was clearly on a downward spiral, not least because, due to shingles, I was unable to execute my plan to stave off destitution. In short, I was in no condition to apply for a temp job! So, instead, I spent my days watching E! specials about how J. Lo spends her money and my nights, uh, watching E! specials about how J. Lo spends her money. And, slowly but surely, approached the most punk rock state of all: bankruptcy. (Note: this problem would only get worse. Read on!)

Fourth! Despite all of these various woes, I thought that, at least by the summer, all would be well. I had applied to be a program coordinator for a group of students going to Rostov – a huge industrial city in southern Russia. I had multiple assurances that this job was basically mine – none of the other applicants spoke any Russian or even read Cyrillic. So, while passing out from painkillers, I thought about how, in a few months, I'd be exploring a crazy run-down industrial wasteland. And then, I got the call. Rejection! Due to extreme dingosity (a term in common use in the Milwaukee punk scene, as noted by William Safire), too boring and bureaucratic to mention, I would not be going after all. And, in the cruelest rub, the person who was selected didn't even know where Rostov was! Argh!

Fifth! Okay, so I wouldn't be going to Russia, I couldn't wear pants, and I lost all my graduate work in French labor history. Fine. I would emerge victorious! I would devise another plan! I decided to go to the Z Media Institute in June. (The Institute is an intense journalism boot camp, including visits from Noam Chomsky and lots of revolutionary drunkenness after hours!) I completed the application, sent it in, and then, several weeks later, receive an email telling me that the program has been cancelled for this year. Strike five!

Sixth! A week later, I left to go on tour as a roadie with Milwaukee's finest, the Modern Machines (Note: one of the greatest bands currently in existence. Husker-Du influenced punk! When their record comes out on Recess in a few months, expect a Lucky Charms comparison from yours truly!) Finally, I thought, all the problems of the past three months would be cured by lots of driving and even more drinking. Salvation through punk rock! Yes!

At first, everything seemed to be going well. Although clearly my curse had rubbed off on the band, leading to the cancellation of sever-

al shows, the extra time was spent in Chattanooga, Tennessee, one of the coolest places I've ever been. I don't say this lightly, but I think their punk scene might even rival Milwaukee's. Insane! So many great punk houses with huge porches, tucked into the sides of hills! So many fun and crazy punks! So many late night drunken hijinks!

So, I was feeling good (read: hung over) when the van rolled into Brooklyn – my most anticipated stop of the tour. I'd get to see my boyfriend for the first time since I moved, plus friends, plus good food! Yes! So, I spent the afternoon walking around Manhattan, buying weird Japanese toys, eating pizza, and feeling nostalgic. Then we go to the show in a basement in Brooklyn. Two of my friends show up, and, after saying hi, I decided to start fulfilling my duties as a roadie, and start lugging a PA down some of the steepest and most ill-conceived stairs in the history of human descent. When I get to the last step of my basement journey, I pause and say to my friend Matt, "These stairs mean certain death." And then, about three seconds later, I fell.

As soon as my ankle hit the ground, I knew something was wrong. After a few seconds, it started swelling up, and I began to realize that one of the worst places to sustain an injury is in a punk basement. I declined several methods of treatment (from whiskey to unidentified painkillers) from well-meaning punks, and was carried out of the basement a few minutes later, to get into a car and drive to the emergency room. The problem? As soon as I made it upstairs, Critical Mass arrived, blocking traffic for blocks! After some initial communication problems, the sea of bikers parted, and I made my way to the hospital.

Fourteen hundred dollars later, I had an ace bandage, an air cast, crutches, and the knowledge that I had sprained my ankle. (A later follow-up visit revealed that I had completely torn two major ligaments. Expected recovery time? Six months!) But punk tours don't get shut down by the inability of the roadie to walk, and so, the next day, I was in the van, headed to the final show in Columbus, Ohio, with my ankle propped up in the van. When we got to Columbus, I decided to just stay in the van. We drove home after the show that night, and, by the time we reached Milwaukee, I had been in the van for about twenty-four hours straight.

Seventh! When I returned home, not only did I have medical bills of \$1400, I was also unable to

work – again. Growing up in a family that was often broke and stressed about money, I have never been one of those punks who glorifies poverty. In fact, I try really hard to avoid it. So, being stuck with all this debt, with about five dollars to my name, may be punk, but it also stinks!

Eighth! So, after accumulating seven woes, I was in serious need of stress relief. Normally, when I'm stressed, I go for a walk or a bike ride. But, with my sprained ankle, all I could do was... watch more TV! I now know all about the top 100 celebrity makeovers and the struggle to raise quintuplets. Brain death!

Ninth! Just when it couldn't get any worse, my boyfriend and I broke up. I won't get into all the details here, lest I creep myself out by becoming one of those way-too-personal zinesters. Let's just say that I found myself listening to the Pegboy song "Strong Reaction" over and over, turning myself into even more of a depressed freak.

Tenth! The only comfort I had left was my favorite food item in the world – the square pizza, as served at the Pizza Shuttle in Milwaukee. So, I ventured there, armed with my last few dollars, in hopes of thick crust salvation. And then, the unthinkable happened. When I went up to the counter to

get my pizza, I took one look at it and realized, "This is not the square pizza." I asked the girl working the counter and she informed me, "We don't make the square pizza the same way anymore. We decided to change it a few weeks ago because it was too thick." No! The final rub! My only hope left – to nurse myself back to physical and mental well-being through the consumption of pizza – foiled!

At that moment I began to understand better the mentality of those random people who, after a long series of humiliations, have one, seemingly minor thing go wrong, and then...they open fire on the innocent Burger King employee. Under the circumstances, this seemed like a perfectly reasonable response. Luckily, I am a.) a total wuss and b.) do not own a gun. And so, the Pizza Shuttle employee lives for another day.

As of press-time, I have suffered no additional woes for the last two weeks. However, I have no illusions that the curse has been lifted! Who knows? Maybe next time around, you'll be reading about how I have requested admittance to an Amish community in central Pennsylvania, where I have found solace churning butter and wearing bonnets. Fuck punk rock! I'm going Amish!

–Maddy



REV. NØRB

LOVE, NØRB

THIS IS THE EXACT TYPE OF TRIAL BY FIRE... THAT RAZORCAKE AUDIENCES GO TRADITIONALLY GA-GA FOR! REVEREND NØRB, THE LITTLE LAZY FUCKER THAT COULD!!!

PUNK ROCK AND THE EXISTENTIAL MAKE-OUT DILEMMA

... but first, this cursory dip into Rev. Nørb's Advice Column Mailbag, so that another Solitary Seeker of Sanguine Sageliness be Serviced Swiftly and Successfully:

Hi Nørb,

Glad to see that you will be back to doing your advice column next month. Because I need some advice; actually, it's more of a question in three parts.

Part 1:

How bad do you think the Packers will be beaten by the Browns when they play them in 2005? Do you think it will be like forty-nine to nothing, or more like seven hundred to nothing?

Part 2:

When the Browns destroy the untalented group of rejects that are known as the "Green Bay Packers," do you think Bret Favrererererr will start crying like a 6-year-old girl who lost her lollipop?

Part 3:

Will the inevitable defeat create a rippling effect of mass embarrassment that extends from Lambeau field outward until the entire state of Wisconsin secedes from the Union to form a independent republic called "New France"?

Would like to hear your response at your earliest convenience.

Regards,
Scott O'Brien
djscot77@aol.com

Dear Scott:

To answer your tri-partite question, 1) No, in today's modern times, i don't think you revealing your crush on the boy who sits in front of you in math class was "completely idiotic" of you. However, for future reference, it is generally held that there is a time and place for such disclosures; "in the shower after gym class" is roundly considered a poor location for such events. Further, you prefacing your declaration of unbridled love for him by commenting that it was "tight" that he had a "big one" was a questionable decision at best. 2) It's really impossible for me to say whether him having a "big one" precludes him from being into guys with "the little boy look" or not. You'll really never know until you ask him! In this case, the locker room shower is actually a very practical forum for your conversation on the matter; he, as you mentioned, might very well wish to "inspect" the "goods" a bit more closely before rendering a final verdict. And, finally, 3) your school is no more apt to host a mock "gay marriage" ceremony for you and the object of your desires than it would be to hold a similar ceremony for a boy-girl couple. Don't rush things! Play the field a bit. He probably doesn't have the *only* "big one" in that locker room! Good luck and God bless! P.S. The "soap thing" might not have worked that day simply because he was under the impression that you were *really looking for the soap*. Try it again next Tuesday and see what happens!

Løve,
Nørb

...advice dutifully dispensed, let's move on to the Existential Make-Out Dilemma aspect of things (however, let the record show that my original plans for this column were to write about me running a marathon. Now, i know what you're saying: "Gosh, Rev. Nørb, not that you running a marathon is a completely far-fetched concept, but... well... you running a marathon is a completely far-fetched concept! What gives?" – and, in this, you are not far from the mark: Running 26.2 miles would be running exactly 25.95 miles more than the furthest distance i've ever run in my life [i mean, run in one fell swoop – if you took all the distance i've ever run in my life, and laid it cumulatively end to end, i'm sure 26.2 miles would be only 23 or 24 miles longer than that]. I max out at about three blocks, and, though i am admittedly not built for comfort, i'm not so much Built For Speed [yes, Stray Cats reference] as i am Built To Go A Long Way If Shot Out Of A Cannon. In point of fact, i will go so far as to say that i fucking HATE running. I LOATHE it. I DESPISE it. It makes me wheeze and my shins hurt and my feet sweaty and my ass all slimy and itchy. Curiously, however, i really like walking. It's one of those archaic past-times, like reading, that, on the one hand, should never have gotten as close to the point of being parked permanently in the Junkyard Of Man's Obsolete Activities as it's gotten, but, then again, is unrepentantly fair game for being swept forevermore into the Dustbin of History [yes, MTX reference] just 'cause it takes so fuckin' long to do. So, anyway, i read somewhere [some real reputable source... like the *msn.com* home page or something] that one of the things everyone should do before they turn 40 is to run a marathon [or similarly-taxing alternate activity like climbing a mountain or something {me, i stick with "marathon" – people built like inverted thermometer bulbs are generally best advised to give wide berth to activities where falling down = death}]. And, inasmuch as i could probably live a relatively satisfactory life without having ever run more than 0.25 miles at a crack [and also inasmuch as the only reason i read the story was because i thought they might hip me to some wacky sex shit i need to try whilst i still got the horsepower nested within my geekly loins], the reason given – "you better do it once before your body turns into a useless pile of connective tissue and seawater" – actually kind of makes sense, in kind of a weird way: *If i ever wanna know what running a marathon is like, i better do it soon* [possibly before i'm old enough to know better]. And besides, giving head to a dromedary while i shoot needle drugs with a pair of underage Pakistani male prostitutes can probably wait 'til i'm nearing my fifties – or, at the very least, until a year or so after the trepanation i have tentatively scheduled for 2006. SO ANYWAY! About a month ago, i decide i'm gonna "run" in the Green Bay Marathon. Except i'm not gonna run. I'm gonna walk. Maybe i'll run like the first block, just so's i can say "yeah, i kinda ran some and walked some." I'll bring along my little voice recorder thingie, keep a log of whatever almost-surely increasingly delusional ideas i get during the race, transcribe same, and pass that off as this month's column. I mean, it might be cool: I might hallucinate and stuff, like when Homer ate the chili peppers! Besides, what the fuck else am i gonna write about? Punk Rock and the Existential Make-Out Dilemma? This is the exact type of Trial By Fire [yes, Trial By Fire reference]/true-character-revealing "Journey of Discovery" that *Razorcake* audiences go traditionally ga-ga for! REVEREND NØRB, THE LITTLE LAZY FUCKER THAT COULD!!! I go to the marathon's website. It costs sixty dollars to register. My ever-so-promising career as an Olympic cross-country gold medallist dies a-borning! SIXTY BUCKS??? For fucking WHAT??? For some dork to stand at the finish line with a stopwatch while i come straggling in behind the guys with the wheelchairs and artificial hips??? For somebody with a bad haircut to hand me a cup of water as i plod gamely forward??? For a t-shirt that i'll be able to buy

REV. NØRB

for two bucks at Goodwill™ next year???. Listen, Mac, for sixty clams i better get 26.2 miles of OPEN FUCKING BAR!!! I want margaritas and pricey import beers slid down the bar [which will run, smoothly and without interruption, down the right-hand-side of the course, from starting line to finish line] at me as i pass!!! And i want fucking pretzels!!! Not that i think eating pretzels while running a marathon is a good idea, it's just The Way Things Ought To Be™!!! In any event, there is, obviously, NO FUCKING WAY i'm forking over a sextuple-sawbuck [i.e., a dodecahedra-fin] to trudge agonizingly through the streets of Titledown™ when i've grown so decadently used to a life of agonizing trudging, funded solely by my property taxes... but yet... but yet... but yet, i remain curiously drawn to the idea of painfully lumbering 26.2 miles on foot for no other reason than, seventeen-trillion years ago, some Roman soldier did it, delivered the immortal message "Nike" [as i understand it, Latin for "victory" or "shoe" or some such shit] [and, btw, thanks a LOT, pal – we'll summon your dipshit centurion ass from the grave when Planet Earth needs ANOTHER bright idea], and promptly keeled over dead immediately thereafter [struck down by the Ghost Of Chuck Taylor™ Future, one can only hope]. I mean, hey, the only way i'm paying sixty clams to meet my doom is if it involves needle drugs, boy prostitutes, and copious servings of thick, hot dromedary cock, ya know? And then it dawns on me: *Hey! I gotta stopwatch!* [purchased, as one may or may not recall, specifically for Boris The Sprinkler's *Group Sex* recording sessions, so that quality control {i.e. performing the songs faster than the Circle Jerks did} might be dutifully maintained] Further, i also live just down the street from the beginning of a nature trail *with elapsed trail distance conveniently demarked in half-mile increments!* Why, were i of a mind to, i could just start my stopwatch, walk down the trail 'til i hit the "13.0 mile" marker and walk back, stop my stopwatch, and call it good! Or walk down the trail 'til i hit the "6.5 mile" marker and walk back twice! Or, shit, just walk back and forth between the "START" and "0.5 mile" marker 26 times! I mean, i'll have to bring my own margaritas and pretzels, but, i mean, for sixty bucks i can set myself up with some pretty good hors d'oeuvres for this thing! Hell, if i do this every week for a year, i'll have saved up enough money for a widescreen plasma TV [less margarita expenditures!] I decide that my target date for DeathTrudge 2004™ will be the Saturday after the "real" marathon. Since the following Monday is Memorial Day, i will have a good long time to recuperate and soak my leprous feet that weekend. Friday night, however, i wind up working late. Having essentially forgotten to eat that day, i take myself out to Green Bay's legendary Jake's™ Pizza for a late-night meal, consuming several pints of Pabst™ and an entire pepperoni, bacon and chicken pie in the process. *Gotta stoke the boiler for tomorrow, ya know?* I make myself one mix tape for my five-dollar Walkman™ [containing "Rock and Roll Guitar" by Johnny Knight, "Funny Things" by Firebeats, Inc., "You Stink" and "How Can I Meet Her" by two completely different Someone-Someone-And-His-Somethings bands, and a bunch of other stuff that i forgot because i was drinking at the time] [and yes, that's right – the plan was 26.2 miles, two feet, one cassette. I figured countless repetitions of "You Stink" would advance my delirium exponentially, thusly provoking even more out-there free-range brain ramblings from which to derive my column]. By mere attrition, i figure out how to get my stopwatch to reset to a bunch of 00's

again. I set my alarm for 7 AM. *I'll have this fucker run by 4 PM! Then i'll sit on the couch and get drunk. Righteously.* 7 AM Saturday morning rolls around. I roll out of bed. For about six seconds, the well, *goddammit, i'm really gonna do it* light goes on in my brain. I stand up. The light toggles off. Another, bigger, brighter, redder, more urgently stroboscopic light comes on in its place: It is the horrendous claxon of the universally dreaded JAKE'S™ MORNING AFTER alarm. Now, as everybody knows – or should – or, if not, should just shut the fuck up and take me at my word on this, as i am Rev. Nørb™, and have i ever lied to you? – Jake's Pizza is the best consumable foodstuff currently [and possibly ever] available to the human race. Bar none. Carpet it with a quarter-inch layer of deadly, butt-igniting crushed red peppers, some parmesan cheese, a dash o' salt, a few liberal [not so much "bleeding heart" liberal as more like "bleeding rectum" liberal] spritzes of Tabasco™ sauce all washed down with delirious amounts of Pabst™ on tap, and you have got the meal that i, were i a condemned man [and who's to say i'm not?], would request for my last meal [especially if i was on death row somewhere like Botswana, where the jailors' procurement time of my trans-global death-vittles might be so drawn out as to extend into a full regime change, and, by extension, full amnesty {even if they phoned the order in ahead of time, which i highly recommend, even if you're not in imminent danger of being executed ((see also: Lyrics to "West of the East," Boris The Sprinkler, 1992))}]. That said, let the record show that Jake's Pizza has certain post-consumer qualities that might best be labeled as, uh, shall we say "intestinally combustible." You won't be worried about "The Day After Tomorrow" if you ate Jake's last night – you'll have a frickin' force ten disaster movie playing in your ass right then 'n' there TODAY. My second attempt at running a marathon is suspended in favor of sitting on the toilet all morning: *It ain't my feet what's gonna be doing the running today. Belly Gunner to Bombardier! Fourteenth payload of anal napalm at the*

... HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MAKING OUT WITH SOMEONE (WAIT! STOP! PENCILS IN THE TRAYS! THAT'S NOT THE WHOLE QUESTION!)...

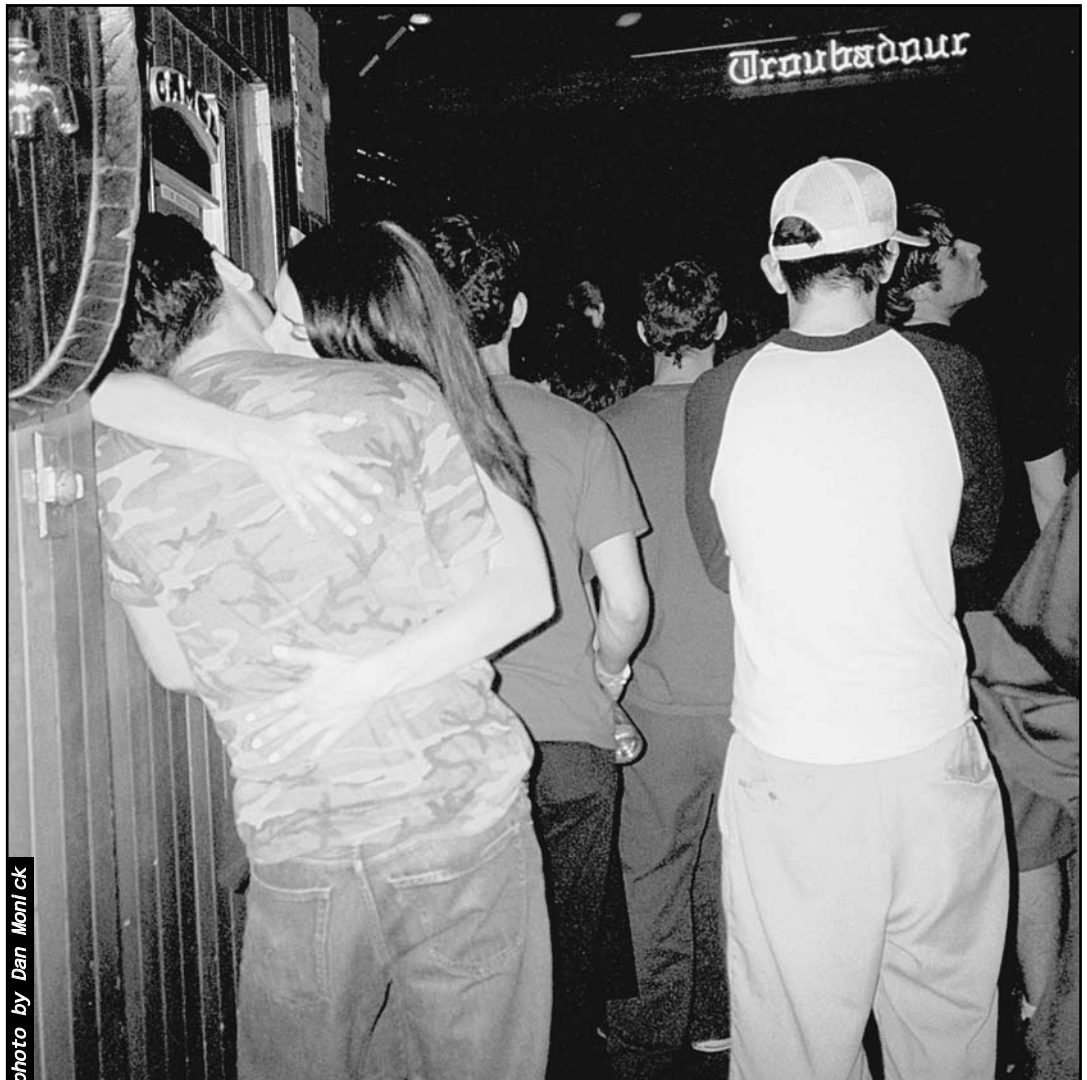


photo by Dan Monick

REV. NØRB

ready! It proceeds to rain outside for the rest of the weekend, paralleling the "Rainforest O' Brimstone" conditions my toilet bowl is also under. My journey of self-awareness and Trial By Pretzel – and, more to the point, my column idea for this issue – are as dead as the nitwit who ran 26.2 miles to yell "Nike!" the first time. On the bright side, the margaritas were pretty good, and my feet feel great! (and, of course, at this point in time, one might do well to ask the rather dodgy question of "Come now, Rev. Nørb! Surely you cannot expect us to believe that you pinned your entire hopes for this issue's column on the – shall we say – 'somewhat unlikely' event that you actually competed in an [admittedly unsanctioned] marathon??? A marathon NOT involving Pinky and the Brain cartoons or something??? Surely you are a more of a natural-born bet-hedger than that! We flatly refuse to believe you had such blind faith in your own [completely unproven] abilities to suddenly go staggering for 26.2 miles one May morning that you approached the problem without some manner of Plan B to fall back on in the [highly likely] event you

LUCKILY, BEING HORNY AND DRUNK, YOU ARE ABLE TO OVERCOME THIS WAVE OF EMPTINESS AND COSMIC INSIGNIFICANCE AND GET BACK TO BUSINESS IN JIG-TIME!

failed to complete [or, in this case, even start] your goal! **Villain! Dissemble no more! Tear up the planks! It is the beating of his hideous heart!!!** WAIT!!! Wrong rant!!! Villain! Dissemble no more! Reveal to us the nature of your Plan B, and your reasons behind its non-utilization!!!" [actually, now that i think about it, there's already a flaw in my structural logic, because why wouldn't you think that "Punk Rock and the Existential Make-Out Dilemma" was my Plan B? Well, HA! You're wrong! It wasn't! Plan B – for that teensy-tiny 0.0000000004% of a chance that i found myself unable {through no fault of my own, i can assure you!} to write about the hard-won life enhancement and great personal discovery of running 26.2 miles

on a whim – was to write about the various items o' bric-a-brac on the shelf in my dinette {i think it's called a "dinette." It's kinda like the space between my living room and my kitchen where my kitchen table is. I would rather call it the "perineum," but i thought that might come off as too formal}. I know, i know – not exactly the most soul-baring, insight-dispatching columnar topic conceivable, but, i dunno, i got like 999 45s and Colonel Klink™ bobbleheads and shit up there, one would assume a column revolving around whimsical bric-a-brac anecdotes of that nature could at least provoke mild distraction in our well-to-do readership. In any event, Plan B was made all the more appealing to me owing to the fact that my new computer is dutifully stationed on the kitchen table not two feet from my ritzy bric-a-brac shelf – all i'd hafta do is just swivel my head around {Linda Blair style or otherwise}, look at my various Items O' Clutter, and type stuff about 'em. *Piece o' cake!* Especially if i don't look at what i'm typing while i type it! Alas, Plan B was not to B: In celebration of finally extricating myself from the commode Saturday afternoon, i used the occasion to completely and fatally mangle my computer's operating system, to the point where it won't even let me reinstall its operating software. *Jolly good show, old bean!* Needless to say, writing a column full of loving odes to the various mounds of shit piled up on one's shelf at home loses a vast amount of its appeal when one attempts to write said column at work {as is my plight}, so, you know, fuck it {i could, of course, fill up the rest of the column by describing the items that fill up the walls of my room here at work... let's see... photo of Christina Applegate with pair of bare boobs pasted where her eyes should be; photo of stripper with big boobs i went on a date with about ten years ago, photo of stripper with even bigger boobs i have not gone on a date with, Loli & the Chones flyer... **HEY!!! WAIT A MINUTE!!! LOLI & THE CHONES FLYER???** **WHAT THE HELL IS THAT DOING HERE???**] So anyway, FUCK IT! "Plan C" is in effect! Plan C is to write about how Plan A and Plan B fell through, then make something up off the top of my head at the last minute. Thus *Punk Rock and The Existential Make-Out Dilemma*. Thank you). Well, anyway, have you ever been making out with someone (*wait! Stop! Pencils in the trays! That's not the whole question!*), and maybe you don't know them very well, or maybe you're both kinda loaded, or maybe, fuck, who knows what, and all of a sudden you're gripped with this intensely uncomfortable realization that the person you're making out with (in the specific) is actually always just The Person You're Making Out With (in the generic), that is to say, that



tomorrrrrrowwww!!!) has a vast amount of impact on the lunch of The Now (unless you ate at Jake's, in which case there's a certain window of influence that must be respected)... and i already forgot how i got to talking about food. *I thought i was talkin' about makin' out with CHICKS, dude!* Well, yeah, anyway, you're makin' out with someone, and all of a sudden you just feel yourself broadsided by this huge existential void (Void reference) because you – for reasons quite unclear – stop perceiving yourself as making out in the specific, and start thinking about how you're merely making out in the generic? That tonight's making out – *which you worked SO GOD DAMN HARD to achieve!* – is merely another specific instance of an ongoingly generic

activity? Another semi-random element of the Make-Out Partner variable array somewhere between the Lower and Upper Bound? That's tonight's making out will be yesterday's lunch if, God willing, you make out Tomorrow or Tomorrow Night (*Rev. Nørb reference! Booyah!*)? And, therefore, the person you're making out with, for all making-out related intents and purposes, might as well be the first or the second or the eighth or the forty-second person you made out with in your life, as opposed to the forty-fourth? Or they might as well be the person you make out with on March 23rd, 2008? Or might as well be a hallucination? A dream? An android? A rather shapely mollusk? I mean, one can get this feeling of pointless interchangeability with pretty much any repeated activity, but experiencing it during really mundane shit like eating lunch doesn't usually wield the same soul-squishing heft as it does when one experiences it during non-mundane shit like making out. I mean, *for cripes sakes, i'm MAKING OUT here!!! A little fucking peace and quiet, wouldja???* You're just minding your own business, going about your Sacred Duties of Tongue Wrestling and Space Groping, and, suddenly, **BOP!** You realize that the identity of the person on the other end of your tongue is largely – actually, pretty much totally – irrelevant (which is, i hasten to add, not to imply that this person HAS no identity. It simply has become a moot point whether they do or not) – and, instead of finding yourself making out with That Specific Person With Whom You Are Making Out At That Time (i.e., a real person with a name and measurements and a phone number which you're trying desperately to acquire), you find yourself making out with The Person With Whom You're Making Out – merely one of numerous (*yeah baby!*) manifestations of a single generic concept. *Your activity is rendered devoid of all higher significance! THUS DO YOU DESPAIR!* Luckily, being horny and drunk, you are able to overcome this wave of emptiness and cosmic insignificance and get back to business in jig-time! Yet thou hast tasted – howe'er briefly – the metaphorical black sperm of the Existential Make-Out Dilemma's vengeance!!! (this has something to do with Plato, i think... as i recall, the old boy posited that in some otherworldly dimension, populated only by our thoughts [i can't remember if said dimension was passed off as "heaven" or "the ether" or what – but, like everything else in this column, it's hardly relevant], there existed the one true idealized concept of everything in existence ["idealized" here not so much in the "one's fantasy come true" sense, but more in the sense of how a truly and absolutely "perfect" circle only exists as an idea in our brains and math books, they

can't be found in real life 'cause they're always a little bumpy and wobbly or whatever], and all we encountered here on Mudball Earth was rough approximations thereof. Like, somewhere in our thought-dimension [or whatever he called it], there existed the perfect concept of "table" – so every table we run into [literally or figuratively] on Earth is just a rough take on the One True Perfect Ideal Table [explained the most famous way, Plato say we be all chained up in a cave, with our backs to the light source, and the Higher Order Of Things {i.e., Tables of Perfection} carrying on behind our backs, so all we know of said Higher Order Of Things is what we can glean from watching their shadows on the wall in front of us. What this has to do with the Plato's Retreat™ sex club i am quite unsure]. *The Existential Make-Out Dilemma, then, is merely a continuance of the Plato's Cave concept, but applied to the relatively more weighty issue* [meant strictly metaphorically, i assure you!] *of make-out partners instead of mere idealized home furnishings!!! How 'bout that?* **However!** The psychic and spiritual discomfort brought upon the individual by the onset of the Existential Make-Out Dilemma is as NOTHING when compared to the unspeakable, formless horror that occurs when those Platonic concepts – concepts which were only mildly disturbing when applied to idealized objects existing beyond our vale of perception (and most of *that* stemming from the idea that we had to be chained up in a cave with the guy in order to dig the gist of his pitch) – concepts whose intense tongue-twizzling terrors were quickly dispelled by our pagan woody's incessant calls to **ACTION!** – are applied to that last bastion of meaning.... that last stanchion of hope... that Last Train To Clarksville... (GASP!)... **PUNK ROCK!!!** I mean, i've got thousands of fucking punk records. Maybe you do too. I've got thousands of fucking punk records, and four of my top five of all time are still the first four i ever bought: Ramones *Leave Home*, Ramones *Rocket to Russia*, Sex Pistols *Never Mind the Bollocks*, The Clash *s/t (US)* (with the free 45!). I mean, *what the fuck?* Was i just lucky? In the right place at the right time? Or maybe i was just impressionable? Like an orphaned baby duck that winds up thinking he's a raccoon because that was the first thing he saw? *Or have all you other punk-record-making fuckers been asleep at the switch for the last twenty-odd years???* Discount (NO! NO DISCOUNT REFERENCE!!!) my lunatic ravings at your own grave peril! For those of us who have bet a gargantuan stack of chips on the lifelong belief that If We Just Go To The Record Store And Come Out With The Right

Record, Everything Will Be OK, to have ten zillion punk records piled up in a heap at home and to be standing at the record store looking for that magical punk record #ten-zillion-and-one that's *really gonna do it this time -!* – and then to suddenly suspect that, holy fuck – barring some amazing statistical aberration right up there with the Virgin Birth and the Cubs winning the World Series, *there IS no "right" record in EXISTENCE* – there is no "right" record likely even **POSSIBLE** – why, 'tis truly to stare into *the bleak and untenable chaos of the eternal abyss!!! Dude!* I mean, you can come out of the record store with a GOOD record – you can still even occasionally come out of the record store with a GREAT record – but can you come out of the record store with a record that's better than the best record you've ever heard in your life, bearing in mind that your top five of all time hasn't changed whatsoever in 24 years???

Suddenly, The Record You Bought Last Week (specifically) is just the record you bought last week (latest in a long line) – the ten-zillion-and-first imperfect shadow of Plato's Perfect Punk Platter that some creep keeps waving around behind your head in a cave somewhere. *Well, FUCK! That's a hell of a thing!* All of which (finally) brings us to this little kernel of joy, folks:

THEOREM OF INESCAPABLE PUNK ROCK DOOM

There is only one punk rock record, and you already own it*.

**presuming the existence of what mathematician Kurt Gödel called a "sufficiently powerful formal system" in his famous Uncertainty Theorem. In this case it basically means that the theorem does not apply until your record collection has reached a certain (unspecified) critical mass.*

...well, that's just about all the time i have for today, kids! If it's any comfort, i'm even more confused by all this than you are! I think i'm going to go home, put on a few Ramones albums i got when i was fourteen, and make out with a table!

Get on the stick, you fuckers!

Løve,
Nørb

REV. NØRB





SQUEEZE MY HORN

THERE'S SO MUCH YOU CAN SERIOUSLY LEARN FROM JEWS IN SPANDEX.

GARY HORNBERGER

Look back, laugh, and have a beer! Wait, you're 40! It seems that youth and punk are not one and the same anymore. Two weeks ago I attended the 40th party of my friend Tim, who used to be the front man for Visual Discrimination, a band who had one foot in O.C. and a leg in L.A. and a small but loyal following. It's hard to believe that twenty years later he has a cozy little place in Anaheim and two kids. He traded in the mic for cycles and jet skis, and still catches foul balls of the side of his head while coaching little league. A week after the party, I was playing golf with Steve, who was a guitarist in the same band. The funny thing about golf is that it's considered an old man's game by the young guys at work.

So I started thinking, "Did we sell our rock and roll souls for the riches and luxuries of the grown-ups?" Well, this is how I see it - I'm writing for this zine you've got between your hands, which is primarily music-based and I review comics, which are

considered child-like, depending on who you ask. Then I thought back to Tim's party. There was Andy, who runs a record shop in Santa Ana, RD who is still drumming in a couple of bands, and several others that still have a foot in hell and a hand reaching to heaven.

My whole reason for questioning any of this is mainly because my faith in youth was crushed when one day at lunch with one of the eighteen-year-old, self-proclaimed "punk rockers," I jokingly said that my golden moment was being on stage with X, upon which he replied, "Who's that?" Could this be true? In a mere two decades, could all the bands that paved the way for our rebellious youth been forgotten? Are the twenty-year-olds living in the "Me! Now!" world unwilling to give thought to the elder statesmen? After all, even Mike Ness showers praise on the likes of Chuck Berry and Johnny Cash. I myself listen to Bill Haley, Louis Prima, and Dean Martin, to list a few. Of course, I

should have realized that I should never use one ignorant sap as my group total. Yes, that also makes me look kinda dumb, but until any of you get your own forum to write in, I'm still the guy who gets to take credit for his own foibles.

Now, where was I? Oh yeah. At that party, even if the tattoos were fading in color and becoming contorted from their original shape, by no means does this mean that some old punker has sold out. It just means he's got money to buy the better things in life - a little older a little wiser. I myself just hit thirty-nine. Few of you were there to have a drink and help me celebrate what's left of my thirties (you know who you are). Anyway, that's more beer for me to consume. It was good to see that even if there are more important things going on in our lives, we can still grab a little bit of the gold and rock and or roll.

HIGHWAY 13, #10

\$2.95 U.S., Les McClaine

Way back when, I believe I reviewed *Highway 13* and I loved it, so when I got issue #10, I figured I'd read it just for my own enjoyment. It turns out that there are only two more issues slated for release. That's right. Twelve issues and *Highway 13* is over. It seems, due to a decline in readers one of the greatest comics I've had the pleasure of reading since taking this job, is closing the doors. What the hell are you people reading? If you're a fan of the old black and white horror classics, such as vampires, Frankenstein, and werewolves, then you should love this stuff. I know I'm not the only kid that grew up on Warner classics, Japanese monsters, or even Elvira's crap. That's what *Highway 13* is. This comic is written so well that you sit outside your local comic shop on a daily basis waiting for the next issue. It's written with a bucket of humor but it still has the right amount of adventure. It leaves you hanging at the right time. So, as I remember, the first issue I read had Rick Rodgers, his buddy, and werewolf in a race for souls - the ultimate pinkslip - with some hotrod ghoul. In this issue, our pair is up against this trippy cult in the first story and against a group of werewolves in the second. That's right, two stories in one comic. Pretty cool, don't ya think? Since I love this comic so much, I'm not about to give you anymore about the story line, but I'm going to encourage you to get off your ass and get a copy. Then, after you're done, tell somebody to go get their own copy, so that maybe this wonderful comic won't become unlucky thirteen. (SLG Publishing, PO Box 26427, San Jose, CA 95159-6427, or highway13@yahoo.com)

ZEEK the MARTIAN GEEK #6

\$2.50 U.S., by Brian Cattapan

Here we go. Zeek is meek. I'm not sure, but I just can't find the fun in a snaggle-toothed Martian and a Venusian flower that love disco. Most of what we see in these pages are bad '70s musical references. I take that back. There are some bad '80s references, too.



Zeek dresses like Travolta one page, is in sweat suit and headband on another, and still on another page we find him in trucker hat and a "reality bites" shirt. Zeek has no shame, yet none of this do I find humorous. The problem with this comic is that it's promoting half-baked commercialism. We've been seeing this so much that it becomes bland. It was a good attempt but it fell a little short for me. (Cattpancomics@yahoo.com)

PIRATE CLUB #1

\$2.95 U.S., by Derek Hunter

Who are the losers here? I'm not sure because every character has their own shortcomings. We start at the clubhouse where we're introduced to the official members of the club: two guys, one who's in charge, I think, and one who thinks he's a bear. You tell me: are these guys cool? I find it hard to believe. Anyway, they go over to some old waste management worker's house to listen to stories similar to Moby Dick. Yeah, it's a bull-shit session. So this guy gives them a boat that they turn into a pirate ship with the help of two other idiots and an ironing board. That's kinda funny. Here's where I get weird. I like it. Yes, a group of angry kids who think they're pirates is amusing, if not completely funny, to me. Check this one out. Maybe angry pirates will make you laugh, too. (SLG Publishing, www.pirateclub.com, or derek@pirateclub.com)

JEWISH HERO CORPS #1

\$3.95 U.S., by Alan Oirich & Ron Randall

I saw this on the shelf at the comic store and thought to myself, how in the hell are they gonna pull this humor off? That's right. I did the quizzical dog right there in the store. I convinced myself that I had to see this to the end. I got home and started reading immediately then found out that this comic was not intended to make light, but to inform. All anyone wants to know about the Jewish faith can be learned from Menorah Man, Dreidel Maidel, Minyan Man, Magen David, Kipa Kid, Shabbas Queen, and Matzah Woman. I'm not shitin ya. It's all here and in color. This book stops just short of making the bad guy Hitler. I'm still confused as to what is going on. Is this funny or am I to take away from this comic a better understanding of the Jewish faith? There's so much you can seriously learn from Jews in spandex. I don't know if it is sacrilege to like or dislike this comic. I mean, this should have been put out by Curveball Comics. So, at this point, I'll tell you to peek at it in the shop and only buy it if you think you need to study it. Then get back to me. (Sayach Comics)

MIGHTY MITE THE EAR MITE

\$6.95 U.S., by Tony Millionaire

From the guy who brought you sock monkey and drinky crow, comes the pulp fiction story line of Mighty Mite, all wrapped up in a four-inch square hardback book. This is the nifty story of how a hungry, cold circus monkey and a singing ear mite find each other. The monkey's story is cold, without color or words, whereas the mite's is colorful and full of song. In the end, all is in color, leading us to believe that a singing mite in a monkey's ear is a good thing. The art in this book is superb and gives one that warm, fuzzy children's book feel. An ear mite might make a young child cry, but us old folk find it endearing. The bizarre is what makes us laugh and this is as bizarre as it gets. I thought this book was delightful and now I'll probably go look for some back issues of the sock monkey. Truly a great find. (Fantagraphics)

EI ZOMBO FANTASMA #1

\$2.99 U.S.

There's nothing like Spanish wrestlers who get killed and are reincarnated to become guardian angels. See, I picked this one because the artwork is real similar to that



arcade game from the '80s, Space Ace. I loved that game and I also liked Dragon's Lair. Anyway, the story line is pretty basic, just like I said before, but for some unknown reason, the Mexican gangsters really do it for me. You know, all that stereotypical gun play and verbiage. It's all good. There's not a whole lot to report on this one, but I did enjoy reading it. Perhaps the story line will pick up now that the couple have been introduced. (Rocket Comics, 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222, Rocketcomics.net)

3 CAR PILE UP #1 & #2

\$2.50 U.S.

Just got done reading these two and let me just say WOW, that's some good stuff. In #1 there are some cool stories. The koala one is weird but I like the idea of letting anyone hang out. My favorite is "Idiot Box," a collection of political observations. If you ever took critical thinking in college, that's what it's like. If A and B then C. You'll understand when you read the judge Scalia ruling on kindergarten teachers. Issue #2 continues the great thinking with the "Harvest," where an army of warriors gets the grab on some Halloween candy. Then there's the "bulimic consumer," which you'll agree with, and laugh about, when you see the reason for the title. It's written by Dan Custer and it has some pretty witty observations on life. And, finally, once again we wrap up with "Idiot box." I loved it. It's an indie comic with one hell of a ferocious bite. This is one that's cheap and worth every penny. A collection of made-you-think commentaries. (mpb151@stu.all.edu, www.vividreams.com)

RIVERWURST #4

\$4.00 U.S., \$6.00 Canada

Indie, indie, indie. What can I say bad about this collection? Not one thing! This is one of the best and biggest collections of stories out there. If there's something you don't like, turn the page. You'll soon get to something you will like. This pulp is so pumped, it will wear you out. It takes some time to go back through just to find my favorites. One sticks out like a sore thumb, because for a minute I thought I was reading *Mad Magazine*. It was "Monstrous Clichés" and let me just say it must take a great deal to entertain a thought. I would like to know if that is the same Candye Kane who was married to the bass player in The Paladins and in fact had her own band that she would gyrate to? Once again, Riverwurst goes deep and out of the park. Thank you. Good night. (Riverwurst, PO Box 511553, Milwaukee, WI, 53203, teakrulos@hotmail.com)

AMERICANJISM

\$12.00 U.S., by Joe Denny

The last one always seem the most difficult. This one goes a little overboard. It's kind of the shock jock of comics. The characters go way over the edge, which, for some, will be humorous. Though I found some of this book funny, I will say it goes way over the edge. Drive thru food and abortions. Gay sex in a church. If this guy has a phone, it must be ringing nonstop from special interest groups wanting a pound of flesh. Your mind has to be way open to fully enjoy the humor that lies within these pages. Just remember I told you so. (Joe Denny, PO Box 432, Sag Harbor, NY 11963)

-Gary Hornberger

GARY HORNBERGER





MARLIE'S STORY

I POINTED THEM OUT TO NETTIE AND SHE PUT HER SCOWL BACK ON AND TOLD ME TO "KEEP AN EYE ON THEM."

(This column is an excerpt from Jennifer's novel, Grrl.)

September 14, 1991

I'm exhausted. I slept until eleven and I woke up exhausted. Exhausted exhausted exhausted. Last night was amazing in so many ways and crazy in so many others. I should start from the beginning.

The student centre (where the show was) was this really weird bar/café type place with a little stage and all sorts of stairs and levels with tables and bars on them. I'd never really seen anything like it. We wore what I said we were going to wear and I used magic marker to write "riot" on one of my arms and "grrrl" on the other. Nettie wrote "queen" on one of hers and "bitch" on the other. My ponytails looked great. We walked in, found the stage and then WOOOSH this girl goes by us and Nettie grabs my arm and says, "It's Hannah Scott!" THE LEAD SINGER! She disappeared backstage before I could talk to her. It wasn't very crowded in the bar.

I pestered Nettie into asking some bartender guy what time the show started and he said at ten PM. It was only 8:30 so Nettie decided that she'd better call her mom. So we walked over to the phones and I was standing there digging out a quarter for her when I look down this ramp and Hannah Scott is walking right towards me! She looked so cool! She was wearing this top that was kind of like a bikini top with ripped-up fishnet stockings - like a shirt over top of it - and a really weird plaid skirt with kneesocks and Converse. She had lots of black eyeliner on and red lipstick. Nettie was talking to me and when I didn't answer she looked up and there was Hannah and Nettie just went, "Oh my God!" and Hannah said, "Hi. Is this where the phones are?" We just nodded because I had no idea what to say.

Hannah got on one phone and Nettie got on the other one and I tried to pay attention to Nettie and

Hannah's conversation. Fortunately, they both got off the phones at the same time and I whipped out my 36(d)ead zine for Hannah to sign. She smiled and signed it and then she said, "So now you have to give me your autograph." I was like, "What?" and she said that she doesn't consider herself to be a celebrity or anything because there's nothing that she does that any other grrrl couldn't do so when she signs something for somebody she always gets them to sign something for her because all grrrls are equally important. Or something like that. Anyway, she had this little notebook in her bag and it was just FULL of signatures and little notes that I guess were all from people who are her fans. She opened it to a blank page for me and I wrote my name and I drew a little cartoon of myself with big boots and my poofy skirt and ponytails. I drew a women's symbol on the skirt of my dress. I felt kind of weird but also kind of cool. Hannah looked at it and smiled at me and said, "Thanks, Marlie." And even if she doesn't want to be considered a celebrity I must admit that just hearing her say my name made me feel like I was floating in space. Then she gave it to Nettie to sign and Nettie had this HUGE smile on her face, which was really funny to me because Nettie hardly ever smiles. She usually just looks all scowly and cool. So I was smiling and Nettie was smiling and Hannah was smiling and it was just so great. I even got up the courage to ask Hannah if I could interview her for *Music Box* and she said YES! She gave me an address to send the questions to and said she'd send the answers back to me after the tour was finished. Then she said good-bye to us and went down the ramp and I guess went backstage.

When she was gone Nettie and I just grabbed each other's arms and started jumping up and down and I had to cover my mouth to keep from screaming. We were like, "She was SO NICE!" and we were just laughing and wanting to scream. It was great because Nettie

doesn't usually act like that, but I totally would have jumped up and down whether or not she did it too. After we calmed down we decided that it was time to go and sit by the stage to make sure that we got good spots. More people were starting to come in and I was happy because most of them were grrrls that seemed like me and Nettie. And a bunch of them had stuff written on their arms too! One girl had "Bitch" like Nettie and I saw one girl who even had "whore" written on her legs. I wasn't sure what she meant by that, but I guess it's just like writing "bitch." It's what boys think of us anyway, so why not scare them by letting them see what they are thinking written on our bodies? I smiled at all the grrrls and they smiled at me and at Nettie but I didn't have the courage to go up and talk to anybody. They seemed to be a little bit older than us and I was still ashamed of my big red "underage" wristband. But then I saw that most of the other grrrls had red ones too. I started feeling a little bit better.

The opening act was a band called The Sylvias and they were AWESOME! They had a little tape with three songs on it and I bought that. They are just from Toronto so maybe we can go and see them again. Nettie and I were right up close to the speakers right at the front of the stage. It was the best place to be because we could see everything perfectly. We were so close that if I'd put out one hand then I could have touched the guitarist's skirt. Right when The Sylvias were finished playing I noticed this big pack of boys coming into the room. They didn't look like the boys who were already there who all looked kind of skinny and maybe gay and they were all with grrrls who I guess they were friends with. These new boys were like the boys from school with baseball caps and ugly sports team t-shirts and stuff. I was wondering if they were in the wrong place and maybe they were going to leave but they just sat down at one of the bars. I pointed them out to Nettie and she put her scowl back on and

told me to "keep an eye on them." After that I kind of forgot about them.

I was just too excited for 36(d)ead to come on. We didn't have to wait for very long. They came on stage and there was Hannah looking so cool and tough and all the other grrrls in the band were just as cool and the first thing that Hannah did was ask that all the boys go to the back of the dance-floor and let the grrrls come to the front. Most of the nice-seeming boys just shuffled to the back like they were even expecting that they'd have to do that. I immediately turned around and looked at the guys at the bar and they were all talking to each other and looking at Hannah and pointing. Nettie was watching them too and we just looked at each other and raised our eyebrows. I really didn't want anything bad to happen. Hannah said, "Now all the women are safe to dance!" and then she raised her one arm up really high and yelled, "THIS IS THE REAL REVOLUTION! FEMINIST FURY NOW!" and they all started playing "Carnivore" off of the record. The audience just went nuts and we started jumping up and down and Nettie and I were screaming the words along with the song. All the other grrrls were doing it too and we were all dancing in this big pack at the front and I didn't even worry about any boys grabbing my ass or pushing me because it was all grrrls and it was SO FUCKING GREAT!

Hannah was amazing to watch, just like she was in Seattle and she was jumping all over the place and twirling the microphone around and crashing into the other band members. And sometimes someone in the band would make a mistake with what they were playing and all of them would just look at each other and laugh and keep going instead of acting like it was the end of the world. It made me want to play guitar in a band SO BADLY but a band like that where I could mess up and it would just be funny instead of being this big deal.

The concert went on like that

for a while and Nettie and I were having totally the best time but when Hannah introduced the song "Dead Men Don't Rape" those guys who had been sitting at the bar just started coming through the crowd of girls and pushing their way to the front. One of them put his hand on my shoulder and shoved me so hard that he knocked me into Nettie and we both fell down on the floor. They all started screaming at Hannah and she was trying to calm them down and get them to back away while at the same time telling them how stupid they were and everyone in the audience was just stunned and all the girls who had been pushed down were trying to help each other up but we were being totally silent. The worst part, I thought, is that some of the guys were laughing. Like it was funny to come in to a place where girls were having fun and make everyone feel angry and scared just because you're bigger than them and you feel threatened by what they believe.

Hannah was still yelling back at them when Nettie and I finally got back on our feet. Everyone else was

quiet and watching. And then Nettie just shuffled past me and pushed the guy near us with all of her strength! He was so surprised that he almost fell over, which would have been really funny, but he just kind of stumbled and then turned around to look at Nettie who was about half his size but she looked really angry and REALLY SCARY! Then SHE started yelling at the guy saying things like, "FUCK OFF! LEAVE US ALONE! GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE YOU STUPID DICK!" and even Hannah was quiet and we all started to watch Nettie. And then a few seconds later another girl started yelling and then a whole bunch of us did and eventually the guys just kind of backed up and walked away and yelled some more insults but then walked out of the bar and didn't come back. Everyone was kind of shocked but we cheered and a lot of grrrls were hugging each other and Hannah was kind of smiling and then she said, "On with the show!" and they started back into the song. When I looked over at Nettie she was watching but totally crying huge tears and looking

just... worn out I guess, and totally miserable.

It was too loud to ask her any questions but I knew that she was thinking about that guy Robbie and I thought that it totally sucked that he could still make her upset when she had just been so tough and we were learning all this stuff about our own power and how we can be however we want to and no men can control us. But I guess he is controlling her. She seemed fine after a couple of songs and even started kind of dancing again and when it was over we all screamed and howled until they came back on and did another song and then Hannah jumped into the audience to talk to people and the band started putting away their instruments and I knew it was totally over. I was glad that we'd gotten to talk to Hannah earlier because she had so many grrrls surrounding her after the show that I knew we would have never gotten to talk to her like we did by the phones.

Nettie seemed fine coming home and we talked mostly about the show except that we didn't really mention the guys or anything. I

didn't want her to get upset because I didn't know what I'd do and last time she seemed almost mad at me when I tried to help. It was really sad because I was thinking about all this stuff we're learning and how it's supposed to be better for girls to talk about their feelings and experiences and share them with each other instead of keeping everything all junked up inside of ourselves. Nettie and I totally agree with that when we're talking about other people, but I guess we're not going to do it for ourselves.

I have to call Sheena and tell her everything about the show, but I don't think I can tell the story all over again just now so maybe I'll have a nap first. I'm still so tired from everything. I'm almost looking forward to going back to school on Monday where everything is boring and predictable.

M.

-Jennifer Whiteford
<matilda@bust.com>





DESIGNATED DALE

I'M AGAINST IT

"Hey, ma'am, it's a vending machine! Carrots aren't gonna fit in the spirals, anyway."

"Everybody was cranky/
Even the maids were mean/
We ran into a miracle/ There
was beer in the soda machine"
—"You Didn't Mean Anything
To Me" from the Ramones' 1981
Pleasant Dreams LP

Beer in the soda machine, indeed. How many of you hops-hankering peeps wish that cold brew was readily available in your workplace's soda machine? Well, you can all put your hands down and stop drooling like Homer J. Simpson, 'cause it ain't happening anytime soon (not here in the States, at least). It's like this: I've been working for a large vending company over the past years, and as a route driver, it's kinda funny how often I've heard this request at a number of my accounts: "Hey, man, how 'bout some stickin' some Budweisers in there?" "Dale, how 'bout stockin' some Coronas today?" These folks with the suggestions are kidding, of course... or are they? It wouldn't surprise me one bit if these on-the-job jokesters took full advantage of an opportunity to purchase frosty treats from their soda machine at work. Can't blame 'em for tryin', right? To quote my beloved mother, "It never hurts to ask. What's the worse they can say? No?" But besides all the half-baked jokes or so-called "witty banter" some people like to indulge me with while I'm out working on my route, there's a whole lot more unwelcome things to handle besides the verbal diarrhea spilling from their pieholes. Don't get me wrong — there's a gang of folks I've come to be good pals with on my route over time; really cool and funny people. On the other hand, I've come across some USDA Grade A pricks as well, and the following is a list of things that anyone would find unacceptable if they were in my boots during the course of my work day.

1. Beggars/ A.K.A. Being a Fucking Leech

This kind of person is the one who thinks that if I was nice enough

to flow them something on one particular occasion (e.g. a candy bar, bag of chips, cup of coffee, or soda), that it's perfectly okay to "coincidentally" show up every damn time I'm there to service their account with the look of a starved seagull on their face. Now, don't go thinking that I don't take care of my regular customers, because I do. I like to because these folks ALWAYS offer to pay, whether or not I'm kicking them down, and they insist on paying more times than none. It's like the same mentality a bar owner has with his regulars — you take care of them, ya know? Besides the seagull scroungers, you also get the types who try to schmooze something offa you. I can't stress enough just how frigging aggravating it is when some dope strolls in and figures that since the machines are opened and getting serviced that they're free to say stupid ass things like, "Hey, everyone, the machines are open! Does that means it's all free today?" Like they think they're the first ones to come up with something as, uh, clever as that. To stop 'em dead in their dumb animal tracks, I always reply with the "Cool! What are you gonna give me in exchange from your company here?" answer. It usually shuts 'em right up, and with the exception of the ones who know you're onto 'em, they get all flustered and give you the "I was just kidding" remark. No you weren't, because if you were kidding, you wouldn't stand there and press the issue. Beat it.

2. Helping Your Damn Self, Making Demands Instead of Suggestions, and General Acts of Being a Creep (Also Known As Being A Rude Motherfucker)

I want to ask you all a question. If you're at your local bar, do you go grabbing bottles of beer or liquor behind the counter that don't belong to you? For some unexplained reason, I often get a clueless person walking up to me while I'm working and they think it's totally cool to grab something out of the machine

I'm working on or off of my cart without saying a word. Then they proceed to hold out their money to buy it, continuing to say nothing. And if you're one of these pushy types who do this, let me explain why this pisses off a lot of us route-men. For starters, if I'm at a busy account and this happens, then everyone watching thinks it's okay to practice this annoying self-serving attitude. Wrong. For example, how would you feel if you were a mail carrier and some impatient dickhead three houses away on your route started rooting through your mailbag slung across your shoulder all because they don't feel like waiting? Not cool. Also, none of the shit on my cart or in the machine belongs to you to begin with, so keep your fucking hands out of it. Let me come to your workstation and start grabbing shit. Not too cool now, is it? There's also the no-question types who come in and tell me what to put in the machines without even thinking to ask me if my company has the item they're demanding. If we do in fact have what they're requesting, I always go out of my way to get them the item they're looking for to buy in the machines. No big deal if it's possible. But coming in demanding something, especially when you're telling me to do it? I know the age-old adage "the customer's always right," but that doesn't mean a customer's given free reign to act like a ripe-for-a-rap-in-the-mouth child star, so knock that shit off. I had a lady come in once, sighing heavily under her breath, and then started to complain about their machine's selection. She crabs on about how there wasn't enough health-conscious items in the machine and how "Some of us here have heart problems and are watching our cholesterol." I really thought she was kidding at first and told her, "Hey, ma'am, it's a vending machine! Carrots aren't gonna fit in the spirals, anyway." She didn't take too nice to my kidding. I soon found out that she wasn't kidding and started nipping at me, "So, what are you going to put in there for us, then?" Getting annoyed with her yenta-like

behavior, I asked what she wanted and all she could say was "Something more healthy than what you've got in there!" I mean, c'mon, people! It's a fucking vending machine, not a health food shop or produce stand! What the hell!? Would you call your cable company and complain that the Spice Channel or the Playboy Channel doesn't show enough family entertainment? Wake up and smell the logic, folks. These are the same types who like to bring lawsuits against fast food corporations with their "look what your food has done to me" jive. Absolutely oblivious.

3. Liars and Refund Slip Abusers (Also Known As Being a Shitbag)

These types somehow try to insult my intelligence as much as they piss me off. Here's a nice example: someone comes up while I'm servicing the machines with a request of a refund because a machine took their money and didn't deliver their selection. Simple enough, right? While getting them their money back or handing them their product they didn't receive, I always ask what happened as to how they lost their money. I do this because if it's an easy enough thing to fix, I can take care of it right there on the spot so I can save on a service call of one of our mechanics coming out to repair it. If they tell me they lost money after it took their money once, they're usually telling the truth. The machines do get jammed or malfunction. It happens. But then I get someone who comes up to me to tell me they want all their money back because after the second or third time they tried putting money in, it wasn't working. Second or third time? Wait a minute... it stole your money once and you kept putting money in? You'd be dumbfounded how many people come to me with this. I ask them this out loud and usually once they hear me repeat what they just said, I get the deer-in-the-headlights look, which means they're probably more of a dolt than they appear to be. Then I'll get the ones who cross

DESIGNATED DALE

their arms insisting "Well, it did!"

I then have to put on my kindergarten teacher's voice and explain that if it takes any of your money and I'm not here, to stop feeding it more money and go see who's in charge of giving you a refund. All of our accounts have refund banks we set up and we balance the money in the refund boxes with refund slips people fill out. But, along with these refund banks, we also get people who like to assume the refund boxes are a convenient way of getting a free buck or two. Here's an example: A while back, our company used to have cigarette machines at some of our accounts, and the cigs were running around \$2.50-\$3.00 a pack. At one of the accounts there was a guy who thought that if he filled out a refund slip, no problem, he'd get his money back for his "malfunctioned" attempt at getting a pack of smokes from the machine. And he did this quite often. The funny thing was, he was the only one at the account who was losing money in the cigarette machine – no one else, just him. One of my company's supervisors actually got his info from one of his many refund slips and went down to talk to him personally to "see the problem he was having" with the machine. After personally humiliating his ass in a straight-up professional way, our supervisor requested it would probably benefit him to buy his cigarettes somewhere else since he was "having such a difficult" time with the machine (about once a week to be exact, the fucking thief).

4) Coin-Rattlers, Hovercrafts, and Other Assorted Assholes.

Sometimes we routemen have to service your machines at the time of your company's break time, and we make every attempt to keep out of the way, like servicing the lesser-crowded machines if the break area is crowded. And if we're in the way, we usually make every attempt to get our customers what they need. A quick word of advice – if the route guy servicing the machines at your work is in this situation, don't be an unruly turd and say shit like "Why do you have to come here during our break time?" We're not choosing to be there in the midst of your break. You think we like being asked (re: told) by a dozen people or more at once to sell them something with the money getting shoved in our faces or complain and whine about our "bad timing"? If we had to wait for every company's break time to be over at every one of our route stops, we'd never get anything done. Believe it or not, the whole working world doesn't

take breaks at the same exact time. Stop, think, and cut the guy some fucking slack. Patience, believe it or not, isn't a four-letter-word. And more times than none, if the routeman sees you're on break, he'll flow you what you need 'cause he knows your on limited time and doesn't wanna hold you up any longer than you want to be.

Here's another piece of helpful advice – if you happen to have a handful of change in your hand and you see us working, please decide what you wanna buy without shaking the change in our ears like a tambourine while hovering over our backs like the Grim Reaper. If

5. Equipment Vandalism (Also Known As "I Need My Ass Whipped 'Cause I'm Acting Like a Spoiled, Scraggly Kid")

These people usually don't have a damn thing to say, especially if they're caught red-handed messing with a machine, whether they're shaking it, beating on it like a chimp, or the ever-favorite practice of kicking it. If I happen to walk upon someone doing this at one of my stops, I usually shout, "Hey! Is that machine mouthing off again? What did it say this time?" or my favorite, "Hey! If your car doesn't start, do you go off and start kicking it or beating

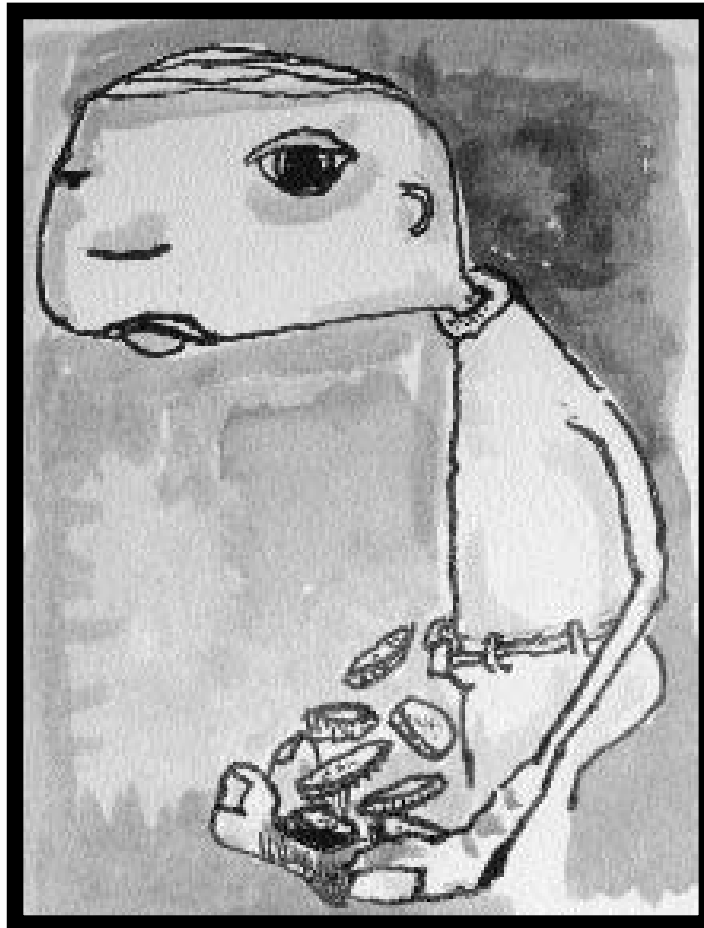


Illustration by Terry Rentzepis: www.alltenthumbs.com

you want something, speak up, 'cause we're usually more than happy to help you out. But if you're some sorry-ass vying for attention, go buy a damn dog and stop it with the coin maracas, okay? I can't count how many times I turn to ask what I can do for someone doing this and they usually don't get it 'til they see me staring at their hands. Think about how you would love that at your job: me hunched behind you at your desk or wherever while you were working and I'm shaking a palmful of change in your ears. Common courtesy isn't a four-letter-word, either.

on it?" Again, not a damn thing outta their mouths except, "Well, it stole my money!" To which I shoot right back with "Do you do this when you're in Vegas and you're losing?" Think about it. And for the record, I wouldn't recommend trying to tilt machines to try to get some free goods, especially soda machines. If a soda machine is fairly loaded with cans or bottles, that thing will come down like a ton of bricks, and you'd best not be in its path, or squash. It's happened, believe me when I say it's happened. But, I suppose if you're dumb enough, have at it, professor.

I recently walked in on some genius stepping back and kicking the front pretty hard. After asking him what the hell was his problem was, he turned around, surprised to see me with my loaded-down cart, waiting to get into the machines. His reply was that his co-worker's bag of Cheez-Its were stuck. And his co-worker nodded her head in agreement while pointing to the hung-up bag. Because he got caught with his dick in his hand, he started to get an attitude with me. I told him, "Look, asshole, would you like a sit-down with me, you, and your boss? I'm sure he'd approve of you acting like a fucking child!" He came back into the break lounge a few minutes later and apologized, and not only because the fear of his boss, but I really think he stopped and saw how much he was acting like an economy-sized douchebag.

There's also those aggressive types who like to take out the front glass with a bowling ball, baseball bat, or with their own foot. How resourceful. And for what? Because your bag of whatever didn't fall or got stuck? Or just because you felt like it? Mind of a lower colon, I tell you. There's the brilliant individuals who like to scrawl their tagging mark with a glass etcher, too... how creative. Your parents would be proud of your disrespecting ass.

But there's a certain someone out there who didn't just take the cake; he also hijacked the baker of the cake with this sickening stunt. One early morning, as I approached the outside area at one of my accounts, I noticed something wasn't right as I rolled up to the bank of machines. On the front of the delivery door (that rectangular door you push in to get your purchase below the display glass) appeared to be mud smeared all over. I'm thinking to myself, "Damn, someone got way too happy with the mud in a dirt clod fight around here." Well, guess what? It wasn't mud, unless you call the foul, runny, fecal river that shoots out of your ass mud. That's right. Some vile bastard backed their ass up to the delivery door and left a king-size mound of semi-soft See's candy inside the delivery bin. And if you're wondering, the smeared front of the delivery door appeared to be their pathetic attempt of doing dog wheelies to get the aftermath of their ass barking off of their behind. The son of a bitch wiped their ass on the front my machine! Some people like to say their job is or can be shitty, but for one uneventful morning, I could cop the phrase in a literal sense. Let's hear it for the human race.

I'm Against It.

–Designated Dale

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DESIGNATED DALE





A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

IT WAS ALL SO UGLY AND SO POINTLESS THAT EVEN THE DUMBEST RUBE WATCHING THE DUMBEST TV BROADCAST HAD ENOUGH SENSE TO TAKE A STEP BACK AND DRAW ONE SOLID CONCLUSION: THIS IS FUCKED.

I went to the polls in November, 2000 wearing an Against All Authority t-shirt. I handed my driver's license and voter registration card to the old lady who was volunteering there. Before she looked at the card or my ID, she looked at my shirt. "You're not really, are you?" she asked. "Not really what?" I asked.

"Against all authority."

It took a second for it to register with me. I'd worn the shirt because it was the least smelly one on my floor when I got ready to leave that day. It was no political statement. It was just a shirt advertising a Florida punk band, as far as I was concerned. And was I against all authority? Well, shit, I don't know. Sometimes yeah. Sometimes no. It's a complex question and the last thing I wanted to get into was a discussion about autonomy and classical anarchism with an old lady volunteer at the north Merritt Island Moose Lodge. I just wanted my ballot. I shook my head and said, "Nope."

I got my ballot, walked into an open voting booth, and stamped out my vote for Ralph Nader for president. I was a Florida resident at the time. Again, this was the 2000 presidential election, which was decided based upon the votes of Floridians. The election that most people feel was lost by the Democrats because liberal voters – and specifically liberal Florida voters – voted for Ralph Nader.

I left the polls and went for a bike ride that day. There's a trail not too far from the Moose Lodge where I voted. The trail winds through some swampland. It's meant for bikes, but there are a lot of twists and turns and places where it's only about as wide as a normal pair of handlebars. Roots stick up in unfortunate spots, Florida cacti line the edges of the trail, and it's real easy to wipe out. Still, it makes for a fun ride, and I could cut through the trail on the way back home instead of riding along the highway. So I twisted and turned along the edge of Sykes Creek, barely avoiding flinging myself into a strand of mangroves a few times. I kept thinking about the election while I rode. I knew it was dangerous to do this. I needed to be thinking about where I was going and not where I'd come from, or I was gonna wipe out.

The trail lasted for about two miles, at which point it opened up into a wide clearing. I stopped the bike there, drank some water, looked around the swamps, and thought about the election. At the time, I was two months away from moving out to California to help start *Razorcake*. I was thinking a lot about the starting this new magazine and thinking a lot about what I'd write for it, and I decided that I'd write my first column about the 2000 presidential election. I'd talk about why voting for Ralph Nader wasn't a wasted vote. My thinking at the time was that a.) it's never a wasted vote if you vote for who you want to win and b.) if Nader got 5% of the popular vote, which was a legitimate possibility, then the Green Party would get the same government funding that the Democrat and Republican parties got. So my hope wasn't that Nader would win. I mean, I did hope that, but I didn't realistically see it as a possibility. What I really wanted was a third party. I also wanted to discuss the notion that a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush, because there's a huge logical fallacy in that notion.

See, in the 2000 election in Florida, a vote for Nader was a vote for Bush. Also in the 2000 election in Florida, a vote for Gore was a vote for Bush. And if you didn't vote in Florida but you were a resident of the state in 2000, you voted for Bush in that election, because the Electoral College determines the outcome of the presidential elections. I know a lot of people don't understand how the Electoral College works, so here's a quick explanation. All of the votes in a state are tallied up, and the person who gets the most votes in the state gets *all* the electoral votes. If Florida has 25 electoral votes (and it did in 2000) and Bush gets more votes for president than any other candidate in Florida (which, officially, he did), then it doesn't matter if he won the majority of votes by a margin of one vote or a million votes, he gets all 25 votes. The electoral votes

are counted up and the guy who gets the most wins. Oregon in 2000 had 7 electoral votes. All of them went to Al Gore. So, in Oregon, a vote for Bush was a vote for Gore. The number of electoral votes depends upon the number of people living in a state. California had the highest population in 2000, so they got the highest number of electoral votes, 54. All of them went to Al Gore. So if you didn't vote in California in 2000, your non-vote was a vote for Al Gore. And so it goes.

I rode my bike home that day and framed my first column in my head. As I saw it, things were looking up. A third political party had a legitimate chance of building itself up to counter the Republicans and Democrats; I was about to co-found a punk rock magazine; and bike riding was still fun. It didn't feel like the dawn of a new era or anything, but I felt optimistic as I peddled home.

Of course, I didn't know then what was about to happen. Not only would the election turn into a huge farce, the discourse of the election would be hijacked. Cable TV, newspapers, and news magazines bombarded us with too much minutia about hanging chads and Republican staffers protesting and bogus recounts. It was all so ugly and so pointless that even the dumbest rube watching the dumbest TV broadcast had enough sense to take a step back and draw one solid conclusion: this is fucked. We all drew that conclusion. We turned off our TVs and stopped reading about it in the papers and just said, "Let me know when they pick a winner." In the end, most people didn't even care that the president wasn't *elected*; he was *selected* by the Supreme Court.

Because the whole election had been so overexposed, because everyone, including me, was sick of it, I scrapped my idea for a column.

Now, it's almost four years later, and we have another election coming up. As I write this, the Democratic Party hasn't yet made their official declaration that John Kerry will be their candidate, and already, everyone is sick of the election. There's been so much dirty politics that most people have made up their mind who they're voting for already, and most people have done this because they really want to block out the next several months of angry, factually challenged, painfully repetitive news reports. At least in 2000, the election wasn't a total farce until after all the votes were in. This year, the election is a total farce before we even know for sure who all the candidates are.

I don't know if this is paranoid of me or not, but I think this is intentional. The majority of eligible voters in the US don't vote, and I think that the two major parties want to keep it that way. It makes sense. The two major parties don't represent the interests of the majority of the eligible voters, so why should they want those people to vote? And what better way to keep most people from voting than to make them so sick of the election that they just turn off from it? I don't think that the mass media blows up issues because people are interested in, say, torture scandals involving Iraqi prisoners or because these reports bring in higher ratings and the higher ratings sell more ads. I don't believe that for a second. I think the mass media overexposes these issues because they're lazy. They're gonna sell ads any way you look at it, and by running the same stories over and over again, they can cut costs on things like journalists and news. It's a fact that most of what you see on TV news and read in newspapers is generated by a PR firm somewhere. And I think that the PR firms working for the Democrat and Republican parties are intentionally feeding negative stories to the mass media knowing that those stories are going to be overexposed, and hoping that the overexposure leads to apathy and lower numbers at the polls. I don't know this for sure. I don't know how much of it is intentional. I do know that people are apathetic. People are sick of the election already, and as the overexposure continues, fewer and fewer people will be inclined to go to the polls.

There's a real danger inherent to elections, though, when most people don't vote. A good example of this is the 2000 election.

Think back to 2000, the time when everyone was arguing about hanging chads and votes for Buchanan and how Nader supposedly fucked everything up. Though there were several differing opinions about the election, one thing that everyone agreed with was that the election was "unprecedented." Everyone said that we'd never seen anything like this before. There was even a really cool documentary called *Unprecedented* that examined all the improprieties surrounding the 2000 elections. Not everyone agreed with the documentary, but everyone agreed with the term: unprecedented. And the only problem with that is that the US electoral history has a long, rich tradition of elections being rigged. The most famous rigged election occurred in 1948 in Texas. It set a precedent. Here's the short version of what happened.

In 1948 in Texas, there was a US Senate race between Coke Stevenson and Lyndon Johnson. Coke Stevenson had been a governor of Texas and entered the election propelled by a popular, two-term administration.

Johnson was a wiry guy whose political future was iffy at best. If he didn't win this election, his political career was pretty much shot. Knowing that he couldn't compete with Stevenson on traditional grounds, Johnson instead backed himself with a tremendous amount of money from corporate campaign contributions, dumped that money into polls, and matched his speeches with fluctuations in the polls so that, by the end of his campaign, he said only what the polls showed as what people wanted to hear. When this didn't prove to be enough for Johnson, Johnson started buying votes. Johnson poured a great deal of money into counties in southern Texas that were run by a political boss named George Parr. On election day, when the votes started pouring in, Stevenson took a strong early lead. Early returns predicted that he'd win. Then, a strange thing happened. Johnson started winning in places where the pre-election polls showed that he was behind. Stevenson's lead started to dwindle until, finally, all the votes were in and the election



(ABOVE) GEORGE PARR'S MEN POSE WITH THE BALLOT BOX THEY STOLE.

was too close to call. For several days, official vote tallies trickled in from the different counties. Often the official tally didn't match the original tally. The election grew closer as more votes came in. The lead switched hands several times. Essentially, both Stevenson and Johnson had friends in charge of certifying the vote in different counties, and the outcome of the election depended not upon who received the most legitimate votes, but upon who handed in the last tally, a friend of Stevenson's or a friend of Johnson's. When it looked like all the counties had reported, a Stevenson friendly county handed in a final tally that put Stevenson up by 117 votes. What they didn't count on, though, was a small county under the thumb of political boss George Parr. The man in charge of the vote in that county was one of Parr's deputies, Luis Salas. Earlier in the election, Salas had reported 765 votes for Johnson in his county. To win the election, Johnson needed 882 from Salas. So, in his official report, Salas changed the 7 to a 9, much like you'd change a D to an A on your report card, and Johnson won the election by 83 votes. Of course, Stevenson tried to fight this result. He took it to the Federal District Court. The most difficult obstacle Stevenson faced in proving that Johnson had stolen the election, however, was the fact that Stevenson had stolen a good chunk of votes himself. Finally, the Supreme Court of Texas chose to award the Senate seat to Johnson rather than allowing a full-blown court case to shine such a bright light on corrupt electoral practices by both candidates.

In 2000, there was the presidential race between Al Gore and George W. Bush. Gore had been a vice president of US and entered the election propelled by a popular, two-term administration. Bush was a wiry guy whose political future was iffy at best. If he didn't win this election, his political career was pretty much shot. Knowing that he couldn't compete with Gore on traditional grounds, Bush instead backed himself with a tremendous amount of money from corporate campaign contributions,

dumped that money into polls, and matched his speeches with fluctuations in the polls so that, by the end of his campaign, he said only what the polls showed as what people wanted to hear. This didn't prove to be enough for Bush, and so he started pouring money into the southern state of Florida, where his brother, Jeb Bush, was governor. Though Bush was behind on election day polls, he didn't need to win the popular vote. A win in Florida would be enough for him to become president. On election day, when the votes started pouring in, Gore took a strong early lead. Early returns predicted that he'd win. Then, a strange thing happened. Bush started winning in places where the pre-election polls showed that he was behind. Gore's lead started to dwindle until, finally, all the votes were in and the election was too close to call. Official vote tallies trickled in from the different counties in Florida. Often the official tally didn't match the original tally. The election grew closer as more votes came in. Essentially, both Gore and Bush had strongholds in different counties, and the outcome of

the election depended not upon who received the most legitimate votes on election day, but upon who could muster up more votes through recounts and absentee ballots. When the numbers from the recounts started to come in, it looked like Gore would win the final tally. At this point, Jeb Bush stepped down as the head of the elections. He felt that it wouldn't be fair for George W. Bush's brother to be in charge of the outcome of the presidential election. Instead, Jeb Bush left Secretary of State Katherine Harris, who was also the head of the George W. Bush campaign in Florida, in charge. No surprise, with Bush's campaign head counting the votes, Bush won. Gore felt that the recounts weren't fair. He took it to the Federal District Court. The most difficult obstacle Gore faced in proving that Bush had stolen the election, however, was the fact that Gore hadn't been forthright in his handling of the election, either. Finally, the Supreme Court chose to award the presidency to Bush rather than allowing a full-blown court case to shine such a bright

light on corrupt electoral practices by both candidates.

I can't say for sure that George W. Bush rigged the Florida election. It seems to me that he did, but the evidence is so hard to dig up and so questionable that, like in the case of the 1948 election in Texas, we won't know the whole truth until it's all ancient history (most of the information I had on the 1948 election wasn't made public until 1990). The 2000 election does follow a very similar pattern to the 1948 one, though. In my more paranoid moments, I think that George H. W. Bush, who was twenty-four in 1948 and who is also a former head of the CIA, studied the 1948 election and used it as a model in helping his son to get elected as president.

Still, George W. Bush has already served most of his term from that election. There's nothing we can do to change that. I understand that. But we can do something about the next term. We can turn off our TVs, or at least mute the political ads, before we get sick of hearing about them. We can select our information more carefully so that everything is not over-exposed. Because, when you get right down to it, a person who pays no attention at all to the election is better informed than a person who only pays attention to Fox News.

And, if you take nothing else from this column, remember this: George W. Bush knows that people like you hate him. He's going to try to make you so sick of hearing about the election that you'll stay away from the polls. If you stay away, it's easier for him to rig the election so that he wins. But he can only buy and steal a finite number votes. After that number, legitimate votes really do count. Bush's biggest fear is that people just like you will vote against him, because no one can buy enough votes to stop a landslide.

-Sean Carswell

SEAN CARSWELL





SWINGING DOOR CONVERSATIONS

AN HOUR LATER I FELT LIKE I HAD JUST STEPPED INTO SOME SORT OF ORWELLIAN NIGHTMARE.

WHATEVER IT'S WORTH

"Sometimes we're not prepared for adversity. When it happens sometimes we're caught short... And I have advice for all of us. I got it from my pianist Joe Zawinul who wrote this tune. And it sounds like what you supposed to say when you have that kind of problem. It's called... Mercy.... Mercy... Mercy."

—Cannonball Adderley

Carol said she couldn't do it anymore. She said making the relationship work was more than she was willing to put up with and really, I couldn't blame her. Carol had direction. She had a career. She was going places. As for me, I was just kind of drifting. Just didn't know what it was I wanted to do. Maybe Carol had some attraction to that in the beginning, but you know how it is, things only last so long.

Eventually it got to the point where we were arguing every night. Seemed like it was always about the most trivial shit. Like me leaving the empty milk carton in the fridge or forgetting to make the bed. Both of us knew that these petty things weren't the problem though. Basically, we'd just grown tired of each other.

Towards the end I started hitting the bottle pretty heavily and most nights she'd go to sleep early and I'd pass out on the couch. I'd wake up in the early mornings to infomercials and the annoying sounds of Billie Dee Williams or Dionne Warwick's voice. Believe me; that'll do a number on whatever migraine you've already got working. I don't know, maybe a lot of couples are able to go on living the rest of their life like that, but for us, the writing was on the wall.

So I took what little I owned, the cat Jo-Jo, and got my own little studio downtown. It was definitely a step-down from the two-bedroom place Carol and I had in the year and a half we'd lived together, but I figured, hey it's cheap; I just need a place to sit and think and figure things out. You know.

Well, it sort of went downhill from there. I started showing up late for my job at the hotel. During the last couple of months I'd been able to hide it pretty well, but now my boss could smell the liquor on my breath. All I did was set up for the banquets so it's not like I was around the guests, but I was getting out of hand. I had a 5 o'clock shadow going and the blood-veined eyes weren't helping any.

To top it off, Carol wouldn't answer any of my phone calls. Well, sometimes she would, but the conversation would be short and blunt and I felt like I didn't even recognize her voice anymore. I'd say I needed to see her

and she'd say she didn't think it was a good idea and then I'd get the slurred tongue going, say something smart, and she'd hang up. It's crazy. It's like you're with this person every single day and night and then boom; just like that, it's all over. There's nothing to show for it. It's like it never even happened. But still, the memory keeps playing over and over inside your head. You're picturing a life that no longer exists. And now you're trying to figure out who the hell you are. And it's not like Carol was the only girl I'd ever had. There's been plenty. But she was the last and that was all I could really think about. Eventually, I got fired.

The next three weeks are kind of foggy. I locked myself in the room, spending countless hours in front of the television watching lame soap operas and pathetic sitcoms. One night I remember seeing this commercial advertising for a show about a talking baby. You know, the played-out smart-ass, *Look Who's Talking* bit. You'd think it would've all ended with Mr. Ed. — "Hey there, Willlllbuuuurr" — but no, some sick, demonic producers out there just wouldn't let it go. "Fifteen million viewers tuned in last week to Baby Bob." It was bad enough that 60% of the country thought George Bush was doing a fine job as a president, but a talking baby?

I lost it. The bad blues were coming down on me and I couldn't get rid of them. I'd spend my days and nights screaming at the television, jotting down undecipherable pages of words in a notebook and reading way too many bitter 19th century Russian novels. I kept having re-occurring dreams about mean midgets and people chasing after me down dark hallways.

The breaking point came when I found myself pissing in a non-discreet alleyway in the middle of the afternoon. I'd been hitting the Jack since early morning at some old man bar and now here I was with my pants around my ankles right there in broad daylight, for the whole city to see. I remember some little boy yelling out, "Mommy, look at that man. He's naked!" Wherever you are kid, all I can say is sorry for the traumatizing show, but thanks for the sobering observation.

I was down to three hundred bucks, a week late on the rent, and without a job. So I took a long look in the bathroom mirror, shaved the dirt off of my face, and thought, it's time. I applied at some of the other hotels downtown, but no one was hiring. Then on to the restaurants where I filled out a bunch of applications and fumbled through a few interviews, but no one called back. I'd wake up in the morning, go grab the paper and search through the classifieds. Still no luck though. If I didn't get some money coming in soon I was going to be out on the streets.

I finally called the place that had an ad for warehouse work.

Hiring 100 new employees!

So I went over to the employment office and sat in front of some college girl who looked way too attractive to be in this line of work, filled out some papers, and had myself a job. You got to be pretty weary about any job that hires you in less than five minutes, but I was desperate. She told me it was a two-month temporary gig and only paid six bucks an hour, but there was an opportunity for advancement. The poor innocent angel said it with such earnestness that it was hard to keep myself from going into hysterics.

The following morning I woke up at 4:30. I stood at the bus stop in the dark, November cold along with a couple of other lost souls, thinking, wow, slip up a little and life will do a complete back-flip and kick your ass right in the gutter. I sat on the bus, staring out the window, telling myself, as bad as the job is I'll just do a couple of weeks, cover the rent and by then, hopefully one of those other jobs will have called me back.

An hour later I felt like I had just stepped into some sort of Orwellian nightmare. Sure, I'd worked some warehouse jobs after I got out of high school, but I'd never been to a place of this magnitude. It was the size of at least two large city blocks. Stacks and stacks and more stacks of boxes and pallets were piled everywhere. Madmen on forklifts zoomed up and down the isles as comatose-eyed people huddled over big pressing machines. There were flashing red and blue lights and buzzers and muddled voices coming from the speakers above. Yes, and all this madness before the blessed hour of sunlight.

They put me in the back of the warehouse along with about a hundred other people. As I leaned against the conveyer belt that stretched about fifty yards the first thing I noticed was that I was the only person who wasn't black. It didn't bother me; I just thought it rather strange. Most of the jobs I'd had before usually had a pretty diverse group of people. But I wasn't here to think. I wasn't here to pass social commentary. I wasn't here to dissect the racial distinctions associated with wealth. I was here to get that little bit of green and hopefully be on my way.

The conveyer belt went into motion and everyone started working away at the magazines. My job was to stick address labels on Christmas catalogs. The average American probably never even passes a second thought when they see their name and address on a magazine they get in the mailbox. Honestly, I'd never even once thought of it before, but here I was now, a

part of the whole cock-eyed orchestra; one more tiny, invisible cog in the vast, tumbling corporate washing machine.

Ironically, the cover of the catalog was a glossy picture of a white woman's hand with a shiny 14k diamond on her finger. For hours that was all we stared at. This damn rich chick's fingers and her diamond that probably cost more than we made in a year. Talk about rubbing it in. After about twenty magazines we'd all throw what we had on to the conveyer belt, dig through a box and continue on.

Four hours must have gone by when I started to feel the ill effects: the standing in the same spot, the never moving more than a few feet. The knees started to lock up. The eyes were going blurry. The theme song for the *I Love Lucy* show popped into my head. Jeez! Just hold on man, just hold on, I kept whispering to myself.

I shouted over to an older gentleman across from me, "What time is it?"

"Quarter ta' nine."

"Hah hah, funny, no really what time is it?"

"I already told you, almost nine," he grunted.

Oh lord, this wasn't a warehouse, this was an insane asylum. This was a twisted vortex of time, a maniacal world where minutes were seconds, where hours were minutes, where time stood still with a joker smile wrapped around his ears. And still, the magazines kept coming. There was no end in sight. Whenever the big box was getting close to being empty a forklift would come by and place another box right next to it. By the time you made it

outside for break you had just enough time to light a cigarette, take a few puffs and then run back to the line. If you were late you got docked. Two marks and they sent you home.

There was an even amount of women and men. There were some kids just out of high school, your thug-lookin' guys, and then the young women talking about their crazy kids. The thing that surprised me though was that at least a quarter of the people had to be over fifty. It just didn't seem right. These people ought to be walking in the park. Watching sunsets. Playing with their grandchildren.

I wanted to think that this was just some temporary job, a way to make some quick, extra money for the holidays. But gauging from that hollow, weary look in their eyes and the hunched-over backs and the stubby fingers, I got the feeling this was just one of many in a long line of minimum-wage labor jobs.

The boss was a short, pig-nosed runt of a woman. She kind of looked like a demented bear. She would constantly walk up and down the aisle, glaring over our shoulders, shouting

out, "People, make sure you are putting the sticker in the upper right hand corner! We're finding too many catalogs with the sticker on the left-hand corner! We can not have this!"

I had a deep, nauseous welling of hate for her in my gut, yet at the same time a part of me felt sorry for her. I wondered how much time she had to do on the line and the machines to get that position of high ranking. Judging by her mannerisms, I figured probably a while.

I can't even begin to put into words what it was like to hear the last buzzer at five finally go off. Actually by that time, I was void of all feeling. All it took was a day and they had me. I

all insecure about her figure and thought she was getting big, but I loved her ass. I'd just lie in bed under the covers and laugh at her.

"What's so funny?" she'd say.

"You are, sugar."

"I'm getting fat."

"You're crazy."

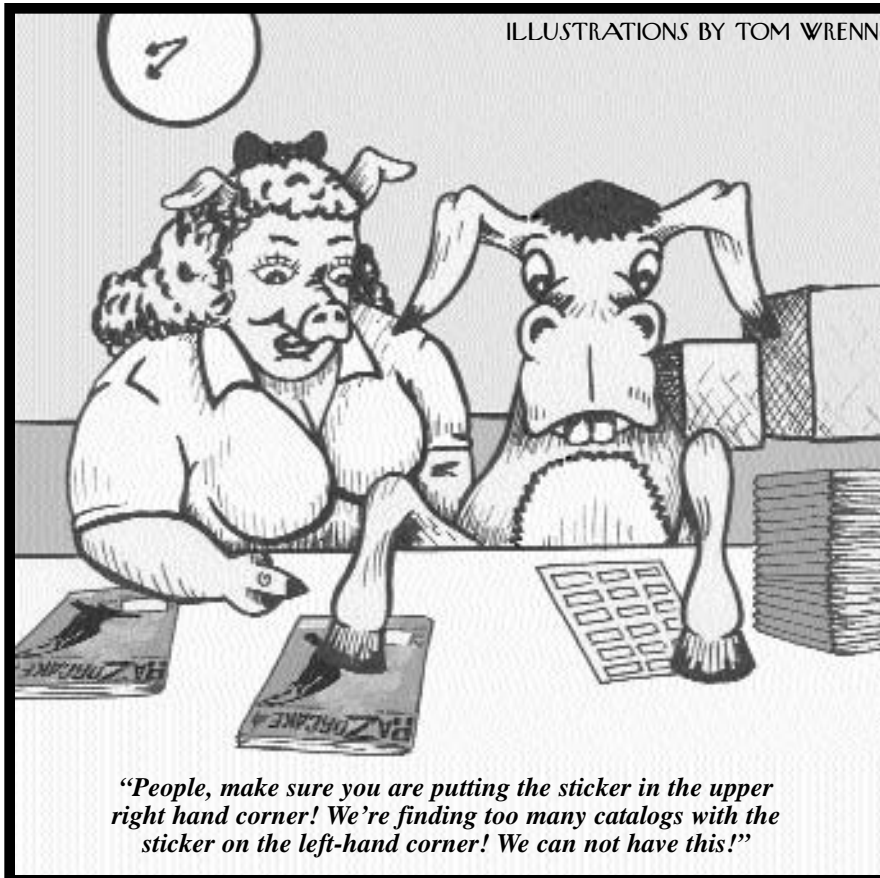
"My ass is big."

"Nuts. It's perfect. Come over here."

"I gotta' go. I'm late for work."

"Come on. You got a couple minutes."

Carol would give me that dirty smile and I'd throw off the covers and she'd get on top of me. Man.



"People, make sure you are putting the sticker in the upper right hand corner! We're finding too many catalogs with the sticker on the left-hand corner! We can not have this!"

wasn't one of those strong-willed menial laborers, one who could block it all out and just focus on the job. No, a full day under my belt and I was already a lost cause, my brain one big ball of mush. I thought about the hotel job. Next month I would've been on my third year there. Man, I'd really messed up. Looking like some heard of sedated cattle, my fellow workers and I filed out of the warehouse and headed for the bus stop.

The minute I got home I turned on the hot water in my tub and put a plug in the faucet. I put my naked body into the hot water and just sat there, looking listless up at the ceiling. I couldn't even remember the last time I'd taken a bath. It'd been years. Every muscle in my body was throbbing. My cat Jo-Jo sat on the toilet seat and stared at me with his big, melancholy eyes and meowed. I thought about Carol. I couldn't help it. She'd probably already found someone else. I remembered back in the heydays when Carol used to stand naked in front of the closet mirror before getting dressed for work. She'd constantly stare at her ass. She was

I pictured the lost reflection, grabbed my dick and pulled away. I let it go a few minutes later and watched the white cream float to the surface. Jo-Jo just gave me those dumb eyes and stretched out his legs. What the hell went on in the mind of Jo-Jo? I thought. Like what was he really aware of? Did he know the difference between a Ray Charles tune compared to Beethoven? Could Jo-Jo tell when I was sad and when I was in a good mood? Did he dream? Of course he dreamed. I could see him twitching when he slept. But what the hell did he dream about? Catching mice? Humping other cats? Yeah, after ten hours of mind-numbing work, this was what you were left with.

An hour later I was lying in bed with my eyes closed. My body felt limp, lucid, like it was a part of the mattress. Through the walls I could hear someone on the floor below mine listening to the gospel station on full blast. Then there was the guy down in #4 who'd been playing the same tune on a trumpet for the last month. It sounded like a Duke Ellington song, but it was all out of tune. The crazy notes floated up the stairs and into my room. My head sunk into the depths of the soft pillow as the strange sounds of the night floated around me.

The next morning I stepped off of the bus and walked along the one-lane road in the thick fog towards the warehouse. As the ice-like wind played games with my pale-skinned face I could see the sun beginning to show its face over the horizon. A flock of birds flew over a field of wheat stocks that brushed against one another. It produced a sort of hypnotic whisper. I stood there on the side of the road and took it all in. It was so quiet and still. Everything around me seemed overwhelmingly extraordinary, so damn fantastic and beautiful.

Ten minutes later the buzzer from the depths of hell was calling me back to the line.

It was hard not to let it take a hold of me. So I tried to ignore the magazines. After a couple

days it was like tying my shoelaces; I didn't even need to look at what I was doing. I let the mind fall into a trance; one filled with pure imagination and rusted visions of a long lost youth.

For some reason I started thinking about this girl I used to have a huge crush on back in the sixth grade. I don't know why, but the memory of Lupe Herrera just popped right into the head. What an angel that Lupe, what soft lips, those Spanish snake hips, and oh, I use to go nuts in the back of class staring and drooling over her. But hell, she'd never give me the time of day. And then there was George Gomez, who'd been held back twice and ran with gangster kids who were in high school. George and I never got along. We were always going at it out on the soccer field during recess. He got Lupe – the good girls always go for the bad boys – but then the next year we all went to junior high and

the long drive home and only getting six hours of sleep before he'd be back at the office.

"What are you talking about? Don't you remember last year when we left early and we were out in the parking lot and Marshall hit that grand slam in the 9th? Jeez. Come on Dad."

That wild-eyed kid sits in those bleachers full of hope. The world is a magic dream. Sitting there he has no idea that he'll be some washed-out loser twenty years later. I see him sitting there, but at the same time, I can't even recognize him.

And this is when the thoughts begin to turn dark and brooding. The day goes on and one feels as if there's no end in sight. The repetition becomes maddening. One even begins to relate to the reasoning of the murderer. Dostoevsky had it right on. How can one not commit murder in this state of mind? I look around at these

side an older man who had H A T E tattooed on his knuckles. Enough said.

"The one over on Howard?"

"Yeah, for a month I was working at a cemetery diggin' graves."

"Damn."

"Hard shit man. Didn't pay nothin'."

Seconds later the pig-nosed, scrawny boss was yelling at me to quit talking. I came close to taking one of my stickers – "Evelyn Jones, 1845 Washington Blvd." – right on the bitch's lips, but somehow I held back. I even mentioned it to Kenny after she left, hoping to maybe throw some humored light into the day, but he just ignored me and continued to go at the magazines like a possessed madman. I suppose there was some sense of tragic, yet comic irony in all of this, but at that moment I was just too tired to laugh.

THAT WILD~EYED KID SITS IN THOSE BLEACHERS FULL OF HOPE...

HE HAS NO IDEA THAT HE'LL BE SOME WASHED~OUT LOSER TWENTY YEARS LATER.

things changed. Lupe became a Chola girl and now she had those cement-coated bangs shooting up half a foot over her head and had replaced her sweet summer dresses with black jeans and white tee shirts. And then a couple years later I heard George – a.k.a. Trigger – was doing time for murder. And now where were they? Was George still staring at life through a cell? Shit, maybe he became one of those dot.com millionaires. Was Lupe now some beautiful suburban mom married to a rich lawyer? Was she some fat cow who had five kids and lived on welfare?

Then the memory that comes to mind is of a few years earlier: the times my father and I went to Dodger games. We'd drive up to Los Angeles early in order to beat the rush hour traffic. There was this park not too far from Chez Ravine and we'd both play catch while Mexican families sat around benches, the husbands kicking soccer balls to one another, the mothers charbroiling corn... the smell of tortillas... children laughing in foreign tongues. I can still see the swooping Palm Trees doing their little dance. Even now the growling sounds of the conveyer belt is miles away and I can feel the hot, Santa Ana winds blowing through the city of Angels as that neon sun lights up the Southern California sky.

The two of us would go eat at some whole in the wall, empty Chinese restaurant. I always got the Moo Shi Pork. I remember that much. Then up the winding road to the stadium. I knew all the players' back then: Fernando... Guerrero... Gibson... Hershieser.

Walking into the ballpark...the distinct smell of freshly cut green grass and oily mitts and buttery popcorn and greasy Dodger dogs wafts through the stands. We were always way up top behind the plate in the cheap six-dollar seats where the players looked like ants, where they hardly ever hit a foul ball. Still all of us kids would continually slap our gloves in the hopes that someone might hit one up there just so we could go to school the next day and brag about it. After the 7th inning my father would try to convince me to go so we could beat the traffic, but hell no, I'd tell him, "We're staying till the end."

"But they're down by four runs, there's no way they're going to win," the tired old man would say, his thoughts more concerned about

vacant eyes staring down at the magazines. A few people down at the end of the line are talking, but I can't quite hear them. Everyone else seems to be in some sort of trance. What are they all thinking about? How the hell did we all get here?

Next to me on the line was a guy who I guessed to be in his late twenties. He was going through the stacks of labels and magazines at a frenetic pace. I wanted to tell him that no matter how fast we went, we were still going to get paid the same. I was only going on my second day, but if I didn't talk to someone soon I was going to go insane and strip naked and do the damn hokey-pokey on top of the conveyer belt. So I said to him, jokingly, "Damn man, you're going to kill yourself going that fast."

"Nah, I gotta' go dis fast. Tryin' to see how many I can do every hour. So far my best is forty-two stacks. Gotta' keep mis'self busy."

As I pondered over that thought, I noticed that his entire upper front row of teeth were silver. He had two faded tattoos of teardrops under each of his eyes. Another tattoo on his neck read in big Old English letters, BAD DOG. He definitely wasn't the type I'd ever think of raising my fists to.

"So what's your name?" I asked.

"Kenny."

"I'm Dave. So how long you been here?"

"Three months."

"Three months? Jeez. I don't know if I'm going to be able to finish the week."

"Man, I wish I could get a betta' job, but I can't cuz of my rech."

"You're what?" I asked, unable to understand his slight lisp.

"My rech."

"Huh?"

"My rech. Can't never get a job with that."

"Oh, you're record. Right."

"Yeah, I was in from '95 to '2001. I did some pretty bad shit back then, but I'm different now. I've changed, you know. Well, at least I'd like to think I have. Can't get no jobs though. Before this I was working for Tops."

Tops was one of those day labor places that paid minimum wage for grueling hard labor. I had walked into the place a week earlier and sat down waiting for my name to be called along-

side. That Friday it turned out they were laying off half of the crew. Christmas catalogs were out. I forget what the next job was going to be. Easter? Just imagine having to stare at a damn pink bunny for ten hours a day. Talk about voices in the head. A lot of the people were up in arms. What the hell were they going to do now? I felt bad for them. These people had children to take care of, food to put on the dinner table, numbers to play. For me, it was a different story. I needed the money, but I also wasn't responsible for anyone else. If I fucked up, it was all on me.

I picked up my paycheck and as I walked away the manager called me back.

"Hey Dave."

"Yeah?"

"You do good work. I've been watching you. We're going to be put some people on the machines. You want to work tomorrow?"

"Yeah, sure," I said, although I knew I had no intention of ever setting foot in that place again. That night I cashed my paycheck, bought a bottle of Carlo Rossi, and went back to my apartment. I took another long, hot bath, discussed the virtues of life with Jo-Jo, unplugged the alarm clock, and let myself temporarily escape into that blissful world of dreams.

A week later I got a temporary job working at a warehouse on the other side of town. I still hadn't heard anything from the hotel or restaurant jobs. My new job had now evolved from stickers and catalogs to adjusting defective windshield wiper tubes. It was nice to know things were moving up. I would readjust a knob on the tube to a certain measurement, mark it with a pen, and then continue on to the next. All day I sat at a table in the far corner of the building staring at these long black tubes that looked like octopus legs. Stretching... Pulling... Bending. Almost... Not quite... OK. Mark the 1st one. Nine more to go. Next bundle. Stretch.... Pull... Bend.

By noon my hands felt like leather and I could hardly move my knuckles.

The only thing that kept me from walking out the door was Maurice. Maurice came in sometime after lunch the second day. He was from the same employment office that had gotten me the job. Maurice was 53, black, and with

the deeply wrinkled face and the cracked fingernails, I got the feeling he'd probably been through a lot. He was dressed in a camouflage Army outfit. He told me he never did any time in the military. The clothes were his father's. "Hell, I just like the way they look," he said.

Maurice told me how he had spent the past six years living in West Africa and down in the Caribbean in St. Lucia. He'd been involved in import and exporting mining in Guinea and then he'd worked for a tourism company in St. Lucia. He was doing fairly well financially but, with the constant coups in Africa and the sad state of tourism after September 11th, he lost a lot of his money and had to move back home and live with his parents. His plan was to work here for a couple years, save up as much money as he could, and then go back to Guinea when things had settled down.

SURE, GOD KNOWS I FUCKIN' HATE THIS SHIT, BUT I AIN'T GONNA LET IT GET TO ME.

"There's a lot of money to be made over there. I'm telling you. People don't know about this. Diamonds. The place is full of diamonds. You mine them there and then sell them here in the U.S. Five hundred bucks and you can come with me over there. No joke, you'll live like a king."

Maurice told me all kinds of weird stories about life in Africa. It was a nice refresher from the mindless monotony of black rubber.

"It's not like here, Dave. You know, a lot of the land in Guinea is still owned by tribes. If you want to be able to mine on their land you have to barter with the tribal leaders. Money holds very little value to them, so instead you have to trade with animals and food."

As he told me this I pictured one of those PBS documentaries where the random foreigner and cameraman are surrounded by this crowd of scantily clad men with spears in their hands, big sharp ivory objects going through their noses; the woman all sitting down with their boobs hanging out: little infants sucking away.

"You know one time I went to visit this tribe and as an offering to me they milked a new-born cow. It's a ceremonial thing they do for a visitor. Well, when they were doing this I saw there was blood from the cow mixing in with the milk. There was no way I could drink it. They've got all kinds of diseases over there. Those people's bodies are used to it, but that shit can kill someone like you or me. Well, I told my translator to tell them that I couldn't drink it. The leader got all offended. He didn't understand why I wouldn't drink the milk. Anyway, after a lot of confusion, we explained to everyone that my body couldn't handle it, that if I were to drink that milk I would get violently sick. Finally, the leader understood. So instead, what does he give me? A mango. Hah, hah. You gotta' love it. A fuckin' mango. Well, a couple days later I had a crew of five guys and we were mining for diamonds.

"It's pretty different over there. The people are beautiful and kind, but very poor. Poorer than you could ever imagine. I mean I had mothers coming over to my house with their sick children thinking I was a doctor. The only reason they thought that was because I had a bag with pills in it. But they were pills I had to take being a foreigner so that I wouldn't catch malar-

ia. I even had local hospital offering to train me in a day to be a dentist."

"A dentist? Jesus?"

"Yes, no lie. They were going to have me pulling teeth. I tell you, you get a whole new perspective of life when you see things like that."

With Maurice telling me stories like this the days seemed to go by quicker. I'd find my imagination drifting off into foreign lands wondering about an entirely different world.

Maurice was probably the most intelligent person I'd ever had a chance to work with. He knew all about literature and history and politics. At one point he almost had me reconsidering my long existing bias about the fact that Shakespeare was one of the most overrated writers in history.

"The entire story of life is in the plays of Shakespeare. That's the beauty of his work," Maurice said with such conviction.

Now and then we'd get into heated debates about the validity of the Bible. He kept trying to explain to me the importance of my name and the religious connotation's it represented. I told him he was full of shit. He just smiled and would calmly continue his argument, although I got the feeling he could've cared less about the Bible either way.

But what the hell was an intelligent guy like Maurice doing at a crap job like this? Maybe there was more to the story than Maurice was telling me. I could just see it: Maurice the bandit, stealing diamonds, crazy African rebels with machine guns chasing after him, the interrogation, the thirty days in solitary with nothing but bread and water, the escape from prison.

I would've thought that at his age and with the things he'd experienced Maurice would've been bitter about what we were doing, but it didn't seem to bother him. He had a look of tranquility and always maintained a smile on his face as he pulled away at the tubes. It was that look that said, "Sure, god knows I fuckin' hate this shit, but I ain't gonna let it get to me." His expression said, "I know where I'm going and if this is what I got to do to get there, then so be it." I envied him. It was really something.

One day the boss came up to Maurice and I just as we were about to leave. He looked at the crates of tubes that we'd gone through and said, "Guys, I just want to tell you I think you're doing a good job, but I counted up the bins and we're only getting 1900 done a day. Now the company is paying for 2000 a day, so we need to pick it up a little. All right, guys. See you tomorrow."

Just like that. He said it without even flinching.

As the boss walked away I felt my face heat up. "You gotta' be kidding me Maurice! Why doesn't that tie-wearing slacker sit his ass down all day!" I yelled.

Maurice just shook his head, as if this wasn't the first time he'd heard something so idiotic, and said, "Two thousand a day, hah hah hah, now that's some funny shit, two thousand a day."

A couple days later Maurice and I got laid off. Apparently the company had screwed up all the measurements. Some corporate life-long businessman came out from Michigan just to break the news. There was all kinds of confusion. 16" or 15 1/2". No one could figure it out. They had to send all the tubes back to General Motors and they weren't going to need us.

As we were walking back to the bus stop Maurice said to me, "Man, I just don't feel like going home right now." I got the feeling that besides work Maurice didn't get out a whole lot. He lived in a pretty rough, drug-infested part of town; the kind of neighborhood you see every night on the news where some senseless murder has occurred.

It was only ten in the morning, but I knew of a place so we went to a bar and drank the beers

away. We were both out of work and broke and didn't really know what was next. We just sat there, throwing back those cold ones, making fun of the old bitter, woman bartender who would slam your change down on the bar and seemed to always have a scowl on her face. We kept sharing stories of old jobs and old girls and all the places we wanted to go one day, and I don't know how to say it, but, well, it just felt right sitting there alongside with Maurice. You could see it on our faces. Both of us had that down home dirty blues feeling, like, man oh man, but at the same time, thinking, well, thing's are bound to get a little better.

"I'm really glad I got to know you Dave," said Maurice, placing his hand gently on my shoulder.

"Thanks Maurice. You too. It made the blisters worthwhile," I smiled back.

We walked out the front door and into the hazy, noontime sun and promised to hang out again soon. Maurice said he was going to go back to the temp place later that afternoon and see if there was any other work. I wasn't really sure what I had planned.

As I was walking down the street back to my apartment I heard Maurice yell out, "Hey Dave!"

I turned around. "Yeah?"

"I just wanted to let you know that the company is paying for two thousand a day! Hah Hah Hah! Two thousand a day! I'll never forget that one! Peace, brother!"

I smiled and gave Maurice a good old fashion salute. There was a sense of victory in that wave. Sure, maybe a small victory, but victory all the same. That feeling that the Man, whoever that was, wasn't going to get the best of us.

I made my way back to my apartment and for the first time in months, I wasn't thinking about money. I wasn't thinking about the fact that I didn't have a job. I wasn't thinking about the fact that I didn't have a girl. I figured, hey, I guess this is just one little stage I got to go through. If I was lucky, I'd be able to look back on this whole ordeal years later and laugh about it. Not really a funny laugh though. Just a good, long laugh. And for whatever it's worth, that was enough.

-Seth Swaaley





NARDWUAR

WHO ARE YOU?

NARDWUAR VS. ICE CUBE



Nardwuar: Who are you?

Ice Cube: [laughs] Ice Cube.

Nardwuar: Ice Cube, welcome to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Ice Cube: Thanks, man.

Nardwuar: I'm really excited because you're shooting this movie *Are We There Yet?* in Vancouver, and Vancouver is playing Vancouver. Is that true, Ice Cube?

Ice Cube: Yeah, Vancouver is playing itself.

Nardwuar: Which is totally amazing because it never happens that way.

Ice Cube: Yeah, most people come here and shoot every other city but Vancouver, but a lot of movies are shot right here and we said, "Yo, we there. Why the hell won't we use Vancouver?" You know?

Nardwuar: Thank

you very much for acknowledging that, Ice Cube, and I wanted to ask you a bit more about the movie *Are We There Yet?* I understand that you're fighting a deer in the movie. That sounds exciting. Ice Cube versus a deer!

Ice Cube: [laughs] Yeah, and I kick that deer's ass too! Don't worry about nothing y'know. It's a kids' comedy, family movie and it's a trip to see me with a couple of kids, y'know. I think that's funny in itself.

Nardwuar: And Nia Long is also in the movie. She was also with you in *Boyz 'N the Hood* too?

Ice Cube: Yeah, Nia Long. We've been following each other's career for the longest. She's been down since *Boyz 'N the Hood*. She was in *Friday* with me and now we've come full circle. And Jay Mohr is in

it, y'know, comedian. Really funny dude, so we got a good movie.

Nardwuar: Ice Cube, I'd like to thank you again for setting your movie in Vancouver, BC, Canada. I don't know if you're familiar with who lives in Vancouver, but Tommy Chong used to live in Vancouver. Did you know that, Ice Cube?

Ice Cube: It seems like it, with all the bud you got going on around here. Tommy Chong coming from BC. Y'know, that seems about right.

Nardwuar: Tommy Chong used to live in Vancouver, but now unfortunately he's in jail. But on behalf of the people from Vancouver, British Columbia, I want to give you a present, Ice Cube, for actually setting your movie *Are We There Yet?* in Vancouver, and this is a present from Tommy Chong and the people of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. This is a Cheech and Chong incense burner for you, Ice Cube. [Nardwuar hands Ice cube a Cheech and Chong incense burner]

Ice Cube: [laughs] Yeah. I'm loving this. Y'know, this is one of my favorite gifts. I'm feeling this, man.

Nardwuar: A Cheech and Chong incense burner, just to let the kids know. An *incense* burner.

Ice Cube: Yeah, we'll keep some incense burning in here, no problem. But I like this man. I dig this. I was a big fan of these movies. We kind of loosely based our *Friday* movies on these *Cheech and Chong* movies.

Nardwuar: That's what I was going to say. You're like the next descendant of the Chongster, aren't you, Ice Cube?

Ice Cube: Everybody gotta have a godfather, so I guess Tommy Chong and Cheech, those are our godfathers. Me and Smokey, me and Day-Day.

Nardwuar: Ice Cube, the first time I heard N.W.A. I was scared.

Ice Cube: Good.

Nardwuar: [laughs] It really scared me!

Ice Cube: You look scared now.

Nardwuar: Well, you're nice Cube, so I'm not that scared.

Ice Cube: [laughs]

Nardwuar: You're the nice Cube, but thinking back, you guys

weren't the first to do the gangsta thing were you? Well, I guess the full-on West Coast thing, but Schoolly D, he did a bit of the gangsterisms too, didn't he, from Philly? Does Schoolly D get any props at all, Ice Cube?

Ice Cube: Yeah, Schoolly D gets much props. He was definitely one of the originators of gangsta rap, you gotta say that. Also, you gotta say KRS-One, y'know, Boogie Down Productions. They was doing some hardcore records back then. There's a few people who came before N.W.A., but no people came like N.W.A. Y'know what I mean? So N.W.A. gotta be the world's most dangerous group.

Nardwuar: Yes, I am still scared.

Ice Cube: Good.

Nardwuar: But I was wondering, Ice Cube, Schoolly D could breakdance. What's your dancing ability like, Ice Cube?

Ice Cube: I have none.

Nardwuar: You've never tried any?

Ice Cube: Nope, I'm like Sir Noise: devoid of funk. I will never dance.

Nardwuar: Ice Cube, one other group that I've been interested in is the rock 'n' roll group Cameo. Some people give them a bad rap, but what is the coolness about the Cameo, because I think they're pretty amazing, aren't they? [hands Ice cube a Cameo record]

Ice Cube: Yeah, Cameo's off the hook. I mean, on this record, "Be Yourself" was dope, "Flirt" was dope, "Alligator Woman" was off the hook, so... I mean, this album only has eight songs, man. I don't think you can get away with that nowadays.

Nardwuar: But Cameo sometimes get a bad rap, don't they? I mean, they don't always get the respect they deserve. I think nowadays the Outkast are even having Cameo's bass player on some of their recordings.

Ice Cube: I don't know if Cameo's getting a bad rap. I mean, who got time to dis Cameo?

Nardwuar: Certainly not me, speaking here to Ice Cube on the set of the movie *Are We... Are We There Yet?*

Ice Cube: *Are We There Yet?*

Nardwuar: And I was wondering Ice Cube, your good homey friend Snoop Dogg. I interviewed him a little while back and I showed him this record by Flip Wilson. [hands Ice Cube a Flip Wilson record] And Flip Wilson is wearing a dress here. And I said to Snoop, "Would you ever wear a dress?" And Snoop said...

Ice Cube: "Hell no!"

Nardwuar: "Hell no!" Now why is that? Why would Snoop not wanna wear a dress and would you ever wear a dress there Ice Cube, like Flip Wilson?

Ice Cube: Hell no! And I don't know why he wouldn't want to wear a dress, but I ain't into it. I leave it up to Flip.

background. Like The Archbishop is down, isn't he? The Archbishop is in the house.

Ice Cube: Yeah, the Archbishop, he's an alright dude with us. Oh, take your records back.

Nardwuar: Thank you very much, Ice Cube.

Ice Cube: I like this (Cheech and Chong incense burner).

Nardwuar: Yes, that's for you. That's for you to keep here. A gift from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Ice Cube: Can you smoke this?

Nardwuar: Incense only there, Ice Cube. And Ice Cube, I was wondering about your first group here, the CIA. [hands Ice Cube a CIA record] This is your first group.

seen pictures of Ice-T and he's looking pretty crazy, dressed up electronica. What did you look like back then in the CIA era?

Ice Cube: Trust me, I didn't look like none of them dudes, y'know. I still dressed like myself. See, we was broke so we couldn't afford nothing but khakis and T-shirts. So we just dressed like ourselves back then. And, you know, it was cool. We were all struggling, we was all trying to get on. It's not my favorite record. But we was on wax, we was happy.

Nardwuar: Ice-T was into that sort of electronica thing, wasn't he? Like, was wearing some crazy outfits, wasn't he?

Ice Cube: Yeah, I don't know. I

in the mainstream?

Ice Cube: Who cares, really? I mean, to be honest, who cares if he's a racist or not? Who cares?

Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much, Ice Cube. Anything else you want to add to the people out there at all?

Ice Cube: I love this, man. Thanks. I appreciate this (Cheech and Chong incense burner).

Nardwuar: That's from the people of Vancouver and me, Nardwuar The Human Serviette, for you Ice Cube. Because you actually shot your movie in Vancouver and actually based your movie in Vancouver, which is very, very rare.

Ice Cube: Yeah, this is the bomb, man. I'll let you smoke it with me later.



NARDWUAR:
ICE CUBE,
THE FIRST
TIME I
HEARD
N.W.A. I
WAS
SCARED.

ICE CUBE:
GOOD.

Nardwuar: Ice Cube, on your brand new LP with the West Side Connection, you guys have a song called "Pimp the System."

Ice Cube: Yeah.

Nardwuar: And on it, you sample the Archbishop Don Magic Juan.

Ice Cube: Yes.

Nardwuar: Now who is that guy, the Archbishop Don Magic Juan? He pops up everywhere. He's around Snoop. What's the history of the Archbishop?

Ice Cube: He's just one of the OG players. He's been doing it a long time, give us a lot of love in Chicago when we come through. So we gotta give it up to the Archbishop, you know what I mean? I put him in a movie or two. He was in *Friday After Next*. You know, he's our man.

Nardwuar: He's always popping up everywhere. It's cool to see him at all these awards shows in the

Ice Cube: Yeah, this is my first group.

Nardwuar: And this was before NWA. What was the CIA like and what happened to the rest of the guys?

Ice Cube: Criminals In Action, that's what CIA stood for. And, uh, you know you got Sir Jinx. He went on to produce for me on a couple of records. And then you got my man, KD, and I put a record out on him in '97. So, you know, everybody's still around. Where'd you find this, dude?

Nardwuar: Just in a record store called Beat Street in Vancouver. They've reissued that. That's a reissue. It's a bootleg!

Ice Cube: Produced by Dr. Dre.

Nardwuar: Produced by Dr. Dre. And I was wondering that, Ice Cube, what was it like back then with the CIA scene? What was it like, the pre-NWA? 'Cause I've

think he was into the breakdance and stuff. Back then in the '80s, you know what I mean, breakdancing, you had on the spikes. Nothing like what you got on, but similar.

Nardwuar: Ice-T was down with it.

Ice Cube: I don't know about all that. But I know, dude, he wore spikes, yeah.

Nardwuar: Ice Cube, lastly, I wanted to ask you a bit of a controversial question about *The Source* magazine. Lately, they've been going on and on about "Is Eminem a racist?" What do you think about that *Source* versus Eminem situation that's going out there?

Ice Cube: I don't care. Who cares?

Nardwuar: Because Eminem apparently recorded something that was racist on some tape that was around for ten years. What are your feelings about digging up tapes from the past and putting them out

Nardwuar: Incense again, just for the kids. This is a kids movie, *Are We There Yet?* An incense burner. And actually, lastly there, Ice Cube, do you still buy in bulk?

Ice Cube: Yeah man, I buy a lot in bulk. Yeah.

Nardwuar: All right, well, thanks so much. Keep on rocking in the free world, Ice Cube. And doot doot doo doo...

Ice Cube: [laughs] Is this dude crazy? West Side for life all day every day. It don't stop 'til the pennies drop, you know!

Nardwuar: That will work. "You know "is almost like "Doot Doo!"

Ice Cube: Are we there yet?

Nardwuar: I think we are.

To hear and watch this interview check out <http://www.nardwuar.com>

NARDWUAR





RHYTHM CHICKEN

THE DINGHOLE REPORTS



All photos by Todd Taylor • Rhythm Chicken in Winchell's Donuts

The Dinghole Reports

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

RHYTHM CHICKEN

Ladies and gentlemen, hens and roosters, your doubts of my continuing ruckus campaign may be somewhat founded after 11½ months of non-ruckus activity on my part. However, I would never let the silence last a full year. After such an extended hiatus, I knew that I had to brew up some type of ultra-whizbang sure-fire all-out audio-visual assault to make up for my slothy avoidance of your ruckus needs. I, the Rhythm Chicken, had not performed in 11 ½ months, with that last show being

in Kohren, Germany during their "Men's Day" drinking festival last May. I had not performed on American soil in eighteen MONTHS! During these internationally troubling times, I'm sure my patriotism was in doubt, until a few weeks ago. I had to find the best way to re-introduce my ruckus to my own people and the time had come. I finished my job in Milwaukee and granted myself a few weeks off before returning to my northern Wisconsin woodshed to work my tail off for yet another summer in the Door County tourist trap. I knew I had to use my time wisely and execute a far-reaching venture to spread my ruckus to areas not yet tainted by my rhyth-

mic virus. I chose to piece together a double-ended tour to Southern California and the Kansas City area. They both have escaped my rhythm wrath for far too long!

Milwaukee folks have been requesting Chicken shows for the last six months since my return. I wanted to kick off the American tour in Milwaukee just before leaving, but I also wanted it to be sort of under the radar. I had it all planned out in a nice, tight schedule, but, of course, the doo-doo had to go awry. Friday was my last day of work and I worked till midnight. My plane left around 6:00 Saturday morning. This was supposed to be a fun, action-packed six-hour window between my last day of work and

my departing to the warm California sun. Well, as I think Murphy's Law dictates, if a chicken's car will die at the most inopportune time, gol'dangit, IT WILL! Yup, my car called it quits. When I got home after my big, exciting last day of work there was a message on my answering machine from some girlie at American Airlines informing me that my connector flight from Dallas to Burbank had been cancelled. I had to wait an additional few hours in the aesthetically mind-numbing Dallas airport. I figured God was trying to save Southern California from my dimension-warping chaos... that or he really wanted me to see lots of Wrangler jeans, shiny cowboy

boots, and perfectly bent yet meticulously positioned \$100 cowboy hats worn by gold-card Texan males who walk way too stiff. C'mon, they can't ALL be stiff from yesterday's rodeo!

After calling Todd, this magazine's fine overseer and also my LA host, to let him know of my late arrival, I thought I could still make the best of the few hours of Wisconsin bar time I had left. I walked to the Cactus Club and its newer neighboring punk-type tavern, the Palomino. Once in the Palomino, I shared my dilemma with the bartender Bill, part owner of Milwaukee's Rushmor Records, who, from time to time, sponsors the Rhythm Chicken in the South Shore Frolics Parade. Without hesitation, Bill tossed me the keys to his new truck and said something to the

"King's" room, as it is labeled. Before many knew what was going on, Christreater, this evening's bartender, turned off the music and yelled to the proles, "Hey, everybody! It's the fuckin' Rhythm Chicken!" and my thunder steamrolled the packed bar. I pulled all the familiar tricks out of my Chickenhead. I worked both sides of the bar against each other in a rhythmic yelling match. I raised my wings to riotous applause, then anxiously pounded a few thuds on the bass drum, demanding more. I pushed them over the top by once again pulling out the ruckus logs and giving them the biggest sound in ruckus rock today! Bar time was near so I ended my rock opera by diving onto my chickenkit and thrashing about until a pint of Blatz was thrust into my wing. I was

salutations we were on the highway southward to Escondido. The tour continues with little rest! I was a typical farm boy tourist gaping wide-eyed at the cultural oddities in this strange land: In-n-Out Burgers, an endless string of strip malls along the highway, and their Hardee's are called Carl Jr.'s. It's a wiggly world.

We arrived at Tiltwheel manor in Escondido. Soon, team Tiltwheel reared its still-drunken head. It was 'round 2 PM. They had to play that night in San Diego and leave the next morning on another tour. They were like three hung-over, wet rats (of course, I mean that in a very endearing way!). I watched them consume more and more beers non-stop all day. Yikes, these boys must have Wisconsin roots!

Tiltwheel's frontman, Davey,

for this monumental rock show. I assume my wooden perch and pull on the crusty chicken head. Just mere hours since my early morning ruckus in Milwaukee, I proceed to pound out my first-ever ruckus rock west of the Rockies! I executed flawless Midwestern Pabst rock and then halted to raise my wings and accept my new fans' adoration. My performance was met with mild clapping from the family, but raucous hoots and hollers from the RC militia. God bless rock, and the rock started to roll! Tiltwheel continues drinking.

Dinghole Report #42: RC Rocks the Pounder Hounds!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)

Back in the van, Davey, being a local, starts listing off possible

It almost seemed as if the whole day lead up to this blissfully drunken Wisconsin petting zoo gone bad.

effect of, "Bring the ruckus here!" This was the first thing to go right in a long string of events that would continue over the next nine days.

Dinghole Report #39: Ruckus Returns to Your Hemisphere!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)

Now armed with a very viable chicken-kit transport, I zoomed home and brought back my one-of-a-kind \$75 drumset. A few heads turned as I hauled the kit in and set it up in front of the jukebox. I was on a tight schedule and could waste no time as bar time drew nearer. I pulled on the Chicken head and instinctively rolled out the ruckus-barrel that is now almost five years old! It felt strangely familiar as I pounded out that same ol' punch-to-the-gut rock that hasn't seen these shores in eighteen months and then halted to valiantly raise my wings with pride. It was after midnight, hence, already Saturday. May 15 will now and forever be known as RR-Day, the day that ruckus returned! I got the crowd mildly worked up and then pulled out my ol' nearly forgotten friends, THE RUCKUS LOGS! With these behemoth mallets, I unleashed true super-sized ruckus on the unsuspecting tavern. I have returned!

Dinghole Report #40: Ruckus Goes Next-Door!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)

Seeing as how the Palomino and the Cactus Club are literally back-to-back, I knew what had to be done. I quickly hauled my gig next door and set up in front of the

appeared. The next chicken gig was hundreds of miles and mere hours away!

—Francis and Sicnarf mumble from the corner where they are tied and gagged!—

Silence, you two! I've got too much material to cover this issue. I don't need you slick-slacks making this column any longer than it's gonna be anyway. Just sit back, hush up, and rejoice in the fresh ruckus! So, Bill drove me and my kit home where I made a fresh pot of coffee, packed my bag with some extra drumsticks, and showered while I had the time. Soon after drying off and donning my Ed Gein shirt, Ruckus O'Reily pulled up in front of my soon-to-be former home to drive me to the airport. I crawled into his car with my bag and chicken head. He instantly asked, "You're still drunk, aren't you!" I replied, "That and I've got my Ed Gein shirt on. I'm going to Southern California and I gotta REPRESENT!" Leaving Milwaukee that morning, the temperature was a balmy fifty degrees.

My later flight to Burbank ended up landing a half-hour early so I thought I'd sit outside and soak up some of that West Coast ambience. I walked out the exit to a wall of liquid butter they call that warm California sun. This is May, dammit! How can they stand the HEAT? I stripped off my two-dollar thrift store Harley Davidson leather jacket and sat on the sidewalk with my bag and chicken head attracting quizzical looks. Todd and Megan soon pulled up and after proper

escorted Todd and me through their practice room of miscellaneous musical mish-mash. He pieces together a fancy orange makeshift chicken kit. The hi-hat clutch is held together with an ill-fitting lug nut. The drum throne is a backless wooden chair with a Grabass Charlestons sticker on it. The bottom snare head is in shreds. The floor tom has part of a cymbal stand for one of its legs. I fully embrace the kit as Chicken worthy, for it's almost better than the one I have back home! Later, Todd and I find out that the drums were actually rumored to be the set used to record Bad Religion's *How Could Hell Be Any Worse?* album. Punk! Tiltwheel found some warm cans of Natural Light and continued drinking. Na zdrowie!

Dinghole Report #41: West Coast Hymen Torn Wide Open!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)

Seeing as how Todd appears to be the only one still free of ruckus-juice and its wily influence, he assumes maximum responsibility and becomes the evening's designated driver. The rest of us pack the van and pile in. We soon happen upon the sight of the Rhythm Chicken's first ever West Coast gig. In nearby Kit Carson Park we see a group of people celebrating in a wholesome extended family type fashion. It turns out being a Quinceañera picnic party! ROCK! Team Tiltwheel, along with Jack Doyle, Josh Mosh, Matty Awesome, Todd, and Megan, all join the Rhythm Chicken worldwide roadie army by helping set up

venues for impromptu chicken rock. I stop him when he says something about a place called Pounder's that he describes as a "mullet bar." My image of all Californians wearing OP clothing and surfing while drinking Sunkist soda is blown away. Bring me this mullet bar you speak of. Soon we are parked directly in front of Pounder's and setting up the chicken kit on the sidewalk. A few genuine mullets notice and slowly ooze towards the action. I pull on the head and begin to rain holy hell on them with drumsticks on chicken-skin. When I halt the ruckus one of the hockey-hairs yells out, "YOU'RE ALL FAGS!" Fuckinay! I'm starting to feel alive! The gears become well oiled and the ruckus machine growls into high gear. Tiltwheel continues drinking.

Dinghole Report #43: Chicken Storms Mission Beach in Belmont!
(Rhythm Chicken sightings #.....&...)

I love having a good number of roadies in an area thick with foot-traffic. This harbors what I like to call "rapid fire ruckus." The Chicken can perform quick assaults, one after the other, in a string of randomly found venues, a veritable carpet bombing of ruckus! My trusty roadie army sets up the Chicken kit under some sort of archway welcoming people to the beach while I run down to the water to dip the tips of my chicken ears in the Pacific. I quickly return to the kit and assume my throne. A crowd already accumulates while I begin

spraying them with my wild-ass Chicken rock! The Chicken ears sway about as I rock the beach to within an inch of its life! Many beach-goers are taking photos and videotaping the Midwest oddity. I contemplate the possibility of any effect I may have on the San Andreas Fault. A few prom date couples filter to the front row, somewhat puzzled. After a few more doses of rhythm rock, my militia quickly grabs the kit and we move to the next ground zero, the Sand Bar. I

captive audience! The ruckus flows in total reckless abandon while Josh Mosh is right up front kickin' it into overdrive. ROCK! The militia grab the kit again and we move back towards the beach until I find another prom date couple and decide to play right in front of these two, a personal romantic serenade enticing them to fornicate later that evening (which I'm almost positive they did!). Even though the gig was for this single couple, another crowd gathered around burbling

cheers and we tore down and headed up the street. While walking down the sidewalk a girl wearing a Fat Boyz Pizza shirt personally invited the Rhythm Chicken to play in her place of employment up the street! THIS WAS BETTER THAN AN INVITE TO THE PROM! We immediately hiked up the street to Fat Boyz, walked in the door and set up while customers looked on, bewildered. I pulled on the head and let the rock roll. The staff behind the counter all came up

**Dinghole Report #43:
Standing Ovation of Liars!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #....)**

It was almost time to head down to Chaser's for the Tiltwheel show, but Davey knew of one more prime stop on this particular Chicken tour, The Liar's Club. This was apparently some bar where the Tiltwheel boys knew one of the bartenders (surprised?) and they knew a Chicken gig would be peachy keen in the establishment.

RHYTHM CHICKEN



Chicken Rocks the Fast Castle Laundry Room Theater! Notice Matty Awesome's leg, spilled cat food, and April Vena Cava's ruckus-approving smile.

set up on the sidewalk directly in front of the open-air bar and unleash my Wisconsin mayhem on the California boozers. Team Tiltwheel are right up front and get the rest of the drinking crowd all riled up, but before long the doorman for the Sand Bar shakes the Chicken's shoulder and busts the show.

The militia quickly grabs the kit and we move over to the roller coaster. The Chicken quickly assumes his throne as children are locked into the not-yet-moving Tilt-

their romantic thunder. Matty Awesome and Jack Doyle grabbed the various drum parts and we were off again to the next bombsite, A REPEAT ATTACK! This time the Chicken kit was set up on the sidewalk ACROSS THE STREET from the Sand Bar in a disabled parking spot! GIMP ROCK! Baby, I'm breaking all social barriers! I threw out some audio ruckus and the crowd gathered and yelled while my faithful roadie army was yelling and hollering as much as ever. Chaos was being had at the beach! This gig finished to the sound of

front and yelled and clapped. Team Tiltwheel were there in a drunken haze hollering and crooning. The customers stopped eating and enjoyed the house band, me. Various beach walkers and pedestrians stuck their heads in to see the supposed first rock show at Fat Boyz. I'll take one large thick crust with an extra side of RUCKUS! I finished up the gig and we loaded out to the applause of the unsuspecting pizza-eating audience. As before, Tiltwheel continued drinking.

The militia hauled the Chicken kit in through the packed bar and I set up on the little stage in the back of the club, right in front of the jukebox. I even grabbed a nearby barrel of beer in the back corner to set in front of my sliding bass drum. You gotta utilize the elements of your environment to your advantage. The crowd looked on and wondered what the cluck I was there for. As soon as I pulled on the cherished crusty head and commenced my rock opera, they caught on quick. I pulled all the drunken audience tricks and led them on to

a riotous pitch before standing and accepting their applause. A beer was thrust into my wing and I was appeased. We sat around enjoying our beers in The Liar's Club, but there was a punk show to get to and we had to haul out. As the militia and the Chicken hauled the kit out through the crowd they gave us a standing ovation! Ruckus be with you. Ruckus be with you. Team Tiltwheel and I were on the way to the evening's Tiltwheel show. Tiltwheel continued drinking.

So, we arrive at Chaser's, a San Diego bar which I'm informed is only used for shows as some sort of last resort, I think, but then again my memory was starting to resemble Swiss cheese again. We pulled into a spot behind the club and just sat in the van drinking for a while before entering the club. I ventured into the club and sat at the bar next to "Boy Band" Paul. I bought a

less chair) I emitted deafening chaos out into the club. I pounded the Chicken skins with no mercy. I led them on. They begged for more. I threw a fit! I raised a ruckus! I put everything on the line and lit the fuse! It almost seemed as if the whole day lead up to this blissfully drunken Wisconsin petting zoo gone bad. I gave California full-blown ruckus and they ate it up. I stood to accept all worship, the crowd roared, and the ladies' room door was closed like the dropping of a curtain at the opera.

I quickly tossed my kit in the corner and used up my final drink ticket before securing my spot near the stage for the Tiltwheel set. In case you hadn't picked up on this yet, I saw these boys from much earlier in the day. They woke up trashed, continued drinking, and drinking, and drinking, and drinking, and I watched them get sloppier and sloppier. I was anxious to

Chicken bringing his ruckus home to the south side of Milwaukee in two early morning gigs, then some coffee and packing, then some airplanes and airports, then some California highway time, then some rhythm ruckus around Escondido and San Diego, and finally a fuckin' punk as peaches rock gig. A mighty fine day if I do say so myself! But was the day really over yet?

**Dinghole Report #45:
Chicken Rocks the Fast Castle
Laundry Room Theater!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #280)**

So would my Southern California hosts let RR-Day end without some after hours ruckus? Technically, I believe the full 24 hours of RR-Day had expired, but the time dimension has a tendency to warp and stretch when faced with the power of ruckus! We all

**Dinghole Report #47:
San Pedro Under Attack!
(Rhythm Chicken sightings
#....., &....)**

A second Chicken roadie army was soon drafted: Rawl, Kid Kevin, Tony, Lena, Erin, Jacob, Todd, and Megan. They each grabbed a part of the Chicken attack kit and we went out into their neighborhood to dispense some rapid-fire guerilla gigs! Since landing in California I felt the uncontrollable urge to push the envelope and actually play INSIDE a Jack in the Box fast food restaurant. The time had come. I was fully expecting the gig to be halted before it began, but NO ONE SAID A DAMN THING! A bunch of punks haul a drum set into Jack in the Box and set it up right in the middle of all the tables of dining families and whatnot. Shouldn't this look at least somewhat suspicious? Let the ruckus roll! I pulled

***When I halt the ruckus one of the hockey-hairs yells out,
"YOU'RE ALL FAGS!" Fuckinay! I'm starting to feel alive!***

beer and he informs me that I'm a performer and I should get drink tickets, so who am I to disagree? He hails the already unhappy bartendress and tells her that I'm one of the bands and she hands me a string of drink tickets. I start really enjoying the show. The first band were somewhat rockin' in a somewhat rockin' sort of way. I put my tickets to use. Tiltwheel continued drinking. The next band, the Giant Haystacks, held my interest with their Minutemen meets Gang of Four brand of rock and roll mayhem, and I'll be damned if that wasn't George Hurley assaulting the skins! Tiltwheel started moving their gear onto the stage area, while drinking.

**Dinghole Report #44: Chaser's
Ladies Room Arena Rock!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)**

This was the only real punk show appearance during the Southern California leg of my tour so I wanted to make it count. I had to play in the ladies' room! Where else would it seem any more appropriate? I set up in the corner of the femalien shitter and the door was propped open. I took one last pull off my beer and pulled on the Chicken head before breaking out the opening drum roll. The wings went up and the house went nuts! I was ready. They were ready. KABANG! Using the girlie's toilet as my drum throne (the only one more deserving than the official wooden Grabass Charlestons back-

see what kind of borderline passed out early-Replacements type set they would spill onto the audience. They assumed the stage, picked up their instruments and babbled a bit with slurred words and drunken smiles. I was fully expecting chaotic drunken slop rock. From note one till the end of their set I was completely blown away. They were 110% dead-on solid! They completely rocked this chicken and made it look almost effortless. They must have been so legally drunk that they might've been damn close to legally dead, yet their wall of rock hit me like a cinder block to the forehead. They were the eye of the storm in San Diego that night. Various audience members were whipped up into a frenzied ruckus so much that they started grabbing at the large pool table light above the band, effectively ripping it out of the ceiling and the whole room went dark. Okay, I figured that now they had to start getting sloppy, but nope. They continued rocking just as hard and no one could see anything. I quickly ran to grab the light above the entrance in the other room and plugged it in holding the light as high above my head and the band as I could, simply because I wanted to witness the rest of their blazing set. Damn, these guys could rock! After many encores, they finally ended their divine rock and continued drinking. This is the punk.

And so RR-Day came to an end. It started with the Rhythm

piled into the van and headed to the after bar party at Josh Mosh's Fast Castle. A few attendees talked the Chicken into some early morning ruckus. I chose the laundry room, I think. That's where the photos say it happened. The photos also show the Chicken pounding out his chaotic scriptures right next to the CAT FOOD! ROCK! The photos also show Matty Awesome rolling around in front of the Chicken, and finally the Chicken rolling around in his own drumset. Ruckus be with us.

**Dinghole Report #46:
Ruckus on 4th Street!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)**

The next morning Todd, Megan, and I woke and moped around in a haze for a few hours. The Tiltwheel boys already had gotten us all breakfast burritos and were preparing to head out on yet another tour. "Boy Band" Paul was preparing by cleaning his pants. We said our farewell salutations to the mighty Tiltwheel and their gang as Todd, Megan, and I headed up to San Pedro to keep our ruckus rolling. We rolled up 4th Street and found the 4th Street Punk House with all the punks hanging out on the porch. Still in my Ed Gein shirt, I set up at the end of their little walkway and rained Wisconsin rock on their abode. The porch-sitters cheered and soon had a beer in my hand. God bless punk house hospitality!

on the head and figured I should quickly get to it before someone decides to stop the gig. There I was, in San Pedro, California, performing like some sort of weird-ass in-house band in JACK IN THE BOX! For me it was a moment frozen in time. It felt so right. To top it off, while we all exited with the chicken kit the staff hollered out, "Is that it? No more?" It's a wiggly world. We walked one block down and found a fine looking street corner with a stoplight. Green means go, but red light means captive audience! I rocked my ruckus for two red lights on the street corner, pointing out passing cars and getting loads of honks and hollers. San Pedro was taking a liking to my Wisconsin ways. Then, I kept seeing the Payless Shoe Source up the street and thought to myself, "Hmmm, don't think I ever played a shoe store before!" While we were heading up to the store, my eyes caught a little Winchell's donut shop and I was sold. The little indoor area in front of the counter was only about twice as big as the Chicken kit. Perfect! The punks filed in to set up their parts of the kit and then watched from outside. The girl behind the counter just looked on, confused and perhaps a little scared. The Chicken head went on and soon the donut racks were vibrating to my..... DONUT SHOP ROCK! I didn't even get busted by a "rookie cop!" Okay, that was bad. Anyway, there was something aesthetically pleasing about my riot

rock in the little glass donut hut. While we all hauled off with the kit, Todd kindly purchased a donut. Tiltwheel were probably on the highway somewhere, drinking.

**Dinghole Report #48:
Ruckus at Point Fermin!
(Rhythm Chicken sightings
#....., &.....)**

We all trekked down to the shore for some oceanside ruckus. In an area known as Point Fermin, we found a biker bar called Walker's Burgers with plenty of Harleys parked out front. While setting up amongst the motormonsters facing the front door, a tall, road-worn biker lady came out to ask exactly what it was I thought I was going to do. I said, "Just a one minute rock show?" She looked at the drumset amongst her customers' Harleys, rolled her eyes, and said, "Okay. You've got one minute and you're on the clock starting NOW!" As soon as I pulled on the Chicken head she became a little more light-hearted and went back inside. Her clientele roared for the show as my roadie army roared from behind. As we were carrying the Chicken kit to the next gig, a member of my militia overheard the quote of the tour. Some bystander yelled to someone else, "Hey, there's some defiant drumming going on over there!" Holy shit! DEFIANT DRUMMING! Ain't I an ausgeflippter! Nearby in the park we saw the large outdoor amphitheater stage empty, just begging for some defiant drumming! Using science to my advantage, I roughly calculated the focal point on the stage under the concert shell to yield maximum Chicken volume. There were rows and rows of empty seats, except for the first row with a few of my militia relaxing to enjoy the concert. I rolled out some thunder as my rhythms emanated outward over the park and down the shoreline. A few passers-by and families in the park halted their activities to enjoy the rock assault. Less than an hour ago I was playing in Winchell's donut shop and now I was on the big stage! Being a native of the immediate neighborhood, Rawl directed us to the prime spot for a Chicken gig, the Korean Friendship Bell. I had never seen a friendship bell before, and was informed it was the site of a big scene in the movie *Usual Suspects*. The tourists gathered around the large structure already had their cameras out when the group of punks carried a drumset up the stairs and positioned it directly in front of the bell. I pulled on the head and I could already hear the cameras going off. At this point I grinned under the Chicken head, thinking of how many family



High volume ruckus rock caused ripples in the thick black La Brea Tar Pits...

vacation photo albums the Rhythm Chicken is in around the world. I wonder how many family vacation albums Pearl Jam are in? I commenced the ruckus and the gathering crowd took photos, albeit somewhat confused. The friendship bell rock show was a smash hit. I finished up and stood valiantly with my wings in the air feeling the cool ocean breeze. So this is California.

We said farewell to the 4th Street punk crew and made our way towards Highland Park to finally settle in at Razorcake HQ. We stopped at the Food 4 Less where I got the necessary ingredients to create my first-ever California version of Rhythm Chili. I marveled at the coolness of being able to buy cactus paddles. Wisconsin has deep fried cheese curds. California has cactus paddles. What did disturb me was that Pabst is a Wisconsin beer, the pride of Milwaukee no less, where I can usually pick up a case for around eleven bucks, and yet here in LA I was able to get the same case for an astounding \$8.99! This truly defies logic. We settled in at Todd and Megan's, where we instantly started assuming quality control over the case of Pabst. Tomorrow the Chicken was going to rock Hollywood! Somewhere up north, Tiltwheel continued drinking.

**Dinghole Report #49: Cockles and Ruckus at Molly Malone's!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)**

The next morning we gathered our senses and headed out to bring

ruckus to LA. First Todd and I picked up our friend Russ before we headed to Molly Malone's to meet up with Jim "Money" Ruland and his girlfriend Noel. A fine breakfast of beer and french fries was had until the remainder of this day's roadie army arrived. Kid Kevin, Rawl, Kobe, and Troy from San Pedro all took the day off to join the Chicken traveling ruckus show around LA. The troops were at hand and it was time to unleash the rock. We started with an early afternoon gig in Molly Malone's. The audience consisted of my militia, the bartender, one old guy and one Greg-Allman-looking fucker. Perfect! I pulled on the head and let my Chicken rhythms fill the club. The bartender cleaned some glasses. The old guy watched in a somewhat drunken haze. The Greg-Allman-looking fucker refused to watch. My roadie army cheered and clapped. Somewhere nearing Portland, Tiltwheel were cracking open some fresh ones.

**Dinghole Report #50: Chicken Rocks the La Brea Tar Pits!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)**

In three different cars, we all somehow met up outside the park containing the La Brea Tar Pits. Now, to you Californians this may be just another tourist stop, but to this Wisconsinite it was the mystical La Brea Tar Pits that Bugs Bunny was always trying to find until he took that wrong turn at Albuquerque! This was BIG! So

here's a group of punks hauling a drumset through the park containing the tar pits and setting them up in front of the largest, most impressive tar pit, the one with the statue of the woolly mammoth getting stuck in the tar. No security arrived. No one questioned a thing. I assumed my wooden throne and started playing yet another one of my most monumental gigs. Pedestrians gathered around. More cameras came out. My high volume ruckus rock caused ripples in the thick black tar pits while it echoed around the entire park nestled amongst a downtown business district. An old man scooted past in his little old man scooter. All this chaos and mayhem occurred totally unchecked. After tearing down a few of my militia members were rolling along on their skateboards and suddenly, out of nowhere, we heard whistles and a couple security dudes came down hard on my roadies. NO SKATEBOARDING! Okay, so drumming quite loudly in a Chicken head in front of the main tar pit is all fine and dandy, but harmlessly rolling along on a skateboard is a crime against G.W., Big Brother, and apple pie? Now I know.

**Dinghole Report #51:
Knock, Knock, Knocking on Disney's Door!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #.....)**

We all met up at the next high profile venue: the new, warped-chrome fronted Disney Concert Hall. While setting

RHYTHM CHICKEN

up on the sidewalk in front of this monstrous architectural nightmare, a few dorky college guys on the steps said, "Just go for it!" I took their advice and just "goed" for it. I gave the pedestrians, the traffic, and the concert hall security one hell of a dose of my ruckus. I thought that homeland security would surely be silencing the gig in no time flat. I halted and accepted the applause and cheers of the gathering crowd. I continued rolling out the thunder and halted again. Cheers. One more round of ruckus rock and I felt the show had come to a successful finish. Once again, no harassment, no long arm of the law, no discrimination. Was California REALLY this laid back? Jeez!

**Dinghole Report #52:
Chicken Salutes Olivera Street.
(Rhythm Chicken sightings
#... &)**

Across from Union Station is this small ped-mall area commemorating the first Spanish settlement in LA, or some other similar historical significance. After finding a large statue of some conquistador, we set up at its feet and I let loose some authentic Bohemian Wisconsin rock. As my thunder rhythms echoed around the site, more people turned their heads and started to flock near. The gig rocked on and the people in attendance were enlightened. One male audience member was overheard commenting, "Rhythm Chicken, huh? Nothing wrong with that!" Ruckus be with you, sir! We all retreated to the nearby churro stand where we feasted on these tasty delights. I enjoyed my churro so much I felt it was fitting to serenade the lady working the stand. The Rhythm Chicken rocked the Disney Concert Hall and a churro stand all in the same hour! Have I no mercy?

**Dinghole Report #53:
Chinatownland Means
Ruckus at Hand!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #...)**

Todd knew of this amazing spot for a Chicken gig in the Chinatown area. It was directly adjacent to the famous old Hong Kong Café, and it was a fenced in area containing large white letters spelling out "Chinatownland." Perfect! The Rhythm Chicken rocked out another Earth-shattering concert to the chicken militia and the folks running the little trinket stand next door. Somewhere, Tiltwheel continued drinking.

**Dinghole Report #54: Chicken
Rocks Pink's While Tiltwheel
Still Drinks!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #...)**

This day's entire roadie army agreed that the Rhythm Chicken HAD TO play to the line of folks in front of the famous Pink's Hot Dogs. This was like a dream come true, which is surprising since I've



Ruckus Inside Jack in the Box

never heard of Pink's before! Hot damn, let the ruckus commence! The line of people outside the establishment watched in mild anticipation while my militia set up my stage on the corner of the building. Then on went the head and on the ruckus rolled! My ears were flapping about tastily and my drumsticks were flying around like two turgid kielbasas! I raised my wings and was met with riotous applause. Another rock solid-dose of ruckus and they were yelling and hollering yet again. One snappily dressed fellow in the front of the line was taking photos with his cell phone! Ah, what a modern world we live in. Inside Pink's the wieners were twitchin'.

**Dinghole Report #54:
Hollywood Attacked!
(Rhythm Chicken sightings
#....., &...)**

Jim and Noel had to get along so we said our farewells. Now the Chicken's roadie army was trimmed down and ready for a guerilla rapid-fire assault on the land below the Hollywood hills! My crew and I all converged just up the street from Mann's Chinese Theater, the first victim in this ruckus blowout finale. I scouted out the area and found the most optimal spot for my stage, directly in front, dead center. There were guided tours going on all around. There were fake actors dressed up as Superwoman and Bruce Willis milling about, signing autographs. There were TONS of tourists and much foot traffic. The time had come. My kit was set up on the walk of fame, just two stars away from Michael Jackson's. I wasted no time and cut right to the ruckus.

My chaos rock echoed around the large entranceway and the people gathered around. I pounded the Chicken skins, flailing about, giving it my all. Once again, my ruckus was playing the big stage! FINALLY, someone, somewhere decided this wasn't supposed to happen in a place like this. One security guy approached my stage and tried to communicate with

Troy, who was sitting in front of my bass drum, holding the Rhythm Chicken sign. Troy rightly ignored the man. Then a SECOND security fellow approached and grabbed my arm. End of show. The funny part was that he never told me to stop, he just told me I had to turn it down a couple notches! Well, I'm sorry sir, but the Rhythm Chicken turns it down for NO ONE! We gathered up the kit and moved on up Hollywood Boulevard. About a half block up the boulevard we stopped in front of the Metro Rail subway entranceway. I set up and sent my high-volume rhythms down into the underworld! Another crowd gathered around and cheered the Chicken on for more. This time, a Metro Rail security dude approached the Chicken and ended the show. He then informed me that if I kept the gig on the far side of the stars on the sidewalk it was fair game! We moved the traveling ruckus circus to the next street corner, Hollywood and Highland. I was set up on the corner and let my ruckus flow to the public. Cars honked, cameras were going off, people cheered, and good merriment was had by all. Then I spied the Guinness Book of Records Theater across the intersection and thought it would be a fine closing gig. We hauled our stage to the entranceway to the theater where I performed on top of some new sidewalk stars. A few pedestrians stopped to enjoy my ruckus. My roadie army cheered. I pounded out my final California rhythms and then knew when enough was enough. I stood and bowed to the entire state. Someone from across the street yelled out, "Rhythm Chicken!" and, as it turned out, it was a Milwaukee resident who had only seen the

Rhythm Chicken on the Milwaukee FOX news, until now.

We bid farewell to our San Pedro infantry. Todd, Russ, and I made our way back to Razorcake HQ where I started working on my Rhythm Chili. Tonight's Rhythm Chili was a special California variant for it included finely chopped cactus paddles. Mr. Designated Dale stopped by for a quick visit before he took off for New York. I was honored to shake paws with him and stunned to see how much he resembled Milwaukee Chicken roadie Ruckus O'Reilly! Later, mild-mannered Jeff Fox joined us and Megan came home from work. Many Pabsts were had while the Rhythm Chili simmered precariously. Later, we all settled down for thick, heart-stopping doses of my Wisconsin-style chili with the slight California variant. All in attendance smiled and Razorcake HQ soon was in need of better ventilation! Thank you, good night!

On my final full day in LA, the Rhythm Chicken was able to relax. Todd and I made a quest to get as close to the Hollywood letters on the hill as we could to take a few photos to make my mother hen happy. Later in the day, I joined Todd to a Highland Park town meeting to discuss the nature of the skatepark they are planning to build. That night a few more guests stopped by and I made them all watch the movie *Drop Dead Gorgeous* so they could enjoy the good thick Midwest accent. Many Pabsts later we were asleep.

Early Wednesday morning, Todd drove me and my Chicken head back to the Burbank airport. It was all over too soon. Soon I was airborne to Dallas, and again to Milwaukee. Lord Kveldulfr met one ragged and fatigued Chicken at the airport. We started shopping for our trip to Kansas City. We were to depart in mere hours. No rest for the wicked Chicken, indeed. Unfortunately, the KC leg of the tour will have to wait till nest time.

Okay, Francis and Sicnarf. I guess I can let you loose now.

—The Rhythm Chicken unties his friends and removes their gags—

[(HOLY SHIT! NEW RUCKUS!
H I P - H I P - H U R -
RAAAAAAYYYYY!!!! - F.F. &
Dr. S.)]

Somewhere, right now, Tiltwheel continues drinking.

—The Rhythm Chicken

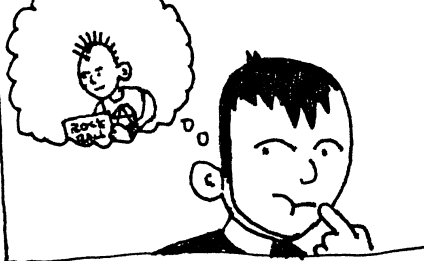
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com
www.rhythmchicken.com

RHYTHM CHICKEN



MY FIFTH COLUMN FOR RAZOR CAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

YOU EVER GO TO ONE OF THOSE PUNK SHOWS THAT TOTALLY REMIND YOU OF WHY YOU GOT INTO IT IN THE FIRST PLACE?



I WENT TO ONE OF THOSE S HOWS LAST NIGHT.



IT WAS AT SOUND ON SOUND, MY BUDDY JUG'S RECORD STORE IN AUSTIN.



ITS AT 106 E. NORTH LOOP IN AUSTIN TEXAS. BEST PUNK STORE IN TOWN!

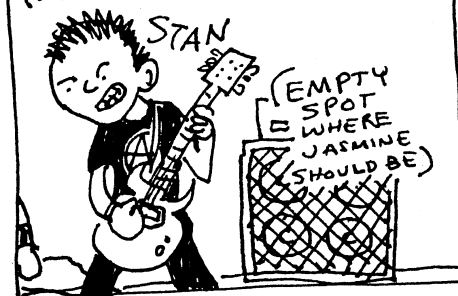
MANIKIN PLAYED FIRST, THEY KINDA SOUNDED LIKE EARLY HUSKER DU MEETS JOY DIVISION.



AFTER THEY PLAYED, MY GOOD FRIENDS SIGNAL LOST PLAYED.



THEIR BASS PLAYER WAS SICK BUT THEY PLAYED WITHOUT HER, ANYWAY. (WHICH WAS PRETTY PUNK)



AFTER THEM, MY STUPID BAND KIDS IN SERVICE TO SATAN PLAYED SOME SONGS.



WE DIDNT SOUND VERY GOOD, BUT WE HAD A LOT OF FUN.



UP NEXT WAS EVIL ARMY FROM MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THEY SOUNDED LIKE CRYPTIC SLAUGHTER MIXED WITH EARLY C.O.C.



AND FINALLY WAS BURY THE LIVING, ALSO FROM MEMPHIS.



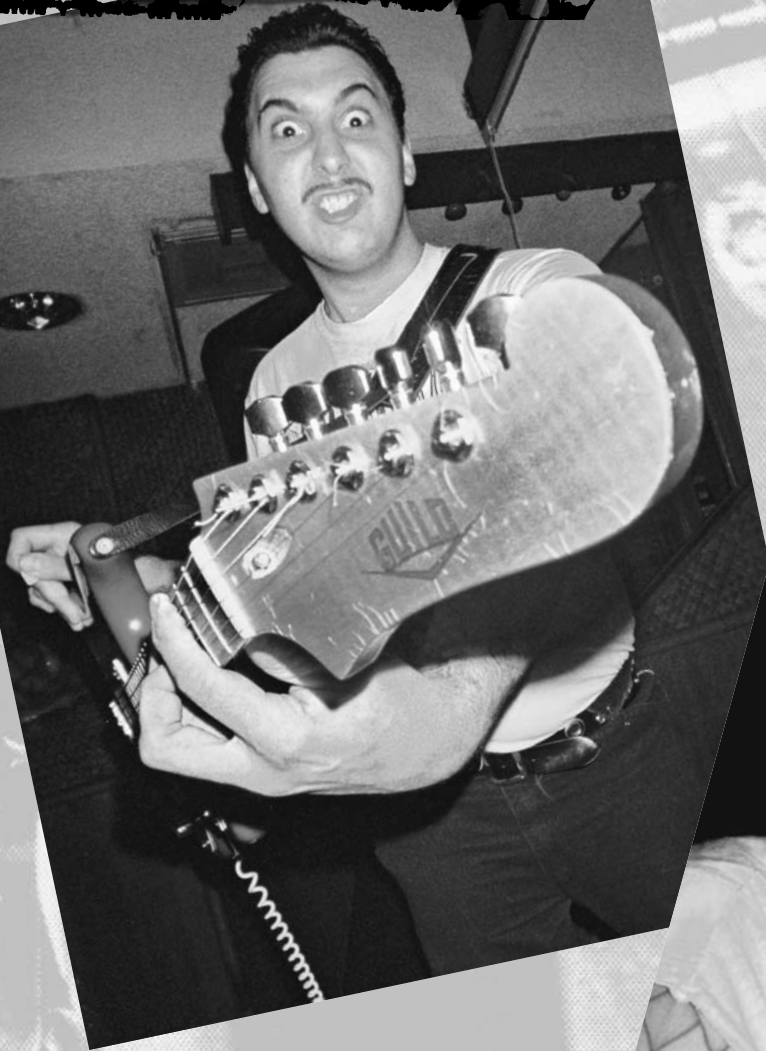
THE MOSH PIT WAS FUN AND DRUNK AND TOTALLY AWESOME!



IT WAS ONE OF THOSE SHOWS WHERE I REMEMBERED WHY I DIDNT BECOME A DILBERT LIKE ALL MY OLD FRIENDS DID.



Chrystaei Branchaw's
Photo Page



**"Don'tcha come
dishin' out no
scraps to me!"
*The Triggers***



CAREER SUICIDE

INTERVIEW BY MIKE FRAME



It's a funny thing about hardcore; it is one of the most overused, misunderstood, and misrepresented musical terms there is. There is never a shortage of sub-genres to latch on to the term and most of 'em stink. My favorite form of hardcore is and has always been what I call original style hardcore. Fast, catchy, short, and simple. If it is Minor Threat, Negative Approach, Zero Boys, or anything that has fallen off that tree, then I can dig it. It is seemingly such an easy thing to play and write, but eight out of ten hardcore bands can't seem to get it right. It is far too easy to fall into tuneless thrash – insanely fast, no hooks, short for short's sake. Much like bluegrass and blues, there is a template, and working within that and still keeping it interesting is challenging and far from easy. However, when it hits right, there is nothing like it: a punch in the face that you *want*. The past few years have seen a rash of great, original-style hardcore bands. After a decade and a half of boring bullshit, great bands like Out Cold, Dead Nation, Real Shit, Amdi Petersens Arme, Out Of Vogue, Tear It Up, and more have come on strong, get-

ting it more than right. Most of these bands are as good, if not better, than many of the original bands. They take the strengths of the original bands and bypass the weak shit.

You can add Career Suicide to the top of that list. I have been in love with this band ever since the first side of the instant classic hardcore punk *Sars* EP (Deranged Records) blew out of my speakers. I have gone on to pick up the self-titled 7" on Kangaroo and the great LP on Ugly Pop. Career Suicide just gets everything *right*. I was excited as hell to get the chance to interview this Canadian hardcore powerhouse and here is the interview with singer Martin and guitarist Johah. They make good records. Finding records like these is the reason that I still invest way too much time and money on hardcore records. The payoff is incredible when you get your hands on a killer hardcore record after purchasing several overhyped thrash ones. Keep your eyes peeled for upcoming releases, including a split LP with garage punk band Jed Whitey from Australia.

Mike: How did you all meet up and decide to start Career Suicide?

Martin: Career Suicide actually formed without any of its current members. It was forged out of a band that I sang in called Fuck Jonah. While I moved to the west coast for six months, the remaining members of the band formed Career Suicide.

Jonah: Martin and I had known each other for a year or two before I joined Career Suicide, but I had never met Eric (original drummer) or talked to Noah (original bass player) all that much. I filled in for their absent guitar player (Marky Rodentpesci) one day and the first "functioning" line up of Career Suicide was born. I think it was the wrong choice, though. All of the members who have left Career Suicide have gone on to be successful somehow. Eric was a mountie and now he owns his own record store. Noah is a big shot TV producer and Mark is on his way to becoming an underwear model.

Mike: What bands had you all played in before?

Jonah: I did a brief jog with Martin and the Juice (our current drummer) in Bored Of Education years back and saw mild recogni-

tion in the Juice-fronted Scare Tactic but things didn't really start to pick up until Career Suicide formed. Also, my twin brother plays in Fucked Up.

Martin: As Jonah mentioned, circa 2000-2001 we played together in the city's most annoying band, Bored Of Education. We'd play mostly improvised sets of snotty power violence that lasted forty-five minutes on average and usually ended with us naked and attacking the crowd or threatening them at gun point. That really happened. Between originals, we'd alternate between Diana Ross and '80s hardcore songs, all the while claiming they were covers of local mosh metal bands which plagued our city at the time. This band disbanded, but Jesse and I were able to reach even lower depths when forming Fuck Jonah. Needless to say, the past history of the members of Career Suicide is quite forgettable.

Mike: What did you want to do differently with Career Suicide than you had in previous bands?

Jonah: I was always the whipping boy in previous bands and I mean that literally.

"Hey Falco, turn down your amp. You're stepping on my leads!" and then, smash, I'd get it. Or it would be like, "Do thirty push ups before I take a shit on your back," then, crash, I'd get it again. In Career Suicide, I am more on a torturer trip than the tortured.

Mike: What were your plans for the band in the beginning?

Martin: Considering the massive aversion to our previous musical incarnations, you can imagine we didn't have high hopes for Career Suicide. I can safely say that the only intention and motivation behind making music for us is to have a good time. I don't mean to make this a "humble beginnings" speech, but you get the idea.

Jonah: I wasn't really around in the very, very beginning, but I think the plans were to just "be a band." The opportunity arose to release records and tour so we took them, but there was never any set scheme that we intended to follow.

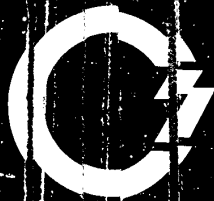
Mike: What was the state of the hardcore scene locally when you started up?

Jonah: It was okay. It seemed that a lot of new bands were forming and becoming more popular, so I'd say when we started, things were on their way to taking shape. For a while there was a sort of unit of local and surrounding area bands that would rotate on playing shows - Haymaker, Fucked Up, Career Suicide, No Warning, Scare Tactic, Our War - but, as usual, the whole thing fell apart. Now things are seemingly stable and there are even some new bands popping up. Check out The Choice, The Action, and Terminal State.

Martin: It's hard to ever gauge the state of Toronto hardcore/punk because it is so inbred. To an outsider it may seem that there are a great number of bands from this area, but I can only think of very few, if any, which don't share their members. This in and of itself is likely no different than most other cities, however Toronto also seriously lacks a younger crop of kids. Due to a variety of regional laws limiting access to bars and live music venues by minors, kids often don't have an opportunity to check out live bands and rarely get heavily involved in quality punk and hardcore.

Mike: What was the response when you first started playing out? How has it changed since?

Jonah: Well, our first show had a great response, which made things look bright for the future. But it definitely got worse before it got bet-



ter. We were never really prepared to play live and the audiences kind of hated us and thought we were boring and shitty. A few people had faith in us, but for the most part, it was pretty negative. Now we have improved a whole lot and have received a heap of international attention, so most of these jerks are singing a different tune. We're still not so hot on the outskirts of town, but in Toronto and outside of Ontario and Canada, people seem to like us a lot.

Mike: How did you hook up with Kangaroo Records in The Netherlands for the 7" single?

Martin: Just a lucky coincidence, I guess. A few years ago I was in Amsterdam for about half a day, waiting on a connecting flight and I ended up stumbling into a record store called Independent Outlet. I became fast friends with the people who ran the shop, and through them, I got a demo to Henk, who runs Kangaroo. There seemed to be a number of great international hardcore releases coming out of Amsterdam, particularly the Out Cold records on Kangaroo, so I was pretty eager to get demos around.

Mike: How much touring have you done, and do you have plans to do more?

Jonah: We've done two major tours. One short tour to the U.S. and one

longer one to Europe. Our daily lives prevent us from touring, really. We all have other commitments outside of music so sometimes it's hard to find the time to even practice, let alone travel across a country. I go to school full time, as does Jesse (drummer), and Miller (bass player) lives in Ottawa so it's hard to get us all together. I do really want this band though, so I have no trouble making time for most any endeavor that we decide to undertake.

Martin: Plus, I basically detest everyone in the band.

Jonah: We do have big plans for touring, though. Most relevant would be a more extensive tour to the United States, then back to Europe, over to Japan, and our last tour ever will be to Hawaii.

Mike: How did you record your full-length LP, how long did it take, and what are some things you might do differently next time?

Jonah: It was recorded at a place called Audiolab, which is literally a laboratory. Dr. Hegge does sound experiments on convicted felons and we got a grant from the Canadian Penal System to record there. We've actually done every record there, but without the government money. We're always changing equipment and guitars, but hopefully we can establish a "Career Suicide Sound" that will be present throughout all our future records. When you look at a review of say, the third record some famous punk band has done, often it will read, "Still good and has that great (blank-blank) sound." That's what I want to do differently.

Mike: What music do you all listen to when you need a break from fast and loud?

Jonah: A lot of oldies, hit parader music from the early '50s, early jazz and Latin music, *Back From The Grave/Garage Punk Unknowns/Nuggets/Pebbles*-type stuff and a bunch of '60s pop music.

Martin: A lot of our musical tastes are informed by pre-punk music, and I would like to think that shows through in Career Suicide to some degree. When turning the radio to an oldies station there are few songs I couldn't sing along to. I'm also into a lot of '60s and '70s soul, as well as '60s psych-garage. I can't say there's much contemporary stuff I listen to though. When on tour we'll go from listening to Merle Haggard to the Geto Boys to Slayer.

Mike: What are your favorite classic and current hardcore bands?

Jonah: My faves of yesteryear are: Ramones, The Mad, Germs, Lewd, The Fix, Zero Boys, Bad Brains, Poison Idea, Gang Green, and Reagan



Youth, but there are a million more. Currently, there is not all that much I would call my "favorite" but I've been into Direct Control from Richmond, who are excellent; Born In Hell from Boston; Violent Minds from everywhere; the Teenage Rejects were pretty much a hardcore band; and some of those California acts that have popped up the last couple of years – Annihilation Time, Knife Fight, and Street Trash. Also, the Danes have produced some good records in the past while – Amdi Petersens Arme, Young Wasteners, Gorilla Angreb, and recently, No Hope For The Kids.

Martin: The usual shit... The Fix, Black Flag, Koro, Angry Samoans, Radio Birdman, Pagans, Ramones, Adolescents, and Urban Waste. As far as current bands, the last few records I played included Direct Control, Young Wasteners, Fucked Up, Dead Stop, and The Prowl.

Mike: What are your favorite classic and current non-hardcore bands?

Jonah: I don't think I have a favorite "classic band." Maybe the Modern Lovers, Black Sabbath, or the Dictators? I don't really have a favorite current non-hardcore band either. I'm not really up on what's happening in modern "music," but how about that Miss Dynamite song?

Martin: I'd have a hard time picking a favorite classic non punk/hardcore band. Queen is awesome, but I would probably go for Sam Cooke. As for current music, I'm also pretty ignorant to what's going on,

but I've recently picked up some decent indie rock stuff. The Decemberists were great live.

Mike: Do you think it is harder being a band in Canada compared to maybe the U.S.? What are some of the roadblocks you run into?

Martin: It's definitely a nightmare every time we prepare to cross the border. We sink a ton of money in printing shirts, getting extra records to sell, renting a van, taking time off from work and school, only to face the possibility that some border guard is having a bad day and decides to turn us away on a whim. Luckily, we have been able to slip by the last few times we've attempted entry to the states. That's about the only drawback and it is really outweighed by the benefits. Hell, we usually don't have to drive longer than eight to ten hours to play a show, but despite that, we're treated especially well just because we come from another country.

Mike: Are you happy with your full-length record and were you surprised by the response to it?

Jonah: Yes and no. Definitely surprising that it sold out within a month or two, but people's reaction to it wasn't as surprising. Most people say they like the LP, but enjoy the 7"s more, which we kind of knew would happen. The LP is great for what it is though: a pummeling hardcore record. The newer stuff is a little more carefully planned.

Martin: For what it is, I think we are definitely as happy as can be about it. You have

to understand that despite the fact that it turned out to be our third official release, it was actually our first studio recording. Unfortunately, it was marred with delays, which kept it from being released for nearly two years. Months before the LP's release, we went back into the studio to re-mix and re-record some tracks, which definitely freshened the sound. I am happy with the LP and I think it's got some of our strongest songs. But, my favorites are still the *Sars* EP (Deranged Records) and the self-titled EP. Funnily enough, maybe my absolute favorite is still our first demo that's available in 12" format on the Toronto Omnibus compilation.

Mike: What are your current plans as far as recording?

Martin: We've recorded eight songs for a split LP with Australia's Jed Whitey. Those tracks have all been mastered and are just being held up by a lack of artwork. I plan to have the covers and inserts laid out soon and the record will likely see release by summer. Otherwise, we've already written songs for another 4-song EP to be released by a local label, Slasher, for North America and Even Worse Records for the rest of the world.

Mike: What are your future plans for the band at this point?

Jonah: A regional tour of convalescent homes and a record deal with Frontier, Touch and Go, or Subterranean.

INDIE BOOKS

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS IN PUBLISHING

ARTICLE BY JIM CONKLIN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROB RUELAS



Imagine that you're a writer. An unpublished writer with a finished manuscript. You've worked for months, probably years, on this thing and now you want to get it published. In the time that you spent conjuring up plot, characters and images to create your story, you may also have been conjuring up images of you being wined and dined by all of the major publishers. I typically envision myself in the Lost Generation of 1920's Paris. There I am chatting and drinking with Hemingway, Fitzgerald and their editors from Scribner's. Gertrude Stein gently touches my arm and whispers, "That book is brilliant. Pure genius." I smile. Damn, I'm smart, I think to myself. I'm going to be a novelist, I'm going to be rich and I'm going to hang out with all of these heavyweights." But it's not the 1920's, Hemingway shot himself, and the chances of getting rich as a writer are slimmer than a smoking flapper. Furthermore, the publishing industry is not the same now as it was then.

Over the past forty years, the author/publisher relationship has changed dramatically. The changes can be attributed, in large part, to the conglomeration of publishing houses. In 1965, there were twenty-seven major publishing houses. Today, there are five. Prestigious presses such as Doubleday and Knopf have been bought out by publishing conglomerates, and the conglomerates are now comprised of a number of previously independent publishers. For example, Random House now shares ownership with Doubleday, Bantam, Dell, Dial, Villard, Ballantine, Knopf, Crown, Times Books, and more. The people who own these conglomerations do so because they help to widen and expand market share, and their ultimate goal is to maximize profit on their investment. However, many people in the publishing and writing industry feel that the intense focus on profit is having a negative effect on the publishing of books, particularly on the publishing of literature.

The conglomerate presses obviously do provide many advantages for some of their writers. The cash that these behemoths control allows them to market, promote and distribute in ways that are impossible for the independents. But this kind of attention is typically only reserved for those books and writers that have a proven commercial track record. While the big houses do publish writers such as the recent Nobel Prize winners, V.S. Naipaul (Random House), J.M. Coetzee (Penguin), and Toni Morrison (Knopf), the majority of their big-selling books tend to be less literary. And the real casualties of the conglomerate presses tend to be their mid-list writers. These are the authors who are often writing solid literary fiction, but are not selling the numbers it takes to be a best seller. Unfortunately for these writers, the new business philosophy of the big New York presses is to publish a huge amount of titles, and bank on some of them being blockbusters. Those books that produce the big numbers are obviously showered with promotion money and attention to sustain their huge sales, but those that do not, the mid-list writers, often have their books go out of print very quickly, and are rarely given the financial and personal attention that most books require to be a sales success. With over 3500 new books being published each year and new research stating that over eighty percent of Americans neither bought nor read a book in the past year, many, many authors will find themselves placed as mid-list writers.

What follows are the stories of a number of people who work in the publishing industry. I interviewed writers, independent publishers, conglomerate publishers and self-publishers, and through their experiences and words, a clearer picture of the publishing world is illuminated.

KAYLIE JONES, WRITER

Kaylie Jones definitely knows something about the writing life. She has published five novels, and has helped to open the MFA Program in Writing at Long Island University's South Hampton campus. She became a Writer in Residence in the NYC public schools after being exposed to the poetry of underprivileged children at workshops she helped to fund.

Furthermore, because her father is James Jones, the author of *From Here to Eternity*, she grew up surrounded by the literary life both in Paris as a child, and later in New York. In her interview, Ms. Jones talked with a frankness and passion that left me spinning.

As we discussed the plight of the mid-list writers at the conglomerate publishing companies, Jones had this to say: "The mid-list writers are screwed completely. There's no way around this. But what's unsettling is that the big publishers don't tell the truth. They don't say, 'We don't care about our mid-list writers, we don't care about literature.' They don't say that, but that's the truth. They have MBAs deciding who gets published because of computer graphics and focus groups. So when they say they care about literature, that's what gets me."

Jones has good reason to be dissatisfied with her publishing experiences. She published her first two novels, *As Soon As It Rains* (1986), and *Quite the Other Way* (1989) with Doubleday, her third novel, *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries* (1990) with Bantam, her fourth, *Celeste Ascending* (2000) with Harper Collins, and finally changed to an independent publisher, Akashic Press, to publish her latest novel, *Speak Now* (2003). At first, her relationship with Doubleday, before it had been taken over by Bertelsmann, was good. But then a disconcerting pattern began. "The day I handed in my second novel, everybody I worked with at Doubleday was fired. There was a huge coup. That's when Bertelsmann bought it. I was inherited by a younger publisher who stayed for a little while and then left. That's been the story of my publishing life. Every single time I've changed and gone to a new publisher the person who I was working with was either fired or left to go to a bigger and better place. There was a big article in *Poets and Writers* when my first novel was published, saying that there was a common scenario of writers being orphaned by their publishers. When I read it I said, 'They're just exaggerating. It can't be that bad.' And that was in the mid eighties. Since then it's no longer an

anomalous nightmare, it's the norm. It's what happens to everybody. There's no longer this old-fashioned mentor relationship between an editor and a writer. There's no longer the notion of sticking with a writer through thick and thin. No sense of developing a writer's career. Now they buy a book because it's got a hook and they'll be able to sell it. So if you're a mid-list writer, which I'm considered, and they think you're difficult to market, you can be treated really badly."

Another issue Jones has had with the conglomerate publishers is a lack of editorial voice. She said that on a number of occasions, her editors have asked her to "sex your books up, shine them up a little." Her most recent novel, *Speak Now* tells the story of a meth-amphetamine dealer who stalks a woman who works at a halfway house for battered women. When Jones brought the manuscript to one of the big publishers, the editor suggested some rather major changes. "My editor said, 'I think you should make the male character a tits and nose plastic surgeon. It's just glitzier and more interesting, and I think

put the book out in 2003. This is the kind of publishing relationship that the writer was looking for. "Johnny's a really decent person with the drive to do the right thing. He's not doing it to get rich, but to keep a good range of stuff out there. There are a lot of books out there that won't get picked up by the big presses, not because they're not good, but because they're not pigeon-holeable."

Another advantage that Jones appreciates about her new publisher is Akashic's willingness to stick with their writers. In our interview, she juxtaposed the experience she had publishing her last book with Bantam. "*Celeste*, came out in the spring and there was a flurry of very good reviews from *People*, *Entertainment Weekly* and a few other places. The book got a lot of attention and it sold very well for a few months, and then bang, it was gone. With Akashic it's been constant. They keep going and going. They never put you out of print. The book is always available. Even if it's not up front in the bookstore, people still ask for it. Sales start to go up. It's a slow build and people start

Jones knows that it will be a long, long time before she would ever even *consider* returning to one of the conglomerate presses.

JOE MENO, WRITER

At the young age of twenty-four, Joe Meno published his first novel, *Tender As Hellfire*, with St. Martin's Press. When he was twenty-seven, he published *How the Hula Girl Sings*, with Harper Collins. However, his experiences working with conglomerate publishing houses left him disgruntled. "It had become very clear to me how corporatized the major houses have become," he told me. "They are not so interested in telling stories. They want capital. This whole industry has turned into producing work for the least common denominator, which isn't what writing fiction is about to me."

Joe Meno is not naïve. His day job has him teaching creative writing at Columbia College in Chicago, and for years, he worked nights as the lead singer and guitar player for the punk band, The Phantom



SALES DEPARTMENTS AT THE BIG PUBLISHING HOUSES WANTED BOOKS THEY HAD SEEN BEFORE - BOOKS THEY KNEW HOW TO SELL. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE CHANCES SELLING BOOKS WITH NO "HANDLE." THEY SHIED AWAY FROM ANYTHING NEW, ANYTHING THEY COULDN'T PIGEON-HOLE.



the female character should be a magazine editor." But Jones would have nothing to do with it. "I know eight or nine magazine editors and I'd rather kill myself than have anything to do with these people, let alone write a character like that. I said, 'Thank you so much for your comments,' and that was the end of that."

Having become completely frustrated with the big New York publishers, Jones took her manuscript to the independent publisher, Johnny Temple, at Akashic Books. The relationship was an immediate success. Temple loved the book and agreed to accept it. With the appropriate revisions made, and a great deal of editorial freedom for Jones as a writer, Jones and Akashic

to pay attention. It's a different thing. It takes a lot longer, but there's a kind of momentum that builds up slowly, and that's happened with a lot of Akashic's books."

And some of Akashic's titles *have* done conspicuously well. Nina Revoyr's *Southland* was selected for the *LA Times*' Best Books of 2003, among other awards. Tim McLoughlin won Italy's Premio Penne Award for his novel, *Heart of the Old Country*. And Daniel Chavarria's *The Eye of Cybele* was long-listed for the 2004 IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

With the kind of relationship that Jones has built with Akashic, and the quality writing that the publisher is putting out,

Three. He speaks with the articulation of an intellectual and the passion of a punk. And when it comes to making decisions about where he will publish his books, Meno's choices seem to be guided by both qualities equally.

As a new and unknown writer, Meno was initially very pleased to be publishing with one of the big houses. "For about a month all I did was go to bookstores - at the time I was still delivering flowers - and here I was, published writer." But his relationship with his publisher soon began to sour. St. Martin's Press, "had massive distribution problems, resulting in sending my book out three months late, and because of the lag, chain **49**

bookstores automatically sent their copies back. St. Martin's also offered no help in promotion." When Meno prepared to write his second novel, he was told he "should write a book just like my first, so it would be easier to position. I didn't want to and my editor there left, and so did I."

Meno moved to Harper Collins, but things didn't get much better. Although they were more helpful in acquiring some press and reviews for the book, ultimately Meno was disappointed about the relationship. "They were all set to do a paperback, I had gotten some great reviews for *Hula Girl*, but then my editor quit, and the book went out of print."

And the problems did not stop there. When Meno submitted an idea for his third novel, Harper Collins proved less than enthusiastic. It was to be a book based on the true story of growing up punk on Chicago's south side and a study in racial intolerance. It would focus on the events

their fucking hands in every market now, are making choices about content, not based on meaning, but based on which will make the most money. People like Johnny and Dan are setting up presses to put work out they feel strongly about, as a response to how empty the publishing world has become."

Meno's new book is due out in September. The author has been very pleased about his relationship with Punk Planet. "It's amazing," he says. "Today I'm going to the photo shoot for the book cover. Dan and Johnny asked, 'What do you want for the cover?' No one ever asked me that before. They worked out the release for September so I could tour and they have been supportive in setting up readings. More than that, they keep thanking me, like they're grateful to be working with me, which is a complete turnaround. Their hearts are in it, you know, it's not a job to them, it's what they love."

Geary had written *Strange Toys*. But her editor at Harper and Row had retired to write his own books at that time, so Geary changed publishers and went to Bantam Books.

By 1987, Bantam was a large conglomerate press made up of Bantam, Doubleday and Dell. Geary became interested in Bantam when they proposed publishing *Strange Toys* in their new literary trade paperback line. The publishers promised a beautifully produced book and heavy promotional backing from the press. Geary was thrilled.

But then something strange happened in the halls and offices of Bantam. Late one night, Geary's editor had a falling out with the director of the new literary line that would publish her novel. Because of this personal dispute and office politics, the head of the new literary line dropped all of the editor's writers, including Geary. But luckily Geary had a contract with

IT WASN'T EXACTLY THE RAMONES AT CBGB'S, BUT THE AUDIENCE LOVED IT

surrounding a Chicago high school's segregated prom in 1992. However, editors at Harper Collins found the material to be too controversial and asked Meno to alter his plans. Shocked by his publisher's unwillingness to tackle important and controversial topics, Meno had some thinking to do about who would publish his next book.

So what did Meno do? He decided to leave Harper Collins and submit his new novel, *Hairstyles of the Damned*, to Punk Planet Books, an imprint of Johnny Temple's Akashic Books in New York City. He had heard that the editors, Temple and Dan Sinker at Punk Planet, were committed to publishing quality fiction, regardless of the market, and the profit and loss reports. As their website notes, Akashic Books is "dedicated to publishing urban literary fiction and political nonfiction by authors who are either ignored by the mainstream, or who have no interest in working within the ever-consolidating ranks of the major corporate publishers."

"Johnny and Dan are not doing what they do to simply make more money," Meno states. "Neither am I. It seems their goals and expectations are aligned very closely with mine."

"An independent house can take risks, in form, content, style, all the things that make writing interesting. The corporations can't do that. They have to let the market make those choices. But you don't write a book as a response to the market, or I don't think you should. This same thing is happening in music, film, TV, these major media companies, which have

PATRICIA GEARY, WRITER

Like Joe Meno, Patricia Geary is a professor. Unlike Meno, she doesn't play guitar in a punk band. Instead, she decided to pursue quieter interests by teaching yoga, and creative writing at University of Redlands. However, don't let the image of serenity overtake this picture. While Geary is definitely a kind, calm and eloquent woman, she didn't hesitate to voice her opinions about her experiences in publishing.

In 1982, Geary published her first novel, *Living in Ether*, with Harper and Row. At the time, Harper and Row had not yet been taken over by the Harper Collins conglomerate. It was still functioning primarily as a literary publisher with a small office and a highly literate and dedicated staff. Geary was thrilled with her experience there. "My relationship at Harper and Row was very personal. I could meet with my editor and work with him for three days. He was always very careful and very interested. At the time that *Living in Ether* came out, I went to New York to meet my editor at Harper and Row and it wasn't a very big office. I met everyone working there, they gave me copies of their new books that were coming out, and my editor invited me over for dinner that night. It was very cozy. The whole experience had a literary presence."

Geary's debut novel went over well. However, when Geary produced her second novel, her editor at Harper and Row was not satisfied. So Geary went back to work to produce another book. By 1987,

Bantam that ensured her book would be published within two years. With the hope of her novel being published by Bantam's literary line crushed, the publisher printed her book under their science fiction imprint. Geary was not pleased. "The book wasn't science fiction at all. If you had to categorize it, I guess you could call it contemporary fantasy." But, essentially, Geary's writing is literary fiction with elements of magical realism. Her publishers would be targeting the wrong reading market.

But once again, strange events occurred. Despite *Strange Toys* not being "science fiction" one of the judges of the Philip K. Dick award for science fiction loved Geary's writing and she was awarded the prize in 1987. But winning the prize had both positive and negative effects.

In the short term, the award supplied Geary with some much appreciated publicity and acclaim. But in the long term, it had less benign consequences. Because Bantam liked Geary's writing, they bought the rights to *Living in Ether* from Harper and Row, and republished that book and *Strange Toys* in their science fiction line. Not surprisingly though, Geary's literary novels did not fare particularly well being marketed as they were. "I actually have a decent sized fan base that followed me from one publisher to the other, but there's such a difference between a big, beautiful literary hardback as opposed to an airport mass market paperback. It's normally two totally different groups of readers."

Unfortunately for Geary, her publish-

er's mismarketing left the readers who wanted to read her literary prose unable to find it, and those who wanted science fiction disappointed to discover that her writing was more literary. The pigeonholing of her books as something they were not left Geary in a publishing no man's land.

When she presented Bantam with her third novel, Geary's editor said that it was unmarketable because it wasn't science fiction. The problem, of course, is that Geary doesn't write science fiction. She then took her new novel to a number of the other large publishing houses, but heard the same response: "If it's not science fiction, we can't market it."

Completely frustrated by the situation, Geary stopped trying to publish her novels, focused her attention on teaching creative writing at University of Redlands, and spending time with her family. But she didn't stop writing.

From 1988 to 2001, Geary had written six novels that she hadn't even *tried* to get published. "I just gave up," Geary says. "I just became tired of the whole scene." But then Geary was rediscovered.

Felizon Vidad is a co-founder and editor at Gorsky Press, an independent publishing company in Los Angeles. After re-reading *Living in Ether* and *Strange Toys*, Vidad decided it was time to discover what Geary was up to in 2001. When Vidad discovered the writer was up to six new books, she knew she was on to something. The editor contacted Geary in Redlands, and a beautiful relationship began. Geary gushes when she talks about her new editor. "Felizon is so smart, she cares, and she reads a lot. You couldn't ask for a better editor. She addresses everything from the microcosmic aspects, to the whole outlook of the novel. We work really well together."

And together, after thirteen years of having her work go unpublished, the writer and editor put out Geary's third novel, *The Other Canyon*, and hope to get Geary's other novels back in print with Gorsky. Geary was once again happy with her publisher.

When asked to compare the different experiences she had at the different presses, Geary said that the conglomerate presses, "definitely don't have the time to spend with their writers and that was my experience with Bantam. My editor there was really nice, but she didn't have much time for me. She gave me some good general suggestions on my book, but she was putting out dozens, and she just didn't have the time. I know from a lot of friends with recent experiences that publishers want books to show up pretty much ready to go, and if your book isn't ready to go, no one has the patience, time or money to work with you, unless you're a big name, of course."

Different motivations at the different presses are another key difference that



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Geary noticed. "In the small press everyone is involved in the project, which is: 'Let's make this book as good as possible.' With the big presses, the editors have to pitch their books and they have to argue for the commercialness of their books – that the book is going to sell. And if they pick a book, and it doesn't sell, then nobody is going to listen to them about their choices in the future. None of that exists in the small presses. Everybody's involved in making the best book possible without it jockeying and competing with all of the other editors' stuff. It really comes down to competition at most of the big presses."

Competition and the all-mighty buck is not what Geary is interested in. She states, "For me, because I'm fortunate enough to have a job where I don't need to earn all of my money from writing, I just want books to be out there for my students and other people to read. I just want to produce good

writing. It's not important to me to make money off of it." And with that, it becomes quite evident where one of the major differences between the conglomerate presses and the independent presses lie.

JEFF FOX, WRITER, MAGAZINE PRODUCER AND SELF-PUBLISHER

Jeff Fox is a self-publisher with a sense of humor. He started publishing fanzines with titles like *Maximum Rock and Raoul*, and *Die Evan Dando Die*. Then, from 1994-1996 he published *Hollywood Highball Magazine*, and from 1998 to the unforeseen future, Fox has been and will be publishing *Barracuda Magazine*. After laughing at Fox's jokes, I quickly realized that he's not just a funny guy. He also has an extremely solid grasp on what's going on in the publishing world, and he's got both feet planted firmly in reality. When we dis-

cussed his initial forays into the publishing arena, I asked if self-publishing was a response to the way that the conglomerate publishers were operating. "I suppose. But only in the sense that I started out doing zines at the copy shop down the street and I can't imagine Conde Nast would have been interested in a punk rock parody zine that would sell fifty copies of each issue."

Though Fox enjoys the creativity and sense of satisfaction of independently completing his projects, he never forgets that publishing is also a business. "Would a big company want to do *Barracuda*? Unlikely. My idea for a magazine could never generate enough money for them to think it was a profitable business venture – assuming they even liked the concept, which I doubt they would. But that doesn't mean they're doing anything 'wrong' in terms of that. That's their business model. That's how they do business and I understand that. Anyone who comes up with some crackpot idea for a magazine and thinks some corporation is just going to bankroll it, like some benevolent king, much less bankroll it and then let you do whatever you want, is living in a fairy tale."

And of course, Fox has a strong point. Whether it's in magazine publishing or book publishing, the owners of the houses *are* in the business to make money. This is a world that is increasingly driven by capitalism, and we should no longer be surprised that business people put profit ahead of art. Disappointed – yes, surprised – no. As Fox later stated, this situation is "understandable, but it's poison to any kind of creative process."

JOHNNY TEMPLE, WRITER, MUSICIAN, INDIE PUBLISHER

However, there are publishers who are trying to find a happy medium in the money vs. art dichotomy. Johnny Temple, the publisher of *Jones and Meno* at Akashic Press, is one of them. Because Temple does not have the capital to market his books the way the conglomerates do, he has to get creative. And luckily, Temple is a creative guy. Since the early '80s he has been heavily involved with the music scene. He's toured around the world with such bands as Soul Side, Girls Against Boys, and is presently playing with Gina Gershon. With no previous publishing experience, he started Akashic five years ago, and has enjoyed a healthy amount of success.

Temple says that he's trying to take lessons he learned as an early punk musician to stimulate the independent publishing industry. "Independent music is much more successful and vital than independent publishing is. In the very early eighties, around 1980, there were no punk networks for bands to travel through. Punks and musicians created those networks. There

are a number of us trying to do a similar thing in the independent publishing world. Instead of trying to just emulate the big publishers and trying to gear all your marketing into trying to get a big review in the *New York Times*, it has much more to do with community and networking between like-minded people in different cities. So we're trying to foster underground literary communities that can make indie publishing more vital, the way that independent music is."



A perfect example of this kind of independent literary community coming together and organizing is Jim Murnoe's Perpetual Motion Roadshow. On his website, Murnoe describes the Roadshow as, "an indie press touring circuit, an unholy combination of a vaudevillian variety show and a punk rock tour. There's one loop in the Northeast that goes May-Oct, and one run of the west coast between Vancouver and LA during Nov-Apr. Each month, three new lively indie performers pile in a car and do seven cities in eight days, doing shows with the bold guarantee: No Boring Readings or Your Money Back!"

At the Roadshow I went to, there were two energetic readings of short stories and one audience-interactive short story/dramatic masked performance type thing. It wasn't exactly the Ramones at CBGB's,

but the audience loved it, and the authors sold some books, got their names and faces out there, and appeared to have a good time.

Another way that Temple keeps his company afloat is by publishing books that target a specific audience, and marketing them in unconventional ways. *Brooklyn Noir* is a new crime fiction collection written by twenty different writers and set in the different neighborhoods of Brooklyn. To publicize the book, Akashic is doing the first ever fifteen-neighborhood book tour of Brooklyn – a tactic that most of the big publishers would find undesirable. Temple states, "most publishers focus their marketing money in places like Manhattan, Chicago and San Francisco, not places like Brooklyn. But it's a book that focuses on the people of Brooklyn."

Another title that Akashic is putting out is *A Phat Death* by Norman Kelly. The book is a murder mystery that is set in the hip hop music industry and examines African American politics. Temple believes that this kind of novel appeals to a number of demographic groups that are not often targeted by the big publishers. First, there is the regular reader who enjoys murder mysteries. But the book will also appeal to those readers interested in African American politics, and younger readers interested in hip hop. To market the book and get it in people's hands, Temple is not advertising in the *New Yorker* or *Reader's Digest*, but in *The Source* and *Fader*. Furthermore, Akashic is dropping off copies of the book at beauty salons in African American neighborhoods. With this kind of "out-of-the-box" thinking, Akashic is selling more books, and continuing their success.

However, the bottom line is definitely not the only thing Temple takes into consideration. Railing against the money-minded ethos of the conglomerates, Temple says, "I think that as these giant companies gobble each other up with fewer and fewer titans controlling the mainstream publishing business, it's going to speed up this process of everything becoming profit focused, which doesn't work well with art. It doesn't work well with music, and it certainly doesn't work with literature. There aren't that many people who are engaged with excellent quality literary fiction, for example, so to apply this rigid business model to something like literature just doesn't fit well. But that's the direction that you see the big companies taking. So I think that the small companies are going to continue. I think it's a wonderful time to be an independent publisher, and in the next five years more and more attention will be paid to the independent publishers because they're doing such a great job of finding stuff that is being ignored."

RICHARD MAREK, CONGLOMERATE PUBLISHER, INDIE PUBLISHER

Richard Marek has worked in the world of publishing since 1965. He has worked for a number of large publishing houses, including Macmillan, St. Martin's, and Random House. He has served as editor, editor-at-large, publisher and president. In 1992 he decided to get a taste of independent publishing. While still working for Crown Publishing (a branch of Random House), Marek decided to run Delphinium Books, an independent publisher based out of Brooklyn. He explains: "I was a member of the mainstream until the stream became a trickle. I negotiated huge deals, made huge paperback sales, was responsible for budgets in the mega-millions, went to marketing meetings and sales conferences, puzzled over jackets and advertisements, worried, exalted, and became depressed as I watched with growing dismay as mainstream publishing moved further and further from care and nourishment for individual books and writers toward the "blockbuster only" philosophy that predominates now. So my true pleasure, the books that ignited my publishing blood, were those I acquired for Delphinium. Real books. Real writers."

While some may suggest that writers' negative experiences with the conglomerate presses could be dismissed as bad luck, publishers like Marek suggest that these episodes are not anomalies. Without the mega-sales to back them up, publishing houses are hesitant to stick with their mid-level writers. Marek states: "I was being forced to try to acquire 'big books' only – nothing experimental or new; no 'unknowns' unless the subject was truly commercial, nothing that did not have a potential sale of 25,000 copies." Sales departments at the big publishing houses wanted books they had seen before – books they knew how to sell. They didn't want to take chances selling books with no "handle." They shied away from anything new, anything they couldn't pigeon-hole.

Unfortunately, Marek notes, "large publishers will give up on a book almost immediately if its advance sales are small or if there are quick returns. The big publisher simply can't afford to go further. Too many new titles are clamoring for attention; there are too many demands on time and energy." And this seems to be one of the biggest pitfalls of publishing with big presses. They have lost their will

to nurture lesser-known writers, and have lost the patience needed to allow them to improve as writers and to attract a readership that will support them in the future.

Marek says that when it comes to sticking with a new author or book, "the independent publisher can keep a book in print, try one approach after another, and nurture the book if it is at first a sickly child. The small publisher simply cannot afford *not* to go further. A very good novelist recently told me that he was going to submit his next book to a small press. He knew he would get a smaller advance, but



he knew too that his book would stay in print far longer and that his work would receive the one-on-one attention he had never gotten from a large house."

To illustrate his point about big publishing houses, Marek tells a story of when he was editor-in-chief at Dial Press. "Each summer I went to the writer's conference in Breadloaf, Vermont, to lecture to the students about publishing. One of the faculty members was a fellow named John Irving, the author of three well-reviewed but unsuccessful novels, and we struck up one of those ardent friendships one sometimes experiences at writers' conferences. In due course, I was offered an exclusive shot at his new novel. But because Irving's roof had fallen in, he needed an advance of \$14,000 immediately to repair it. I had enough clout at Dial to be able to buy such a book purely on my say-so – and I turned it down. None of John's earlier books had sold nearly enough copies to warrant such an advance and, more importantly, I didn't like the first chapter. It struck me as show-off and too clever for its own good. A week later, at a party, I ran into a colleague named Hal Scharlatt, then the Editor-in-Chief of EP Dutton Press. He told me he had just bought a novel for \$14,000 which, when finished, would be the most successful book of his career. I winced. 'The

World According to Garp?' I asked tremulously. 'How did you know?' he asked."

Marek continues, "The fact that Hal was right and I wrong in a commercial sense isn't as much the point as the fact that Hal was there, as the head of a relatively small, independent house. What if, like today, there had been only five big publishing houses? It's possible, even probable, that the book would have been published, but books of so delicate a nature need more than mere publication. They need the passion, enthusiasm and wholehearted dedication Hal brought to *Garp's* publication, and in my worst dreams I see a Hal of today going to his sales director – who is under tremendous pressure to advance more copies of the latest Dean Koontz – and trying to tell him about the book. The sales manager might listen. He might even be caught up in Hal's enthusiasm. But in the end he'd say to Hal, 'I just can't advance many copies of it. Who could with a title like that?'"

Finally, Marek goes on to compare the "good old days" of publishing in the '60s, to the kind of work independent publishers are doing today. "In many ways, the time moonlighting for my own independent press, Delphinium Books, were the happiest years of my life in publishing. Man, it was fun! Indeed, I used to sneak away early from my Crown office to go into my cubicle at home. For in 1995 I was doing what I had done thirty years earlier and no longer could in the mainstream – look for talent, edit it, foster it, work closely with the author, worry over every detail. I didn't have to sell 25,000 copies to make a profit. I didn't have to present my ideas to an editorial board that was dominated by a sales department."

And with that, Marek takes us back to the beginning. To the good old days when publishing still had some finesse, a little more artistic integrity, and a dedicated personal touch. Marek suggests that we don't have to go back to the '20s, and my imagined cocktail party with Hemingway and the rest of his crew. We don't even have to go back to the '60s, before the beginning of the consolidation of the publishing companies. In order for writers, editors and publishers to enjoy the integrity and dedication that Marek discusses, it's starting to look like all we have to do is find an independent publisher that values those qualities. And it sounds like it won't be that hard to do.



RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS

INTERVIEW & PHOTOS
BY TODD TAYLOR



The premise is simple: straight-ahead, high-energy rock'n'roll. The irony? Most of the bands that wave that flag the hardest, well, they aren't so good. It's almost as if they're waving the white flag of surrender instead of hoisting a banner that symbolizes fun, true recklessness, and songs that you want to hear so loud you'll only be satisfied when you feel a trickle of blood roll from your ear down your neck. For me, this map was laid down long ago by the likes of the Who, Black Sabbath, Cheap Trick, AC/DC, and Motörhead. An endless stream of bands have stomped over the same ground, but over the last several years – as will happen with grass if it sees an endless stream of foot traffic – nothing new was seeming to grow out of what was once laid down as heavy and sturdy as rocks. If I had a nickel for every band that pleaded for ladies' bras and panties to become magically unfastened and thrown up on stage due to their sheer rock prowess, I could take everyone reading this right now out to

a nice burrito lunch. Sure, these bands have the expensive duds, fancy gear, found-it-at-Guitar Center's "hot licks"-seminar guitaring, and pro sneers but they were missing... well, they were missing something as serious as heart.

It makes sense, that when I got to sit down with Mike, the Riverboat Gambler's lead singer, that this band was less about rock of the past, and so much more about backyard parties in Denton, Texas and being poor, strange, and anxious. The more Mike talked, the more it made sense that their CD has remained within arm's length of my stereo since its release. The Gamblers have a healthy admiration of recent and current groups you'd be hard-pressed to hear in their sound, but if you take a closer listen, it's undeniable that they're kindred spirits to bands like Toys That Kill, The Bananas, Hickey, the Chop Sakis, and the Marked Men.

Live, the Riverboat Gamblers have been responsible for thousands of beautiful bruises, all across America. Bruises

that people wear like badges of honor. Gone is standard rock posturing and in its place are five guys ripping you a new one, smiling all the way through their set. Keep your eye on Mike. He's not afraid to smash down those barriers separating band and audience. Even with restraints, I don't think he could sit still during their set. Just check out this issue's cover. That's about seven feet of air between him and the ground.

Mike Wiebe: Vocals
Freddy Castro: Guitar, Vocals
Jessie 3X: Drums, Vocals
Patrick Lillard: Bass
Mark Ryan: Guitar, Vocals

Todd: So you have a nickname?

Mike: We're always changing them, like the Wu Tang Clan. We'll probably change them on each album. On the next one, I think it'll be The Rookie Sensation Mike Wiebe.

Todd: Were you Teko, is that right?

Mike: I was Teko, but that's another side to

my personality, see.

Todd: What's something that someone has said about your band that they meant as a compliment but you didn't take it as a compliment? For example, if somebody said, "Dude, you guys sound exactly like Blues Hammer."

Mike: I've definitely read reviews that were like, "Seventies cock rock to the max!" Anytime redneck is described in there. We hate rednecks. I grew up getting my ass kicked by rednecks and I do not want to emulate rednecks in any way. And just that cock rock thing, I don't know where that's coming from. Unlike *Razorcake*, most people aren't that good at reviewing records and a lot of times they have a limited frame of reference. I don't know how many times we've been compared to the Strokes. Seriously, I've read like ten reviews where it said, "For fans of the Strokes and the White Stripes." I actually like both of those bands, but they have nothing to do with us. It's just so left and right field, you know?

Todd: The longer I'm dealing with stuff, the more I realize that most people's frame of reference only lasts around three years.

Mike: And then another weird thing, too, and this happens occasionally, people will be like, "Yeah, you guys were really good tonight, but last time you weren't. I wasn't really that into you, but you've really gotten good now." And I'll be like, "I thought the show last week was all right."

Todd: Take me through what happened to Pat.

Mike: Pat's the bass player, and we were playing in Thee Parkside. We started into our fun-filled, rock and roll...

Todd: Ruckus?

Mike: Ruckus, and we were probably like a song or two into it, and I didn't even really swing the mic real hard. I kinda like throwing it around, 'cause I kinda feel nervous standing still on stage. I think I look dumb. Anyway, I wasn't paying attention and I kinda threw it back. He was looking up in the air and it just came down perfect, like right on his front teeth. It cracked three teeth way up in the gumline where, if the gums hadn't been there, they would've just fallen out. One of this teeth also got chipped kind of in half to where you could see down in the regular enamel, and that got embedded into his lip. I don't think it fractured his jaw up there at the top, but it fucked it up real bad. He made it through about four more songs, but he was just swallowing tons of blood and was getting woozy, so we took him to a hospital and spent lots of money on him. We're still not done. They're gonna put metal rods in there and put fake teeth in there, but it's a real slow process, 'cause the metal rods have to heal and stuff like that. But it cost us tons of money. Thanks to everybody who helped out. Tons of people had benefits. People in Sacramento had a benefit for it, and then there's that Musician's Aid

and Sweet Relief. I think Eddie Vedder set it up or something like that, weirdly enough, and anybody who's on the road, if something comes up, you should check into it, 'cause it's for all the broke people who can't get insurance 'cause you're out touring and stuff like that and can't get a real job. They covered some of it, too. We're still pretty far in the hole, but it's good that it's such a slow process 'cause we can pay it off over time.

Todd: Is it true that he's going to get silver or gold teeth that say "BOO YEAH!" right in the front?

Mike: We're begging him to. He wants to, but I don't think his momma wants him to. We want that.

Todd: Do any of you have health insurance?

Mike: One guy, Mark Ryan, the new guitar player, he might have it. He used to work full-time at a group home for retarded people and he was high up. I do that, too, but I'm just like a schlub. He was kind of high up, but he unwisely quit to go touring with us, so I don't know if any of us have it at all. I used to have it. My folks were helping me out with it for a long

time, but they kind of gave up on that.

Todd: Where's the most phenomenal place that people have reported your blood ending up at a show?

Mike: In their semen. No, uh... There was some on a ceiling one time. It was pretty awesome. I've had lots of people come up and say, "Look! Stains! From You!" And it's pretty funny to see the reactions when you're bleeding. It's just like, "Ehh." I'm not into like the GG Allin, GWAR thing. It's never on purpose. I'm not going to pick something up and cut myself. I have self-esteem problems, but not that bad.

Todd: Have you ever been kicked out of a venue as a band?

Mike: Yeah, a couple times. It's usually sound guys. Now, I always bring my own mic. A lot of sound guys are the most anal retentive, Guitar Center-workin', long hair-havin', knowin' the names of all the equipment dorks, Yngwie Malmsteen-listenin' heshers ever. "You do not drop my SM50!" And they always freak out. If a mic stand gets bent, they're like, "That's a \$200 mic stand!" "Where the fuck are you buying mic stands at? You can get 'em for fourteen dollars, man." There were a cou-



ple times where it just got real tense at the end of the night and the sound guys were just real aggressive and stuff like that, but there's been a couple where things got real nutty and stuff got broken where the sound guy was like, "Man, that was so fuckin' cool. I don't give a fuck. If you guys woulda sucked, I'd be mad, but that was cool. Let's go drink. Let's do shots of Jage."

Todd: Have you ever been banned from a place, and now that you're getting more popular, are people inviting you back?

Mike: I don't think that's ever happened. It's weird, in Denton there are all these bars that are owned by the same corporation, and these aren't bars where we play. They're just regular bars where you go to hang out. I'm kind of fighting with my dollar. A bunch of friends and I got banned from one for different incidents, but it's all one corporation, and some of them, I used to like to go drink at. Some of the bartenders who do come to shows are like, "Why don't you come hang out?" "You know why. Because your boss is a fuckhead, that's why."

Todd: How much do you think Denton has formed what you do? Because from what I understand, Denton had a fucking awesome house party/ backyard scene, and even though it's not a large population, bands cross-pollinated all the time and it was pretty vibrant for such a small place.

Mike: It's so weird that it was so small and it had so much going on and Dallas was right next door. Dallas is really lame, like this wannabe LA. Everything that's negative and weird about LA, like all the creepy stuff, Dallas wants to be that. Like, why would you aspire to that? But, yeah, we started in '97, but for the first three or four years, we just didn't really care that much. We were all in four bands and there were so many house shows going on. It's weird when I go to another town and bands have to talk about how hard it was to get a show in a certain town when they're starting out. For us it was like, yeah, it might have been tough in a club, but fuck it, we'll throw our own show this week with a band that we really like coming through and we get to hang out with them and stuff. It made us kind of naïve, business-wise. When we'd play a club, at the end of the night, even a really good show, they'd be like, "Here's \$30, but you owe us half that for the beer you drank." And we were like, "Oh, okay, that's cool. We got \$15, guys. Let's go put that into a quarter of a tank of gas."

Todd: And you know they made a lot of money.

Mike: Some of those places, yeah.

Todd: Is there anything true to the rumor that you're a very aggressive karaoke singer?

Mike: Wow. Where'd you hear that from?

Todd: We have sources.

Mike: I got kicked out of a bar for my karaoke dealings, actually. My Jay-Z "Can I Get a What-What?" was so fly and so soulful and I brought such a newness to it, and I think I broke a table when I was doing my rhymes that I got ex-corted out of the Ex-po that night. Wow, I hadn't even thought about that in a long time.

Todd: Have you ever been threatened to be sued by a fan?

Mike: No, but I've totally worried about it. There's only been a couple times that anybody has gotten hurt at all, and one of them was Bryan but now he's with us, so fuck it. I was kind of goofing around on a ceiling fan, and the whole fan just came down and kind of winged him. The one I felt real bad about was we were playing some show and there was a pool table, and I was just goof-

I GOT KICKED OUT OF A BAR FOR MY KARAOKE DEALINGS, ACTUALLY.

ing around and I hit my head on a light, like the ceramic pottery around the light, and it broke and cut this girl's head and I just felt so bad. I try to be really careful, especially with all that. That would suck. Not just to get sued, but for somebody to actually get really hurt. She was real cool about it and I was like, "I'll buy you a beer. I'll buy you a beer. You want a shirt? You want a CD?" There's been bruises and stuff, but that's probably more like crowds bumping around and stuff.

Todd: Did you start off being that energetic?

Mike: I think it wasn't quite as energetic. It kind of just grew more and more.

Todd: Do you feed off the crowd?

Mike: Yeah. When we started out, we were a little bit more jokey. At that time in our area, indie rock was getting so huge. I mean like the crying on stage kind of emo, really out-of-hand, ultra-pretentious. At the time, we thought that even the name was so stupid: Riverboat Gamblers. The songs were a little bit more jokey and stuff. A lot of them, thank God, aren't recorded, but they're a little bit more goofy, like [in goofy voice] "This is rock and roll!" But our roots came in more, the more punk rock side kind of developed. When it started out, it was more sedate but then it just started steamrolling.

Todd: What names did you bandy around before the Riverboat Gamblers? Why'd you stop on the Riverboat Gamblers?

Mike: I think we probably actually had the name before we had the band, even. There were a couple of bands that we were starting that we had thought of that name for. I think we all have a couple projects with a

name that we're actually going to plug in. Black Boogaz, my rap group that I want to start one day. It's with a "Z," Boogaz.

Todd: Are you guys big fans of James Garner, who was a riverboat gambler?

Mike: Oh yeah, I love him. I love him. It's weird, he's on that John Ritter show, and that's lame, but yeah, *Rockford Files* is awesome. [hums theme song]

Todd: How did you guys get your first record on, essentially, a reggae/ska label?

Mike: Me and Kris Pierce and Fadi and Jesse from the Gamblers, we were in a punk band with horns but there was never any ska in it. We were really going for Rocket From the Crypt, only we fell horribly short and thank God that band isn't around. And actually Mark Shaw, who was in Tiltwheel, played in that, too.

Todd: What was the name of that band?

Mike: Kid Chaos. Don't look for it. But anyway, this guy, he's from DC but he ended up signing like six bands from the Dallas area, and they were all different. He signed one band called the Paper Chase, who were real noise/exper-

imental, and a pop group and an indie rock group. I don't really know how that happened. That was kind of a weird deal. We owe them a record. It's going to come out sometime, maybe this summer. It's like B-sides, covers, and songs that other people wrote for us, which is pretty cool. It's pretty fun making the record, but I don't really know what's going to happen with it. When it's done, I'm going to be real honest in interviews, like, "It's a fans-only kind of thing." I mean, I'm happy with it, but it's not our *Sgt. Pepper's*.

Todd: I read somewhere that at approximately 30% of your shows, someone in the band ends up in the emergency room.

Mike: That's totally untrue. I think that was just Gearhead trying to hype up the band. We owe too much money with the three or four emergency room visits as it is. I can only think of three incidents. The teeth thing, I cut my hand in New York...

Todd: How many stitches did that take?

Mike: About sixteen or seventeen. But that's cool, I actually don't owe any money for that. I went to Bellevue hospital, where they send all the crazy people, and there were crackheads freaking out. One guy was screaming about how he was Richard Pryor, and this one guy who burned his top lip off from a crack pipe, was just so high and didn't know and kept smoking. I was there for six hours and they stitched it up but never sent me a bill. I gave them my real name and everything. That'll probably come up in two years or so.

Todd: Since we're at South by Southwest, celebrating people getting signed, has any major label offered you anything ridiculous?

Mike: There's been sniffing around, but nobody's held up a check and grinned or anything like that.

Todd: "That monster truck is yours."

Mike: Rick Rubin came out to one of our shows in LA, which is really weird. There was this weird whispering all through the crowd, and people grabbing us and saying "Rick Rubin came out. He never comes out. You have to do the best show ever." It's so hard to know who to trust. Like I said, we just started really touring and taking it out in the last three years, and it's really only been the last year that business actually started becoming a part of it. I try not to have bad attitude about it just because it's a necessary evil.

Todd: It's just something that you have to face. It's a shame that the Dead Kennedys got totally sidelined because of accounting, but that's one of the new wrinkles to punk rock if you're going to do it now. If you're not going to sign to a major, you've got to get your shit tight. You need to be surrounded by people you trust and know what can work for you.

Mike: For a long time, I'd think, "Well, we're just an indie band. We're just punk rock. It doesn't really matter." We just had low self-esteem about everything, you know? We never thought we were serious enough to take it seriously. Hopefully, it'll all work out.

Todd: I think that now since a lot of majors are crumbling, it's nice to see that there's very honest, long-lasting indies that are like, "Here's your business plan." You don't have to really do anything differently, you just have to pay attention to what you're doing, make sure you keep your receipts, that type of stuff.

Mike: Yeah, the music industry, the major industry, is crazy right now. Everyone's getting fired. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

Todd: I think it's a good thing. It's one of the times where before they were like, "Oh, it's nothing. We had to shift things a little bit, but we're okay. We can still make somebody who will sell three million records." That may not be true right now.

Mike: Especially in rock music. There are just so many scenes and it's so diverse. It's getting harder for them to package.

Todd: Things are definitely becoming more regional.

Mike: Yeah, that's cool. That's really cool.

Todd: How did you guys get mentioned in *Harper's*? Fuck, they published Mark Twain when Mark Twain was contemporary.

Mike: Man, I have no idea. That guy just happened to be at our Philly show, for whatever reason.

Todd: What was the tenor of the article? Do you remember?

Mike: It was about how Clear Channel is monopolizing and taking over everything, which is a really scary thing, too. And it somehow came up that this guy was trying to be the rogue Clear Channel guy who was going to try to make good things happen

may have been a sexual metaphor.

Todd: Were you part of the Riverboat Gamblers that got interviewed by dogs?

Mike: Yeah.

Todd: How did that happen?

Mike: It was an email interview, and I don't know how the dogs managed to type, but they did.

Todd: Good paw control.

Mike: Yeah, actually there's some new Japanese thing that's like a collar for dogs, and when the dogs bark, it's supposed to tell you what emotions they're feeling based on their bark that just came out. It's pretty awesome.

Todd: Have you ever gotten contacted by the FBI?

Mike: Mark was in a band called the Reds before this, and the FBI was really checking out their website and stuff because it's the Reds. I don't know if we as the Riverboat Gamblers have been, other than connections with the Reds. Back when I was growing up in Denton, when I was in high school, there was this band called the Semination Network. They were kind of like a techno thing, but it was actually pretty good. They were all about the "Free the Information" hacker guys, and I got in real good with them. At one point one of them kind of said something like, "Your name's come up. They look at us. They're probably looking at you." They were real paranoid. They're really cool guys, though.

Todd: On *Something to Crow About*, there are two songs about suicide. Why does that come up as a theme?

Mike: The "Last to Know" song, that's kind of saying that

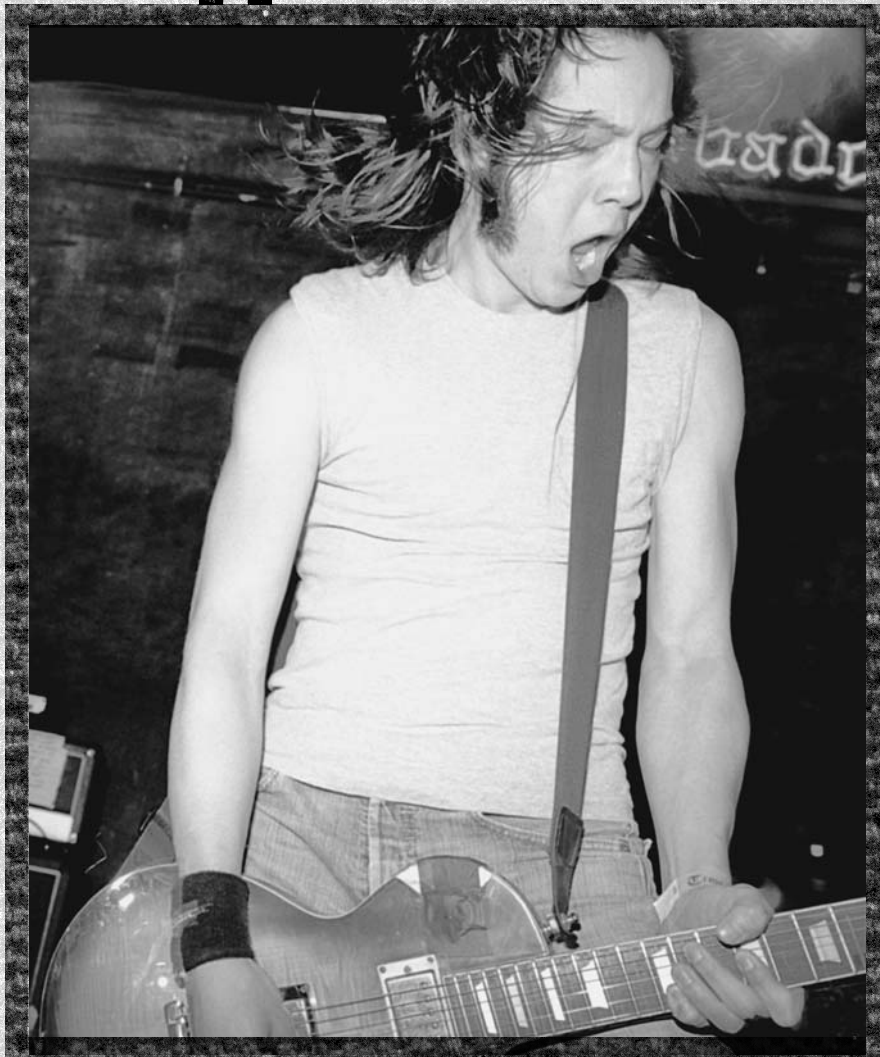
you're such a fuck-up that you'd screw up your own suicide note. Somebody who's just so lame that they would write a pretentious, lame suicide note as their last thing in this world. I guess I've had sort of a troubled youth and now I've got a degree in psychology and I work with that kind of stuff. I still have a weird fascination with the really fucked-up kids, like junior high kids who are suicidal and they have mental problems. I have kind of an affinity for them, and it seems to be just a



even though it is a big evil industry, and he ended up saying, "Oh, I saw this band the Riverboat Gamblers. They were really good." And then it actually came up that he was on NPR talking about the article and somebody called in and said, "Riverboat Gamblers! Rock on!" or something, and he was like, "Yeah, I really like them."

Random dude: Cherry capitol of the world!

Mike: Apparently this is the cherry capitol of the world. I had absolutely no idea. That



really American phenomenon, the really misanthropic, fucked-up kid who just has no chance whatsoever, who just has the most miserable time growing up. Mine was pretty miserable, but I did have some friends. Occasionally, you just see these kids who... there's just nothing you can do for them. They're so young that they'll probably understand later on, but they just don't know any better.

Todd: It's just like blind rage. Not knowing the difference between somebody who's trying to reach out and help you and somebody who's trying to take advantage of you.

Mike: They have no concept of how to let off steam without completely fucking up. I always liked how the Ramones used to have really poppy, catchy songs about being a male prostitute and turning tricks. I love it when songs do that – have contradictory sound with subject matter. I probably wouldn't put those lyrics in a darker, heavier-sounding song. I would probably write it about puppies or something.

Todd: I think that works really well for you guys, too, because it's very exciting and very fun when you hear the record, but then you look at the lyrics and

you're like, "There's some sad stuff going on."

Mike: I like stuff like that where I really like a song. You know that band the Bananas? They're one of my favorite bands.

Todd: I love the Bananas. They're from Sacramento, right?

Mike: Yeah, they actually played a benefit for us in Sacramento about a month ago. I think he's one of the best lyric writers, and the songs are just so amazingly catchy, and sometimes he sings real fast, but when you read the lyrics, the lyrics are so fucking good. My favorite stuff is when it's kind of smart and maybe touching, but funny at the same time. I'd love to write like he does, like that. It's smart and it can be about something serious but it's still humorous and written in a new way.

Todd: Also self-effacing instead of self-indulgent.

Mike: I'm definitely not against writing a love song, but I would definitely want to figure out a new way to write one, 'cause there's enough that are just, "You're so pretty, I love you." I'd want to figure out a new way to say that.

Todd: I feel the same way with Tiltwheel,

too. You hear 'em and you're like, "Oh, they're so happy," and then you read the lyrics and you're like, "Oh, Jesus."

Mike: Yeah, like "a thousand small white crosses and the blood on the highway." That's great.

Todd: Who's the show chicken?

Mike: Oh, his other name is Jeff Humper. His real name is Jeff Long. He got the name Jeff Humper because the first time we met him, he was randomly walking up to people and humping their legs. He's just one of those characters who ends up being part of the band in some way. He tours with us sometimes. We were on tour one time and it was like ten AM in Louisiana and he was driving. We were all kinda groggy and sleeping, and he's poppin' tallboys. An hour later he was weaving all over, and we were like, "He's wasted!" And we get behind this truck that says "Caution: Show Chickens Inside," and he goes, "Motherfuckin' show chickens! I fuckin' hate 'em!" At the time, he was really, really skinny, like emaciated and gaunt and he had one of those phony faux-hawks, really short, and he's kind of like crimping it in the mirror of a gas station and wobbling all over, and somebody said, "Jeff, I think you're a show chicken."

Todd: When was the first time you picked up an instrument and started to play and realized that you probably wouldn't put it down for a while?

Mike: I was in some bands in high school, but it wasn't really my kind of music. It was more just kind of goofing around. I didn't ever get a guitar until I was in college. It sat around for about a year and then I started messing around with it and I figured out a Ramones song. I was like, oh my God, I can't believe I figured that out. It just took off from there. I was definitely playing in bands before I knew how to play the guitar at all. It was just that ridiculous, retarded need that we band people get to get up in front of people and make an ass out of ourselves. I've just had that forever.

Todd: I usually don't ask this type of question, but what drew you to recording in the Sweatbox with Mike Vasquez? The thing that comes to my mind are the two Toys That Kill albums. Those albums are fucking phenomenal because everything's separated but the songs come out as wholes, if that makes sense.

Mike: We'd recorded there before I'd heard them. The first record was recorded there. With the first record, we were kind of going into it like, "Let's just go record. Here's Tim Kerr at the Sweatbox," you know? The second one, I definitely went to Mike and said, "Toys That Kill, Toys That Kill. Let's do this," because those records are fucking great.

Todd: I read this in an interview with the *John Doe* zine. What's the frightening psychology of the groupie?

Mike: It's such a weird thing. I've had a girlfriend for a while, but like I said, growing up was just miserable. I never had girl-

friends growing up. The frightening psychology of the groupie is you want to fuck a guy because he stood in front of a crowd for thirty minutes and jumped around. Right then and there, that night. And there's no way that chick would talk to me if I just walked into a bar. It should be great. The fact that I'm troubled by it troubles me. I should be loving this, taking this all in. Some of them are real pathetic. The weird thing is it exists on every level of a band. Probably the higher you get up, the higher class of the girl, but the worst band that only draws three people, one of them is some chick who wants to fuck one of the guys for no reason.

Todd: So you were having a scuffle with somebody and a Japanese friend...

Mike: Oh yeah...

Todd: Tell me that story.

Mike: There was a scuffle that went down after a show. We actually played with Scared of Chaka, who are another one of my favorite bands. It was an outside party. I feel I was in the right but I got into it with these two guys and people separated them across the street and they were just kind of standing around. I was still at the party outside with all the people and they were just standing there pointing at me. Somebody was like, "Look, let's just go a couple houses down, mellow it out, have a drink," and I'm like, "Yeah, that's a good idea." So we went down and had a drink and I went outside. If I had waited one more minute they would have been gone, but as I was walking back to the party, they were driving up. So they stop in the middle of the road and they all jump out of the car and just leave it running in the middle of the road. One guy runs over and we start getting into it, then the whole party comes over and starts breaking it up.

While all this is going on, this Japanese guy who speaks pretty decent English but has no driver's license and is insanely drunk - he's the craziest guy, he dresses like Brad Pitt in *Fight Club*; red pants and a big fur coat - he just jumps in the car and takes off with it. I'm in the middle of yelling with these people and I saw the car drive off but I didn't really think anything of it. Dave from Scared of Chaka was like, "I think that Japanese guy was the one who stole the car," and I said, "No, no, no." Then I get a call when I get home in broken English. "Mike, I cannot fight so good. I'm not good fighter, so I steal car for you." He drove it four blocks away, just left it running on the side of the road, and walked back to the party. Apparently, these guys are freaking out, and my friend just walks up, all loaded in his fur coat, and he's like, "What's going on, dude?" They had no idea. I guess the cops drove them around and they found their car. I really ought to be following him around, waiting to save his life one day, like Chewbacca or something.

Todd: Not in a presumptuous way or anything, but what's the future for the band musically? Do you have like different

themes that you're gonna try to do, like you want to play faster or slower, or are you just going to let everything gestate and work itself out?

Mike: Definitely let everything gestate. It'll kinda happen as it happens. We never really ever said, "We need to write a faster song," but it's just different people bringing songs to the table that are musically different. Now we've got a new guy in the band, Mark Ryan, who plays in the Marked Men, and he's adding a different element. He's really talented and really tight, and his songwriting is more staccato, like if you're listening to the Marked Men or Reds stuff.

Todd: Like the early Buzzcocks stuff, very bright tones but very fast.

Mike: I love that stuff. We're not going to go completely in any direction, but I think that's definitely going to influence us. I kind of foresee it always changing a little bit. I really don't want to write the same record every time.

Todd: It seems very well-realized but it doesn't seem calculated, like, "Here's our fast one, here's our slow one."

Mike: It just kind of happens as it happens.

Like Rocket From the Crypt, every record they do is really different, but it's all Rocket From the Crypt. Everybody I know has a different favorite one, and there's even people who are like, "I don't like this one but I like this one." I like them all, but in different times, I like this one a whole lot or I like this one a whole lot. I think that's really cool that it's all Rocket From the Crypt but it's all a little bit different.

Todd: Like a larger palate.

Mike: I think that's awesome, but I would like to experiment a little.

Todd: Another thing is that fifteen seconds into someone playing a Rocket From the Crypt song, you know it's Rocket From the Crypt.

Mike: When I hear them have strings on a song, I'm not like, "What are they trying to do?" It just happens that someone had the really good idea that this song would sound really good with strings. I would love to have weird stuff like that happen, not force it, but like, "Wow, a keyboard would be really cool on this song, or a harpsichord or a kazoo. This song needs a kazoo solo!"



CLOROX GIRLS

INTERVIEW BY
MITCH CARDWELL
PHOTOS BY
CHRYSTAEI BRANCHAW



Ahhhhhhhhhhh... Clorox Girls. A deep sigh of relief is unavoidable when it comes to these guys. Their debut album (on San Francisco's SmartGuy Records) will definitely go down as one of the finest albums of the year. Hook after hook, tune after tune.... We're talking pinpoint precision, Jack! I met with The Girls known as Clay, Justin and Zack recently to discuss their motivations, their move to Portland, and their uncanny knack for crafting simple tunes on subjects both potty-mouthed and grandiose. I'm still trying to catch up!

Clorox Girls:
Justin Maurer – Guitar/Vocals
Clay Silva – Drums
Zack Lewis – Bass

Mitch: So your album is officially out now. Recorded by Kurt Bloch. Did he do any crazy guitar stuff in the studio?

Justin: He would just come up to Clay before recording drum stuff and just fuck with the drums and tune them perfectly.

Clay: Yeah. It was the same studio that The Presidents of the United States of America recorded in. There are all these gold records on the wall.

Justin: Conrad Uno just shows up in sweatpants and a Supersonics hoodie.

Mitch: I've been bit puzzled by the album's lead tune, "The One." Please tell me it has nothing to do with alpha-males or *The Matrix*.

Justin: "The One" is about finding somebody who doesn't stop blowing you away. I think I might have found her. [laughs]

Mitch: You guys are a pop band, so naturally there's gonna be relationship songs. It appears that you guys have a far different take on love songs than most other bands. Tunes like

"Vietnam," which sounds like you are invading or something, or "Stuck in a Hole," which is poetic and smutty, really stick out. Are these love songs or fuck songs?

Justin: Love songs. "Vietnam" and "Stuck in a Hole" are really romantic. "It's the time for Vietnam/ It's the time for me and you" sounds pretty romantic to me. Just fucking put everything out there. Why be dead before you're dead? Fuck yeah, we are invading. Songs like those are just about being restless and badly wanting to be somewhere else. Where's that somewhere? I don't know, but I'm getting there. Being in love is fucking insane. I think one can employ love like a firearm or something. [laughs] War is so phallic. We are a society focused on sex and war. The album is just how I feel about the world right now.

Zack: I don't think that any good love songs aren't some form of fuck song. Maybe ours are very thinly disguised fuck songs. Then again, no one wants to hear someone singing "I Wanna Hold Your Hand." Everyone wants to know what will happen after the handholding.

Mitch: How do you feel about the reviews and reactions you've got so far?

Justin: Someone was telling me last night that, "You guys are a punk band, but you're really anti-punk." That was the reason they liked us, which I thought was strange.

Zack: Well, we're pro-Blink 182...

Justin: Exactly! You have to embrace the plastic in order to reject it. You have to make love to your enemies. It's like going to the mall. What better way to make fun of the mall than by going?

Mitch: What about the comparisons to "retarded" bands like Masters of the Obvious or The Spits? Your songs do have that simple quality about them that worms into your head.

Justin: Some of it is warranted. I dunno about the M.O.T.O. comparisons, but The Spits are genius. Simple songs are great. We write simple songs. I don't think it makes us retarded or incompetent. All in all, I think people want to put us in some kind of corner. We are gonna play what we want. We definitely are conscious of what we are doing. I think there's something about holding back, too. I mean, theoretically, we could play really technical stuff. Maybe. It could happen. You never know. I just think it's good to hold back a tiny bit. If you look at any great song, there's not that much to it. It's just a good song.

Zack: [In dork voice] Duh... It's just like a good song... and stuff.

Justin: [dorking again] Yeah, 'cause like... bands, like, now, like, just take themselves too seriously. And it, like, sucks.

Mitch: Well, a lot of those retard comments were written about the single.

Justin: I think once people hear the LP, we'll get more respect for the songs. The single was just all of us saying "fuck it."

Clay: We basically just needed a record to go on tour with.

Justin: And when we read the reviews of the single, they as always said we were "retarded" or "semi-incompetent" or whatever. That was because we had a shitty bass player. But I kinda like that.

Mitch: How old are you guys?

Clay: Twenty-two.

Justin: Zack and me are twenty. Oh... we drink. I've been playing in bars since I was sixteen, playing drums and stuff.

Mitch: Folks seem to make a big deal about how young you guys are. It's like "how do these kids even know about Red Cross or The Gears?"

Justin: [banging on the table and singing] "Who's gonna play the last chord? Wonder who it'll be!" I was born in Santa Monica

and grew up on beach punk even after moving to Bainbridge Island, WA when I was twelve. My dad sang for an LA punk band in the early '80s called The Defenders. I remember hearing them practice in my living room growing up. Of course, I also skateboarded to high school listening to Black Flag, Germs, Adolescents, X, The Dils, and yeah, even The Gears. I still think the only reason people compare us to The Gears is because of that "Jill Ruder Smokes Dope" song from the 7", which is kind of annoying. I grew up there, so I have a love/hate relationship. But I feel the same about San Francisco.

Mitch: So you guys used to live in the Bay Area, but are now in Portland, Oregon. Why'd you leave?

Justin: [burping] Well, Oakland sucks.

All: [laughter]

Justin: Clay and I were living in this van, just backing into the Berkeley Marina, ya know? Just turning tricks. We got really sick of it. Tons of scab-by old men. We were also sleeping behind The Oaks Club on San Pablo. We lived in that crusty punk house with the press all over the place. Back to the moving thing, I dunno. I like Oakland. I like certain parts. It has this charm.

Mitch: After hearing the LP, I thought a few songs, "The Press" especially, dealt with Oakland's charm.

Justin: Well, "The Press" is actually about Clay and myself getting evicted from the ever-dismal Punks With Presses warehouse. The pothead crust punks definitely did not party down to the euphoric Euro beats of The Venga Boys, one of our favorite pop groups.

Mitch: Are you finding any similarities between Portland and Oakland? Are these parties the same?

Justin: People in Portland drink quite a bit, but nothing can equate to a warehouse show in Oakland. Brontez from Panty Raid got some hearty fellatio performed on him publicly right before they went on to play one of the rowdiest, drunkest East Oakland warehouse shows I have ever seen. Nothing in Portland really compares to that. Also, I think all of the tension in Oakland causes really explosive sexual rock'n'roll type events. It's just much more likely to occur there than here.

Zack: My Portland "party" has been staying in the library until it's time for band practice, then going back to the library and staying until it's time for a show. I don't think I get out much. No copulation on any lawns for me.

Mitch: How do you see yourselves in the Pacific Northwest scene?

Justin: Our music is real different from most of the bands there. The

trend in Portland is to start a band with a real shitty girl drummer, too many effects pedals, and a keyboardist who does nothing. All style, no substance "art" is way too prevalent and that "death disco" bullshit is just as popular there as it is down in SF. We feel a real kinship and just friendship with the bands that are actually fans of music, and you can see those people at almost every show. As to how we fit in? I dunno. I don't think that we really care about fitting in. We just want to write good songs and have fun.

Zack: I don't think that there's any need to fit in or not fit in here. In Portland, the amount and diversity of bands allows us to remain a bit camouflaged. There's always a whole new batch of people that come to each show. It seems like there's some sort of in-between fitting in here - not quite being in a "scene" and definitely not outside it.

Clay: I just think people are realizing there are other places on the West Coast where you can be successful.

Zack: I think that could explain the influx of bands moving there or bands from there getting a certain amount of acclaim in some circles.

Justin: I just think it's so affordable to live there compared to other cities out here. It has all the same dynamics and like-minded people as other spots, but you don't have to pay a ridiculous amount just to live there. I've noticed that there is a lot less competition between bands up there, too. It's no hassle to borrow equipment, which is sort of different here. If you aren't wearing all denim, you're fucked.

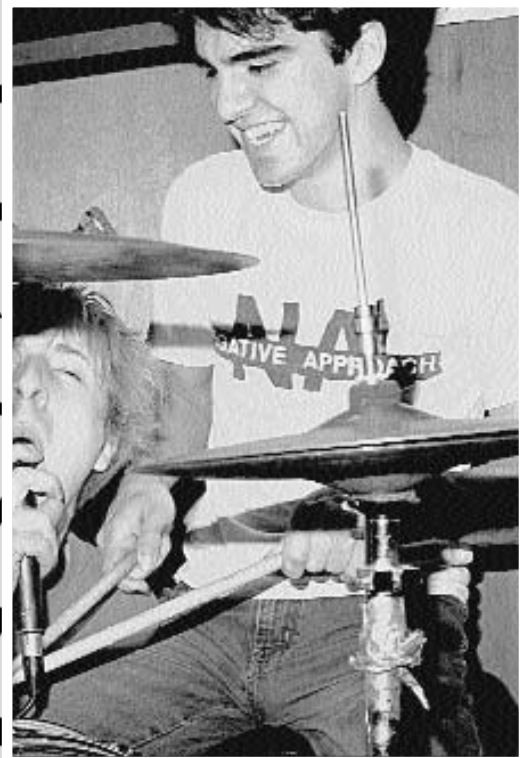
Zack: I think the unemployment statistics are inflated there, too. Justin even found a job.

Justin: Yeah! But I made more playing a twenty-minute set at Three Parkside than I did working for three weeks at my job. Cultivate your mind or else you'll end up like me, man. Yeah, he's a college man. How can our band be retarded? Maybe now reviewers will call our lyrics "poignant."

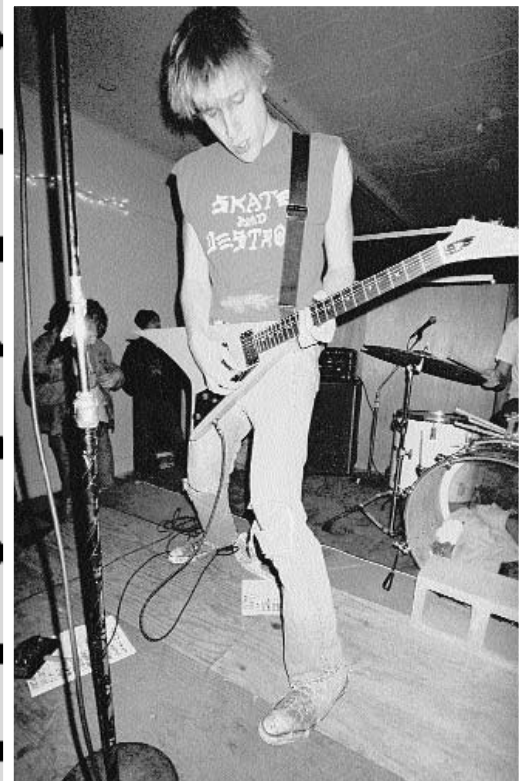
Zack: Poignant?

Justin: Hella poignant! Fuck! That's it. Just listen to the music, have fun, and go crazy at the shows. Throw food at us. That's authentic discourse - a food fight! In closing: PARTY! Uhhhhh... Seattle doesn't party! Oakland doesn't party!

Zack: We party in our van. That's the only party there is.



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THE ENDS

Interview by Todd Taylor
Photos by Rochelle Fox

Alex: Guitar
Monte: Bass
Ian: Vocals
John Venom: Drums
Al G.: Guitar

I tell people this all of the time: one of the biggest challenges facing punk rock today is that there's just so damn much of it – in almost every form imaginable. Fuck, even just the list of types of punk rock is long, from hardcore to gutter punk to punk'n'roll to streetpunk to art punk to punkabilly to pop punk and beyond. No longer can you walk into a record store, see a record by a band you've never heard of or a label you've never seen, agree with the aesthetics of the cover art, and have a good chance of not being burned by a crappy release. This is the down side to democracy.

I also understand that I'm in a rare position, one that I'm grateful for. I can sift through literally thousands of pieces of music a year without having to plunk down my ever-thin pile of dollars on audio roulette. Music magically comes through my post office box, and I can handpick stuff that piques my interest. I knew nothing about The Ends when I put the stylus down on the groove of their *Jump Ship 7"* and I've been a fan ever since.

Too many bands use one of the aforementioned subsections of punk rock like a noose. Like, "How can I stick my neck into this screamo thing?" The problem's obvious. If there are strict parameters to the music, you'll never exceed its limitations. You're, figuratively, stringing yourself up.

Maybe it's Texas punk's history of allowing their bands to not follow rigid musical rules is why The Ends have taken the exact opposite approach. Since punk rock has cut such a wide path since 1977, why not harvest the best of it without being a slave to just one or two influences and create a new thread and bloodlink through it? There's no reason for a band to not remind you simultaneously of both the Buzzcocks and Johnny Thunders. All that shit's putty waiting to be stretched, bounced around, and muscled into another form. Ultimately, with The Ends, there are bits of The Rezillos, Eater, Elvis Costello, The Stitches, and The Clash, but these are merely signposts they're whizzing by, not monuments they're stopping at, climbing up on, and giving head to the statues.

Todd: What's the hardest part about being an End?

John: Getting five lamebrains together at the same time in the same place.

Todd: What would you say the easiest thing is?

Al G.: I like everybody in the band.

John: They all rock, so it's worth the wait.

Todd: What's the dumbest question you've ever heard from a fan?

Alex: Fan? We haven't had any of those yet.

Monte: "Is it hard to play rock like that?"

John: "Do you want to make out?" Of course I do.

Todd: Has anybody said, "Hey, just send me ten CDs and I'll pay you back later," that type of thing?

Alex: Nope. Nobody even wants ten CDs.

Todd: Because on your message board it says, "Send me five CDs and you'll be big at my high school."

Alex: Oh, wait, that was from John's cousin. That doesn't count.

Todd: This is kind of an abstract question. What was the last wish that you had that was solid gold?

Alex: My daughter.

Monte: I wish I could fuck Halle Berry.

John: I wanted to make out with Marilyn McCoo.

Al G.: I want to play every day and not have to work.

Ian: I just want some money. That's it.

Todd: Monty, you were in the band Schatzi, correct?

Monte: Uh huh.

Todd: Were you in the band when they opened up for Hilary Duff?

Monte: No. [laughter] Thank fucking God. They called me and said, "Hey dude, can you play that show? Is that cool?" I was like, "What show?" They said, "Hilary Duff," and I was like, "No. I can't do it."

Todd: So, for you, what's the biggest difference between being in a band that would open up for Hilary Duff and being in the Ends?

Monte: The difference is that we're still sort of hungry, whereas Schatzi, it was just another crappy show that they had to play. There's no "oomph." And this band, we're just stoked to rock, you know? I think that's the key.

Todd: So how did you come into this band?

Monte: I played with the Born Deads and

then we started the Ends shortly after that. Then Schatzi had to go do their thing so I quit, but then I was like, "No fucking way," and I rejoined the Ends.

Alex: He begged for his place back.

Todd: So Al, you've left the band a couple of times, to do things like walking dogs and doing yoga and interpretive dance.

Al G.: I'm still on my spiritual quest. I play with guys in Houston who I've played with since I was twelve, and I'm on lots of heavy medication so it's hard to play in two bands at once. In two months I get off my medicine so I'll have normal strength.

Todd: What medical problem do you have?

Al G.: Hepatitis C. I have the liver of a seventy-year-old man, but I'm twenty-three. I had to go on heavy shit. Let's talk about something happy.

Todd: So you were in the Ritchie Whites for a while, too?

John: That was me, too. We're all Austin bands. I played drums for them on the record and toured with them. I love those guys to death.

Todd: Ian, are you an artist? A painter?

Ian: Yeah.

Todd: When was the last time that you felt



It's just a giant



like a mechanic dreaming about Shakespeare?

Ian: Every fucking day when I'm sweeping up at work.

Todd: Explain that a little, though.

Ian: The painting? When I made that, I was working at a body shop and I saw all those guys just wasting away, drinking themselves to sleep every night and getting up and doing it all again.

Todd: Are you involved with any of the Ends' artwork?

Ian: I don't do meth, so I do the covers and

stuff. Anything that I can do half-assed, I'll do.

Todd: Are you a tattoo artist, too? How's that going?

Ian: I just started. It's going all right.

Alex: He does good work.

Todd: Does anybody in the band have any that you did?

Al G.: I have two.

Ian: Yeah, you can't get it on tape, but Monte's got a couple.

Todd: Why did Candi leave the band?

Alex: She started teaching full-time, so she

didn't have time for us and she's getting married.

John: She started teaching retarded kids. I was like, "You're teaching retarded kids right now in the band."

Todd: What was the biggest adjustment between Candi and getting Monte?

Alex: She used to do a lot of high kicks and stuff in a dress. That was pretty cool. Monte doesn't do any high kicks.

Monte: It was really hard learning Candi's bass lines, too. She's a great bass player.

Todd: Why aren't any of your lyrics available anywhere?

Ian: I'm not real confident. I have a lot of issues.

Todd: To everybody except Ian, what's your favorite lyric for the Ends, and Ian's going to have to say if it's correct.

Alex: Oh, man. I don't know any of the lyrics. [laughter] "Jump ship from your wishful thinking." Is that on the record?

Monte: My favorite is "Make Me Dull."

Todd: But you've got to know a lyric.

Monte: I don't know any lyrics in that song.

John: We don't know the lyrics. He won't write them down.

Ian: I write them down. I'll show them to people when we record and stuff, but they can't read them.

Todd: What's your favorite lyric, then?

Ian: I love them all just like my children. [laughter] Shit.

Todd: What lyric most typifies the Ends?

Ian: "I'm just wrong." Almost all of them are just about me, how much I hate myself.

Todd: Is that the main theme?

Ian: Not anymore, because I'm getting a little happier now. I'm getting married in two weeks.

Todd: How long have you known the lady?

Ian: Since high school. We've only been dating for about four years.

Todd: Why aren't kids right in the head? That's the only lyric I can get.

Ian: Because it rhymes with whatever the next line is. [laughter] That song was just about getting stuck in a rut.

Todd: So Alex, you run a label that was named after a movie?

Alex: Yeah.

Todd: What was the movie?

Alex: Ask Toby. He started the label. It was a John Waters movie.

Todd: *Desperate Living*.

Alex: Okay. You can edit out the part about asking Toby.

Todd: How did you become part of Mortville Records?

schwangled clusterfuck.



Alex: Toby, the bass player for the Motards, started a label, Austin's best punk rock label, and he was running out of money and running out of energy. I came in and wanted to be a part of it and was able to get some releases out that he'd had in the works for a while. He said, "Hell yeah!" Then he moved to Mexico, so I've been running it for the past year.

Todd: How did you know Toby?

Alex: Ever since I was seventeen, going downtown in Austin, I've known Toby. Everybody knows Toby in this town.

Todd: What's your day job?

Alex: My day job is taking care of my daughter. My afternoon job is bartending at a Mexican restaurant. I'm opening my own bar in about two months, playing in this band, and running the label. Those are pretty full-time jobs.

Todd: Monte, what's your day job?

Monte: My day-time job is cooking at The Dog and Duck, and it sucks ass. It's an English pub.

Ian: He gets to make all kinds of really gross food.

Monte: I get to make fish and chips. I get to make salmon cider. It's just a fuckin' bullet train. I do that, I go to school, and I just had a baby, so I'm taking care of my daughter.

Ian: I work at a commercial art studio. I do styrofoam sculptures and mold-making.

Al G.: I help run a liquor distributorship. I do most of the receiving and stuff like that.

Todd: Do you put beer aside for these guys?

John: He always takes care of us. [laughter] I'm currently unemployed, but I just got done running a day care for the last four years. I got a job working at a school for the blind, but I haven't started yet.

Todd: Did you ever get thrown up on?

John: Yeah, I've had kids bite their tongues off and first graders call me a fucker and punch me in the nuts. It's good fun.

Todd: Do any of you have childhood friends who have become authority figures?

Monte: I had a friend whose name was also Monte, and he's a cop. I couldn't believe it.

Ian: I have a friend who's a manager at Journey's.

Todd: What's that?

Ian: It's a shoe store in the mall.

Alex: He's got a lawyer friend.

John: I do have a lawyer friend.

Todd: Is weird having friends like that?

John: It's kind of weird smoking pot with a lawyer.

Ian: He's actually my lawyer, too. I got a DUI and I met his friend getting out of the truck with a twenty pack of Bud Light, like, "Hey, dude, I'm gonna be your lawyer." He did a great job.

John: He was wasted the whole time.

Todd: Everyone has to answer this. What's

the absolute worst bathroom you've ever had to use?

Alex: Blue Flamingo. It used to be right across the street.

Todd: Describe it.

Alex: It had the standard piss and puke, but it was only like two feet and by three feet, so there was just a lot of piss and puke.

Monte: What's the name of that place in Chicago, the bowling alley?

Alex: The Fireside.

Monte: That is the gnarliest bathroom in the country. Have you ever been there? It's the worst bathroom of all time.

Monte: I went to take a shit there. It was the dankest room, no lights. There was water an inch deep on the ground and there was a toilet in the middle of the fucking room that you couldn't see into. It didn't even have a lid, no water inside, no paper.

Todd: For you who have kids, what's one thing you'll never buy them.

Monte: A mic. [laughter]

Alex: I didn't want her to have a Barbie, but my wife bought that.

Ian: I think kids shouldn't have toys. I think they need to be trained early on to think that dishes are fun. If you start early enough, he could do whatever the hell you want him to.

Al G.: "Dude, cutting the grass is kick ass!"

Monte: "Taking out the trash is awesome!"

Todd: What's one thing you've learned early on that you didn't think would be a benefit of being in a punk rock band?

Ian: Long trips don't bother me as much anymore.

Alex: Yeah, eight hours is a piece of cake after going twenty-six.

Monte: I've learned to be able to drink a reasonably large amount of alcohol and still be able to sort of pull off the songs.

Alex: Some of us have even mastered the art of vomiting and soloing at the same time.

Todd: How many times have you done that?

Alex: Too many to count. But it gets you from believing in nothing to believing in playing music. That's the thing that keeps going, on days when you just want to shoot yourself in the fucking brain. This is it.

Todd: What makes you want to stop playing music?

Alex: Seeing really, really bad bands get really popular. I'm not going to name names, but some of them are in this town. It makes me feel like I'm really out of touch with what's going on and maybe I should just play in my bedroom for the rest of my life.

Monte: For me, it's playing a show that's packed and then when you go get paid, the guy's like, "Sorry, here's thirty bucks. We're doing the best we can." And you know that it was five bucks a head for two hundred people. I'm not in it for the money, but that's a little disrespectful.

Ian: I don't smoke a lot of pot, but when I smoke pot, I weird myself out a whole lot and I'm just like, "Why the hell am I in a band?"

John: Being a drummer gets expensive, and we don't make any money, so it all comes out of pocket. Then loading it in, breaking it up, tearing it down, can't find a good parking spot, and you play for ten people.

Al G.: Not being able to eat and not being able to buy guitar strings.

Todd: The converse to that. What keeps you playing?

Alex: Going to the practice room and somebody brings a new song that's just awesome. It's like, "Man, I want to learn that. I want to play that." Hearing that great song and being a part of that process and being in the band that gets to play that song.

Monte: For me, it's being at Taco Bell on some random day, and some dude will be like, "The Ends! You guys fuckin' rock! Wooh!" And all you're doing is buying a burrito.

Ian: For me, it's just hanging out with my friends. I don't really have a whole bunch of friends, so when we go to practice, it's like hanging out.

John: We all get along really well.

Al G.: What else is fun? Playing in a band or beating off. [laughter] I don't know what to do besides play in a band and beat off.

Todd: So Alex, you were saying you weren't happy with the mix of *Sorry... XOXO-XOXO*. What don't you like about it?

Alex: It's pretty rough. I felt like the rough mixes were a lot truer to what we were doing. We had a really good friend mix down the record and it didn't turn out as well as we hoped. We brought Monte into the band and he's got a lot more experience going into the studio and doing that stuff. We figured, what the hell, we've got it coming out in Europe, might as well give it a different spin. On the other side of that, if you listen to those songs, you do get an idea of what the Ends are. You're not going to come see us and say, "That's a totally different band," but at the same time, if we can do it better, why not?

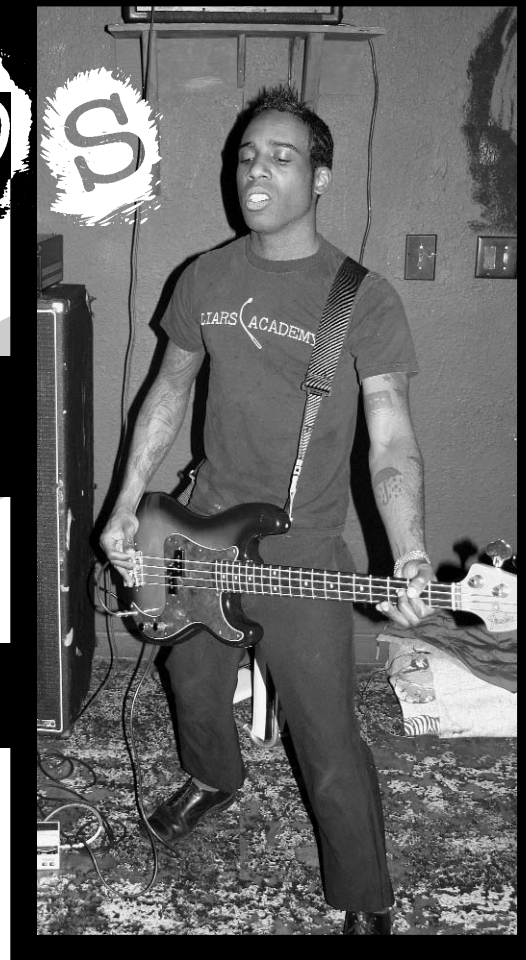
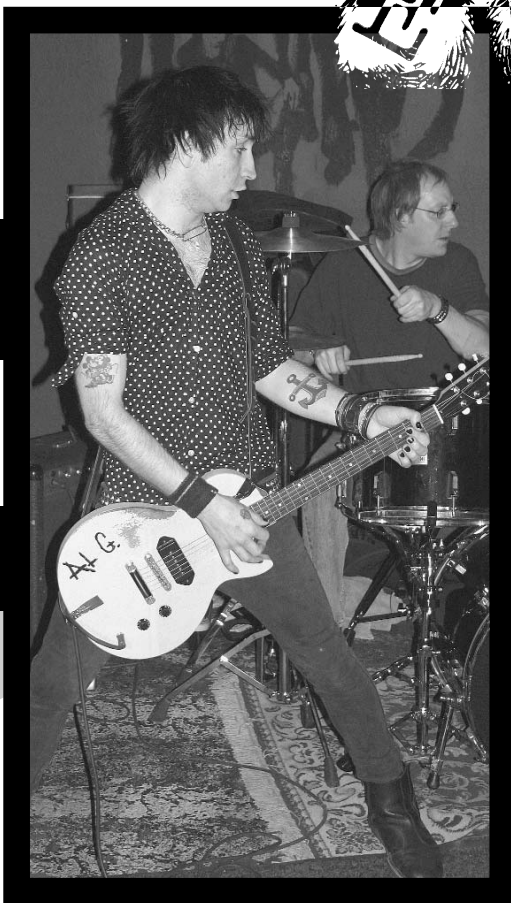
Ian: I chalk it up to not having much experience mixing down. My ears were just shot anyway.

Al G.: It has beautiful aspects, too, because it's just a giant schwangled clusterfuck of whatever anxieties we had. And half of those songs, we almost wrote them in the studio. We just went in and said, "Let's make a record. Let's do it."

Todd: Were any of your parents in the military? There's a lot of military imagery in the Ends, like with the dive-bomber and the Sailor Jerry-looking guy hanging onto the pole.

Some of us have even mastered the art of

THE ENDS



Ian: I'm a big fan of World War II stuff.

Alex: He just goes through old art books and uses what we think looks cool.

Todd: Ian, did you discover you sound like Mike Lohrman of the Stitches or is there anything you're trying to change about that?

A.I.G.: Actually, we did a really early record and we mailed it to Mike Lohrman, so he actually mimicked Ian when they started.

Ian: No, we know those guys and they're all great guys. That's just the way I sing.

John: We'll fight 'em anytime. [laughter]

Ian: When you double up vocals on a recording, it's naturally going to sound like that, because he does it a lot, too. I don't know. It bugs me sometimes but there's not a whole lot I can do about it.

Todd: What's your ultimate vision of the Ends sounding like? What things are you working on that you haven't fully developed but really want to nail down?

A.I.G.: Honestly, I like the direction the band is heading in, more towards an old school seventies rock sound with the slower tempos and stuff. I'd like to see the band head more in that direction.

Alex: I think Ian's going for T Rex.

Ian: I'd like to see a little bit more thought and effort in the studio, just go a little bit more crazy. I love that first Supergrass album a whole lot. I like how raw and nasty they can sound and keep poppy stuff in there.

John: We're just trying to keep everything a little different instead of just being the same thing all the time. It's more fun.

A.I.G.: Just real rock and roll, whether it sounds like the first Cock Sparrer record or Generation X or Johnny Thunders or the Real Kids, just songs that you can tell that somebody's bleeding their guts out in the music.

Alex: It's hard to push things in one certain direction because we have three primary songwriters in the band. We end up sounding like whatever the hell somebody brought. We really don't push anything away if it's a great song, regardless of tempo or whatever, because if we like it, then we go for it. Once we add Ian on top, it's going to sound like an Ends record. He's not going to sound super sweet. We're not going to be

really sappy no matter what we do, so we just feel free to do whatever. There's really no goal in mind.

Todd: What would be the Ends theme song?

Ian: I'd probably go with a Chumps song. "Goddamn American Eagle" is one of my favorites. "Fuck You, I'm Rich."

A.I.G.: I'd have to say our rendition of "Johnny, Are You Queer?" by Josie Cotton.

Alex: "Johnny, Are You Queer?" is our theme song.

Todd: When was the last time you were in a fistfight?

A.I.G.: I've had some one-sided fights. Two years ago at South By Southwest, I got beat up. I broke three ribs, got my nose broken. I bumped into some guy and I said, "Excuse fuckin' you!" The next thing I knew, I got my whole face pounded in.

John: The last time I got violent was when Ian tried to wipe puke on me in Canada.

Ian: It was my birthday, too.

The Ends: PO Box 4263, Austin, TX 78765

www.theends.com



~~vomiting and soloing at the same time.~~

Anatomy of Disgust

SPONTANEOUS DISGUST

An interview with...

by Dan Glenn Fury

By and large, today's musical climate is ripe for eradication. Whether it's nationally televised talent shows where the voting is done by dickheads with cell phones, or whether it's former members of Guns N Roses vainly attempting to cash in on their white-leather-and-bandana glory, organic music simply does not exist in popular culture. Underground music isn't exempt from these allegations, either. Bands that spout off rhetoric about how they're "punks 'til they die" but forget to mention that they have personal stylists and a \$75 dell tray in their dressing rooms are, unfortunately, a dime-a-dozen. If you were jaded or pessimistic, all hope would be lost, but for the few of us that are hungry and restless, there is an answer: Spontaneous Disgust. With a history of nearly impossible-to-find releases and a finesse-out-the-window approach not seen since the first time Whack-A-Mole machines were installed in Showbiz Pizza restaurants across the country, Spontaneous Disgust is at once as catchy as a urinary tract infection in Baltimore, as hard as the milkman's wiener when he's doing your mom, and as awe-inspiringly brilliant as absolutely nothing you've ever seen. Reference points are few and far between, but one thing's for sure: if music needs to be eradicated, Spontaneous Disgust is here to do just that.

Dan: Individually, where are you guys from?

Tommy: Coney Island, New York.

Ponch: Saskatoon, Italy.

Donuthead: Originally from Las Vegas, but my parents moved to California for the migrant farm work jobs that are plentiful there.

Bunny: Pending litigation, stemming from my hometown's attempts to disown me, I am legally prohibited to divulge where I come from. Let's just say that I hope I never, ever have to look at another calculator watch again for the rest of my life.

Dan: What bands, if any, were you in before Spontaneous Disgust?

Bunny: Um, does jumping up on stage and singing "Muskrat Love" with a reformed Captain and Tennille count as "being in the band"?

Dan: Sure, I guess. The rest of you guys?

Ponch: The Dignified Pugilists, Gregorian Handplant.

Tommy: Bea Arthur's Maude Squad, The Jersey Jewbaiters, and PLH (Play Like Hell).

Rod: Photocopy Your Nuts and Anarchy in Lace. Two separate bands. AiL was an all-male Go-Go's cover band, but we changed the songs to have more Crass-like lyrics.

Donuthead: None. I'm not a personable guy and lack friends. I have many phobias and a nervous tick that makes me

Donuthead: Bass

Tommy: Drums

Rod: Vocals

Gator: Guitar

Ponch: Guitar

Bunny: Tuba, glockenspiel, "various percussion and occasional winds"

stand out, so I avoid contact as much as possible. These guys are crazy enough to tolerate me.

Dan: Where does Spontaneous Disgust call home?

Bunny: No offense, dude. I second that fuck you.

Dan: [long silence] What are your day jobs?

Tommy: What's a "job"? Is that along the same lines as work? What the fuck?... Rod wants to be a fuckin' star. Tell him what you were doing yesterday.

Rod: Standing in a shower, clucking like a chicken. I'm working on my SAG card. It was a commercial for a sandwich. I got a callback.

Bunny: My main job is staying alive. After that, I figure all other "jobs" seem kinda irrelevant.

Donuthead: I have never had a job. I get Social Security for my ongoing battle with my disorders.

Ponch: Harvester of Sorrow.

Dan: That's your job?

Ponch: Yeah. Harvester of Sorrow.

Dan: Are any of your parents currently

securing bioengineering patents?

Rod: My Dad used to work for Monsanto. He worked on the project that included developing new strains of more insect-resistant plants – rapeseed, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, basically any plant in the entire brassica genus.

Dan: Rapeseed?

Tommy: Are you gonna keep interrupting?

Dan: Sorry.

Rod: Rapeseed's related to canola, okay? So, anyway, after he retired, he went to work for Shaman Pharmaceuticals as a consultant and went to the Amazon. Helped isolate *sangre de drago* – Dragon's Blood. That shit'll cure any cut fast as fuck. We give it to Donuthead for his ulcers.

Dan: Really?

Rod: Check it, dude. It's legit.

Tommy: [poking me in the chest very hard] Legit.

Donuthead: [smiling] I no longer shit blood.

Dan: The song, "The Slaughtering of a Few Sacred Cows. With Ketchup," has the first use of a pan flute I've ever heard in a punk song. How does one come to the conclusion, "After that guitar riff, start puffing like crazy"?

Ponch: Dude, haven't you ever listened to Sleep?

Bunny: Actually, that's not a pan flute. You know those bamboo wind chimes that are so big that you'd need a fucking typhoon to come along and get it to even move? Well, that's what it is. Rod was kinda bored with being the only guy standing on stage with nothing but his organ in his hand, so he made his own instrument. He got it from the front yard of the neighborhood asshole, who apparently derives some sort of sexual pleasure from collecting bamboo wind chimes – I think I counted forty-three of 'em, minus the one that Rod nicked, littering that dude's front porch. Anyway, he took the thing apart, glued it back together on a piece of sheet metal, added some forks and PVC tubing on the other side to serve as some sort of percussive instrument. You can hear him banging the tubes on "Britney Aguilera Makes My Pee Run Red," by the way. He got it to sound like a pan flute by modifying one of them bottles of compressed air you use to clean off

computer keyboards and using it to “blow” across the bamboo tops. Pretty inventive for a guy with the creativity of a retarded coma patient, don’t you think?

Donuthead: Punk rock over the years has become paint by numbers. Who would expect a pan flute in a punk song? I think it pushes the boundaries of making a racket. My feelings were, “I don’t care if people don’t get it.”

Dan: What other names were discarded before you came up with the name Spontaneous Disgust?

Bunny: We all have our little obsessions, all of which we’ll vehemently deny are an influence on the decisions we make. Gator’s been a huge fan of Manfred Mann since that blow to the head he took at some “Freedom Rock” concert. Rod’s obviously got a dick thing going on... That said, I think that my own personal obsessions resulted in the brilliant names Herpes Duplex, The Monkey Strippers, The Naughty Moms, Boba Fett’s Salamander, and Bunny Hitler and the Pretty-Nice-Guys-If-You-Only-Took-The-Time-To-Get-To-Know-Them. Of course, none of these assholes liked a single one on ‘em.

Donuthead: I liked Feather Boa Wearing Construction Guys, but I was shot down. I liked the contradiction.

Gator: We had tons of names. Manfred Mann’s Afterbirth Band, the Dresden Firefighters, uh, what was that other one?

Rod: Dave Grohl Has the Smallest Wiener Ever.

Gator: Yeah, Dave Grohl Has the Smallest Wiener Ever. We didn’t use that one because we were scared that he would [trying not to laugh {and failing}] whoop our asses like rented mules.

Dan: Makeup isn’t just for black metal guys, you know... Why are your releases so hard to get?

Ponch: If you don’t get it, that’s your problem.

Tommy: They’re not so hard to get, people are just not trying hard enough.

Bunny: What do you mean, “they’re hard to get”? I’ve had no problem whatsoever getting every one of our releases. The Clash’s *Combat Rock* record, now that’s a pain in the ass to get. Especially when you ain’t got any dough.

Donuthead: Exclusivity makes for collectibility. Look at the weird pressing Pushead releases. They go for big bucks. I admit it: I keep a couple of copies for the future to put up on eBay if the band gets popular like the Locust. I don’t get much money from Social Security.

Gator: I think the more appropriate question is, why are Beck releases so easy to find?

Dan: Touché.

Gator: Nobody listens to music because it’s good. I mean, think about it: Creed has sold, like, fifty gazillion CDs. Do you know anybody who has one? Of course not. The only people who do are high school girls who want to peel off the lead singer’s vinyl pant-shirt combo, and then there’s Bible-thumping rednecks who are so glad that they’ve finally found a Jesus Rock band that rocks harder than DC Talk. People that matter can get our records.

Dan: Who is the embodiment of Spontaneous Disgust, excluding you guys?

Gator: I’m gonna say Marlon Brando. I just ate a big plate of spaghetti, and I’m feeling a little bloated. I also haven’t made a

good movie in years, excluding homemade porno, of course.

Dan: Why have you released the 8-track only (*Boobs Make Hugs Fun*) and a 78rpm-only (*More Beer in the Monitor, Please*) EPs?

Bunny: Okay, look. The problem with most music fans these days is that music is way too fuckin’ accessible and, because it’s way too fuckin’ accessible, they don’t really give a two-penny fart about what’s coming out of the speakers. It’s all too easy, you know? Add in the fact that you can pretty much find anything you want to hear on the internet with virtually no effort, and you’ve got a whole group of music “fans” who completely take what they’re listening to for granted. We’re old enough to remember, be it on the



radio or at the local mom and pop record shop, how fuckin’ exasperating it was to find something worth listening to. We also remember how great it was to finally find something that looked interesting, take it home and have it be so good that you would have to peel your head off the back wall. We figured that, since getting music ain’t all that difficult, we’d make it a pain in the ass to play it once you got it. And let me tell you, we haven’t gotten any complaints from anyone who’s actually gone to the trouble of actually playing those releases.

Donuthead: If people really want to hear the music, then they have to search for the vintage equipment. It gives people incentive to find dated equipment and see the beauty of the era they were made in. Also, CDs and CD players are boring. The packaging is so limited. It’s another form of big corporations making us into a generic society.

Dan: How did you find a pressing plant to make a 78?

Donuthead: I won’t tell you. I don’t care about the masses and, like Poison Idea said, “Record collectors are pretentious assholes.” Here’s something for the assholes. These are the assholes who have nothing better in life other than to brag about their rare find. We fuel that.

Tommy: Head, let me tell ‘em.

Donuthead: No.

Tommy: Yes, 'Head. [pokes DonutHead several times] Yes, 'Head.

DonutHead: Okay.

Tommy: We have a hook-up overseas that does 78-rpm records dirt cheap. It's one of the actual companies that used to press early American music standards for our GIs in the first two world wars, believe it or not.

Dan: But don't you want as many people as possible listening to your music?

Tommy: Of course we want as many people listening to our music as possible. What kinda fucking question is that? Now the reason as to just why we released those EPs on 8-track and 78 rpm is very simple. For instance, just because you might really be into creating watercolor paintings doesn't mean you can't look at or create oil or acrylic paintings, right? So what's the difference on how the music's pressed? The medium may differ, but the art is the same. Take off the blinders, you fuck.

Rod: All those industry crotch-sniffers have their t-backs in a bunch about MP3s and the internet ruining the music industry. Eat ass. Know why it's going down? The music – by and large – is awful and it's too expensive. No great mystery. We struggle. So should our audience. Take this to warning, though. Donuthead, he don't look like much, but if you put up an MP3 of SponDis up – just for fun – in the hour he's allowed at the library computer, he'll hack directly your puny little computer and cripple it like...

Tommy: Your mom.

Dan: Fuck, dude.

Donuthead: I made a trojan horse. Ever see *Fantasia*? Every time you think you've gotten rid of it, it splits in two, like those broomsticks, until you've got an army of viruses. It's fun. You'll basically have to nuke your hard drive and start over.

Dan: I'm still looking for a 78 player. I've got the output to an 8-track rigged through my stereo... So you guys released an album on cassette where you bought tapes at thrift stores and recorded over them, is that right?

All: [nods of agreement]

Dan: What kind of stuff did you tape over?

Gator: Shit. Uh, *AWB* by Average White Band, *One Vice at a Time* by Krokus, umm... *Brand New Man* by Brooks & Dunn, mostly just random shit. Nothing decent, but nothing generic like Pink Floyd, either.

Rod: One of 'em was the Jim Nabors Christmas album.

Dan: Jim Nabors?

Gator: Yeah, the guy who played Gomer Pyle, remember? He's not as successful a singer as Andy Griffith.

Rod: Or Don Knotts, for that matter.

Dan: What type of vehicle do you guys tour in?

Bunny: I dunno. What's your mom driving these days?

Tommy: A fucking Humvee, what do you think? A van. Except 'Head.

Donuthead: My mom drives me in the family station wagon to gigs. I don't think the other members can tolerate me in close quarters for any length of time.

Dan: Even the longer tours?

Tommy: Even longer tours. Sissy.

Dan: When's the last time the van broke down?

Tommy: When was the last time you picked up your teeth offa the ground with broken elbows, you ass?

Donuthead: My mom's station wagon is in tip-top shape. My dad works on the car all the time. They know him by name at the local Pep Boys. The fake wood paneling is faded, though.

Tommy: 'Head's mom does work the merch table, though.

Dan: When was the last time you were spontaneously disgusted?

Bunny: I dunno. Probably the last time I had to shave your mother's back. This interview's running a close second.

Dan: In *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex, the bad dude, undergoes "treatment" for all his gang rapes and car-jackings. It's called the Ludovico Method, a system of behavioral therapy that associates sex and violence with feelings of nausea and disgust. Does that have anything to do with your song, "Satisfactory Alienation," which goes "Stuff this in your memory hole/ Ludovico was a

pussy/ I sleep with my eyes open/ even when I drive/ my nuts cry"?

Bunny: Absolutely nothing. It's about Gator's gay Italian uncle. If you saw how he looked in a dress, your nuts would cry, too.

Donuthead: I only deal with rhythm and mood.

Tommy: [sighs] I can tell you completely read way into that song. Should I tell him the real story?

Bunny: It's your dime.

Tommy: The Ludovico who we were talking about in "Satisfactory Alienation" was this prick who ran a liquor store near our rehearsal loft when we were first getting the band rolling. One night he cut off our store credit tab, which was silly being that we

bought scads of booze there constantly. We start arguing with him and it gets into a very loud yelling match. Then he threatens to call the cops on us if we don't get out of his store. We then grab all the beers we could carry, told him to go fuck himself, and walk out. All the while this is going down, that Ludovico fuck's tapping the side of his head, saying in that thick accent of his, "I have you in my memory hole for when the police gets here, assholes!" So that's the first part of the lyric. The second part is just a goof on Prince's "When the Doves Cry." I thought even you'd get that part, jerkoff.

Dan: What's your hobby?

Ponch: Getting arrested.

Bunny: Whittling, long walks on the beach, fudge-packing baby seals.... For fuck's sake, what do we look like, Martha Stewart fans?

Donuthead: I recently got into ant farms. I like the fact they don't talk and they are separated



from me because of the plastic they're cased in.

Rod: 'Head's ant farm is fun. I'll go with that, too.

Dan: Have you ever been arrested?

Ponch: No.

Tommy: Yes. Have you ever been beat for being a snitch?

Donuthead: I hate to sound like the freak, but I am allergic to okra. I tried it once and I got real swollen and I felt like I was hallucinating. I jumped out of my bedroom window and ran down the dirt road that leads to the trailer, naked, to the main road where there is a gas station. I ran up to a guy putting gas in his Ford truck and spit in his face and I started pounding on his hood screaming that he was evil and I accidentally shit. I got arrested for indecent exposure and they sent me to psychiatric hospital for five months. I'm scared of the okra.

Gator: Yeah, I've been arrested for [looks down shamefully] bestiality.

Dan: You're gonna have to elaborate on that one.

Gator: When me and Rod were in high school, I, uh, I called the toll-free NAMBLA hotline and had a bunch of pro-pedophilia literature sent to Rod's house, and when his parents saw it, they didn't get mad. They're the most supportive people on the planet, and they just sat him down and told him, "We're really proud of your decision to become a member of this North American Man-Boy Love Association thing. We're behind you a hundred percent," which pissed Rod off way more than getting grounded. So, in retaliation, he wrote a letter to some porno company in Greece and ordered a subscription to *Goat Cock Monthly* or something and had it sent to my house. I got home one day and the cops were standing on my front porch, waving it at me.

Dan: Did you go to jail?

Gator: I spent the night there.

Bunny: Amazingly, I only got arrested once. I tried to pass myself off as Iggy Pop at an AA meeting and they didn't take to kindly to my throwing their coffee grounds all over the place.

Dan: You guys have been compared to everyone from Happy Farm (a Swedish band) to Rot (a Brazilian band) to early, "unreleased demo" Enya. I take it that this is on purpose?

Donuthead: I say keep them guessing. Don't be pigeonholed.

Tommy: We have no conscious purpose. The best bands just are.

Dan: What's the worst accident you've ever been in?

Gator: Does my conception count?

Donuthead: I'm with Gator. For me was being born. It's tough on my parents that I turned out the way I did and they could have avoided having me by using a condom or pulling out a little earlier.

Ponch: I wet the bed last week.

Dan: If you could have every TV in the world pop on for an hour and it couldn't change its channel, what would you show?

Bunny: Hands down, Kookla, Fran and Ollie. Ever see the porno they made? Sheer brilliance.

Rod: Ever see *The Killing*? That's a great movie. I guess edit it down to an hour.

Donuthead: I would show, over and over, the intro to the children's television show, *The Electric Company*. Do you remember that show? I loved that show as a kid. I never really learned anything from it but I sure loved the song.

Dan: Do you have an audience?

Ponch: Yes.

Donuthead: We select the audience. Also, there is always someone looking for something fresh to get excited about.

Bunny: Hell yeah, we have an audience! And we appreciate both of them guys coming out every now and then to see us.

Rod: Sad, and more true than false, my friend.

Dan: What's one dance move you'd like to teach your audience?

Gator: I made one up a while back. I like to call it the "Drink Lots of Beer and Pee on Piebald."

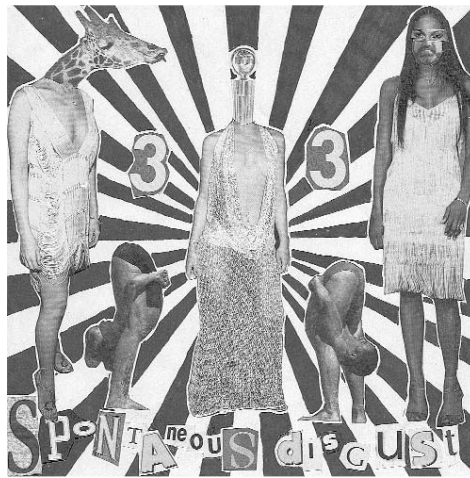
Dan: You've really got something against those guys, don't you?

Gator: Well, yeah. Just listen to 'em. They're Piebald, for Christ's sake.

Bunny: The "Bend Over and Take It Like a Man." Here, let me demonstrate how it's done.

Ponch: The Rabbit Butt. Or the Rabbi Butt.

Tommy: Crazy-ass, breakdancing windmills, like in the movie



Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo.

Donuthead: There was this dance while I was in junior high called the Gigolo. It was real easy and if done super fast would look like line dancers on meth.

Dan: What's your stance on religion? "Easy Christ" doesn't paint a very pretty picture.

Donuthead: I don't really know what our lyrics are. I barely know the song titles. I'm like a hired gun. I just play bass or at least try to and I like to find odd children's instruments from garage sales to add sonic aural texture. And act crazy.

Tommy: I'm personally not down with organized religion. "Easy Christ" is about all the timecard-punchers who show up to church every Sunday to

"wash themselves clean" and then continue on with their regular way of living for another six days, twenty-three hours. (sarcastically) Easy enough!

Rod: Seriously, I think that people should be good to one another if they can be. Over the course of history, organized religion's killed more people than the Black Plague. Tell me how that's a good thing.

Bunny: As long as the world comes to the conclusion that I am god, treat me accordingly, and hand over the virgins before they off them, I have no problems with religion.

Dan: Figuring if you made a video, you'd only release it on Beta cassette, tell me what song you'd do and how the video would go.

Tommy: Well, for starters, Mr. I've-Got-It-All-Figured-Out, we were kicking around the idea of releasing a laserdisc, as well. We figured laserdiscs would be a nice break from the monotony of the DVD train everyone has been hopping on with their video music releases of late. And, yes, it will be out on Beta, as well. As far as the video itself, we might go the Replacements route, but instead of showing nothing but a close-up of a stereo speaker and such the entire time of the video, we'll show a close-up of a VHS player and DVD player.

Rod: The video concept's all done. It's for our remake of a Vibrators song. We're doing a song called "Venus and Rollerblades." It's this lady getting liposuction on this crowded boardwalk, only she and the doctors are on rollerblades. Lots of blood. I'm working on the zombie angle.

DGFU Records, PO Box 5432, Atlanta, GA 31107



Dan Monick's Photo Page



Pete



Andrew

Yawns Are Hellos



Anton

Please note: If you're an established record company, and you send us a pre-release without all the album art, we're probably going to throw that shit away... cock gobblers.

46 SHORT:

Just a Liability: CD

This is not the band you would think Ron Martinez of Final Conflict fame would be playing bass for. You would think more spiked hair than baseball caps. Well, this band has that South Bay sound of the early '80s meets D.I. Nothing that made me want to kick a hole in the wall but it gave me tingles to go out and skate. —Donofthead (Go Kart)

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE: Mantra of Love: CD

Usually, my first instinct when I see a record that clocks in at forty-five minutes with only two songs is to run for the hills, but for some reason, I decided to take a chance on this 'un, and I'm glad I did. Sure, there's a heavy "hippie" vibe oozing offa this, but hell, I'm open to most anything. The first track, the longer of the two, is essentially a thirty-five-minute jam based on a chant that manages to invoke in sound both Dead Can Dance and Savage Republic, which is always a plus. I was doing something around the house when I initially put this disc on and soon found myself sitting in front of the stereo in rapt attention to what was coming out of the speakers, which should say volumes about the music's trance-inducing qualities. The second song wasn't all that bad, either, but, boy, that first one was a bit mind-blowing. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.alien8recordings.com)

ALAN REPLICA: Clockworks, Juliet: CD

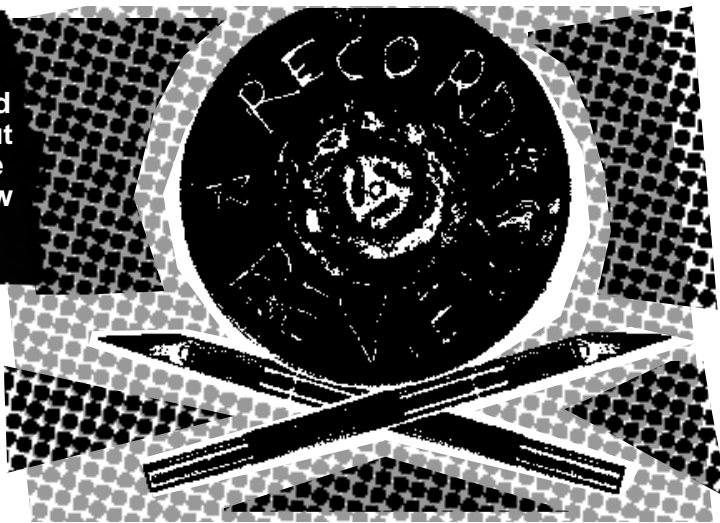
"Isolation," the opening track on *Clockworks, Juliet*, is the rare song that lives up to its title. Synthesizers trickle like raindrops and the forlorn melody plays like a face pressed up against a cold windowpane watching the night. Alan Replica sings on the verge of tears, all cracking chords and congested nasal passages, as the song beckons listeners to continue on with the album. Alan Replica works with slow, plodding beats that increase in speed and intensity as the album progresses. Soon, the strings enter, and it becomes apparent that this is one of the most genuine attempts at producing high-quality synthpop to make it onto album in some time. There is no trace of tongue-in-cheek '80s posing, no cries for the rhythmless nation to take to the dance floor and make like dying robots. This is music for people who find romance hidden within Japan and Ultravox records.

—Liz Ohanesian (Ninth Wave; www.ninthwaverecords.com)

ALL OR NOTHING H.C.: What Doesn't Kill You...: CD

I have read Renae Bryant's columns in *MRR* for a number of years and she has mentioned her band many of times. I never actively went out to purchase her band's music and never went to check out her shows. My loss.

RAZORCAKE 76



If this record would've come out in 1984, it'd be kicking ass on eBay right now. —Cuss



If this release is any indication, I have been missing out on a lot. The songs are mid-tempo to fast. It's straight-up punk rock with raw production that keeps things aggressive. Her vocals are intense with anger and you truly believe her words because of how she delivers. I have read that she has had a lot of line-up changes throughout their history, but that does not hurt the music here. She seems to have built a solid backing here since there seems to be no weak link. The songs are strong and keep me attentive. Now I need to get off my ass and go see them live. —Donofthead (Rodent Popsicle)

AMONGST THE SHADOWS: Demo: CD

For the most part, I think a lot of what's considered the "new metal" these days is a truckload of hand-selected shit. You've got bands like Korn (yikes), Linkin Park (yow), the ever-annoying Limp Bizkit (will Durst ever shut the fuck up? He and Lars Ulrich need to put their heads together and make an ass outta themselves), and Rage Against The Machine (How's that shiny, black BMW driving these days, Zack? I bet they have a lot of those on the reservations, huh?). I mean, how many times can these bands take what was created and deemed sacred from bands like Black Sabbath and piss all over it? Search me, but it obviously sells. I gotta give some credit to Amongst the Shadows, though, due to the fact that they ain't afraid to rock the way they seem fit. I hear glints and glimmers of Maiden in a lot of this demo and I gotta say, for a five-piece outfit whose age range is eighteen to twenty-one, not to mention only being together for a little over six months, ATS can be a band that will be turning a lot of heads if they keep it up. My only piece of advice to these guys would be to kick out some more straight-ahead cuts for us older fucks, like their "Under The Gun" track, 'cause that song's happening in my opinion. And Mitch — drop a suggestion to the rest of your bandmates to cover Pantera's "Fucking Hostile." I know damn well your band could do a fine version, complete with your vocalist doing Mr. Phillip Anselmo proud. —Designated Dale (band contact: (562) 587-2389)

AMPS FOR CHRIST: The People at Large: CD

If Harry Smith's "Anthology of American Folk Music" had consisted of Indian ragas and static-laden field recordings (instead of the hissing and crackling blues songs and child ballads that it is), it might well have sounded like this. Although I've heard some people criticize this album as little more than noise, it's more immediately interesting than the Deerhoof album reviewed elsewhere in these pages precisely because it combines noise with more traditional elements of American music; it begins with a clear understanding of something which is both familiar and forgotten and proceeds to interpret and update those structures in intriguing ways, yielding an album which may prove to be the equivalent of an old Carter Family session in eighty years. Regardless of its future impact, it's fucking awesome right now and I can't think of anything better to listen to on this stormy Sunday as I wait for the tornado watches to expire. —Puckett (5 Rue Christine)

ANGELIC UPSTARTS: Punk Singles Collection: CD

The collected A-sides from this band's assorted singles are compiled on one disc so's you don't hafta keep getting' up every few minutes to change the record. All the hits are here, including "I'm An Upstart," "Liddle Towers," "Woman In Disguise," etc., so if yer lookin' for a decent overview of their career without the commitment of actually buying an album or two, this should do the trick. My only gripe is that it would've been nice to have a couple of the B-sides on disc as well, namely "Lust for Glory." Ah, well, such is life, I guess. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

ANTIDOTE: Thou Shalt Not Kill: CD EP

A reissue of a great 45 from this long-gone '80s band, who cranked out some choice New York hardcore back when that term didn't mean lame tough-guy thug metal. The songs, eight in all, are short, fast and to the point, naturally, and there ain't a bad one in the bunch. Buy it now and be the envy of your punker pals or buy the latest New

Found Glory disc instead and look like a clueless poseur fop later. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hellbent)

ARMY OF PONCH: Army of Ponch Vs. the Curse: CD EP

In an election year, we're all looking for wedge issues in the culture war. We all need them to make sure that we only associate with people who are exactly like us and won't challenge us to change ourselves, our minds, or our opinions. Fuck, even I need one to ensure that I'm doing my part to divide while claiming to unify, and I think I finally got it with this release. I've concluded that I simply don't get Army Of Ponch. I don't understand what all the fuss is about. Screamed vocals, disjointed and slightly chaotic music, chunky riffs that stay crispy even in milk — I think I need more melodies with this, that what's really missing is a sense of harmony. It's not that this is bad — I've just finally realized after a few separate attempts over the time span of about a year that this really isn't my thing. —Puckett (Sabot)

ARTIMUS PYLE: Fucked from Birth: CD

Holy shit! I haven't listened to this band in a few years since their *Civil Dead* LP, but I was fortunate enough to see them live recently. What I remember from the past was laid to waste very moment they started to perform. As loud as they were live, they are loud on this CD. Brutal, bass-heavy power riffage. The amplifiers sound like they are on maximum overdrive. They do not rely heavily on the powerviolence sound but incorporate more of a dirge of feedback and atonal noise to create the sound of pure pain. Like Kylesa and Dystopia, they take noise and anger to another level. It's an aural rampage that jerks you from fast to slow without sacrificing the energy. If music can be used to describe a migraine headache, this would be it. —Donofthead (Prank)

ATOM SMASHERS: Drop the Bomb: CD

I have a friend named Adam Smasher, and he's way cooler than this CD! Adam Smasher once drove all the way to Brooklyn from Wisconsin just to see his favorite band, The Onion Flavored Rings, but then he got so drunk that he passed out at the show before they even played. THAT, my friends, is punk! This CD, on the other hand, is nowhere near as cool as that. Pretty standard garage, of the sort that you'd expect from Rip Off these days. Not horrible, not amazing. You know, like most garage punk! If this were a cereal, it'd be regular Chex. Take it or leave it. —Maddy (Rip Off)

ATOMSMASHERS/ DeLOREANS: Split 7"

Atomsmashers deliver some manner of rabid thermonuclear attack concealed within the guise of a Trojan Zero Boys cover ("Hightime") (good, I was getting sick of "Civilization's Dying") and a marginally original original. DeLoreans play in the traditional Italian punk rock style: Almost completely unmemorable, but with no visible defects. Maybe a trunk full of blow is no longer part of the standard DeLorean accessory package? **BEST SONG:** Atomsmashers, "Hightime" **BEST SIDE OF THE COVER:** DeLoreans. MONKEYS serving band members pizza whilst they peruse *New Warriors* comic books surrounded by radiating wedges of magenta and black is a very underutilized theme for

record covers these days. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: From the Atomsmashers liner notes: "Many thanks to no one especially if come from Wisconsin." Uhhh... you're welcome? -Rev. Nørb (Rockin' Bones)

AUTUMN PICTURE:

Fait Maison: CD

This makes Pedro The Lion sound like tough-guy hardcore. Seriously. -Puckett (Hill Billy Stew)

BAD RELIGION:

The Empire Strikes First: CD

I have been listening to this for over a month and a half. That is pretty good since I have so many CDs and records that I haven't listened to sitting next to the stereo. I get so excited about every release that they put out. I have been a fan since they began in 1980 and continued to purchase every release since then, except that I still do not own a copy of the first 7". I still listen to *Into the Unknown*, even though they tried to destroy many of the copies and made it one of the most collectable of their releases. If you liked *The Process of Belief*, I think this album is much better. As many longtime fans cite *Suffer* as their ultimate record, I think this is on par or surpasses that record. Being on a major label for a time, the band has learned how to take advantage of a studio. To me, the additional production values add to the power of the songs. Brooks Wakerman, already having an album under his belt with the band, shows that he is starting to get comfortable and at home. The drumming on the song "Sinister Rouge" is incredible and on the album throughout. I almost forgot that he had played for Suicidal Tendencies for a time. Greg Graffin can always be counted on to write lyrics that aren't at a sixth grade reading level. His reuniting with Brett Gurewitz as writing partner shows that they need each other to bounce ideas off of to get songs put together. They do benefit from having punk hall of famers Greg Hetson and Brian Baker to back things up and provide input. I can't forget Jay Bentley, who has been there from the beginning, minus a record or two. All I can say that is if you are a new fan or a longtime fan, this doesn't disappoint. Now I have to go out and get an actual copy since I got a CD-R with no cover. -Donofthedeath (Epitaph)

BADNADS, THE:

Japanese Bloodbath: 7"

Brutus-style hardcore with a thick, red-dish neck and a fetish for old school wrasslin heels like Bruiser Brody and Abdullah the Butcher. Basic no-frills ECW-core that fans of the Bump N' Uglies and/or Antiseen might enjoy, though I think both those bands do a better job of it. And while I'm on the subject, why is it that all these wrasslin bands kiss the boots of all the same wrestlers? Sure Mick Foley was great back in his hardcore heyday, but I'd like to see some bands lionize some of the more thickly body-haired kookballs like George the Animal Steele and Mad Dog Vachon. Just to spice things up a bit. -Aphid Peewit (Scarey)

BELVEDERE: Fast Forward Eats the Tape: CD

It never ceases to amaze me how this corporate punk crap has managed to take the hyper-speed thrash beat, which used to pump a brother up and make him aggro, and make it about as slow and boring as a John Denver record. -Jimmy Alvarado (www.unionlabelgroup.com)

BILL PARKER AND HIS MOTHERSCRATCHERS:

United We Stand: CD

Fake country music about Jesus and about drinking and about as clever and interesting as fingernail dirt. -Cuss Baxter (Wrecked-Em)

BIRDS MAY BITE:

If Startled: CD

This CD rules for approximately six seconds. For those six seconds, it is a warm, breathy rush of melodic indie pop from 1993. It reminds me of the Godrays, Velocity Girl, Fudge - every last one of the bands that focused on using guitar tones to create an atmosphere, yet still tried to shape the form of that atmosphere via hooks. At the end of that six seconds, the vocals kick in and the entire thing falls apart. It promptly downshifts from promising indie pop into bland, lilted, headache-inducing guitar rock. At about twenty-three seconds in, there was a brief flash of potential with a riff which sounded like it came from a Longshot song, but then the organs came in and the CD came out. -Puckett (Egg White Thought)

BLACK EYES: Cough: CD

Sounds like a high school marching band on a wicked PCP wigout - all honking saxes, spastic drums, screaming and blowing whistles. Two cats yell their jazz poetry at each other over the wailing and gnashing of their artrock noise ensemble like some kind of terrible soundtrack to some kind of terrible movie about something terrible. But probably not as terrible as I make it out to be. -Cuss Baxter (Dischord)

BLACK LIPS: We Did Not Know the Forest Spirit Made the Flowers Grow: CD

Trashy slop more rooted in the '60s definition of the word "punk" than the modern connotation that word is saddled with. The music sounds authentic to the times it's trying to evoke, the singer sounds drunk and the rest of the guys sound like they're having a ball bashing their instruments in wild abandon. -Jimmy Alvarado (Bomp)

BLANK ITS: Johnny's Tongue b/w I'm OK: 7"

Raw as an itchy rash. Simple as retard math. As catchy and blinding as syphilis in the 18th century. Much like the Ka-Knives, the charm of spazz, duct tape as lifestyle choice and fix-all, and the sound of a singer singing through a face mask and a snorkel overcomes the need for fidelity. Whereas Metallica uses lasers and NASA scientists to make what they call music, the Blank Its use a small box of blunt crayons. I like what they're doodling. If this 7" was first grader art, I'd happily magnet it to the fridge. Fans of the Spits, The Gories, and Supercharger are already hard wired to liking this. -Todd (Band Its; blankits@netscape.net)

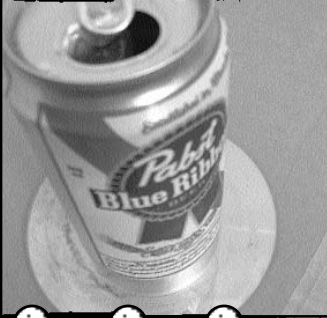
BLOCKO / MINORITY BLUES BAND: Split 7"

Blocko: Blocko tread that ever-thin ice that behemoths Leatherface and Hot Water Music have been skating on and carving their own distinctive designs in for years. The good news is that Blocko brings a lot of their own to the table. The guitars swell, siren, and are played urgently, the singer doesn't strain too hard nor get lazy, and there's a Jam-like sensibility (and "down at the tubeway station at midnight" feel) hiding right beneath the concrete that makes them

RAZZORCAKE

Did you know that "CD" is short for "Aluminum Beer Coaster?"

THESE ARE THE TOP 7"s SINCE THE LAST MAG.



Underground Medicine Mailorder, Connecticut

1. Dream Dates, *The Mess You're In* (Ugly Pop)
2. Some Action, self-titled (Gigantic)
3. Tyrades, *I Am Homicide* (Shit Sandwich)
4. Briefs, *The Joy of Killing* (Lollipop)
5. Real Losers, *Go Nutzoid* (Wrench)
6. Nazis From Mars, *American Express* (Subway Star)
7. Suburban Reptiles, *Razor Smile* (Raw Power)
8. Seger Liberation Army, *2+2=?* (Big Neck)
9. Krunchies, *Interobang* (Criminal IQ)
10. Pegs, *Robot Romance* (Hostage)

Know Crap Mailorder, Oregon

1. Gorilla Angreb, self-titled (Kick N Punch)
2. Lost Sounds, *3x7" Box Set* (Rockin' Bones)
3. Fe Fi Fo Fums, *Electrofize Me* (Boom Boom of Renton)
4. Real Losers, *Go Nutzoid* (Wrench)
5. Locomotions, *A Little Bit of Lovin'* (Perpetrator)
6. Tyrades, *I Am Homicide* (Shit Sandwich)
7. Alleycats, *Nothing Means Nothing Anymore* (Dangermouse)
8. Headache City, *Knee Jerk Reaction* (Shit Sandwich)
9. Locomotions, self-titled (Yakisana)
10. Kodiaks, self-titled (Yakikasana)

Disgruntled Mailorder, California

1. BellRays, *Warhead* (Bronx Cheer)
2. Briefs/Shocks split (Dirty Faces)
3. Weirdos, *Destroy All Music* (Bomp)
4. Texas Terri/The Speed Kings split (Devils Shitburner)
5. Sick Fits, *Mirror Creeps* (Big Neck)
6. Diffs, self-titled (Headline)
7. Starvations, *One Way to Remind* (GSL)
8. Smut Peddlers, *Exit Plan* (Ransom)
9. Die Hunns/Radio 1, split (Disaster)
10. Seger Liberation Army, *2+2=?* (Big Neck)

very enjoyable to listen to. Their second song, "Black Coffee," is a cover by a pop band I've never heard of, All Saints. It sounds weird on paper, but Die Toten Hosen covered the same song, and, for some reason, it works well with the punk rock treatment. Minority Blues Band: Deep in the vein of Hüsker-Dü-loving DIY Japanese punk, I can't say anything bad about 'em. Catchy hooks, lots of similarities to Japanese brethren like The Urchin, for their immediately catchy energy and crazily precise playing, and Florida's Tim Version for layer upon layer of sounds to wrap your brain around. Super solid, no-fashion, no-pre-tense punk. Oh, and the best Japanese to English translation? "Without you, nuts go wrong." Sweet split. Thumbs up. -Todd (Snuffy Smile)

BLUEBIRD:

Falling Back to Earth: CD EP

This is mostly comprised of outtakes from a session that resulted in another release, *Hot Blooded*. You get loud, heavy *alt-rock* for your buck, pretty good for what it is, but ain't exactly my preferred bag o' worms. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dim Mak)

BOBBY BARE JR'S YOUNG CRIMINALS' STARVATION LEAGUE: From the End of Your Leash: CD

Seems to me like an orchestral alt-country Flaming Lips. I probably got that wrong, but who cares? Bobby Bare Sr? Mister Peanut? Hotdog Teade? Hotdog Teade! -Cuss Baxter (Bloodshot)

BOMBSTRIKE/LEGION 666: Split 7"

Bombstrike: Swedish D-Beat that carries on the tradition of a country that produces great punk bands. The vocals are harsh and in a yelled fashion. The guitars are important when you play this type of punk. They have to be very heavy with a lot of distortion. They fill that requirement. The bass is also distorted and that is a plus. It makes the sound bottom heavy. The drums are more than competent and they drive home that bass heavy sound. Legion 666: D-Beat crust with a down and dirty metal sound by way of Canada. If you haven't bought their great split LP with Brazil's Sick Terror, you are missing out. Their first song starts out with a wicked metal intro and goes into D-Beat glory. Also included is a Crude SS cover! Two songs each and worth the effort of seeking out and purchasing. -Donofthedeath (Schizophrenic)

BOOKS LIE: Hall of Fame of Fire (Plus Singles and B-sides): CD

When I was in college several years ago, almost all the punks there were exclusively into grindcore, noise, thrash, emo, etc. What was a decent, harmony-loving punk who wasn't given to public emotional breakdowns to do? Well, when in Rome... I ended up going to a fair amount of shows I would've never gone to otherwise, and one of those shows was Books Lie. I actually ended up seeing them a few times, and, out of all "those" bands, they were the only ones I actually thought were all right. This CD is both a new album and lots of singles and b-sides. Hardcore with some metal influence, definitely a *Heartattack* kind of thing! I'd be lying if I said I listen to it all the time, but the fact that I listen to it at all, given my musical tastes, must be worth something! If this were a cereal, it'd be

Heartattack Ohs! Oh, subculture! -Maddy (Level-Plane)

BOXCAR SATAN:

Upstanding and Indigent: CD

Singer sounds like Captain Beefheart and sings a million words in every song. Sometimes the band sounds like the Jesus Lizard, sometimes more like Beefheart's band, sometimes like Mule or the Cows. If you like that stuff, you'll get the picture. "I got back with a new tattoo of you kissing my ass." Wholesome weirdness. -Cuss Baxter (Dogfingers)

BRAT ATTACK, THE:

Destruction Sound System: CD

The first song, "Infighting and Bickering," excited me with its dual female/male vocals and melodic pop sound that reminded me of the now defunct UK band Servo. I was hoping for more! But no, the male vocals are dominant here. Where did that great female voice go? Two tracks of average punk rock. Track four is "Enemy" and the female vocals come back! The vocals are soft and enduring and go into Brody and Courtney country during the chorus. Tracks five through eight: male dude again. Yawn. Track nine, the dual vocals are back! You go, girl! Track ten is dude again. Skip. Track eleven has too much dude and not enough female vocals. Track twelve: dude. Track thirteen: dude. Track fourteen: dude's track up front, female vocals buried. Track fifteen comes back with dude singing the verses and female vocals in the chorus. Track sixteen closes off with a rock ballad of sorts but dude is only a background singer. So I'm not sure who dude is. On the CD there is Ben and Dave who are listed as vocalists. They need to step back and just play guitars. No more singing. The female vocals, I think, are handled by Seana but there is a picture of a Meaghan on the back that says vocals, too. Put them up front on vocal duties and this band would be much improved in my book. Sounds like I'm a dude hater, huh? -Donofthedeath (Steel Capped)

BRIEFS, THE:

Sex Objects: CD

...something about this record *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* can't exactly put my finger on *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* "Orange Alert," presumably a cautionary tale about their last *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* and, while I can certainly appreciate the unbridled craftsmanship it takes to introduce the lead to a song called "Halfsize Girl" with the impassioned reminder to "keep it short!" you've eventually got to admit that *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* so like aren't songs like "Destroy the USA" and "No More Presidents" just the aging punkly equivalent of those old tribute/spoof '50s type numbers decaying rockers in the '70s and '80s used to occasionally include on their albums (i'm thinking that "Wham-a-lama-lama-lama rock and roll is king" song by ELO here but that's probably not a very good *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* songs are actually the Briefs' equivalent of "Old Time Rock & Roll??" **CAN THIS BE HAPPENING???** Now, granted I *Golden Shower of Hits...* but overreacting or not, I can't help but *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* you know? On the brighter side *Golden*

Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits... almost Seussian lyrics like "I picked it up, it weighed almost an ounce / on the top was a name that I couldn't pronounce," "Mystery Pill" is the exact type of midtempo, easily comprehensible number college DJs (at least used to) wet their *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* with some authority that "Sally I Can't Go to the Beach" is the best song with the word "Beach" in the title of the last fifteen years, and the best song with the name "Sally" in the title ever! That's right! Fuck you, Wilson Pickett! Fuck you, Sir Mack Rice! Fuck you, Dick! Fuck you, Jane! Fuck you, Spot! The Briefs are coming to *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* which is what the Toy Dolls started relying too much on during their long, protracted decline as well, so really I woulda saved my "Clash City Rockers" larceny for *Golden Shower of Hits... Golden Shower of Hits...* with "Lifestyles of the Truly Lazy," which is just stupid. Hey, Ronald Reagan died within four days of me hearing the song "No More Presidents," too bad you guys weren't a band twenty years ago. **BEST SONG:** "Sally I Can't Go to the Beach," but I will also accept "Mystery Pill" as an alternate lifestyle **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Killed By Ants," because who in this post-Adam universe even bothers to recall the punk/ant connection so viably established by Eater in 1978? **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** This record cover is red, yellow, gray and black and therefore does not coordinate with any of my outfits. Please do not tape it to me. -Rev. Nørb (BYO)

BRIEFS: Sex Objects: CD

Man, it seems like these guys just get better and better as time goes on. Last long player I heard was their first (although I have an extensive collection of assorted singles, so it's not like I'm totally in the dark about what they've been up to since that disc hit the streets), and while I thought that record was just peachy, this is one is miles above that one when it comes to the "hit versus miss" ratio. This is one solid piece of work here, and it boggles the mind that these guys aren't played every five minutes on your local quality radio station. Then again, one would need a quality station. -Jimmy Alvarado (BYO)

BROKEN BONES: No-One Survives: 7" EP

One of the early "crossover" punk bands returns with three new tracks of metallic, Discharge-influenced hardcore, which makes total sense when you take into account that former Discharger Bones is on guitar. Not as intense as I remember them being back in the day, but it still manages to do the trick. Limited to 800 copies, 400 of which are on white vinyl. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

BROKEN BOTTLES: Drinking in the Rain: CD-Single

Hey! It's the Adolescent Distortion of Liberty! They're so whiny and SoCal 1981, the only thing sillier than the fact that they even exist is that they put out a two-song CD! It does have a video, but it's about drinking in the rain! Hey guys, drink in your houses! -Cuss Baxter (TKO)

BROKEN HEROES/ TOUGHSKINS: Split: 7" EP

Broken Heroes: Two mind-bogglingly stupid songs, the dumber of the two

being "Smashing Hippies," an ode to beating hippies "with all your heart." Apparently to these geniuses, however, "hippies" are anyone who disagrees with the current war and are "spouting all you're [sic] commie shit." Well, as a former skinhead, let me just ask you this: If you are so filled with "pride," why don't you fuck off to the nearest recruitment center, join up and become another "working class" corpse killed in yet another rich man's war instead of sitting safely at home and writing songs about beating up those who may disagree with your blind, ignorant patriotism? Toughskins: Ahhhh, *now* I understand where these jerkoffs - uh, bands - are coming from, as the Toughskins have laid it out for all to see in their opening salvo, "Payback": "I know you dream of the day when you come here/own some seven elevens but you smell weird... all you fuckers - payback is a bitch - better pray to allah you don't wind up in a ditch." These is racist baldies, and I'm willing to bet that they're of the ilk that says shit like, "We're not racist, we're just proud of our country and who we are," and then proceed to spout off dumb, hypocritical shit like the above. Well, now that you've been sussed, allow me to extend a middle finger to each of you. -Jimmy Alvarado (Headache)

BUSINESS, THE:

Smash the Discos: CD

What we have here, kiddies, is the issuing of the Business' "first" album, one they recorded before *Suburban Rebels*, but lost and, thus, remained unreleased until now. What you get are rough, yet strong, versions of classic tunes like "Drinking and Driving," "Smash the Discos," "Guttersnipe," "Work Or Riot," and pretty much the bulk of what was on *Suburban Rebels*, as well as "H-Bomb," "Law and Order," "Last Train to Clapham Junction," and a Sham and Crass cover, respectively. As with most Captain Oi releases, there are a few bonus tracks on here as well, namely versions of "Loud Proud and Punk," "Real Enemy," "Disco Girls," "Dayo," and the single version of "Smash the Discos," as well as lyrics to the tunes and some liner notes detailing the album's history. Frankly, as a longtime fan, I'm fuggin' stoked. -Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

CAPTAIN EVERYTHING!: It's Not Rocket Science: CD

Pop-punk that threatens to become ska-punk on the second track. Call it a guilty pleasure, call it bad taste, I like it. It's summer and this is super-catchy and dancey, so lighten up. -Megan (Household Name)

CASINO VOLANTE/ WAISTCOATS: Split 2 x 7"

Casino Volante are an English band who contribute four essentially placid surf instrumentals with reverb and whammy bars and minor chords and all that other appropriate shit. The Waistcoats are Dutch neo-mods (mods more like "Keith Moon's balls mod" than like "touch-up paint for your Vespa™ mod"), who apparently thought I wouldn't notice that their carkin', Farfisa™-driven instrumental "Jack's Off Day" found herein is THE EXACT SAME SONG as their carkin', Farfisa™-driven instrumental "Jack's Day Off" found on their *All The Rage* album. WELL, I GOT NEWS FOR YA! I NOTICED! YOU GODDAMN KIDS! WILL NEVER GET RAZORCAKE 79

AWAY WITH THIS! I KNOW MY RIGHTS! I KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU DID! Luckily, "Jack's Day Off"/"Jack's Off Day" is my favorite Waistoats song, so I won't be pressing charges this time. Roundin' out their lot is a pretty cool cover of the Moving Sidewalks' oft-covered "99th Floor," a Yardbirds-styled honker, and an additional instrumental of much less ambient corkitude. The Waistoats are worth a sniff, but unless you were looking for an excuse to stock your larder with some more surf instrumentals, I'm not so sure the split-double-seven-inch would be the model of efficiency you so richly deserve. **BEST SONG:** Waistoats, "Jack's Off Day" **BEST SONG TITLE:** Casino Volante, "Breathe, Elvis, Breathe" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** I believe I covered this with the whole "Jack's Day Off" thing. —Rev. Nørþ (Rockin' Bones)

CATHOLIC DISCIPLINE: Underground Babylon: CD

Total LA punk archival boner. Catholic Discipline, memorialized in *Decline of Western Civilization*, never recorded track one in a studio, was a supergroup of sorts, lasted only six months almost a quarter of a century ago ('79-'80), and only played out of LA once. And here are twenty-one tracks from live recordings and radio performances on one handy CD. It's got the feel of the Screemers LP that was put together twenty-plus years after the fact. It's half "this is weird, good, and well played" and half the feel not unlike legendary folk music collector Alan Lomax's scouring the south in the 1930s and 1940s for original music made by real people in the field. Folks. Spirit over fidelity. Crudeness and honesty over any sort of professional validation. Varied recording levels, dropouts, and uneven recordings merely underscore the "fuck it, we're all going to be nuked anyway" attitude of late '70s punk. This time, with Catholic Discipline, it's urban, cynical, and fueled and shaped by a chain-smoking, heavily drinking Frenchman. The vocal charge and captain of the ship was Claude Bessy (Kickboy Face, editor of *Slash*, RIP). The band was co-formed by Craig Lee (Bags, long-time *LA Weekly* contributor, RIP) who plays drums. Phranc (Nervous Gender and long-time solo artist) on guitar, Rick Brodey (B-People, who was married at the time to Alice Bag) on bass, Richard Meade on synths, who would be replaced by Robert Lopez (Zeros, and currently he's El Vez) rounds out the troupe. The idea behind the band was that even though all of the members were accomplished musicians (except Claude. It was his first band), they picked up instruments they hadn't played before and started from scratch. Listening to this, and it may be through telekinesis or pollution, there are echoes of Catholic Discipline in more than several current Southern California punk bands. The Distraction, Radio Vago, The Fuse! and The Sharp Ease come instantly to mind — the angularity, the sharp and jagged use of instruments, the mordant tempos, all tempered by an almost subliminal melody. My only slight criticism is that I wish there were lyrics to these songs. It's not merely archival curiosity, but because Claude was respected as one of the best writers in the original LA punk rock wave and it'd be cool read what he was singing about. Excellent stuff. —Todd (Artfix)

CHASED AND SMASHED: 30 Seconds Over Hillsboro: LP

The packaging and vinyl are immaculate. The thick insert that has comic and lyric sheet. Blue vinyl. Chased and Smashed are in the same pajama party of dirty, pop-liking, DIY punk rock as ADDC, Allergic to Bullshit, and Crimpshrine, with a slight whiff of Fleshes thrown in for rockitude. That said, if they were put on a bill, I feel like they'd be the opening band. Although not terrible — there's some toe tapping going on — Chased and Smashed isn't terribly memorable. Pretty standard fare. —Todd (Onion Flavored)

CHAZ HALO: Amazing Graceless (Demos 2002-2003): CD

Chaz Halo's old band, The Dimestore Haloes, are one of the most under-appreciated bands in punk rock history. Classic late '70s rock and roll sound crossed with depression and loss and lots of Bukowski. I love 'em! This CD is full of newer Chaz Halo songs, heard here backed by — ack! — a drum machine! Bad technology notwithstanding, there are some amazing songs in here, like "Baby Comes Undone," but they all point to one obvious fact: This man needs a band! As punk rockers, it is our duty to patronize the arts, and so, if you're living on the East Coast, and you play an instrument, for the love of all things punk, give this man a call! If this were a cereal, it'd be the test demo for a new breed of Corn Pops. Yum! —Maddy (Black Nipple)

CHEESEBURGER: Self-titled: CD-EP

Cheeseburger is a rock and roll masterpiece; a stomp, ragged, AC/DC-in-Estrus tumble down a staircase clad in 10-grit sandpaper. The CD's four songs bristle with rocknroll drugsnpartyng cliches that never sounded so right, probably because the accompaniment is just so goddamn perfect, even without a bass player. Also a thing about a pirate I can't understand the words to. I love you, Cheeseburger! —Cuss Baxter (Aerodrome)

CHORIVETTS: Hana Fumi Hisae: 7"

Deliriously squeaky trio of Asiatic females (oh no! El Guapo sighting! El Guapo sighting!) whose five songs worth of protean 5.6.7.8.s-meets-the-Brentwoods garage-pop can transform Earth's most manly subwoofer into a two-inch tweeter in jig-time. Their version of the oft-covered Hollies standard "Come on Back" sounds like the Martian voice from "The Martian Hop" singing dub reggae over a backbeat created by a piece of bacon the size of a quarter-mile of four-lane highway sizzling under the universe's largest magnifying glass. Shucks, ladies, you had me at "Martian!" **BEST SONG:** "I Fought the Law" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "My Boyfriend's Learning Karate" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** They actually spell the Bobby Fuller Four song "I Fought The Low" on the cover and label. As far as the EQ goes, I would say in this particular battle they were quite successful. —Rev. Nørþ (I Don't Feel a Thing!)

CHROMATICS: Plaster Hounds: CD

Arty and boring, but hey, I could imagine people into that sort of thing digging this. Yes, I am serious! If this were a

cereal, it'd be I Don't Understand-Ohs. —Maddy (Gold Standard Laboratories)

COCKNEY REJECTS: Greatest Hits Vol. 1: CD

Back when I was a kid, there was a record shop, Roadhouse Records, next to the youth center my dad ran in Montebello. Whenever my brother and I would go with my father to work, we'd pop over to Roadhouse to peruse the shelves and stock up on punk badges and copies of *Flipside*. Because the owner of said record shop was a friend of my father's, we managed to make a deal with him that if no one came in and bought the punk LPs he occasionally stocked within a month or so, he'd sell 'em to us for two or three bucks. It worked out swell for all involved because he'd clear a room for the lame metal records that were popular at the time and we got brand new albums for a song. To make a long story short, this was one o' those records. I remember rushing home, plopping it on the record player and being blown outta the room by what I still consider to be the UK's answer to Black Flag. Songs like "They're Gonna Put Me Away," "Fighting in the Streets," and "Police Car" easily rival that band's best work in terms of intensity, and, like Black Flag, the Reject's efforts helped spawn a whole new subgenre of punk rock, in their case what became known as "oi." Twenty-plus years on, the tracks here still hold up and still generate that same sense of immediacy they did so long ago. In addition to the original album's tracks, Captain Oi serves up the *Flares and Slippers* EP and some BBC sessions to sweeten the deal. In the grand pantheon of English punk rock records, this puppy ranks in the top fuggin' three and as far as Rejects albums themselves, this is, hands down THEE BEST of the lot. (Captain Oi)

COCKNEY REJECTS: Greatest Hits Vol. 2: CD

Captain Oi has seen fit to reissue album number two from these boys, and we are all the better for it. While not as consistently awe-inspiring as the first album, with Stinky in particular not belting out them vocals like he did on prior efforts, this is still one monster of an album, with classic tunes like "Subculture," "War on the Terraces," "Urban Guerrilla" and, of course, "Oi Oi Oi," the song that gave the movement its name. Also included here are assorted singles tracks and BBC sessions for your listening pleasure. If you have any sense at all, you already own a copy of this. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

COMMUNIQUE: Poison Arrows: CD

Unless Ted Leo comes out with a new record in 2004, Lookout! won't release anything else that's as good as this. With this follow-up to 2003's *A Crescent Honeymoon*, the former members of American Steel begin mining a shaft that most bands left behind in the 1980s and find that precious gems still exist. Falling somewhere between Marc Almond's cabaret pop and Duran Duran's synth-driven guitar rock, *Poison Arrows* turns inward, tenderly focusing on the intricacies and complexities of human relationships which all too often lead to failure. Like all the best albums, it's guarded and occasionally bitter ("Dagger Vision") but there's also a potential for redemption here, suggested in songs like "Strays" in lines like "I'm coming home / With nothing but

losses / I'm coming home to mend the cracks / In the fragile détente of our love." Unfortunately, it's difficult to look at this record in a vacuum which excludes Communiqué's history because of the debates that broke out when American Steel released *Jagged Thoughts*. In truth, those discussions weren't debates as much as a collective questioning of whether evolving beyond a stringent and dogmatic scene was selling out. Most people didn't think of the album as a progression; American Steel — one of the most vital and creative punk bands of the last two decades — broke up not long after that. I've always wondered whether those attitudes caused the break-up or were just another factor and, in that respect, *Poison Arrows* seems like an answer record, an abiding gesture of defiance to people's limited and limiting expectations. *Jagged Thoughts* was much closer to *Poison Arrows* than it was to anything else that American Steel had done and, while you can still hear the echoes of the band's punk rock history, they resonate far more quietly now, held in notes and riffs that only seem to provide a peek into a rearview mirror at a past which is quickly receding into distant memory. I'm listening to *Poison Arrows* for approximately the 30th time in the last week and still can't think of anything else which has been released this year which is as elegant, stately, and touching, nor am I aware of anything scheduled for release which will be able to catch up to these breathtaking songs. Sometimes, making a clean break is the best thing that can happen and the best decision someone can make; in this case, there's just no question that it was. —Puckett (Lookout!)

CONCUBINE FORMING: The Guilt Will Kill: CD

From the packaging, I was expecting some patently lame straight edge metal or something, but what's coming out of the speakers is some dual guitar/bass/drum machine skronk, which, compared to the former, is by all means a good thing. Their brand of noise was a tad redundant, but "March of the Robots," ironically the longest track on the disc, was pretty danged good, and the unlisted cover of Billy Squier's "The Stroke" was good for a laugh. —Jimmy Alvarado (Big Neck)

CRUMBS, THE: Hold That Shit Right!: CD

...if the Crumbs woulda kept on with that Farfisa™ thing, they would've fuckin' ruled the last half of the pop-punk '90s. Just fuckin' kicked everybody else's ass. They were neither terribly original nor astoundingly proficient, but they were good enough — kind of like an early-ish Screaming Weasel plus rock & roll plus those kinda sing-song melodies the Jockstrap Murphys would later do whiz-bang business with plus maybe a little upbeat Dead Boys-type guitar mischief for good measure — and, of course, they had the singer with the Peruvian accent that all the chicks found soooo unbearably precious — thus all they had to do was stick that goddamn Farfisa™ in the mix for keeps, and it's swimming pools and movie stars, forever and ever, amen. *But they didn't, and now an evil man is president!!!* Learn from this experience, children, lest you be doomed to repeat it! That aside, this package gathers together the tracks from the *Spaghetti & Schlitz™ 10"* (including the almighty "Farfisa™ Song," which is actually called... let me see... "Get All

Tangled Up,” i think. What a stupid name. They should have called it “The Farfisa™ Song,” like everybody else did) and some singles and stuff – i’d be more specific, but the origins of the tracks are so poorly documented in the packaging that i’d hafta read thru about six members’ various liner note reminiscences to scrape together all the data, and wouldn’t anybody who thought they really needed this stuff already have it anyway? Next off, this shoulda been released as *Spaghetti & Schlitz* (which is actually called... let me see... *Get All Tangled Up*, i think. What a stupid name. They should have called it *The Spaghetti & Schlitz™ 10-inch*, like everybody else did) + 10 or something, for two reasons: 1) The original *Spaghetti and Schlitz™* cover photo kicked ass, and 2) that would mandate that the eight songs off the 10-inch occupy the first eight slots on the disc, WHICH WOULD BE REALLY HANDY, BECAUSE THE OTHER TEN SONGS ON THIS DISC ARE SO FRICKING QUIET AS TO BE LITERALLY PRACTICALLY INAUDIBLE, and if they were all buried at the end, the end user would only be required to get up and crank the volume (by like 800% or something) on one occasion. I mean, i’ve been responsible for more than my share of recordings with variable sound levels (“Sheena’s Got a Microwave,” anyone?) but THIS is fucking RIDICULOUS. It sounds like this: *whisper whisper whisper whisper RRAHHRR RRAHHRR RAAH-HHRRR RRAHHHRRR whisper whisper whisper*. I kinda fail to see how no one noticed this beforehand. All i can say is that it’s a darn good thing this disc isn’t called *COMPILE That Shit Right!* BEST SONG: *The Farfisa Song!* BEST SONG TITLE: “Dothan, Pill City, USA” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: *Worst Tommy Roe cover ever!* –Rev. Nørb (Recess)

CURL UP AND DIE: *But the Past Ain’t Through with Us: CDEP*

Three tracks of mostly Morbid Angelic metal, and a fourteen-minute finale consisting of beats, loops, guitar effects, static, guitar jangle, some more metal, feedback, and some other quiet stuff. Like a whole college radio station in one song. –Cuss Baxter (Revelation)

CUT THE SHIT: *Marked for Life: CD*

On first listen, this twenty-seven song collection of Cut the Shit’s two EPs goes by like a blister forming. It happens quick. It’s painful, bulging, sensitive-to-the-touch hardcore, but it’s fun to pick at to see the pus ooze out, much like Dead Nation (who’ve been Tear It Up for a bit now, but i really like that Dead Nation record, *Dead End*). Several listens in, it’s as awesome by both what it is and isn’t. Thankfully, there’s no metal. It’s not jocky, but it’s as unforgiving as falling fifteen feet down onto cement. It’s also not 100% blurring by. There are great song titles. I can easily get behind stuff like “I Officially Have No Idea What It Is That the Kids Want.” It takes a bit for the ears to catch the pace – and this is what i really like – there are some melodies that sound like musical notes laced onto barbed wire being swung above their heads the whole time, a la DS-13, Career Suicide, and Fucked Up. The *Bored to Death* EP part of this CD sold me on ‘em. Me likey plenty. –Todd (Gloom)

CUTS, THE: *Self-titled: CD*

As best i can tell (and my knowledge of this band is by no means comprehensive), this is the band’s firstly-recorded, but secondly-released album. I thought the first one (i.e., the second one) plowed a passable demi-Television furrow, i guess (probably better than the actual second Television album, as i remember it, but that’s not saying much in either instance) – some manner of mutational present-day East Bay take on ‘70s Manhattan art-rock. This second album (which is the first one) kicks off with “Do the Sleeper,” an above average (and, for them, comparatively stormin’) ‘60s-ish pop-rock whose opening riff kinda reminds me of the one in “Teardrop City” by the Monkees (which itself reminds me of the opening riff of the Beatles’ “Paperback Writer,” so... you know, there ya go), spends a while sounding like what the Chocolate Watchband mighta sounded like were they the house band at Max’s Kansas City every Thursday night in 1976, takes one cool stumble into flat-out Velvet Underground (circa in between albums 3 and 4) piracy (with the guitar doing that one Lou Reed thing that i could show you with my mouth but would take far too long to dope out the proper written onomatopoeia for) and then meanders into something more Jefferson Airplane oriented and therefore beneath my notice. BEST SONG: Either “Do the Sleeper” or “Don’t Look Behind” BEST SONG TITLE: “The Spider” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The Pistons are up by one right now. –Rev. Nørb (Birdman)

CZOLGOSZ/ EN LA OLLA: *split 7”*

Czolgosz: anarcho-political punk with a strong Dead Kennedys influence. The name stumps me. Leon Czolgosz was executed on October 1901 for the assassination of President McKinley. He had been a socialist who became bored with the movement and moved to Chicago to meet with anarchists, who thought him to be a spy and rejected him. He implicated one his few supporters, Emma Goldman, in the assassination even though she was in another state at the time of his act. After she was released from jail for insufficient evidence, she still fought for him, and shortly before his execution he stated that she had never had anything to do with his actions. Oh, and their label, Sept 6, the date McKinley was shot, which has a PO Box address. That’s what i’ve never understood about anarchists. How can you tout anti-government rhetoric, but then directly benefit from a government institution like the postal service? If i stood that firmly behind those beliefs i guess i’d be saddling up my pony to deliver the mail. En La Olla: topical rather than political punk in that they deal with general concepts rather than direct issues. Lyrics are in Spanish. The better side of the split. –Megan (Sept. 6)

DAVID ROVICS: *Behind the Barricades: The Best of David Rovics: CD*

It may sound odd to hear that i can’t think of a single album i’ve reviewed for this issue which is more punk than this one, especially considering that this is one person with an acoustic guitar and some bitter, scabrous humor. It may seem even more unusual when

you consider that this is a folk album in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, Phil Ochs and Pete Seeger. Then again, i’ve always had a fondness for folk songs. At a theoretical level, they are usually one of the purest expressions of DIY. At a practical level, they usually express the most radical politics because they can embody the voice of one person. I don’t think it’s really too surprising that The Weakerthans, one of the more folk-inclined bands currently recording, also express some of the more sensitively crafted political ideas in music. Rovics, a musician who i wasn’t familiar with, works in a similar vein, although his songs are far more overt and really don’t require any parsing at all. These songs are about as subtle as a bag of hammers because, as a rule, folk music doesn’t want to be vague or misinterpreted. Back to the songs, it’s fair to say that they’re blunt. You can’t really misread them or misunderstand them. They’re pretty progressive – or, if you prefer, left-wing. They all seem to have a sad sort of black humor; as we all know, it’s fairly easy to laugh at horror these days, probably because we’ve all seen so much of it. However, there’s also hope here and perhaps that’s the thing that most draws me to this record... while Rovics isn’t pulling any punches, it’s because he’s using these hard-hitting songs to help shape a better future and, as sad as it is to say, it’s highly unlikely that such a future can be built without a brawl or two. –Puckett (AK Press)

DEAD END KIDS: *I’m So Bored with the U.K.: CD*

Pretty generic ‘70s influenced punk. The promo sheet says they are an “incredibly important band.” What does that even mean? Maybe Paul Robeson or Woody Guthrie or Minor Threat were “incredibly important,” helping create and sustain political culture and build community, but this? This is just music, dumb and fun, the way this kind of music should be. Unfortunately, this just isn’t fun or catchy enough. If this were a cereal, it’d be unfrosted Mini-Wheats. Yawn. –Maddy (No Front Teeth)

DEADLY WEAPONS: *Get Right in There: CD*

...the ‘90s Bay Area Garage Mafia have a pretty lackluster track record when it comes to pulling off the “shorter, faster, louder!” thing (case in point being Greg “Midas Touch” Lowery’s Zodiac Killers needing three attempts [and who knows how many lineups?] before going relatively yard with an album); i would be hard-pressed to understand why Tina Lucchesi (you know...from the Bobby/Trash/Total/Whatever It Is This Week Women/ Teens/ Babes/ Whatever It Is This Week) felt compelled to take a similarly futile whack at this type of record as well, but i can’t imagine it’s ‘cause she thinks she ain’t in enough bands. Maybe she’s trying to spread herself too thin for health reasons or something? Beats me. If i’m supposed to appreciate this on the grounds of it being all FAST and VICIOUS and CRAZED and VILE, it’s nowhere near FAST and VICIOUS and CRAZED and VILE enough to work for me. If i’m supposed to appreciate it because it’s well-crafted, catchy Tina Stuff (as, admittedly, most Tina Stuff tends to be), it ain’t anywhere well-crafted nor catchy enough, and it all comes off either as a shrill, pointless

version of something she did previously (presumably of a less shrill, pointless nature) or a day-late, dollar-short attempt at something the Loudmouths already did far more successfully like five years ago or something. The one redeeming feature is the cool Greg Ginn knockoff guitar runs; presumably, given a few years of practice and seasoning to properly hone their craft, they might well aspire to be the next Dick Army. *Congratfuckinlations*. BEST SONG: As no one saw fit to include a track listing with the review copy, i’ll say the one with the “Rise Above” rip-off leads. BEST SONG TITLE: I guess i’ll have to say “What a Way to Die,” because said Pleasure Seekers cover is the only song i know to actually HAVE a title. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: According to the press release, 200 copies of the album are on “invisible” wax. I kinda wish this CD was “invisible,” actually. –Rev. Nørb (Jonny Cat)

DECLARATION OF WAR: *4-song CD-R*

Pretty bad, aimless, tuneless hardcore. If this were a cereal, it’d be “If-You’re-In-High-School-Don’t-Worry-I-Produced-Much-Worse-Punk-Rock-Items-In-My-Youth-Than-This Ohs.” –Maddy (self-released?)

DEERHOOF: *Milk Man: CD*

Weirded-out avant-pop – Deerhoof is an acquired musical taste with lots of blips, twitters, and odd sound textures that put them right in line with incidental music from cartoons and the sonic portraits of labelmates Xiu Xiu, Young People, and Hella. In some ways, it sounds tremendously Japanese – waifish vocals, skewed melodies and offbeat sensibilities which veer from playful to ominous. Frankly, i’m still torn on this album and haven’t yet listened to it enough times to determine whether it’s utterly brilliant or something that will wind up being passed on to someone else. What i know at this point is that this indie-pop is interesting enough to warrant the time necessary to make that judgment. –Puckett (5 Rue Christine)

DEPTH CHARGE REVOLT: *The Inaudible Growl: CD*

This is pretty strange. The music is like when Bill and Ted get to the future and Rufus shows them the music they created. Then there’s someone screaming on top of that really mellow, guitar-driven stuff, but the levels are all the same so the yelling is all muted and soft. It’s pretty arty. –Megan (Drama Destroyed)

DESCENDENTS: *Cool to Be You: CD*

Jeez, where does one begin when speaking of the Descendents? These guys have been a personal favorite of mine since White Morgan lent me the *Fat* EP back in junior high school, and while they may not have always managed to consistently deliver the goods over the years (the *ALL* album, which admittedly has some of their best work, is uneven at best), their “comeback” record, *Everything Sucks*, was a nice return to form, and this, their latest, is a fine extension on that album. There may be a dearth of obligatory thrashers here, but it is nonetheless chock full of some of the finest pop a punk band ever mustered – taut, tight as hell, melancholy and tough as nails all at once. More amazingly, with the explosion of tenth-rate pop-punk bands inundating

the airwaves, these boys still manage to somehow set themselves apart from the pack simply by playing with a level of honesty most of the new jack bands lack. When Milo sings an anthem to being a glasses-wearing nerd, he ain't just whistling Dixie, kid. My only gripe is that seven years is TOO FUCKING LONG to make us wait between albums. There's got to be torture laws they're violatin' by having us sit and wait year after year after year for the next fix. The copy of this I happen to be reviewing is destined to be played until it disintegrates, and then replaced numerous times over the course of my lifetime. —Jimmy Alvarado (Fat)

DESPISTADO: The Emergency Response: CD EP

Is it really so hard to send out the actual release? Even if I wanted to review this promo, I don't have any liner notes. I can't tell you what any of the song titles are — about all I can say is that this reminds me of Braid, Cap'n Jazz in their more musically competent (and far less interesting) moments and Hey Mercedes. And with that said, since I have to pull this disc out of the CD player to read the title, I think I've wasted enough words and time on this. —Puckett (Jade Tree)

DESTRUCTION UNIT: Self-titled: CD

Overblown synthpunk from one or two ex-Reatards that goes from desperate and creepy to frantic and bright, all over the exhilarating place like tusslin' with a spastic waving a couple razor knives — knives so sharp you're never sure whether they cut you until you see the blood. —Cuss Baxter (Empty)

DIMLAIA: Self-titled: CD
Should've been titled *Screamo: The Soundtrack to Jimmy Alvarado's Worst Nightmares*. Nothing like piss-poor attempts at being all arty 'n' shit PLUS a fucker screeching in your ear to aggravate already raging neuroses. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.lifeisabuse.com)

DISCIPLINE/ARGY BARGY: 100% Thug Rock: Split CD

Discipline: Think the Vanilla Muffins with a gruffer singer. They were better than I remember them being. **Argy Bargy:** More of the same with an even gruffer singer than the one fronting Discipline. Nothing really blew my skirt up on here or anything, but listening to either band wasn't exactly a painful experience, either. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

DOWN AND AWAY: Set to Blow!: CD

(Shout the intro.) I blew my wad on Down and Away's split with Smalltown, but this full-length leaves me disappointed. Standardization's the problem. Most of these songs could pass for b-sides to Dropkick Murphys songs. (Raise fist. Mention the streets.) The production's squeaky clean. (Chorus.) The chops are there. The anthems are all in place ("Hey, ho, come on, let's go."), but it all seems so pat, so by the numbers. (Short solo here.) No chills. No fire. (Vague lyrics about us vs. them. Us good. Them, they don't understand us.) No sparks. Nothing's embarrassing about this CD, it's just that so many boots have trampled these same musical avenues, you gotta have new bombs to huck — or, I

know it's a stretch — songs that sound like they haven't been played a thousand times. That's the disappointment. Everything on this record's been done before, and better — like the DKM's *Do or Die* — and that leaves us standing around in a big, ol' streetpunk/oi thought ghetto in very tight pants and careful bootlace selection, staring at one another. (Grab the cymbal so it stops vibrating.) —Todd (Rockstar)

DRUGS, THE/ DRUGS, THE: Split 7"

One's from Brazil, and the other one's from Holland. They're both essentially lo-fi, hi-energy garage punk, but the Brazil one sounds more like the Mad (!) or something from *Back from the Grave*, while the Holland one has one that sounds like the Fartz (!!), and one that's more bluesy, with a laid-back part and a rave-up part. Guess which one has funnier personnel names. Funniest name from Brazil is Fred, but Holland has Peter Alias Mr. Boogie-Woogie and Hotdog Teade. Hotdog Teade! —Cuss Baxter (Rockin' Bones)

DUKES OF HILLSBOROUGH, THE/ ALTAIRA: Sometimes You Eat the Bar, Sometimes the Bar Eats You: Split CD

The Dukes of Hillsborough play a heavy blend of melodic hardcore. It's the kind of thing you'd expect from a band opening for Hot Water Music. A few people whose musical taste I respect have recommended the Dukes of Hillsborough to me, and I notice that, whenever they make the recommendation, they add that the Dukes are really good guys. After listening to the four songs on the split, I think that I'd

probably like the Dukes a lot better if they were my friends and I was watching them live and I was drunk. With nothing but this recording to go on, I'm not wild over it. The Altaira half of the split picks things up considerably. I've been listening to these guys since their guitar player, J., sent me their demo to review. I liked the demo and things just keep getting better. They owe a lot to Tiltwheel, musically speaking, but they've branched out enough on their own to avoid being a Tiltwheel clone. Still, they get Davey to sing a song on this split, and Altaira lay down five solid songs that make this split worth it for their half, alone. —Sean (A.D.D.)

EGAN'S RATS: Shanghaied: 7" EP


I see a bunch of a number of skin-oriented t-shirts in the xeroxed photos on the back of the lyric sheet, but the mid-tempo punk stuff I'm hearin' is more akin to late '80s bands like Crimpshrine. This ain't a bad thang, but I found it kinda interesting. If they're shootin' for the whole skin trip, the lyrics are way above average for that scene, with virtually no references to drinking and fighting, and their sense of not fitting into the greater society is interestingly optimistic. Not too shabby on the whole. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.geocities.com/egansrats)

ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN: We Will Bury You!: 2 x CD

There was a golden time back in the late '90s when I thought Electric Frankenstein was King Shit. I really believed that their music could kill hippies. I thought they were the new Dead Boys, only heavier and with a few more


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chins – not just sonically speaking, but heavier in the physical sense as well (as anyone can plainly see that it would take about 3.5 Stiv Bators to make one Steve Miller.) And while Steve Miller's no Gap underpants model, he's a got a great punk rock voice – greasy and gritty and slimey like a wet paper bag full of rancid dog food and worms. Back then I was listening to their live discs, *How I Rose From the Dead*, *I Was a Teenage Shutdown* and *Me No Like You* constantly. And when I did an interview with the Hookers and they slagged on E.F. for being old and fat and having too many chins, I liked E.F. even better. What could be more truly cool than being the farthest thing from MTV pretty people? And their old choppers weren't exactly floating in a glass of water next to their bed; E.F. had a sound that spit in your eye right before it tore your adam's apple out with its teeth. Or at least the live recordings did. I soon found out that the studio offerings didn't quite have that same bite. And right about the time I made that discovery, they started squirting records out like bunny turds; these boys definitely don't suffer from Axl Rose Reluctancy Syndrome when it comes to cranking new stuff out. Soon, for me, a new E.F. release became nothing to get excited about. They seemed hell bent to show everyone and Axl Rose that it really is quantity over quality. On top of that, they further bogged down their fans – or me at least – with their preachy “Fight the Anti-Rock Conspiracy” twaddle. I generally don't get an itchy reaction to “preaching to the choir” type stuff, but this particular campaign seemed as ponderous as their recorded output was prolific. So it was with some trepidation that I approached reviewing this new double E.F. CD of

nothing but cover tunes. To their credit, they are all over the map here. They go from covers of the Circle Jerks to AC/DC to the Supersuckers to Crime, the Dead Kennedys, Blue Oyster Cult, the Misfits, F-Word, Fleetwood Mac, Johnny Cash and Pink Floyd. All in all, very admirable attempts. But when you get to the stuff you'd like to re-listen to – not as interesting. What it comes down to for me, is that the covers of “arena rock” tunes tend to show that slower, softish mid-tempo side of E.F. that seems to have been more and more prevalent on their more recent releases – while the more “punk” covers have more snot and teeth and bile. Which I like. Sorry, I'm biased. “Ace's High” by Iron Maiden is a cool/cheesy tune, but E.F.'s relaxed remake makes the original sound more “punk” than the E.F. version. And personally, for me, if you're going around with a comic book-inspired band logo that says “Electric Frankenstein – Punk Rock” and you're showing up on the monitor as “less punk” than a fencing doofus like Bruce Dickenson, you better take a step back and rethink things. Like most recent E.F. releases, I find this one to be a mixed bag of really good and really uninteresting. The good stuff is good, though. As usual, I wish I could have gone into the studio and trimmed the fat for them, using my razor sharp music critic scalpels. Because this is, perhaps, the most “Frankenstein-ish” of all their releases and, while it doesn't come anywhere near to totally sucking, it doesn't have the over-all power and ignorance to drown sweet little innocent girls in sun dresses either. A lurching hit-and-miss patchwork of random parts sewn together with cheap yarn. Your call. –Aphid Peewit (TKO)

EPIDEMIC, THE:
Self-titled: CD

The guys at Rodent Popsicle serve up a reissue of an album that apparently first saw the light of day in the very recent past. Some pretty rockin' hardcore is dished up here, with a lyrical emphasis on war, which makes perfect sense considering what's been going on in this country under Herr Bush's regime, as well as a couple of ditties about police oppression and sadomasochism to break up the monotony. Some good work is put down here that should satisfy the jones of any thrash fiend. –Jimmy Alvarado (Rodent Popsicle)

ERGS, THE:
Dorkrockcorkrod: CD

There's no delicate way to say this. I think The Ergs are geniuses. I adored their *Ben Kwell* EP, but missed something. I loved it as a simple pop album. On *Dorkrockcorkrod* (it's a palindrome!) it's easier to hear a lot of the complexities that are going on behind the guise of pop. It's like Rivethead, where I just thought it was the hooks that had me listening to it all the time, but then I began to pay closer attention. They're all proficient players, and when you listen to what's going on in the background of the songs you hear some interesting things. I actually hear a strong jazz influence, but it never overrides the pop (which has a lot more power in the pop than the EP) and don't worry, it never even steps close to fusion. Broken-hearted lyrics prevail from their Carpenter-style set-up (you know, the drummer sings). Incredibly infectious – I listened to it fourteen times yesterday. –Megan (Whoa Oh)

ESOTERIC, THE:
1336: CD EP

It's amazing how easily suckass jock metal passing itself off as hardcore can ruin one's day. –Jimmy Alvarado (Black Noise)

EXPLODING FUCK DOLLS:
Crack the Safe: CD

A collection of assorted tracks from a band that first made the rounds back in the early '90s and are now apparently out playing again. The early tracks with Duane Peters on vocals are not that far off from the noise his more recent bands have been making, but the later tracks with some guy named Kris could easily pass for Clash outtakes. Better than my drunken memories of seeing and/or sharing bills with them led me to believe. –Jimmy Alvarado (Disaster/Bomp)

FANG: Live Cheap: CD

Although there is nothing in the packaging to verify it, what I am able to suss from listening to this is that you've got two or three live recordings here from this venerable Bay Area band, the first from one of their recent reunion shows and the others from back in the '80s. Great versions of classics like “The Money Will Roll Right In,” “Skinheads Smoke Dope,” “Landshark,” “They Sent Me to Hell COD,” and “Fun with Acid,” among others, can be found here, as well as some others I don't recognize. Sound quality is pretty good throughout and the performances are pretty spirited, which is about the best one can expect from a live recording. All in all, a nice addition to your collection and guaranteed fun for the whole family. –Jimmy Alvarado (Malt Soda)

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FLATUS: *Crashing Down*: CD
 Maybe I'm just not getting it, but this sounds to me like over-produced melodic punk with lots of breakdowns and, unfortunately, vocals that could best be described as "operatic." Not awful, but nothing new, either. If this were a cereal, it'd be Total. In a pinch, it'll do, but if you've got even a box of Honey Nut Cheerios handy, well, it's all over. -Maddy (Black Pumpkin)

FLUX OF PINK INDIANS: *Strive to Survive/ Neu Smell*: CD

Strange what time can do to one's listening tastes. Like Crass and most of the other English anarcho-punk bands of the late '70s/early '80s (except, I must point out, Rudimentary Peni, who maintain an almost religious respect from me to this day) I HATED this band with a passion. Their songs were the musical equivalent of fingernails on a chalkboard or strangling a cat and resulted in many a fantasy of jamming ice picks into my ears. Some of the boys in the 'hood swore by these guys, but I preferred bashing my head into a concrete wall to having to sit through their brand of noise. Twenty years on, however, I find a couple of Crass records in my collection and myself actually digging this reissue. Kinda unnerving. Next thing I know, I'm gonna find myself rocking out to Conflict or something. -Jimmy Alvarado (One Little Indian)

FLUX OF PINK INDIANS: *The Fucking Cunts Treat Us Like Pricks/ Taking a Liberty*: CD

Eighteen tracks from this legendary Crass-affiliated band. The *TFCTULP* LP and the *Taking Liberty 7"* were orig-

inally released in 1983 and 1984 on Spiderleg Records. Here you get both without acquiring a scratched up original for an exorbitant price, but you might have already guessed that obvious fact from the title. I don't know if this is a defect or it was intended, but all the songs are on one track. That sure takes away the convenience of it being on CD. It's like having a cassette. You have to fast forward but you cannot skip tracks. At least with vinyl, you can manually lift the needle and move it past songs you don't want to listen to. I can't say I'm the most knowledgeable fan. I do have the *Strive to Survive...* LP. Wasn't too into the whole Crass thing. Liked the ideology, but could pass on the music. I still find it hard to listen to after twenty years. If you got the patch on your clothing and never listened to the band before, go get this. Someone will eventually call you on it. -Donofthedead (One Little Indian)

FOUR EYES, THE: *Rock & Role Playing*: CD

Super-nerd, super-pop from Sacramento's The Four Eyes. Topics ranging from winning spelling bees and becoming king of the nerds to *Deathrace 2000*. It's all in good fun, and pulled together really well - playing for eleven years will do that, I've heard. I'm getting the impression that they're an acquired taste, but one I apparently have because I love it. -Megan (Plastic Idol)

FOUR LETTER WORD: *Crimewave! 7" EP*

There are a lot of settings on Four Letter Word's amps. The title track carries through with a spy surf guitar that could have been lifted from JFA or *Hawaii*

Five-O. "Turning the Screw" - clean, jumpy, and snotty - is reminiscent of late '90s pop punk along the lines of NRA. "Friends in High Places" is a straight-ahead hardcore scorcher that bares its teeth and looks at the Effigies right in the eyes. "Johnny Foreigner" has more than a couple intersecting points to a mid-tempo Anti-Flag song. It's all held together by explicit left-wing politics and the artwork nods to other inspirations, like the Posh Boy-inspired crest of the record label. It's listenable, enjoyable, and well crafted. -Todd (Newest Industry, \$7 ppd./world)

FULL FRONTAL ASSAULT: *The Universal Struggle*: CD

Iron Maiden delves into the world of speed metal with the Cookie Monster doing his best Bruce Dickenson impersonation. -Jimmy Alvarado (www.newregardmedia.com)

G.D. LUXXE: *Between Zero & Eternity*: CD

You are in your twenties now, slowly but surely pushing thirty. You grew up on punk, embraced the spirit of DIY, moshed when it was still called slam dancing. You developed a goth fetish, bought Sisters of Mercy albums, started dressing in black. You graduated high school, started hanging out at clubs, started listening to techno, started dreaming about Berlin. You got older and started to wonder what was next. You dabbled in seemingly every subculture when you were young and, now that you are an adult, can you find a place where the influences collide? Enter *Between Zero and Eternity*, the latest album from GD Luxxe (aka Gerhard Potuznik). Here, the dark, sparse elec-

tronics of the nuclear winter in your mind go head-to-head with a rock rhythm as frenzied as that pit where you once took a Doc Marten to the eye as the vocals exude the sort of intense heat that prompt bouts of teenage longing. Were you still sixteen, you would be sweating Kabuki make-up right about now. In your room, listening to this album, trying to decide whether or not, at your age, it is still appropriate to jump on the bed in time to the beat, you realize that G.D. Luxxe is the sound of the future. It is music without the now-requisite new wave nostalgia, without the more forward-retro-minded acid house nostalgia. It is the sound that may just carry you and your friends into the next phase of life. -Liz Ohanesian (Ersatz Audio)

GARAGELAND: *Last Exit to Garageland*: CD

Most of the Flying Nun records I'd heard before this were gentle and lilting pop. This sounds like Pavement trying to play punk rock while drunk as hell on some fucked up distillation of the Nuggets box set into moonshine. It veers from power-pop to noise-pop to shoegaze to garage rock and somehow manages to make the whole damned mess cohere into something that actually sounds like a consistent record. It isn't brilliant, but it isn't common (particularly not these days) and it's well-done - sometimes, that's more satisfying than a jaw-droppingly good album. -Puckett (Flying Nun)

GEISHA GIRLS: *Self-titled: 12" EP*

There's definitely a strong Gang of Four feel here, with Robert Smith-ish vocals, which may sound like charted

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decathlon of styles. G.I. (the matrix etch claims it stands for "Genital Inspectors") were kindred spirits to the Teen Idles, SOA, and the east coast Youth Brigade. It's both nostalgic and fun stuff. Although fast, you can already here the fungus of melody creeping in that would later infect the band's central nervous system and steer them into distant musical seas. After all this time, it's funny and charming that the lead singer, John Stabb, can't figure out the chorus to his song, "War Zone Casualty," because it's so fast and so slurred. John also mentions this in liner notes, but it's worth repeating – G.I. has a lot in common from the often-overlooked first ever American hardcore band, Middle Class. This demo EP could have easily been the companion piece to *Out of Vogue*, and that's a high compliment. Cool stuff. –Todd (Spontaneous Combustion; www.spontaneous.com)

GUNMOLL:
Board of Rejection: CD

I love this album! Right away when I heard the first song, I knew this was gonna be amazing. I just keep listening to it over and over. You can make all the obvious comparisons – Hot Water Music, Leatherface, Pegboy, Jawbreaker, but somehow, this manages to still sound new. One of the best CDs I've heard this year. If you don't pick this up, you're seriously missing out. Especially if you need some great wallowing music. Just put it on your walkman, get on your bike, and ride around thinking about how sad you are. Do you think I'm joking? This is what emo SHOULD sound like! If this were a cereal, it'd be Lucky Charms! The highest honor! –Maddy (No Idea)

HANDGUN BRAVADO:
These Days Move Fast : CD

I popped this in the player while driving through the high desert between LA and Vegas. In my opinion it's one of the best places to listen to music. Everything is so vast that you kind of have to focus on something, music usually being my choice. Handgun Bravado have something interesting going on here. On most of the tracks the guitar seems to be rhythm guitar, but with nothing taking up the lead. It doesn't feel like there's anything missing, and the tracks that have a lead guitar just feel a bit fuller, not better. Vocals reminiscent of Danny Elfman's days with Oingo Boingo, and the music has a Bad Religion feel to it. Interesting approach and not a bad listen at all. –Megan (Firefly)

HATE PINKS, THE:
Parasites Like Me: CD

Total Killed By Death type stuff. This album gets the ridiculous lyric award for: "I'm going to get me that girl Natasha/Behind the economical curtain." And the singer pronounces "badge" like "bay-dge." Punk! And I think they're French! If this were a cereal, it'd be Apple Jacks. If you like 'em/KBD, you'll love this! –Maddy (Unity Squad)

HATEPINKS, THE: Sehr Gut Rock Und Roll: CD

Me: Okay, got guitars?
Band: Oui.
Me: Got bass?
Band: Oui.
Me: Got drums?
Band: Oui.
Me: Got sunglasses?
Band: Oui.
Me: Got ties?

Band: Oui.
Me: Some of them featuring the ever-dynamic "diagonal stripe" pattern?
Band: Mais oui!
Me: Are you standing in front of some sort of grid-type background, such as the tiles of a subway station or underpass, to contrast the mathematical regularity of the grid pattern itself with the imperfections of the physical form it has taken on in its manifestation as a byproduct of mere functional utility?
Band: (whispering) Uhhh... oui?
Me: Got song titles that appear to be composed by writing down a variety of "punk" sounding words – "Brainless" "Selfish" "Kids" "Gimmick" "Phoning" "Pills" "Bored" "Rotten" "Plastic" "Polaroid" – then picking those words randomly out of a hat?
Band: Oui.
Me: Got inspiration?
Band: ... quoi?
Me: You know, "inspiration?" Like, do you do anything but embrace and reflect previously established stylistic conventions?
Band: (offended): "Je suis une gimmick!"
Me: Yeah, but can't you think of a better gimmick than just being punk? I mean, isn't that sort of a given for a punk band? A default gimmick?
Band: "Nous sommes la haine rose!"
Me: LOOK, DO YOU HAVE A GIMMICK OTHER THAN BEING A GIMMICK PUNK BAND WHO IS PUNK???

Band: "Garçon je danse bien!"
Me: Look, if you want a gimmick, why not sing in French? French is, amazingly, a perfectly good rock singin' language. It also sounds really freaky, which is good. Plastic Bertrand sang in French, and HE was Belgian!
Band: !!! *Quel chien!!! Quel cochon Belgique!!!*
Me: I mean, instead of doing something like wearing a diagonally-stripped tie 'cause it looks sort of symbolically hiply jarring, why dontcha do something REALLY hiply jarring for a change, and sing in your native language???

I can assure you that the white male Anglophone mafia who've been running Punk Rock since its inception have a lot more interest in hearing French dudes singing punk in French than they do hearing yet more punk rock sung in English. I mean, the only reason we put up with French punks singing in English anyway is because sometimes they say "Moo-zair-foo-kair," which we love – which you don't say even say once! So whaddaya say? Can you sing your next album in French? Huh? Can ya? Will ya? Huh? Huh? Huh?
Band: We do not speak the French!!! Moo-zair-foo-kair!!!
BEST SONG: "Bored on Pills" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "(Killed By) Polaroid Screen" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** "*Fuck the rest of the world, especially you.*" –Rev. Nørb (Lollipop)

HIDDEN TRACKS: The Sweet Sounds of Excess: CD

I swear, whatever I did to deserve getting so much indie rock to review, I apologize! Please! End the deluge! Contains the line, "I wanna be your whore/I wanna be all yours." Lots of new-school Dr. Frank-esque vocals, and, once again, tons of R.E.M. influence. One pretty alright song ("Insomnia"). More of that, less of the rest! If this were a cereal, it'd be a defective box, containing mostly Special K (and advertised as such), but

with a little sprinkling of Honey Nut Chex thrown in (fortunately) by mistake. The end! –Maddy (Disposable Pop Revolution)

HOLY SHIT!: What the Fuck?: 7" EP

Ass my dick etc. What it reminds me of is an old band by the name of Killing Children from Ohio or somewhere. If this record would've come out in 1984 like that one, it'd be kicking ass on eBay right now. As it stands, well, that might not ever happen, but it's a nice little blast of Midwest (Milwaukee – the city that Schlitz made famous) hardcore that's like chicken croquettes going into your ears. You can buy it for \$4 ppd. –Cuss Baxter (Holy Shit!)

HORRIBLE ODDS, THE: Underground: LP

Straight ahead gearhead rock for fans of that. Not enough for me to drive fast to. –Speedway Randy (Onion Flavored Records)

HORROR, THE: First Blood Parts I & II: CD-R

I like it when I'm not expecting something. Like this release, I got an ass kicking while I was not looking. Consisting of former members of the Voorhees from the UK, they take the short, fast and loud route and pummel through twenty-eight songs. Done well, this style is extremely entertaining and is a great outlet. Fans of DS-13, their former band the Voorhees, or Amdi Petersens Arme will be won over by this band. Now I have to go out and get the actual release and hope I haven't missed them live. –Donofthead (Chainsaw Safety)

HOT'N'HEAVY/ THE SHARP EASE: Split 7"

It's fitting that Hot'n'Heavy should join forces with The Sharp Ease for this split 7". Both are Los Angeles-based bands lacking in the pretension that often plagues the scene in this city. Both are the writers of sharp, insightful lyrics and the players of heavy beats. Both are known for their highly energetic live shows. Hot'n'Heavy could be part of the High NRG Riot, should something exist, as influenced by Kathleen Hanna as they are by Bronski Beat. Listening to this album, it becomes obvious that Dolly Resendez and Rudy Blue are just as comfortable making zines at home as they are dancing to Trans X's "Living on Video." The duo offers two tracks on this release. "Colored Vinyl," featuring Dolly on vocals, is a hyper-rhythm dance track in the vein of '80s Hi NRG music, but with a distinct punk twist. On "State of Confusion," Rudy Blue takes center stage with flat but endearing vocals, as if New Order's Bernard Sumner grew up in Los Angeles, as opposed to Manchester. On the flipside, The Sharp Ease prove, once again, that they lay claim to the best drummer in Los Angeles. Christine Kings wields her drumsticks like a Williams sister on the tennis court. Listening to her, I'm half-expecting to hear her rip off the skins. Yet, for all this power, she never drops a beat. Running through the rhythm is Paloma Parfrey sounding as if she is on the verge of kicking someone's ass – all anger and fiery passion. While this 7" is a strong testament to the sound of both bands, it does not match seeing either group play in a dark, skanky club. The music just isn't the same without watching Rudy Blue work the Jazzercise moves in the middle of the crowd as his

boxers hang from under his gym shorts or Paloma Parfrey spitting out lyrics as she jumps into the audience. –Liz Ohanesian (Spitshine; www.spitshinerecords.com)

INSTIGATOR:
Sorry We're Punk: CD

Picked this up recently at a South Bay show. Haven't been to a show in the South Bay in over a decade. This band was the opening act. While they were playing, my brother told me that he remembered this band from the early '80s. As the band played along, I vaguely remembered the band. They played an impressive set that brought back memories of the early days and the many bands that never went anywhere but were good. After the show, I struck up a conversation with the drummer and asked him if he had played many a night at the local punk club in Hollywood back in the '80s. He confirmed my suspicion and I immediately felt like I'd met a comrade in arms. This release features the one of the first bands to play the melodic beach punk sound. They also have a sound that is very OC from that time period. Cross the Vandals with D.I. and, for some weird reason, I hear some Youth Brigade. You can also hear where Pennywise might have gotten some of their influence in there, too, due to proximity. Their live set caught me but hearing a good recording of that set is even better. The old punk in me cried for this. –Donofthead (Instigator)

JOHNNY CHEAPO:
Rock-N-Roll Sinner: CD

Imagine a less political Sloppy Seconds. Yes, you read that correctly. –Jimmy Alvarado (Smut, no address)

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT:
Fade to Black: CD

This is supposedly the first in a series of discs highlighting Arizona's treasure trove of "lost" bands, and it is one hell of a way to start things off. This album, first released back in 1984, is a gem of '80s hardcore punk rock with a gaggle of dark, catchy-as-hell mid-tempo hardcore done up in ways one rarely hears anymore. According to the press materials, it was recorded on a two track which is mind-boggling considering how well it came out. There's nary a lousy track to be found here, and if the album ain't enough, a soundboard recording of a live set is tacked on the end for good measure. Now, I highly recommend that all reading this inundate Malt Soda with letters requesting that they offer up Conflict's (the Tucson band, not the UK hippie punks) sole album, Mighty Sphincter's *Ghost Walking* double EP (hell, almost anything from Placebo's back catalog would be swell) and anything they can manage to scrape up from Soilent Green. Trust me, you'll thank me for it later. –Jimmy Alvarado (Malt Soda)

KUKL: The Eye: CD & Holiday in Europe (The Noughty Nought): CD

Never been a fan of Bjork, but always kind of wanted to hear Kukl, her pre-SugarCubes band, as they were on Crass and that was a recommendation of sorts. Now I can, because it's reissued. 1984's *The Eye* is about what I expected: super-effected, Cure-esque guitar, arrhythmic percussion, gothic touches like donging bells, all presided over by Bjork's grating caterwaul. The next year's *Holiday in Europe*, however, makes considerable gains in terms of non-irritation: Bjork's

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vocals are reigned in somewhat, the drumming shaped up, and the incidental noise fleshed out satisfyingly, giving the whole thing a tone that's more regulated and more ethereal at the same time, like they stepped up from being pretend-weird to being actual-weird. That said, though, you're not likely to catch me listening to Kukl again any time soon; just because it ain't bad don't make it good. —Cuss Baxter (One Little Indian)

**KYLESA: "No Ending"/
"A 100° Heat Index": CDEP**

Pretty similar to fellow Georgian crust grinders Damad, from which band are half of KyleSA: crushing detuned heaviness, but with more audible, more worldly vocals. The 7" has two songs, but the CD version has four (one is "Clutches" by Nausea) and a video. —Cuss Baxter (Prank)

LAHAR: Collapsing of the Soul: CDEP

Three-song EP. Guessed the grind sound from the album title. Find the EP from the band Are You God? instead. —Speedway Randy (Wormfodder, www.odeum.org/wormfodder)

**LAYMEN TERMS:
3 Weeks In: CD EP**

Before the vocals kick in, the first song sounds so much like Metallica's "One" that I can see Lars Ulrich nodding his head as he hits that tom *just once* before hitting the snare. Who's showing off their classical guitar lessons, huh? —Puckett (Suburban Home)

**LOCOMOTIONS:
Self-titled: CD**

If you purchased ten or more records with a Born On Date of 2003 A.D. and the Locomotions LP was not among them, you are hereby charged with Contempt of Rock, and will remain in such a state until the oversight is corrected and the proper reparations are made. As some sort of a fucked-up reward for you not being on-the-ball enough to have figured things out the first time through, said album is now available on piracy-friendly CD format with two bonus tracks. I would repeat my review of last year's vinyl at this point, but the only part I remember is the bit about DMZ locking their rabid redheaded stepchildren in the basement and them burning the house down instead of playing "Mighty Idy" — which is, realistically, all you need to know anyway. If you like punk rock and you like, say, The Pack, then if you like the garage punk thing you oughtta like the Locomotions. Surely you groove upon the whole furriners-bashing-shit-around aesthetic? **ROCK AWAITS YOUR OVERDUE ACT OF CONTRITION! BEST SONG:** Goddammit, I STILL say "Sigma Attack!" **BEST SONG TITLE:** I don't even remember what I said last time. **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** The press release mistakenly refers to the song "She's Got Her" as "She's On Her." Good one, Tom! —Rev. Nørb (Dead Beat)

**LOST PATROL, THE: Songs
About Running Away: CD**

Who the fuck ever thought that Dennis Lyxsen would ever write an album which is just slightly to the rock side of Kings Of Convenience? These country-inflected pop songs are a far cry from The International Noise Conspiracy, much less Refused. Frankly, once this

hit the CD player, I really didn't listen to much else for this issue. While there's nothing here as overtly political as Lyxsen's other bands, the songs seem covertly political, primarily focusing on relationships — perhaps romantic, perhaps platonic — which are still imbued with longing and desire. This is perhaps one of the most noteworthy characteristics inherent in Lyxsen's music — there is usually a sense of yearning for something, whether a better political future or a relationship which doesn't yield a sense that something is still missing. One of the most interesting artistic ideas at play here is a sense that disenfranchisement, that alienation and ostracization engender a void which pulls on other areas of a life; that being removed from or marginalized in the political realm can in turn result in frustrating or unfulfilling relationships and that these frustrations can cascade throughout one's existence, coloring everything they touch. Of course, maybe I'm just another asshole rock critic who's reading too much into a set of pop songs ... but still, it moves. —Puckett (Burning Heart)

**LOST SOUNDS: Demos and
Outtakes Volume 2:
3 x 7" Box Set**

While the terms "garage rock" and "new wave" have recently been smooched together like a forgotten peanut butter and jelly sandwich in a back pocket, and most bands affecting that pose sound like a soggy mess, the Lost Sounds have tightened the screws on the hull of their monster of sound. From the eerie subject matter — including zombies and graveyards — to the b-movie world of lost planets, to the crackling, jumpy, synth-adedded, guitar trappings, the Lost Sounds started out by inhabiting distant worlds and are now setting their eyeballs, glowing green with radiation, on this planet. The wide structure of the band — I hate to use the word "concept," because so many concepts are too damn fruity, but that's what it may be — is analogous to Man... or Astroman? Substituting mutant wolverine new wave in the place of intergalactic surf opuses, the band is bigger than any one isolated part. A cacophony with it toes dipped in melody. How all of the pieces come together is the really exciting part. This box set's a perfect example. You've got the music — fifteen songs on three seven inches — but it doesn't stop there. Included are also a booklet, a poster, a pin, a photograph, and a piece of candy. Much like MoAM? The Lost Sounds seem to be as interested in creating an entirely new world as much as they are with creating new songs. This collection, as the title suggests, has alternate and earlier takes on a lot of their songs. It also includes one song that had never been released before, "Chopping Block." Awesome. Limited to 500. —Todd (Rockin' Bones)

**LOUSY BREAK: Don't Wait
for the Next Time: CD**

Wow. There's dice on the front AND back cover! Contains lyrics like: "Meet a girl drinking on a Friday night/Knowing she'll get loose when she gets tight." And, in the song "Fuck the French," we've got, "Land of fags, wine, and cheese/A nation of pussies and chicks with dicks." Wow. If this were a cereal, it'd be Berry Berry Kix. Yuck! —Maddy (Headache)

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LUBRICATED GOAT:
The Great Old Ones: CD

One time, I was at a Lubricated Goat show, and I yelled for my favorite Lubricated Goat song "Japanese Train Driver" after every song, and they never played it, and I was swimming in a sea of Milwaukee's Best, because at that time they packed it in longnecks, and I swam home in it, and I discovered that "Japanese Train Driver" is by Grong Grong. I was terribly embarrassed. Later, singer Stu Spasm moved to New York and got stabbed in the brain. Apparently, recently, he formed a new Lubricated Goat and re-recorded several extant Lubricated Goat songs and they sound pretty good. I no longer have any of my Lubricated Goat records, so I can't do a proper comparison, but I don't remember Stu's voice sounding so much like Lemmy or the guy from the Anti Nowhere League. Must've been the brain infection. Prime AmRep post-punk. -Cuss Baxter (Reptilian)

MALAVISTA:
Self-titled: CDEP

This one caught me by surprise. I haven't heard anything from Malavista in a couple of years, and apparently, they've spent that time getting way better. This EP is five songs long, and the songs bridge the gap between '80s hardcore like Los Olvidados and JFA and current Orange County beach punk like Smogtown and the Smut Peddlers. It's a lot more complex than it sounds on the first listen, and, if you know how much I like all four bands I've just compared Malavista to, you understand how impressed I am by this EP. -Sean (Rezist)

MANIKINS, THE:
Self-titled: LP

Lo-Fi Rip Off punk that would've probably made for a great bunch of singles, but only manages to blur into one long drone as a full length. There are some good tunes on here, but it's almost too much of a good thing, if you catch my drift. -Jimmy Alvarado (Rockin' Bones)

MARKED MEN, THE:
On the Outside: CD

What is it that makes the Marked Men so great at what they do? Is it those bass lines that pop like an adolescent (read: pre-Guns N Roses) Tommy Stinson? Is it the way they took the bright, hooky guitars from the best late '70s power pop bands, axed the commercial rock tendencies, and then duct-taped them onto ninety-second punk rock songs? Is it the creative drumming that somehow never goes into Neil Peart territory? I don't know. All I know is that they somehow found an untapped musical vein somewhere between Scared of Chaka and the FM Knives, only they're better than both of those bands. And if you think that's blasphemy, I'll go one better and say that they're the American Teengenerate. -Josh (Dirtnap)

MARVELS, THE:
Cheat to Win: CD

I forgot how much Staffy's vocals sound like the Black Halos until I put them on back-to-back the other day. A few lineup changes since the last recording, but no worse for the wear. Michelle adds a nice contrast with female vocals, and she plays a pretty mean bass. This recording captures their rawness much better than the last release. Anthemic, rock'n'roll with a snotty edge. I haven't

seen them in about two years, and they still top my list of live bands. Well worth checking out -Megan (Abbey Lounge)

MISTAKE, THE:
Fuck Everything Up: CD

One of those chonka-chonka metal bands that plays their guitars nipple-high so that they can get the right chonka-chonka sound. According to the lyrics, they're going to take back the scene from all you poseurs out there. Watch out, poseurs! -Josh (Prime Directive)

MODERN MACHINES:
Thwap!: LP

The first time I listened to this record, I thought it was just okay. Not great, not bad. I would've passed on it, but Maddy Tight Pants really loves the Modern Machines, and since I tend to agree with Maddy's musical tastes most of the time, I figured that I'd give this record another chance. I took it home and, over the past two months, I've listened to it dozens of times. After all of these repeated listens, the songs started to separate in my head. I could better recognize the subtleties of the parts. I could pick out parts where the Replacements influence crept in. "Run It" has some nice echoes of the Big Boys. The heavy Hüsker Dü influence is just about everywhere, and that's not a bad thing. I could hear where they were trying to branch out in different directions. And, in the end, I've decided that this album is great. And it's bad. And it's just okay. By that, I mean that four or five songs off of this album would make a great EP. Alternately, a few of these songs should've stayed in the practice room a bit longer before they were recorded.

And the record is just okay when they have a song like "Radio Tower" which is going along great, then does a quick tempo change and launches into a part where the singer says he's gonna fly, and I stop paying attention. I think that the Modern Machines have a good starting point. I think they'll get better. For the time being, though, I'd rather listen to The Crowd song they're named after than listen to this record. -Sean (Onion Flavored)

MONSTERS, THE:
Youth Against Nature: CD

Wacked-out garage punk from a Swiss three-man band featuring Swiss one-man band Lightning Beat-Man. That, and a wide-eyed, cough-syruped, fuzz-adled blast down some weird highway from snow-blind northern Europe to a smoky roadhouse outside New Orleans in a car full of psychopaths on concrete tires. -Cuss Baxter (Voodoo Rhythm)

MORNING SHAKES, THE:
XXX-plode with the Sounds of Sex, Booze and Sin!: LP

...i'm not sure if it's a testament to this defunct '90s outfit's latent greatness or more of an indictment of today's vendors of the Stinky Garage Molecule that a band which sounded "good" but not overly raveworthy six-seven years ago now comes off as substantially above average ("SUBSTANTIALLY ABOVE AVERAGE!" My devotion knows no bounds!) in most regards. Singles tracks, album tracks, the ever-popular "lost tracks" and some keen covers by a band who never met a New Bomb Turks song recorded in Billy Childish's bedroom they didn't like - i just hope when i die somebody can cobble together a package this useful out of my spare

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parts. BEST SONG: i got to go with the Dicks cover here, but if they would have thought to medley "Thunderbird ESQ" into "Stealing People's Mail" i would say that. BEST SONG TITLE: "Devious Means," outside authorship be hanged! FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This is one of two Rockin' Bones releases reviewed this month which sports a Zero Boys cover. Indianapolis: *New Centre of the Universe!* -Rev. Nørb (Rockin' Bones)

MOUSEROCKET:
Self-titled: CD

Alicja Trout is one busy lady. Not only does she play in the Lost Sounds, the Fitts, and Destruction Unit, she's the guitarist and main vocalist in Mouserocket. And much like John Reis (Rocket From the Crypt, Drive Like Jehu, The Swamis), being so busy and so involved (she runs Contaminated Records and distro out of Memphis, too) it doesn't show at the kneecaps that she's stretching herself too thin because none of the bands she's involved in are slouchy. Mouserocket isn't as synth-driven as the Lost Sounds, art damaged as Destruction Unit, or wrecked garage as the Fitts. Delicate is a good way to put it. The songs are more eerie, sad, and organic. Overall, this CD reminds me of the best of Bongwater, minus the more irritating fuck-your-ear noise bits and tracks that you swear they didn't know the record button was pressed. So, all in all, it sounds otherworldly, yet it lends its hand out to the listener in a very accessible way, which doesn't happen very often. It's experimental but well realized with firm strokes. On first listen, my favorite track was the cover of the Damned's "Alone Again Or," but as I

got more familiar with the musical scenery I like the album as a whole, from start to finish. The more I listened to it, the more I thought of it almost as an audio accompaniment to a darkly themed children's book. Mouserocket would be perfect for a *Where the Wild Things Are* or a *Series of Unfortunate Events* movie, and that's not a slight in the least. -Todd (Empty)

MUGGERS, THE:
Self-titled: CD

Whoa! You skins and punks better hold onto your fucking boots because the Muggers are coming to kick your ass! This is some brutal fucking street punk for you. They start out with a song about John Walker Lindh, the American who was helping Al Qaeda. It's called "Turn-Coat-Kid" and it's got some lyrics. "I know what you did/John Walker Lindh/I know what you did/John Walker Lindh." Then they burn into "Standing Back." It's about getting pissed off and killing some guy, then getting thrown in jail, which sucks. This one also has lyrics, "This must be a dream/Could be sitting at home like a king on his throne/Nursing a black eye." Yeah. This is sarcasm if you didn't catch it. - Megan wearing Bruce Roehrs' Pants (Radio)

MY SO-CALLED BAND:
Weapons of Mass Distortion: CDEP

Full disclosure: Chris Peigler, who plays in My So-Called Band, does live reviews and columns on razorcake.com. *Weapons of Mass Distortion* is the most straightforward and no-nonsense My So Called Band release I've heard. As a trio, the songs are more direct and shorn of the occa-

sional meandering parts. If long-term enthusiasm, a fully tested arsenal of ethics, and living in a town (Charlotte, NC) with little to no appreciation for honest, DIY punk rock could be distilled into songs, My So Called-Band nails it. What works the most for this band is a greater understanding of punk rock in general while dipping into wells deeper than any one genre could provide. It's like they've cribbed notes from the play lists of past greats as diverse as DOA to Naked Raygun to the MC5 - like a skeleton - but it's all joined by a workmanlike ethos - the muscle - that keeps it from being merely a musically cut and paste affair. Separate parts, yet joined, and it's a good listen. -Todd (Suicide Watch)

NEW MEXICANS, THE:
Chicken Head
Talking Diamonds: CD

Some high precision noise rock from this Seattle-by-way-of-Arizona/Kentucky/ South Carolina outfit. Song titles like "I'm Going to Go Put on My Cape and Go Jack Off to Some Beat Happening CDs," "Shit Hard, Clown Shoes" and "Lesbian Llamas Are the Fruit of Gnomes" pretty much let you know where they're coming from. Good, noisy stuff. -Jimmy Alvarado (Under the Needle)

NIGHT TERRORS: *The Hit/ (I Have) Night Terrors: 7*

As a spazz, I can tell you that I actually experience real life night terrors on a regular basis and I can also tell you that these Wisconsin boys are way less scary than actual night terrors. But I don't think that they're really trying to scare anyone. Except maybe people who like to bath and use deodorant and

foo-foo stuff like that. This is a little less manic than Teengenerate or Sweet J.A.P. and a little more garagey than yer typical Confederacy of Scum. band. A nice blend though. I would like to hear more. Mungy armpit hair fun. -Aphid Peewit (Goodbye Boozy)

NO MEANS NO:
The People's Choice: CD

Another band I've always loved but have never broken down and actually bought anything by (I have no credible excuse. I suck and I know it.) get the "best of" treatment here. For the uninitiated, this is one of Canada's treasures, a hardcore band for the musically literate, meaning that while they can thrash it up with the best of 'em, they do it with an amazing level of technical precision and songwriting complexity. By no means should this be taken to mean that they are a one trick pony, for in addition to the aforementioned moments of angry brilliance, the listener also gets for his buck smart pop and art damaged noise to serve up as the featured music at the next summer barbecue. All their best tunes are represented, from "Sex Mad," to "Theresa, Give Me that Knife" to "The Day Everything Became Nothing" to "Dad," so interested parties who would like to dip their toes rather than throwing caution to the wind and jumping right in are recommended to wade around in this for a spell. In short, this is most definitely worthy of your "must buy" list. -Jimmy Alvarado (AntAcidAudio)

NORTHERN LIBERTIES:
Erode + Disappear: CD

Sub-Naked Raygun oi prog with some kind of weird effects on the guitar and



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vocals that make it sound like it's playing through a wooden beer can. That, plus the relentless pish, pish, pish of the hi-hat and the singer's droning tone add up to one famously monotonous mundanity. —Cuss Baxter (Worldeater)

OBSERVERS, THE:
Lead Pill: 7" EP

Eighties-tinged punk rock with smart lyrics and some well-placed cynicism. The line "So I sold my soul just to save some face in front of the fashion police/Life is so much better now that I've found beige," from "Normally Normal," was brilliant. —Jimmy Alvarado (Super Secret)

OBSOLETES:
Is This Progress?: CD

Yes! Wisconsin does it again! You'd think having two AMAZING bands (The Modern Machines, Fury of a Thousand Zeuses) in one state would be enough, but we here in the Dairy State constantly surpass all projections for punk rock greatness! The Obsoletes feature two former members of the amazing and under-appreciated pop punk band Yesterday's Kids. This time around, it's way more pop, way more influenced by classic country and the Replacements (the album includes an obscure 'Mats cover), and it's so damn good! These are just great songs, period. I can't stop listening to it. My only slight criticism? Slowed down vocals on "Little Gurl." So strange, and so bad! But, minor complaints aside, this is, at least, Honey Nut Chex: simple and amazing. And, who knows? After a few more dozen listens, it may even become Corn Pops! —Maddy (145 Records)

ODDS AGAINST TOMORROW:

Nights. Not. End.: CD
The first few seconds of this starts off pretty rock'n'roll, followed by the perfectly placed, growling, "Yeah!" A few more hot licks, then the sissiest dang voice starts to croon. Continue to end of CD. I cried because I was laughing so hard the first time I heard it. I played that intro five times before struggling through the rest of it. —Megan (www.oddsagainsttomorrow.com)

OH, BEAST!:
Makin It in the Scene: CD
Hints of NoMeansNo, Blonde Redhead, swirly conceptual maybe-punk rock, not as successful as those two big bands though. Everyone in their hometown probably loves them but don't stay the whole show. —Speedway Randy (Perverted Son)

OPPRESSED LOGIC:
Ones That Control: CD
Reminds me of Mystic Records bands like R.K.L., Don't know, and Scared Straight minus the double bass drums. On first listen, it didn't really move me. Something in it took me back to the mid-'80s and the local LA scene. Bands like these were a dime a dozen back in the day but they're probably considered old school today. If this band was local and I had seen them

many times live, I would probably have a different perspective. But as a newcomer, I was not blown away. The almost out of tune sound of the guitars mixed with the double bass drumming on this rubbed me wrong. —Donofthead (Blazing Guns)

ORGANZ/O'DEATH, MY CHILD: DRGZ! DRGZ! DRGZ!: split 12"

Hand printed covers are nice. Noisy rock bands are nice. "Thrashy hardcore" Organz have three bass players and fuck up eight songs so great (greatly?) you won't care that there's no regular guitar. In fact, you'll wish some other bands would get rid of their regular guitars. O'Death keeps the fi kind of low, also lowers the volume, and goes the spooky route with piano and reverbed samples over electrobeats. Just one crappy song on the whole record, and it's only one second long, so just ignore it. —Cuss Baxter (Calls and Correspondence Robot/ Winter/ Nail in the Coffin)

OSCARS, THE:
American Idol: CD

Low-res cover art worried me, but sure enough this is the same band that released a rad Memphis home-grown 5-song EP on Contaminated Records. This one is on Bootleg Records and just as basement-created. Recorded at Tronic Graveyard by Jay and Alicja and, sure enough, sounds like a descendent of the Reatards/Oblivians/etc, with some creepy inbreeding resulting in noise and moderate speed. Then I finally recognized it: these are all those weird songs on Thrasher's skate rock comps I could never find the whole albums for. Not really, just a metaphor. —Speedway Randy (Bootleg, www.oscarsindustries.com)

OUTCASTS: Self Conscious Over You: CD

Funny thing it is, reading about music. At the risk of quoting Forrest Gump, you never can tell what you're gonna get when you actually give what you've been reading about a listen. After reading about these guys and their exploits in the fine book *It Makes You Wanna Spit*, I imagined ram-bunctious, "take no shit" punk rock. What is actually on this, their debut album, is more akin to the Irish pop punk made famous by fellow Ulster punks the Undertones than, say, the Cockney Rejects. Now don't get me wrong, I ain't gripin' about what's on here, 'cause the tunes are wicked good, but I just find it interesting when a band's musical output doesn't quite match up with their image. Closest comparison I can come up with regarding what I'm getting at is TSOL, who had a reputation in some circles of being rather violent jocks, yet when you hear a song like "Weathered Statues," you can't help but scratch your head in wonder. Then I get to this album's bonus tracks, particularly "Frustration" and "I Don't Wanna Be No Adult," and they perfectly embody what I expected them to sound like, all mean and pissed off 'n' such. Ahh, fuck it, don't mind

me and my neuroses. It's a damn good album, plus it's got the singles versions of "Love is for Sops" and "Just Another Teenage Rebel," which makes it just the bee's knees. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

OUTLIE: Companions to Devils and Saints: CD

Remember those protective bio-hazard crime scene suits they wore when they hauled barrels of acid-washed human being chunks out of Jeffrey Dahmer's apartment-cum-butcher shop? Well, as soon as I glanced at this disc I threw one of those on and made damn sure that all the snaps were snapped and all the zippers zipped. This thing is crawling with tell-tale signs that seem to point directly to the vile noxiousness known back in the day as "emotional punk" and now known as simply as a "cash cow." Arsty artwork and angel statues and gawky song titles like "Anxieties of the Vain and Unknowing." That, my friends, is the musical equivalent of a shoe box full of human penises. But as so few times happens, I can happily announce that my keen first-impression instruments steered me wrong on this one. Oh sure, every once in a while Outlie pirouettes dangerously close to the tough-but-suggly world of emo, but all-in-all this has some punch to it. And more importantly, it is punch given unapologetically — without the immediate obligatory "okay, now we're gonna show you that we're sensitive, too" malarkey. This has the melodies of early Social Distortion mixed with the musical dynamics of Quicksand. Actually, it maybe reminds me most of the Lillingtons. And I like them. So I guess I can take this stupid suit off now. —Aphid Peewit (Porterhouse)

PAINT LIKE PLANE: Curse Chorus Curse: 7"

Screamy silly noise stuff. I know not such music, and I like not such music. (Whenever I listen to something arty, I usually feel like the lame kid in school who just cannot understand multiplication or, I dunno, direct objects. And, after asking about it and having it explained to him a dozen times, stops asking, and still doesn't get it at all, but just feels dumb.) If this were a cereal, it'd be I-Don't-Like-Noise-Music Chex. —Maddy (S-S)

PARIS TEXAS: Like You Like an Arsonist: CD

Why, why, why do bands have to take cool film titles and make music so routine? Yes it's a real town but why does everyone reference hip movies? Are you also listening... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead? Or even more confusing, the routine bands that are named after songs by utterly different and better bands. Texas Is The Reason? —Speedway Randy (New Line)

PIRX THE PILOT: Famous in 47 States: CD

Done right, an overblown, operatic voice in punk rock can be a mark of distinction. Tilt, the Dead Kennedys, Misfits, Fleshies all have or had folks who could belt it

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out. Unfortunately, that's the main hurdle I have with Pirx the Pilot. The main singer, Ernst (who also runs New Disorder Records and is a really nice guy) is so high up in the mix, sounds like a less nasal Fred Schneider of the B-52's, and the instruments almost always watershed around his vocals. Regrettably, his voice – the instrument that most often dominates the music – is my least favorite part of the band. If Erica took the mic more, or they did more change offs, like in "Patriotism" and "Cloud Factory," the equation might change a little bit. The music, sans male vocals, reminds me of early '90s college rock like Love and Rockets with dashes of the Pixies, and scrapes of late period Bauhaus (they're arty and a little doomy, and have a fixation on Fozzie the Bear dolls) but more straightforward punk, which is nice. So, it's personal taste, which all hinges on liking a type of voice. Comes with two home-made videos, which is admirable. –Todd (New Disorder)

PONYS, THE: "Wicked City" b/w "Little Friends": 7"

Simple, thick-guitared punk with a bit of Richard Hell in the vocals; could easily have come out of New York in the late '70s. It would have been a little too poppy to have hit the Killed by Death lists, but people would still be listening to it now. Solid. –Cuss Baxter (Big Neck)

PRACTICE: More Practice: 7"

This seven inch starts off with a Chip Hanna-style marching drum beat. It's almost enough to make you think you're listening to an old US Bombs record. Then the guitars kick in and you're in for something completely different. I hear touches of the second Clash album, of Dillinger Four basslines, of punk rock that's poppy without being Ramones influenced pop punk, of so many influences, really, that it makes the songs very original. Like the first Practice seven inch on Snuffy Smile, *More Practice* has three amazing songs that make me want ten more. –Sean (Snuffy Smile)

Q AND NOT U: X-Polynation: CD EP

These funky songs don't fall that far from the tree of The Rapture, Hot Hot Heat, Radio 4, etc. – or the rest of Q And Not U's work for that matter – but damn if they aren't some of the most enjoyable post-punk I've heard in a while. –Puckett (Dischord)

RAG MEN: Self-titled: CD

Tough-guy hardcore. One guy's named "Bulldog." –Megan (Eulogy)

RAKING BOMBS:

Self-titled: CD
Arty noise that was about as exciting as a macramé contest. –Jimmy Alvarado (rakingbombs@hotmail.com)

REALLY RED:

Teaching You the Fear: CD
Where do we begin with this record? Driven by the claustrophobia that came from living in Texas in 1981 and the paranoia of living under the threat of nuclear war, Really Red released the most haunting, ethereal music that hardcore has ever seen. I'd put them in league with the Big Boys and Naked Raygun for their ability to apply a British post-punk influence to their music in the same way that government contractors put nuclear warheads on rockets. Instead of tiptoeing around icy guitars like Wire, they barreled through their songs full-force, with

the result being chilling and menacing instead of artsy and detached. Lyrically, they were, hands-down, one of the best, most caustic political bands ever. While other bands of that time period were either accusatory (like MDC) or concerned with pushing people's buttons (like the Feederz), what Really Red brought to the table was sheer focused rage, and it's as vital today as it was over twenty years ago. Essential. "For what you are, I could spit in your eye..." –Josh (Empty)

REIGNING SOUND: Too Much Guitar!: CD

...a friend of mine and I were discussing this album, and I told him I had only listened to it once because it was a two-good-song piece of overrated horseshit with an ugly cover by a pointless band with a lame-ass name, or other carefully selected words of that nature. After further review, I am quite unsure what manner of Grumpy Pills I was popping that day (*GO Grumpy Pill Popper! GO Grumpy Pill Popper!*), because, on follow-up inspection, this record's sounds sound pretty unfeigningly reigning indeed (maybe I still hold some manner of unfounded begrudgement against all things Oblivian, since 1. I got my ex-girlfriend an Oblivians album for Christmas once and what good did it do me?, and 2. Somebody broke into my band's van while I was watching them once [and stole my postage stamps! What for? To write home to Mother and inform her of her son's burgeoning career as a window-smashing postage stamp thief?]). After more thorough inspection, I have herein identified compounds bearing the atomic signatures of the Sonics' "He's Waiting," that *Pebbles*-type tune about love not being worth a dime, the Motors' "Dancing the Night Away," first-album Beatles, Swingin' Neckbreakers beating Hank Ballard compositions into bloody pulp with reanimated George Harrison's fifty-foot boner, mid-sixties Rolling Stones (yeah, and you know how every now and again some jerk-off music twit opines that some song or another "sounds like the kind of thing the Stones used to write... when they were good!") when it sounds nothing like anything the Stones ever did, except maybe in this guy's [mostly imaginary] mental rock history? Well "Drowning," for ONCE, actually DOES sound like something the Stones used to write [minus brief detours into Byrds-ism and peculiar Joe Meek Teen Death-ism], Byrds-ism, peculiar Joe Meek Teen Death-ism, the Standells, *Incredible Shrinking Dickies*-era Dickies (!!) (well, okay, with different vocals) (it's the last song, "Medication." Go ahead. Knowledgeably refute my assertion!), and, the nuclear glue that keeps this volatile compound from melting down into a hunk of lead upon contact with Earth's atmosphere, the voice: *Total Mark Lindsay!!!* I mean, I dunno how many Paul Revere & The Raiders fans we got in the house tonight, but if "Your Love Is a Fine Thing" ain't just a nine-volt-battery-lickin' update of "Alias Pink Puz" / "Hard 'n' Heavy (With Marshmallow)"-era Raiders A-sides, well, then... boy, I dunno what then. I never had to carry out on my threats my before. Also contains a minor smattering of the more Blues Explosiony stuff, but the rest of the material is so buff I can't fault anyone for throwing an occasional bone to the squares. **BEST SONG:** Right now I'm pretty whipped on "Your Love Is a Fine Thing," but I think by next week I should be back into "I'll Cry." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "We Repel Each Other" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA**

FACT: Annie had a baby, she can't work no more. Wait, wrong band! -Rev. Nørb (In The Red)

RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS: *Something to Crow About*: CD

Okay, this album was unleashed last year, but I gotta say something that needs to be said. Not in quite some time have I had my ass go into spastic, rock'n'roll-induced fits upon seeing a band for the first time like it did when I saw The Riverboat Gamblers this past May while Yvonne and I were out visiting my sister Julie (NYC's resident kick-ass party rocker, and she drink'n'drives a pretty mean Schwinn Stingray alongside her main cohort, Tim, too). While out there for Joey Ramone's Annual Birthday Bash, The Riverboat Gamblers happened to be playing that Friday a coupla days later. And under the strong recommendation of our own Retodd, we made our way out to The Knitting Factory to see what was one of the best sets I've seen in some time. To say you need to grab their records or see them is a severe understatement. Not to peg their sound, but it's in the same ballpark of experiencing the beautiful, awesome power of The Who, The Candy Snatchers, and the MC5 simultaneously in a new and fucking brilliant way. To simply put it, I'm gonna quote Phast Phreddie Patterson for this CD review the same way he was quoted for his review of the Ramones' self-titled debut back in '76: "Anyone who doesn't like this record is an asshole." Perfectly put, Mr. Patterson. -Designated Dale (Gearhead)

ROACH MOTEL: *Worstest Hits*: CD

Ah, at long last we can all breathe a sigh of relief. The Roach Motel CD is here,

war with Iraq will soon end, and everyone man, woman, and child will be given a lollipop! For those out-of-the-loop (O.O.T.L.), this is George Tabb's (really) old band. Songs like "My Dog's into Anarchy" and "Brooke Shields Must Die." This won't blow you away or anything, but it's just, I don't know... is it punk to call songs like "Mom Likes Drugs" endearing? If this were a cereal, it'd be Honey Nut Cheerios. Cool! -Maddy (Destroy)

SCRAWL, LE: *Eager to Please*: CD

Every now and then you get a CD that just walks up, grabs you by the shirt and proceeds to slap you silly. This bizarre little ditty is one such record. This is like one big schizophrenic nightmare, a cookie monster vocalist backed by a hardcore band that every now and then feels the urge to fuck off into left field and delve into a little ska, metal, surf or lounge music for a few seconds, then goes back to thrashing things up. Somehow (don't look at me, 'cause I haven't a clue why) it works. Not quite sure I can say I dig it, but it is one mind-spinningly interesting listen, that's for sure. -Jimmy Alvarado (Life Is Abuse)

SEWER TROUT: *From the Forgotten Memories of Punks Failed Hopes and Dreams Loom...*: CD

1988 did pretty much suck as far as punk rock went - everybody kind of fucked off and was either into REM-like collegiate blandness or Guns'n'Roses-like bandana rock, and what passed for punk rock at that point was dreary, monotonous and self-important (not to mention being kind of a fuckhead magnet at that point as well). Thus, one of

the leading problems facing the scientific community was "How can we make punk that doesn't suck?" It was kind of an ongoing project that took several years to get right (and, in all fairness, it did also take several years to get it wrong as well). Sewer Trout - what with their dippy humor and harmonies and occasional sprigs of melody and Ian Woodcock-esque bass runs - were obviously something that, were i to have popped in a demo of theirs or something while delivering pizzas in my '74 AMC™ Matador, i would have doubtless concluded were on "my" side. That said, i can't imagine too many more occasions left in my life when i'll need to hear "President of the Anarchist Club" or "Vagina Envy" to really set the mood, let alone every recorded version thereof. Hey, are cassettes cool again yet? BEST SONG: "Garbage In, Garbage Out" BEST SONG TITLE: "TSOL Esidarap" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Coors™ still sucks. -Rev. Nørb (Sactoe Punk Archive)

SEXY: *Por Vida*: LP

I was a bit conflicted on this. My friend Rawl said it was great. My friend Josh said that one of them had to be physically removed from his house after spray painting their bathroom. I gave it a listen. It's really fucking good. Spastic in the vein of Fleshyes and The Bananas. My advice: Definitely pick up the album, but pat 'em down before letting them in your pisser. -Megan (Onion Flavored Rings)

SHIVS, THE: *Blind Drunk*: CD

Pissed off gallop-core from a band I know nothing about. Song topics range from getting drunk to railing against

Bush, religion, losing canes and, most poignantly, a psychiatrist whose writing of a prescription resulted in a person's death. While they might not exactly break new ground, they do thrash things up pretty hard, which alone makes this worth repeated listenings. -Jimmy Alvarado (No address)

SICK FITS: *Mirror Creeps*: 7"

More mid-tempo punk from these guys, very vaguely reminiscent of the Flesh Eaters without the poetic flair, although the proceedings here are not as interesting as their CD EP from a year or so ago. (Big Neck)

SK AND THE PUNK ASS BITCHES: *The True Saviors of Rock N Roll*: CD

"Whooh yeah, who's your daddy?!" These are lyrics, and I don't think they're trying to be ironic. If they truly are the saviors of rock'n'roll, then we are in for some trouble, folks. I'm investing in polka. -Megan (We Got)

SKEW WHIFF: *Tedium Vitae*: CD

For some reason, I thought this would be a grindcore noise band. Far from the truth. First thing I thought of was crossover-period '80s UK punk mixed with Discharge, kind of like the English Dogs or Broken Bones. It also has that modern day crust sound where the music is metallic yet dark. Being from Belgium explains a lot because they have easy access to the music mentioned prior and Europe, in general, having a thriving crust scene. This is extremely intense and shows that the genre constantly reproduces a good amount of talented bands. -Donofthead (Life is Abuse)

The advertisement for the CD "Action Toolbelt" features a large, stylized title in a bubbly font. To the right, a large, detailed image of a fish's head is shown. Below the main title, the text "NEW CD OUT NOW ON FASTMUSIC" is displayed in a bold, blocky font. In the bottom right corner, there is a small inset image of a chalkboard with the words "action toolbelt" written on it in chalk. The background of the ad shows a silhouette of a factory with smoking chimneys against a light sky.

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SMALLTOWN:
The First Three Years: CD

I've reviewed this previously in bits and pieces from their four 7"s. This CD corals all of their previous works and adds one new song, "The One." This Swedish trio has the immaculate knack of polishing up the cues laid down, then abandoned, by Stiff Little Fingers and then reinspected by the likes of pre-*Life Won't Wait* Rancid. What you get is ultra-catchy, smart and anthemic songs. To mark them as solely street punk would be too cheap of a branding, although I could understand if they get put under that umbrella. They've got tight yet fluid songwriting, the crisp attack and ultra bounce of early Jam, the blood-runs-freely, ringing energy of Cock Sparrer, and the teeth-clenching grit of a largely unknown band making great, rugged punk songs. There's not a stinker in the dozen. This is a sleeper hit. -Todd (Deranged/Snuffy Smile)

SMUT PEDDLERS:
Coming Out: CD

Five LPs from a South Bay or OC punk band? It's almost unheard of. As a matter of fact, I can think of a handful. I'm sure there's more. The Circle Jerks' *VI LP* (not so good), Pennywise's *Straight Ahead* (proficient), and TSOL's *Disappear* (I'm not counting the Joe Wood ones, and, strangely, their latest, *Divided We Stand* is better than *Disappear*), FYP's *Toys That Kill* (excellent, excellent stuff), and the Minutemen's *3-Way Tie (For Last)* (not their best, but far from slouching and I've got a soft spot for D. Boon). OC and the South Bay breed a special, more resilient fuckup. Bands just usually can't stay together and tend to crack from member's jail visits, egos, addictions, old-fashioned wig-outs, or any cocktail of the four. For a band to keep it together when the lead singer's fixated on skate parks and rattles on about pharmaceuticals better than your average neighborhood Sav-on white coat, the wheels should have flown off this dysfunctional wagon long ago. Not so. For all the yahoo, numbntty attention OC gets, it's still nice to hear that neither dank and rank rock'n'roll nor the first wave of English punk have been abandoned for designer t-shirts and empty caskets of nostalgia with "1977" spray painted on their lids. The Smut Peddlers keep blapping along with a wacky-assed lead singer with a heart of gold and a short attention span, gun-rattling guitar work, and a wrecking ball, rock solid rhythm section. *Coming Out's* a good listen, neck and neck with their last full length, *Ism*. My only complaint? Since I have the *Exit Plan 7*" and their self-titled 10" that preceded this album, only half of the songs were new to me. -Todd (TKO)

SOOPHIE NUN SQUAD:
Pasizzle Slizzle tha Drizzle: CD

I came up with a loose sliding scale for the Soophie Nun Squad. If the song has drums and electric guitars, they're as good as anyone out there. Earnest, fun, energetic basement punk that reminds me of bands like This Bike Is a Pipebomb and the Grabass Charlestone. As for the other songs, well, I'm sure that it was a lot of fun to record a bunch of hip-hop songs and cheerleader chants, but I'm grinding my teeth the whole time. It's probably fun to watch live, but there's only a handful of songs that make the cut for me. Sorry. -Josh (Plan-It-X)

SOVIETTES: LP II: CD

You can't accuse The Soviettes of simply remaking their debut LP, which is a blessing. The funny thing is that it took me about twenty listens to come to that conclusion. *LP II* was a slow grow on me. Their debut was instantly glued to my ear. Still in effect: irresistible charm, gleaming punk hooks, infectious energy, and the smart yet partying vibe. Think of a broken, jagged lollipop. Very sweet, but watch out how you approach it. It might poke the inside of your cheek. The Soviettes are still rife with sneaky songs. Until I sat down and read along to "Angela," I had no idea it was a song about a lady who shoots a man. The infectious "Portland" with the boppy chorus of "Shelly, Shelly" is about an ex-friend who became a dope fiend. The Soviettes also have the uncanny ability to make political statements in serious, yet charming, ways. (For instance, like how the TV news focuses on diet trends and stars instead of world politics, but it's said in a way that's like an intelligent friend making a comment instead of a blowhard pounding a podium.) It's all very conversational. Some changes from the first LP: each of the four members makes more distinct signatures on songs. There are much more varied tempos from song to song, and my only caveat is that a couple of the songs themselves don't have as complex a texture as the first record. What had me scratching my head at first was that *LP II* didn't have instantly recognizable anthems, but that's okay. When I began listening to it for what it was - a different album by a talented band that's very far away from painting itself into a corner - I just got down to digging it. Now it's on high rotation. -Todd (Adeline)

SPIDER RICO: Self-titled: 7"

Being a big-shot music critic, I know I should know this, but are the Hellcopters still around? I guess it doesn't really matter because that band, whether they realize it or not, left one monstrous spider egg-sack behind and now there are little Hellcopters bands dangling like Michael Jackson babies everywhere you look. Spider Rico is one such band. White trashy fun sounds shaped and filtered by the architecture of someone's garage. I wouldn't kick it out of bed for eating crackers. -Aphid Peewit (Kuriosa)

SPLITHABIT: Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is: CD

As smooth as a talcum-powdered baby's butt and just about as excruciatingly sappy as a *Family Circus* cartoon. In fact, as I listen to this, I picture the band with big balloon heads like the kids in the *Family Circus* - which somehow makes the whole thing a bit more palatable. But not even cartoony visions of ridiculous hydroencephalus can save this cloying heap of sweet dung. I bet even Hillary Duff would think Splithabit is lame. -Aphid Peewit (Double Zero)

STARLITE DESPERATION:
Violate a Sundae: CD

Raucous rock'n'roll with more than its share of punk rock influence. Not a bad listen by any stretch of the imagination. -Jimmy Alvarado (www.coldsweat.com)

STEREOTYPIDER:
Under the Influence: CD

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Grab a bunch of songs that you have listened to while you were growing up and cover them like they were your own. Well, this band chooses songs by The Cure, Archers of Loaf, Fugazi, The Pixies, Seaweed, Descendents and Quicksand. I know I wouldn't have personally covered these songs except for maybe the Descendents song. But these were their choices and not mine. I bet you it was fun for them to record this. -Donofthedeath (Suburban Home)

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS:
Guitar and Drum: CD

There's no debating SLF's legacy. It's as revered as ever. Just listen to the newest crop of oi and street punk bands. The blueprint they drafted is a trusty one. SLF's songs, "Alternative Ulster" and "Suspect Device" alone, bands would stab their own mothers to write. It took balls as big and hairy as coconuts to be an uncompromising punk band in the midst of a war: 1977 Belfast. *Inflammable Material*, their first, is a near-perfect album. They held their own with the Clash and the Sex Pistols. Granted. That heritage is in check, and that's not in doubt. That's the good news. The bad news is that with *Guitar and Drum* - including The Jam's Bruce Foxton on bass no less - the pendulum has swung from the SLF of old with grit, gasoline, and Jake's unmistakably cigarette growl to run-of-the-mill shit-pop-punk territory. It's so pro-dude, pro-equipment wank, gloss, and sheen with hot licks and tasty chords that it almost sounds like a "punk" soundtrack to an '80s movie starring Molly Ringwald hosting a bunch of crappy bands like Simply Red, INXS, the Outfield, Genesis, and, at times, The Fifth Dimension. ("Be True to Yourself" has

more in common with "(The Age of Aquarius)" than any sort of punk rock.) It is varied. I'll give it that. It gets drunk from sucking a wide variety of stylistic cocks. That said, there's a couple decent songs on here, remnants of SLF of yore - like "Who Died and Made You Elvis" and "Guitar and Drum." If this whole affair was under the moniker of Jake Burns and the Big Wheel (since he's the only original member by a long shot), I wouldn't be so hackled up. Smalltown's new CD annihilates the present-tense SLF at their own game. No contest. -Todd (Kung Fu)

STRIKE, THE:
The Oi! Collection: CD

Outside of their *Oi!* compilation appearances, I never really knew much about this Scotland band, so this overview, a collection of those aforementioned compilation cuts and some demo tracks, was a welcome schooling in their tuneage. Unlike many of their peers, they appear to have been able to maintain some semblance of quality in their songwriting, which no doubt makes for a good case in getting in the fray, making your point and fucking off before the popularity starts swelling your head and you end up playing bad disco or something. If you're looking for some fine '80s bald-boy music from a band other than those whose names are usually invoked, this is a good place to start your search. -Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

SUNDAY MORNING
EINSTEINS: Kangnave: CD

Sweden's all-star punk band has a release in the states. From what I have heard, this band consists of former members of **RAZORCAKE 97**

Svart Sno, Wolfbrigade, and possibly Anti Cimex. Being seasoned veterans, these guys crank out fierce Swedish d-beat with some authority. Thundering bass lines over bottles-broken-against-the-wall drumming. The ever-so-distorted guitar thrashing adds to the crunch. Vocals yelled in the traditional way: aggressive and piercing. What attracts me to international acts is the full-force rage. These guys play with conviction and play songs that we could never comprehend the anger of since we are not from Sweden. If you missed out on their tour here in the states, you really missed out. As incredible as this release is, their live set is just as good or better. —Donofthedeat (Prank)

SUPERCHARGER: *Live at the Covered Wagon*: CD

Bad sound quality, super lo-fi, but then again it's Supercharger, so you expect it. You know you want it. —Megan (Rip Off)

SWEET JUSTICE: *Self-titled*: CD

A veritable cornucopia of '70s rock stylings, and I mean that in the best possible way. You get glam smooshed with swaggering, post-Stones/Zep blues, Cheap Trick pop snuggled up next to pseudo-reggae, with just a dash of Motown pop sprinkled here and there. If there is any justice (sweet or otherwise), "Guns of Navarone" will be a HUGE hit. —Jimmy Alvarado (realOmind)

SWEET JUSTICE: *Self-titled*: CD

If your mind can't separate one song from another and all you listen to is

classic rock stations, then this is what it might sound like. The first track, "Guns of Navarone," has a strong David Bowie "Space Oddity" feel to it and is the only track I thought was listenable. From there it goes through the obligatory southern rock track, Jesus Christ Superstar, and Kansas. I felt like I was getting thrown all over the place. Me no like. —Megan (RealOmind)

SYSTEMS OFFICER: *Self-titled*: CD EP

I was ready to tear into this EP because it sounds like a rip-off of Three Mile Pilot, and Pinback. Lo! Upon looking at the liner notes, I realized the joke was on me because this is, in fact, members of Three Mile Pilot and Pinback. Fuck. That doesn't make this sound any less like those other bands though. —Puckett (Ace Fu)

TED LEO / PHARMACISTS: *Tell Balgeary, Balgury Is Dead*: CD EP

Listening to Ted Leo is like walking into a history class for a country that you've never heard of but recognize instinctively as your own. I spent the last thirty minutes trying to research what the hell the title track is about, and the best I can come up with is an farmers' rebellion in County Cork in the 1800s. And honestly, it wouldn't surprise me if that were indeed a starting point... but based on how much ground Leo covers and how quickly he moves, the end isn't even in sight. "Tell Balgeary, Balgury Is Dead" is one of two songs that appears on Leo's full-length from last year (*Hearts of Oak*) but the version of "The High Party" which appears here — along with the other songs, including covers of Split

Enz, The Jam and Ewan McColl — features little more instrumentation than a single electric guitar (cf. Billy Bragg), and that simply never fails to kill me. There are very few performers who can sustain interest with nothing more than a voice, an electric guitar, and a story to tell. Ted Leo is one of them and I can't wait to hear what he comes up with next. —Puckett (Lookout!)

TEDDY BOYS FROM THE CRYPT, THE: *Self-titled*: CD-R

No information with this one at all, just band name and song titles. Which is a shame, because it's really good '60s garage-rock with a strong surf influence. Cramps and Rocket From The Crypt appear to be influences. The internet tells me that they're Greek, but little else. —Megan (no address given)

TEN THOUSAND TONGUES: *Self-titled*: CD-R

If moo cows, wind chimes, and didgeridoos are art, then maybe this is art-core. —Megan ((small) Noisemaker)

TEXAS TERRI BOMB!: *Your Lips... My Ass!*: CD

Texas Terri popping back up on the radar again with a new incarnation and a host of notable guests on her new record. I've seen her in one form or another in last couple of decades. Can't say that I'm a fan. Here, she plays that punk and roll, Hollywood bar rock sound: nasty and dirty with some straight-up guitar wrecking. Her vocals have a trashy, drunk sound yet they're strong, and that puts her in the same league as a Courtney or Brody. Very similar in many ways, I think. I give her much props for lasting and playing this long. —Donofthedeat (TKO)

TEXAS TERRI BOMB!: *Your Lips... My Ass!*: CD

Fuck a duck if this don't rock! Think of the most brutal version of "I Got a Right" you know, then make yourself hear a lady sing it and you're hearing this record. With help from Wayne Kramer and guys from the Dwarves, the Dickies, Alice Cooper's band and others, Terri tears all asses with snotty confidence and attitude and decibels to spare. Fuck yeah. —Cuss Baxter (TKO)

TEXAS THIEVES: *Killer on Craig's List*: CD

Wow, these guys are apparently mighty prolific. This is the second full-length in as many months I've heard from these San Franciscans, and I gotta say, they've managed to keep the quality high. Ten more tracks here of skate punk that sounds like it could've come outta Orange County circa 1983, which is not to say they sound dated or anything, because they don't. If you're looking for some grade-A tunes from the MIA/DI school of hardcore, you'd be hard pressed to find a band doing it better than these boys', 'cept maybe Smogtown, but they're broken up so even mentioning them is a moot exercise. I think I founds me a new favorite band and I'm frigginn' stoked. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

THREE MINUTE MOVIE/ THE MILES APART: *Split 7"*

Three Minute Movie: man, these guys are tight. They lay down melodies that should bring a tear to Frankie Stubbs' eyes, Hisashi can really sing (and not just in a punk rock way), and it makes for that weird combo where I want to sing along (even though the Japanese lyrics translated into and sung in



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English make no sense to me) but really, the songs are way better if I just shut up and listen. This seven inch has two really cool tracks from one of my favorite Japanese bands. The Miles Apart: they have a tough act to follow. You should really listen to their side first. Let them work as the opening act for Three Minute Movie. The Miles Apart temper their punk rock with a lot of Psychedelic Furs/Smiths influence. It makes the songs a little too self-consciously sad. —Sean (Snuffy Smile)

**THUNDERTRAIN:
Teenage Suicide: LP**

A reissue of an album by an old post glam/proto punk band, which means this is up to its eyeballs in Dolls reference and bad fashion selections. It ain't all that bad, and the inclusion of a DMZ member in the ranks is an interesting trivia bit, but I just ain't feelin' that crucial-tuneage-gotta-have-it feeling I should be getting' from this. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rockin' Bones)

**TIGER SHOVEL NOSE:
Cappuccino Twist b/w
Stupid Stupid: 7"**

This is some super sugary pop punk. It's sweet like eating watermelon until you get a stomach ache. Tiger Shovel Nose play two songs here that are very much reminiscent of early '60s female rock and roll but with an edge. Like a sped up Holly Golightly, or a band you would expect to be playing in a Quentin Tarantino movie: the singer in a poodle skirt and the guitarist with hair slicked into a pompadour and the protagonist tapping along in a way that let's you know that sooner or later, someone's gonna die a bloody death. Luckily, though, the seven inch ends while we're all still alive. —Sean (I Don't Feel a Thing)

**TOKYO DRIFTERS,
THE: Demos Project,
Vol. 3: one-sided LP**

STOP THE FUCKING PRESS-ES, I FINALLY HEARD A VERSION OF "I'M A MAN" THAT DOESN'T SUCK. **BO DIDDLEY INCLUDED!** Sounds a bit like what i imagine the Dirtbombs would sound like if all of them were Caucasian but none of them were overweight and they knew people who could get them a really good deal down at the harmonica store. I debate the functional utility of my mentioning how the second song reminds me a bit of "Hoochie" off the second Moby Grape album, thus i shall conclude my review leaving that last line unsaid. Certainly kicks ass on The Statics, if anyone would care to hear my opinion on that matter. **BEST SONG:** Since the powers-that-be did not feel it necessary to equip this release with track listings, i'll say it's one of the two covers i recognize: "I'm a Man" or the Rolling Stones' "Stoned" **BEST SONG TITLE:** I'll say "Stoned." Boy, that Nanker Phelge had a way with words. **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** It said " /200" on the back cover of my copy. I didn't much like the looks of that, so

now it says "201/200."—Rev. Nørb (Rockin' Bones)

**TOXIC NARCOTIC:
89-99: LP**

This is a reissue, on picture disc no less, of a collection of tunes originally put out a number of years ago. Don't remember how the story goes, whether this is a collection of tracks recorded over the course of a decade or a reworking of songs a decade old, but, either way, you still get a sound pummeling from one of Massachusetts' finest hardcore bands. If you've never heard anything by them, this is the best place to start. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rodent Popsicle)

**TOXIC NARCOTIC:
Beer in the Shower: 7"**

An interesting release to put out on picture disc. Toxic Narcotic is a band that has the patch punk kids sew patches of their band on their sweatshirts, pants, shorts, jackets and backpacks. An interesting fashion statement in its own right since I don't really like it. But that's the grumpy old fat guy talking. Well, the thrash punk band with a grindcore sound at times puts out an instrumental EP that is Irish in flavor. At first, hearing the bagpipes felt like a cheap sell to capture some of the audience of Flogging Molly and the Dropkick Murphys. Like another wave of ska punk or pop punk. But listening to this a couple of times, I grew to appreciate it more. I like that the band did not clean up the production and continued to play with a heavy edge. The bagpipe became the singer or the lead guitarist. It defined itself as an alternative and an angrier expression of an Irish pub band. If these two songs are mixed into their normal live set, it would set them apart by showing that they are not one dimensional as a band. I raise my glass. —Donofthead (Rodent Popsicle)

**TRAGEDY ANDY: It's
Never Too Late to Start
Over: CD**

If you didn't get enough with Jimmy Eat World and want out-of-tune harmonies, today is your lucky day. Quite possibly the worst band name ever, too. —Megan (Pop Smear)

**TRAILER PARK QUEEN;
Wrong Side of the 4
Track: CD-R**

When most folks think of famous Minnesotans they conjure up images of the woebegone Lutheran raconteur Garrison Keillor, or the wizened folkie Bob Dylan, or (shudder) the ghostly purple disco pixie Prince Rogers Nelson. I, for one, would like to see at least one of those regional icons replaced with a true local treasure, Berni the Trailer Park Queen, who is soon to be a famous Minnesotan, I am quite sure. She is the female, punk rock version of Weird Al, but is outfitted with a giant brassiere packed with a dangerous arsenal of cutting wit and in-yer-face bluntness that makes Weird Alfred look like Ronald McDonald by comparison. Highlights: a hilarious dildo-love version of Boston's "More

Than a Feeling" called "More Than a Penis," a re-take of the DK's "Holiday in Cambodia" called "Holiday in Waconia," and a groinal paean to Crispin Glover set to the music of "Crimson and Clover." You can take all yer Ashton Kutcher trucker hats and yer faux thrift store wardrobes and pitch 'em in whatever stupid lake Prince made famous in *Purple Rain* — true White Trashiness gets no finer than the Trailer Park Queen. Long live the Queen. This is funny shit. —Aphid Peewit (www.trailerparkqueen.cjb.net)

**TRAITORS: Bring Me the
Head of Matt Skiba: 7"**

The title track, a mid-tempo, anthemic ditty, appears to be a jab at a former drummer, and the flip has two ADD-inspired thrashers, the latter of which I am more partial to. Hey, my old friend, and former East LA punk rat, Pat Houdek took the band pics. Neato. —Jimmy Alvarado (Johanns Face)

**TRAMPS, THE:
Self-titled: CD**

The Tramps are columnist Ayn Imperato's band. This album came out over a year ago, but for some reason, was never reviewed in *Razorcake*. Since its release, the band has survived a move down the California coast and a couple of personnel changes. I'm not sure how the changes have affected them, but this album is pretty cool. It's fourteen songs of solid punk and roll. Ayn sounds tough when she sings, belting out vocals that are similar to Chica Baby's from the Beautys or Pia Zadora's from The Gits. In fact, this album sounds a lot like what I imagine the The Gits could've become if Pia Zadora had lived. It's good stuff. —Sean (Broken Rekids)

**TRANSPLANTS, THE:
Police State: CD**

...okay, i completely understand the urge these long-kaput bands have to — at long last! — issue an album in their own hallowed names: *Hey, we were doing this shit twenty-five years ago, man, when hardly anybody got to put out albums! Now these fuckin' kids come along, and they got a whole frickin' catalog out before they're even old enough t' goddamn drive! We paid our dues! We put in our time! We demonstrated adequate sweat equity! We want our album! FUCK YOU!* ... which is, you know, fair enough. However, from a consumer's standpoint, it's kinda hard to pop a boner over records that are cobbled together haphazardly from live tapes, practice tapes, and a handful of studio recordings — often using multiple versions of the same songs. I mean, i understand why it's gotta be like that, it's just hard to get all lathered up over the results. The Transplants ("early Boston punk, 1976-1979!") do have some pretty great songs. "Suicidal Tendencies" is surely indicative of some manner of parallel evolution (devolution?) whereby an Atlantic Division version of "Inside My Brain"-era Angry Samoans slithered from the primordial ooze con-



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temporarily with their Californian doppelgangers. But, i mean, fuckin-a, "Suicidal Tendencies" is on here FOUR DIFFERENT TIMES. "I've Had My Fill" and "It's Your Own Fault" are on here thrice. Even The Haunted's '60s punke chestnut "1-2-5" merited multiple inclusions! I mean, enough! Maybe instead of one band plundering every decomposing archival recording of theirs still in existence to fill up one CD with material of which much might be fairly referred to as "a stretch," maybe three bands or something could gang up and release one CD with just their top shit on it. Then again, why deprive the older generation of the lifetime of joy having a bunch of boxes of unsold compact discs stacked up in their shed for years on end has given us young 'uns? BEST SONG: "Braincase" BEST SONG TITLE: "Vegetable Stew," although i don't like vegetables. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Their song called "Police State" is the first song so titled that i can think of. -Rev. Nørð (Dionysus)

TRIGGERS, THE: *Bad Dream b/w Cut Open, Lost Soul: 7" EP*

Maybe I'm making this comparison because it's so fresh in my mind. I just got a best-of Joan Jett and the Blackhearts CD for free and it was okay. Joan Jett can sing - it sometimes sounds like she's having sex, smoking, and kicking ass at the same time when she sings, which is all right by me - but her backup band's fucking awful. I guess it's all played "well." It's all Guitar Center licks and no soul. And I guess I can comprehend why. Joan Jett's voice is the centerpiece, and major labels do that - forefront the featured artist - but I still want to hear her backed by a punk band. Perfection is a death in and of itself. Man, the Triggers kick ass. They made me realize that, maybe even subliminally, when I was growing up - starting around thirteen - that there were elements to songs played on the radio that were pretty alright, but I'd fill it in with dirty guitars and screaming and puking and fuzz and distortion. And maybe that's why I keep on listening to bands for almost twenty years straight that are new to me, to fill in that big radio station in my brain with more and more songs. The Triggers have a lady singing and it's careening and warty punk rock accented by terrifying mustaches, alcoholism, pants shitting, and missing teeth. More great stuff from the Pacific Northwest. It's like garage rock, where a van has crashed through the side of the garage, and nobody complains. Fans of the Orphans would find much to like with the Triggers. -Todd (Dirtmap)

TRUE NORTH: *Somewhat Similar: CD*

True North owes a lot to Fugazi and Rites of Spring. The songs build up tension and release it in arty breakdowns. There's heavy feedback in just the right places. There's a lot of Guy Picciotto-style screaming and singing. The lyrics are vague and poetic in that punk-rock-lyric sense. This is more than just somewhat similar to Fugazi and Rites of Spring. It's close enough to those bands that you could probably play *Somewhat Similar* to a Rites of Spring fan and convince him that this was actually a new side project from Guy and Brendan Canty. Still, what sets True North apart from the other Fugazi/Rites of Spring

influenced bands is that they actually pull it off. The songs are original enough and interesting enough and fresh enough to let you forget the influences and just enjoy the music. Also, True North brings with them a lot of energy and rock, and those are the most important things. -Sean (No Idea)

UNSACRED HEARTS: *Self-titled: CD*

Big-city take on southern rock. Blech. -Megan (Serious Business)

USURP SYNAPSE: *Disinformation Fix: 2 x CD*

Looks like a discography of sorts. Sixty songs in total, from fourteen releases, that were from splits, comps and a CDEP. Too much to take in at one sitting. A lot of screamo mixed with blast beats, emo, metal, and electronics. Discomforting to the ears and not something to talk yourself out of suicide. -Donofthedeath (Alone)

V.P.R.: *Aural Assault: CD*

Washington, DC area band that plays the hardcore. A mixture of Sick of it All, Strife, and some old-school Negative Approach. Throat-shredding vocals over metallic riffs. Only drawback is the cartoon artwork on the cover. It made me believe that I was going to be listening to a pop punk band. I have no idea what "V.P.R." stands for. -Donofthedeath (Squirrel Heart)

VALENTINOS, THE: *Aerosol Dream: 7"*

Awful. Not even a cereal. Seriously. -Maddy (Tom Perkins Entertainment)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Babyhead: LP*

A trip through punk's fringy recesses, with a host of styles and sounds coming outta the dark to serve as soundtrack to your worst nightmares, from the percussion/sax instrumentation of Klondike & York, to '60s-influenced tuneage of Blutt to the skronk of the A-Heads to the bizarre spasms of the Piranhas, and this is just scratching the surface of the aural psychoses to be found on this hunk of white wax. This could easily have degenerated into an exercise in arty pretentiousness and the compilers should be commended for instead coming up with one of the best compilations of the year. -Jimmy Alvarado (www.s-srecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Bastard Radio #16: CD-R*

It looks like bands and labels send music in and Bastard Records picks one track (more if they like them) and makes a mix CD. This one has forty-three tracks, and I'd only heard a couple of the bands before. It starts off with the label-sent tracks, which were mostly thrash/grind/hardcore. The individual band tracks were a bit more of a grab bag. Overall, a great comp to introduce you to a large chunk of what might be slipping by your radar. Oh, and it's only three bucks, and they also accept trades. I'll look for future releases. -Megan (Bastard Radio)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Death Rattle & Roll Volume 1: CD*

The Sid clone on the cover led me not to expect too much from this, so I was a bit surprised at how strong this comp actually was. Some pretty solid tracks can be found here from the likes of the Grannies, Bottles and Skulls, Fleshies,

Midnight Bombers, and Endino's Earthworm to name but a few. Color me impressed. Cover still sucks, though. -Jimmy Alvarado (Wundertaker)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Hardcore Ljubljana 1984 - 2004: CD*

Good ole Bob Suren of Sound Idea out of Florida is an asset to the punk rock community. If it wasn't for his email updates, I wouldn't know about a bunch of stuff that comes out. I received one of his updates recently and saw this. I know my brother has this and I haven't heard this compilation in a couple of decades. When I should have been working while I was reading the email, I called his store and ordered a copy. This compilation was released in 1984 and was a compilation of Yugoslavian bands of the period. That was the period that I discovered that punk bands were sprouting up all over the world. The bands from elsewhere were extremely intriguing and fierce. They had their own identity and were extremely fresh to these ears. Compilations of the time period turned me on to so many different bands. So the story goes, a fan of this release goes and contacts the original people involved and asked to re-release this comp. Since there was a bootleg out at the time, there was no problem getting the music. But he goes one step further. He looks up and finds current bands of the region to include in the re-release. The bands fit perfectly with the original bands. The spirit of the original bands is seamless with the new bands. A great comp stands the test of time and, with the addition of the current bands, makes this a worthy buy. -Donofthedeath (BatAttak)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Kiss or Kill Presents Los Angeles Classics Vol. 1: CD*

Felt like a total moron 'cause I consider myself a pretty hip L.A. resident and, other than the Dollyrots, I didn't know a single fuckin' band on this compilation of L.A. bands. I mean, c'mon, Deadbeat Sinatras? Midway? The Letter Openers? Bang Sugar Bang? Didn't have a clue they even existed prior to this CD. I was particularly impressed with the track provided by the Randies, which is one sweet slice of pop confection going under the moniker "Boys In Stereo." Fans of the *Let's Get Rid of L.A.* comp would find much to like here, as any one of the bands on here would've fit just nicely on that comp. I gotta get out more often 'cause there's apparently some mighty fine punk rock making the rounds in town again. -Jimmy Alvarado (War Room)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Lude Boy Vol. 1: CD*

I gotta be honest, the initial reason I picked this up was 'cause one of the bands on here goes by the name of the Tumors. Megan knew of 'em and said they weren't too bad, but the reason I was so interested in 'em stems from the fact that my last band was called the Tumors, (not a stunningly original name, I know, but I thought it was a funny name for a band when Yogi came up with it over a pitcher of beer back in '93) and I wanted to see what another band with the same name would sound like. My opinion? Their brand of hardcore does the name justice, although I'd be happy to put our "Eat It and Die, Pigboy" up against their "Die Hippie Scumbag" any day. Too bad they've apparently broken up. We could've set

up some sorta package tour with at least three bands with the name "Tumors" sharing the same bill at clubs across the country. That rather long diatribe aside, the comp itself ain't too shabby. While I find that I'm more partial to the hardcore tracks, (Down to Kill's "Outta Control" was a pretty nifty little ditty) I do like the fact that they mixed up styles on here, with some mid-tempo stuff, psychobilly, street punk and emo slop getting equal time. -Jimmy Alvarado (lude_boy@lycos.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Music for the Terraces: CD*

Advertised as an anti-fascist football compilation, this release includes a bonus disc that has videos and pictures to educate that they want racism eradicated from the sport. I've read through the years that the racist hooligans were big fans of the sport in Europe and it was a problem before, during, and after the games. I pretty much know that it isn't a prevalent problem here in the states since the sport here is multi-racial and it's called soccer. I think we are the only country in world that calls football "soccer." I played it in school but never became a fan. A mixture of street punk, pop punk and ska. Bands like Klasse Kriminale, The Real McKenzies, The Business with EK77, Derozer and Scrapy are bands that I recognized. A band named 20 Years of Hate play a great ska tune and so do the Braces. It has a lot of German bands I have never heard of. A good introduction to many. Also, anything that supports a cause that I personally agree with is good in my book. -Donofthedeath (Mad Butcher)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Old Skars and Upstarts 2004: CD*

Another year and another volume in Duane Peters' series of punk comps. The twenty-seven tracks are, of course, heavy on the punk'n'roll and "1977 revisited" sides of the fence, but those bands that manage to deviate from those molds are the one's that contribute the most memorable tracks. Personal favorites here include The Insaints' "Care On," the Hollowpoints' still-amazing ('twas previously featured last year on a Dirtsnap comp) "POW," Monster Squads' thrash attack on "FTS" and, of course, the Briefs' two contributions to the party. -Jimmy Alvarado (Disaster/Bomp)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Punkorama Vol. 9: CD + DVD*

You know the drill. It's a label sampler of twenty-four previously released songs by bands on Epitaph's roster. This one also includes a DVD with eleven videos. We've reviewed each of these bands in our pages, and I don't want to repeat what was said. I'm keeping it for the Randy video to "X-Ray Eyes." They fuck up a trailer from the inside when it's rolling down the highway. Randy. Now, that's a really good band. -Todd (Epitaph)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Resistance, Resistance, Resistance: CD*

No Front Teeth has been doing a great job of releasing lo-fi street punk bands that do justice to bands like the Business or Sham 69, and this album showcases a few of these bands, like Blacklist Brigade, the Briggs and Vinny Jack and the Jabbs. But this comp goes beyond just the street punk, paying tribute to OC punk rock with cool (though previ-

ously released) songs by the Smut Peddlers and the Hunns. There are two tunes by an earlier Duane Peters band, the Exploding Fuck Dolls (see Todd's interview with Duane Peters to learn about the real exploding fuck doll). Texas punk anomalies Malavista rock through songs that will hopefully inspire you to pick up their new EP. The Briefs show up halfway through the CD and keep things fresh. And, really, there are too many good songs here to mention all the bands. It's a solid comp from beginning to end. The icing on top of it, though, are two live JFA songs. —Sean (No Front Teeth)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Rip Off Records' Third Wave of Hits: CD

Imagine that the last comp from Rip Off had been a championship winning team, with superstars like the Rip Offs, the Motards, and Loli and the Chones scoring big points. If that were the case, than this comp would be the team after the championship, when the superstars have been traded away and the franchise is in a rebuilding stage. The Rip Offs have been replaced by a less fleshed out version of themselves in The Infections. The Swindlers fill in the Motards position, but just aren't up to the same level as the Motards. The Spastics sound like a band that could fill in the shoes of Loli and the Chones. The Registrators are still around from the second comp, and they're still putting forth a solid effort. And the new additions (Chinese Millionaires and Spites) are respectable players in their own rights, but without the superstars, I just don't see how this comp is going to make it to the playoffs. If you're a fan, they're still worth rooting for. If you're not sure if you're a fan, buy the second comp and wait for the fourth when, when Rip Off should pick up blue chip prospects like the Kill-O-Watts and the Tyrades. —Sean (Rip Off)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Rock Against Bush Vol. 1: CD

This CD is being covered by every music magazine possible, from *Rolling Stone* down to us. I also see it advertised everywhere. My views are so tiny compared to the others describing this. There are always more than two different points of view in every topic. But the subject of free thought and open discussion is an important one here. Having been in punk a long time, I see the cycle of kids come through every year. One year they are here and, poof, they are gone. Such a small percentage take advantage of the wonderful network it has to offer. So much of the scene seems to be about partying and being macho. You can get that in any scene. There is so much information that is being bypassed because the person is apathetic or has such a low self-esteem that they are a puppet on a string. Bands on this release cater more to the people I'm talking about — bands that play Warped Tour, get radio airplay, and can be bought in most chain stores throughout the country. These are generally the new kids to the scene. These bands play more established venues. These are not the same kids you see at a D.I.Y. show. They are not as educated. But one in fifty or one in a hundred might grasp something and be completely changed forever. This is a great vehicle for this. Lure them in by offering a band that they are a fan of and give them a little more. The bonus DVD is check full of information.

Documentaries, short films, music videos and even a comedy skit to egg on some thought. Thoughts to create independent theory that is based on facts from not only mass media, government, and the education system but from outside sources. Independent media not controlled by large corporations is getting harder and harder to come by. So it's scary that the most up-front political punk bands of late have been Bad Religion, NOFX, and the Descendents. They actually have a better reach than the most political of punk bands. Even though I'm not a Republican, George W. Bush and the Republican Party is always good for punk. For some reason, when a Democrat is in office, people get complacent. Punk rock was great during the Reagan years and punk rock is great now. The scenes of punk rock may be fragmented and separate but the anger level is up again in a united front. Getting new thought outside of the conformist education and media system is always good. So I commend all the bands on this comp, like Fat bands NOFX, Anti-Flag, Descendents, None More Black, The Epoxies, Against Me! and others and major label bands like Sum 41, Ministry, New Found Glory, Less than Jake, and the Ataris in participating. A second volume is in the works for the summer. A lot of product for what I believe is being marketed at a low price. It's worth it just for the bonus DVD. —Donofthedeath (Fat)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Shielded by Death Volume Three: CD

One good thing to come outta the whole "Killed By Death" phenomenon that even the bands that weren't too thrilled to find they'd been bootlegged hafta admit, some pretty interesting, otherwise obscure as hell tuneage has been unearthed, and with the subsequent variations on the KBD formula that continue to come out, even more rarities spanning the globe are seeing the light of day, which brings me to this release. This is a collection of punk rarities from the non-Xclaim/Modern Method Boston/CT scene of the 1970s/'80s. The styles are pretty well mixed up, with a few bands offering up some hardcore, some representing the traditional East Coast punk sound of the time, and others still opting to forge their own path, and all of them are good at what they do. Funny to see some of the bands on here 'cause I wouldn't have considered them "obscure," but further consideration has made me come to the realization that only boring old scene barnacles like me, Don, and Al Quint would know anything about Cancerous Growth, Seizure or even 8th Route Army anymore. Fuck, suddenly I have this urge to buy a rocking chair. I may be old, but this shit still rocks. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dionysus)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Streetpunk Worldwide: CD

Twenty-five tracks from an international assortment of "street punk" bands illustrating that one need not be bald and American to have a lame band with dumb lyrics. SO much bad shit going on in the world and the best you can come up with is "Satan is a Skinhead"? Puh-LEEZE. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.rebellionrecords.nl)

VITAMIN X: Bad Trip: LP

Naysayers, when whining about how hardcore died in 1986 or whatever year they stopped listening it, condemn this

kind of music as nothing more than stunted vocabularies, monkeybeats, thudding guitar riffs, and an increasing emphasis on fashion and style. For the most part, they're right, but every so often, bands like Vitamin X or the Gordon Solie Motherfuckers come along and it's just one chairshot to the face after another. Fast, but not ridiculously so, allowing the drummer to play some of the most inventive stuff I've ever heard a thrash band play. Thankfully, the guitar sounds closer to the Zero Boys than Youth of Today, and the singer never veers off into cookie monster territory or any "wasn't Morrissey great?" interludes. This whole record flies by like a tornado of buzzsaws, duct tape, dirt, and blood. Couple this with their last album, and you've got yourself forty-something songs of prime hardcore listening. —Josh (Havoc)

VOIDS: Kill a Generation: CD

Some pretty good female-fronted hardcore here. Although I would've personally preferred to hear more rhythmic variation from song to song to break up the monotony, especially after thirty-four minutes, their songs and delivery are good enough to keep one's interest piqued. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

VULVETTES: This Is the Science We Believe In: CD

Quite possibly the best impersonation of "Live at Target" era Nervous Gender I've ever heard in my life. Gloriously noisy and annoying in ways I've haven't enjoyed since the early '80s. Highly, highly recommended. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dragnet)

WEAVING THE DEATHBAG: The Devil's Punchline: 7"

Hyperspeed Wisconsin thrash along the lines of label-mates The Neighbors, with the socially conscious lyrics and the going as fast as possible, though with a couple slow parts for them to rest their arms. —Cuss Baxter (Kangaroo)

WHAT THE KIDS WANT: Loud Quiet Loud: CD

Female-fronted pop punk in the vein of the Sissies, which only makes sense since the singer/guitar player was in the Sissies. Good stuff, well worth the five bucks. —Megan (Smack Dab in the Middle)

WHERE EAGLES DARE: To Come from Nowhere: CD

I remember reviewing their *In a Thousand Words or Less* CD a year ago. I pulled it out to hear what they sounded like. They had a straight-forward hardcore/straight edge sound that was energetic and fierce. I pop this in the player and hear a lot of change and progression. The hardcore/straight edge is still here, but they must have been playing a lot of Mars Volta or At the Drive In while in their touring van. The breakdowns that were mosh in the past became more emotive. Also, due to better musicianship, the music has more metal elements. So the emo-screamo is more prevalent, added with the youth crew backgrounds. Still burly and their shows are probably a bad place to be if you suffer from some body ailments. —Donofthedeath (New Day Rising)

WILDHEARTS, THE: Riff after Riff: CD

First off, this is the third-worst kick drum sound I've ever heard on record

(behind only that of NOFX and the worst-there-ever-could-be Me First & The Gimme Gimmes). Second off, my Advance Nu-Metal Warning System™ emits horrifying blasts of dire static at periodic intervals when I experience this product. Third off, with a name this gay and graphics this lame (or is it "a name this lame and graphics this gay?") I forget exactly whom I intend to offend here), I do not blame myself whatsoever for not having Clue One whom this band was, even though they've apparently been putting out records since 1993. Fourth off, this record kicks ass, so go the fuck figure. I mean, I'm running the key algorithms thru my brain as we speak: *If Cheap Trick, who were compelled to palliate their Anglophiliac leanings (e.g. The Move, The Beatles, The Who) with liberal doses of Midwestern Arena Clod Rock for yokel-pleasing purposes, were, in fact, Anglos who were compelled to palliate their more melodic aspects with liberal doses of the rube-rock of their time and place (Nu-Metal last time I checked), would not Cheap Trick's One On One album, then, sound much like Riff After Riff?* Best answer I can come up with is "yup." One second they'll be playing these **BUGGACHUGGACHUG! DUGGACHUGGABUGG!** guitar parts, with the singer sounding like Chad Price of All trying to hork up a football, next second the guy's singing like Robin Zander, the sun is out, and everybody's drinking free wine coolers. Damnedest thing. And it actually works, that's the nutty part. Rocks about as hard as a Joan Jett album (on average); my math says that logically this should be the kind of record that almost everyone likes — insuring that there's about a 99.9% probability that it turns out to be the kind of record almost everyone hates. **ROCK THAT LAKE OF PISS ACE FREHLEY ALIVE I STYLE, MOTHERFUCKER!!!** BEST SONG: "Return to Zero" BEST SONG TITLE: "Stormy in the North, Karma in the South" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: He's gonna get HIGH, he's gonna get LOW, he's gonna get HIGH and return to zero. I guarantee it! —Rev. Nørb (Gearhead)

X-GIRL: Endangered Species: CD

Synth and guitar driven, sometimes moody, Japanese pop from three girls dressed like they just walked out of an episode of some anime show. It's interesting, but that don't mean it's particularly good. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

YETI: Volume Obliteration Transcendence: CD

Hey Rob Zombie, you should totally get these guys to play on the soundtrack for your next super-good horror movie that I'll totally go see. Ummm four tracks, almost an hour of play time. —Megan (Life Is Abuse)

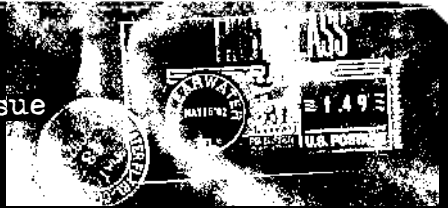
ZODIAC KILLERS: Society's Offenders: CD

If you've heard the Zodiac Killers before, you know what to expect here. Short, deceptively simple rock and roll that never fails to draw blood. Apparently, there's a video on here, but I couldn't get my computer to play it. I guess it's because I'm a loser and should just drink my life away because I am as dumb as a box of rocks and don't really deserve to see it. —Josh



CONTACT ADDRESSES

to bands and labels that were reviewed either in this issue or posted on www.razorcake.com in the last two months.



- **145;** <www.145records.com>
- **5 RC,** PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507
- **Abbey Lounge,** 3 Beacon St., Somerville, MA 02143
- **Ace Fu,** PO Box 552, NY, NY 10009
- **A.D.D.,** PO Box 8240, Tampa, FL 33674
- **Adeline,** 5245 College Ave. #318, Oakland, CA 94618
- **Aerodrome,** 302 Bedford Ave, PMB #133, Brooklyn, NY 11211
- **AK Press,** 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612-1163
- **Alone,** PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126
- **Alternative Tentacles,** PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141
- **AntAcidAudio,** PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563
- **Arclight,** 1403 Rio Grande Street, Austin, TX 78701
- **Artfix,** PO Box 641, Moreno Valley, CA 92556-0641; <www.artfixrecords.com>
- **Asian Man,** PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030
- **Basement,** PO Box 511, La Habra, CA 90633-0511
- **Bastard Radio,** 2421 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ
- **BatAttak,** PO Box 153073, Tampa, FL 33684
- **Big Neck,** PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195; <www.bigneckrecords.com>
- **Birdman,** PO Box 50777, LA, CA 90050
- **Black Noise,** PO Box 44-2622, Lawrence, KS 66044
- **Black Pumpkin,** PO Box 4377, River Edge, NJ 07661-4377
- **Blackhouse,** 422 E Reid Ave., Coeur D'alene, ID 83814
- **Blackout!;** <www.blackoutrecords.com>
- **Blazing Guns,** PO Box 40236, Downey, CA 90239
- **Bloodshot,** 3039 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60618; <www.bloodshotrecords.com>
- **Bomp,** PO Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510
- **Broken Rekids,** PO Box 460402, SF, CA 94141
- **Burning Heart,** 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026
- **BYO,** PO Box 67609, LA, CA 90067
- **Calls and Correspondence;** <callsandcorrespondence@hotmail.com>
- **Captain Oi,** PO Box, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 8QA, England
- **Chainsaw Safety,** PO Box 260318, Bellerose, NY 11426
- **Cut Lips,** attn: Melissa/Greg, 3744 1st Ave. #4, San Diego, CA 92103
- **Dead Beat,** PO Box 283, LA, CA 90078
- **Deadtank,** 1007 Acosta St Apt. #2, Jacksonville, FL 32204
- **Deranged,** PO Box 543, Station P, Toronto, M5S 2T1, Canada
- **D-Fens,** PO Box 72275, Newnan, GA 30271

- **Dim Mak,** PO Box 348, Hollywood, CA 90078
- **Dionysus,** PO Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507
- **Dirtnap,** PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111
- **Dischord,** 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington DC, 20007
- **Dogfingers,** PO Box 2433, San Antonio, TX 78298
- **Double Zero;** <www.doublezerorecords.com>
- **Dr. Strange,** PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701
- **Dragnet,** 3519 S.W. Elmores St., Seattle, WA 98126
- **Drama Destroyed,** PO Box 8005, Santa Cruz, CA 95061
- **Empty,** PO Box 12301, Portland, OR 97211; <www.emptyrecords.com>
- **Epitaph,** 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026
- **Equal Vision,** PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534
- **Ersatz Audio,** PO Box 02713, Detroit, MI 48202
- **Eulogy,** PO Box 24913, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307
- **Fat,** PO Box 193690, SF, CA 94119-3690
- **Fearless,** 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683
- **Firefly,** PO Box 30179, London, E17 5FE, England
- **Gearhead,** PO Box 421219, SF, CA 94142
- **Gloom,** PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212
- **Go Kart,** PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, NY, NY 10012
- **Gold Standard Laboratories,** PO Box 65091, LA, CA 90065
- **Goodbye Boozy,** Via Villa Pompetti 147, 64020 S. Nicolò A Tordinò, Teramo, Italy
- **Hardcore Holocaust,** PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261
- **Havoc,** PO 8585, Minneapolis, MN 55408
- **Headache,** PO Box 204, Midland Park, NJ 07432
- **Hellbent,** PO Box 1529, Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742
- **Hill Billy Stew,** PO Box 82625, San Diego, CA 92138-2625
- **Holy Shit!,** 2658 N. Booth St, Milwaukee, WI 53212
- **Household Name,** PO Box 12286, London, SW9 6FE, UK
- **I Don't Feel A Thing,** PO Box 858, Tempe, AZ 85280
- **I Used To Fuck People Like You**
- **In Prison,** Schafersstrasse 33a, D-44147 Dortmund, Germany
- **In The Red,** PO Box 50777, LA, CA 90050
- **Initial,** PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217
- **Instigator;** <instigatorpunk@yahoo.com>
- **J & T,** 113 U St, Washington, DC 20001
- **Jade Tree,** 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810
- **Johanns Face,** PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647
- **Kangaroo,** Middenweg 13, 1098 AA. Amsterdam, The Netherlands; <www.geocities.com/tysonkangaroo>

- **Kuriosa,** Thorbeckelaan 65, 7942 CM Meppel, The Netherlands
- **Level Plane,** PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906
- **Life Is Abuse,** PO Box 20524, Oakland, CA 94620
- **Lollipop,** 7 Impasse Monségur, 13016 Marseille, France
- **Lookout!,** 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703
- **Lovvit,** PO Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210-9998
- **Lucid,** 665 Timber Hill Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015
- **Lude Boy,** PO Box 4744, Portland, ME 04112
- **Mad Butcher,** Kurze Geismarstr. 6, 37073 Goettingen, Germany
- **Malt Soda,** PO Box 7611, Chandler, AZ 85246
- **Nail In The Coffin;** <www.coffinz.cjb.net>
- **New Day Rising,** PO Box 1383, Miller Place, NY 11764
- **New Disorder,** 115 Bartlett St., SF, CA 94110; <www.newdisorder.com>
- **Newest Industry,** Unit 100, 61 Wellfield Rd., Cardiff, CF24 3DG, U.K.
- **No Front Teeth,** PO Box 27070, London N29ZP, UK; <www.nofrontteeth.co.uk>
- **No Idea,** PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604; <www.noidearecords.com>
- **Oh The Humanity,** 1004 M. St. NW #2, Washington, DC 20001
- **Omnium,** PO Box 7367, Minneapolis, MN 55407
- **Onion Flavored,** PO Box 190054, SF, CA 94119
- **Perverted Son,** PO Box 49290, Austin, TX 78765
- **Plan-it-X,** PO Box 3521, Bloomington, IN 47402
- **Plastic Idol,** attn: Mario Solis, 410 Bell Avenue, Apt. 25, Sacramento, CA 95838
- **Pop Smear,** 2269 Chestnut St. #970, SF, CA 94123
- **Porterhouse,** PO Box 3597, Hollywood, CA 90078
- **Prank,** PO Box 410892, SF, CA 94141-0892; <www.prankrecords.com>
- **Prime Directive,** PO Box 571, Balboa, CA 92661
- **Radio,** PO Box 1452, Sonoma, CA 95476
- **RealOmind,** PO Box 63516, Philadelphia, PA 19147
- **Recess,** PO Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733
- **Reptilian,** 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231
- **Revelation,** PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232
- **Rezist,** 4300 Price Lane, Longview, TX 75605
- **Rip Off,** 581 Maple Ave., San Bruno, CA 94066
- **Robot Winter;** <www.robotwinter.com>
- **Rockin' Bones,** c/o Gualtiero Pagani, Borgo Palmia 3a, 43100 Parma, Italy
- **Rockstar,** Kurbrunnenstrasse 32-26, 52066 Rockcity Aachen, Germany

- **Rodent Popsicle,** PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134
- **Sabot,** PO Box 28, Gainesville, FL 32602
- **Sactoe Punk Archive,** 1114 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814
- **Scarey,** c/o Carlo, Casella Postale 516, Succ. 76 10121 Torino, Italy
- **Scenester Credentials,** PO Box 1275, Iowa City, IA 52444
- **Schizophrenic,** 17 West 4th St., Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L9C 3M2
- **Sept. 6,** PO Box 629, Boston, MA 02117
- **Serious Business,** 538 Johnson Ave., Suite 205, Brooklyn, NY 11237
- **Side One Dummy,** PO Box 2350, LA, CA 90078
- **Smack Dad In The Middle,** 5339 Moro Rd., Moro, IL 62067
- **Small Noisemaker,** PO Box 71208 Shorewood, WI 53211
- **Smartguy,** 3288 21st St. #32, SF, CA 94110
- **Snuffy Smile,** 4-1-16-201 Daita, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, 155-0033, Japan
- **Souful Warrior,** PO Box 1174, Hollywood, CA 90078
- **Spontaneous Combustion,** 3943 Cumnor Rd., Downers Grove, IL 60515
- **Springman,** PO Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015-2043
- **Squirrel Heart,** PO Box 5871, Arlington, VA 22205
- **S-S,** 1114-21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814
- **Stardumb,** PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- **Steel Capped;** <www.steelcappeddesign.com>
- **Stimulator;** <www.stimulatorband.com>
- **Suburban Home,** PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204
- **Suicide Watch,** PO Box 9599, Charlotte, NC 28299; <www.suicidewatchrecords.com>
- **Super Secret,** PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767
- **Thick;** <www.thickrecords.com>
- **TKO,** 3126 W. Cary St, Richmond, VA 23221; <www.tkorecords.com>
- **Tom Perkins Entertainment,** 7233 Lamphere, Detroit, MI 48239
- **Trailer Park Queen;** <www.trailerparkqueen.cjb.net>
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- **Unity Squad,** PO Box 1235, Huntington Beach, CA 92647
- **Voodoo Rhythm,** Jurastrasse 15, 3013 Bern, Switzerland; <www.voodooorhythm.com>
- **War Room,** PO Box 93-1813, LA, CA 90093-1813
- **We Got Records,** 7900 N. Washburne, Portland, OR 97217
- **Whoa Oh,** 21-36 43rd St, 3rd Floor, Astoria, NY 11105
- **World eater;** <www.world eaterrecords.com>
- **Wrecked-Em,** PO Box 240701, Memphis, TN 38124; <www.wrecked-em.com>
- **Wundertaker,** PO Box 470153, SF, CA 94147-153



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AMERIKAN HIGH SCHOOL STORIES, #?, \$?, 8½ x 11, glossy cover, copied

Awhile back, I reviewed some other writings by Jimmy Reject, the author of this zine. Those were mostly autobiographical, and, although, or maybe because they depicted a crazy, GG-Allin-styled punk upbringing (way different than my own, which was heavy on Bakunin, pop punk, and poverty), I got into them, in an almost sociological way. This new collection of stories are fictional, and, frankly, shocking. Lots of stories involving rape, including at least one that describes the act itself. And it's not done in a way that is supposed to make you hate the rapist. Instead, it comes across as, "Oh, look at this poor fucked up guy who is so messed up that he rapes a girl." Jimmy even acknowledges in some of the intros that some of the stories are misogynist, but that doesn't really count for much. I wonder why so many of these characters see rape as a central part of their rebellion. Fucked up. -Maddy (Jimmy Reject, PO Box 2033, Ocean Bluff, MA 02065)

ARTCORE #21, \$?, 8¼ x 11¾, glossy cover, offset, 40 pgs.

Welly, the editor and publisher of *Artcore*, has got an undying love for the foundation of punk rock without it letting it eclipse the contributions of current bands. Often times with bands that have long histories, as is the case with JFA, Welly tells the entire story, from beginning to end. It's this attention to detail and a super earnest attempt to get it all right on paper that is the glue which makes *Artcore* a superior punk zine. Original punk and hardcore have been covered, wrong and sloppily, so many times (like the abysmal *American Hardcore*) that it's just nice to read articles about bands that ring true and jive with my own memories and research. Welly also does a great job of backgrounding himself, so the bands' stories are told without a lot of interference. In this issue is a long section on the importance of punk rock flyer art (with a guest contribution by David Ensminger, who does the equally excellent *Left of the Dial* fanzine), a never-before-published interview with Touch and Go's Cory Rusk from 1982, and interviews with Knife Fight, Biscuit's Texas Bombs (fronted by former Big Boy, Biscuit), 7 Seconds, Moving Targets, and Battalion of Saints. My only complaint is one I think I already know the answer to. (More pages equals more weight, which equals more postage.) It seems that there's so much stuff that's crammed in these pages that the type size suffers and I find myself

going cross-eyed once in awhile when reading. It's worth the effort, though. That's for sure. -Todd (Artcore, Aberdulais Road, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 2PH, Wales, UK)

BIG TAKEOVER #54, \$4.95, 8 x 11, glossy, 320 pgs.

Thinking that the *Big Takeover*'s editor and publisher Jack Rabid has been at it for twenty-four years straight is sobering. I've been at it for eight years. To automatically triple that number is almost inconceivable. Issue #54 is massive. It's obvious that *Razorcake* and *Big Takeover*'s current overall musical tastes diverge quite drastically. Jack champions a wide field of indie rock like Stereolab and Belle and Sebastian. I like Dillinger Four, Randy, Fucked Up, and The Riverboat Gamblers. His tolerance for contemporary hardcore and revved-up punk rock is as minimal as my interest in "in-makes-me-sleepy" pop. What's cool, though, is that we both have a unwavering love of Leatherface, one of the best, most underrated bands on the planet. Also, and I can't quite get the year right, but up until that year, (it's got to be around 1983-84) Jack and I see almost eye-to-eye across the board about punk music. When he covers early punk (like the Weirdos), I can't think of better interviews that have ever been conducted with those bands. That all said, *The Big Takeover* is so big, thick, and covers so many bases, that I think it's virtually impossible for a person who loves independent music - beyond being a mere, unexploratory genre fan - not to find something of use and entertainment in its pages. Add to the equation that Jack's one of the best interviewers going, there's always interesting reading. I'm also a fan of testing people's attention spans picking musicians' brains, so the long-format interviews that take up a big portion of *The Bigtakeover* really appeal to me. In this issue, I found myself engrossed in the histories, stories, and memories of Rocket from the Tombs, The Weirdos, TSOL, Leatherface, The Undertones, and The Zombies. Shit, if I can say any hundred pages of a magazine are worth reading, it's worth the five bucks. Highly recommended. After each issue, I always have a new list of records I want to listen to. That's a good feeling. -Todd (The Big Takeover, 249 Eldridge St., # 14, NY, NY 10002)

BLURT!, #1, \$2, 4¼ x 5½, copied, 110 pgs.

Blurt! is the latest zine from Lew Houston - the guy who brought you *Vinyl A Go Go* and *Tales of a Traveling Panty Salesman*. It's a collection of vignettes about a guy

finishing college and striking out on his own. The stories are peppered with liberal doses of humor, intelligence, and sensitivity. Lew's Cometbus influence is clear in his heavy nostalgia and the way he never really lets the reader out of his head. Still, he's got a good eye for description - it's easy for me to picture the small Pennsylvania towns he lives in. And I have a lot in common with him in the sense that he writes about riding his bike, listening to punk LPs, reading zines and books, and walking aimlessly around town, which are all some of my favorite things to do. All of this makes *Blurt!* a good read. It's more than worth your two bucks. -Sean (Vinyl a Print Print, 135 Wapwallopon Rd., Nescopeck, PA 18635)

CHAOS & FRUIT PUNCH, #1, \$3, 8½ x 11, 40 pgs.

The thing about people making zines about whatever the hell they feel like writing about is that a lot of times they come off as really sloppy, slapped together at the last minute, and just plain dumb. Luckily, that's not the case with this one. Yeah, most of the stuff the guy writes about is pretty random and it doesn't always make sense (the interview with the Canadian band Fucked Up), but for the most part, it's pretty entertaining. Not essential, but a good read nonetheless. -Josh (PO Box 13380, Mill Creek, WA 98082)

CHICKEN-HEAD RECORDS

ZINE, #10, \$1, 8½ x 11, 24 pgs. Simple, cool cartoons, a healthy fixation on chili fires, a drawing of a monkey saying, "It's progress, bitch"... You know you're going to like this. Not a bad gig. -Josh (PO Box 371147, Reseda, CA 91337)

CHUMPIRE, #169 & #170, a stamp Every issue of this zine that I've read has been really tiny. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot of stuff crammed in here, but the small size and the messy handwriting are not a very good combination. It looks like whoever puts this out takes pretty good live band photos, but it's hard to tell since everything is so cramped. -Josh (PO Box 27, Annville, PA 17003)

CITIZINE, #5, \$4, 8½ x 11, 60 pgs. As far as content goes, *Citizine* is a pretty standard punk rock magazine: interviews, news, generic layout, and pictures that look like they're taken from press releases. I can forgive the press photos in this instance, though, because it stands to reason that not too many people are going to have action shots of Tommy Ramone recording his new bluegrass album. The interviews (with the aforementioned Ramone,

Bill Stevenson from the Descendents, Eric Davidson from the New Bomb Turks, and East Bay Ray from Skrapyard) all suffer from a lack of editing. I mean, "hello" and "goodbye" are integral parts of a telephone conversation, but they don't exactly make for compelling reading, and while it's fantastic that you like the music of the bands that you're interviewing, it's not really necessary to tell them that eight or nine times during the interview. This is kind of like the zine equivalent to Hawkwind: it would be twice as good if it were half as long. —Josh (2513 W 4th St., LA, CA 90057)

DUCK BOX, #1, \$2,

5½ x 8½, 22 pgs. This is a brief personal-type zine, but in a good, not-a-bunch-of-sucky-poetry-about-clouds kind of way (and keep in mind that I said "brief"). There's a couple of non-pretentious Cometbus-y things and an interview with the drummer from Jawbreaker. This is a good first issue even though I have no clue what a duck box is. —Josh (Rick Arnold, 2440 Lyndale Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN 55405)

GET OFF MY LAWN! #21,

\$1, 5½ x 8½, photocopied, 26 pgs. The introduction to *Get off My*

Lawn is the perfect example of how not to start a zine. Self-deprecating is fine, but to say that the issue sucks and you don't know why you did it, and, man it's late, makes me, the reader, want to put it down and go read a book instead. But, introduction aside, *Get off My Lawn* is a quality read. Obituaries are some of the hardest things to write, but Johnny's remembrance of his friend Chris is tender, honest, and candid. Sections about Chris sleeping naked, wang a-floppin', pissing on himself are balanced out with seeing him grow into a man, and ultimately dying — at a party — from liver failure. The other longer story in the zine is about Johnny working in a thrift store. I have the same attitude as he: "I just don't give a fuck; they pay us minimum wage and still make us pay half-price for merchandise, so if you've got the balls to run full speed through my store, up the ramp and out the glass doors with one of our fur coats or an electric guitar, my hats off to ya, I'll go back to my phone call, thanks." The story ends when an ultra-stinky dude called "Crusty" takes a shit standing up, shakes the monster out of his pants, and leaves it on the floor for the employees to mop up. Good read. The rest of the issue is live reviews and records reviews that exhibit a healthy appreciation

for Johnny Cash. Worth the buck. —Todd (5814 ½ Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105)

KIMOSABE, #1, 10 cents,

copied w/ cardstock cover, 28 pgs. The best things about this zine are the price and the crisp, clear prose of author Marc Parker. The worst things are the fact that it's another personal zine out of zinester Heaven: Portland. And the endlessly laying about watching *The O.C.* stoned. There's promise in Parker's style and acknowledgement of the minutia in our lives. But somebody named Jeff Gomez already wrote the book on Keroaucian gonowhere zinester love and it was called *Our Noise* and it came out way back in the '90s. So why should I care about this twenty-eight-page chapbook? I guess because I'm a fan of the chronicler, journal writing and archivalism and publishing. Yet *Kimosabe* still comes off in the end like watered-down emo. —Greg Barbera (Marc Parker, 2000 NE 24 Ave. #221, Portland, OR 97213)

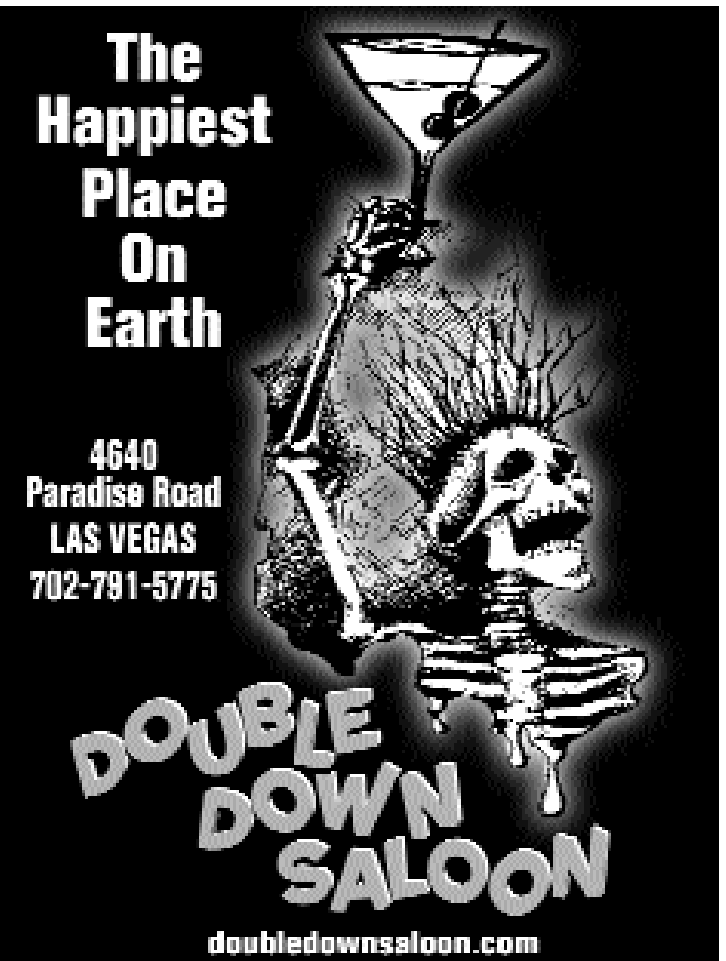
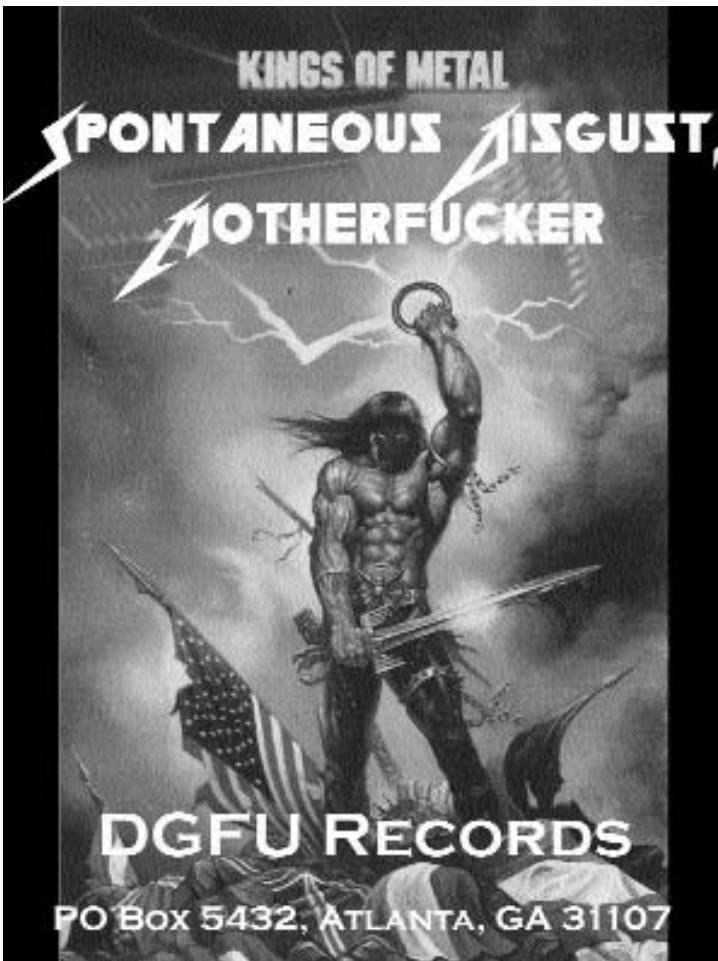
LET THERE BE DANGER #2,

\$2, 44 pages, copied, 4¼ x 5½. Wow. I brought this zine with me to my stupid temp job where I sit at a desk and transfer calls all day. I thought that I'd bring a few zines,

read 'em really fast, and then spend the rest of the day trying not to fall asleep. Then I started reading *Let There Be Danger*. This issue is all about Sean's best friend Matt, who recently died of cancer. Unlike so many zines about sadness, death or depression, this didn't have a self-pitying, woe-is-me, bare-all-my-emotions feel, although it is very personal. Instead, Sean tells stories about some of the most memorable moments spent with his friend. The writing is good, and it's just so simple — to tell stories about your friend who died. I was completely caught up in it, and I think anyone else who has known someone who died too soon will be, too. Sean organized the zine around a mix tape he had made for his friend, and each song is one story. The zine really reads more like a letter to his friend, and I don't mean that in a cheezy way at all. I wish more "personal" zines could be like this. —Maddy (Sean Raff, 509 Cutters Mill Ln., Schaumburg, IL 60194; letherebedanger@yahoo.com)

MODEST PROPOSAL, #4,

\$3, 8½ x 11. I've reviewed this zine before, but I don't remember what I said about it. Luckily, the editors were nice enough to reprint my review in its entirety. I realize that "some parts



are funny and some aren't" isn't the most astute criticism of a magazine, so here's what I think about this issue. It's funny as shit pretty much all the way through (and we all know how funny shit can be sometimes). There's a restaurant review section consisting of The Chinese Food Place Near My Apartment ("If you thought the food looked great in *The Shawshank Redemption*, you'll love it."). There's not only interviews with real-life comedians like Bob Odenkirk from *Mr. Show*, Paul Krassner from *The Realist*, and Neil Hamburger ("Q: Did *Laugh Out Loud* help you cash in on the religious audience? A: That was the idea, but no, there was no cashing in at all."), there's also an interview with The Annoying Guy from the Movie Theater, which was the funniest thing I read all month ("Somebody interrupted me to ask if the seat next to me was available. I told him no, as I was saving the eighteen seats around me for my friends with b.o. that would be arriving twenty minutes into the movie.") If it helps, think *Chunklet* focusing on comedy instead of indie rock. Their ludicrous endorsement of Margaret Cho notwithstanding, this is totally worth seeking out. —Josh (PO Box 3211, Tempe, AZ 85280)

MR. PEEBODY'S SOILED TROUSERS & OTHER DELIGHTS, #17,

\$2, 5 1/2 x 4 1/4, xeroxed, 38 pgs. This zine is a daily diary from October and November 2001. "What a strange day. I woke up at 5am with a thumping headache and couldn't get back to sleep," and other daily stuff – including (XXX warning) SEX! I couldn't really get into it, but, then again, I don't read blogs or ever really get into diary-based zines. Maybe it's because when I was little I tried keeping a daily diary, and I kept getting so far behind and frustrated, and I'd spend an hour frantically filling in the past 100 days with "Ate dinner. Went to bed." Ack! Repressed memories of food- and sleep-based diary entries! I'd be interested in reading his other zine, *Townsend*, about growing up in small-town Massachusetts, though! —Maddy (Jay, PO Box 931333, LA, CA 90093)

MY FAT IRISH ASS, #5, \$2, 8 1/2 x 11, copied, 36 pgs. *My Fat Irish Ass* is about thirty minutes of enjoyable reading. It consists of six zine reviews (including a positive *Razorcake* review), three live reviews (Misfits, Murder Junkies, Midnight Creeps), one CD review, one book review, one story about a confederate house sitter,

one funny/sloppy comic about a biker, and thirteen pages of bastardized *Family Circle* and *Dennis the Menace* comics. The live reviews are actually very well done, and the rest of the stuff is good for a few laughs. For something based on a fat ass, this comes off short and sweet. —Sean (MFIA, PO Box 65391, Washington, DC 20035)

NEUS SUBJEX, THE, #60 & #61, a stamp, travel-brochure size *The Neus Subjex* not only proclaims that it "documents the Greater Cincinnati Underground Music scene," it also admits to being "literally waiting to happen," so I guess my job here is done. Issue #60 is printed on two different colors of paper. *The Neus Subjex* says, "Eat that, monochrome fanzines!" —Josh (PO Box 18051, Fairfield, OH 45018)

NEW SCHEME, THE #9, free, 8 1/2 x 11, newsprint, 48 pgs. A top notch music zine out of Boulder, CO., *The New Scheme* takes a bare bones approach to production – with its Spartan layout and jaggedy white space around ads – but has better content than most glossy publications these days. There's interviews (Against Me!, Rum Diary, Bright Calm Blue, and Andy Low of Robotic Empire label), plenty of CD reviews that cover a broad spectrum (Nebraska indie rock, Japanese hardcore, Swedish metal, Gainesville melodic punk, DC post-punk, emo), book reviews that cover equally as diverse subject matter (from places like Akashic Books and Crimethinc) and a couple of DVD reviews. All in all, not a bad read. —Greg Barbera (The New Scheme, PO Box 7542, Boulder, CO 80306; www.newscheme.com)

PROPAGANDA ZINE, #3, £1, chapbook, xeroxed Punk rock zine from the UK with interviews on Strike Anywhere, Kevin Seconds, Anti-Flag, Waterdown and The Dillinger Escape Plan. It is what it is. —Greg Barbera (Propaganda Zine, 279 Main Street, Calverton Nottingham, NG14 6LT, UK; propaganzine@hotmail.com)

REVIEWER MAGAZINE, #21, free, newsprint It lives up to its name. There's a lot of reviews and a lot of ads for porn sites on the internet. I'm guessing that if you live in San Diego (roughly translated, "San Diego" means "Saint Doug"), you could probably pick this up at a local business establishment. —Josh (PO Box 87069, San Diego, CA 92138)

RISE AND THE FALL, THE, 5 1/2 x 8, printed, 32 pgs., A zine about San Pedro, CA. There's a lot I like about this zine – interviews with Killer Dreamer and Toys That Kill, an article on the Pedro skatepark by El Beardo, stuff by Hal Ba Dal – all good stuff. But it's put out by some dude who offered a girl eighty bucks to jump me after I got into a fight with his friend (I offered to take half and not fight back, but no dice), so I can't fully like it. —Megan (The Rise and The Fall, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733)

ROCTOBER, #38, \$4, 8 1/2 x 11, newsprint, 112 pgs. When I first got this zine, I flipped through and saw that twenty-something pages were dedicated to *Behind the Music* – the VH1 series. My first thought was, what kind of loser would read all of this? Especially because it was printed in a tiny, 6 pt. font. Well, two days later, I was completely obsessed with the *Behind the Music* articles and going cross-eyed from the type. And here's the funny thing – I've never watched a complete episode of *BTM*. I've seen it. I've watched parts of shows a few times. It never really kept my attention. But reading about *BTM* in *Roctober* was fascinating, I guess because *Roctober* took a team of talented writers and distilled the episodes to key points of interest to a rock'n'roll fanatic like myself. I was amazed. I also answered the question of what kind of loser would read all of this with a resounding, "Uh... me." This whole issue is dedicated to rock'n'roll and TV. There is a piece about Jerry Lee Lewis's top TV performances. There are reviews of Johnny Cash, Eddie Cochran, and Gene Vincent on *Town Hall Party*. There are about a hundred (literally) other pieces covering everything from Gidget rocking out to the Dingbats to Iggy Pop on *Pete and Pete* to Lee Ving on *Who's the Boss* to "Lurch the Teen Idol." Most of the other rock'n'roll TV moments are set in a larger typeface, so I didn't go cross-eyed reading them, but I couldn't put this zine down. This issue's coverage of rock'n'roll TV was so broad in scope and so engaging that it blew my mind. There's enough interesting content in this issue alone to keep you reading for weeks. This is far and away one of the best zines I've read in a long time. —Sean (Roctober, 1507 E. 53rd St. #617, Chicago, IL 60615)

SHUTTLEBUS, Vol. 2, Issue #2, \$2, newsprint, 32 pgs. A Michigan-fried new school zine with old school flair, *Shuttlebus*

covers a wide range of culture and music in the short time in takes to digest thirty-two pages. Excellent interview with current freak rock darlings Wolf Eyes, a funny essay about meeting Richard Hell and being let down but not really, comics and more. Top notch. —Greg Barbera (Shuttlebus, PO Box 7814, Ann Arbor, MI 48107; shuttlebuszine@hotmail.com)

SILLY LITTLE TROUSER MONKEYS, #20, 8 1/2 x 11, newsprint, 20 pgs. This starts off like *The Onion*, with the fake news headlines and whathaveyou, but it's just not very funny. And to think, there was so much promise with an article on the decline of cunnilingus rates. The highlights are one guy who became disillusioned with television when they cancelled *Alf*, and another part where I not only learned how to make an Orange Julius, I also learned a short history of the Orange Julius. —Josh (webmaster@sltmonkees.com)

ZISK, #8, \$2, 7 x 8 1/2, 52 pages of unadulterated awesomeness Ahhh, baseball: the scourge of my existence. I love watching baseball so much that I use it as an excuse not to do other things. I'll think to myself, "Yeah, I'm going to clean my apartment today," or, "Gee, I'll get my zine reviews done without waiting until the last minute," but then I'll turn on the TV and end up watching baseball for four hours and I've accomplished absolutely nothing. Just between you and me, I might take it a little too seriously, like when the Yankees come from behind to win, I mutter to myself about how the other team is a bunch of fucking retards and how they're a pathetic excuse for a franchise and how they'd have trouble beating a Triple A team, even though I know it's not their fault that the Yankees have a two hundred gazillion dollar payroll and put their roster together like housewives shopping at their neighborhood grocery store. And what's with Roger Clemens bitching about how if he can't go into the Hall of Fame as a Yankee, he's not going in at all. It's like, if you love the Yankees so much, why don't you fucking play for the Yankees anymore, you wiener? What was I talking about? Oh, yeah, the new issue of *Zisk*. It's a zine about baseball, and anybody who hates Roger Clemens as much as me is solid gold. —Josh (801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509)



Beat the Heat: How to Handle Encounters with Law Enforcement

by Katya Komisaruk, 192 pages.

This is a guide for a variety of run-ins with police, security guards, FBI, and many other agencies. The text is balanced by comics which show the scenario all the way through, then again with the guidance of Sibyl Rites. She explains how to phrase responses to get you out of (or into less) trouble. There are a lot of interesting tips in here, which I never knew. Things like the differences between being arrested and being detained, and the how the police can treat you in each of those situations. For instance, if you are only being detained, the police can't search your pockets. They can pat you down and ask you to remove the contents, but you can refuse to show them. Also, if the police show up with an arrest warrant, it isn't necessarily a search warrant as well, but if you let them into the house they can search anything within reach. Even if they have a search warrant there can be glitches. Search warrants have to be specific. They have to have the exact address and your name. If you live in an apartment, the number has to be on the warrant. There is a date issued, and they usually only remain valid for two weeks at most. If any of the details are wrong, the entire warrant is invalid and they cannot enter without your permission.

Sometimes it seems like the advice for the right actions are a lot more hassle than the gut reaction. In the case of mistaken identity, they suggest that you stick to your guns, remain silent, and get a lawyer. I don't know about anyone else, but if I'm getting arrested for something I know I didn't do, I think I'd protest. Their position is that whenever you give up your right to silence that you may disclose some detail that the police can then press charges (even if they had none to start with). I also know of people who have refused to let an officer search their vehicle to protect their own privacy, knowing they had nothing to hide. The officers took their refusal as probable cause that there was something worth searching for and impounded the car until they could get a warrant. It seems like a lot more trouble than the hassle of them looking in my trunk for ten minutes and asking about the drugs they know I'm smuggling.

There's a lot of helpful tips about witnessing police misconduct, working with a lawyer, the rights of non-citizens, and dealing with undercover cops. The main points I came away with were to be careful in what you say and sign. Words can be manipulated very easily to have very specific, and possibly detrimental, meanings. In this case, misunderstanding can lead to jail time. A good eye-opener. —Megan (AK Press, 674-A 23rd St, Oakland, CA 94612-1163)

How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office

edited by Adrienne Maree Brown and William Upski Wimsatt, 206 pgs.

If you read one book about politics this year, make it *How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office*. Sure, there are dozens of books about how Bush is evil, how politics are corrupt, and how America has become a right-wing theocracy. And I like those books; but this book actually shows you how to do something about it.

How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office compiles over twenty stories of young activists getting involved in local political campaigns – for mayor, Senate, state representative, and more. Over and over again, the same message is repeated: At the local level, you and your friends, CAN get someone cool elected, and make real changes in your community.

Although I have been skeptical of Upski (author of *Bomb the Suburbs* and *No More Prisons*) in the past, a lot of his intro is right on: “The harsh reality that we young whippersnappers [!] hate to face is that most people in American actually *don't* think like us and our friends. The revolution is *not* going to happen tomorrow. Winona LaDuke will not become vice president of the U.S. or even governor of Minnesota.”

Instead, the book concentrates on the difficult day-to-day local organizing necessary to win local elections. And the successes are real. Voters elected 26-year-old Jason West mayor of New Paltz, N.Y. in 2003. (West, a member of the Green Party, has since grabbed national headlines for marrying same-sex couples.) Alisha Thomas, a 24-year-old black woman, won a state legislature seat in notoriously racist Cobb County, Georgia. Paul Wellstone inspired progressive folks all over Minnesota.

Lots of important decisions about everything from zoning to police funding get decided mostly by local aldermen and women.



Electing progressive folks at this level can make a huge difference. Hopefully this book will motivate young people to get involved in these battles.

However, despite all the attention on the local, the explicit goal of the book is to use these local strategies to defeat Bush in the 2004 presidential election. While I obviously think Bush should be defeated, presidential elections are completely different their local counterparts – the odds of getting a genuine progressive election are worse, the ability to influence candidates is less, and money rules everything.

Add to that the creeping suspicion of many folks that Kerry isn't really that much better, or, at the very least, he's a manipulative amoral rich guy. Of course, if I'm in a swing state, I'll vote for him, but look at his record: just a few weeks ago, he called for 40,000 more troops in Iraq. He voted for No Child Left Behind, the PATRIOT ACT, the authorization to invade Iraq, the Bush tax cuts, and more. Everyone keeps talking again how this time it *really* matters who gets elected. Although, of course, it always matters who becomes president, I wonder if progressives should really expect much success from working like crazy on the presidential election. What would success mean? Four years of Kerry?

At one point, Upski writes that establishing a solid progressive majority “will take a thirty-year-plan.” He calls for the Left to study and co-opt some of the tactics of the Right. All of these are good ideas, but perhaps a better way to achieve a progressive majority would be to focus on building local progressive communities, elected local politicians, and then, slowly but surely, creating a genuine grassroots movement that would push the Democratic party further to the Left, while perhaps creating support for a genuine third party – instead of placing that much importance on electing Kerry. It's not the sort of thing that happens overnight. In fact, if it only took thirty years, I'd be amazed.

But these criticisms have more to do with the way the book is packaged and its call to action than with the stories themselves. And, in the end, getting motivated to do political organizing is the important thing. And these stories will make you realize how much power you can have in a democracy – if you have a good strategy, lots of energy, and are willing to build coalitions – even with people who – oh, the horror! – aren't into the same bands as you, aren't your age, go to church, and have an American flag in their front yard. —Maddy (Soft Skull Press, 71 Bond St., Brooklyn, NY 11237, www.softskull.com)

I, Shithead: A Life in Punk

by Joey Keithley, 237 pages

DOA were easily one of punk's greats, an inspirational and influential band who had one hell of an initial run that lasted from the late '70s to the early '90s. They were responsible for some the genre's greatest tunes – “America the Beautiful,” “Fucked Up Ronnie,” “Disco Sucks,” “Race Riot,” “Fuck You” and “Class War” (the latter two admittedly covers of songs originally by the Subhumans and the Dils, respectively, but it was DOA that made them honest-to-goodness anthems) – their extensive touring regimen inspired thousands of other bands to do the same, and their *Hardcore 81* album is allegedly where North American Punk Phase Two derives its moniker. I bring all this up to point out that DOA lead singer Joey “Shithead” Keithley could easily, and justifiably, take on a bigger-than-God tone to the proceedings, toot his own horn loudly and get away with it, considering his achievements in the underground, yet in this, his autobiography, he maintains an unflagging level of humility, opting to tell his story as if he were recounting his exploits to a friend.

The proceedings start with his beginnings as a bored kid in Burnaby, British Columbia who decided to start a band, the Skulls, with some friends, all of whom in their own right went on to be just as important to Canada's punk scene. With the dissolution of that band, he and a few of the members decide to start another band and, thus, DOA is born. The remainder of the book is part recollection, part tour diary of the band's assorted excursions throughout every nook and cranny of North America and Europe. He offers up oodles of anecdotes and stories, like being fucked over by the Clash when the band opened up for them, playing a benefit show with one of his big influences, folk musician Pete Seeger (!), and the numerous politically inspired actions the band took over the years, such as releasing a single of the aforementioned “Fuck You” to help pay

the legal costs of former bandmate and friend Gerry Hannah when he found himself up to his eyeballs in trouble as one of the infamous "Vancouver Five," who were eventually convicted for some bombings.

The minuses to be found in this book, mostly in the occasional klunky writing passage, a lack of a clear explanation for why he was attracted to punk in the first place, and why it has managed to maintain his dedication when so many of his peers left it by the wayside decades ago, are very few and far between, leaving *I, Shithead* one of the best tomes on the punk scene to come out thus far. The book gives little space to DOA's reformation and more recent endeavors, but does end with the indication that the band, and punk itself, carry on, and we, despite any griping about the recent work of either the band or the movement, are better off for it. —Jimmy Alvarado (Arsenal Press, 103 - 1014 Homer Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 2W9, Canada; www.arsenalpulp.com)

It Makes You Want to Spit:

The Definitive Guide to PUNK in N. Ireland

by Seam O'Neill and Guy Trelford, 275 pages

I love scene histories, especially those that take a more proletarian approach to what is covered rather than merely singling out a few of the biggie bands, singing their praises for hundreds of pages and effective ignoring the rank and file, so this, basically an encyclopedia of nearly everyone who bashed on an instrument in Northern Ireland from 1977-82, to me, is frankly the bee's knees: nearly 300 pages about a whole host of bands I've never heard of alongside more famous names, all given more or less equal weight, as it should be.

A bevy of juicy tidbits can be found wedged between the covers about the bigger names to come out of the scene, from an almost universal admiration for the Undertones' street pop to an almost universal questioning of Stiff Little Fingers' motivations, but there is also more than enough about those who made as much of a racket without managing the same accolades, from the bands that opted to tour and/or relocate to England to the numerous others who opted instead to slug it out in the home clubs. A wealth of first-hand experiences can be found here on what a complete nightmare being a punk in Ulster could be and what made the scene so special that so many felt the need to endure what they did to keep it alive, and what looks to be like everybody involved, from musician to fanzine editor to filmmaker to label mogul to just plain fans, gets to weigh in with their two cents.

The coverage here is focused on the first five years of the scene's existence, yet there is little of the pathetic elitism and "this was OUR thing and anything that came after us ain't real" mentality so prevalent in other tomes, namely the coffee table-sized overviews being peddled by aging Londoners grasping desperately to their still-overpriced Vivienne Westwood originals and longing for the days before they sold out, when they were still the freaks du jour. On the contrary, this book ends with a recap of what has happened since the "golden age" covered herein indicating that the scene is still alive and well and that while many of the old guard may have moved on, they acknowledge that what they helped to build has continued on with or without them. The biggest gripe I'm able to muster is that with so many obscure bands and out of print singles covered here, an accompanying compilation of, at the very least, the highlights is sorely needed, but otherwise, this is easily the best scene overview that has thus far come along. —Jimmy Alvarado (Reekus, 77 Haddington Road, Dublin 4, Ireland; www.reekus.com)

Life and Limb: Skateboarders Write from the Deep End

edited by Justin Hocking, Jeffrey Knutson, and Jared Maher, 188 pgs.

I view collections of short stories much like compilation tapes. If it's done right, different readers will have favorite tracks, but none of them outright stink. It should have a nice flow from beginning to end. Editing is key. *Life and Limb* does just that. The loose thematic foundation is skateboarding. The editors also do a pretty good job of keeping a central focus, but also dilate it just enough to show how skating intersects with art, literature (there's a story that directly evokes *Moby Dick*), bus rides, photography, pranks, abstract thoughts, and spirituality. (Some stories have nothing to do with skating — but ice fishing and raccoon eradication attempts — but are written by skaters.) By allowing a diverse cross section of writers some breathing room, *Life and Limb* also has the feel of a book you could give to a non-skater to show them that skateboarding's world is much wider than a bunch of concrete-terrorizing miscreants or an ever-touring corporately sponsored modular park with jacked-up commentators.

All that said, my favorite stories were those that effortlessly intertwined skating into a narrative about growing up or growing older.

"Get Radical," by longtime *Thrasher* photographer and writer

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DOES TRAFFIC GET ON YOUR NERVES?
NOW THAT TRUCK JUST MISSED ME BY AN INCH!

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Michael Burnett, covers how he befriended a dorky kid, Dirk, and skated his backyard ramp. One particularly funny section is Dirk's mom first time on a skateboard. In a very unwise initial move, she decides, having watched kids skate the ramp effortlessly for months, that dropping in on the halfpipe would be easy. "Then, in an incident so powerful it has since taken up more space in my brain than my entire education in mathematics, she took a slam more appropriate in a rodeo bloopers tape than in the neatly groomed backyard of an upper middle class home in the American West.... Her chest, less than thirty-six months cancer free, plowed squarely into the awaiting slope, followed by her chin, which scraped along, bouncing her head a good two or three time in a cartoon-like woodpecker motion...." The entire story is filled with innocence, gaining skate skills, tenderness, poor alcohol decisions, and ends with the young Michael dancing with Dirk's cute, older sister.

In "Last Summer Some Hippy Pinched My Stick," by another long-time skater and *Thrasher* regular, Wez Lundry continues with the engaging storytelling. Recounting the karmic gains and losses of his skateboards over the years, he leads the reader into a situation where they've handcuffed the kid who had stolen their boards to a couch as the kid's mom comes in to collect her son. "It was hilarious," Wez writes. "Someone spotted her and we all hid in separate bedrooms, laughing.... I came out of hiding, unlocked him, and explained to her what happened, and that we wanted our boards back. She rolled her eyes, obviously used to her son's exploits."

What's also a positive for this collection is that although it isn't didactic — it isn't saying "this is right, this is wrong." It does a good job of looking at skateboarding from the inside out, from long-time observers. Niall Neeson's "The Lost Boys," makes the comparison of modern skate videos to pornography. And he makes a good point. Neither medium is very interested in the chase nor the slow build up, but the flash, flash, flash. "The idea," Neeson writes, "was that with crisp editing and endless footage, the thrill just kept coming. In fact it is an oddly anaesthetic experience, devoid of human context; a great joy reduced to mere mechanics." He's right. Watching a highlight reel of Tony Hawk in a vert contest for more than ten minutes has more than a couple similarities with closeups of Ron Jeremy pumping a porn star. Repetition, precision, inherent skill, and robotics, instead of the loose and fluid joys of skateboarding (and sex) as a whole.

The book also does a good job of marking the territorial boundaries that skateboarding has claimed and the battles that it's currently fighting. Case in point: rollerblades. I'm a mellow dude and if some young kid's skating them, I figure they just don't know better and do my best not to tease them. But, if that kid turns out to be a run-snaking little fucker, the "This isn't a slide!" taunts flow freely from my mouth. Jocko Weyland, in "Cracker Bastards vs. the Fat Dyke Bitch Brood" sheds a little more light on my impulsive disgust. "The main reason is," Jocko writes, "is that rollerbladers have co-opted the style, clothing, and tricks of skateboarding and adapted them to a demonstrably inferior activity. They also have a penchant for acting laughably tough while trying to pass their eight-wheeled folly off as being comparable to skating. It isn't.... They are parasites who are unfortunately allowed to share space with skateboarders."

In wrapping this up, Justin Hocking's "Whaling," provides an appropriate bookend. "According to the imaginary bureaucrats in your head, you're way to old to be skateboarding, but you're still thinking maybe you can get up and try the frontside air one more time before the pain really sets in.... Then Bronco slides down and kneels beside you. 'Come on,' he says, grinning, 'let's get your ass up out of here.'"

With the hit ratio much higher than the misses, *Life and Limb* comes highly recommended. -Todd (Soft Skull)

My Little Funny

by Kaz, 96 pgs.

My first introduction to Kaz was by a crazy guy, Frederique Le Bastard, who would write me about the war books he was reading and the obscure punk rock he was listening to at the time. Nice guy. With all the letters, he'd include two or three comics by Kaz. I'd never seen the comics before. Dark, funny, and drawn like they came from the spleen of Walt Disney's nightmare alter ego, I couldn't stop laughing at them. *My Little Funny* is a great collection, the fifth, of Kaz's syndicated strips. Here's a taste of what you're in for. Multiple, funny fart jokes. An "Aww tits! I'm doomed!" vibe. Fishermen having sex with big fish in lingerie that aren't, nor could ever be, mermaids. Polar bears getting a nice, mellow high from tranquilizer darts and commenting on the buzz as "Frosty." Smiley faces are replaced by skulls and crossbones. Unicorns with tattoo skulls that gore little children. Once-cute animals have syringes sticking out of their arms as casually as if they were wearing necklaces. Shaved, masturbating gorillas. Recurring characters include Sam Snuff, who looks like an alcoholic Popeye of the Apocalypse, and Creep Rat who looks like a coughed-up hairball with an "X" of band-aids approximately where his

belly button would be. If you're trying to find that elusive (hypodermic) needle of a comic in a haystack that'll give you giggles when you crack the spine, *My Little Funny*'s just the right type of fucked-up medicine. -Todd (Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115)

Pie Any Means Necessary: The Biotic Baking Brigade Cookbook

edited by Agent Apple, 116 pgs.

A few years ago, I remember hearing about Bill Gates getting pied. It seemed so simple, and yet, so perfect. There was something about the sheer humiliation of it all that stuck with me - and still makes me smile whenever I think about it. Most businessmen are anonymous, and even those who are well-known rarely openly discuss their business with the public. In their own private circles, they are well respected and isolated from the rest of us. But then, one day, after a mundane meeting about the price of computer chips, WHAM! Right in the face!

Pie Any Means Necessary chronicles the tales of pie throwing around the world, from economist Milton Friedman's encounter with a coconut creme variety to former San Francisco mayor Willie Brown's collision with a mixture of tofu creme, pumpkin, and berry. There's pie recipes (with the utmost consideration given to throw-ability), pieing photos, tons of pie puns ("Cream and Punishment," "No Pastry, No Peace") and even a pieing folk song ("So if you cut down the last of the forests/Spew poison in the air/Don't you be surprised to find/That cheesecake in your hair")!

My favorite section details the activities of Georges Le Gloupier, a French pie-thrower famous for having pied pro-war philosopher Bernard Henri-Levy no less than five times! Le Gloupier, a classic Frenchman, pays attention to culinary detail: "We only use the finest patisserie, ordered at the last minute from small local bakers. Quality is everything. If things go wrong, we eat them."

Although this book would be even better if it had color photos instead of just black and white, that's a minor criticism. Really, this book is hilarious and provides inspiration to us all. Can you imagine someone pieing, say, Donald Rumsfeld? Or Dick Cheney? Of course, there would be something amazing about pieing Dubya himself, but, as the writers of this book are quick to point out, pieing is even more successful when the victim fails to joke about it and instead becomes enraged. I'd imagine Dubya would find a way to have it turn out in his favor, but Rumsfeld? Cheney? Ashcroft? Start preparing the crusts and the topping! Its time to go forth and pie! -Maddy (AK Press)



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