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Razorcake is a bonafide non-profit music magazine dedicated to supporting independent music culture. All donations, subscriptions, and orders directly from us—regardless of amount—have been large components to our continued survival.

It's that time of year again. If you made any taxable income this year and you could benefit by donating to a charitable organization, Razorcake is a bonafide 501(c)(3). What that means is that if you donate to us before December 31st 2007, we will promptly send you a receipt of your donation so you can use it as a deduction. Instead of shelling out dough to Uncle Sam in taxes, you directly help Razorcake continue fulfilling its mission of covering, perpetuating, and celebrating DIY punk.

It may sound a little weird—helping DIY punk. But think of how rare it is that a group of people spend an inordinate amount of time and energy not just pushing one band, one very strict punk subgenre or agenda, but contextualizing it as a whole, trying to understand what it *means* instead of how it can be bought and sold without flexing our egos over everything we cover.

It's totally predictable that DIY punk is so often misrepresented by mainstream society and media. What is surprising and is becoming clearer is that even the progressive components of middle-sized media aren't aware or aren't often interested with current-day DIY punk, often times because it doesn't have an obvious "hook." Razorcake is hoping to continue raising awareness of how great, affirming, and positive this music culture can be; how, on its best days, it can transform lives for the better.

If you would like to give Razorcake some assistance beyond donations, we're looking for help in the following areas: non-profit grant writer, FileMaker Pro wizard, website coders, and zine reviewers. If you live in the L.A. area, we could always use a helping hand.

Contact us via www.razorcake.org if you'd like to help out.

Thank you.

—Todd Taylor

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Killer Dreamer at Awesome Fest 2





Deliberate Forward Momentum

Three years ago, I was staring at a dirt lot. The dirt lot was down the street from the apartment where I was living. The street I lived on, although only a block long, was busy. It was also on the outside stretches of a major gang's turf, so skirmishes with the smaller, local gangs wasn't uncommon. I'd get the occasional stink eye when I was doing mail. We once had to pull over because middle school kids—in the road in front of us—were exchanging words with someone behind us. I pulled the truck over to the side. Behind us a man was pointing below his raised shirt, to the pistol tucked in his pants, yelling, "You want this, bitch?" We were stuck in the middle for a bit, but nothing happened.

Helicopters were over me so often for seven years that I totally blocked them out. I didn't take any special notice of the one above me as I was staring at the dirt lot until some definitely federal law enforcement vehicles surrounded the house next to my apartment. I pretended to decipher the real estate sign in the front of the dirt lot that had been graffitied beyond meaningful recognition.

Bristling in black body armor, helmets, and high-tech weaponry, the feds stormed the house and came out about twenty minutes later, carrying boxes of evidence but no fugitive. It was the same house that had been raided a couple years before for raising fighting cocks, which resulted in a poultry quarantine being placed on the entire neighborhood.

Back inside my apartment, I typed the dirt lot's address into a real estate website that listed the selling prices of all the homes in the neighborhood. In Highland Park, Los Angeles, on my street, the lot was valued at \$500,000. It seemed incomprehensibly crazy to me. Who could afford that, in a neighborhood that had its obvious share of problems? Maybe I was the one out of touch with "reality." A month later, a house went up on the lot. I gave up on

my pipe dream of seeing if we could afford putting up a Razorcake HQ in the neighborhood.

So, in the last several months of 2008, the nation's house of cards fell and the financial crisis's genesis can be directly traced to the algorithmic alchemy of subprime loans. Hundreds of thousands of people who were buying what they felt they "deserved"—often times houses they really couldn't afford—were being cheer-led by banks into the abyss. Someone thought that half a million dollars for a dirt lot was a good investment. A financial institution underwrote it. Someone moved into that house. Multiply that many times over and now America's in a world of shit and debt.

I, and by extension, Razorcake have always run on an antiquated financial model. Grow slowly. Only buy what we can afford. Spend within our means. Don't buy anything on credit that we can't immediately pay off when the bill comes in. Everything we carry in our distribution is paid for upon receipt. Every issue of the zine is paid for up front when we pick it up from the printers and send it out in the postal system. I've even used the phrase "budgeting fun." It's super unsexy, punk-uninteresting stuff: modesty, patience, frugality, balancing checkbooks. It's just how I was raised and when a lot of America is on one knee financially, Razorcake's continuing its deliberate forward momentum. 2008 was good for us: six zines, three Razorcake Records, forty podcasts (by the end of the year), the website being constantly updated and improved, and some money in the bank set aside purely for a future community center.

In no small part, I would like to thank you. You for being interested in a culture that is resistant to the ways of approaching dominant music culture and doing business, which refuses to be erased without daily diligence and one hell of a fight. Hang in.
—Todd Taylor

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ISSUE #48

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February 1st, 2009

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Cover artwork by Keith Rosson,
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Cover photo by Marc Ruvolo

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Aaron "Norton" Fuller, (1973-2008), lead singer of Plan 9
Congratulations to J.Wang and Corinne Smida on their marriage.

Contact Razorcake via our regularly updated website, www.razorcake.org or PO Box 42129, LA, CA 90042

"I have discovered that there are really only two kinds of people: those who are for you and those who are against you. Learn to recognize them, for they are often and easily mistaken for each other."

—Lemmy Kilmister

THANK YOU: *Welding goggles and symmetrical chest hair thanks to Keith Rosson for designing the cover; I'm pretty sure you're familiar with their penises in the wild thanks to Marc Ruvolo for the photo; Bookboat thanks to Maynard for his illo. in Jim's column; It would be awesome if Kid Rock was attacked by a zombie, a werewolf, and hit by a plane all at the same time thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illo. in Nerb's column; Ramones-to-cop ambassadorship thanks to Nation of Amanda for her illo. in Dale's column; Lights out, fun on thanks to Lauren Trout for her guest column and illustration; What Jesus hates is a fascinating topic thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Golf Masters mayhem to the throat thanks to Adrian Chi for her illo. in Gary's column; Dumb! Together! thanks to Joe Evans III and Marc Gärtner for the Full Of Fancy interview and photos; You know InDesign so much better than us and I don't have a joke about it thanks to Lauren Measure the layout; The dude's got a joke—there isn't a large contingency of Indian punk rockers in America, drop 'em a line thanks to Stevie Greco and Craig Doty for the Rager interview and photos; Definitely not a bad rock band with a fiddle thanks to Matt Walker, Jana Miller, Jessie Rowntree, Laura Predny, and Albert Lam for their interview, photos, illustration, and layout of the Ninja Gun interview; Megan Pants proclaims, "How does that Scaccia magic work? thanks to Ryan for his recorder for the Sass Dragon interview' (Mine refused to work. He produced one out of nowhere that my bike light batteries fit into.);"; Keith Rosson beered and blooded the Sass Dragons interview layout just right; My love is a bat thanks to Christian Kock, Baldo, and Canderson for the Hex Dispensers photos; Vinyl stretch marks on a bubble that's poised to pop? thanks to Joseph Steinhardt for "The Vinyl Record Bubble?" article; It's a "Where's Waldo" type deal and Ben Snakepit's in there thanks to Steve Larder for that illo.; Shit, dude, newsprint can be a fickle, contrasty medium and Chris Baxter's PhotoShop skills are a big reason why we're all supple tones and nice grays; Ian Silber and Newtim are coding their way into our digital hearts with their help with the website; Why is it that people who send items to be reviewed later sometimes "request" a written apology, a "retraction," or threaten to sue for "slander" for an opinion they willingly subjected themselves to? We're not merely cheerleaders for anyone who can release anything thanks to the following record, book, DVD, and zine reviewers: Kurt Morris, Ryan Leach, Corrine, Vincent, Lauren Trout, CT Terry, Kristen K, Dave Dillon, Dave Williams, Matt Average, Dondadondon, Mike Faloon, Jeff Proctor, Joe Evans III, Bryan Static, Art Ettinger, Reyan Ali, Jimmy Alvarado, Keith Rosson, Sean Koepenick, Will Kwiatowski, MP Johnson, Adrian Salas, and Craven Rock; "Please highlight all the dick and fart jokes. Make some buttons?" thanks to our profers and helpers Jenny Moncayo, Vincent, Juan Espinosa, Jeff Proctor, Adrian Salas, Sammy Lamba, and Jeremy Jones.*



What came first?

The (San Diego) Chicken

or...

The (Rhythm) Chicken?

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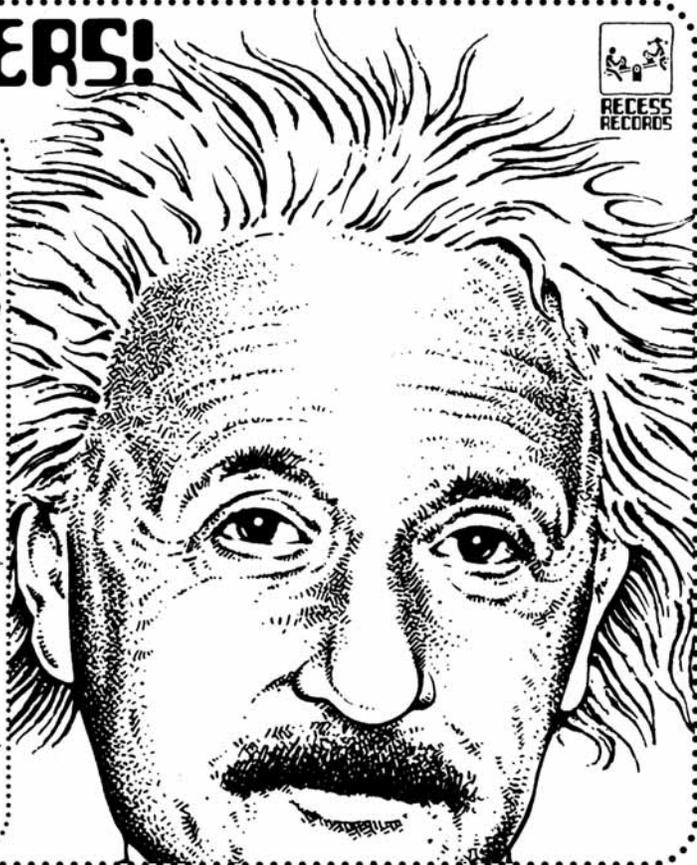
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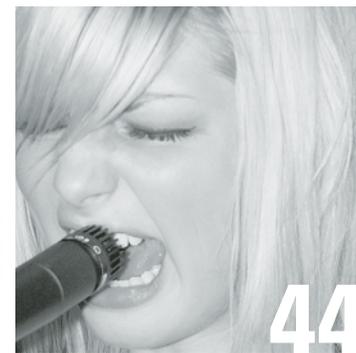
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“Nothing really happened on this Thursday night, but it was still something.”

Drinking with *Li Po*

“Some people call it lye-po,” the bartender answered when we asked for the name of the establishment.

He said this with a shrug, as though it made no real difference that people seemed to commonly confuse the name of a bar in San Francisco’s Chinatown with a fat-sucking surgery.

I don’t recall the bartender ever telling us his name. He was slightly shorter than tall and nearly bald under his neutral-hued baseball cap. He wore a denim button-down shirt, opened to reveal a white T-shirt. The shirt was baggy enough to hide any presence of a beer belly and the sleeves rolled up just high enough to deal with spilt alcohol. He spoke English with the faintest accent. Since we were in Chinatown, I presumed that it was Chinese, or maybe Taiwanese, which could maybe also be Chinese, depending on who you ask.

“But,” he added. “It’s called lee-po.”

Li Po was a sixth century Chinese poet. I learned this after the fact, when I was Googling the name in search of Yelp reviews and MySpace pages and ended up on Wikipedia. He was alternately known as Li Po and Li Bai, along with a few other similar pronunciations that make sense to those who translate Chinese characters into Roman letters. By whichever name, though, Li Po remains one of the best known and best loved poets in China’s history. He also loved the hooch, as made evident in verse bearing titles like “Drinking Alone with the Moon,” “Bringing in the Wine” and “Parting at a Wine Shop in Nan-King.” Had I known this before we entered the bar, it might have made for interesting conversation. However, I did not.

Li Po, the San Francisco bar, is located on Grant Avenue, a few blocks downhill from the Chinatown gate. It is a gaudy hole-in-the-wall, occupying a storefront maybe a quarter of the size of a similar joint in L.A. A dramatic, stuccoed arch marked the entrance,

its rough-textured façade forming sunbeams about six feet above the top of the doorway. Rusted iron signage marked by slowly deteriorating neon lights poked out from the faded gold exterior.

We never intended to spend the bulk of a Thursday night inside this watering hole. A few hours earlier, we ventured outside of our hotel in search of food, which we found in an unusually large Chinese restaurant lined with private dining stalls. After courses involving pork buns, egg foo yung, and the crispiest duck we had ever tasted, we had to continue walking. And so we rounded corners in an area where neighborhoods like Nob Hill, Chinatown, and North Beach all blur together to form part of a compact city lined with tiny, scruffy trinket shops, adult theaters, massage parlors, and family-style restaurants. We stumbled up and down hills through crowds of people, most of whom, for reasons I have not discerned, spoke German.

There were no German tourists inside Li Po. Three guys in baggy jeans and worn shirts exited the bar just as we entered, leaving only us, our bartender, and two screens broadcasting John McCain and Sarah Palin as they waved to the rhythm of uproarious applause.

The Republican Convention was everywhere in San Francisco. This might have seemed normal if we were in a hundred other U.S. cities, maybe even in certain sections of Los Angeles, but we were in a place where curbside vendors hawked Obama shirts like they were bootlegged concert tees. Minutes earlier inside City Lights, a bookstore that doesn’t let you forget that it published Allen Ginsberg’s pocket-sized opus *Howl and Other Poems*, McCain’s speech was obscured by what could have been construed as a debate between clerk and customer had the two not clearly been playing for the same team.

Back in the bar, we tried to ignore the television and silently waited for our drinks. There was nothing left to say about the election, the endless string of question-

dodging sound bites from politicians and shouts of talking heads having formed the background noise of our lives since last fall.

I swiveled the mini-straw between shards of ice in my vodka tonic before taking a sip.

“Mmm.”

“Is it good?” Carlos asked.

“Stiff,” I answered. “Hey, can you watch it for a second?”

I slid my drink towards my boyfriend and hopped off the barstool, looking over my left shoulder for a sign pointing to the ladies’ room.

Li Po is shaped like an upside-down L, narrow and shorter on the back, horizontal end. The bathrooms were located in a basement. I crept carefully down a ramshackle stairway, looking around as though something might pop out from behind a decrepit door.

The ladies’ room was the size of a storage closet; it’s only adornment was an exposed light bulb that dimly blinked like it was a few short hours away from death. Instead of paper towels and toilet paper, there were thin tissues about the quarter of a size of a sheet of Kleenex shoved into tiny dispensers. Inside the stall, in a corner of the bathroom that the light bulb did not reach, I slapped my hand across the wall in search of the dispenser. It was a bathroom whose awfulness could only be surpassed by the persistently dirty stalls of a slew of L.A. indie rock venues. Considering the fear of public bathrooms that I only overcame after reaching the legal drinking age, Li Po’s facilities should have turned me off from the bar all together. Instead, I trekked back up the stairs thinking what I would later tell Carlos.

“This is the best bar ever.”

Cantonese pop filtered through the venue as three or four people slowly trickled into the bar. Two hipster guys made their way over to the jukebox, spending minutes pouring through pages of CD booklets and

selecting enough songs to last an hour. Then I took my turn, picking out some Prince, Nena's early-'80s hit "99 Luftballons" (feeling inspired after trying to eavesdrop on German conversations all day) and what, in my tipsiness, I thought was Everything But The Girl but what, in reality, was some random 1990s rave-pop track that I sort of recalled, but couldn't place.

As we waited for the tunes, we ordered round after round of drinks, still amazed by the notion of being in a city where we didn't have to worry about who would be the designated sucker. Our bartender poured generously and courteously, telling us about some of the club nights that go down here. On Sundays, he said, there's a party called Sweater Funk that seems to be doing pretty well. It seemed like our sort of night, but we were leaving Saturday morning.

I started to ramble in the way that only happens when vodka is running through my bloodstream, stringing together recollections of a family vacation to San Francisco that occurred twenty years and a few weeks before this excursion. It was a trip that was so ridiculous that I have yet to write about it for fear that no one would believe it as truth. Carlos laughed through the whole thing like he had never heard the story before, although after nearly ten years together, I can't imagine that he hadn't heard about the one and only Ohanesian Family Vacation. Maybe he was holding down enough of a buzz to forget that his girlfriend had entered the so-drunk-she's-repeating-herself phase.

By the time the jukebox had finished the hipsters' Four Seasons-heavy playlist and dropped "99 Luftballons," I was teetering on the barstool while giving into to frequent fits of laughter. Then I realized that this was the English rendition of Nena's song.

"Damn!" I exclaimed. "I actually know all the words to the German version."

"You do?"

"Sure, I used to sing along to it when I was a kid."

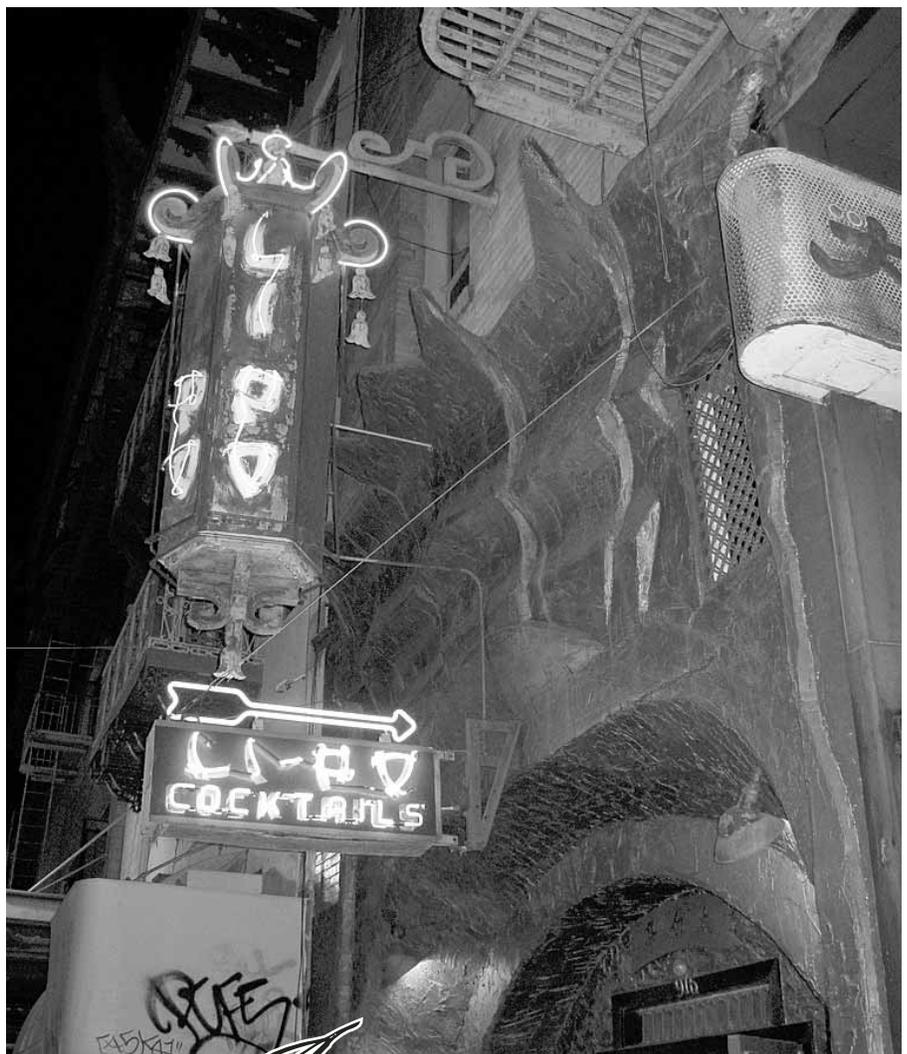
Of course, that doesn't mean that when I sing the song, it actually sounds like German.

Three songs later, when the piece that was supposed to be Everything But The Girl ended, we said goodbye to our bartender and headed back towards the hotel.

Carlos wrapped his arm around my waist as I giggled while stumbling out of Chinatown.

"I love Li Po."

"I love San Francisco."



LIZ O

 'm almost always sober, which might not automatically indicate a bad night, but usually does when you're sober in a bar.

Nothing really happened on this Thursday night, but it was still something. Back home, going out means chasing interviews and reviewing shows. Back home, going out means driving. And even if someone else is behind the wheel, there are still a slew of deadlines and meetings and other responsibilities that get in the way of having a good time. In L.A., I'm almost always sober, which might not automatically indicate a bad night, but usually does when you're sober in a bar. I'm constantly checking the time,

leaving early with the legitimate excuse that has become a mantra: "I'd love to stay, but I have to finish some work."

It took going out of town to realize that I've become the consummate party pooper. In San Francisco, though, with just me and my boyfriend and a bar named after a Chinese poet, there was no party-pooing to be had.

—Liz Ohanesian



RAZORCAKE 7



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

“I don’t ask how old you was, I asked if you’d like a beer.”

SUNK

The first ship I ever sailed sank in the Bay of Biscay off the coast of France on September 11, 2008.

The ship was a tall ship, a square-rigged brigantine. What does that mean? Imagine a pirate ship with white sails and a green hull and you’ve got the Asgard II. The ship was used by the Irish government as a sail-training vessel and its mission was to teach people the craft of seamanship circa 1830. Call me O’Ishmael? Hardly, but I’m getting ahead myself.

I got the news via an email from my father, who had a personal connection to the ship. My father grew up around boats at the Morris Yacht Club on City Island, New York, a blue collar boatyard with a bar. He was in the sailing club in college, commanded a swift boat in Vietnam, and had a twenty-year career as a Surface Warfare Officer in the Navy. He’s spent more time on ocean-going vessels than most people spend in cars.

My father had two passions: boats and all things Irish. In the mid-’80s, he was part of a committee that organized a series of regattas in cities up and down the Eastern seaboard. The races were in honor of St. Brendan the Navigator, the monk who some people believe sailed to America seven hundred years before Columbus.

(Sounds crazy, right? In West Virginia there are caves with Celtic runes that tell the story of the birth of Christ. The runes use a system called Ogham, an Irish alphabet that was abandoned in the 10th Century. Do the math and make your conclusions.)

My father was a believer in the legend of St. Brendan, but he knew there would be skeptics. So he arranged to have the Asgard II cross the Atlantic and make stops at each of the regattas. Even though the vessel Brendan would have sailed, a craft called a curragh and used by Irish fisher folk for centuries was much smaller, the beautiful brig, with its billowing sails and creaking masts, it was a symbol of St. Brendan’s unlikely crossing.

(In the late ’70s, the sailor/historian Tim Severin recreated the journey in a curragh he built with tools and materials that would have been available to Brendan.)

My family greeted the Asgard II when it arrived in Washington, D.C. As an able-bodied teenager, I spent several nights on the ship. A certain number of crewmembers were required to stay onboard while the ship was tied up to the pier. I volunteered to “stand watch” so that an extra crewmember could see the sights. Thus, I was a temporary, but very welcome, member of the crew.

It’s impossible to understate the impression the Asgard II made on me. The brig was built in County Wicklow in the early ’80s. Though it was equipped with a motor and the latest navigational equipment, it looked like something out of an adventure novel. Its wooden decks, hemp lines, and brass fittings were like something you’d see in a museum, but the boat was one hundred percent authentic and operational. Nothing was for show. Everything was essential.

There wasn’t much for me to do and I was given free reign of the ship. I explored every inch of it from stem to stern. I scared myself shitless by climbing up the masts and out on the yard arm and tried to imagine what it would be like in high seas and bad weather. I went below where the crew took their meals and slept in tiny bunks. The more time I spent onboard, the more familiar I became with its strange nomenclature—topside, starboard, bulkhead—but the green-hulled brig never became completely familiar to me. It never lost its magic. Every time I saw her it was like she’d sailed out of the pages of a book. Magic.

My first night onboard, one of the crewmembers told me he wanted to show me something. I followed him down a passageway on the main deck until we came to a cooler the size of a refrigerator. It was filled with Budweiser.

“Would you like a beer?”

“I’m not old enough.”

“I don’t ask how old you was, I asked if you’d like a beer.”

“Sure.”

I took a beer. And then another. At first I was furtive about it, slinking away to the forecandle to drink in the dark where no one would see me, but eventually I loosened up

and drank with the sailors, listened to their stories. One of them was a bit strange. He went around with all the hair on one side of his head completely shaved—including his mustache and beard—while the other half he left unmolested. For a while I thought he was two different people.

I had so much fun on the Asgard II that I volunteered for this duty again in Annapolis, Baltimore, and New York. Did I mention the ship was co-ed? Many of the trainees who’d sailed over from Ireland were women in their late teens and early twenties. It was a bit of a shock to be sent below to wake someone up in the dark, cramped berthing compartment and watch as a long white leg of a twenty-year-old woman in nothing but her skivvies emerged from the bunk. It was a lively environment for a horny teenager with unlimited access to beer.

All the action was in the captain’s quarters. It was more like a lounge with a full bar and a television. The crew gathered here to watch movies on the ship’s VCR, which in 1985 was still something of a novelty, and drink beer. There was a ceremony—I can’t remember the name of it now—in which honored guests were hung upside down from the overhead and given a glass of Harvey Wallbanger to guzzle. Entry into the club was predicated on getting the drink down without spilling it and the names of the initiates were recorded in a log.

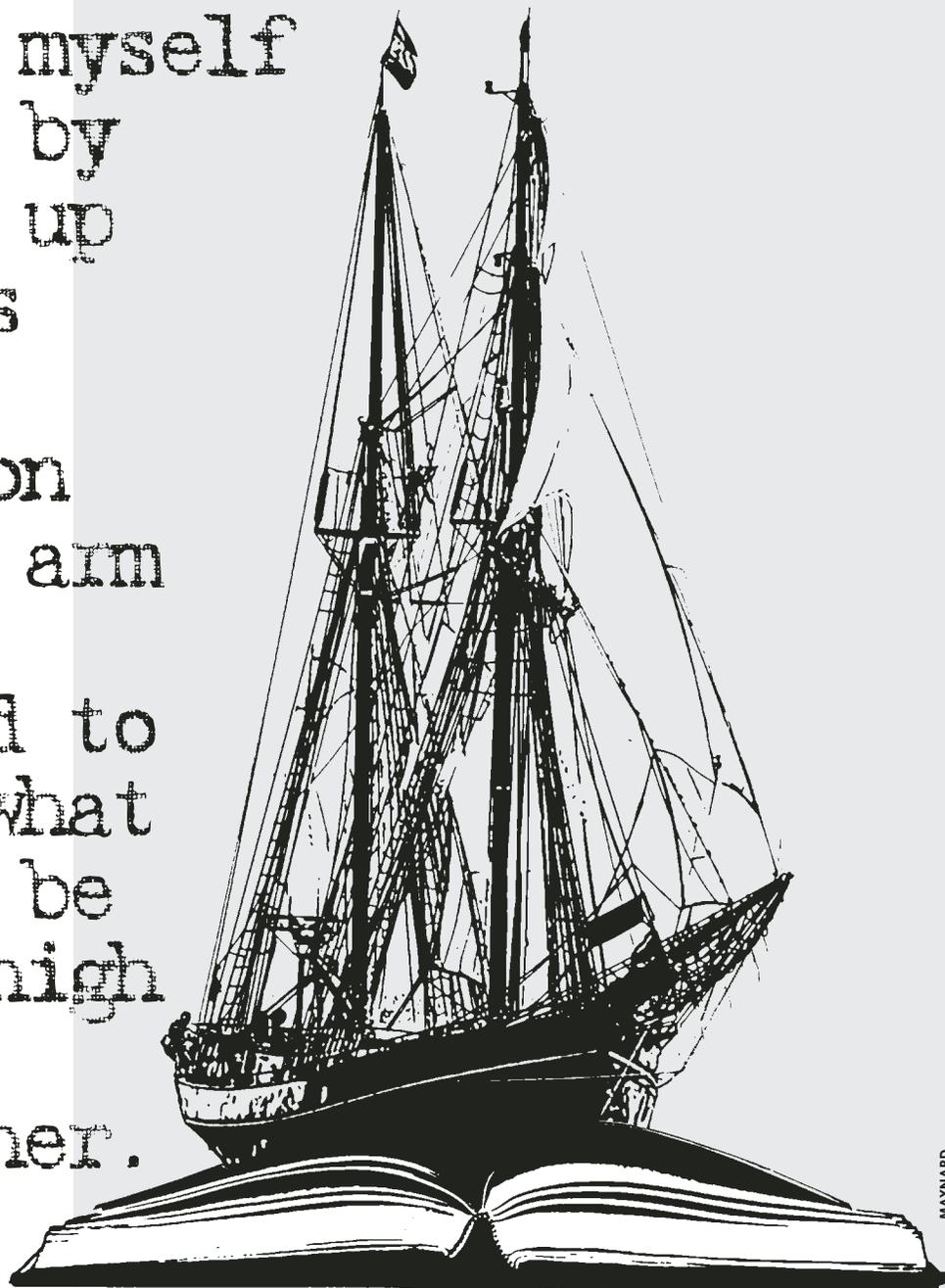
One of the crew members was determined to get me into the club before my father, so one night in New York I was hazed in, so to speak. Most people were so freaked out by being hung upside down that they spilled the drink all over themselves, but I’d heard my father and one of his friends discussing strategies for downing the beverage. So when my turn came I knew the trick: drink from the back of the cup and pour it over your top lip. It worked like a charm.

Looking back, my experiences onboard the Asgard II must have played a role in my decision to enlist in the Navy straight out of high school. At the very least, it’s the reason why I tend to romanticize my memories of my years before the mast even though I despised just about every minute of it. I wasn’t so naïve as to think that I’d be kicking back with

I scared myself
shitless by
climbing up
the masts

and out on
the yard arm

and tried to
imagine what
it would be
like in high
seas and
bad weather.



MAYNARD

the captain and drinking beer every night, but ships went places you couldn't get to in a car. The Asgard II took hold of my imagination and refused to let go.

No one knows what happened to the ship. Maybe there was a problem with the valve that regulated water intake. Perhaps it collided with a shipping container that had slipped off of a tanker. Or maybe it ran afoul of an old wreck. The Bay of Biscay was home to numerous German U-boat bases during WWII and the bottom is carpeted with the hulls of destroyed ships and submarines. All that is known for certain is the Asgard II started taking on water at a rate faster than the crew could pump it out. The mayday alarm was sounded and all of the trainees and crew were safely taken off the boat. A few

hours later the ship sank and now sits under two hundred feet of water.

I hadn't thought of the Asgard II in years, but when I heard the news that the ship had sunk, all the memories I'm sharing with you now rose to the surface. It's an empty feeling, like driving down a street where you used to live and discovering the house you grew up in is no longer there. A ship is many things, some of them contradictory: a symbol of limitless freedom and inflexible discipline, an authoritative father and life-sustaining mother, a place where you live yet the precise opposite of a home, a sanctuary from the elements but an affront to Nature, a giant prick slicing through the seas and a replica of a womb, a floating storehouse of elusive memories.

My fondest memory of the Asgard II is the time I sailed from the South Street seaport in Manhattan up the East River under all those magnificent bridges to City Island in Eastchester Bay. It was a short trip and one my father had sailed countless times as a youngster when he was in the sailing club. For all his work bringing the ship over, my father, the decorated naval officer, was given the honor of taking the helm for the journey. I don't think I can imagine how thrilled he was.

When my father asked if I wanted to steer, I nodded and slipped behind the spoked wheel of the helm. With my father's hand on my shoulder, I guided the ship out to sea.

—Jim Ruland





“Even Christians don’t say that the Holy Spirit is turquoise.”

The Dead Kennedys, Pituitary Glands, and Lettuce-Eating Aliens!

Attention all religion-hating punks! Yes, sit *down* Everyday Sunday (yes, that is a band)! And hey, no, no, Mr. Tooth And Nail Records, stop interrupting the class! Yes, that’s right. We already talked to your dad at the parent-teacher conference, and even He’s sick of listening to your crappy “punk” records!

Now that we’ve dispensed with the most obvious Examples of Religious Stupidity (ERS), on to the matter at hand! If you’ve been reading my last several columns, and, *especially*, if you’ve been cutting out each individual column and compiling them into a binder entitled, “Maddy Tight Pants Won’t Stop Writing About One Topic,” and then have periodically spent time reviewing said binder, you will have noticed that I’m in the middle (yes! The middle! And you hoped it was the end!) of an in-depth examination of religious oddities, which is to say... religion!

Up until now, I’ve focused on specific religions and cults, you know, the sort of beliefs that are likely not shared by anyone with the Dead Kennedy’s *Fresh Fruit for*

Rotting Vegetables in their record collection. But, lately it has come to my attention that some of you may be harboring what could only be called Even Stupider Religious Beliefs (ESRB)! Yes, there is something even more idiotic than signing up for the Jehovah’s Witnesses or believing in an epic North American race war that occurred hundreds of thousands of years ago (Mormonism!). Yes, there are apparently some beliefs that are deemed cooler, more enlightened, you know, *spiritual*, not religious. Because, I mean, man, *religion* is so dumb! But *spiritually*, now that’s something I can get behind!

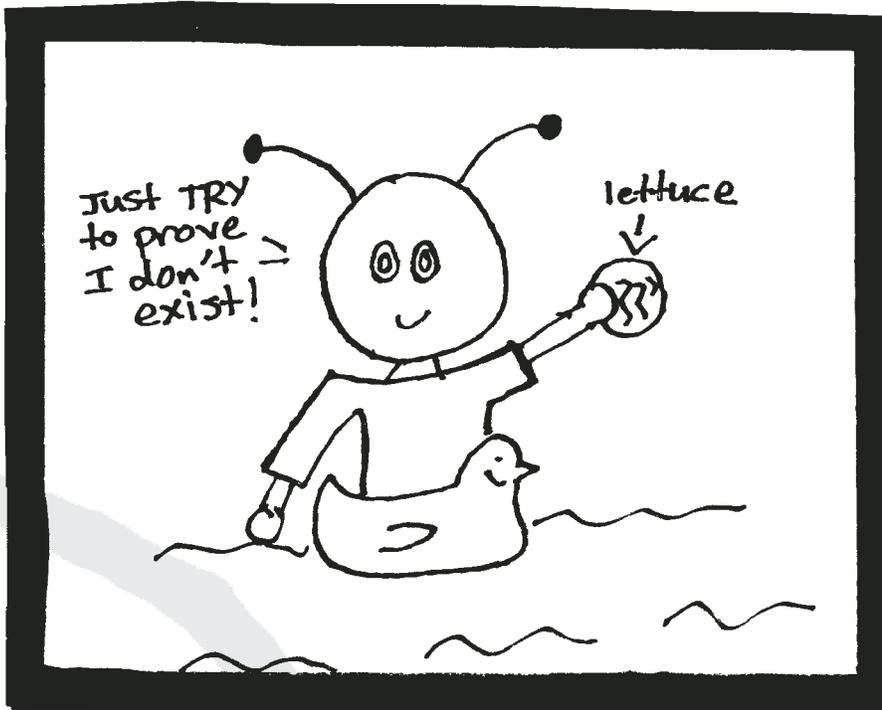
If you currently harbor this belief, I want you to do the following: 1.) Grab a large concrete block. 2.) Go over to your record collection. 3.) Take out each record, starting with the Adverts or the Avengers and work your way through until X, or maybe, embarrassingly enough, Zeke. 3.) Take the aforementioned concrete block in your hand and throw it down onto each and every record until all have been utterly destroyed. Addendum: You

are allowed to keep a handful of records, including Lagwagon, MxPx, and Veruca Salt, for the only thing more shameful than no records is, well, these records.

The point? Well, it’s simple. These days, it seems that plenty of seemingly well-meaning, intelligent people will reject religion and yet... here’s the deal. If you don’t believe in God or any particular religion or any set of beliefs, you are not religious *and* you are not spiritual. Yes, you’ll simply have to face reality on this one. If you don’t believe in something, you have no faith. This point seems almost too dumb to mention (although, actually, mentioning dumb points is usually the basis for this very column), but apparently, plenty of people have not yet stumbled across the word agnostic, which implies lack of faith rooted in skepticism and the inability to ever know the truth. And this implies that you actually care about the truth, and are, in fact, prioritizing knowing what is actually going on over believing in something that may or may not be true.

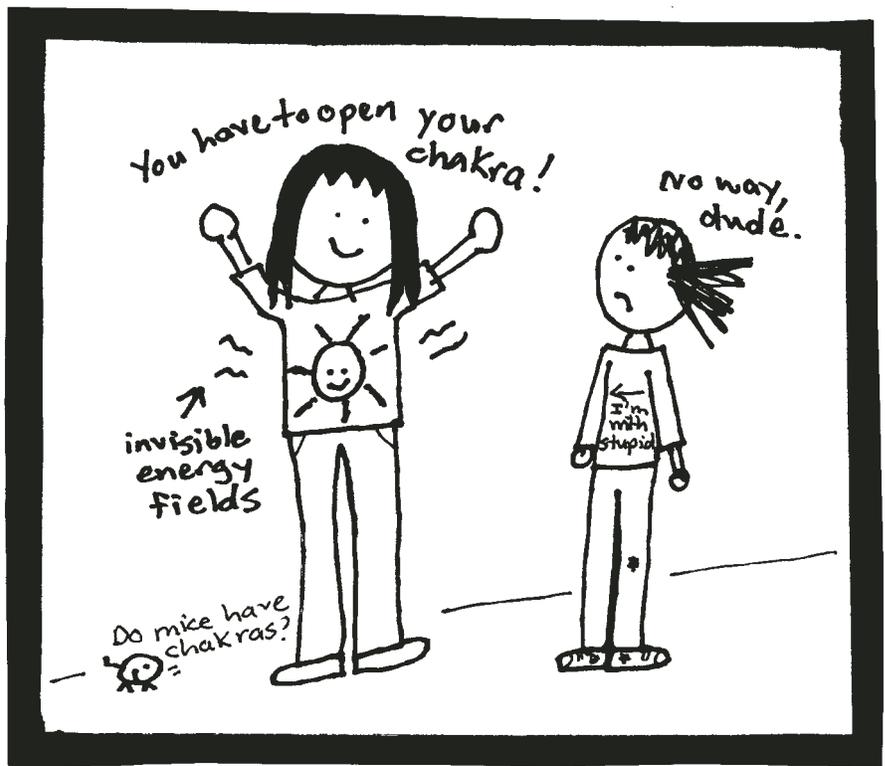
So, what’s with the spirituality tag? Upon deeper probing, I have discovered that many punks have decided that, although organized religion is like, totally for their lame parents, there are some mystical forces out there, and you just need to be attuned to them, you know? Case in point: one of my friends recently told me about an incident a few years back in which he let a bunch of punks stay at his house in preparation for a massive leftist political protest. The punks got drunk the night before and, in the age-old tradition of punks everywhere, were too hung over to attend the protest. When my friend returned, he found that the punks had lit candles in a precarious fashion all over his house, threatening to melt his Operation Ivy records and burn up the collected works of Gus Hall! So, my friend did what any reasonable person would, and blew out the candles, only to be confronted by said punks, who informed him, in all seriousness, that he had just extinguished their spells. For shame!

Now that we’ve followed the premise of most compilation records, and meandered all over the place, it’s time to focus! Let’s narrow the scope of our research and pinpoint just one vaguely punk-related “spiritual” belief. The chakra.



Everyone has a right to believe whatever they want.

However, everyone also has a right to ridicule whatever they want.



Yes, chakras. I'm guessing that many of us have been in perfectly reasonable conversations with apparently reasonable people, *cool* people even, only to have that dreaded word slip out. Our initial reaction might be to, you know, let bygones be bygones, and, you know, everyone has a right to believe whatever they want. However, everyone also has a right to ridicule whatever they want. And so here we are.

By definition, chakras are "energy centers in the spine located at major branchings of the human nervous system, beginning at the base of the spinal column and moving upward to the top of the skull," or at least that's what the internet told me. The internet goes on to elaborate, "Chakras are considered to be a point or nexus of metaphysical and/or biophysical energy of the human body." According to various Hindu texts, chakras come from the energy formed during the world's creation, which lies "coiled and sleeping" at the base of the spine. Various practices, including certain kinds of yoga, aim to cause this energy to rise upwards from the lower spine, until reaching the top of the head, at which point union with God is achieved.

Okay. If we're going to make fun of a son being born from a virgin mother, or a religious command to take multiple wives, in what way exactly does the meeting of an energy field in the head which signifies an union with God seem, um, reasonable?

To continue, chakras occasionally get closed and then need to be opened. According to certain chakra believers, each chakra has a different color and is associated with locus symbols with varying numbers of

petals. Chakras are also thought to be linked to the endocrine system, because, you know, why not?

In general parlance, you might hear people talking about opening their chakra to new experiences, or to love, or to deep sadness, or to pituitary health. Others talk about "needing to get my chakras in harmony." Or needing to remove blockages in said chakras.

Now, while this may seem like an explanation, or at least a definition of sorts, upon closer examination, it is neither. This still does not explain what a chakra *is*. How do we know where it's located? What does it look like? Why, pray tell, is it not visible, and yet it has a color and a specific number of lotus leaves? I mean, even Christians don't say that the Holy Spirit is turquoise. Another way of testing this theory is to replace the word chakra with something else, like, I don't know, Cereal Energy Centers. Let's try it. "Cereal Energy Centers begin at the spine, moving upwards, and are the locus point for biophysical and metaphysical energy." Does that make any more or less sense? No. At least with the Jehovah's Witnesses, replacing the word Jehovah with the phrase Nutri-Grain bar actually results in their belief system making less sense.

And then we arrive at the same problem we are faced with when examining any religious belief. At a certain point, you can't prove it or disprove it because it exists beyond the realm of human logic. In other words, try though you might to refute the existence of an alien who survives only on lettuce and prefers to spend his time in shallow swimming pools wearing kid-sized,

duck-shaped flotation devices, if said alien is *invisible*, well, you're fucked. "Dude, that's just the point! You can't see it!" And the lettuce? "That's invisible, too!" Man, these people have thought of everything.

So, although you can't dispute the existence of chakras using a chakra-based belief system, you can refute it based on common sense. I recommend starting like this:

You: Do you see this rare Misfits bootleg?

Chakra believer: Whoa, dude! Lemme see that! I've been searching ebay for that bootleg for the last nine years!

You: Hold on just a sec. How do you know that this bootleg really exists?

Chakra believer: Come on, dude. What the fuck's that supposed to mean? You're holding it right there in your hands!

You: Well, according to logic and reason, I am. But in your world of illogical energy systems, these rules apparently don't apply to you. In your world, we don't follow rules of logic.

Chakra believer: Wait a sec...

You: Which is why you really shouldn't be upset when I break this record in half.

Chakra believer: No! That's crazy!

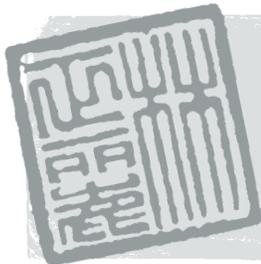
You: "Exactly." [sound of record snapping in half]

Only, of course, the broken record is actually your older brother's Pearl Jam *Ten* LP, so no harm done.

The End!
—Maddy

P.S. Send your discarded chakras to me c/o Razorcake.





MONSTER OF FUN

AMY ADOYZIE

“Tits just
pissed
on me!”

Live Nude Karma

He asked for it.

He penned his own fate in destiny's ledger when he named those kittens. They were salt and pepper grey sisters whose forlorn lives began when they were given to Graham who, in his limited abilities, named them Tits and Ass. Graham and his sophomoric humor didn't recognize the responsibility one bore in caring for and naming domestic pets. His mistake would eventually catch up with him as the universal creed of karma made itself known.

The notion of *karma* is the idea that an action a person takes in the present will somehow effect and create experiences in the future. It's cause and effect with ju-ju. Karma might reveal itself when someone is most vulnerable, to spotlight the consequences of their decision beneath the harsh light of *what-goes-around-comes-around*. When, exactly, might a person be most vulnerable? Perhaps it is when they are as naked as the moment they popped out of their mama's special bathing suit area. It is when we are without these woven pieces of fabric covering our bare flesh that we feel most susceptible to the elements.

If you're one to believe in reincarnation, Tits and Ass themselves may be the ones to blame for their fortune (or lack thereof). Maybe those little balls of ash-colored fur were rotten souls in a former life and were being punished as they were reborn into house cats named for salacious body parts.

Ass's life ended prematurely when she crossed a busy street, which left Tits distraught and ill: a symptom that a cat is suffering from an ailment or grief over the loss of a family member is that she will begin pissing anywhere but in her litter box. That's a feline way of saying, "Dude, take me to the effin' vet. I feel like shit." But Graham heeded no such warnings and figured Tits would eventually heal from the pain of losing her best friend and sister—the A to her T.

It was months after this tragedy that I found myself laying in Graham's bed, a brand new \$700 queen-sized, pillow-top mattress that felt like a cotton ball cloud on top of spongy marshmallows. It was heavenly, even with Graham awkwardly groping me as I tried to drift off to sleep.

I ain't no prude, but I just wasn't into it. As it were, this was the last night I'd spend in his bed. We had been dating for months and I could no longer overlook his character flaws (like naming his cats Tits and Ass wasn't enough of a deal breaker) such as poor taste in music (unintelligible screamo masquerading as math rock) and a bad eye for design (bland vector drawings were his forte). *We* were fizzing and his last ditch effort to get fresh with me got him nowhere and forced me to the edge of the bed.

Tits must have sensed my discomfort and hopped into bed to distract Graham who was dressed only in his thin boxers and laying on his side. She slowly climbed up behind him and crawled onto his bony hip.

The mattress jolted suddenly.

"Fuck!" Graham jumped out of bed, teetered on his lanky legs, yanked off his underpants, and tossed them into the corner of the room. "Tits just pissed on me!"

I looked behind to see the cat scurry away and a small puddle where Graham once laid.

"And the bed," I added nonchalantly. "She peed the bed too."

I leisurely rolled out of bed, stood back, and watched as a naked Graham pounced onto his new mattress with this bath towel. His long limbs perched on all fours, every freckle of his red-headed body exposed and his flaccid penis swayed from side to side as he furiously scrubbed out cat piss.

If that wasn't karmic retribution, I don't know what is.

We broke up the next day.

The comfort of the rising steam and heat from the stream of a hot shower after a seemingly endless, arduous day cannot be understated. It is sometimes the last refuge one has in a space void of any semblance of solace. It's simple enough: heated water forced through pinholes from a showerhead nozzle. A spray of warmth to drown out your tiresome day, to sooth and wash away all those miserable minutes you were awake when you would have rather not been.

My first four months in Bangladesh were rough, exhaustive fifteen-hour days of continuous meetings, research, and planning. Worse even was my lack of outlets for decompression: no friends around and dimly lit bars to whine about work in. It was just me, a dozen other teachers, and a ten-story building amidst the chaos of a developing nation's second largest city in a Muslim country. It was much akin to the antithesis of fun.

And, of course, as the gods willed it, we had no hot water.

I wasn't sure what I had done to deserve this. Had I coveted too much (Hamm's, Gus and Marah's Crunchitos, boys)? Should I have stayed at that brain-numbingly boring new media job at the local public television station, fulfilling my parents dreams while giving myself a career lobotomy? Was I in Bangladesh for all the wrong reasons—to assuage first-world guilt—rather than out of pure, altruistic motivations? How had I become so karmically damned that our modern building was without hot water for those desperate nights?

My brain began to fry on an average of four and a half hours of sleep every night and under the weight of being responsible for the education of 128 underserved young women from south Asia. A pixel went out in my left eye; there was a small grey splotch right in the lower center field of vision. I was too terrified to self-diagnose myself via the internet and a friend from home did it for me. She said that I had a floater, something to do with retinal gel that gooped up in my eyeball. I figured it was from stress and lack of sleep.

I found myself disturbingly sleep-deprived, stressed to the max, and possibly exhibiting signs of early retinal detachment in the middle of a country where the literacy rate is less than half and people leave the city to get serious medical care (if they can afford it). It was during one of those nights in the early months where the only remedy I could figure for my condition was a hot shower.

The combination of hope and stupidity has lead me to do many things in vain. Drinking for courage, pining after boys who won't even acknowledge my existence,



AMY ADOYZIE

Dude, take me to the effin' vet. I feel like shit.

deluding myself with pipedreams about how I'm going to be next Asian not-gay David Sedaris. But on one particular night, I turned the left shower knob, hoping by sheer force of will that the water that jetted out of the showerhead would be heated. All in vain.

I stood there, without a stitch of clothing on, next to the flowing spout that formed a tepid pool of slightly chilled water at the drain by my feet. My fatigue and frustration coalesced into me sobbing loudly, physically unable to stand beneath the lukewarm shower, pleading

with the powers that be and asking why I was at that juncture. I was a pathetic, cold, naked sight.

The only way I could justify that sad scene was to think that perhaps, in my moment of stripped vulnerability, I was paying karma forward. That some of us live in discomfort, sacrificing convenience and some bits of sanity, in hope/vain that somewhere, someone may benefit from this.

I asked for it.

And I wonder how about the folks who have given up much more for the betterment

of others. Or how simple, small selfless acts can set in motion karmic energy that may find its way back to complete a circle (if you're lucky, while you're naked).

Mind your Ps and Qs, don't name your pets T and A, and we'll all get along fine as karma winds its way.

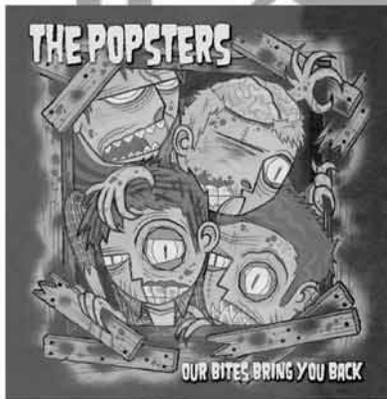
—Amy Adoyzie
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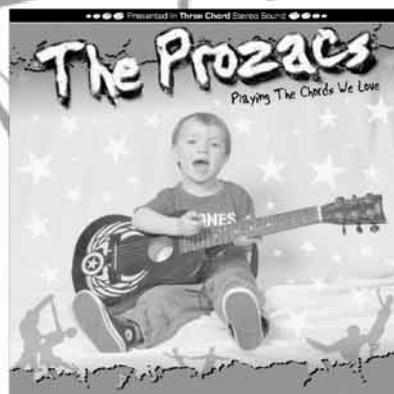


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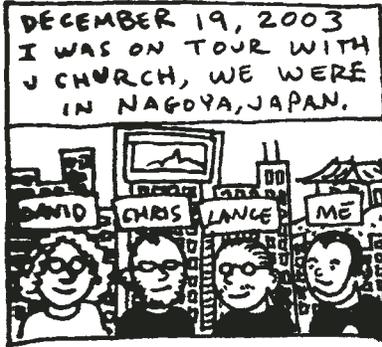
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“Imagine that
you have a
catheter in
your penis.”

DEPORT KID ROCK or NO, SERIOUSLY, DEPORT KID ROCK

...so i'm at this wedding and i'm dancing with a bunch of roller derby girls, which isn't as great a proposition as it seems, because i have been compelled ((against nature)) to dance in pathetic succession to the Village People, KC & the Sunshine Band, and MC Hammer ((what, no "Cotton-Eyed Joe?")). As the DJ spins his next tune, however, it seems that emancipation from this veritable acoustic gulag is upon me, as i hear what sounds, to my brutally repressed eardrums, like the tiny, yet mighty crocus—the first sprout of aural sanity poking its way up through the yellow snow of the wedding DJ's crimes against the ear: "Werewolves of London" by Warren Zevon. Now, in case you have not been properly indoctrinated in such matters, "Werewolves of London" is a pretty cool song. I used to own the 45 when i was a kid ((still own it, actually)), and it was, in fact, the first song i ever played with a band—although said band never learned more than that one song, and never played out ((we were called "Static Cling," we practiced three times in January 1980 in Todd Truttman's basement, and i was the piano player, which is a great and exalted role if the one song in your repertoire is, in fact, "Werewolves of London." We broke up over a dispute as to what our second song should be: The singer and i wanted "Blitzkrieg Bop"; everybody else thought we should learn "Heartbroken Bopper" by the Guess Who. We could not reconcile this wedge issue, thus the singer and i split and formed the Rat Eaters [[later dba "Suburban Mutilation"]]. In retrospect, it would probably be cooler to tell my kids that i was in a band who played "Heartbroken Bopper" by the Guess Who in 1980 than it would be to tell them that i was in a band who played the ubiquitous "Blitzkrieg Bop," but i don't HAVE any kids, so i obviously made the correct decision)). So, yes, like a clarion call to my reptilian forebrain ((the part that's too "dumb" to somehow justify the aesthetic crime of publicly dancing to "Shake Your Booty" under any circumstance, regardless of whatever tangentially compelling social situation is urging me to do otherwise)), "Werewolves of London" is suddenly Ye Olde Metaphorical Breath of Fresh Air—sweet release from the nails-on-a-chalkboard thumping and squawking of KC Hammer and MC Sunshine Band and dancing construction workers and the like. Or so i thought. Suddenly—FOR NO GOOD

REASON—the "Werewolves" piano riff veers off into the unexpected ((and quite unwelcome)) realm of some hoary dumbshit croaking about being younger and sitting in some car with a chick drinking whiskey and smoking pot and shit. The singer sounds like a retarded Bob Seger. I mean, more so than usual ((disclaimer: I actually kinda like some Bob Seger. "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man" continues to maintain its lock on the G2 spot on my Rock-Ola® 440, and i could never really figure out the words to "Silver Bullet" by the Briefs anyway)) ((speaking of the Briefs, whilst attending the Wild Weekend Power Pop Fest in Austin, i met up with Steve E. Nix [[currently of Steve E. Nix's® Cute Lepers featuring Steve E. Nix®]], who asked the one great Rock & Roll Question that all must expect to be asked at some point in time, yet none can truly prepare for: "Did you ever find that bottle of pee i put in your van in 2002?" The sad thing is that i actually DON'T remember if we found it or not. Eh, just a little bonus for the van's current owner, i reckon. Boris the Sprinkler delivers VALUE! VALUE! VALUE! Oh well, the last time i saw the Briefs in Austin, they were duct taping records to my pajamas, so i reckon i should consider myself fortunate that this latest social exchange was largely adhesive-free)) ((in any event, since i'm up, here is the capsule breakdown of said fest: **1. The Cute Lepers** were great, and if you've been scratching your noggin over what i want for Christmas, that trio of backing vocalists ought to do nicely. YES, I WANT THE COMPLETE SET! Kindly consult my Gift Registry for further details; **2. The Ugly Beats** were great, and walked into the crowd whilst playing; **3. The Black & Whites** were great, but i was eating a chicken sandwich at Casino El Camino and missed every song but "Fucked Up Heart," which is treacherously akin to the time i went to Chicago to see the Ramones and Iggy Pop in the '80s, and was intentionally lollygagging so as to miss what was rumored to be the opening band—some useless new college rock darling piece of shit called Jane's Addiction—and i got to the show just in time to find out i was missing the fucking DICKIES [[one of my favorite bands of all time]], as opposed to the useless Jane's Addiction—consequently, my first Dickies experience consisted, in its entirety, of me seeing Leonard Graves Phillips on his knees, arms extended, singing "Gi-gaaa-aaa-aan-torr!" about two times and then following

that up with "thanks, good night!" Arrgh! **4. Nikki Corvette** was great, and appeared to be quite tickled by the fact that my travel companion and i had once DONE IT in my car while listening to the Nikki & The Corvettes album [[although it was technically "Front Seat Love," on accounta my back seat is really tiny and i'm kinda tall; **5. The Pointed Sticks** were great, except that they saved "Out Of Luck" for their encore, which is DOUCHE beyond imagining. AS OF 6:24 AM CDT 10/06/08, ANY TIME A BAND FAILS TO PLAY THEIR MOST WELL-KNOWN SONG DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR REGULAR SET, SAVING IT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE ENCORE, THEN COMES OUT FOR SAID ENCORE AND SAYS "SO, DO YOU WANT TO HEAR [[name of most well-known song]]?", YOUR DUTY AS A CROWD MEMBER IS TO SHRUG AND MUTTER "NO, NOT REALLY" AND WALK AWAY DISINTERESTEDLY!!! IT IS WRITTEN!!! **6. Even the Boss Martians** were pretty great, though their singer looked like a cross between this meathead roller derby ref we always called "Refbot" and my old roommate/bandmate Jamie circa 1982 [[tragic for all parties concerned, i can assure you]] and their bass player, who significantly resembles the bass player in Static Cling [[whom, i will point out, was solidly on the "Heartbroken Bopper" side of the coin]] rode around on my shoulders for a while, as if i were the local equivalent of Time Bomb Tom; **7. 20/20** were great, which stunned me, as i had seen them before and they were Noticeably Other Than Great; **8. Gentleman Jesse & His Men** were great, Billy Childish/Greg Norton mustache wax be danged; **9. the Tranzmitors** were great, AND nattily attired; **10. The Paul Collins Beat** were eventually great [[although they led off with that dopey "The Kids Are The Same" song off the second album, which i once heard on WAPL when i was working my high school job of gutting chickens and always thought was cheesy]], and i will flat-out state that Paul was about as friendly and gentlemanly a gent as i've ever met; i can't say as i've ever met anyone who was quite as cool with a lukewarm review as the rightly esteemed Mr. Collins was, so a \$5.98 list price HUZDAH his way! [[I used to sorta try to comb my hair like him when i was a freshman in high school; this is, however, no longer the case]] [[also, in case you've been wondering this since 1979 like the rest of us,



RYAN GELATIN

the first line of “USA” is “L.A., S.F., Denver, Chi.” I always kinda thought it was something like “F-A-S-S, double-T.” *Chi?*] He wound up eventually getting to all the hits, it was great; and **11**. The Boys were great, even though they had no piano player. *I should have volunteered! I know “Werewolves of London!”* Ah yes...“Werewolves of London”...) So, yes. The song in question—my theoretical Balm in Gilead—is NOT “Werewolves of London” at all, but is, in fact, some yokel-rock ditty which merely STEALS ((er, i mean, “samples”)) the piano riff from “Werewolves of London,” then staggers out of it and into some pointless reminiscing about whiskey or something. Lame—but, at THIS point, MERELY lame. That will change. Suddenly—and again, for no good reason—the song lurches out of short-school-bus-Bob-Seger mode and IN to a SECOND sample. Now, at this point in time, you might be asking yourself “*whatever was that second sample, Rev. Nørb? Could it have been ‘Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner,’ the b-side of ‘Werewolves?’ Or was this sample extracted from other fitting, contemporaneous source material, such as ‘Just Another Night’ by Ian Hunter, or topical equivalent?’* Oh, no. No no no no no. Much worse. Much MUCH worse. Instead of thieving from another song reasonably similar to “Werewolves of London”—which is one thing—this nincompoop segues into—wait for it—wait for it—“SWEET HOME

ALABAMA” by fucking LYNYRD SKYNYRD. Yes, THAT’S RIGHT. WARREN ZEVON and fucking LYNYRD SKYNYRD ripped off in the SAME FUCKING SONG. **THE SAME FUCKING SONG!!!** Imagine that you have a catheter in your penis (“it’s easy if you try”). That catheter is hooked up to a water cooler, filled with ten gallons of supercooled name-brand ginger ale, pressurized to remain liquid at temperatures below freezing. Further imagine that this cooler is hooked up to a gas generator that has been modified to burn nitroglycerin for increased performance. Now, imagine that the catheter, instead of directing fluids AWAY from your penis, has been repurposed to direct high volumes of fluids back INTO your penis. Now imagine some fuckhead with a cowboy just JUMPING ON THE PEDAL THAT TURNS ON THE NITRO-BURNING GENERATOR THAT BLASTS THE TEN GALLONS OF SUB-FREEZING NAME-BRAND GINGER ALE BACK UP YOUR DICK AT THE RATE OF LIKE A GALLON PER SECOND. **That**, my friends, is what Kid Rock’s brain-damaged combination of “Werewolves of London” and “Sweet Home Alabama” feels like to me. I mean, Alabama’s emitted some fine product over the years—the *Dixie Derby Girls! The Huntsville Stars! Beautiful Bobby Eaton and Loverboy Dennis Condrey!*—but no one should need to be told that mixing “Sweet Home Alabama” with “Werewolves of

the LIVING EMBODIMENT OF AMERICAN WRONGITUDE.

London” is kinda like mixing bleach and ammonia—if you do it, you should either fucking die or be dragged out of the laundry room by your mom and be made to promise never to do it again. And, needless to say, it should come as no surprise that budding genius Kid Rock is a staunch Republican. *Iraq War? SURE! Mix Zevon and Skynyrd? SURE! Trillion dollar budget deficit? SURE! It’s ALL GOOD, bro’!* This doesn’t even take that idiotic “American Warrior” video they show before movies into account, where he sings some woefully misguided thud-rock dirge about how it’s cool to join the National Guard ((after seeing this video, you’ll be rushing to join the Iranian army, where at least they have the good sense to ban western “rock” music under pain of death)). I cannot STAND this bozo. I lament the fact that his contamination is allowed to run unchecked, exerting influence on the feeble-minded, because this dude is the LIVING EMBODIMENT OF AMERICAN WRONGITUDE. As proof of this, i can only turn to America’s sole remaining beacon of light in the darkness of insanity—roller derby. While recently announcing at the Fall Brawl II roller derby tournament in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, one of my colleagues asked me what i thought of the impending Ohio Rollergirls/Dixie Derby Girls matchup, to which i replied “Columbus vs. Huntsville? That’s like ‘Hang On Sloopy’ vs. ‘Sweet Home Alabama,’ and may the best song win!”

Ohio won.

Love,
Nørb



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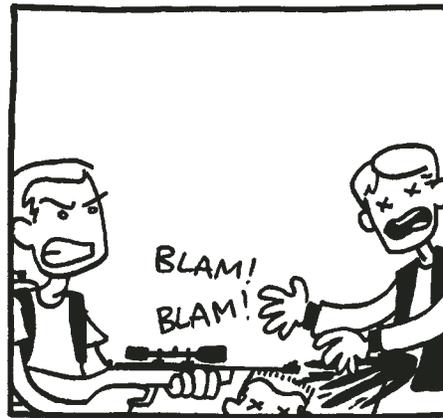
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“A poster chicken for drunken efficiency!”

Radishes, Cucumbers, and Pizzas! Oh my!

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

My eyes cracked open and squinted to see the little travel alarm clock right in front of my face. 8:24 AM, time to get up. I closed my eyes and tried to analyze my current state. My head hurt, but it was a familiar hurt. After stretching, rubbing my eyes, and the mother of all yawns, I concluded that I was hung over. My eyes opened again to see that I was fully clothed and lying on my old bed in Milwaukee. Milwaukee... huh. That would explain the hangover. I slid my legs off the side of the bare mattress and sat up to hold my head in my hands. Milwaukee, Milwaukee, why was I in Milwaukee? Then my brain finally understood why my ears heard a beeping sound. 8:25, time to get up. **HOLY SHICKEN! TIME TO GET UP!**

I grabbed my crappy Polish travel clock and shut it up. Luckily, I was already fully clothed and ready to go, a poster chicken for drunken efficiency! My first order of business was to stumble over to my old toilet. The previous night was spent at the Cactus Club, the Palomino, and Club Garibaldi inhaling gallons upon gallons of Pabst and Blatz. Now I was sitting on cold, white porcelain with a case of the ol' "crapst and splatz." After a most eventful explosion of half-digested birdseed, I felt a bit more in touch with reality. Just then, I heard a groan from the living room. I splashed water on my face and tidied up.

Out in the living room, lying half on the couch and half on the floor, was my brave comrade and vastly decorated soldier in the war against our livers, Ruckus O'Reily. He was also fully clothed, though somewhat disheveled from a night of maximum tomfoolery. "RUCKUS!!!! Ready for a beer?" I asked. He groaned again. "No... yeah." Moments later, I returned from the kitchen with two warm cans of High Life. This was truly a classic Milwaukee morning. We sat out on the porch and with our twelve-ounce eye-openers, anxiously pieced together the morning's battle plans. Another Milwaukee festival morning was underway.

Thirty minutes later we were in the Pick-n-Save parking lot, giggling our way to the entrance. Once inside, we grabbed a shopping cart and headed straight for the

produce section. Still mildly hung over, and with a few cans of morning ruckus juice in me, I began to scour the fruits and veggies for the best deals. Cucumbers! Two for ninety-nine cents! Radishes! Eighty-nine cents a bag! The bottom of the cart was filling up already. Ruckus grew anxious and pulled the cart away saying, "C'mon. Let's find the pizzas." Then I saw the box of ice-cream cones. Ninety-nine cents. I grabbed it and threw it in the cart.

Ruckus was scouring the freezer doors in the frozen foods section. Then he found the golden deal he'd been dreaming of. They had these crappy little eight-inch frozen pizzas. They were two for three dollars, or some other such ridiculous price. The shopping cart was filling up fast. On the way to the cashier, I made a quick detour down the bakery aisle. I had to pick up the magic item which would ensure a most victorious festival: one bag of flour. Before exiting the bakery aisle, I instinctively grabbed a loaf of the most generic white bread they had. Our shopping list fulfilled, we settled into one of the register lines.

[Radishes? Pizzas? Cucumbers? Ice-cream cones? Flour? I'm almost afraid to ask, Mr. Chicken, but what demented sort of festival picnic were you planning? –Dr. S.]

Just then, I looked ahead of us and noticed a Fuel Café T-shirt. I looked up to see my old friend Davey (formerly of the Promise Ring, now of Maritime). He and his wife saw Ruckus and me with our bloodshot eyes and cart full of mismatched festival grub. "Hey Chicken! Cucumbers? Bread? Flour? Radishes? Crappy little pizzas? Oh! That's right! It's the South Shore Frolics today, isn't it!" It most certainly was. The South Shore Frolics, the Milwaukee southside's most anticipated Saturday of the year! Here in my old neighborhood, there was Christmas in December, and then the *real* Christmas in July. The South Shore Frolics is a Christmas of beer, kielbasa, and an army of drunk, shirtless elves on skateboards.

(Okay, so here it comes, this year's parade report. I knew you couldn't hold it in any longer. –F.F.)

Ruckus and I were already tight for time. We sped over to Bill's house where this year's float was being readied for another year of punk rock mayhem on wheels. Bill is part

owner of Milwaukee's Rushmor Records. He is also one grade-A, first-class punk rock gentleman. Not only had he donated his truck as the float, he was also filling it with coolers of Pabst and loads and loads of *candy*. He later even provided a young female to help toss candy to the kids! Then Bill is content to just sit with the other cretins outside Rushmor and watch the mayhem roll by. Three clucks for Bill and Dan at Rushmor! CLUCK! CLUCK! CLUCK! Then Bill's girlfriend Kate comes out and hands us all her home-made egg biscuit breakfast things. Ruckus and I inhaled them like kings.

While waiting in line for the parade to begin, Ruckus, the candy girl, and I are just sitting there on the float soaking up Pabst after glorious Pabst. Then we are most surprised when one of Milwaukee's finest strolls up to us and actually *scolds* us for drinking in public! In the middle of a neighborhood-wide festival which is damn near waist deep in beer, he singles us out and tells us that we should at least conceal our beverages out of sight. We all stare in doe-eyed befuddlement. This cop was attempting to squelch our god-given right to fun! After he walked away, I duct-taped three new empty cans to the truck and we opened three more. Cops...huh! You gotta wonder.

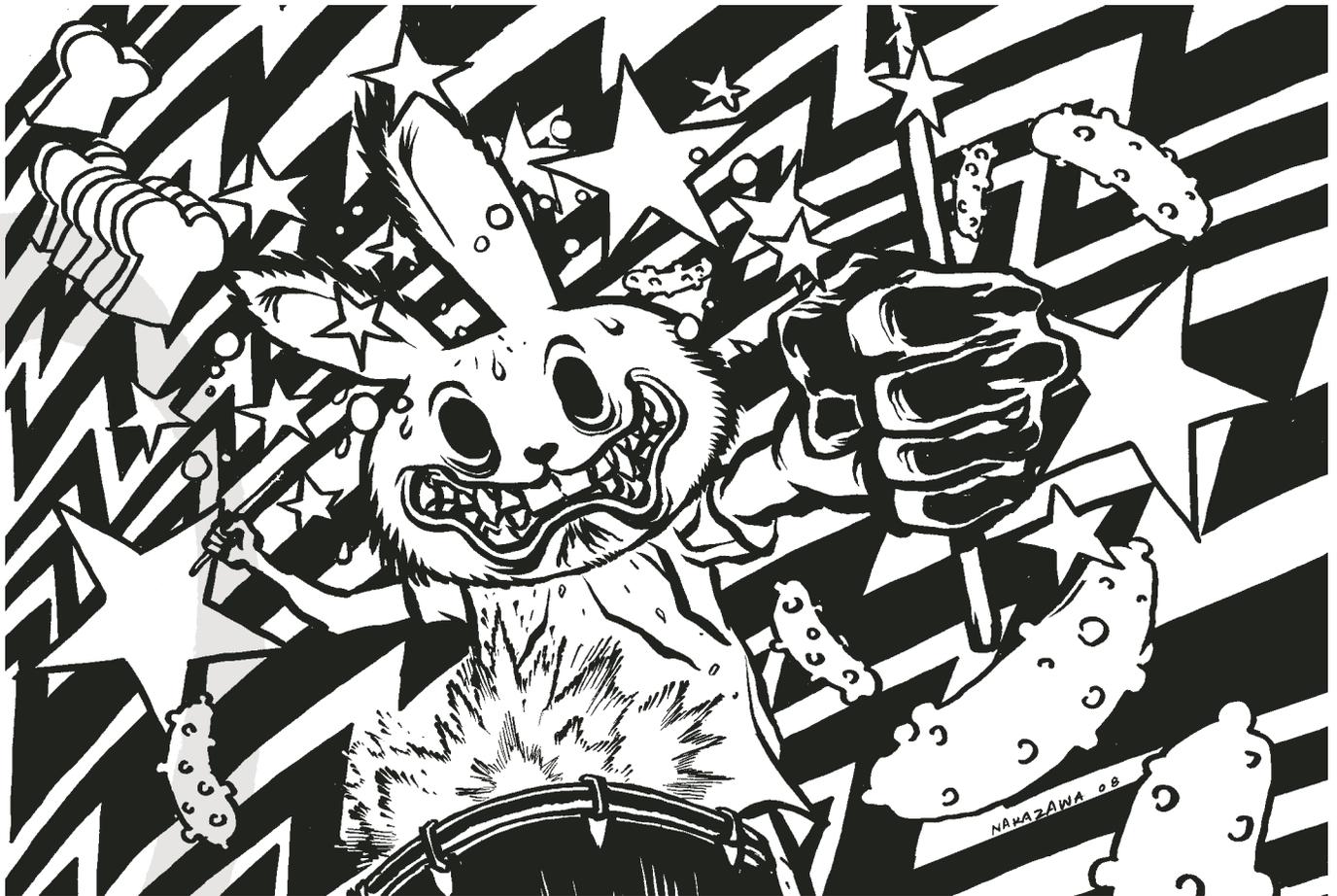
[Here come the cops! Here come the cops! This is where the party stops! –Dr. S.]

(So, where does all the picnic grub come in? –F.F.)

Dinghole Report #97: Radishes, Cucumbers, and Pizzas! Oh my!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #421)

As this summer's Rushmor float inched its way onto Kinnickinnic Avenue, you could really feel the chaos to come. I pulled on my ever-graying chickenhead and started what always ends up being the longest Chicken gig of the year. The Milwaukee southsiders were lined up, ready to ingest this year's ruckus. I pounded out my rolling rock opera and gave them dose after dose of audiovisual mayhem! My ears and wings were live wires, jolting about rhythmically in high voltage spasms! The crowds yelled, the kids scrambled to get their candy, and beers were being carried up to the float! **THAT'S RIGHT! APPEASE THE BEAST!**

I took a small break, halting to raise my wings skyward and accept the adoration. Then I heard



KIYOSHI NAKAZAWA

SHOW US YOUR TOTS

the untamed crowd ahead. We were nearing Rushmor Records. The throng of rock cretins had also been drinking all morning and were ready for their float! In previous parades, I had always saved my craziest drumming for the home crowd, unleashing sheer percussive lunacy upon my people. They were already yelling for the Chicken. They couldn't wait! This year's Rushmor appearance, however, would be a little different. The driver pulled the float into a Y-turn and backed the float up so the home crowd would get a full-on front row seat to the show. The rowdy Rushmorians were screaming for their ruckus! It was time. I then parted with protocol and threw my drumsticks aside. I reached down, grabbed the open bag of radishes, and began hurling the foul vegetables at my people! Then I reached down and grabbed cucumber after cucumber after cucumber, hurling each skyward over the electric crowd! At first they were in shock, but the screams did continue. I opened the cheap-ass bread and began flinging slice after slice after slice. There were now a few dozen radishes, ten cucumbers, and one loaf of bread on the playing field. The inevitable retaliation soon followed. Oddball food items were flying hither and yon!

There was no actual drumming at all. I was too busy keeping the battle alive. My ever-evolving

ruckus show had finally morphed into its most advanced state, the FOOD FIGHT! Just as I started tossing dry, empty ice-cream cones on the rockers, Ruckus pulled out his secret weapon, sun-thawed pizzas! As the gooey, molten pizzas became airborne; the screams intensified. Rock cretins ducked for cover! The counter assault was successful! Ruckus remembers seeing one pizza land directly on a gentleman's face only to slide and ooze down his lengthy beard! Then came their return! I took a pizza to the chest! The air was full of pizza parts, radishes, cucumber parts, ice-cream cones, and cheap-ass bread. FOOD FIGHT PUNK!

The float participants and crowd alike were covered in sweat, beer, and pizza sauce. With edible artillery still flying in various directions, I reached down behind me for my secret weapon. A lulled gasp mildly hushed the crowd as I raised up my bag of flour! I teasingly swayed it left and right to the mob's "Ooooh"s and "Aaaah"s. Just then, I heard Ruckus yell out "AAAAAAH!" as a whole cucumber hit him upside the head! I could keep my finger off the button no longer. ATTACK!

I thrust the bag up over the crowd and the whole street corner was soon engulfed in a white cloud of MAGIC RUCKUS POWDER!

White out! Women and children screamed! It was a near riot, I tell you! All the rockers' black rock T-shirts were now a most glorious white! Just think what my magic ruckus powder could do at a goth show! The Rushmor float began to ease back into the parade, leaving the crowd all soiled and riled up. I left them wanting more... and they got it.

A few floats behind us was the float for the Palomino, one of Milwaukee's finest fried food taverns. They had plenty of ammo, but knew not what they were in for. The Rushmor crowd was fresh from battle. The Palomino float thought they would really surprise the rock cretins and started dumping tons and tons of tator tots on the already angered mob! From what I hear, a full blown tator tot crusade ensued. The children had learned from the previous battle. They ran out into the road and hit the Palomino float from all sides! God, I love Milwaukee.

(SHOW US YOUR TOTS!!! -F.F.)

-Rhythm Chicken
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com



I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DALE

“Get your tongue out of your crotch and learn a lesson or two.”

We Can't Win!

(Part 2 of 2)

Last issue, I cited one of my more ridiculously, uncalled-for situations when it comes to getting flagged down on the road by a black and white during the wee hours of post-gig festivities. As persistently irritating as a whole lot of the police force out there can be, I have to admit that there have actually been a few officers who've proven themselves on the rad side. When I stopped to think of any of these pleasantly surprising instances while writing this, it sort of bummed me out that only these two following scenarios came to mind. These types of cops shouldn't be so few and far between. Here's to hoping that more of their fellow officers follow their footsteps on being respectable human beings. (I ain't holding my breath, but a guy can hope, can't he?)

Some months down the line after the Santa Barbara fiasco, I got the whooping siren flash on the 5 freeway driving through Anaheim near Di\$neyland late one night by an officer and his partner. This time 'round, I was driving solo with all our band gear in the back on the way back to the lockout to dump it off. The younger patrolman approached my side of the truck while the fossil of the other past-retirement-aged sourpuss glared at me from my passenger window with his flashlight in my face. License and registration were asked for and shown, and then I was asked what I was up to this evening. I explained that my band had finished a show and that I was on my way back to L.A. to drop off the equipment. The officer on my side asked if I had been drinking at all that night, to which I replied that, “No, I don't drink at all.” Cool. He sees this and says he's sorry to have to pull me over on the freeway, but you can understand his situation this time at night, blah blah, blah. Well, Fossil Face wasn't buying it and made this kid officer bust out the eye test, to which I had no problem with, as usual. The kid officer thanked me for my cooperation and was about to let me leave when Officer Wrinkles told me to stay put and went back to the squad car to run my

documents for anything he could possibly get on me. Yeah, good luck with that, Wrinkles, 'cause you ain't finding jack. The younger officer actually apologized for his partner's behavior, to which I replied, “I feel sorry for *you*. You gotta ride along with *him*.” He chuckled and then noticed one of the Ramones stickers that I had on my back window, saying, “The Ramones, man they were really great.” That caught me off guard, to say the least, and we started trading stories of going to see 'em around So. Cal. when the Ramones were still together and touring. Patrolman Prunepuss then sauntered up back to my window to hand me back my documents, gave his younger partner a dirty scowl, and then turned around and walked away without saying a word. Watching the old crow get back into the patrol car from my side mirror, I told the younger officer, “Good luck with that,” pointing behind me. He just smiled, told me to take it easy, and to drive safe. I pondered on the way back to the lockout if that old shit of an officer gave his partner any grief for “being too nice.” He wasn't being too nice, you rancid rack of bones, he was simply acting like a human being! Get your tongue out of your crotch and learn a lesson or two from the new dog, you old hound.

The other instance that comes to mind was just a few months ago, driving back from a Riverboat Gamblers/Toys That Kill show out in Long Beach. A CHP unit with two officers pulled my fiancée Yvonne, my friends Jenny and Diego, and me over off the 60 freeway and onto some street in Montebello. One of the officers came up to my window and asked for license and registration, telling me that I was swerving a few miles back, while the other officer was looking from the other side of the car with this stumped look on his face, trying to get a handle on the whole scene.

Yvonne and Jenny were seething at this cop with comments like, “You pulled over the wrong guy, maaan! He doesn't drink

at all! *NOTHING!*” while Diego, sitting shotgun, had this huge grin on his face, beaming with the knowledge that there wasn't a damn thing the police could do to him (that night, anyway). I cut to the chase and told the officer at my window that I don't drink but that I *was* probably swerving a bit, being that I was laughing pretty good a few miles back because everyone else in the car was hammered and we were joking around/yukking it up all the way home from the show.

He paused and looked at me for a few seconds, then asked me to step out onto the sidewalk, performed the eye test, and even had me stand on one leg while watching my pupils with his penlight. He then told me that he was sorry for having to pull me over and asked me to try and understand his position on a Saturday night after 2 AM. He was being completely cool and told me not to sweat it, that I was only getting a verbal warning.

At the same time, the other officer was talking to the rest of the drunken brood in the car, asking if they all had been drinking tonight, to which they loudly exclaimed in happy unison, “*YEEESSSS!*” Yvonne and Jenny started yelling at that officer again how the whole situation of me being pulled over was lame. Then, exactly at the same time, a speeding white sports car barreled right by us doing about eighty miles an hour. I looked at the officer I was talking with and asked him, “Don't they even see you have someone pulled over with all your lights on?” He just smiled, shrugged, and said, “You see what I mean about the weekends?” The officers didn't go after the car, but his partner instantly radioed someone on his two-way shoulder unit, looking over at me with a blank look on his face while I heard Yvonne, Jenny and Diego screaming, “That's the car you should be going after!” and I started laughing, seeing all of their arms pointing out of the car windows and sunroof.



NATION OF AMANDA

No mustache grooming kit under the Christmas tree for you this year.

The officer I was talking with asked who we went to see tonight and although he never heard of The Riverboat Gamblers or Toys That Kill, he remembered reading *Flipside* and spoke of some of the older bands he went to see when he was growing up around L.A. I told him that I actually wrote for *Flipside* in the later years and currently for *Razorcake*. He was a bit surprised and then smiled when I told him briefly how I got my nickname. He then said, "Well, there should be more people like you out here on the roads. It'd make things a helluva lot safer and our jobs a whole lot smoother." Kudos to you, Officer Martinez, if you ever happen to read this. Any old Adolescents fan is a friend of mine.

Again, why is this so difficult for law enforcement to wrap their heads around? I can dig the fact that they deal with a majority of buttholes on a daily basis, but

if someone is being one hundred percent compliant with you (and I mean *one hundred percent*), treat them accordingly as you'd like to be treated, unless you're some sicko with a badge that gets off on being treated like an asshole. In this case, you shouldn't even be part of any law enforcement agency, but there are those who are and will continue their jerkass reign. For shame. No mustache grooming kit under the Christmas tree for you this year. You get the finger. You get nothing and like it. But then there are those appreciated few on the force like the young officer in Anaheim or Officer Martinez in Montebello; these guys get my utmost respect not as being decent cops, but as decent human beings. A little human decency can go a long way and respect is something that should be earned, not demanded because of one's position of power. That's just lame.

Realistically, it all boils down to giving what you get, and getting what you give, all the while trying to hold on to as much patience as you possibly can. And isn't patience a virtue? Webster's Dictionary defines virtue as "a moral excellence of a person. A virtue is a trait valued as being good. The conceptual opposite of virtue is vice."

Sounds as if there's more than one meaning to the term "vice squad."

I'm Against It,
-Designated Dale

designateddale@yahoo.com



GUEST COLUMNIST

LAUREN TROUT

“If you decide to stay this weekend, write your name and social security number in marker on your forearm.”

HURRICANED!

We got faked out a few times this fall before getting slammed with a real hurricane, but the forecasters promised that the real thing was coming straight for the Gulf Coast the weekend of September 12th. The medium-size coastal town of Galveston was evacuated all week, save for a few hundred stubborn residents who refused to leave the city despite an ominous warning from the city police chief. It was broadcast all over the news mid-week: “If you decide to stay this weekend, do us a favor and write your name and social security number in permanent marker on your left forearm.” Everybody here in Houston, thirty miles inland, was told to take shelter in their homes so that the roads would be clear enough for Galveston residents who heeded the warning to find a pathway out of danger.

Friday afternoon, I was working side by side with my mom in the backyard, putting away anything that might get picked up by the wind and hurled through a window. Pop music played on the radio as we took down the hammock and the basketball goal. News reports awkwardly positioned themselves between every few songs with reports about how dozens of cars are spilling out into the streets outside of gas stations and fistfights are breaking out over canned food at the supermarkets. I had enough packs of cigarettes and gallons of water to get me through a week, so I was far from panicking.

The dogs, on the other hand, were barking at the air; wagging their tails and looking skyward to the threatening clouds that were blocking out most of the afternoon sunlight. A cool breeze blew through the trees around me, and I noticed that this was the first day in months to show a break in the usual September heat and humidity. My mom motioned to me from across the backyard where she was taking apart the trampoline. “The dogs can sense the change in the air pressure,” she told me.

By nightfall, the breeze had picked up in to a howling wind that knocked out the power

to our house. The rain started to pound down hard on the roof, and debris kept slamming into the walls. The noise from hundred-mile-an-hour wind was creepy; unlike anything I had ever heard. I started to get nervous about sleeping next to a sliding glass door, so I moved my mattress into the hallway and my three dogs piled on top of me for the rest of the long, sleepless night. I finally drifted off as daylight started to break through the clouds, illuminating the flooded streets and fallen tree limbs around the house.

Over the course of morning, the storm’s strength dwindled enough so that I could go outside to smoke on the porch, but only because it was surrounded by brick walls. The weather conditions kept me confined to the dank stillness of my house until the next morning, when I drove to my older brother’s house across town. On the way, I saw houses that got hit harder than mine—ones with roofs that caved in under the pressure of fallen trees, fences that got ripped out of the ground, car windows all blown out. As far as I could tell, there was no electricity anywhere in town except for the lucky few households with gasoline-powered generators. The rest of the residents with nothing to do at home and no businesses to visit, all appeared to be roaming the streets and checking out the damage.

My younger sister Abby lives with my mom and me, but she decided to ride out the storm at my brother’s house, as did my dad who lives in an apartment twenty miles away. All three were sitting in the garage playing cards while the rain drizzled down a few feet away. I greeted them and headed inside to check around for some peanut butter and bread, a can of soup, or anything else to eat for dinner. But like most single twenty-three-year-old guys, my brother kept a minimal amount of food in the pantry and everything in the fridge had gone bad since he’d lost power. My brother offered to share the chicken that they were about to grill because, while he knew that I hadn’t eaten meat in two years, he also knew that I hadn’t eaten anything at all for a day.

If a straight edger drinks and it’s called “breaking edge,” then if a vegetarian eats meat, is it called “breaking veg?” I had always figured that my body would react to meat like it was poison since it hadn’t been in my system for so long. I fully expected to be paying the price for that chicken leg by puking for the rest of the night. Maybe I even imagined that the ghost of the chicken I ate that night would somehow appear and tell me about its sad, caged life. But none of that happened. In fact, it tasted fine.

The next few days were long and slow. I passed the time with my sister; playing cards and board games, inviting ourselves over to the house of a family friend who was having a generator-powered party in her garage. In the middle of the week, my mom came back home from her boyfriend’s house—he lives an hour away in a part of Houston that avoided getting hit by the brunt of the storm—so she had spent the last few days in air-conditioned comfort with him. In contrast, I had been working up a sweat indoors and out with tasks like cleaning out the refrigerator’s rotten contents and raking piles of tree branches from the yard. Bitterness aside, mom and Abby and I all went to visit another family friend on Monday night.

At their house, I played board games with the kids, smoked cigarettes, and watched the other adults get drunk. The family had a television set that plugged into their car’s adapter, so we sat in the driveway and watched the latest updates on Fox news for a few minutes. Actually, there weren’t any important updates on at that moment; just a piece about some guys who bought a truckload of ice and then jacked the price way up and sold it to a huge line of hurricane victims. A woman who was in line came on the screen and started yelling hysterically about the scam artists. The adults around me jumped on it and started imitating her and making comments about how she should just get “her lazy black self to whatever store the



LAUREN TROUT

Maybe I even imagined that the ghost of the chicken I ate that night would somehow appear and tell me about its sad, caged life!

guys with the truck originally bought the ice from.” I thought about bringing up my point of view that anybody would be upset in that situation, but then looked I around at the drunk white people around me and decided that it wasn’t worth getting into. Instead, I drove my mom and sister home and we all went to sleep promptly.

My mom brought us along to her boyfriend’s house the next day. The four of us were just hanging out, making dinner and watching television for a few hours until his dogs started fighting. Mom’s boyfriend stuck his foot between them to try and break it up and one of the dogs bit his foot. He fell to the ground and was holding the bloody foot. My sister and I looked at each other awkwardly because we don’t know him very well, so we didn’t know if we should just leave him alone or try to help. My mom ended up having to take him to the emergency room to get stitches, so Abby

and I went upstairs to watch the movies we rented: *Knocked Up* and *What Happens in Vegas*. The boyfriend’s ex-wife never moved all of her stuff out of the house, so there was a super creepy life-sized portrait of her in the room upstairs. We named her Clarice and would tease each other like, “Oh, I don’t think Clarice would want you to do that,” then collapse into hysterics.

Since I was a kid, I have harbored this secret dream of someday just going out into the woods to live by myself in peace because I like myself and spend most of my time alone happily. But during those two weeks without power, it was hard to fight off the feelings of boredom and isolation. Without TV, computers, work, or any other ways to pass the time, I was left with myself and the people around me. I tried to carry on as usual—reading, writing, and drawing in my room—but believe me, it got old quickly.

The adults around me all seemed to be either griping about their rotten luck or getting as hammered as possible to escape their sorry situation. And who knows if I would have eventually joined their glum reality if it wasn’t for my sister. Abby became my constant companion in those days. While the grownups were inventing new troubles to occupy themselves with—like driving from place to place looking for ice—she was running from room to room looking for a deck of cards to play “speed” with. We passed a football back and forth in the street for an hour until we got sick of it and went to find the volleyball. Abby was by my side while we bounced around between my brother’s house, my dad’s apartment, and our house, as each household’s electricity was restored, one by one, over the course of a weekend.

—Lauren Trout

DOOT
DOOLA
DOOT
DOO...

DOOT
DOO!

WHO ARE YOU?

“I thought you meant, like ‘Who am I?’ I thought it was a deeper question. My name is Jay-Z, yes.”

Nardwuar versus Jay-Z!

The Human Serviette

A few months ago in these fair pages, you may remember I did an interview with the band N*E*R*D. Now, Pharrell Williams and his crew have been interviewed hundreds of times, so I was quite surprised when he commented, “This is one of the most impressive interviews I’ve ever experienced in my life. Seriously.”

After the interview, I asked Pharrell if he could hook me up with Jay-Z, because Jay-Z and N*E*R*D were going to be playing the upcoming Pemberton Music Festival in Pemberton, British Columbia, Canada. Pharrell agreed, but in the months following I didn’t get any indication that the interview with Jay-Z would ever happen. In other words, I had totally lost hope. That was until the morning of the day of gig, when I got an email that Pharrell would hook me up. Suddenly scrambling into action, I then got in my car and drove six hours to the Pemberton Festival. (The drive usually takes two hours, however heavy traffic really slowed things down!) Upon arrival, Sean Lala from Spectrum Events guided me backstage to look for Pharrell. N*E*R*D had played earlier; however, Pharrell was nowhere to be found. Luckily, Shay from N*E*R*D was kind enough to call Pharrell up. Pharrell then emailed Jay-Z, called Jay-Z, and sent Jay-Z a text message. Jay-Z agreed to do an interview with me. The first thing Jay-Z said to me was that Pharrell had been calling him all day, asking him to do an interview with me. Amazing...

Jay-Z: Yeah, Pharrell says you come highly recommended.

Nardwuar: Well, it’s an honor to speak to you.

Jay-Z: He called me a hundred times.

Nardwuar: Well, sorry about that.

Jay-Z: I never understood. I really didn’t understand it at first. It was like, you’re calling me *to do an interview*? What the fuck does that mean? [laughs] He just said that your knowledge is extensive and he knows that I appreciate people that—no matter what you do, whether you paint art or you make records or you do interviews or you’re a writer, if you’re truly good at your craft—he knows I’m excited by that type of shit. He wanted me to meet you, so here we are. So don’t disappoint him.

Nardwuar: Who are you?

Jay-Z: Who am I? I’m a young man from the Mossy Projects who really made that thing that they say—“The American Dream”—come true. Because I’m not supposed to be here speaking to you. You know, there’s a lot of people who come from where I come from, there are a lot of skilled people who were from where I come from, who are not here right now.

Nardwuar: You are Jay-Z.

Jay-Z: Oh, I thought you meant, like “Who am I?” I thought it was a deeper question. My name is Jay-Z, yes. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Jay-Z, welcome to the Pemberton Festival.

Jay-Z: Thank you.

Nardwuar: Right off the bat, going back to the early days of Jay-Z, what can you tell us about Jaz, and the early appearance of a young Jay-Z right there. [Nardwuar pulls out a Jaz record, *Word to the Jaz*.]

Jay-Z: To be very honest with you, if you look, this is not your typical rapper right here. This is not even my album. This is actually Jaz’s album. [Points to the jewelry he and Jaz are wearing.] But if you look on the back of this thing, the cable rope, and the four finger ring, that cable was mine. That cobra was a friend of mine, that was mine, that was mine. This anchor was mine—all that was my jewelry—because I was a street guy. So you never come into a game and already have all this type of things. So I was an artist who come highly recommended from the street, a real guy from the street.

Nardwuar: Is that your stuff on the front of LP, too Jay, with the panther? That’s amazing.

Jay-Z: No, that’s Jaz. That’s not mine. But that piece, if you look at it, that piece that is on me is the piece that is on him in the front of the LP.

Nardwuar: Was that your first appearance on wax, Jay-Z?

Jay-Z: No, actually my first appearance on wax was a song called “H.P. Gets Busy” by High Potent MCs. It was, like, me, Jaz, and two other guys from Mossy Projects.

Nardwuar: Jay-Z, I have a gift for you. [Nardwuar hands Jay-Z a cool, hand-drawn poster called “The History of Rap.”] This poster right here, done by Kagan McLeod, a Canadian, featuring...

Jay-Z: I’ve never seen this shit in my life. What is this?

Nardwuar: And you are represented on here. Can you find yourself, Jay-Z?

Jay-Z: Right there, right there. Yeah, I know who I am. Right next to Akinyele and Xzibit.

Nardwuar: What do you think of this poster that’s repping all the favorites hip hoppers of Kagan McLeod? This is a Canadian gift for you.

Jay-Z: Can I have it?

Nardwuar: Yeah, this is for you.

Jay-Z: Oh, fuck.

Nardwuar: And look at it on the back. It gives a little description of everybody. What do you think of the people you’ve been grouped with here?

Jay-Z: Oh, anybody I’ve been grouped with... excuse me. [Jay takes the cigar he has been smoking out of his mouth.] I’m a supporter of hip-hop, so, you know, I support all these people. That’s great. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Nardwuar: Jay-Z, when I interviewed ?uestlove of The Roots, he told me that for you to memorize something, you had to do it eighteen times?

Jay-Z: Well, yeah. Maybe, yeah. Repetition. You know, repetition. Basketball players, that’s why they practice everyday. They’ve been playing their whole life but they practice every day because of repetition.

[Excerpt from Nardwuar’s Interview with ?uestlove]

?uestlove: *The coolest thing about Jay-Z is that a) He’s not lazy... hey, that rhymes. That’s crazy...ba-boomp-pa—no, he’s not lazy. And I told him, “If you want to know all these songs, studies say that if you repeat anything eighteen times in a row, it will instantly get committed to memory.” So at first he was like, “Aw man, I’ll just do it like six times or whatever.” No. But then he would forget and I said, “Look, dude, if you do it eighteen times in a row and we’ll be straight.” So we did a little schedule for nine days before, four songs a day, you know, three hour rehearsal, take a break, three hour rehearsal, take a break, and that’s how he committed it to memory.*

Nardwuar: Is that the magic number? Eighteen?

I didn't really have any problems with the Canadians.

Tell the guys at customs to ease up a little bit.

Seriously.



Jay-Z: Well, yeah, I don't know if eighteen's the number. But, you know [laughs].

Nardwuar: How about ninety-nine? Is that the magic number, Jay-Z?

Jay-Z: Well, ninety-nine problems, you know, that's pretty much.

Nardwuar: And that's what I was wondering Jay-Z. Did that song originally come from Brother Marquis or Ice-T, Jay-Z?

Jay-Z: Yeah, actually, was it Marquis or Ice-T? I thought it was Ice-T. Yeah.

Nardwuar: So Ice-T and Brother Marquis helped with the "99 Problems"?

Jay-Z: Well, they invented it, you know. I just followed tradition.

[Excerpt from Nardwuar's Interview with Ice T.]

Nardwuar: Ice-T, one other thing I was wondering about was "99 Problems." What's the history of that song? It's your song. Jay-Z took it, and now apparently there's some links to 2 Live Crew?

Ice T: What happened was—the true story is Brother Marquis made that comment one time, I was with him. And he was like you know "I got ninety-nine problems and a bitch ain't one." So I thought we can make a record off of that, so we call Marquis up and flew him

out to L.A. Me and him did the record together, paid him, everything was cool, and that was that. Years later, Jay-Z hears the record from Rick Rubin and decides he wants to remake it, remakes the hook, and does it. Then, Marquis comes back and hears Jay-Z did it and decides he wants more money, but all the money was already paid out. I didn't get any money from it because I had a publishing deal at the time. So he decides he wants to sue me and all kinds of nasty stuff, which friends shouldn't do to each other; but that's the true story. Nothing's happened since then. You know, it's kinda water under the bridge, but the first "99 Problems" was done by myself and Brother Marquis from 2 Live Crew.

Nardwuar: Lastly here, Jay-Z, here we are at the Pemberton Festival. At the Glastonbury Festival, you covered some Oasis?

Jay-Z: Yeah.

Nardwuar: Are you going to cover any Canadian classics? Are you down with the Canadian classics?

Jay-Z: Well, you know, I didn't really have any problems with the Canadians. The Glastonbury thing, it was this great thing because... it wasn't really a backlash, it was just a couple people stating their opinion of

who they thought should play Glastonbury and Noel (Gallagher) was actually vocal about it. So it just happened.

Nardwuar: Do you have any Canadian classics, like Maestro Fresh-Wes, Kardinal? Any covers you can do? Any Canadian songs?

Jay-Z: No, I'm just going to do my set, go out, and have fun.

Nardwuar: Well, thanks for the time, Jay-Z. Anything else you want to add to the people out there at all?

Jay-Z: You know, we appreciate being here and we love the opportunity. And if you guys could help out—like the whole Canadian culture—tell the guys at customs to ease up a little bit. Seriously.

Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much, Jay-Z. Keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

Jay-Z: Yeah

Nardwuar: Almost, Jay-Z.

Jay-Z: [laughs]

Nardwuar: Doot doola doot doo...

Jay-Z: Yeah, yeah.

(To see this interview visit www.nardwuar.com)



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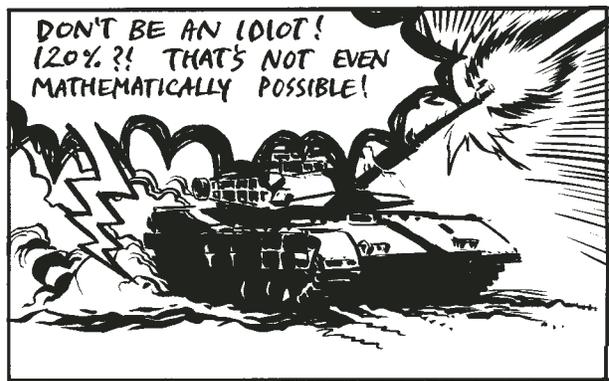
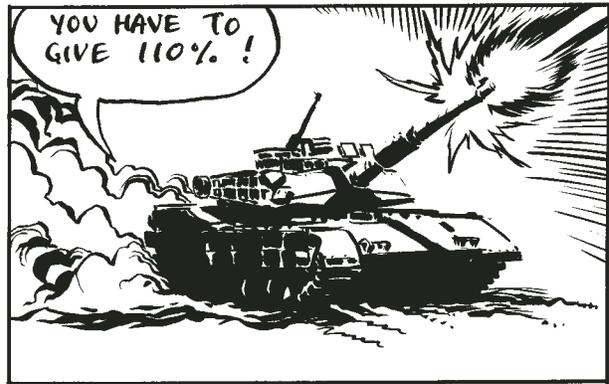
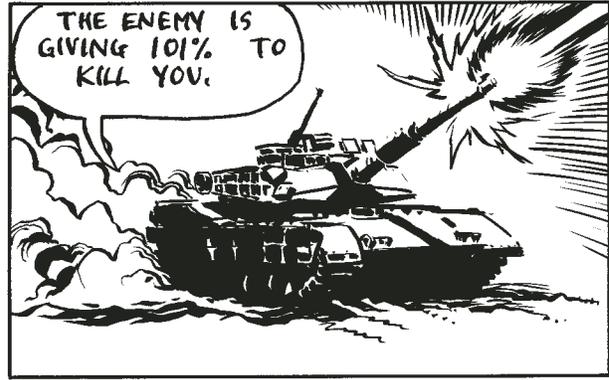
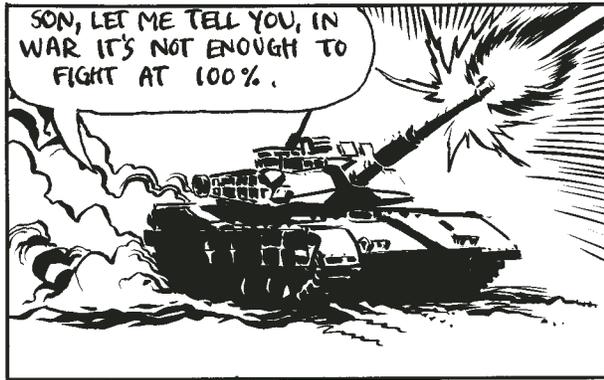
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MATH LOVERS OUT THERE.

THIS ONE'S DEDICATED TO ALL THE





A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

“Is bathroom graffiti an effective way for a scorned man to strike back?”

A TOUR OF SELF-DISCOVER

7. SEATTLE

In Seattle, one of the local weeklies had a blurb about my reading at Elliott Bay Book Company. The weekly said that my new book was about a “bartender [who] goes on a road trip of self-discover.”

The book is absolutely not about that.

I happened to be standing on the Seattle waterfront when I read the weekly, a bit south of the famous fish market but still surrounded by a tourist district that I’d taken a wrong turn into. I paused for a second to remember a time when the independent weeklies that you found in every city used to actually be independent and actually cover events in those cities. In the next second, I wondered what happened to this imaginary bartender’s “y” on his road trip of self-discover.

I wandered as far away as I could from this little tourist district, gradually forgetting that stupid little blurb and remembering, still, that this was my nineteenth and final city on the summer tour I did to promote *Train Wreck Girl*, and, while it hadn’t been the road trip to self-discover that the *Seattle Weekly* billed it as, I had seen some things crisscrossing this continent.

6. THE DELLS

There’s a region of Wisconsin called the Dells. On the way back from my reading in Minneapolis, I stopped in a gas station a little west of the Dells. Someone had written on the bathroom wall, “For a good time stop at Dolls in the Dells and ask for Ticia. She is a whore and will fuck you for money.”

A few minutes later, I rode through the Dells and saw Dolls. I didn’t stop in. I did think for a while about the guy who wrote that note on the bathroom wall. I wondered what inspired him to do it. Did he have a good time with Ticia? Was it such a good time that he had to tell everyone about it? Recommend it to all his friends, or anyone taking a piss for that matter? Was Ticia an ex-girlfriend who the scribe was looking to get back at? Is bathroom graffiti an effective way for a scorned man to strike back? Was Ticia really Tricia and our scribe just a bad speller? Questions like that kept popping up into my head as I rode across rural Wisconsin.

I applauded the scribe’s clarity. He’d taken the time to point out that Ticia was a

whore who would fuck you for money, as opposed to a whore who may give it away for free, but would require you to have more game than just strolling up to her and saying, “I read about you on the bathroom wall.”

After a while, I let my tour mates in on all my meditations on Ticia and the scribe. They indulged me, helped me speculate as to who this guy was who penned this note above the urinal, even told stories of graffiti they’d ruminated about. I thought, is this how I pick my friends? Those who won’t say, “Dude, you’re thinking way too much about this shit.”

5. PHILADELPHIA

In Philadelphia, it is not unheard of for someone to steal a manhole cover.

Go there. Get into town too late to do anything but sleep for the night. Wake up, eat a home-style breakfast at a hipster diner. Wander around the old city. See the site where the Constitution was signed. Pass Ben Franklin’s grave. Read the historical markers about the slaves who escaped to Philadelphia: the first free city they reached coming up from the south. Go to a gallery featuring “underrepresented” artists and take your time with the paintings. Then, when the afternoon has made itself comfortable and a thunderstorm lingers above the city, listen to Danielle. She’ll tell you the story about sitting right where she’s sitting now, looking out of that window right there, and seeing a guy on a bike wrestle with a manhole cover, stuffing it haphazardly into his duffel bag, peddling away, the manhole cover ripping through the duffel bag, and the sound of police sirens growing louder.

If you do this, then you too can watch the rain falling on the city and wonder what the scene must be like when someone shows up at a scrap metal yard with a manhole cover to sell. What story does he come up with when the metal yard guy asks him, “You didn’t steal this, did you?”

The possibilities seem endless.

4. OXFORD

We stopped in a gas station tucked in the foothills between Atlanta and Birmingham, more just to stop driving for a while than to actually get anything. I wandered through the

aisles of the gas station and paused at a sign that read, “Goodies and BC Powder behind the counter. Ask the cashier.” The condoms were displayed next to the sign. I stood there for a while and thought about the shoplifting patterns of this town.

After Carla, A.J., and I bought stuff we didn’t really need, we loitered in front of the store. I said, “They have the condoms in the aisles where anyone can shoplift them, and the headache powder behind the counter where no one can. You know what that tells me? It tells me that people around here get drunk, have unprotected sex, and then steal aspirin when they’re hungover.”

Carla said, “Shit. You didn’t know that about Alabama already?”

A.J. told us a story about touring with the Kings Of Nuthin’, a nine-piece punk band. He’d get so sick of sitting in that tour van that he’d learned how to waste twenty or thirty minutes in a convenience store. When he got done with the story, he lit a cigarette. The three of us stood around while he smoked. Everyone who walked into the store looked hungover and fucked to me.

A.J. finished his smoke and we got back into the car, twenty or thirty minutes after we’d first stopped. I was learning stuff all the time.

3. CLEVELAND

I’d never seen them at my readings before. I’m used to reading to punk rockers and hipsters in their twenties and thirties. But with this tour, I stumbled into readings with a different crowd. At Mac’s Backs in Cleveland, fully half of the audience was composed of gray-haired women in their sixties. One of them was a nun. I didn’t know she was a nun until after the reading, which seems like such a wasted opportunity to me because I know so many Catholic jokes.

My reading at the Cocoa Beach Library brought out a second crowd of sexagenarians. This made more sense to me because it was a reading in a library in a community with a large population of retirees. I still wasn’t sure why they chose to come out and listen to me, though.

As it turned out, sexagenarians rounded out the audience at most of the readings I did to support *Train Wreck Girl*. They laughed at the times that I hoped they would. They



BRAD BESHAW

**IS THIS HOW I PICK MY FRIENDS?
THOSE WHO WON'T SAY,
"DUDE, YOU'RE THINKING WAY
TOO MUCH ABOUT THIS SHIT."**

bought books. One even showed up with a dog-eared copy of the novel and had me sign it to her, then talked to me about the ending.

Now, you may be thinking, wait a second. Aren't you supposed to be a punk rock guy? Aren't you one of the founders of this here punk rock zine? What's going on here?

I may be thinking the same thing.

2. MINNEAPOLIS

After I finished my reading at Arise Bookstore in Minneapolis, the God Damn Doo Wop Band took the stage. And, by "stage," I mean the empty area in front of the chairs in the backyard of Arise. It was one of those

perfect Minneapolis days that apparently don't happen all that often but seem to happen every time I'm there. It was sunny, temperatures in the low eighties, an even cooler breeze. The sun was starting to set behind the bookstore. The band sat on a low wall.

The God Damn Doo Wop Band: three women who know how to spend their money on boots and tattoos and hair dye, who, more importantly, know how to sing doo wop songs. They launched into three-part-harmonies about boy troubles. On the one hand, they seemed like an authentic throwback to the Staten Island doo wop of the fifties. On the other hand, it was something totally fresh and original.

One of the band members is named Annie. She used to be in the Soviettes. She didn't wear boots. Her Vans were worn through just above the big toe. As she sang, her big toe popped out of the hole in her shoe. A little red toenail kept the beat.

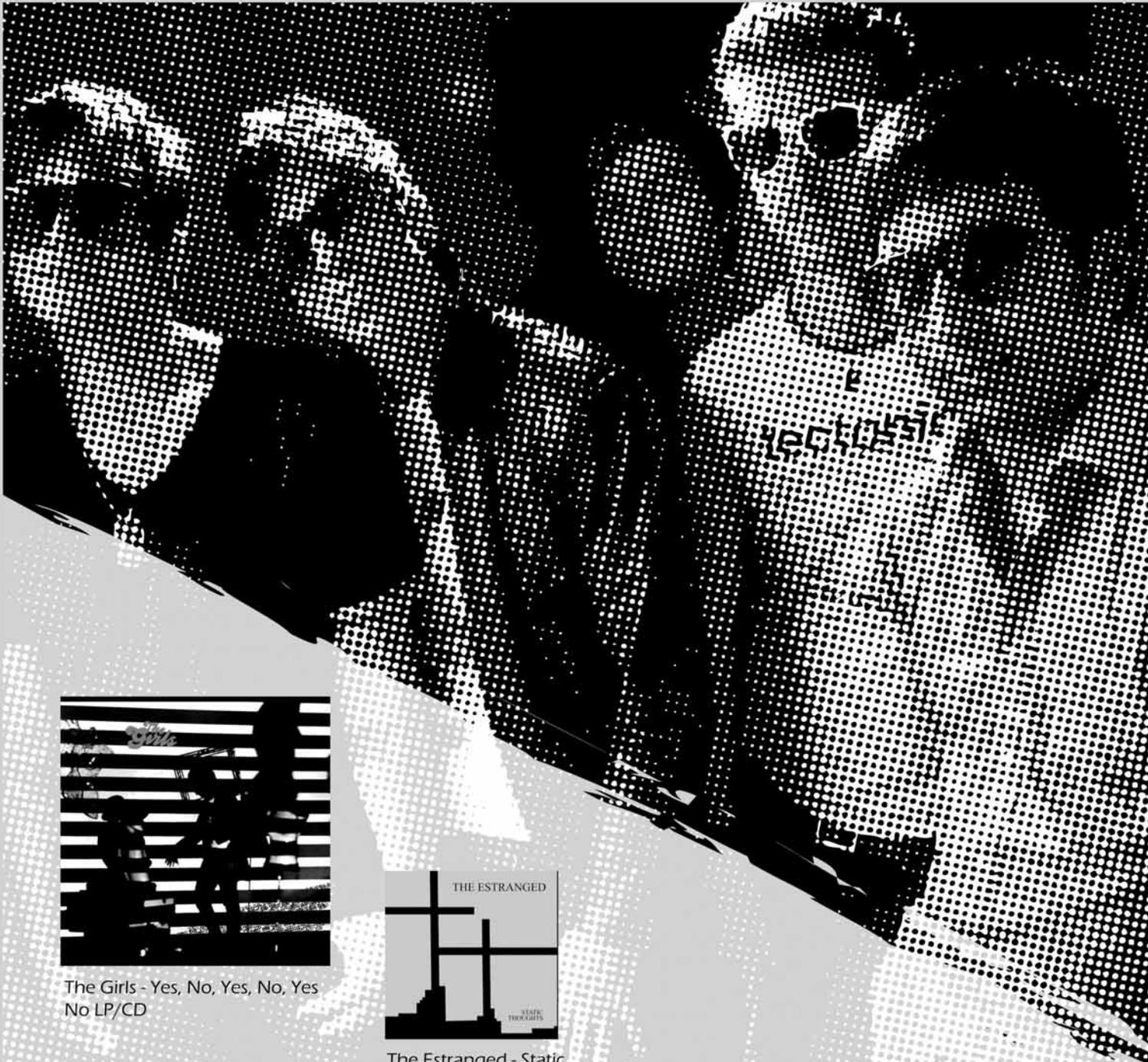
1. ATLANTA

Above the urinal in The Highlander in midtown Atlanta, someone has written, "Jesus Hates Bald Pussy."

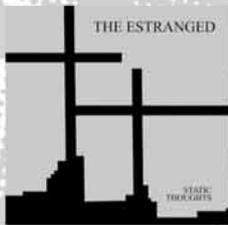
I did not know that.

—Sean Carswell





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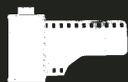
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ART
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FATHER...



WHO'S
MY
DADDY?

I ALWAYS SAY IT'S
NO BIG DEAL...



I DON'T NEED
HIM NOW...
I'M FINE...

BUT WHEN A SAPPY PART IN A MOVIE
COMES ON AND THE DAD IS HUGGING
THE KIDS AND THEY'RE ALL HAPPY
HE'S THERE, I ALWAYS CRY...



WE LOVE YOU
DADDY!

AND I HATE HIM FOR THAT...

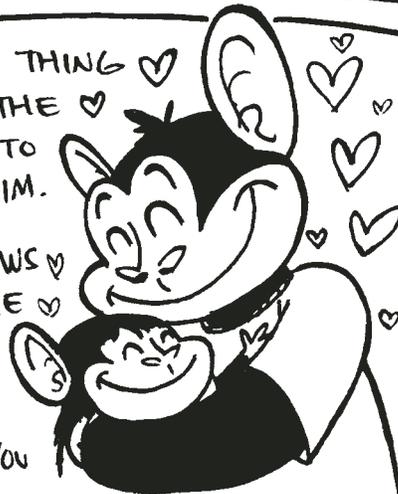
WHY WASN'T I WORTH
LOVING? WHY DIDN'T
HE STICK AROUND?...



IF ONLY FOR ME.

THE ONLY GOOD THING ♡
HE GAVE ME IS THE ♡
STRONG DESIRE TO ♡
NEVER BE LIKE HIM.

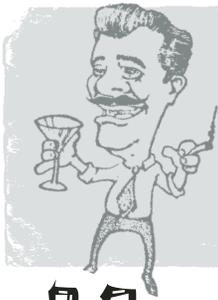
MY DAUGHTER KNOWS ♡
I LOVE HER. SHE ♡
HAS A REAL ♡
FATHER. I GUESS ♡
IT'S TRUE THAT YOU ♡
ALWAYS TRY TO GIVE ♡
YOUR CHILDREN WHAT YOU NEVER HAD.



FATHERS,
LOVE YOUR
CHILDREN.

CHILDREN,
LOVE, AND
FORGIVE,
YOUR FATHERS.

NO
KIDDIN'!



SQUEEZE MY HORN

GARY HORNBERGER

“Golf is fun, even if it has the most dickey rulebook ever to be introduced to sports.”

Hey YOU! Carry My Bag

Here I sit, contemplating the end of the Ryder Cup final. For those who aren't golfers, that is the final tournament of the year to determine whose better: the U.S.A. or Europe. For me, it's a toss up. Yeah, sure, I like to see my countrymen win, but, at the same time, for the next two weeks I'll have to play with every jackass who thinks they can go out to the garage and dust off their daddy's golf bag and play just like the guys on television. I play two or three times a week, so, justifiably, I claim a decent game. Even if I'm not playing great, I play fast and stay out of others way. If the course is wide open, I can walk it in two and a half hours.

Golf is the one sport that is both anal and asinine at the same time, closely followed by bowling. There is a certain segment of golfers who buy into the sport of royalty and will purchase all the high-end golf equipment, clothing, bags, shoes, and shirts (along with the naked lady tees, since I sound like Rodney Dangerfield in *Caddy Shack*). They also feel that no matter how poorly they play, those of minority or poverty should not be allowed to play. I've even heard that golf is an acronym for Gentlemen Only, Ladies Forbidden. How hypocritical is that considering how many times I've seen these types drooling over the beer girls that drive around and take pictures at corporate events. Here's my take on golf: I get to slap a little white ball as far as possible, where no two holes are alike. If I have some buddies who are even better, we get something to eat at the end of the round and bullshit for an hour. I also can—for the most part—wear whatever crazy shirt, pants, or shorts I desire as long as the shirt has a collar. This means that color or print need not match. Golf is fun, even if it has the most dickey rulebook ever to be introduced to sports; I've read the whole damn thing. If you must know, yes, I was bored out of my mind at the time.

At one time, the sport was really fucked up, keeping a good old boy mentality by forming country clubs to keep out undesirables from playing on their greens. That still holds true today, yet it now seems to be for cash flow concerns, because you no longer can keep women, minorities, or the poor out if they have the cash. The only reason I don't push for a punk rock golf tournament is that cheating runs rampant in golf. Without people watching, balls get kicked, rolled, even thrown into better positions and scores would magically sink very low. I'll give you an example: we were playing in a work tournament behind the bosses, luckily,

when on a par three that no player came close to, my co-workers had what seemed to be a long, impossible putt for par. After going through the foursome twice, one of the players put his heels together just behind the cup, and, by “the power of Grayskull,” the ball rebounded in the hole on the ninth try. Later, when asked their score, they said par because they had bought some mulligans. Mulligans are free do overs that are usually sold at corporate events for charity and they have a limit of one or two to keep things from slowing down. That was not the only hole these guys used the magic mulligans on. I'll even admit that when I was a kid I cheated like a madman to keep my score somewhat close to my dad or my grandfather's, but in tournaments I sure as hell don't want to get caught.

Some pretty funny things happen in this sport, and I don't mean the pro that fell in the water this year. I was in one tournament that decided to go high tech for the long drive hole. Instead of just putting a flag down the fairway and with each ball that flies past that flag, said golfer gets their name on it, this event decided to put a swing meter on the tee box. The thing works by taking swing speed and clubface position into its data banks to determine flight of the ball. See, you can swing fast, but if your club is upside down... you get the picture. So one drunken son of a bitch got up, thinking all he had to do is swing hard and fast. We all know that being intoxicated impairs equilibrium, right? So what happened was this guy ended up drilling a hole in the ground with his ass.

For me, the wackiness took place while playing alone. This may be tough to recant, but here it goes. I was on the tee box. Right behind me was a fence bordering the course from houses. I couldn't see in the back yard because the fence was covered with vines. So back I swung, sending the ball low and left. It hit the base of a palm and caromed into the backyard behind where I was facing. After hearing a couple of bounces, the ball shot over the fence and right back into my *hand*. I gave myself a two stroke penalty and re-teed. This is how wonderfully screwed up this sport is.

MANAGER#2

By Ben “Jack” Walter, free, \$1 would help, trades welcome

I love reading stories about the occupation I used to have! *Manager* #1 was great. I think everyone with mundane, routine work should write about them. This contains more jewels of how the grocery biz rots employees and plays the schoolyard bully with its management

and employees. It also has some references to the games that are played with the union and how some people are just out of luck. My favorite piece is an acronym of Safeway backwards is “You Always Work Every Friday and Saturday.” Everything they do is sneaky! When all the laughing dies down, though, this paints a really bad picture of how inept the managers are trained, lack common sense, and how it is a miracle these stores aren't sued more often. I say this due to the phone call transcription of a super and a manager about locking a shoplifter in the freezer and forgetting about him. True stuff, I'm sure. If you want to feel better about your job, give this one a read. (Ben Walter, 1702 Mount Pisgah Lane, apt. #13, Silver Spring, MD 20903, jack45rpm@gmail.com)

HICUP #6

By various writers, free

I had my choice from *Hicup*#2 to #6, so I chose the most recent of the bunch. *Hicup* comics are written for those of us who love rock'n'roll. The stories, reviews, and comics almost always deal with a band or a fan involved in some sort of rock hi-jinx. I will take exception to “The Living One” which is a spirited break from the rock. If you like reading others' personal music views and having a good chuckle, then this is the zine for you. (www.madisonundergroundpress.com)

FATHER SON AND HOLY SMOKE

By The Band, free

What is there to say other than it's by a band about a band, yet it is somewhat more. It seems to be about the city of Minot, North Dakota, and the bands that originate therein. It's like reading fourteen pages of liner notes, without hearing any of their music. So if you want to be geographically enhanced and would like to know more about this city, pick this one up. (F.S.H.S., 720 2nd Ave, NE Minot, ND 58703, billylvetzen@yahoo.com)

OUT OF ORDER COMICS #2

By Heather K, \$?

At first I was excited, feeling this was going to be all stories about record collecting or working at a record store or something like that, but I should know better. It turns out that this is the life story of a person who likes to collect records and the record part has little to do with the whole. This is not to say I didn't like it; some of the stories ring true, like a “serving size” of Girl Scout cookies is two. Who the hell eats only two cookies of any kind, and if that were the case, do



ADRIAN CHI

One drunken son of a bitch got up, thinking all he had to do is swing hard and fast.

we wash them down with four ounces of ice-cold milk? Sheez! I also like the thought bubbles of the people waiting in line at the post office; hell that could be me. It is interesting when people have similar points of view. This one's a good read. (Out of Order, PO Box 72775, Davis, CA 95617, heather@outoforderrecords.com)

CRAMHOLE #2

By Billups Allen, Art by Allen, Chen, Gambrell, and Shapiro, \$ 3.00 U.S.
I am very confused about *Cramhole*. I want to say I read #1 and really loved it, but I went back and could not find the review. I then started reading #2 and felt I had read it before, so I hope I'm not doubling up. I like this comic because it has this real gruff character in it, yet, if I remember right, he's much better in the first comic—which really means I should not try to

go any further and just tell people that this is a quality comic. (Billups Allen, 2244 E.17th St, Tucson, AZ 85719, www.billupsallen.com)

VOICES IN THE DARK

By various writers, \$1.00 U.S.
This one is just too far out there for me! It is a sex/art zine, which, for a guy who reads/stares at *Hustler*, is very confusing. Let's just say if you like to let your mind wander, this one could be for you. (Bare Bones Press, Real World 101 E. 25th ST, #1 MPLS, MN 55404, ed.is.so.dead@gmail.com)

TERMS OF PSYCHIC WARFARE #1

By A.S., \$?
Punk rock psychology is what we have here, all right. These two friends go about analyzing

everything from movies to feelings. The first story has our two friends picking apart the movie *Walk the Line*, going from start to finish, ripping the movie to shreds. Then Johnny Cash and June Carter show up in spirit form to argue points further. The other two stories go about the same; analyzing feelings in music and so on, with guest appearances by this group or that. The conversations are so in-depth that they become very comical, and to have these two roughly drawn slackers go at it is gut busting. If you are a student of psychology, this is a must-have in your collection. (A.S., 23 Taylor Ave., Bethel, CT 06801, psychicwarfare@hotmail.com)



FULL OF FANCY

Interview by Joe Evans III

Pictures by Marc Gärtner

Layout by Lauren Measure

Two lessons I've learned as I've grown older: one, don't take everything so seriously all the time. Two, I make a lot of mistakes. For the first, I realized not everything needs to be so arty, or political, and so on, and that it's okay to have fun for the sheer sake of having fun. For the second, after hearing about Full Of Fancy's early shows, I kept figuring "Oh, I'll catch them next time," until our bands finally played together, at which point I said to myself "Wow."

After a short while as a lighter, somewhat folksy duo, Full Of Fancy evolved into, for lack of a better description, a noticeably more rocking trio, who—at heart—write

catchy, fun, pop music that will quickly have you jumping up and down and singing along. But this isn't just cheap, shallow "I love love" songs with no substance. There's more to it than that, from the often subtle influences of indie/alternative rock (not to mention some doom metal) to the fact that after years of being in bands, they know how to write great songs. I've yet to see or listen to them without a smile on my face. So along with the second lesson, I decided "No matter what, I'll do whatever it takes to see them."

Erin – Bass, Vocals

Miranda – Guitar, Vocals

Evan – Drums

Joe: So you started playing as a two piece originally? Was that intentional?

Miranda: Yes, I just always wanted to sing with Erin.

Erin: Ditto.

Miranda: We like singing together. So we just wrote songs together, and then we realized we didn't really want to be a sort of an acoustic act. We had some other drummers, and then our friends Alyssa and Angela said that Evan wanted to learn how to play drums, specifically in a poppy band. So we talked to him, and he said [in a super high pitched voice] "Yeah, sure."

Evan: Actually, I said, "Are you sure? I don't know how to play drums."

Miranda: And we said, "No it's okay! We're stupid too! Don't worry. We'll all be at home!" [Still in super high pitched voice] "Dumb! Together!"

Joe: So you'd never played drums before? And you also came from more of a hardcore background, right?

Evan: Yeah, more hardcore and doom metal [laughing].

DUMB! TOGETHER!



Joe: What made you say “Hey, I want to play the drums?”

Evan: I just wanted to hit things—gently.

Joe: This isn’t any of your first bands by any means, obviously. Miranda you’re also in Hunchback, and you’re also multi-instrument talented too, right?

Evan: I can play many things okay. I can fake a lot.

Miranda: I think I’d say the same thing.

Evan: Just because I *own* a banjo doesn’t mean I can really play. But I pretend I can.

Erin: I’ll be honest, I’m a musical genius. I can play anything. Perfectly.

Joe: Like the violin?

Erin: I can. Can’t play that one so perfectly. [Laughing] I’m all right. I’d be better if I practiced. I think I’d be better if I practiced *anything*.

Joe: Evan, you were in a band called The Nothing?

Everyone: [Laughing]

Evan: Where did *that* come from?

Erin: Joe Evans always has the most ridiculous questions.

Evan: Yes! I think I was about sixteen, and it was probably the biggest mess ever. Actually Mike Hunchback was in The Nothing.

Miranda: Oh my god...

Evan: And we actually wrote a song. I think it became a Hunchback song for a minute, and then it wasn’t anymore.

Miranda: What was it?

Evan: “Make Them Die Slowly”? This was like...

Miranda: Probably 2000?

Evan: I think it became first wave Hunchback. But, yeah, it was a mess. It was like anyone’s first. This was my second band. Yeah. I still can’t pass Spanish One third period and can’t play guitar either.

Erin: Was it named after *the* Nothing? As in the actual Nothing (From *Neverending Story*)?

Evan: Yes.

Erin: That’s awesome.

Joe: Miranda, do you know anything about a song called “Jay Rhymes with Gay”?

Miranda: Of course I do. “Jay Rhymes with Gay”: that’s from—[stops to laugh] I feel like this becomes a quiz and I fail it. I’m like, “It’s from... wait, give me a second... ummm...” It’s from Jay, Mike, and Adam Sugarman’s band of which (our friend) Jay is a huge fan of... oh my god, yes, Sam’s Town. Yeah, and Jay does in fact absolutely rhyme with gay.

Joe: Who was in Planet Janet or Amber Brown Vision?

Erin: Uhhhh...

Miranda: I have to, uh, go to the bathroom.

Erin: Yeah, Miranda was in Planet Janet, and I was in Amber Brown Vision, and that’s how Miranda and I met. So that’s a good thing.

Miranda: We went on tour...

Erin: We went on tour together, which was crazy.

Miranda: ...by which I mean we played Maine, in the middle of January, to no one.

Erin: Yeah, smart thing. We decided to tour New England in January.

Miranda: And Canada in December.

Erin: That’s how Miranda and I met. And

that's pretty much all we'll talk about. That. But you know what, Amber Brown Vision, they were like my best friends, and that was the first band I was ever in. And I'm still in a band with those guys. We changed our name. We don't really play anymore. We started playing again, but who knows?

Joe: Is that Tonight We Dance?

Erin: Yes.

Miranda: You didn't change it again?

Erin: We didn't change it again, and we won't because I won't let it.

Joe: So Miranda and Erin, you're both into a lot of '90s/alternative rock, and Evan, with your hardcore/metal background, do you think that helps you as a band, coming together, especially with any sort of crossover



appeal to other kids?

Miranda: I definitely think so. I think one kind of music for the entire set is boring. And I don't like when a band sounds the same from beginning to end. So I think it's good that Evan likes doom metal, and I like Mudhoney, and Erin likes, um, the stuff that she likes.

Erin: I like Superchunk.

Miranda: I think Superchunk, doom metal, and Mudhoney make a really good combination.

Erin: I think it makes a sweet combination. And this is what happens [pointing amongst themselves] when you combine all that.

Joe: Miranda, did you have a moment of inspiration seeing Mudhoney?

Miranda: Ridiculously inspiring. Like, I hesitate to say, but I will, that it did change my life.

Erin: She isn't the same person that she was before.

Miranda: I'm really not. It was so good. Mark Arm is my hero; he's so great. It was cool to hear songs that I've liked since high school, played live by people who were still really cool. Mark Arm watched all the bands before him and didn't have some kind of attitude. They weren't drunk. It was great, you know? It was really cool. It was happy.

Joe: Similar to the influences, when you're in an area like New Brunswick where you have a lot of—call it incestuous for lack of a better word—where you have a bunch of people all in each other bands that cross over, do you think that it helps? That it pushes you to say, "Okay, I've got all this going on. I've got to keep working with it," or that it just burns you out?

Erin: It depends on the day. It's hard.

Miranda: It could go either way.

Erin: Yeah. I mean right now, at this very moment, I'm thinking about not doing so many bands because I'm getting burnt out. I've been doing it for three years now and I want to do other things besides just music with my life. I don't know. And it's come to a point where I'm like, "You know, maybe I should crank it down to just *two* bands." [Laughing]

Erin: I wasn't going to leave you out!

Evan: That's it. Interview's over.

Joe: I was actually told to ask about your Ramones LP collection.

Evan: I like The Ramones.

Erin: Wait, what happened to the horror movies?

Joe: You can keep talking about them! I just want everyone to feel included.

Erin: Oh no, that's fine. Go talk to him about his "Ramones records."

Evan: I need a copy of *Greatest Hits Live* on vinyl.

Joe: And that's it?

Evan: And *Loco Live*, actually. But everything else, I've got. I actually found a sealed copy of *Adios Amigos* for thirteen dollars last year, and it was the greatest day of my life. I have thirty-three Ramones LPs, and they have thirteen albums.

I THINK I'D BE BETTER IF I PRACTICED ANYTHING

Evan: I actually do the opposite. I was in five bands at one point. Now I'm in this one, so I just started another one called Barry Jive And The Uptown Five. Or Pickle Party. We're not sure.

Joe: Like just depending on the day?

Erin: Sundays we'll call it "Pickle Party!"

Evan: We're kinda sitting on it, seeing which one works better.

Erin: I mean, I love music. Playing is awesome. But there's a point I've seemed to reach where I'm like, "Maybe I need to not be in fifty bands. Maybe I want to go hiking one day instead of going to practice or playing a show."

Miranda: I feel that. And sometimes it feels like if I just focused on one thing in my life, maybe it would turn out that I was really good at that one thing, but I really like music, and I really like lots of other stuff.

Erin: Sometimes I'm just like, "Oh, there's a party going on, on this day and—oh, wait, I can't go to it. Sorry." [Pauses] That doesn't constantly happen though [laughing].

Miranda: I've never been to a party in my life.

Evan: There's actually one going on right now.

Miranda: And we're missing it. Thanks, Joe. This stupid band! It's smothering me!

Erin: I hate you!

Joe: Erin, you're really into horror movies?

Erin: Oh yeah. So is Miranda.

Evan: Yeah, and I don't like *anything*. Just leave me out of it!

Miranda: Who did you ask for information? I'm just curious.

Joe: Just kinda the same local people, pretty much. We still don't have to give up on the horror movies though.

Erin: Oh, yeah, we love horror movies. Sometimes we have pizza party/horror movie nights.

Evan: But even more important than horror movies is Sean Connery's performance in (*Indiana Jones and the*) *Last Crusade*. It's perfect.

Erin: It's basically one of our favorite movies, of all time.

Miranda: That's a great one. It's really good at Easter.

Evan: "I surely remember my Charlemagne" [in Sean Connery voice].

Miranda: [Laughing] "I should've mailed it to the Marx Brothers" [also in Sean Connery voice].

Erin: Yeah, we like quoting that movie a lot.

Joe: I feel like that's a very New Jersey band thing to do, like every band has like, "*Their* movie."

Erin: That's probably very true. And *Last Crusade*, we claimed it.

Miranda: We're just bored around here. We sit around, watch nonsense...

Erin: We pretty much just write songs...

Miranda: Miss parties...

Erin: Missing parties...

Miranda: Watching Sean Connery. I *could* socialize. Or I could watch *Rosemary's Baby* over again by myself. I don't know. It's hard.

Erin: That's basically all I do. I just sit in my



The Ergs!
“That’s It...Bye”

Don Giovanni Records



I THINK SUPERCHUNK, DOOM METAL, AND MUDHONEY MAKE A REALLY GOOD COMBINATION.

room and watch movies all the time. That's about it. That's all I've got for you.

Evan: I'll watch the Food Network.

Erin: Me too! And reality television.

Miranda: [Laughing] He looks so overwhelmed!

Joe: I was actually only told that you're really into LOL cats (internet pictures of cats with silly words).

Miranda: O M G I am, I'm obsessed with LOL cats. They're so great. I talk to my cat—yes, hi, I talk to my cat.

Evan: [Quickly] And what's your cat's name?

Miranda: Pants. Short for Kittenpants. When I got her, her name was "Love Bug," and that's disgusting so we changed it. But I talk to her like she doesn't know English very well, like it's her second language, and I could not believe my freakin' eyes when I first saw LOL cats, because it was like "You just tapped into my brain." I was like oh my god, because they don't talk well, they talk like they're all. "Ah, I don't really get it, but I'm going to try to communicate with you," like in the way that you try to communicate. It's *amazing*.

Erin: I love her when she talks like Pants. Like she does the Pants language. It's the best language ever created. In fact it should

be like America's language. English, no. Pants-ese, yes. I don't even know what it would be called.

Miranda: Pants-ese is amazing. What a good name. "You can't speak Pants-ese? Get the hell out of my America" [in Sean Connery voice again].

Joe: I know it's a cover, but who wrote "Lads in Training"?

Miranda: Ryan Doyle.

Evan: He's a lovely man. I've known him since I was seven. He's my sister's best friend, and he's fantastic. And, normally, it's just a guitar. He's just a cute little man who plays guitar and piano, and he made it into a rock song. But yeah, he's really great.

Erin: He's wonderful.

Evan: He's got the most beautiful eyes ever, too.

Miranda: He's a beautiful man.

Erin: Who writes beautiful music.

Joe: Evan, when did you meet Jack Grisham?

Evan: Okay, so it was 1999 or 2000, and TSOL comes around and plays this really shitty bar in Long Branch, New Jersey. I ended up going by myself, because no one I knew wanted to go. So I get there, and what's that really crappy rockabilly band?

Joe: Was it Tiger Army?

Evan: Tiger Army! Tiger Army plays, and I'm bored. TSOL plays. They'd just put out some new record on Epitaph or Fat Wreck Chords or something that I could care less about, but I'm there and they play one song off of it and no one cared, and then they played some older stuff that I knew. And maybe me and this one other drunk dude knew it, so they kept asking us, "Oh, what song do you want to hear?" So we'd tell them. Then, afterwards, I was leaving and Jay Insult was there too, and we were going to go to a diner, and Jack Grisham was outside, and was like "Hey, you know words," and I was like "Thanks," and he's like, "What are you guys doing?" So we say, "We're probably going to a diner." So he says, "Oh, come back here. We've got food in our Winnebago." So we go back in this Winnebago, ended up eating Tiger Army's food, and talked to Jack Grisham. He was super nice, and then that documentary came out where he admits to raping corpses. But I would've never guessed.



RAGER



Sebastian Bach is still
on TV talking about
signing weird groupie boobs,
for fuck's sake, and it's 2008, and I'm watching it.

Interview by Stevie Greco
Photos by Craig Doty
Layout by Daryl Gussin

Rager is a three-piece hardcore band formed in Chicago. Maggie Iwanicki and Murty Gollakota recently moved to Richmond, Virginia and they just played their first show there. Known for interests in violence and politics, fast songs and energetic shows, the band embodies a community-based ethos. They never stop complimenting their friends' bands and venues they've played—they also never stop cursing. While they were transitioning to new homes, Maggie and Murty took the time to talk to me about the Chicago scene, underrepresented groups in hardcore, and why Rager is decidedly not a thrash band.

Murty Gollakota, bass/vocals
Maggie Iwanicki, guitar/vocals
Brent Psurny, drums

Stevie: How long have you been playing together as Rager?

Murty: With our current line-up, we've been around for about a year and a half.

Stevie: What was the impetus for starting Rager?

Murty: Our impetus was just to play music and have fun. But now shit's real serious, unless Maggie's singing Bone Thugs.

Maggie: Yeah, I remember the initial motivation for starting the band was to fuck around and play some powerviolence.

Stevie: By setting out to play short, fast songs, did you feel like you needed to fill a void or participate in a specific way in the Chicago hardcore community?

Maggie: Well, I wouldn't say we necessarily were trying to fill a void. There are so many amazing bands in Chicago that are playing short, fast songs and are soooo good at it—Sin Orden, Rat Bastards, Punch In The Face, the Krunchies—the list goes on and on.

Murty: We play the type of songs we play because it's what interests us the most. We could care less about how we fit into the grander scale of the Chicago scene, or any scene for that matter.

Stevie: Before you moved to Richmond, you guys played out with many of the same groups—Skullzone, (Lone) Wolf And Cub, and The Muzzler come to mind. What is the significance for you of playing with your friends?

Maggie: Playing with your friends is the number one reason why we play shows at all—playing with current friends or making new ones as you go. It is singularly the most fun thing that I can imagine doing. It's the justification for the existence of the band.

Murty: The bands we have played with consistently are not only great bands but just so happen to be great friends of ours, so it makes absolute sense the next time we're setting up a show to have them play. It's the same way in Richmond as well.

Stevie: By playing with your friends, or similar groups of bands on bills, do you think, besides building a fanbase, that you helped thrash in Chicago make a comeback or get greater recognition?

Murty: I think it's a misconception that we are a thrash band. There is more, if not total, influence from punk and hardcore music that really shapes what songs we write.

I think we just got lumped into the whole thrash thing because we more often than not played with bands that were thrash, or claimed to be thrash.

Maggie: Yeah, I wouldn't really consider us a thrash band. The inspiration for a lot of our songs stems from Screeching Weasel or Wipers riffs and chord progressions more than anything, though that may be manifested in a way that does neither of those bands justice. I think we have a few songs that are heavily influenced by Violence, D.R.I., etcetera but we've always agreed that we're just a fast punk band, if anything. Okay, so I do yell "Motherfucking thrash!" in one of our songs, but it was a total joke line thrown in when we were recording because the original lyric didn't fit. The joke's totally on me now, as it is the only line anyone ever knows or remembers. In terms of the thrash revival, I think it started in Chicago and around the country before we had even formed. I guess I just never considered our band to really be a part of it. Most of the bands we played with in Chicago, with the exception of Skullzone and Infinite Missiles, were not thrash bands.

Stevie: How did you get linked up with Hewhocorrupts, Inc.? What was doing a 7" with them like?

Murty: We've known Ryan (Durkin) from the label for some time. The idea of releasing a 7" came up at a show we played with Hewhocorrupts. Ryan was telling me about what he had planned for the label and I was telling him about what we were trying to do with Rager. Just so happened he was looking to release another band and we were hoping to release a 7", so it all worked out. Ryan and Andy were amazing to work with. We had a really small timeframe to get the 7" because we were about to go on tour and they worked their asses off to make sure it happened. We're considered by many financial planners to be a high-risk investment, but I think it's paid off.

Stevie: Many of your lyrics and past show fliers implicate you as "Pinko fucks." What is your interest in socialism or Marxism?

Maggie: Admittedly, I think that most of the references to communism and Marx are spawned per my suggestion, as it is a subject about which I'm extremely passionate. I welcome our band sparking interest in the topic for anyone who listens to us, but that is not the main objective. Ultimately, I write about the ills of capitalism and the apex of the shit storm in which the U.S. is currently entrenched because it is something that

makes me want to scream. It's something that consistently makes me wake up and go to bed fucking furious.

Stevie: How does working with anti-capitalist doctrine make your ideas accessible to your fans, either those who normally like hardcore or those who feel disassociated from mainstream value systems?

Maggie: I don't think I would feel honest screaming shit I didn't care about. I'm not really trying to convince anyone or impress what I'm saying upon any audience. No one can understand me anyway. Our intent as a band is not purely political. I think that "being political" too often negates a sense of fun or playfulness in hardcore. I give an enormous shit about the immediate dangers of our pseudo-egalitarian, rampantly consumerist situation, but that doesn't mean I don't recognize that utilizing a fast punk song as your soapbox is hilarious. And that's okay.

Stevie: Yet you're screaming, "We don't give a fuck" in the song "Been Signin' Tits since '86," acting indifferently to politics and using hardcore as *raison d'être*.

Maggie: I really hope that our "we don't give a fuck" lines are not extrapolated into the areas of politics or, more generally, what the fuck is going on in the world currently. Not all of our lyrics are about politics. "Been Signin' Tits since '86" is about being so disgusted with people that it just makes you feel resigned to the situation. Like, just "Fuck it. I'm over it." Sebastian Bach is still on TV talking about signing weird groupie boobs, for fuck's sake, and it's 2008, and I'm watching it. No strides have been made, nothing's going to change, I'm over people still doing shitty and provocative things to be cool. I'm over no one getting it, and I don't give a fuck anymore.

Stevie: So, basically, you're trying to couple mocking sarcasm and playing to have fun with this serious issue stuff?

Maggie: Yeah, that's a pretty good way to explain it. I think that talking about things in a joking way doesn't just define our band. It's a good way to describe us as people. Murty, Brent (Rager's drummer), and I are total goofs most of the time. It's pretty safe to say that not one of us takes him or herself seriously in the least. We're always fucking around and fucking with each other. When it comes down to it, though, we still feel very strongly and are dead serious about certain things. It would just be too much of a bummer to let the reality of things consume you at every point of your life or your band.

We're considered by many financial planners to be a high-risk investment, but I think it's paid off.



Murty: There is certainly no intention to couple the two ideas. At least from my end, it's difficult to maintain that lightheartedness when we are actually playing our songs. The songs are aggressive and fast, which allows us to delve into the more serious issues that we often contemplate. It's almost bi-polar, the way we conduct ourselves when we play. While we're playing the songs, we seem very intense and angry, and once the song is over, we have huge smiles on our faces, yelling at each other like little children.

Stevie: Since hardcore is traditionally a male-dominated genre, can you talk about what the differences are having a female presence in the group and whether audiences react in a different way? I was looking on your MySpace page and someone wrote a comment like "Hey, cute singer, can I get a number? Wink, wink." Do you often have to deal with this kind of bullshit and what is the band's response?

Murty: First of all, I think all those comments are meant for me; otherwise I've given my number to a lot of pissed-off dudes. Seriously though, you're going to get ignorant shithheads at shows or on MySpace. The good thing is that the community-at-large are intelligent supportive people and you try not to get bogged down on the few bad seeds. With that said, Maggie is an amazing musician and songwriter, so for us her gender never was or is an issue.

Stevie: In your opinion, how has the role of women in the hardcore scene changed over time?

Maggie: I've been torn over this for a while. That we are often asked this question is a pretty good indication that the position of women in hardcore hasn't made remarkable gains. It's obvious that the ladies are disproportionately represented in the genre. I can't pinpoint the origin of the discrepancy—maybe the lack of precedents somehow discourages a lot of girls from even trying to pick up a guitar. Personally, my band and those close to us have never made it an issue, so I'm not forced to think about it a lot. Maybe that's because I sound like a fifteen-year-old boy when I sing.

Stevie: Maggie, do you think your presence in the band is sort of welcoming to young women who want to get involved in music?

Maggie: I'm not really sure because no girls talk to me about it! I wish they would! I know that when I was nine years old, I bought Hole's *Live Through This* record because it had a prom queen on the front. I remember hearing Courtney Love scream, and it being like a revelation. I became totally obsessed with being able to do that. I got a bass and joined a band within months of buying that record, and it was all because I could see myself pulling off being Courtney Love because she was a girl. I had this weird retrospective moment about that recently where I was like, okay—bleach blond, check. Guitar, check. Screaming "fuck" way too much, check. Sloppy drunk, check. Jesus, I'm still trying to be a circa 1993 Courtney Love! The point

of all of this is that it would be awesome if what I was doing inspired some other girl to try to get involved in playing music, even in the slightest amount. I think it's important to have someone who's doing something—like playing in a band—and identify with them just enough to realize that you can do it, too.

Stevie: Are you annoyed at getting the same gender questions over and over?

Maggie: Actually, no. I think it should be discussed. It sometimes feels a little daunting—I start to feel like how I answer those questions might be interpreted as being representative of the general opinions of all women in punk. But, I define myself as a huge feminist, and I like talking about this kind of shit. It's also really fascinating that a "subculture" like punk, made up of social misfits and dissidents, still has this glaring disproportion, and not many seem to mind that much.

Stevie: As a female, I still want to know what it's like for you to be at the command of the pit, screaming at mostly men to "stop being pussies and fucking move." I mean, you really chide them.

Maggie: When I yell at people to move, it's almost always a joke, so I don't have gender issues in mind at the time. But it's cool that it seems like there's more of a balance when we play. I think a lot of that has to do with the lack of shitty machismo, tough guy bullshit within the whole band, not just me. While I don't know what every woman in hardcore or metal wants, per se, a balance is never a bad thing.

I think I would, ideally, want not to be singled out, for better or worse, for being a girl in this type of a band. It would be nice if that weren't still a little bit of a novelty. I think that would make the questions stop, if there were so many women in metal and hardcore bands that it was uninteresting to talk about it.

Murty: You know what's unfortunately not as clear and certainly not discussed as much as women in hardcore, is how underrepresented Indians are in hardcore. Do you hear anyone talking about that? This is something that I have to deal with day in and day out. Seriously though, if there are Indians out there that are into hardcore, give me a call. We'll share in our struggle.

Stevie: Oh, man. Do you want to talk about that further?

Murty: No.

Stevie: Still, your songs demonstrate a clear interest in overturning dominant power structures.

Maggie: I feel that hardcore can basically be a good starting point for social change. Most people who get really into this niche of music have something in their lives pushing them into it—a dissatisfaction, a vague or acute sense of anger, a feeling that they are not like everyone else who wants to rip a bong at Bonaroo when they're in college, but then settle for a shit job at an office and marry anyone just to produce miserable children they can stuff into their Hummer. Hardcore provides a forum within



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So I do yell “Motherfucking thrash!” in one of our songs, The joke’s totally on me now, as it is the only line anyone ever knows or remembers.

which people who have these feelings can congregate. When you realize that a good amount of people are just as disgusted by how our society defines “success,” maybe you won’t feel that pressured to succumb to that definition. It becomes totally okay to operate outside the normative.

The horrors of what is supposed to be normal in this country are striking, especially from a peripheral vantage point. It’s this clarity that often acts as the catalyst for real social change. I think the most effective tool in changing anything is knowledge. Too many people become complacent and scared enough to lose interest in why our social system is flawed and why it should be restructured. Maybe hardcore combats that complacency and fear for some people.

Stevie: How does appropriating the language traditional of oppressors (cocks, tits, cunts) useful in getting your messages across?

Maggie: Using that kind of language relates back to the dichotomy of being funny and serious at the same time. It feels powerful to make fun of someone using their own punch lines. On the other hand, I just have a filthy mouth. Horrible. Sometimes we get drunk and write lyrics that have way too many

“fucks” in there. It’s like, when Sebastian Bach talks about titties, you grimace at what he represents, but you smile because he *has* titties now, and the whole thing plus a bottle of Beam equals a Rager song. Yikes!

Stevie: Do you want to take five to talk about gear or something?

Maggie: I love Sovteks.

Stevie: What is that, an amp? No seriously, I’m an idiot and have no idea.

Maggie: Oh man, Sovteks are not just amps. They are Russian tanks. There are no words to describe how much I love my mig100h. It’s beautiful. Fuck the cold war, and fuck Nixon’s kitchen politics. The Russians are in it to win it.

Stevie: Maggie, you just contributed to the new Venomous Concept LP. How did that opportunity arise?

Maggie: We were recording some songs for our demo, and Kevin from Brutal Truth stopped in to do some vocals on some of our songs. He and Brent are buddies. Kevin and I did some of the trade-off vocals together. A month later, he asked me to return the favor on the Venomous Concept record, which blew my fucking mind. That band is pretty much made up of all my heroes. It’s a really

good record, too, and I feel totally honored to be a part of it. We were so excited that Kevin did vocals on our record. He is so amazing—he just came in, drank a beer, did the coolest shit ever, and took off like a professional’s professional.

Stevie: Finally, in March you played your last show as a Chicago band. What was that like?

Murty: The show was amazing. We played at People Projects, which we consider our home away from home, and, in our opinion, the best space in Chicago, run by some really great people. The bands that played were incredible. What got me the most excited was that kids were going nuts during our set, which is always fun to see. We really can’t wait to return to Chicago and hopefully play shows that have that same energy.

Stevie: So what’s the future of Rager?

Murty: Now, Maggie and I live in Richmond and we’re getting acclimated. For Maggie, it’s her first time living here, and for me, it’s my return home. As for Rager, we intend to keep writing songs, recording, and playing as much as possible. We’re both really excited to see how things turn out living in the East Coast.



Jonathan Coody: Vocals, guitar
Thad Megow: Guitar
Jeffrey Hameault: Drums
Jacob Sparks: Bass

JANA MILLER

INTENT GUITAR



Ninja Gun's music pushes against the Southern culture that the four members of the group were raised in, while at the same time paying homage to the rich musical heritage the South has produced. Their hometown is Valdosta, Georgia, which is only an hour and a half north of Gainesville geographically, but, culturally, the distance is much greater. Propelled by Johnathan Coody's lyrics that skewer the cultural and social mores of their environment, they turn simple melodies into thick, textured sonic landscapes that resonate for days. On record, they are a finely tuned machine, concocting their own special mixture of rock, country, and punk. And live, they push the machine to its limits. I've seen them play shows in Gainesville where the energy levels reach heights equal to some of the best punk shows I've been to. Their catchy choruses are transformed into crowd anthems with people pushing onto the stage to sing along to Coody's words. It's that intangible, bottled up energy that eventually overflows on stage that makes bands like Ninja Gun special.

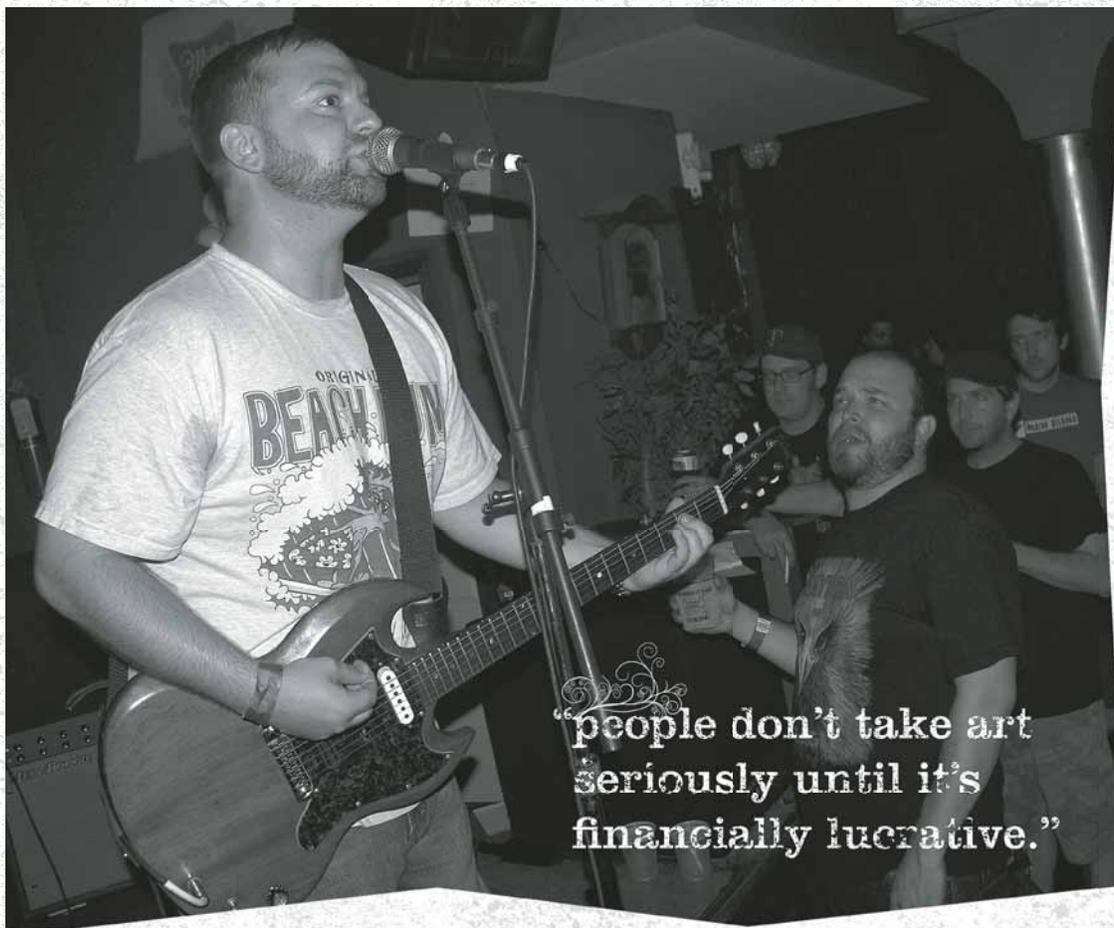


Interview by **Matt Walker**

Photos by **Jana Miller,**
Matt Walker,
and **Jessie Rowntree**

Illustration by **Laura Predny**

Layout by **Albert Lam**



“people don’t take art seriously until it’s financially lucrative.”

JANA MILLER

Matt: So a lot of people here think of you guys as a Gainesville band, but you’re from South Georgia. Do you consider yourselves to be a Gainesville band?

Coody: No, we’re South Georgia, man, because that’s a lot of our identity and we stay up here because it keeps us pissed off and it gives us a lot to write about. I think a lot of good art comes from seclusion and isolation and we stay around here because we write about pretty much where we’re from and where we grew up. It keeps the whole mentality of how we write fresh, and it just gives you a lot to write about. And also it’s hotter in Gainesville and people don’t use air conditioning.

Matt: How do you think that it came about that people down here consider you a Gainesville band?

Coody: We went down there and made a bunch of friends. Everybody’s real nice. I think there are a lot of true music fans in Gainesville who actually listen to songs and listen to the content of songs. It’s not so much about a haircut.

Matt: You grew up in a rural setting on a pig farm in Georgia, which is not the usual stepping stone into punk rock and playing in an independent band. How do you think you made that transition?

Coody: I’m not really sure. I’ve always been into good music with melody. I wrote an article about it called “The Death Squeal.” It’s about

this time when I had to help my dad castrate hogs when I was about ten years old. That would have been the late ‘80s. It was the first time I’d ever done it. I was having to hold this hog while my dad cut him; the sheer violence and primal nature of the situation. That squeal and that piercing loudness is what put that rock’n’roll in me. And at some point when I was an early teenager, I realized I wasn’t like everybody else in South Georgia.

Matt: Did it ever dissuade you from eating pork?

Coody: No, not at all, not at all. That was what put the food on the table—to some degree—farming or whatever. But I’ve never felt like I fit in in my surroundings. There are elements of Southern culture about me but I’ve never been able to completely adopt, say, my parents’ ideologies on things. A lot of people around here don’t think for themselves. They just kind of adopt whatever their parents have and that’s what they carry with them because it’s a lot easier to get a job: if you hate the right people and work the right job and knock your girlfriend up right out of high school and marry her and learn how to fix air conditioners and stuff.

Matt: Well, that seems to be part of what your lyrics about. You seem to embrace and rebel against the Southern culture you were raised in. Do you see that happening? Is there a conflict there?

Coody: Yeah, man. All the great Southern rockers—and by Southern rockers I mean

Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and Little Richard—they’ve all battled with what they’ve felt inside them, what they were born to do, rubbing against what the social elements of their time are telling them to do. Religion, per se, was a big deal to all those guys because they had all been raised in church. It was such a big issue that they were playing rock’n’roll. They knew inside them that it was right and it was what they were supposed to be doing. But yet the social context in which they operated caused a lot of internal conflict with them because they had this primal urge to play rock’n’roll and they had a lot of people telling them that it wasn’t what these people do. It’s kind of still the same today because people don’t take art seriously until it’s financially lucrative.

There are elements to Southern culture that I love and that I think are reputable, but there also are really ugly elements to Southern culture that I don’t think most people outside of the South can really grasp until you’ve lived here, been immersed in it, and—maybe—raised in it.

Matt: What do you think the worst thing is about growing up in the South?

Coody: Just willful ignorance. People who just adopt whatever mentality that is the accepted mentality at the time because it makes life easier. Original thought is not valued in the South, as far as I know of.



“How did I wind up in a band that rides around the country playing songs for no money, growing up on a farm?”



Education is not even valued. It's almost detrimental to your quality of life around here because most people aren't educated and so you're discriminated against.

Matt: So what's the best thing about growing up in the South?

Coody: I guess it's just a unique experience that most people in the punk rock scene don't have because you don't think of the South when you think of punk rock. Like today, we've got a heifer that's sick. She just had a calf and the calf died yesterday and I had to go down there today, way back in the woods behind my parents' house, and hand feed her and water her. It's funny because sometimes I'll think, "How did I wind up in a band that rides around the country playing songs for no money, growing up on a farm?" I think what it is is my parents. If you grow up poor like my parents kind of did, they value security over a lot of other things and they may be willing to sacrifice happiness to make sure that they're going to be able to pay doctor bills or something like that. And I've never been able to rectify that idea that I need a 401k or something like that. I've just always wanted to be happy and do what I love doing and I'm not going to be happy unless I'm playing songs that I wrote.

Matt: A good portion of your lyrics also deal with rebelling against a regular nine to five existence and the average American lifestyle. Are you afraid of that happening?

Coody: Yeah, to a certain degree, because that's another thing in the South. There are no cool jobs in Valdosta, Georgia. There's no cool record stores or magazines to write for. You do something really practical. I had a job with a company called Servpro last year and they do fire and water damage restoration and mold remediation. So for the past two years I've had to go talk to South Georgia insurance adjusters about mold. That's pretty soul-crushing. It's not fulfilling at all. It's not a lifestyle I can relate to. But it's what you're expected to do. If you want to have any sense of security or if you want to provide for your family, you're forced into this mold and if you don't fit in it, you pretend you do and you just live an unhappy life because there's so much social expectation on you to do that.

Matt: You're not working there anymore, I guess, but you're trying to find a job in between tours. How's that going?

Coody: I went to Target today to find a job for three weeks before we fly out to Denver to do this thirteenth anniversary thing for

Suburban Home. It was pretty demeaning because I went to college and got a degree because I thought that was what you were supposed to do and it helped me prolong my youth. And I was sitting there today filling out this application at Target and they were asking these questions, this inventory they do to make sure they're hiring robots and not people with brains. There's a question on there about what percentage of politicians do you think are really honest and you're supposed to answer really high, so, naturally, that's what I did.

Matt: What did you put?

Coody: I don't know; it was like ninety percent or something like that. It's all about sacrificing dignity at this point because you have to pimp yourself out for money to horrible people who you don't share the same values with. And people in the South, people in really poverty-stricken areas don't take art seriously until it's financially lucrative and then everybody's like, "Wow, how'd you do that?" and that kind of sucks because I think artists are the conscience of every civilization since the beginning of time.

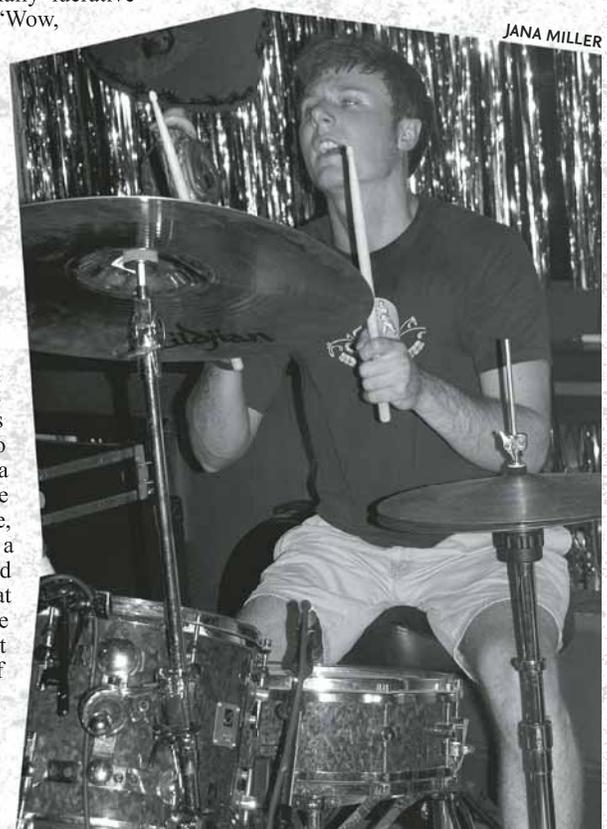
Matt: Well, don't you think a lot of art was born out of poverty?

Coody: Yeah, well the best art comes out of poverty. The best art comes out of isolation and desperation. Valdosta, Georgia, is a very practical area because you work a job and have a couple of kids and you die. I just think the best art comes from areas like this because it has to struggle so much to exist. There's not a support network here like there is in Gainesville. Down there, you've got record labels and a lot of music stuff going on and plenty of restaurants to work at and rent's cheap. Things like that that make it easy for art to exist. And there are a lot of like-minded people down there who can relate to each other and hang out. There's a sense of community down there, whereas Jeffrey and I live in the Trailer of Tears down

the dirt road in Brooks County. And it's a lot different up here. You're kind of alone and you can grow as an artist or do whatever you want because there's no context in which you're creating something; you're just doing it.

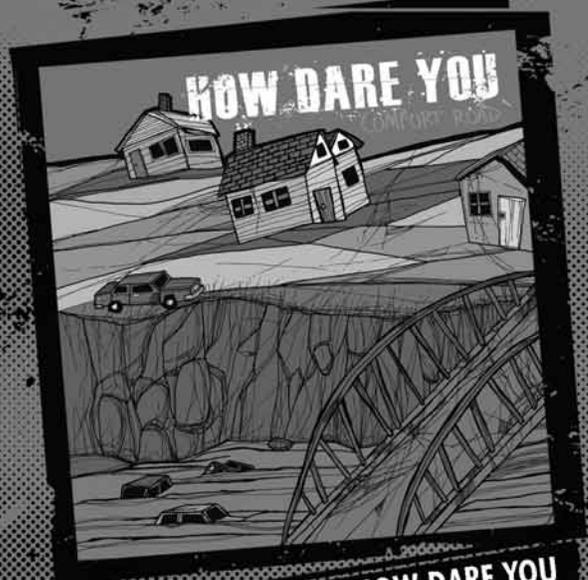
Matt: I wanted to talk about your music, too. Classic punk bands have been a big influence on you, but a lot of Ninja Gun's music sounds more like a mixture of '60s pop, Southern rock, and country music. Do you think your punk background still comes through in the music?

Coody: Yeah, and if it doesn't sonically, hopefully it does in what we're writing about. We've got a song on the new album called "Darwin Was a Baptist." I read about Darwin, who was raised in a pretty religious environment, and at some point what he learned on his own conflicted heavily with what he had been taught all his life. He had a lot of inner conflict and turmoil with that, rectifying those two things. And growing up in





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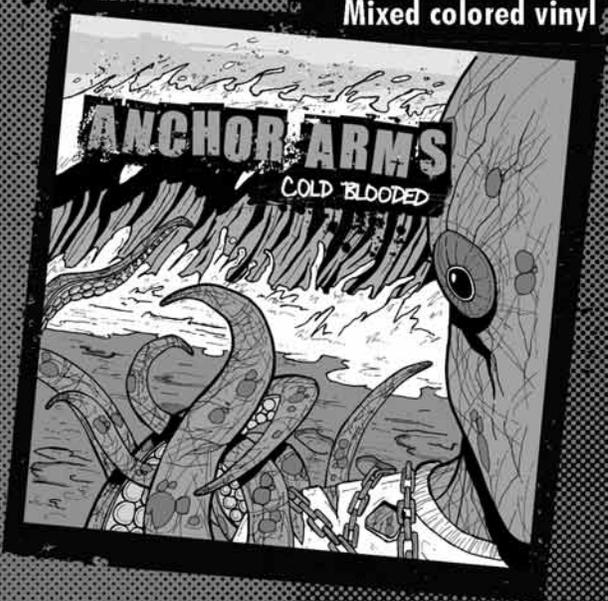
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LAURA PREDNY

a little red brick Baptist church in South Georgia like I did, I remember sitting on the back pew as a kid and hearing my preacher—I guess it was when Clinton first came into office—and he was like, “Well, we don’t agree with him, but we need to pray for him and accept whatever he does because he’s our leader.” And I remember at that time thinking how religion and democracy were like oil and water, how one’s based on blind faith and the other’s based on asking a question. That’s why the chorus in that song is “Can I get a little church in my state? Give me one more reason to hate everything around me.” People just blindly accept whatever they’re told and whatever’s going to make their life easier and I just don’t think that’s the way a democracy can thrive, so there’s that element to our songs. At the same time, I listen to John Prine or somebody like that who was writing songs that had a lot of melody but also had a lot of lyrical depth, too. That is just as important to me as Crass or the Buzzcocks or something.

Matt: Speaking of melody, your new album is pretty carefully produced and orchestrated—and it sounds awesome—but it’s not necessarily the usual approach that a band in the independent music community would take. Is that something you gave a lot of thought to?

Coody: No. I mean, the fact that a lot of our friends’ bands record albums in a day and the fact that we spent, on and off, a year and a half working on this album; nothing about that really influenced the process because I knew what these songs were and I knew what they needed. We record in our bedroom all the time, but we also knew that we wanted to hear these songs really textured and really dynamic. I like both sides of recording. Our next album will probably be a more straight-forward guitar rock album, probably recorded a lot more raw, but these songs, we really wanted to hear them in that type of production. We recorded until we thought the songs sounded full and they got us off. We recorded the first album in five days and it’s a really good document of who we were as a band at that time. We just wanted to try something different this time and I’m glad that we did.

Matt: Your live show is a little different because it’s a little heavier, a little more straightforward, because you can’t really replicate everything you did on the album onstage. Do you think that some people might be disappointed if they hear the album first, then see you live, or vice versa?

Coody: I don’t think so because I think if the song is good enough, it can be presented in a lot of different contexts and it’s still going to hold up because it’s a

good song. A lot of these songs were written acoustically and then we recorded them with a little bit bigger production, more instruments and more harmonies and stuff like that. Then we play live and it’s just a full band stripped down—raw production or whatever—and it’s still fun for us because it sounds good to us and, hopefully, that translates to the listener.

Matt: How did you guys get involved with Suburban Home?

Coody: I just knew that they’re a good, reputable label that had good bands, a really good roster. So I sent Virgil an email that had some rough mixes of the songs while we were recording, and I guess he liked them because he wrote me back and asked what we were looking for in a label, and I told him we just wanted somebody good and reputable

that was into our songs to put it out. We put it out with them and we’re really glad that we did because they’re all really nice people and they’ve treated us really well.

Matt: Your first album sounds a bit different than your new album. Are you concerned with having any kind of continuity between albums?

Coody: It’s still us. Anything we do is going to be us just because we can’t help but sound like wherever we’re at. But there’s four years between those two albums and there’s a lot of undocumented growth as a band. When we recorded that first album, we had been a band for two years and with this one we had been together for six years. I think the first album, as far as content-wise, is pretty much about a lot of the same stuff: frustration about where we are and the people we have to deal with on a daily basis. We get lumped into the alt country thing a whole lot and I don’t really see us as that—whatever alt country means; I don’t even understand it. But I think of us more as a rock band in the sonic sense and probably a punk band in the lyrical sense because of the subject matter we write about.

Matt: I always think the stuff that’s classified as alt country sounds more like country music than new country does.

Coody: Well, Tom Petty says that new country is just bad rock music with a fiddle. And it’s true. It’s like shitty Southern rock from people who aren’t from the South who are affecting a Southern accent, and it’s super formulaic and it’s dumbed down for people who aren’t music fans.

Matt: Well, I’m coming back to Valdosta in a couple of weeks. Do you want to go eat at Ole Times (Country Buffet)?

Coody: Fuck yeah.



“Tom Petty says that new country is just bad rock music with a fiddle.”



JESSIE ROWNTREE

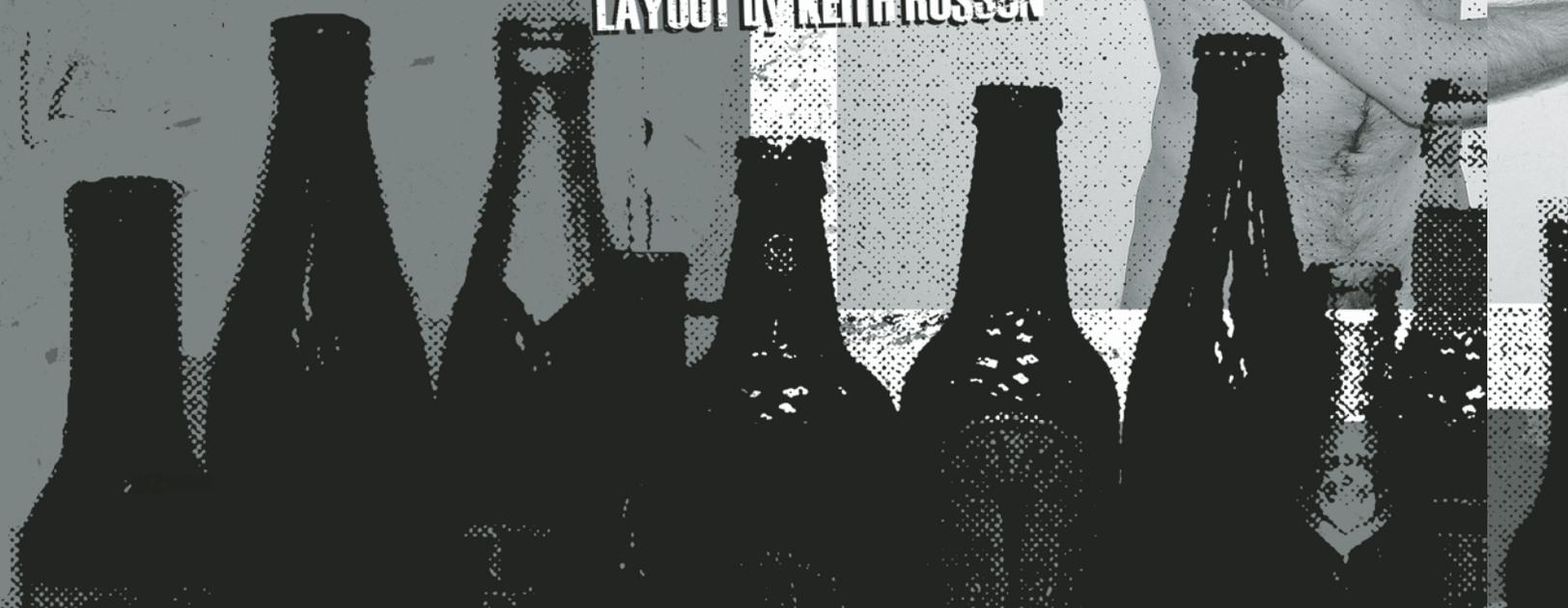
O, A POX ON ALL
THAT IS SWEET
AND HOLY, IT'S THE

SASS DRAGONS

JASON: guitar, vocals | JIMMY: drums | MIKE: bass, vocals

INTERVIEW and PHOTOS by MEGAN PANTS

LAYOUT by KEITH ROSSON





THE SASS DRAGONS PUT ME IN A BIND SOMETIMES.

See, I love words. I will argue semantics and refer to etymological origins, the Oxford English Dictionary preferred definition(s), or grammar books to back up my position. But, on the other hand, I appreciate that language can be rough and ugly, and that can be the only way to really convey a particular message. (I cuss like a sailor and use noises instead of words all the time.)

Another conflict is that I like fun. I like saying things that are fun to say or cause funny reactions. But, talking about words on the offensive no-no list and their social impact bores me to death (if you want to talk about the linguistic impact which becomes social impact when a word like niggardly becomes a no-no word for no intelligent reason, that's another story). Sometimes stupidity is the smartest approach to fun. Stupidity, not to be confused with ignorance, is at the heart of every dick or fart joke, which I think are essential to finding some happiness in this not-always-nice world.

Back to the Sass Dragons making jokes about sex and weed, and, if the mood's right, possibly sticking a drumstick up a butt. Offset that with music that's pleasantly all over the place—on *Bonkaroo!* alone, they've got a blues song and a straight-forward ballad mixed in with the more dancey, thrashy, spastic stuff they're known for—and an intelligent humor and wit, and you know that it's not as simple as it all seems on the surface.

So, when the Sass Dragons say things are gay, you can argue negative connotations and denotations and the furthering of hate all you want, I'm just going to tune out. With them it's just a word, and a word with little power at that. If it wasn't, I'm sure they wouldn't be playing gay bars, on a label run by a gay man, waking up next to a dude on occasion, or any other things on a laundry list of unnecessary defenses I could name.

You can go ahead and choose to walk around with a PC melvin killing all your fun, or you could just stop being gay, have a little fun, and just read this interview.

Jimmy: Now that we're being interviewed, fuck Skrewdriver and fuck their non-racist album. Everything they put out was stupid. And fuck racist bands altogether. I don't care how good their first album was when they weren't racist. That shit's gay as hell.

Megan: Racism is gay as hell?

Jimmy: I'll go on record.

Megan: What does it take to be a punk legend?

Jimmy: Steal your neighbor's pills.

Jimmy and Jason: Take a poo in the garage.

Mike: And suck an old dude's wang.

Megan: Are you punk legends yet?

Jason: No, no.

Jimmy: Yes. I am.

Jason: Well, Jimmy is. I haven't taken a poo in the garage yet. It's a little unsanitary.

Jimmy: I've sucked many an old dude's wang. So, we are punk legends.

Jason: Jimmy gives us that credit because

he's in the band and he's done all three things. He's given us the rite of passage.

Jimmy: I wrote a couple songs, so I think I have the authority to say that we are punk legends.

Megan: You've written Sass Dragons songs?

Mike: Yeah, he's written a bunch.

Megan: Which ones?

Jason: "Smells Like Teen Spirit."

Mike: "Smells Like *Shit* Spirit."

Jimmy: That one that goes, "I'm goin' hungrrrrrrryeaaaaah!"

Jason: And Jimmy also wrote the song that went "der ner ner nerner ner ner ner... yeeeah!"

Megan: I usually don't ask this one, but I actually don't know the story of how any of you met or got together.

Jason: I met Jimmy when we were sixteen.

Jimmy: I was fifteen. I had a Megadeth shirt on with cutoff sleeves.

Jason: I was playing in a punk band where I drew on my shirts because that was punker than anything. If you had a punk shirt and it said Rancid on it, you drew it on when your parents weren't looking. Then you were punker. I met Mike at Baker's Square, and we were all like, "Let's start a band." We'd started a band before this band and it was called Gentlemen Prefer Boners.

Megan: Which they do...

Jason: It was Blondes, but that's gay.

Jimmy: Jason was on the ground screaming about some ex-girlfriend and I thought, "Man, this guy is punk as hell." He had a Subhumans patch on or something. I thought this was the king of punk rock and I really idolized him.

Megan: Especially because of the written-on shirt...

Jason: My self-made Subhumans patch.

Jimmy: And I was at a church and I didn't



understand what church shows were about, so we were being all rowdy.

Jason: They were beating me up.

Jimmy: And me and Mike met at Baker's Square.

Megan: Did you guys all work there?

Jimmy: We hung out there and drank coffee, and, back in the day when you could, smoked cigarettes. Mike and I and some of our friends started gangs. We'd meet in the parking lot: "Okay, we're going to meet tomorrow at 6PM. We're gonna fuckin' duke it out. We're gonna kick your fucking ass." And then the next day, we'd see each other and be all, "What happened?"

Megan: Wait, you were in opposing gangs?

Jimmy: Yeah.

Mike: That was definitely the point.

Jimmy: We were skateboarding and they were listening to Joan Of Arc or something. The first time I really had contact with Mike, he saw the pentagram tattoo on me and was like, "That's an awesome tattoo," and I was like, "I really like this guy." And then we started Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.

Megan: What kind of music was it?

Jason: Stupid.

Jimmy: It was Nation Of Ulysses meets a buttohole.

Jason: I was obsessed with Nation Of Ulysses and I thought it'd be so cool if we did something like wear ties, but we never wore ties. Or, it'd be cool if we knew shit, and we didn't know shit. But, it was awesome. Mike actually played drums; Jimmy sang, no instrument; and I played guitar, which is exactly where I am now; and Jim Thoma. And he now works in South Bend, Indiana, fixing cars. So, fuckin' mad props to that motherfucker!

Jimmy: We've been friends since way back. They were at my divorce party and everything.

Jason: Mike was at my wedding and Jimmy's divorce party.

Jimmy: Jason was even the best man at my wedding.

Jason: True story. I even shed a tear. It was so beautiful; they were getting married. It's something special, but, whatever, fuck it.

Megan: You had a divorce party?

Jimmy: Well yeah, it lasted less than five years.

Megan: What were your bachelor parties like?

Jimmy: I do believe we stole a picnic table

from the taco place down the street and brought it to the Dunkin' Donuts where we hung out because it was one of those octagon picnic tables and all we had at our Dunkin' Donuts was one of those shitty, gay four-seaters. So we straight jacked the one down the street and carried it down Ogden Avenue to the Dunkin' Donuts. I think that was my bachelor party.

Jason: It was because I remember getting huge shit. I'm his best man; I was not at the bachelor party, but, c'mon, you're eighteen, gettin' married to some huge weirdo. I mean, in retrospect. At the time, it was probably a wrong thing to do, but I was too busy goin' to the makeout spot with who's now my wife, but at the time was just my girlfriend, 'cause, you know, you got to get some on the side. She was my girlfriend and she was like, "Let's go to the makeout spot." "But Jimmy's bachelor thing is tonight...I'm not goin'." Poontang.

Megan: How long had you been together at that point?

Jason: Eight months. I did the wrong thing.

Jimmy: I was plenty pissed.



MEGAN: What would happen if Jimmy's boner tattoos got together with Mike's vagina tattoos?

Jason: He was pissed and he told me so. We went out for coffee the day of his wedding, and, I think because I was trying to be tough, I was smoking filterless cigarettes because I thought that was cooler. I told him I was sorry and I was like, "Are you ready, man?" He was like, "Yeah, I'm ready, man." None of us were ready for shit.

Jimmy: I had that Bauhaus shirt on. Jason's bachelor party. I think you were there. We played with the Arrivals...

Jason: Underground Railroad To Candyland... It was just fun because there are so many people who are all, "Oooohhh bachelor party, let's go to a strip club." and this show came up and it sounded awesome, so I was just like, let's make that it. So, basically, it was a show we would play any day of the week, but I had free drinks. Then, on top of that—this is the worst progression of it—I'm sitting there and Ryan, my best man, was like, "Let me buy you a beer. Yeah! Gettin' married!" and then someone would hear it and be like, "Hey, you're getting married? Let me buy you a shot." And then Little Dave from the Arrivals was [claps] "Jäger! All night." He bought me five or six Jäger shots in a row and I was destroyed. When we played, it was fine because we played first or second, by the end of the night, I couldn't stand up. I threw up in the alleyway. I slept on a bed next to Pete (Sweet Pete from Let's Pretend Records).

Jimmy: Didn't he try to touch your junk?

Jason: He kind of cuddled me a little bit. But the funny thing is, it was the same night my wife was getting her bachelorette party. We were sleeping next to each other and I woke up at six thirty in the morning. I heard some people talking. I looked at my phone and it was dead. I was like, "Fuck. I want to call Katie and see how she's doin'." I figured she was still up. So, I dug into Pete's pocket, who was spooning me, and pulled his phone out. I guess she was still up, but she saw some number she didn't know. I thought, "She'll know this...it's Pete." She doesn't know Pete's number. So I'm all, "Where the fuck is she? I'm gonna beat the fuck out of her if she doesn't pick up the phone. If she's fucking some other dude on her bachelorette party,

I'm gonna fucking kill her!" It was all good though: Red Roof Inn. Mothafucka.

Megan: What would happen if Jimmy's boner tattoos got together with Mike's vagina tattoos?

Jason: The Republican National Convention.

Mike: That fuckin' Vice President's Down Syndrome baby.

Jimmy: The world's first ass baby of a...

Jimmy and Jason: A brutal mêlée of butts and penises!

Mike: Next question!

Megan: How did you get into a commercial that was on *Adult Swim*?

Jimmy: We've got connections.

Jason: My wife works for Optimus, which is a post-production lab. They always do this thing where they just buy ad space. We were just fucking around and it was a joke that came off from a tour about a cup of coffee.

Jimmy: With Prizzy Prizzy Please.

Jason: They had an unusually large cup of coffee that looked like a bowl of soup to me, and I was like, "This soup tastes terrible." They were, "It's not soup; it's coffee." "Oh, that's a pretty good coffee." Actually, we were approached by Optimus. They were like, "You guys are geniuses of comedy." So the three of us just wrote it up in some spare time. We got together, a little Jack Daniels, a little...

Jimmy: Weed.

Jason: ...guy we like to call Jose Queer-vo, and some weed, and we just ripped it up. Natural talent, the way you're born.

Megan: How come you never play "Sour Like Green Apples," ya joiks?

Jimmy: Jason and Mike don't know how to play it, and I really like it.

Jason: What are you talking about? You really like it?! All of us make fun of that song. We don't play "Sour Like Green Apples" 'cause none of us like it. Don't even front.

Jimmy: No, I really like it.

Mike: I remember it.

Jimmy: "I'll fuck you up and fucking kill you too 'cause I'm back and you're dead." Those are great lyrics.

Mike: Yeah.

Jimmy: We spent hours in our bedroom, me and you, writing back and forth, sharing poetry. We were laughing so hard.

Megan: You were writing poetry back and forth in the bedroom?

Jimmy: That's how we write songs.

Jason: It's called sexual confusion. Writin' poetry back and forth. Mike and I wrote one song.

Jimmy: And I vetoed.

Jason: Jimmy vetoed it because we were drinking whiskey and 7-Up, and we wrote that nightmare.

Jimmy: It was a Britney Spears's song.

Jason: It was fun. We had a good time.

Megan: You mention not wanting to work a lot in your songs. Do you hate your jobs?

All: Nope.

Megan: Then what would you rather be doing?

Jimmy: This.

Mike: I would rather have all my time to myself. I would rather make my own decisions all the time as opposed to having to be somewhere. No matter how easy it is, you still have to be somewhere or you're going to have to answer for it, and that sucks. It's just that mentality I hate. You've got to work; that's the way it's been for a while now. All of us like having a place to live. We definitely admire a lot of these bands that are able to just be out on tour all the time. We like where we're at. We like hanging out with our friends where we are, but we want to see other shit, and we've been trying to as best we can. I guess we just haven't been willing to take the "not having a home" route. Jason's married, and he has the perfect place to have with his wife right now, so to fuck that up would just be stupid.

Jimmy: For all of us. We're all happy.

Mike: We are all happy. We've made zero off of this band, and if that's how it continues, we'd be happy then too.

Jimmy: As long as I can take two weeks out of every year to go on tour, on vacation with my best friends, that's all I care about.

Mike: None of us have ever gone on tour to any extent before this, and this will be twice in one year. As Bill Murray would say, "Baby steps."

Jason: What was the original question?

Mike: Do you believe in God?

Megan: What would you rather be doing other than work?

JASON: THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION.

Jason: I think it's totally genuine—all of us have had, at one point or another, jobs that we've hated. Right now, when you ask that question, we all like our jobs.

Jimmy: Who knows two years down the line.

Jason: Mike walks dogs, Jimmy makes pizza and sandwiches, and I carry luggage.

Jimmy: I'm learning to make pizzas.

Jason: *Learning* to make pizzas and I'm learning to cope with my job. No, all of us enjoy what we do right now, but it wasn't always that way. Like Mike said, having to answer to somebody is just silly to an extent because I write hit fuckin' punk songs. "You want a pepperoni pizza out of the house? Fuck that."

Jimmy: Pepperonezone!

Jason: It's all fun, but you feel more comfortable hanging out with your friends drinking and smoking drugs. Having a good time is always going to be preferable to answering to someone else. Even though we all like our jobs now, I'd rather be doing exactly what we're doing for a buttload of money...and right now we're making a good thirty, forty k, but that doesn't pay the bills in Chicago 'cause you can't smoke in any bar.

Megan: What?

Jason: You've gotta pay at least ten k a year to smoke in front of a meter.

Jimmy: We live like high rollers, but we pay the price.

Jason: Five bucks a day to pay the cost to be the boss.

Megan: Isn't that what high rollers do?

Jimmy: We have to kill people sometimes.

Jason: Sometimes you've gotta sell a speaker for four million dollars more than it's worth to pay the cost to be the boss, know what I'm sayin'?

Megan: I'm scared that I actually do. When was the last time you had a spotlight on your cock, Jimmy?

Jimmy: Every day of my life when I'm taking a shit and I get that urge that it wouldn't feel bad to jerk off.

Mike: Isn't that an urban myth to jerk off while you poop? It's for the dudes who are too big of pussies to stick a finger in their ass.

Jimmy: I'll stick a finger in my ass any day of the week. Poo is gross. Barf is okay.

Jason: Barf is okay? When did that become okay?

Jimmy: We've all barfed in front of a chick.

Jason: Yeah, barfed in front of a chick. Not on a chick. Or while a chick is shoving a dildo up my ass.

Jimmy: I'm just saying I could barf in front of you, but I couldn't take a shit in front of you. I have a friend who barfed in a girl's jay-jay.

Jason: That's like bringing a bouquet to a one-night stand.

Megan: So, spotlight, cock, what happened?

Jason: It was at the Jackhammer.

Mike: Jimmy pulled his pants off. We didn't know what these guys were going to expect. We were playing at a gay bar called the Jackhammer.

Jason: *The* gay bar.

Mike: So Jimmy did it, just to do it; he does things like that.

Jimmy: I was sober.

Mike: We get through a few songs, by the end of maybe the second song, there was a guy up on a ladder who took a spotlight and moved it right on Jimmy's junk.

Jimmy: My small, little weenie. It was so embarrassing.

Jason: His Li'l Smokie.

Jimmy: I couldn't do anything about it because I had to play drums. I was like, "You son-of-a-bitch." But we got a lot of free drinks that night and got paid \$280. It was awesome.

Jason: If you get paid \$280 for having a spotlight on your pee wee, fuck yeah. I think we've all been there with our small pee wees. Who remembers anyway?

Jimmy: Well, Mike's got a fuckin' pendulum over there.

Jason: He's got an elephant trunk, sucking up peanuts. And by peanuts, I mean vaginas. No, he's got it together. He's not sucking up *anybody's* peanuts, just the right peanuts. Lightly salted, on the half shell.

Megan: Jason, if it came down between picking between *Sass Dragons* and *Metal Gear Solid*, which would you pick?

Jason: There's all sorts of bad assery in *Metal Gear Solid*. Seriously, if I'm gonna pick, it's gonna be *Metal Gear Solid* because



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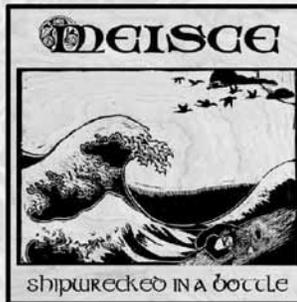
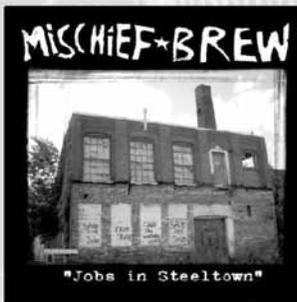
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I decided that I was going to play in a punk rock band that didn't make any money and live with all my friends, and I followed my dream. Seriously, not even kidding.

Megan: How do you go from being told that you'd only play V.F.W. halls to playing the Subterranean (large venue in Chicago)?

Mike: It feels good.

Megan: Not how does it feel, but how did it happen?

Mike: The reason it feels good is that was a situation of us just throwing everything out there and getting these shows that didn't mean anything to the promoter. They didn't mean anything as far as the area down here. It was all in the city and we were in the suburbs. It sucked. We didn't have anybody there while we played, and then you go to when we played the Subterranean, which was part of Mauled By Tigers (Fest), and that's been the highlight of our summers for the past few years here. It was good to know that we were being thought of and that someone took the time to think of us and put us into a show like that. And it's way more fun when you've got that many people there who are on the same page. They may not know who you are, but they liked you and had a good time. That whole weekend was great. We weren't trying to do anything; we were just trying to keep a good thing going.

Jason: We've just done the same thing. Nothing we've done has been different. Three years ago, no one cared. Now, not that no one cares, but we're doing the same thing. It just caught on in some small way or another. It doesn't feel any different because most of the people who have come to shows and done stuff, we're friends with, but it happens to have grown with enough magnitude to be like, "Hey this feels really good," but it's all people who we've grown to be friends with. There are some other people out there, but it's really fun being told, "You guys mean nothing." It doesn't matter; we're still gonna do the same thing. "You're gonna play V.F.W.s and basements for the rest of your lives," and we went, "Can you tell us where those are at because all we're doing is playing these really big venues where no one is at." We didn't know where to begin. We didn't have friends or other bands to rely on. We were just going to play to nobody or somebody and it didn't matter, and it worked. For the first time in my life, for my whole life and not just this band, everything's falling in line very well. I think it's really fucking amazing.

Mike: My life is shit.

Jimmy: My life is sweet as hell. I could not ask for anything more. Ever since I was thirteen, I decided that I was going to play in a punk rock band that didn't make any money

and live with all my friends, and I followed my dream. Seriously, not even kidding.

Megan: So when you started, you didn't know any other bands at all?

All: No.

Jason: We've fallen into everything that we have now by total circumstance.

Megan: You'd just get randomly added onto shows and then end up hanging out and making friends?

Jason: Yeah. What happened was that Sweet Pete had us out to Carbondale for a show. We knew nobody. We knew nothing at all of a scene. Then, slowly but surely for us since we didn't tour—we'd just do weekends in the Midwest at first—we were just getting drunk and playing shows. None of us had any sort of goal. I didn't even know about any of this basement, V.F.W. hall...the same thing that we were told we would be involved in—I had no idea that any of that really, truly existed other than playing in front of two friends. I grew up with a lot of punk rock in the suburb I lived in, but it was literally that: two people. It was just an insult because he was trying to put us down, and then now we're friends with him. We're friends with Brian Petersen (the promoter who insulted them). It all worked out.

Megan: Do you guys have any superstitions?

Jason: If you don't drink before a show, you're lame.

Jimmy: If you don't smoke pot for three days, your apartment burns down.

Mike: One day. That is my superstition. I have to smoke pot every day now because the one day I hadn't smoked pot in three and a half years, our fucking apartment burned down. And it sucked, so I try to smoke pot every day.

Megan: What did happen with the fire?

Mike: End of the story first is that someone set our apartment on fire. They found a gas can afterwards. We had just gotten home from a show and were lying down to go to bed...

Jimmy: It was the night Tulsa played.

Megan: It wasn't that night, was it?

Jimmy: It was because I had a migraine and I took a Xanax that we found in a pill box that a friend gave to us.

Mike: The power surged for a second. Then I heard...we had unplugged our smoke alarm because it went off every time that we cooked. We heard it downstairs and I peeked into the living room and there was smoke pouring through the front door. I was like, "Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, get up. Get up!" He knew something was going on, so he was ready

there's someone else in control. The three of us have control of this band, but we're all really unreliable. We drink too much; we smoke too much; we never practice. Hideo Kojima writes some pretty awesome video games, and even though it took four years for one to come out, they're pretty fucking good. And, they touch my heart, except for the last one. The last one's ending blew ass. So, if it came down between *Metal Gear Solid 4* and *Sass Dragons*, I'd say *Sass Dragons*. If it comes between *Metal Gear Solid*, the series, and *Sass Dragons*, I would have to say *Metal Gear Solid*. [To Mike] I'm sorry.

Mike: You're entitled to your opinion.

Jason: I only said it because it'd be funnier to say *Metal Gear Solid*. Of course, *Sass Dragons*.

Megan: Why do you play bass upside down?

Mike: It hurts my wrist the other way.

Jason: He didn't play bass when we got him as a bass player, and he just learned it upside down. He even strung his bass right after learning to play it upside down and was just like, "This sucks. I don't like it," and that's just the way it's been and it's worked for us. It might not work for, let's say, Journey. It might not work for Linkin Park. It might not work for...

Megan: Flea?

Jason: Flea. Great example. He's a great bass player, but it might not work for him. But it works for Mike and I think he trumps the rest of 'em for what we do. Now are we playing Red Hot Chili Peppers? Hell no. I don't know how to do that. I don't think any of us know how to do that.





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fast. I grabbed a cat, my girlfriend grabbed our other cat, and Jimmy grabbed the Sass Dragons CDs that we just got, and we got out of there. Jimmy grabbed his cell phone as well and we sat in our back alley with a bunch of other people who lived there and watched our apartment burn down. We called Jason. He came and picked us up.

Jimmy: Drank some beers.

Mike: Finally got around to that smoking.

Jimmy: I went to bed that night so scared. I was traumatized for one day.

Jason: It was funny because that was a night where we all kind of kept it cool. It was just a random weeknight where we played a show. It was a Tuesday. Any other given night, one of us, at least, would be catatonically drunk to the point where you would literally have to put them over your shoulders to run them out of a burning building. I didn't have to work the next morning, but I drove. Mike and Jimmy were like, "It's a Tuesday night. We have to work in the morning." Maybe not even that. I don't know what it was, but none of us got drunk, and, let me tell you, we got plenty blasted when they made it to my house. We were whipping out the Southern Comfort that had been sitting above my fridge for months, not touched, was annihilated. We drank our balls off.

Jimmy: I called my parents at two in the morning like, "Ehhh...you might see this on the news, but I'm safe. Our apartment building burned down, but we ran out of it and escaped."

Jason: I even told Jimmy, because he'd borrowed a few of my CDs...I was like, "You have that Germs CD of mine, the entire discography. I know your house just burned down, but when you get a chance and you get some money together, I'd really like that back." And he said, "Yeah, man...I'll burn it for ya." Long and short of it: I'm still waiting.

Megan: What did you get when you went back?

Jimmy: I got my fire dog (a stuffed animal he's had since he was young).

Jason: Scared.

Mike: Jimmy's room was pretty much just water damage. Us, it was everything. We tried to find anything. There were some clothes that were salvageable. The night

before, I did the non-lazy thing: I actually carried all of my bass stuff back up out of Jason's car. I was debating whether to do it or not. So all of my bass stuff got burned up. And Jimmy's snare drum.

Jimmy: But it's not a tragic incident at all. It's actually been a glorious incident. We live in this great place now and all of our great friends supported us.

Mike: We have summer camp every day now.

Megan: What's the thing you most admire about the person to your right?

Jason: What I love most about Jimmy is that he's been my best friend for ten years and that's enough said. We've been there for one another and that's that.

Jimmy: Keep going.

Jason: Even through the stupidest shit... he's cuddling me pretty hard right now (really, he was), but it's been the same thing, with Mike as well. It's been easy. We've all done stupid things and we've all been able to roll it off our shoulders. None of us are like, "You haven't been around for a week." Who gives a fuck if you're not around for a week? It's easy being the friends we are. We've had times where we've been around each other all the time and time where we've been apart, and it doesn't matter; it's all the same.

Jimmy: Mike...where do I start? Sometimes Mike makes fun of me. I'll be on the couch, listening to the Vindictives or Hewhocorrupts and Mike will come downstairs: "What the fuck is that bullshit? Fuck this shit; you just woke me up." But, I think Mike is one of the most beautiful men I have ever seen in my life. That smile. That charming grace. Those eyes. And the talent to show for all of it. Best upside down bass player ever. And my favorite friend ever. We've lived together how many years? Six years?

Mike: I don't know.

Jimmy: I think twenty years.

Mike: Probably fifty.

Jimmy: BFF.

Mike: The thing I most admire about Jason is that he came up with the phrase "I'm so hungry, I could fuck a shark."





THE HEX DISPENSERS

Interview by Ben Snakepit

Garage punk and Austin, Texas go hand in hand. One immediately brings thoughts of the other. Austin has a rich, thriving garage punk scene, and one of the top dogs on the pile these days are the Hex Dispensers. Made up of scene veterans from bands like Feast Of Snakes, The Gimmicks, The Blow Up, King Sound Quartet, The Gospel Swingers, Now Time Delegation, The Brotherhood of Electricity, Manikin, The Winks, Tractor Sex Fatality, The Kodiaks, and The Hatchbacks (and those are just the ones I know about!), the Hex Dispensers started as a three-piece from the ashes of This Damn Town in the summer of 2006. Since then, they've released a self-titled LP on Germany's Alien Snatch Records, a split 7", and a handful of tour singles. In 2007, Tom moved to guitar and Dave joined on bass. I recently sat down with them over pizzas and beer to talk about music, marriage, and bandits from outer space...



CHRISTIAN KOCK

Alex: Guitar and Vocals

Dave: Bass

Tom: Guitar

Alyse: Drums

Ben: What's the deal with the Brotherhood Of Electricity? Aren't all of you guys also in that band?

Dave: Well, Alex and Alyse and me, the three of us, yes. I flew down from Seattle and we wrote songs for like a week and recorded them—and then we went on tour and Tom played bass, and then we recorded again like a year ago.

Ben: So it was just a project, not really a real band?

Alex: Dave and I have been friends for a long time. We'd been wanting to do something together for a long time, but we had no idea at the time that the exact same four people would end up in another band. In the Brotherhood, Tom came in a little later down the line, and with the Hex Dispensers, Dave came in a little later down the line, so the end result was the same.

Ben: Dave, did you move from Seattle to Austin specifically to be in this band?

Dave: Kinda. I was getting really sick of Seattle. I just couldn't handle the fucking rain anymore.

Ben: Did your band really start on 6-6-06?

Alex: Yeah, the week before that, Tom wanted to start practicing, but I said, "No, let's wait." We could've started earlier—at the time we were in This Damn Town, and that was going on hiatus—so we waited 'til 6-6-06 to officially start this band.



BALDO

My dreams were crushed years ago.

Ben: So you went into this right away. You already had a name picked out and songs written and everything?

Tom: It was at the Blackout (a festival put on by *Horizontal Action*). They kept texting me these ridiculous names...

Alex: The Hex Addicts: lots of bad variations of the name.

Ben: How did you arrive at Hex Dispensers?

Alex: I think we quit trying.

Ben: So the Pez dispenser shirt design, that came later?

Alex: Dave's friend Brian Cole drew that for us, up in Seattle.

Ben: That leads perfectly into my next question. Who does all of your artwork?

Alex: Dave and I pretty much do all of it. Brian Cole did the T-shirt and Dave Wallin did the *Lose My Cool 7'*, but everything else we did. I did the LP cover.

Ben: You actually painted it?

Alex: No, it's a collage. I did the background digitally. The tentacles and baby carriage are just clip art. And those tentacles just show up everywhere on every Threadless T-shirt. I'm so bummed.

Dave: We saw them on flyers in Europe.

Alex: Yeah, and Dave did the other T-shirt

and the tour poster, and the European tour single, but yeah he and I pretty much do all the art.

Ben: So you guys are all veterans. You've all been in tons of bands before. What about the Hex Dispensers makes it work?

Tom: We've all played together before, so we knew we would all get along.

Alex: It's hard to articulate what I've learned. You can't define it, really. It's just wisdom, and wisdom is not an easily definable trait.

Dave: You learn not to get mad at stupid shit. There's no power plays or anything like that. You just learn not to lose your shit over stuff.

Alyse: I feel like with this band, we're getting a little bit older, so we're not really expecting a whole lot, except for fun, which is all we really wanted to begin with.

Alex: Our expectations are a lot more realistic. There's not a pie in the sky. We know we're never gonna be on MTV and, frankly, none of us really want that. Not that anyone's knocking down our door, but if that did happen, it'd be really cool to say, "Thanks, but no thanks."

Alyse: It's so different from being sixteen and starting in your first band and being like, "Yeah, I'm gonna take over the world."

Alex: Where you think you're gonna be big enough to have the opportunity to decline offers.

Tom: My dreams were crushed years ago.

Ben: So the split with Haunted George was your first record?

Alex: No, the LP was our first.

Ben: Wow, you just came out swinging, huh? How did you end up being on a German label?

Tom: We sent over a nice box of chocolates.

Alex: The guy was familiar with all the bands we'd been in before. We had listed the bands that Alyse, Tom, and I had been in on our Myspace page and he took interest because of that, because he had liked the bands we'd been in previously. That's a major benefit of having been in other bands: people who liked the stuff we were doing before would be more inclined to want to work with us. And we really wanted to go to Europe, so doing the record on a European label seemed like a good way to facilitate that.

Ben: You recorded it with Mark from the Marked Men? Did you do it in their shed where they record all their stuff?

Tom: No, it's not there anymore.

Alex: We did it in Mark's house.

Alyse: I was in the dining room and they were in the living room. We did vocals in the kitchen and all the recording gear was in the den.

Alex: It's pretty ingenious, the way he milks the acoustics out of every room in the house. It's a real awesome '50s or '60s ranch-style house, but it's not really that sprawling. He's really clever in the way he problem solves. He made the best out of the situation, especially acoustically. He did it on this super primitive half-inch tape, and I'm really impressed that he could coax the stuff he did out of those recordings.

Ben: How many tours have you done?

Alex: We did one Midwest tour right before we recorded the LP. We've done some festivals. We drove up to Gonerfest and we flew up to Budget Rock in Oakland, and then up to Seattle and Vancouver. That's the closest to a West coast tour we ever did.

Dave: So pretty much just the Midwest and Europe.

Ben: Do you want to do more touring?

Alex: If anyone wants to fly us out for a weekender, we're all for it, but we all work, we all have bills to pay, and you reach a point where you're like, "Do you want to go full-blast and be broke all the time or do you want to work and just play when you can?" It's a tough choice to make, but you gotta pay the bills.

Ben: Alex and Alyse, does it feel different touring as a married couple?

Alex: No, not at all. We travel really well together.

Alyse: We toured together once before, when we were dating. Nothing's really changed lately. We try to be respectful of everyone else.

Ben: Tom and Dave, how is it touring with a married couple?

Tom: You wouldn't even know...

Dave: If they would just stop fucking in the van all the time.

Ben: Alex and Alyse, do you plan on ending up like Fred and Toody Cole (Dead Moon, Pierced Arrows), just playing together for the rest of your lives?

Alyse: I would love that.

Alex: Yes, absolutely. They're a great blueprint for what we want to do.

Ben: Had any of you guys been to Europe before?

Dave: Tom and I had, but not with rock bands, just as tourists.

Ben: Well the question I have here is, "How did you like Europe?" but that's kinda stupid, I guess. How does touring Europe compare to touring the states?

Dave: It doesn't. There's absolutely no comparison.

Ben: How long were you there for?

Alex: A month. We went all over the place but most of the shows were in Germany, which makes sense because of the label. We went up to Denmark, did the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, France. We had nineteen shows before our first day off. It was kinda weird, 'cause we were so excited to be there, but just really exhausted from playing in a different city every night for nineteen days. I know that sounds like—other bands would be like "nineteen days, whatever"—like the Riverboat Gamblers would probably think we're the biggest fuckin babies, but we were strangers in a strange land.

Tom: People pouring beer down your throat every night...

Alyse: All that Jägermeister.

Alex: Everyone over there was so extremely hospitable. It's hard to explain, like sometimes when you're playing some podunk town down here in the States, on the way to a bigger city. As soon as you show up, the people at the bar are acting like it's a pain in the ass that you're even there, they have to deal with you, and they're bummed about it, but in Europe it's never like that. They're so hospitable. They're feeding you. They're just really gracious, really appreciative, and not in an ass-kissy way. They just treat you the way they would treat an old friend that just came to town.

Ben: What was your favorite food in Europe?

Dave: The Italian gas stations.

Alex: When we first got there, we went to this one holy grail unicorn of a place, and we figured it would be a chain and we'd see them all over, but we never found it again.

Alyse: Autogrille.

Tom: I got an angry Whopper at an Autogrill in Italy. It was called the "Angry Whopper." It was like a western Whopper but really bad.

Alex: All the Turkish food in Germany. It seems like Turkish food there is like Mexican food in the southern United States: the doner kebabs and stuff; that shit was awesome.

Alyse: My favorite was the rolo, which we only had in Bremen. It was so crazy spicy.

Alex: The pizza we had in Gronigen, Netherlands was unbelievably good.

Ben: What does the future hold for the Hex Dispensers?

Alex: We're working on a new LP. It's going slower, but we've got about six songs. About half of the next LP is written. We're kinda

not playing a lot right now. We're just kinda trying to write. Our lives are all kinda busy right now. Dave just got a new job and Alyse and I just moved into a new house. We're kind of in a state of flux, so it's hard to throw all of our time at it. We've just been eking out a song here and there.

Alex: The plan is to release the Euro version on Alien Snatch and the domestic version on Douchemaster.

Alyse: And we will tour again

Alex: We hope to be back in Europe in a year and a half or so.

Dave: If anybody wants to fly us out, we'll be totally down. You'll lose money, but we're a lot of fun.

Ben: So Alex, do you write all the lyrics?

Alex: Mostly. Dave contributes some, too.

Ben: So do you come in with a song already written or do you all collaborate musically?

Alex: It's changed. On the first album, I wrote a lot of stuff and then Tom and Alyse helped arrange it, but after that album, pretty much everything has been collaborative. I think the stuff we've written since then has been more sophisticated. It's not rocket science or anything, but the stuff we're doing now is a bit more involved than the stuff I was writing by myself. I really like it better when we write as a group. Sometimes, Tom will have a riff or idea, and we'll play around it until it develops the skeleton of a song, or I'll just have a kernel of an idea. I think the songs will sound a little bit differently on the second album. We're the same band, but now the songs have a little bit more to them.

Ben: Are you sick of Misfits comparisons?

Alex: I don't really see it.

Tom: It's not as bad now as it was with This Damn Town.

Alex: Yeah, in This Damn Town, I kinda crooned a lot more, so I got a lot of Danzig comparisons, which were really unwelcome, because I love the Misfits and I love Samhain, but Danzig now, he's just kind of a parody of what he used to be...

Alyse: And that is fun.

Alex: Yeah he's the source of a lot of YouTube fun...

Alyse: I could spend an entire day looking up Danzig crap on YouTube.

Alex: Yeah, the Misfits were such a pivotal band in my interest in music and my development, but I don't think that this band—aside from that we both like spooky stuff—we're anything like them.

Ben: Who is Forest Ray Colson?

We're getting a little bit older, so we're not really expecting a whole lot, except for fun, which is all we really wanted to begin with.



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CANDERSON

Dave: What does evil taste like? Tom: Evil tastes like a Zagnut.

Alex: I actually spell his name wrong on the album, because of the website where I got the information...

Dave: This song was written entirely by Google.

Alex: The Necessary Evils had a song called "The Man from Mars," which is a really cool song, but I didn't make the correlation until Haunted George started his Myspace profile, and he had all this random stuff on there. He had this clipping of this thing about this bandit who wore this fucking insane costume and had been apprehended in California in the '50s. He had a gas mask and a motorcycle helmet with a skull decal on the front and a leather cop jacket with bandoliers and skull patches all over it. He just looked like this Buck Rogers villain, and he robbed grocery stores in this ghetto. He became known in southern California as the "Man from Mars Bandit."

Alyse: But he lived in Oklahoma...

Alex: He would commute out to California and rob grocery stores, then go back to

Oklahoma and spend all that money. But the way he was apprehended—in the '50s, being a robber was as bad as being a murderer or a rapist now—it was such a horrific thing.

Dave: It didn't help that he was from outer space, either.

Alex: Exactly. These two police officers walked in while he was doing a robbery, and without any hesitation, they shot him in the head. He never hurt anybody in any of his robberies. I'm not saying what he did was right, but the force used to stop him was a bit excessive. The thing about Forest Ray Colson is that you have to see the costume to really appreciate the story, 'cause he looked fucking awesome. And it was because of Haunted George and The Necessary Evils that I found out about him and started digging around for information about him. Then I realized that they had already done a song about him.

Ben: Here's a question I got from Todd Taylor. If this was the early '90s, what label would you be happy to be on?

Tom: Warner Brothers.

Dave: What label was EMF on?

Alyse: How about Crypt?

Alex: Crypt or Estrus. That would've been cool. But, honestly, if this was the early '90s we probably wouldn't sound like we do now.

Dave: Yeah we'd have a DJ and we'd be rapping. We'd be like Urban Dance Squad.

Tom: Yeah I'd look like Shannon Hoon.

Ben: Tom, what's the secret to good brisket? (Tom is very well-known in Austin party circles as the best barbecue chef in town.)

Tom: If I told you, it wouldn't be a secret anymore.

Ben: If there could be a Hex Dispensers candy, what would it be like?

Dave: What does evil taste like?

Tom: Evil tastes like a Zagnut.





THE VINYL RECORD BUBBLE?

BY JOSEPH STEINHARDT
ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE LARDER

“Did you know that disco record sales were up 400% for the year ending 1976? If these trends continues... AAY!” —Disco Stu (*The Simpsons*)

In January of this year, the RIAA reported a 15.4% increase in vinyl sales in 2007 compared to 2006, a period in which album sales as a whole dropped 9.5%. This would seem to say that vinyl is making a comeback and led journalists ranging from *Wired* to *Time* to declare its resurgence, but what no one seemed to be able to figure out was why. While looking into the factors that led to the sales increase, what I really discovered was that these journalists may have been as foolish as Disco Stu was on *The Simpsons* when trying to convince people to invest in disco vinyl based on past performance. In addition, after looking at the data and current record collecting climate, it may turn out that vinyl sales are actually just the next bubble waiting to burst.

Being both a vinyl collector and a statistics nerd, I decided the best way to get to the bottom of this was to randomly sample people buying records by exit polling at two of the East Coast's largest record stores (The Princeton Record Exchange and Vintage Vinyl). I also intentionally picked stores that cater more towards average music listeners and not vinyl DJ's. DJ's buy up a lot of vinyl, but it is almost an entirely different culture from that of the average listener, and thus would make it hard to draw useful conclusions if they were accounted for. While not ideal, in addition to the collectors and buyers who I interviewed, I also draw a lot in the article below from semi-anecdotal evidence derived from my own experiences running a record label, as well as others whom I deal with.

The result of the survey was pretty surprising, even knowing what I do about the industry. Close to 73% of vinyl buying customers polled said they already had the music they were buying in another format (CD/MP3/cassette). Roughly 60% of those polled said they buy less than five new CDs a year. Most surprising is that 93% of record buyers polled own a record player valued at under \$200 and 67% under \$100.

What does this say about record buyers? This seems to show that the market is fuelled by record collectors. Arguments about the fidelity of vinyl compared to digital formats seem to be moot when the record itself is being played on a cheap turntable, which is exactly what the bulk of buyers are doing. Some may argue that vinyl played on a bad

The music itself isn't what is being purchased for most buyers, either, as they already have it in some format and it would be safe to say that those who don't have it could easily obtain it from one of their friends who does. Buyers of vinyl in 2008 are essentially buying a collectible that they can also listen to should they choose to. Finally, the fact that vinyl buyers buy so few CDs compared to vinyl can be likely attributed to the fact that, presently, vinyl holds its value much stronger than CDs, again due to the collectors market for vinyl records. That is to say, when someone purchases an album on vinyl that is also available on CD, either consciously or subconsciously, they are choosing a format that is less practical yet that will be able to be resold or traded at a greater value than the other format.

Another factor skewing the vinyl sales statistics is the fact that, as vinyl is getting popular, many records never available on the format are finally being issued, in addition to old favorites being reissued. The same thing occurred when DVDs first started becoming popular. There was a push to issue cult classics on DVDs and repackage older DVDs that were issued before the format truly picked up. Looking at the top 25 best-selling CDs on amazon.com, it is exclusively new releases. In comparison, the amazon.com top 25 vinyl bestsellers are almost exclusively reissues. Whereas, with CDs, people are buying new releases to add to their collection, vinyl buyers, especially new collectors, are backfilling their library with reissued classics and new-to-vinyl issues.

This leads to a very unfair comparison to other formats during this nascent period. Essentially, current CD sales are being compared directly to sales of every album ever issued. As this happened with DVDs—and there was an initial boom to fill collections—the growth of DVD sales started to trail off in 2005 and 2006, leading to the first ever decline in growth for 2007. This can hardly be attributed to HD formats (HD DVD, Blu Ray) as the combined sales of both for the year—8.9 million discs—sold less than the 7th best selling DVD of the year on its own (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (10.14 million). While it is next to impossible to account for the sale of second hand vinyl, which makes up a large fraction of the business for most record stores, the same can be said about CD and DVD sales.

Record collectors who are in it for the long haul and aren't worried about the value of their collections—simply the music contained within—would benefit greatly from patience.

turntable sounds better than a CD—and while that is a tough argument to defend in either direction as it is pretty subjective to the listeners desire—high definition audio and audiophile versions of records make up only a small fraction of sales, according to Jon Lambert, General Manager of The Princeton Record Exchange (although he did make a point to say that those types of records are rarely in stock and when they do come into the store, they sell pretty quickly). Still, I would find it odd that someone who is interested enough in audio quality to deviate from the standard format, would then buy a player with the least audio quality.

There is definitely something to be said for the ease of use of vinyl (and CDs) compared to MP3s. For many, computers are still daunting, and especially in the underground community, many choose to live a life without them. Record players are found, to me, to be more comforting as they are less digital than CD players. Computers are becoming both cheaper and easier to use. As a result, as they become more integrated into daily life to the point where they become as comforting as a record player (which was also, at one point, a daunting new technology) or a TV set, I would imagine that that aspect of vinyl culture will die down somewhat.

It should be no surprise then that the market for second hand and collectable vinyl is booming right now, with prices of rare records skyrocketing, especially over the last five years. Aside from justifying a vinyl purchase from a casual buyer who knows they can resell the record later—possibly even for a profit—this has led to speculators who buy up multiple copies of records with the hopes of reselling them for a higher price on the collectors market. This has also led the record labels themselves to issue special collectors versions of records with the hopes of being able to convince fans and speculators alike to buy multiple copies of the same record.

This story is nothing new. A similar situation happened with the comic book industry between 1985 and 1993. A combination of speculators buying up multiple copies of issues and comic book companies issuing intentional collectibles with the hopes of multiple sales to single collectors, led to a complete collapse of the comic market as a whole when the collectors started to lose interest, leading to a mad rush to unload all the comics that had been hoarded onto a market that had no more interest in buying them. They became worthless.

Now, I'm not even halfway through the article and I have a feeling there are readers already feeling insulted, maybe even offended, and thinking, "Yeah, maybe some people, but not me." First of all, these numbers, and this article applies to the average person and speaks to the vinyl market as a whole, so while there may be some people who are really just buying what they can't get elsewhere with no plans to resell and who are in it for the long haul, there are also people who only recently got into collecting records when the boom began and buy everything they can on eight different colors.

On top of that, there is nothing wrong with collecting records, but there is no reason to kid yourself or others into thinking that there is some kind of higher reason that you are buying vinyl. Record collecting is one of my greatest hobbies. It has gotten me into such a wide variety of music and connected me with friends locally and across the country. It even led me to starting a record label primarily focusing on vinyl. Recently, though, I feel that I and many others who buy, sell, and release records have sort of lost sight of the reason they got into collecting records in the first place.

There were two main factors that attracted me to buying records at a young age: the price and the punk records that were only on

vinyl. Nothing was more exciting to me than being able to explore all kinds of new music that I had heard about for just a few bucks or less per album, often even in thrift stores and dollar bins. It was even cooler when I started discovering punk and indie releases that were only coming out on vinyl, and that were also cheap. Flash forward twelve years. CDs are the dead format you can pick up used for a few bucks, and new vinyl is sometimes even more expensive than the CD version. As pressing and shipping costs increase, even low budget indie and underground releases have become almost as expensive as the major label releases. On top of that, the scarcity of the vinyl-only punk releases combined with the collecting boom led to a huge increase in price for small, out-of-print releases, which, in turn, resulted in much cheaper CD issues coming out, often containing complete discographies and bonus tracks. The music lover would obviously want the CD version, as it is more versatile and contains more music, yet the vinyl versions of these both cost more, and sell more. What are we really buying here?

For some, it is simply art (or an artifact) that is being bought. The vinyl version is being bought for the expanded artwork, and larger layout, which, of course, further argues for the vinyl album as a collectable in the 21st century. Some are buying the album on vinyl, as they find them less disposable and that, overall, they treat them better. This is a direct effect, however, of the value of the piece itself. Records are preserved better because they are seen as something which could be valuable if properly taken care of. Were CDs or cassettes to suddenly multiply in value by ten, I have a feeling they would quickly start being stored better and taken care of. While some complain about CDs decaying, CD technology has changed a lot since its invention. CDs pressed in the early '80s are, in fact, susceptible to "CD rot." However, modern CDs will last for many, many years. This is not the case, however, with burnt CDs (as opposed to pressed ones), which may only last somewhere between two and five years, according to a 2006 Computerworld study.

It used to be vinyl that came with exclusive extra tracks. Now it is the CDs. From a punk and DIY standpoint, the CDs are far cheaper to produce and thus can be sold for cheaper, and are generally more eco friendly on the production end. So why are punk and indie fans still buying vinyl? I think many are finding themselves in the same situation I am in, which is that I have invested so much time into a vinyl collection that it's easier to pay a premium at this point to fill in holes and buy new music than it is to start collecting a new format. This then leads to some people just getting into underground music to see vinyl as a piece of the culture—almost as a rite of passage—and continue the trend. Collector sites have sprung up all over the internet. It's a direct result of the internet making it easier to get into subcultures and websites like Ebay making it not just easy to buy and sell

records, but to also estimate values for items that were once near impossible to appraise in real time. Some sites allow people to post the entire list of their collection for both trading and bragging purposes. It is not uncommon for there to be postings on the message boards of these sites where collectors take pictures of their collections or rare pieces for bragging purposes, further fuelling the collecting bubble.

It's hard to say how long this collecting bubble will last, although I could see the current downturn in the economy lead to consumers spending less money on collectibles and entertainment. Combine that with collectors selling their records as something they can live without, it will lead to a buyers market. As the value of records go down, speculators

While a bursting of the bubble is unpreventable, listeners and collectors alike can make sure to only buy what they really want to listen to, on a format that is most practical to them. After all, even a record that is sold for a dollar could be your favorite and most listened-to album. Labels would be best to stop producing intentional collector copies of records and multiple editions of the same album, but the way most labels are run, there is little chance of them to stop doing that until it is too late. (That's the American way, right?)

Record collectors who are in it for the long haul and aren't worried about the value of their collections—simply the music contained within—would benefit greatly from patience, as there will be a time in the

There will be a time in the near future when everything will be on a huge sale.



also leave the market, resulting in labels no longer being able to get away with selling five or more copies of an album to the same person, leading to slower sales as a whole. Unfortunately, even good labels that don't employ these practices are susceptible to downturns in the market, no matter how unfeigned their own practices.

As records lose their value, people will try to sell their collections so as not to be left holding the bag, so to speak, resulting in an even further devaluing of vinyl as the market is flooded. Fewer people will want to buy vinyl for the same reason they aren't buying CDs and haven't been buying vinyl until recently: because it is seen as worthless.

near future when everything will be on a huge sale: from stuff that just came out, to old rarities. Labels, too, need to remember why they got into pressing vinyl in the first place. Yes, there is presently more money to be more easily made by making lots of limited pressings of your releases, but you should stop to think about what got you into putting out records in the first place. I highly doubt it was sales, or I assume you would have picked something more lucrative than punk vinyl. The same goes for the buyers. Try to remember what got you into buying your first records and try not to lose sight of that when you buy your thousandth.

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE STAFF

Adrian Salas

Recent WTF Moments and My Soundtrack to Them

5. Watching *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* – Miss Derringer, “Black Tears”
4. How fast the global economies tanking – Nomeansno, “Dark Ages”
3. That executive pay limits aren’t a given in the proposed economic bail out – Propagandhi, “A People’s History of the World”
2. Sarah Palin and the fact people actually take her serious – Bad Religion, “New Dark Ages”
1. Watching final episode of *Twin Peaks* – Pixies, “Is She Weird”

Amy Adoyzie

Stories to Teach in a Conservative Muslim Country

- *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury
- *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell
- *The Lottery*, by Shirley Jackson
- *The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros
- *The Devil Wears Prada*, by Laura Weisberger (Oh, but I jest! The movie was much better than the book.)

Aphid Peewit

- Teenage Bottlerocket, *Warning Device* CD
- The Rotters, *Pull It and Yell* CD
- The Dickies, *Incredible Shrinking Dickies* CD
- Heino, *Liebe Mutter 12*”
- Hanson Brothers, *It’s a Living* CD + DVD

Art Ettinger

Top Five Recent Punk DVDs

- Meatmen, *The Devil’s in the Details Volume 1*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen the Fabulous Stains*
- ANTiSEEN, *Destructo Vision*
- *Punk’s Not Dead*
- D.I., *The Suburbia Sessions 1983*

Buttertooth

1. My baby, Scarlett Faye Micelli-Price enters the world!
2. Democratic Presidential debate. If Americans are on the fence, they must have their head up their ass. Vote Obama 2008 to start progressive change.
3. Financial meltdown. Only in America can the free-market turn into socialism overnight. They Fed-Ex’d that shit!
4. Cyber-petitions. It’s important to make your voice heard, even if they never listen.
5. *The Nation* magazine. Do yourself a favor and start paying attention. It’s how I know the Treasury Secretary, Paulson, used to be a CEO at Goldman-Sachs! How bout that for a bailout?

Chris Pepus

- Reading Antonio Gramsci during election season
- *The Conformist* (DVD)
- Steve Bell’s cartoons in the *Guardian*
- *Frost/Nixon* (play), written by Peter Morgan, performed by St. Louis Repertory Theatre
- *The Only Girl in the World*, Glyn Maxwell’s play about one of history’s most tragic couples: Joseph Barnett and Mary Jane Kelly

Cristy C. Road

Top Five Things New Bands

- Should Be Influenced By*
1. The vocals on the self-titled American Steel record
 2. “Ring of Joy,” Pansy Division
 3. The Muffs
 4. ska
 5. uppers

CT Terry

1. Skanking and crying at the same time
2. My new kitten Wallace
3. Nick Cave’s unironic air humping
4. Canadian Rifle 7”s
5. Actually mentioning “punk stuff” in my Top 5

Daryl

- Cola Freaks, “Dødt Batteri” b/w “Nej!” 7”
- *Cometbus #51*
- Blotto / Ringers split 7”
- Canadian Rifle / American Cheeseburger split 7”
- Cheeky, *Choke on a Cheeseburger 7”*

Dave Williams

Top 5 Non-OWTH Records That

- Have Me Crazy Fest-Stoked!:*
1. Monikers, *Wake Up* LP
 2. Bridge And Tunnel, *East/West* CD
 3. Hidden Spots, *Secret Noise* EP
 4. Banner Pilot, *Resignation Day* CD
 5. The Measure [SA], *One Chapter in the Book* LP

Designated Dale’s

Top 5 Recent Things to Plaster a Smile on His Face

1. Proposing to Yvonne (finally!) 08-09-08
2. Motörhead’s latest LP, *Motorizer*
3. Off With Their Heads *From The Bottom* LP and rocking it live at The Scene bar here in Glendale
4. *And You’ll Spin: A Tribute To Big Drill Car* CD on Itchy Korean
5. Cruster bringing the rock back to Kill City this past September (new record coming soon!)

Jennifer Federico

Recent Top 5 Best

No-Earplugs Moments

1. Jay Reatard “My Shadow” at The Independent
2. The Cute Lepers “Prove It” at Lower Sproul Plaza
3. The Toadies “I Burn” at Slim’s
4. Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds “Get Ready for Love” at the Warfield
5. The last song by Vitamin X at Thee Parkside

Jimmy Alvarado

Thrifty Tres, Con Dos

- Circle One, *Never Give In* LP: No “Highway Patrolman” remake, but still a monster and wholly worth the twenty-five year wait.
- *Jesus Camp* documentary: Quite possibly the scariest fuggin’ movie I’ve ever seen.
- Cute Lepers, *Can’t Stand Modern Music* CD: Can’t stand still when this is blatin’
- Bulan Restaurant in Silverlake: Bomb-ass veggie Thai food. Coming from an avowed omnivore, that’s saying something.
- Having had the pleasure of knowing Sick Rick of Sister Morphine/Dysfunctionals and Gary Pogo of the Black Jax: Thanks for the cool tunes and friendship. Rest in peace, homeboys.

Joe Evans III

1. The Ergs!, *Hindsight Is 20/20 My Friend* CD
2. Hunchback, *All the 7”s+Comp Stuff* CD-R
3. The Pillowfights, *Demo* CDR
4. Sass Dragons – new song on myspace
5. More shows at really shitty dive bars than normal.

Josh Benke

- Subsonics @ Debauch-A-Reno (live show)
- Okmoniks @ Debauch-A-Reno (live show)
- Head @ Debauch-A-Reno (live show)
- Eddy Current Suppression Ring, *Primary Colours* LP
- Hunx and His Punx, *Cruisin’* MP3, awaiting the single

Tour de Pastry and the gloriously delicious world of sausages!

Juan Espinosa

Top 5 2008 Dodgers Players

1. Manny Ramirez
2. Andre Ethier
3. Chad Billingsley
4. Matt Kemp
5. Russell Martin

Keith Rosson

- State Lottery, *Cities We're Not From* LP
- The Gaslight Anthem, *The '59 Sound* CD
- Madison Bloodbath, *Gettin' Loose with Madison Bloodbath* CD
- Banner Pilot, *Resignation Day* CD
- Get Bent, demo

Kurt Morris

1. Starting grad school... again
2. Portishead, *Three*
3. Pig Destroyer, *Phantom Limb*
4. Adam Gnade, *Hymn California* (book)
5. Eating all the baked goods my roommate makes

Lauren Deniztio

Top 5 Positive Things the Punks Are Doing in Brooklyn that I'm Really Psyched About:

1. Cinders Gallery and store full of zines
2. The walk for a cure for Polycystic Kidney Disease which helps out a friend
3. For The Birds, a new women's collective!
4. SupportNY, a collective that supports survivors of sexual assault
5. Willie Mae Rock Camp For Girls

Maddy Tight Pants

Top 5 Things I Did This Month (because you care!)

1. Went 2,341 feet underground to tour an old iron ore mine in Ely, Minnesota!
2. Read the new Erick Lyle book, *On the Lower Frequencies* and thanked Erick for taking me to Hunt's Donuts years ago before it closed!
3. Went on a Tour de Pastry, a long bike ride to different bakeries around the Twin Cities!
4. Listened to the Onion Flavored Rings! (Still! I'm obsessed!)
5. Read the new *Cometbus* (probably my favorite one in years!)

Matt Average

1. Pedestrians, *Ideal Divide* LP
2. It's Casual (live)

3. *Artcore #25* (zine w/ Beef People EP)
4. Defektors, *Secret Trials 7"*
5. Vile Nation, Self-titled EP

Mike Frame

1. Chris Knight, *Heart of Stone*, CD
2. Pierced Arrows, *Straight to the Heart* LP
3. Perfect Fits / Twinkle Van Winkle, split 7"
4. Dan Baird & Homemade Sin, Self-titled CD
5. Obsoletes, *Is This Progress* CD

Megan Pants

Top 5 Things about Fall Weather

- Bike rides that last for hours
- Sex under blankets
- Any time feels like coffee time
- Big vats of soups and stews
- Dogs wearing clothes

MP Johnson

- *What We Do Is Secret* (The new movie about the Germs)
- Impaler's 25th anniversary show at Station 4
- Suicidal Tendencies
- *Smiley Face* (What a hilarious movie)
- I'm in a Jess Franco State of Mind (Everything about Eurolease's best filmmaker in one great blog)

Mr. Z

Top 5 Favorite Bands Who Released Material in 2008

1. Killer Dreamer
2. Shang-A-Lang
3. The Copyrights
4. The Veterans
5. Off With Their Heads

Naked Rob (KSCU 103.3FM)

1. Lightning Beat-Man & His No Talent, *Wrestling Rock "n" Roll* CD
2. Aids Wolf, *Cities of Glass* CD
3. Off With Their Heads, *From the Bottom* CD
4. Hipbone Slim And The Knee Tremblers, *The Sheik Said Shake* CD
5. Grady, *Y.U. So Shady?* CD

Nardwuar The Human Serviette

1. *Personality Crisis: Warm Beers and Wild Times* by Chris Walter (Wonderful book about legendary Winnipeg Punk Rockers Personality Crisis)
2. *Ugly Things # 27* Fanzine
3. THOR *Live in Detroit* 1985 CD (Canadian Metal God's recently released "lost" live LP)

4. The Parallels *Arms to Hold You 7"*
5. River City Tanlines, *He Said Yes 7"* (Cover of Vancouver '60s punks The Painted Ship's "She Said Yes"!)

Razorcake Office 5 Disc CD Changer

- Eddy Current Suppression Ring, *Primary Colours* CD
- The Bananas, *New Animals* CD
- Gentleman Jesse & His Men, Self-titled CD
- The Estranged, *Static Thoughts* CD
- The Brokedowns, *Six Songs* CD

Rev. Nørð

- The Pets, *Misdirection* LP
- Gentleman Jesse & His Men, Self-titled LP
- Perfect Fits, *My Heart Is a Radio Transmitter 7"*
- Various Artists, *Ruling the World from the Back Seat* 2xLP
- The Ettes, *Look at Life Again* Soon CD

Rhythm Chicken

- The Strike, *A Conscience Left to Struggle with Pockets Full of Rust* LP
- Tuba Dan and the Polkalanders, *Polkatively Yours* (on North Star Appliance, an old Green Bay polka record label which I believe is still based out of a small kitchen appliance store on West Mason Street, over by Sears)
- Dillinger Four, *Vs. God*
- Brygada Kryzys, Self-titled
- The gloriously delicious world of sausages!

Ryan Leach

- Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*
- Old Jason Jesse, Natas, and Matt Hensley skate footage
- Wire's *154*
- Clash's *Sandinista!*
- R.I.P. to my friend Van Wastell. A great person and skateboarder.

Sarah Shay

1. Jason Webley, *The Cost of Living* LP
2. Man Plus, *The Hungarian Suicide Songbook* CD
3. Heathers, *Here, Not There* CD
4. God Made Me The Raven (bad name, good band)
5. Kia-Ora (too orangey for crows)

Scott Laval

Top 5 Bands/Artists That I Admire Much More Now Than I Did Twelve Months Ago

1. The Damned
2. The Wildhearts
3. Bee Gees
4. Willie Nelson
5. Young Fresh Fellows

Sean Koepenick

Top 5 Beer Catchphrases

1. King of Beers
2. From the Land of Pleasant Living
3. An Honest Brew Makes Its Own Friends
4. Head for the Mountains
5. It's the Water

Steve

1. Nobunny, *Love Visions* LP
2. Nick Cave, Live Seattle 1998 bootleg I made myself
3. Brian Eno, *Here Come the Warm Jets*
4. Wilson Pickett, *Ninety-Nine and a Half (Won't Do)*
5. Nobunny and King Khan beat box extravaganza at The Stork Club. Fucking weird.

Todd Taylor

- The Measure [SA], *One Chapter in the Book: A Collection of Standard Waits and Measurements* CD
- Pure Country Gold, *P.C.G.E.P. 7"EP*
- Banner Pilot, *Resignation Day* CD
- Sunnyside, *Make Tacos Not Bombs* CDEP demo
- The Achievement, self-titled CD
- Autistic Youth, *I Want to See Every Tower Fall 7"EP*
- Shang-a-lang and Awesome Fest 2

Ty Stranglehold

Top Five "E" Bands:

1. The Excessives
2. The Evaporators
3. The Ergs!
4. Electric Frankenstein
5. Exploited (the twelve-year-old in me made me say it)

Vincent Battilana

- Awesome Fest 2
- Banner Pilot, *Resignation Day* CD (Go Kart)
- Nate Gangelhoff, *You Idiot: The First Book* (Arsenic)
- Shang-A-Lang / Turkish Techno split 7" (¡Muy Auténtico!)
- Shang-A-Lang / Jonesin' split 7" (Dead Broke / Dirt Cult)

1-800-BAND / SNAKES: Split 7"

Two tracks on the 1-800-Band side, steeped in 1970s power pop sensibilities. "Tropical Meds," the first song, is a catchy, sing-a-long number akin to Joe Jackson's early releases, island inspired, and feet shufflin' tunes. Second song, "Good Intentions," is a little more straightforward pop gem with Wavering vocals over a bouncy organ-filled beat. Good stuff. Snakes provides one song, "Faked Heartscrew," another song that seems to take a cue from 1970s rock, though more from the Nazareth school of long hair and wizard bong than the sharp dressed pop of Joe Jackson. —Jeff (Slow Gold Zebra)

26 BEERS: Long Walk, Short Pier: CDEP

Newer band from the Boston area that pulls its sound from a few different genres. Punk, thrash, metal, crossover, and hardcore can be heard in their take of anger music. They may start out playing a chunking, heavy riff at one moment and then change it up with blasting beats. A great feeling of manic rage but with energy that is consistent and fierce. Music that you want to play in your car with the windows down to offend nearby listeners while you are screaming at the top of your lungs. A reference that comes to mind is that this band reminds me a lot of Fall Silent. Especially the vocals with its screamed yet controlled output. With a band name like 26 Beers, I really thought I wasn't going to like this. Musically, they won me over. —Donofthedeath (Rodent Popsicle)

ACHIEVEMENT, THE: Self-titled: CD

This is a riddle: What would a band sound like if they sounded sorta like Radon, but approached it from a completely different angle? The instrument tones are similar. The lead singer's voice sounds like one of the two Radon singers. But then, it was a different deal, a different focus altogether: lean, clean, flexible songs that rely on inner dynamics to recede and explode. Radon's funniness is exchanged for straight-ahead earnestness straight through. In a world that made any sense to me, The Achievement would be "emocore"—emotionally bare and charged songs that almost feel like the singer is singing, alternately, directly to you and to versions of himself in the attempts of some deeper understanding, backed up by a band playing interesting music that's not afraid to either charge or relax. I'd go so far as to say that The Achievement are a direct descendent of Rites Of Spring, but a band all to themselves... and with this record, this Salinas, CA, trio broken up. Thems the shakes. —Todd (Self-released)



ALPINIST / FINISTERRE: Split: LP

A split with two up-and-coming bands from Germany. Alpinist: Seem to have the formula right. The music is pummeling and dark while falling in the crust genre. Screamed vocals power forward through the speakers as the charging guitars cut through. Amazing drumming that is far from generic. They're definitely an apocalyptic journey of sound. I just wish it was a bit more bass heavy and darker. To me, it sounded a bit bright. Finisterre: My personal favorite of the two, the band plays more of traditional d-beat meets crust than the latter. But they also infuse a sense of melody under the distortion. It adds to the music and gives it more textured layers. Not a pretty sound in the slightest, though. The music is mid-tempo but is bottom heavy and played with a mean streak of anger. Also, the guttural vocals add to the picture of unrest that I believe they are portraying in their songs. Another co-released by Sengaja, Acclaim Collective, Phobiact, Subversive Ways, Bad Pingu, Humidad y Honestidad, Contrasztl, and Threat of Today. —Donofthedeath (Contrasztl!)

AMEN AND THE HELL YEAHS / THE

MANIX: Split: CDEP
AMEN AND THE HELL YEAHS:
Shitstorm: CD

Amen And The Hell Yeahs: These

dudes drove from 1,895 miles one way, from Minneapolis, MN, to Riverside, CA, to play one show: Awesome Fest II. They didn't make a tour of it. They just wanted to play. Simple as that. When I asked them what they did for work, they said that they worked for an asshole wine distributor and they'd have to cannonball it back home the next day. They were young dudes, very sincere, and totally down. The music follows. It's simple, sloppy, direct, and fun. Nothing mind erasing, but real solid and full of promise. The Manix: Do you think it's possible to channel the crowd's reaction to a great, past band? The Manix don't sound much like "Kids Don't Follow"-era Replacements, but I can totally imagine someone in The Manix being in the audience, and soaking in all of that drunken, catchy, alcho-poetry, going home, and starting a band of their own (twenty years later; a bad analogy, I know), and forming with a band that just wanted to continue to harness that feeling. Good stuff, both bands. —Todd (Heart Of The Lakes)

ANTI-PLAYAX:

Valencia Marca Registrada: LP

From Spain comes this hyper punk band that draws from the late seventies and early eighties. The guitars are noisy and jangley, and no distortion

pedal is in use! Everything else is held down with straight-forward rhythms and a quick pace that won't let up. They do slow down a bit of the song "Valencia," which is catchy as hell, and throws some stop-start breaks to keep it interesting. Then they rip it up again with "Sang a Les Mans." A few other standouts are "Seitan," "Anys Perduts," and "You Smoke You Die!" Great record, without a doubt! —M.Avrq (Trabuc)

ASEDIO: Self-titled: LP

This is dark, brooding crust with a self-described addition of Swedish death metal. This band from Spain knows how to take dark emotions and play a musical soundtrack to it. The band Tragedy comes to mind when hearing the music, but it's not exactly the same. They tend to work with the formula and add elements to make it their own: a big sound with an underlying melody with charging punk metal riffs. Very deep, almost guttural vocals set the tone for the dark landscape that the music portrays. The lyrics are in Spanish and I have no idea what might be behind them. Judging by the music alone, I know it's not pretty. Overall, a good listen and not a dud in the bunch. Co-released by Contrasztl!, La Agonia de Cicir, Be-Part, Devil Child, and Behind The Scenes. Now get on that computer and search! —Donofthedeath (Contrasztl!)

AUTISTIC YOUTH: I Want to See Every Tower Fall: 7"EP

Maybe it should bother me a bit that Autistic Youth are hella reminiscent of The Observers (RIP), but it doesn't. All the parts are in place: mid-paced songs, bubbling bass, surf-edged guitar, a guy who can really sing and who punctuates like he's spitting out bullets; what should be a throwback is a step in the right direction. If you're up for melodic punk that's as much about broken glass, the broken state of the world, clarity of delivery, and can incorporate a tambourine in a way that sounds like it's being played by someone in a gas mask instead of bellbottoms with leather fringe, then this is for you. Happily surprised at how strong these four songs are. —Todd (Rock Bottom)

AVSKUM: Uppror Underifrån: CD

If early Swedish hardcore is within your radar, Avskum should be in your sights. Basically recording and performing since the early '80s, the band continues on with its tradition of the d-beat. With experience and how well this release is recorded and written, it shows that they are still one of the premier bands from that region doing this genre of

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music. Sixteen tracks of near flawless blasts of charging guitars, pounding drums, and bass guitar drive that should get the blood pumping. The vocals are yelled out with conviction and expressed with controlled anger, showing that the singer truly believes what he sings. Songs are sung mostly in Swedish, but there are a few in English. Overall, I was engulfed by the energy of the music right from the beginning of the opening chords. I felt my teeth gritting closed with force and soaking in the musical abrasiveness. —Donofthead (Prank)

BANNER PILOT: Resignation Day: CD

This album is so goddamned good. I thought their EP and split with Monikers were great, but this record is head-and-shoulders above that earlier output. I've heard a few people drop Screeching Weasel comparisons, which I suppose is somewhat accurate, but I feel like there's more of a Rhythm Collision pop punk thing happening here, with some undeniable Jawbreaker action thrown in there. The production is somewhat subdued or maybe a bit lacking in dynamics, but I think it works incredibly well in recreating that distinctive and super-sincere '90s sound, intentionally or not. I honestly can't stop listening to this record. —Dave Williams (Go-Kart)

BANNER PILOT: Resignation Day: CD

Watertight melodic punk that's as close to perfect as this genre of music can get to. The record just feels good,

like palm-sized rocks itching in your pocket as you pass an abandoned warehouse with some windows still left unbroken. My hat's off to Nate Gangelhoff (bassist, songwriter, author of *You Idiot* and *Whiskey Plus*). Nate and I have corresponded for many years, and he sent over early demos of many of the songs on this record; they were formative, the tracks were supported by a drum machine. It was good. The skeletons of the songs were there, awaiting flesh. *Resignation Day*—and I don't say this lightly—is on par with Rivethead's *The Cheap Wine of Youth*, Off With Their Heads' *All Things Move Toward Their End*, and Dear Landlord's scattered vinyl tracks. Gruff, direct, plainclothes Midwest punk. Not fancy. Not tricky. Not gimmicky. Not precious. No make believe. Just direct, continual, and literate, shot after aching shot. It's the album-form answer to "What are you going to do with your life when you're old enough to completely and utterly fail on your own?" Do you rise up with lumps or lay down and place the blame on something else? —Todd (Go Kart)

BATMAN & ROBIN: I'm a Bat!!! I'm a Rock 'n' Roll Animal: 7"

This jokey garage band from "Gotham City, Austria" (get it?) deliver their second 7" of punchy, campy garage punk. Limited to 500 copies, the packaging includes a cutout moustache to wear while enjoying the fine tunes as well as a glossy *Gotham Gazette* faux newspaper. I guess fans of garage

punk haven't started growing facial hair in Europe yet. In any event, this hilarious and rockin' release won't disappoint those looking for new, comedic garage punk fun. —Art Ettinger (Bachelor)

BEAVERS, THE: Come on Let's Beav': 10" 45

It appears that this Dutch garage rock band from the '90s has reformed and released a 45 RPM 10". If only these guys' magical genie would come along and grant them a wish, maybe they could travel back to the 1960s and record these eight songs in the most authentically way out and reverby way imaginable and not in this energy-less form where everything feels really forced and uninspired. And even maybe if I saw them live in some Wisconsin bar—Old Style in hand and stomach—and Rev. Norb was explaining why they were so great, I'd like this, but right now it's just kind of annoying me. —Daryl (High School Refuse)

BEEF PEOPLE: Pavlov's Dog: EP

Here's an obscure band from the early to mid-eighties, unearthed for another look. Beef People were based out of Virginia in 1984, where they released a six-song EP, *Music for Men*, and appeared on the TPOS double cassette compilation *War Between the States*. On this, you get seven songs, one being from the *War Between the States* comp. They remind me a bit of DOA and Fang, but with enough of their own style. It's a bit raw in parts, all

around rough, and a driving tempo. Very much of the time. "Industrial Jelly" is a slow, lumbering number with snarling vocals and a paper cutter with reverb. "Living in a Gas Chamber" is awesome with its time changes and odd bridge. Excellent record the whole way through. Comes with issue #25 of *Artcore*. —M.Avrq (Artcore)

BELLFURIES, THE: Palmyra: CD

For what's largely pop rock (a subset of music that I have never been very inclined towards), the Bellfuries do a lot of things really quite competently. The sort of Reel Big Fish/Motion City Soundtrack bent to the slightly nasal vocals and lyrics that largely serve as exposition for emotion may be a little corny, but it does feel sincere and surprisingly tender. There are glimmers of greater things on here. The third track, for example, would be fantastic if it only toned down on the borderline maudlin theatrics to the background strings. With some decisive changes to their sound and some more interesting wordplay, this band could go places. —Reyan Ali (Moe & Sal)

BLACK ANGELS, THE: Directions to See a Ghost: CD

Moody, psychedelic space rock that doesn't put you to sleep. Second release from this Austin, TX, six piece. Anyone that has a drone machine player in the band is okay in my book. "Science Killer" and "Vikings" are the

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standouts here. They have been doing shows with Roky Erickson on the West Coast. Bring this to the East Coast and I'll put you up at my crib. —Sean Kopenick (Light In The Attic)

BLACK MARKET FETUS / IN DEFENCE: Split 7"

I saw Black Market Fetus at a hole in the wall in Eau Claire, WI, nearly ten years ago. At the time, they didn't impress me. It's good to see they've stuck around to hone their scummy Midwestern punk. Their side of the split has some righteous guitar action and multiple personality vocal work. I prefer the singer's "I have toxic waste in my throat but I must scream" voice to his "I'm growling like my songs are about eating aborted babies" voice. Still, one compliments the other. In Defence may not have the longevity, but they've definitely got the energy. They're ready to do battle to protect the good name of hardcore punk rock, but they don't have any broken bottles or baseball bats. The only weapons they have are a sweet underground network of awesome dudes, distaste for the daily grind, and a passion for tacos. By the sound of this record, they're confident that's all it will take to get the job done. They might just be right. —MP Johnson (Scenster Credentials / Give Praise)

BLACK ORPHAN: Self-titled: 7" EP

The music here sounds like a demo from some long-lost fringe new wave band that might've managed a spot on a *New Wave Theatre* broadcast. The highlight here,

though, is the cover of the record itself, which is the first I can remember running into that actually glows in the dark. Call me easily swayed by clever marketing ploys, but *that* is fuggin' dope. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.ufodictator.com)

BLACK RAINBOW: "Pin Pricks," "For Your Entertainment" b/w "Brownfields": 7" EP

I have a feeling that I'll follow Ivy Jean's voice into any song. It is truly one of the greatest contemporary set of lungs around today. She sounds like she's singing from her entire body; not only her throat. It's just a wicked force. Couple that to a more rock'n'roll feel to Allergic To Bullshit (a band Ivy was previously (still?) in) where the songs seem to fall around you all at once, cleansing like an unexpected shower on a sunny day; Black Rainbow is melodic, driving, gutsy stuff in the East Bay punk vein. Comes with a full-on zine. Another best case scenario for DIY punk. Great. —Todd (Thrillhouse)

BLACK RAINBOW: "Pin Pricks," "For Your Entertainment" b/w "Brownfields": 7" EP

Excellent punk from San Francisco. Reminds me of Strawman in the tone and emotion of their music and message. "Brownfields" is a great song. A little melancholy, but one that makes it way into your memory. Ivy has a great voice that makes these songs come across with soul. This also comes with a zine that focuses on a few unique aspects of San Francisco.

Listening to this record, and reading the zine, makes me miss the place... —M.AvrG (Thrillhouse)

BLOTTO / RINGERS: Split 7"

Anybody who gives a hot pocket about poppy DIY punk rock will automatically recognize this as an amazing match up. And no fucking doubt it is. Blotto continue in their long line of great, slurry punk songs about plenty of things that completely confuse me, and then at the end of "Drowning in Thirst" they incorporate a slide guitar and it's goddamn amazing. Ringers bring some of the most authentic and justifying Clash worship since the Ratchets. "I got a brother in the service / and if he gets shot then he deserves it." Without hesitation, top 5 split of the year. —Daryl (Snuffy Smiles)

BLOTTO / RINGERS: Split 7"

Ringers: Opposite to my usual slide rule with things of this nature, the closer The Ringers get towards The Clash, the more they sound like a band making music on their own terms. It's almost like they've found the key to the secret decoder ring that Rancid was fiddling around with for years. And with Saint Joe Strummer's passing, I like hearing that banner being re-hoisted oh, so well. Totally on target. Blotto: Japan is a planet where echoes of America's musical past can tidal wave on a 2008 shore without losing any of its initial energy. How does a band sound like themselves—Blotto's a force to be reckoned with by themselves—but also

seem to be sharing the microphones and amplification with The Replacements and The Jam in a way those bands never quite sounded? I don't know; I'm no musical genius. But I do know that I like it. —Todd (Snuffy Smiles)

BLOWBACK: Drug War: 7"

Surprising stuff here. Competent and detailed hardcore with a great recording and the strange ability—almost entirely due to the vocalist—to sound like entirely different bands on each of the four songs here. I'm hearing Agnostic Front, Dead Kennedys (mostly due to the heavy sarcasm and mocking Southern accents in the song "Bible Belt"), Pennywise and, finally, Voodoo Glowskulls, again mostly because of the ragged and repetitive Spanish being belted out ala Eddie whatever-his-name-is from that band. Vocals are also fairly high up in the mix, which, at times, lends this thing a slightly cartoony quality that I could've done without, but as a whole, there's some definite power here, and the sonic similarities to the aforementioned bands are definitely better off for being built off a hardcore template like the kind that Blowback's laying down. Decent record. —Keith Rosson (String Break)

BOLD SLUG: Touché Honkey: Cassette

This incredible, awe-inspiring, lo-fi demo tape blew my mind. Out of nowhere (a.k.a. Georgia) comes Bold Slug, a Bananas-influenced sloppy pop band. Rather than record in a studio and later add effects to make it seem

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lo-fi, this band apparently recorded this sucker live and on a boom box. The tape itself is spray painted and brings back lots of memories from the demo tape era. "Back in the day," hardly anyone would even review a demo tape. Now Bold Slug and their goofily packaged tape is the sort of thing we've all been waiting for. This is some seriously fun shit here. —Art Ettinger (Self-released)

BRIDGE AND TUNNEL: East/West: CD

Bridge And Tunnel whisk me away to an era of rampant sweater-vestery and when Morning Again and Harvest were names that meant something to more than a few people. With their *Our Own Wars*-type feel, American Football-style fretwork, and occasionally Fugazi-esque delivery recall a time when some unquestionably embarrassing "new-school straightedge hardcore" trends eventually led to my discovering Hot Water Music, thus paving the way to my becoming a part of the wonderful community of DIY punk rockers I've called home for some time now. The guy/gal vocals in this band are perhaps the best combination thereof that I can think of, whether singing separately or blending together seamlessly, and, lyrically, Bridge And Tunnel are a cut above most of their musical kin, usually looking out instead of in. There are some seriously goosebumpy moments on this record, and I can't wait to see these songs played live. Killer. —Dave Williams (No Idea)

BRING DOWN THE HAMMER:

Self-titled: CD

Their lyrics have a socio-political bent and it's fairly clear they have a certain affinity for Marxist thought. The music is pretty solid when it takes a minute to slow down a bit and ride a heavy groove, but too often they opt instead for the same über-fast hardcore template, turning much here into parts of one long song that wasn't much interesting to begin with. —Jimmy Alvarado (Know)

BROKEN STRINGS: Self-titled: LP

This record's packaging is boss. Like an ultra-thick sleeve, it's the kind of cardboard (is that what LP sleeves are made of? It's like a cardboard/paper stock, right?) the band Chicago used in their mid-'70s heyday. Jazz rock and thick LP sleeves. Bitchin'. Anyway, I'm glad this record by Broken Strings doesn't suck like a Chicago album—it only has a thick LP cover in common with the gods of '70s rock. (For good measure—fuck Chicago and every record they ever made. All of them.) Broken Strings—their bio thing mentions California post-psychedelia. Not so much 'cause I have, like, all of those records (the Rose Garden, Byrds, the Association, etc.) and Broken Strings doesn't sound like a descendant. Broken Strings sounds more like the Wipers, Syd Barrett, and that pop trio Cheap Time that just came out. That's a great pedigree to me...Awesome record. And that's rare—an awesome record. P.S. Where are you Nick Tosches? Chicago is still around and you're not trashing

their records like you used to. —Ryan Leach (True Panther Sounds, www.truepanther.com)

CAMP X-RAY: Self-titled: 7"

A self-described Drive Like Jehu-influenced post punk band, this dark, brooding mid-tempo record from Austin isn't the miserable turd you'd expect. You won't want to snip the belt on your turntable while this is playing, although it *is* overly technical and somewhat egotistical. Hopefully *post-post-punk* will soon be upon us so that bands like this won't try so hard to be sophisticated. There is some potential here, but these guys need to lighten the fuck up. —Art Ettinger (Twistworthy)

CANADIAN RIFLE / AMERICAN CHEESEBURGER: Split 7"

Another amazing split this rotation. Two really different bands that match up beautifully. American Cheeseburger play unhinged, frantic, angry thrash. Canadian Rifle play unhinged, frantic, angry melodic punk. The perfect marriage of 2008 DIY punk/hardcore. —Daryl (Rock Bottom)

CANADIAN RIFLE / AMERICAN CHEESEBURGER: Split: 7"

Canadian Rifle: The pus that comes out of an infected wound; and that wound is life. Melodic songs about disease. American Cheeseburger: Microphoned locusts loudly gnashing wheat. Abrasive sounds about the endless tiers of "you're fucked"dom that this country is in. Nice split. —Todd (Rock Bottom)

CASTET: Punk Side of the Moon: LP

Polish hardcore record in a gatefold LP, with each side coming from a recording session a few years apart. It's passable, yet still pretty goddamn mired in mediocrity—you've heard these breakdowns and gang choruses, despite the language differences and somewhat ragged translations, a million times before. One gatefold cover features the band's name carved into a dude's chest with a straight razor, while the other side features an illustration of the band drinking vodka with every nerd-ass pop culture icon of the past twenty years (Darth Maul, a Teletubby, Hellboy, Alf, etc.) aboard a spaceship. Unfortunately, these dudes never really come close to reaching the menace or hilarity that those covers would suggest. —Keith Rosson (Pasazer)

CHRIS CLAVIN: The Roads Don't Lead Home. The Roads Lead Everywhere: LP

New long player from the guy who brought/brings you Plan-It X, Ghost Mice, and, obviously, Operation: Chris Clavin. I think if you've heard the name more than once or twice by now, you know what to expect (fairly lo-fi folk punk), and if you'll like it or not. Like a lot of his projects I've listened to, there's a concept, this time being that all the songs are about what happened in different cities on a recent tour, which, by the first song, made me think that's like something J Church would do. I can't honestly say I'm worried about wearing this out anytime soon, but I still enjoyed it, and think

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it's a novel idea, nicely executed. Shit, anytime I get home, all I do is blab about new girls I have crushes on. —Joe Evans III (Crafty)

CHRIST ON PARADE: Loud and Live: CD
Christ On Parade, for me, are one of those bands that, upon hearing, had an effect on how I looked at the world, as well as what I came to demand/expect from music. They weren't your typical punk band of the time. There was something more to their sound. Definite Rudimentary Peni influence, but not a knockoff. The darkness of their music was carried by a good amount of speedy tempos, yet the songs were catchy and instantly memorable. Just listen to "Riding in the Flatlands." The lyrics were politically focused as well, but presented in a way that anyone could relate to. A couple years back, Christ On Parade reunited for a series of shows and tours. During that time they made an appearance on the radio station KFJC and recorded these thirteen songs, sticking mainly to the *A Mind Is a Terrible Thing* LP, a bit of the *Sounds of Nature 12*", and the *Avarice* EP. The sound quality is great. You can hear everything. It's done so well it's easy to forget this is a live recording. Along with the aforementioned "Riding in the Flatlands," they also play "Teach Your Children Well," "Joshua Brown," "Self-Serving," "Flash," "Thoughts of War," and more. If you haven't heard these guys before, this is a good place to start—then seek out the rest of their catalog. —M.AvrG (Prank)

CHRONIC SEIZURE: Ancient Wound: LP
Mighty good stuff here! Gather 'round and get some! Quick paced hardcore punk that resided on the edge of being thrash, yet they hold it back and let the songs retain their power. The delivery is urgent, and the energy and rhythm are infectious. If these songs don't make you move, you must be catatonic. Very early eighties hardcore influenced, but also living in the world today. Reagan is dead and buried, but America is still a mess and people are on edge—which is why records like this are easy to connect to. —M.AvrG (No Way / Fashionable Idiots)

CIRCLE ONE: Never Give Up: LP
Normally a band releasing an album some twenty-five years after their last one came out is a dicey proposition. Ah, but this is Circle One we're talking about, a band whose members have remained an active part of L.A.'s punk scene pretty much the entirety of that gap. What this means is while they may have gotten a bit longer in the tooth, they're still very much in touch with both their past glory and how they've evolved as people and musicians, and the songs here reflect both. Roughly half of the tunes date back to the band's first go-round, when the late John Macias fronted the band, and the others are brand spankin' new tracks, with all of the above recorded within the past year or so—they've been back together and gigging regularly for a few years now—and featuring new vocalist Billy Brown fronting the lineup that

produced their last album, *Patterns of Force*. While that album is now rightly considered a hardcore classic, this one is significantly more consistent, with not a stinker to be found anywhere. The band still knows how to dish 'em out fast'n'mean, any musical proficiency they've amassed over the past quarter century manifests itself in tightness and precision rather than metal wanking and pretentiousness, and the lyrical subject matter remains as topical as ever, with considerably less Jesus influence in evidence with John's absence, resulting in a doozy of a disc wherein they've expanded upon, rather than killed off, the band's soul. As someone who's been a fan for more years than some punkers have been alive, this was more than worth the wait and can't come more highly recommended. —Jimmy Alvarado (Artifix)

COLA FREAKS: "Dadt Batteri" b/w "Nej!":7"
Wow! What the fuck? This is not what I thought this band sounded like. This is such a weird and pleasurable blend of raw Swedish assault hardcore and delicious Danish pop. It seems like there's so much deconstruction going on here; I'm not even sure if this fits into a genre of music. Taking the most basic elements of punk, pop, and garage and mutilating them to pieces until it sounds like a band that formed in the basement of a mental institution. For fans of both Instäng and Gorilla Angreb; plus the rest of those great European bands, except I don't feel

like anyone in the Cola Freaks spends much time in the morning deciding which color beret they should wear. —Daryl (Local Cross)

CONSTANT VELOCITY: Muttonhead: CD
At first listen I thought, "This guy is tone deaf and these songs are ridiculous." After a week or two, I still feel the same way, but the pop punk/humor rock band from Illinois has grown on me like radioactive fungus. "Truculent," their most popular song, reminds me a lot of Cake's mid '90s stuff—white boy rap over tense guitar rhythms. Their Spanish-influenced cover of Pink Floyd's "Time" is both unrecognizable and excellent at the same time. Recommended. —Kristen K. (Misc. Music)

CRITICAL PICNIC: Self-titled: EP
Fast, chaotic, and belligerent hardcore with the scales tipped heavily on the thrash end of things. Definitely a lot of energy in this music. The rawness is kept intact, which is necessary for this music to work on record. I imagine, live, they deliver in full. At least they better... —M.AvrG (Cowabunga)

CUTE LEPERS: Can't Stand Modern Music: CD
Herr Nix and the gang definitely pick up right where the Briefs left off and let fly one of the best discs I've heard in recent months, but there's a bit more going on just under the surface. Spackled in the cracks are bits of Elvis Costello and the same sorta power pop

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HENRY FIAT'S OPEN SORE

LP
"Mondo Blotto" Stockholm. The sky turns black - the living Swedish conspiracy loudmouths HENRY FIAT'S OPEN SORE got released! The world order is shattered by the fact that, once more, four more morons claim to have the almighty clue of saving the world. The proletariats nonsense and boredom sleep cells form one-man riots in the street. Residents constantly pick-up passed out demonstrators in the gutter. The Swedish police and city officials still have no imagination about the seismic shift in their youth's habit. "Mondo Blotto" is driving insane Vikings and Inka tribes, the re-occupied Stasi commando bunker party PROLETKULT REC proudly offer you the vinyl documentary. It has 20 killing shortcuts of rocknroll redemption along the path.

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hero worship that made the Exploding Hearts so swell, making the songs even that much catchier. It's always a good sign when you find yourself reaching to turn up the stereo song after song, and by the end of this I think people three cities down could hear this blasting from my car's stereo speakers. -Jimmy Alvarado (no address)

DARVOCETS, THE: Are... New Wave: LP

I'd like to see the bookshelves of the Darvocets. Songs about HARRP, time travel, Bigfoot, etc. There has to be some interesting titles in their libraries. The last thing I had heard from these guys was over ten years ago. These six songs are in the same vein. Early Midwestern style punk with an edgy and paranoid side. The vocalist reminds me of Doc Dart (Crucifucks). Demented and off balance. Perfect for this band. Definitely not typical. -M.Avrq (Fashionable Idiots)

DAUNTLESS ELITE: Graft: CD

Is it a totally lame and stereotypical idea to have your boyfriend help you review records? Perhaps! However, I assure you that I make up my own mind, you know, being influenced by Gloria Steinem and all, but, in this case, it pays to have the assistance of someone who listens to the Dropkick Murphys and can say, "This sounds like the Dropkick Murphys!" Here's what I'll say (although keep in mind that the following comments are tainted by double X chromosomes!): This is really good melodic punk

rock, kinda like Gunmoll or maybe even a little bit of early, non-acoustic Against Me! And they're from Leeds! Geographical note: that's in England! Plus, it's on Plan-It-X, a record label that has pleased me greatly by going back to releasing more straight up punk albums, in addition to the usual folk punk stuff! (Note: The U.K. release is on Bombed Out Records.) Buy this! It's only five bucks! You'd spend that on coffee and a donut or two, so, come on! If this were a cereal, it'd be Raisin Bran! Solid base, not too sugary, just, you know, straightforwardly awesome! -Maddy (Plan-It X / Bombed Out)

DAVILA 666: Self-titled: CD

So far as I can tell, these guys are a current band hailing from Puerto Rico, but found myself repeatedly searching through the meager information provided here just to make sure. What we've got here is a band steeped in equal parts, primal rock, '60s pop, trash rock, punk and minimalist stuff bands like the Cramps, Jesus And Mary Chain and the Scientists love so much, and they manage to serve it all up in ways that sound like they're first, rather than reheated helpings. The delivery is subdued, but there is a strange bit of edge bubbling just underneath. Don't let the fact that the lyrics are in Spanish deter you, 'cause one helluva band they is. -Jimmy Alvarado (In The Red)

DEFEKTORS: Secret Trials: 7" single

Only two songs: short and simple, yet addictive as hell. Enough to get you

off your dead ass and hovering over the turntable to flip the record over for another listen. And another and another and another... Defektors take a page from early L.A. punk like the Eyes, but with more of a garage sound. Damn catchy, played with attitude, and a solid delivery. Downright life-affirming. -M.Avrq (Nominal)

DESTINATION: OBLIVION: The Bridge to No Where: CDEP

These six new cuts from goth/electronic outfit, D:O, are less orchestrated than former releases. Here, D:O has morphed into a prog black metal duo. This EP wields more 808 kick drum and a denser song structure. "Paid in Flesh" has that signature speed metal double-bass drumming going on and is probably the most solid song. The remaining tunes have well-crafted melodies but tend to lose momentum when transitioning to another part of the song. -Kristen K. (Apocalypse Machine)

DIANOGAH: QHNNNL: CD

First things first: I have no idea how you pronounce the name of this album. What this CD really brings to mind is the one time I saw Pinback, who I caught opening for Slint. Dianogah is comprised of two bass players and drums. Other instruments like violin, keyboard, and drums pop up occasionally, along with female vocals to compliment the male vocalist in the band. The songs are post-rock with a big, open, clean sound, for the most part. Things tend to be mellow, but in a nice, atmospheric

way. A few of the tracks ratchet up the intensity considerably, though, with some ominous guitar or some tweaked out bass like the songs "Qhnnnl" and "Snowpants." Quite a few of the songs are instrumentals too, but they never get wanky and wear out their welcome. All in all, this is some fine indie rock to put on when a nice, contemplative mood is in order. -Adrian (Southern)

DIRECT HIT: #1: CD-R EP

Remember when all those bands starting popping up that thought Green Day invented punk? Well, it looks like it's time for bands who think Sum 41 invented (and actually play) punk to start popping up, if this is any indication. Sure, they cover "Rockaway Beach" (horribly), but that excuses nothing. Whatever the case, this sounds like mall punk. Seriously, the only thing louder than the drums in the mix is the suck. -Vincent (Bright Ideas Music)

DIVISIONS RUIN: Self-titled: 7"

Pretty generic, heavy crust from Ireland, similar to Ballast without nearly as much charm. You've got your requisite male/female vocal tradeoffs, Tragedy-esque melodies, bleak, black imagery, etc. You should pretty much know the drill by now. Granted, it's incredibly difficult to stand out in this genre, but Divisions Ruin don't even seem to be trying. -Dave Williams (Contrast!)

DOUBLE DAGGER: Self-titled: EP

Flehhhh... A few loose ideas. No strong focus. The title track is terrible



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lyrically and musically. Sounds like something from the '90s. The opening track is cynical "screamo." "Catalogs" is a simulacrum of Fugazi, and the dance track, "Dancefloor," is sort of like gabber but with far less interesting results. —M.Avrq (Toxic Pop)

DOUBLE DAGGER:
Sophisticated Urban Living: 7"

The cover has a picture of skyscrapers with clothes drying on clotheslines drawn in—very appropriate considering the title. On one side of the 7" is "Luxury Condos for the Poor." The flip has two tracks: "No Allies" and "Art Machine." The a-side and "No Allies" have a post-hardcore sound à la D.C. They also kind of have an At The Drive-In sound minus ATDI's pop appeal. The lyrics are politically charged on the front and personal on the back. They have a sound that I don't hear too often these days; though, I don't seek it out, either. Nonetheless, it's a sound that's always kind of refreshing to hear. "Art Machine" is white noise. I'm going to give 'em the benefit of the doubt and say that it's a (much needed) critique of "bands" that pass off the bullshit noise they make as art. Thankfully, it only lasts for a few seconds. —Vincent (Terra Firma Limited)

DROWNING WITH OUR ANCHORS:
Breathing Lessons: 7"

Due to his encyclopedic knowledge and cyborg-like retrieval capacity regarding all things emo, I decided to consult David the Brit on this

one. He said that the high/low vocal arrangements were very similar to Yaphet Kotto (with one of the vocalists apparently being a dead ringer for one of the dudes from Under A Dying Sun) while the record as a whole was very colored with a Funeral Diner flavor. Me, I just thought it was a decent, if a bit long-winded, seven inch—the quiet guitar buildups were nice, but by the time they got to the vocal duels and instrumental gunfights I'd felt like I'd swam in this particular pool plenty of times before. Features members of Bullets In and Burial Year. —Keith Rosson (Commodity Fetish)

DUSTHEADS: Little Pieces: 12" EP

Wound-up and, at times, speedy hardcore that has more of an eye on today and tomorrow, instead of yesterday and a couple decades before. They throw in a stoner rock riff on the opening of "Passive Aggressive," but for the rest they keep the needle in the red and charge forward. "Jailbird III" is an awesome song of disgust and the desire to escape. Rapid pace gives way to a slowed down tromp to eventual static. —M.Avrq (Don Giovanni)

ERGS!, THE:
Hindsight Is 20/20 My Friend: CD

By the time this goes to print, The Ergs! will have played their "last show." Bummer, on account that I found them to be one of the most inspiring bands in the American underground today. This singles collection is a reminder why. Musically speaking, they weren't

afraid to just do whatever the hell they wanted. "Thrash about the monotony of touring? We'll record it on our day off. Alt country? Bring it on, we'll do a 7." Call me an asshole, but that's a lot more exciting than a lot of other formulaic bands I've seen get big these days. Then again, these guys still wrote some of the best, straight-up poppy punk rock songs about girls and being backstage at NOFX concerts in a long time. I hope more bands down the line take a lesson from these guys, because, at this point, I feel like if you don't like The Ergs!, you're an asshole. —Joe Evans III (Dirtnap)

EVICION PARTY: Forward, Always: CD

I believe I reviewed some split tape release this band did a while back; I don't remember it being as nearly as awkward or jangly as what I'm hearing here. *Forward, Always* reminds me of Jeff Ott's earlier solo output, but only if he lived in a weird half-lit world where his stuff wasn't quite acoustic but he wasn't quite ready to kick the distortion pedal on yet either. The end result is an odd mish-mash of great "take flight from the things that bum you out and embrace the things you enjoy" styled lyrics unfortunately set to some pretty bland folk punk with a wincingly bright high-end and nary a hook in sight. I like the stark packaging, I like the down to earth sentiments they're throwing around, but the gravity of the vocals coupled with the lack of musical impact just isn't grabbing me this time around. —Keith Rosson (Sharpie Fumes)

EXTREME ANIMALS: Let the Music Take You There: CD

I challenge you to go to the MySpace page for Extreme Animals (www.myspace.com/extremeanimals) and not have a seizure. That page pretty much summarizes what their album is like. It's a clusterfuck of Lite-Brites, Casio keyboards, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, a Colecovision, troll dolls, mannequins, UFO conspirators, dance beats, that episode of *The Simpsons* where they go to Australia, and a child who has vomited Skittles, all turned into music. Vaguely reminiscent of Soul-Junk's later material but with more of a dance beat, Extreme Animals is comprised of a Professor of Art at Carnegie Mellon and Ph.D. candidate in music at UC-San Diego (I'm not kidding). This is insane shit and, moreover, it's fairly infectious. I want to host a dance party just to see how people react to me playing this. I know I'd be dancing like a crazy white guy. —Kurt Morris (Vicious Pop)

FARAQUET: Anthology 1997-98: CD

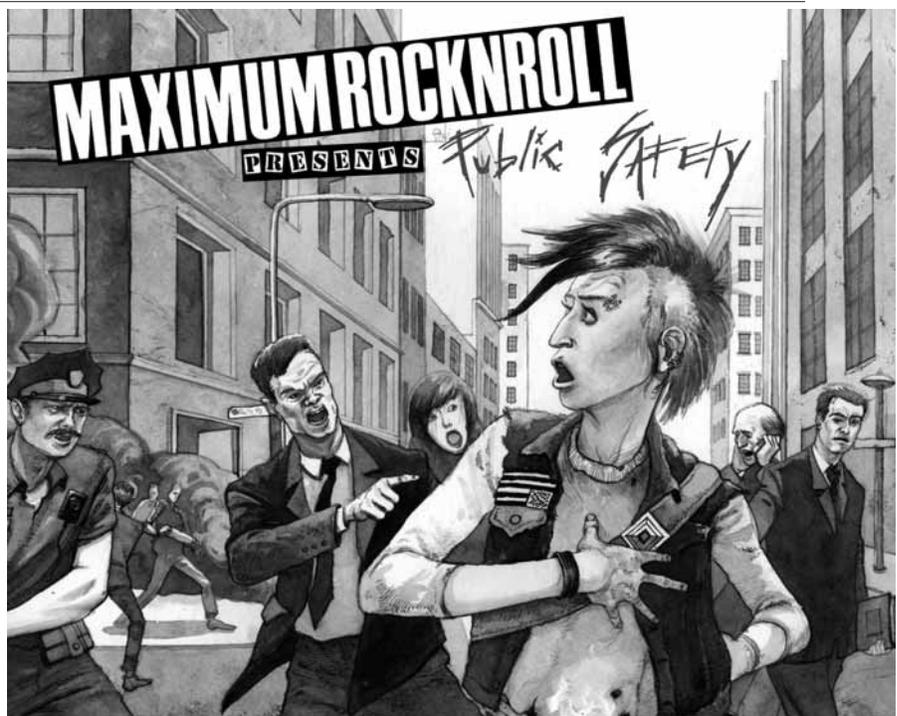
The musician in me says, "Jeezly crow, these guys can play the fuck outta their instruments." All sorta noodling, time signature changes, dynamics and such are smooched into every song. The punker in me says, "Jeezly crow, I wish there was some fuggin' 'edge' to their delivery." I kept expecting the songs to build and then kick into overdrive, but that sadly never happened. In the end, I felt pretty much the same way I do about most prog rock: impressive

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playin', but the end result makes me drift off in contemplation of my shoes and their place in the universe. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dischord)

FOUR EYES, THE: Secret Center Sessions Volume 3: 2x CDR

Here's a reissued collection of various previous "Secret Center" sessions, where this long-running Sacramento nerd-core band takes a break from writing songs about D&D and trying to woo Ms. Pac Man, and screws around with various covers. For the unfamiliar, they're kind of like if the Bananas (especially since these are fairly lo-fi recordings, with a lot of biting trebly guitar sound that only helps it sound great) were a little more Chuck Berry style rock'n'roll, dare I say, even a little soulful at times (however, there's a whole bunch of different songs in here, and they manage to pretty much tap in and nail it every time, even when they're goofing on them—or are they?). I'll say this much; I was in such a bad mood that I was literally punching the ground in frustration that my hand hurt, and then put this on, and started cracking up out of enjoyment, thinking "This rules." Also, I feel compelled to point out that I'm pretty sure this was a thank you gift for explaining Pokémon to one of these guys via a message board. Who's the nerd now? Oh, right... -Joe Evans III (Self-released)

FRANKLIN FOR SHORT: Swell: CD

First off, horrible band name. Secondly, this is boring: Americana mixed with

pop music and some surf. I'd like to think that could be really cool, but all I can picture when I listen to Franklin For Short is some TV show where there's a scene on the beach and a beach bar nearby with a band playing while the main characters are either dancing or there's a moment of drawn out sexual tension between the two leads. Franklin For Short would be that band. And the show would be on FOX or the CW and would go off the air after one season. -Kurt Morris (Bee House)

FUNERAL SHOCK: III: EP

Jason from Agents Of Satan is no longer in the band. I guess that's old news for some, but... Negative Tom, from Case Of Emergency, is now the front person. Seems to be a good fit. Three mid-tempo numbers that have roots in the past, but aren't some hollow retro act. The opener, "Some Kind of Bullshit" is the most energetic of the three, with a good bass line. "Locked" is the most manic, and "Fucked Up Kid" mixes it up fast and slow. This stuff is legit. -M.Avrq (Cowabunga)

FUNERAL SHOCK: Paint Thinner: EP

Perhaps the best record from Funeral Shock yet. The songs are more urgent and all around solid. "Autopilot" is a Black Flag style instrumental, with "Let's Fight" and "Messed It Up" being the speedier and amped up songs. "Good Intentions" slows it down, recalling Fang and Sick Pleasure. A great record the whole way through. -M.Avrq (Cowabunga)

FUTURE PHONES: Self-titled: 7"

Goddamn, some sweet damage going on here. Couple the yowls and howls of the Tyrades with the more restrained, bouncy approach of the Estranged or maybe Wire and that's what you're looking at with Future Phones. It's plodding while also danceable, catchy while still coming across as mean as shit. Some pretty neat work, though I don't have a clue what they're bellowing about. Includes a cute little 3" CD-R of the songs on the 7", too. Come and play Portland sometime. -Keith Rosson (Future Phones)

GHUNDI: 3196ep: CD

Remember when there was no need to break punk down into tiny subgenres like fastcore or crust or straight-edge glam disco? Remember when punk rock was just punk rock? Yeah, me neither. Anyway, Ghundi are just punk rock. Their singer has one of those old school voices that sounds like he's thought a lot about the words he's singing, thought about them so much that they've stewed around in his insides getting soaked in bile and hate so that they're dripping in the stuff as they flow out of his mouth. You can't help but pay attention as these seething sentiments shoot out of your speakers. And any punk rock that doesn't demand attention isn't punk rock. -MP Johnson (Fake Your Own Death)

GO SELL DRUGS: American Handjob: CD

These guys go for broke and try to take your head off from the first note

on this disc, and soldier on like a battering ram right until the last note of the last song. Their chosen medium is a hybrid of hardcore and hard rock with the delivery ratcheted up with such intensity that in the hands of lesser men would probably not be 1/12th as effective. Impressive, I gotta say. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Broke)

GRUK / THE WOBBLIES: Split: 7"

Gruk: I really liked these tracks even more than the full length CD I reviewed for this issue. Two manic punk numbers that jerk and pull while feeling like spit is splattering your face. The Wobblies: First thought that came into my head was, "Is this a long lost demo of Against Me! or Mischief Brew?" on their first track. The second track with different vocals sounded like late '90s pop punk. -Donofthedeath (Gruk)

GRUK: Waiting for the Rapture: CD

Manic and spastic punk rock that is definitely fuckin' pissed off to the core. Frothing at the mouth with spit-spraying female vocals is what catches your attention right off the bat. Her vocals jerk and sway during the screaming and express a picture of insanity unleashed. The production on this release has a very live feel to it; almost what you would imagine if you saw the band playing live in your living room. The band plays a garage-y punk sound at one moment and then they push forward with their thrash attack. It reminded me of a few bands that I saw in the mid '80s. If you

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get a chance to see this band live, you have to experience the mayhem and see the vocalist at work. Over the summer I did catch them and I was truly impressed. —Donofthedeath (Gruk)

HOLOCAUST IN YOUR HEAD / MOTOR BREATH: Split: LP

Holocaust In Your Head (from Barcelona) crank out some heavy crust with a moderate dose of speed, as well as rock mixed in. They never veer off into blur or incoherent grunting into the mic. Instead, these guys demonstrate their power through well-structured songs that have depth. The vocals, though dry and raspy, carry their message over quite well. They can certainly pummel, but there's a strong melody here as well. Motor Breath (Sweden) are a bit thrasher and chaotic. Definite Japanese influence, especially in the rhythm section. Starts off pretty good, but soon deteriorates into a redundant mess. If anything, pick this up for the Holocaust In Your Head side. Red vinyl as well. —M.Avg (Trabuc)

HOMOSTUPIDS: Cat Music: 7" EP

Mysterious. I can't quite get a reading on the Homostupids beyond: 1) I like them. 2) They (sorta) remind me of The Feelers' take on music, disregarding any imagined division line between hardcore and garage rock. But then add cryptic lyrics, cat noise intros, horn instrument out-tros. 3) The mastering job sounds a lot like Supercharger's *Go Way Out!* (meaning that it sounds like it was recorded in someone's kitchen

and adjacent hall), yet it—again, mysteriously—works and works well. —Todd (Fashionable Idiots)

HOT NEW MEXICANS: Well... Um... Er... Uh...: 7" EP

The same goes for Ninja Gun. From the outside looking in, this case could be made: "Dude, so totally not punk rock." And if you were just listening to the music, weren't reading along to the lyrics, and you didn't know the band's intentions, you'd have a point. Hot New Mexicans sound almost straight-up like a band from the late '60s, early '70s who appreciated The Beatles as much as Credence Clearwater Revival, Tom Petty, and Elvis Costello. It's well-produced rock'n'roll that's equally serious and playful... and in this day and age, on stages large and small, that's a fuckin' anomaly. So while this has few outward trappings of punk—there are no conceptual safety pins, middle fingers holding their music in place, or dumpster dives mentioned—it's celebratory, it's made by and directed to the disenfranchised, and it's just great music to get behind. If you're a fan of The Carrie Nations and haven't checked these guys out yet, it'd be a good idea to. —Todd (Fast Crowd / Little Deed)

HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH / CHAINSAW TO THE FACE: Split: 10"

I'm sure there's some snickering going on over the names of both these bands. Rightfully so. But we're not here to discuss band names. It's about the music, maaaaamnn... Hummingbird

Of Death blast out thrash akin to bands 625 would release: blast beats galore, and a guitar that has a weird metal style whilst still playing 1,000 mph. Not bad, but I get the feeling the best is yet to come. Chainsaw To The Face is your standard powerviolence with a heavy influence from Crossed Out and No Comment. Listening to this makes me feel like I'm back in the Bay Area 1991 to 1995, before the bandwagon jumpers came around. Equally fast and heavy. The playing is tight, despite the blinding fast pace they keep. Their strength is when they shift from fast to mid tempo in songs. Gives character amid all the pummeling going on. "Crawl," "I'll Bury You," and "Retardation" are the standouts. Wouldn't mind hearing more from these guys. —M.Avg (Cowabunga)

HUNCHBACK: All the 7's + Comp Stuff: CDR

Dear Hunchback: You are one of my favorite bands. I love that you play music about weird horror movies and finding the inner beauty of things while sounding like a band that was too punk for any Killed By Death compilation to handle. I bought this one night in Chicago, after you played what was an "interesting" set, where you said "We don't know what we're going to keep doing as a band." Even though I even have most of these songs elsewhere, it's another reminder of how much I love you, be it the retelling of a classic *Twilight Zone* episode like "Number 12 Looks Just Like You," or the fact that you manage to literally sound like you recorded back in the '80s

hardcore days, or just because you really do love the hell out of Neil Young. That is why I ask of you, please, don't break up. Taking a vacation is fair enough, because you have earned it, but ending it for good will surely break my heart, and I will literally cry. I hope you take this into consideration. Thank you (PS, you still owe me that tape). Sincerely, —Joe Evans III (Self-released)

IGNORANT, THE: Loaded Statement: CD

This is an open letter to Diego, the lead singer and ringleader of The Ignorant, a great guy who've I've eaten chicken wings with on his last two birthdays. Please, blast The Ignorant wide open. We both agree that *War Birth* is an awesome U.S. Bombs record, as is Youth Brigade's *Sound and Fury*. But you're such a funny guy who can't keep dumb jobs (you're not cut out to drive Mini Coopers to get coffee for movie fucks), yet you truly care about retarded kids. I think you're looking at The Ignorant too narrowly. Not every song needs a chant. You don't have to sound English. Some songs could be much slower (I'm not talking Poison power ballads, mind you, but some Sam Cooke in the monitor never hurt), some songs could be much faster (okay, your drummer would have had a heart attack and that would have been on your head), but *Loaded Statement's* vision is too narrow, coming across as fifteen takes on almost the same streetpunk song. I know, I know, there are some small breaks in the template, but not much. Perhaps another way to look

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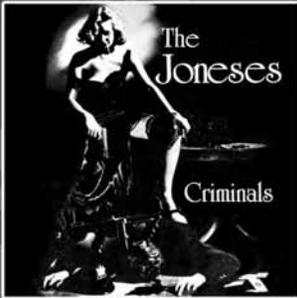
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at it would be to ask yourself: "What would Homer do?" No, not Iliad and Odyssey shit, the J.Simpson variety. You're such a thoughtful, original guy and—I may be wrong—but I think the world's ready for the first Simpsons-inspired punk band. How about using your humor and unexpectedness as a springboard? I want songs about beer and donuts. I want songs about gloriously bad decisions pulled off with sparkle, bravado, and a shrug. I want the musical equivalent to you going to Tijuana and getting not one, but two hot dogs wrapped in bacon, covered in warm mayonnaise, and its violent exit strategy through your body... Hope we're still on for beers next Monday. See you soon. —Todd (Northwest)

IMAGINARY ICONS: Self-titled: 12" EP
Twitchy post punk that reminds me of the early Midwest and U.K. bands of the same genre. The rhythms are bouncy, yet manic, and there is a "something is not quite right" about it all. And I mean that in a good way. Its poppy, yet dark currents move underneath. "New Face of France" is given to bursts of distortion teetering on white noise with confessions that don't seem quite accepted. "Rosa Luxemburg" shows traces of sixties psych in the guitar, and the overall drone can be hypnotic. "Mirror Panics," which opens this up, is danceable and a good way to get pulled into the record as a whole. However, "Economics Is Everything" is the primo song here. A little jangly, with a punchy beat. —M.Avg (Daggerman)

IMPULSE INTERNATIONAL, THE: "The Real Kid" b/w "The World Hates Me": 7"
A new 45 from this now postal-service-land-band (I'm taking credit for that). The first A side is more upbeat garage rock'n'roll that will likely get you boogieing down to some extent. The other "A" side (which threw me for a quick loop and cracked me up) sounds more like a mid-tempo Buzzcocks song, or, I'm really tempted to say, a less melancholy Arrivals song. Do I even mean that? I just think this is the best thing I've heard of theirs so far. —Joe Evans III (Deranged)

INSTANGD: Mitt Svar På Ingenting: EP
I must admit, this took a few listens before I started to dig it. It's definitely a style of music I think is the bee's knees: raw European hardcore punk that sounds straight from the late seventies, early eighties. Perhaps it's the lack of any strong hooks that normally grab on the first listen. So after a few listens it began to reveal itself. The playing is as raw as the recording. The guitar sounds like it's being played with a tin can lid—jagged and unclear. The distortion is perfect. "Vansinne" had a cool guitar line that's more unique compared to the other five songs. "Instang" has a riff that is eerily similar to Agent Orange's "Blood Stains." —M.Avg (Sorry State)

IRON CHIC: Demo Tape '08: Cassette
Wow, great find. From the name and the cover art I was expecting something totally different. But Iron Chic covers ground musically from fantastically

played Methadones style pop punk to urgent Archers of Loaf style anthems, both major favorites of mine. A nice start here by Iron Chic. I'm definitely looking forward to more output from these guys. —Jeff (Dead Broke)

JACK OBLIVIAN AND THE CIGARILLOS: "Drinking Women's Milk" b/w "15 Beers": 7"
What I suspect would be the perfect soundtrack to a Jim Jarmusch film (say *Stranger than Paradise* or *Down by Law*), both songs are eerie-funny, naked, stripped down to drum and guitar, and charmingly rambling-along. The standout is "Drinkin' Women's Milk," which goes deep into many different scenarios one may have to face while drinking women's milk—chocolate milk, stale milk, getting babies out of the way, etc.—it's a much more involved topic than I thought it could be. There's something effortless about Jack Oblivian—much like Bob Log III. Even though I don't celebrate every song of his extensive catalog on a daily basis, I don't ever mind getting into his car and going along for the ride, to hear what's been rattling around in his brain lately. (Apparently, this was recorded in 2003. And only seventy-eight were made? (Maybe that's the color or vinyl?) Don't quite know.) —Todd (Ghost Highway Recordings, myspace.com/ghosthiwayrecordings)

JACK OF HEART: Self-titled: 7"
While listening to the b-side of this record, I found myself doing a really

bizarre dance that started with me shrugging my shoulders to the beat and sort of stepping from side to side. Then I kind of marched in place, continuing to shrug my shoulders while swaying slightly from side to side. It's the sort of one of a kind song that, in a perfect world, would be played on AM radio every day at exactly 3:17 in the morning. Everyone would climb out of bed and play it really loud while dancing weird in the street. —MP Johnson (Rob's House)

JERK ALERT: Dirty Slur: LP
Think along the lines of a more raunchy, less catchy, slightly more inept Beautys, and you're in the ballpark (all in good ways, mind you). Songs about love (and breaking hearts) and fucking (and wanting to get fucked and being disappointed that the fucking got sidelined by whiskey, and male prostitutes). Party fun. Think Schlitz. Think Nalgene touring bottles with Toys That Kill and Goner stickers. Think small town. Think they would be good on a bill with The Okmoniks. —Todd (Eradicator)

JESUS FUCKING CHRIST: Life's Hateful Seed: LP
The band with the total cool punk name comes back with another record that you will either love or not get. It's mid-tempo punk rock with a strong metallic rock sound that doesn't have to rely on speed as a source of power. This time out, they seem to get more comfortable around each other and have expanded on their sound; experimenting more with sounds, time changes, and riffs

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to create a darker brooding sound. But the music still retains its charging energy and keeps up the feeling of rocking out. It also has more of a dual vocal attack this time around, with one being yelled and the other more guttural, adding to a more dynamic output. This is one of those that the more you listen, the more you grow to like. —Donofthead (Inimical)

JOEY CORMAN: *Morgue Pt II: CDEP*

A CD-R with acoustic guitar songs perhaps influenced in a roundabout way by the Misfits, although it doesn't sound anything like them. Songs about dead people, song titles like "Bottom of the Lake" and "Morgue Part III," lyrics like, "I would not believe that I'd fall in love at the cemetery." If this were a cereal, it'd be a cereal that does not yet exist—Ghoul-ohs, only this version of Ghoul-ohs would not have marshmallows. For shame! I could see some people thinking this is okay, but it didn't make me want to have a solo dance party, the crucial criteria for a band's success! —Maddy (Obz)

KAKISTOCRACY: *An Apology: 7"*

It's been a while since I listened to this band on their early EP *And So You Spilled Your Children's Blood* on Punk 111 and the full length that was released a couple of years ago on Profane Existence. An easy and a common reference for this band is that they fall into the anarcho crust camp. But they also seem to have an underlying infusion of melody that

makes the music operatic and epic while maintaining the energy of their metallic punk sound. Taking the standard and adding a bit of themselves into the music sets it above the generic. Three songs seem to be a tease but, in reality, is enough to get the dose without being overbearing. Listening to this release, I'm glad to hear that they continue to progress and get better from release to release. If you are looking around, it's also co-released by Rust and Machine and Halo Of Flies.

—Donofthead (Humdinger)

KAT KILLERS: *Self-titled: CD*

The songs on this disc are about chemically created zombies, evil gangsters, raging werewolves, and the like. In theory, these are exciting topics. Unfortunately, somebody forgot to tell that to the singer. He yawns through lyrics about taking people to the edge of his knife as if reciting the ingredients in a can of baked beans. On stage, I can imagine him looking bored with his hands on his hips as undead spider monkeys rain down to pluck out his eyeballs. "Gee, am I in danger? Oh well, I guess I'll just stand here and die." —MP Johnson (SKD Ltd)

KATIE THE PEST / STERLING SAYS: *Split: 7"*

Katie The Pest: Female-fronted alterna rock with a heavy '90s vibe in the best way possible. It contains those friendly elements of punk that non-punk listeners can appreciate. Think Velocity Girl. Sterling Says: Not too bad, either.

Some dude rocks the mic on this side. The more I listen to it, the more I like it. It's pop punk, but it doesn't knock off the usual suspects. It even gets kinda guitar heavy in a Dinosaur Jr. kind of way. Overall: My interest has been piqued. Bring forth an EP from each; one song each wasn't enough. —Vincent (Commodity Fetish)

KORO: *Speed Kills +: CD*

From what I understand, this is the first time this LP has been issued, despite being recorded well over twenty years ago. Worth the wait, for sure. The sound is a bit more fleshed out than the *700 Club* EP (which is also on here, as well as fourteen extra tracks—three of those never before heard, and none of which are on the vinyl version), yet just as urgent. Something amazing about this stuff is it's stripped down, incredibly tight, and sounds as fresh today as it did when it was still new. This is hardcore punk, the kind that made people change their lives. —M.Avrq (Sorry State)

LADIES: *Self-titled: 7"*

This record was going my way for the first four songs. Their energy had me ready to jump out of my chair and whip a can of baked beans through the window, yelling "Yeah, that's right! God doesn't listen!" Then, on the last song, they decided to start shit. "You're Dumb," they said. Well, first of all, you assholes don't even know me. You think because you've got dirty black jeans and spiked belts that you can just be rude to people who

listen to your records? Nope. Next time I listen, I'm only going to listen to side one. What do you think about that? Now who's the dumb one? —MP Johnson (Riff Raff)

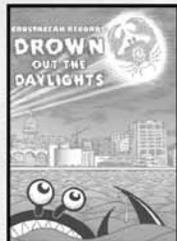
LAGRECIA: *On Parallels: CD*

This is the newest band to feature Jason Shevchuk from Kid Dynamite and None More Black. Apparently, LaGrecia lasted just long enough to release this album before breaking up. This doesn't sound like too big of a departure from the last None More Black album, *This Is Satire*. If anything, I guess you could say this tends to be *slightly* more melodic and straight forward. I just miss all the "whoa, oh, oh's" and "hey, hey, hey's" that Shevchuk used to throw into all his other songs. Now they're only in every other song or so. Actually, "Two Shotguns" has a bunch of them, come to think about it. Anyway, this is pretty good if you're a fan of melodic punk that puts the emphasis on melody. Oh, and in case you're not familiar with Shevchuk from his other bands, he has a mighty distinctive, gravelly voice which might be an acquired taste for some, but I happen to quite enjoy it. The cover art is really nice too, and I'm sure it's a tattoo just waiting to happen for hundreds of hardcore dudes. —Adrian (Suburban Home)

LEFTY LOOSIE / PEAR OF THE WEST: *Split: 7"*

Lefty Loosie: Picks up right where the full length left off, *really* catchy poppy

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punk. Addie's voice sounds a little smoother on this (I'd make some sort of switching beers joke to be clever, but what do I know about partying?), and I think Katherine sings on this too, and I like it when more people sing. Rad. Pear Of The West: I'm torn on this, but not in a bad way. They sound just like a Japanese Unlovables, (catchy female vocals and a lot of little noodley guitar parts) who happen to be one of my favorite local pop punk bands. Like, I love them, and they're my buds. But, Pear Of The West is from Japan, so they've got that going for them. So good! Screw decisions, I'm saying it's like apples and square watermelons (in hindsight, is that racist? I just really love making Simpsons references). —Joe Evans III (Repulsion)

LIBYANS:

Welcome to the Neighborhood: 7" EP

Oh, hell yeah. The title song is totally Dangerhouse 1978 via Boston 2008. It's first wave punk that's a loose, flapping, and exposed wire. Dangerous sparks leap. "Welcome to the Neighborhood" is raw and melodic and reminds me of The Bags. Very cool. The two tracks on the flip are harder and faster, like 1980, and it's comforting to see a band not care about the totally erasable, largely made-up division between punk and hardcore, playing both with equal levels of quality and conviction. —Todd (Shock To The System)

LOGIC PROBLEM: Self-titled: EP

Two different recording sessions that show a difference in the band's style.

The first side is mid-tempo hardcore, while the second side is more on the raw and thrashy side. I prefer side two. The songs have more energy and are all around more interesting. Don't get me wrong, "Double Crossed" on the first side, with its rumbling bass lines, is a cool song. But the two on the b-side—"Common Characteristics" and "MK Ultra"—rage and have more of a lasting impact. —M.Avrq (Sorry State)

LUXURY SWEETS / THE GREATEST HITS: Split: 7"

Y'know, I see why people dig bands like Luxury Sweets and The Greatest Hits. It's nice to put on a record and just dance around your living room to from time to time, and I assume their shows are real ass-shakers. I just can't help but feel that, to me, this genre of "punk" is what Poison or Cinderella were to the serious metal folks in the '80s. Do you follow me? There's no question that these cats can write some incredibly catchy post-Dolls/Undertones pop songs, but the whole package—musically, lyrically, visually—is just from this whole other bleached hair and neon tights world that I really have no interest in being a part of. Again, there are a lot of people who would just eat this up, because it's near-perfectly executed and totally accessible, but it's just lacking a lot of what I look for in punk rock. —Dave Williams (Desert Island)

MAD SPLATTER: Demo: CD

The moon's shining down hard. You decide to take the shortcut through

the old schoolyard to speed up your walk home. Before you pass the rusted monkey bars, you're surrounded by zombies. You smile and grab a fallen tree branch. It feels good in your hands as you bludgeon undead skulls. You're having a really good time. Eventually, you put them all down and move on. Before you're even ten feet away, you realize the deadies are back on their feet. You do the smash and bash again... and again... and again. The fun runs out fast. Just like zombies, the songs on this disc start out fun, but they just don't know when to stop. —MP Johnson (Self-released)

MAKEOUT PARTY, THEE:

Play Pretend: CD

It's extremely difficult to walk the fine line between, say, bands like the Shoes or the Raspberries and bands that are total eighties pop crap. I mean, both of those bands even often sound like lame eighties crap! Fortunately, Thee Makeout Party avoids these pitfalls for the most part, although the last song indicates a dangerous possibility that they could fall victim to such blunders. In a rare departure from my usual reviews, I will even tell you (sort of) what they sound like! Take one cup Shoes, a half cup of Plimsouls, two tablespoons bubblegum pop (à la Ohio Express, et. al), stir gently, and then, um, pour some plastic junk into a circular shape! Plus, they don't look like hipsters! They look like total dorks! Hooray! If this were a cereal, it'd be Froot Loops! Sugary yumminess! —Maddy (Teenacide)

MALEFACTION: Division: 7"

Odd. I remember reviewing something from this band back in the *Flipside* days. So I do some research and see that the band broke up in 2004 and this was released in 1997. Is this a reissue? Anyways, if this is re-issued, here is a snapshot of what a Canadian band sounds like playing a hybrid of hardcore with hints of grind and death metal. —Donofthedeath (Bad Food For Thought)

MAYFAIR & HUXLEY:

Ace Hardware Presents: 7" EP

Jesus, these cats can kick up one mean muhfuckin' racket. Equal parts noise rock, punk, and freakout, they pack the ten tunes crammed onto this little plastic record with more over the top slam-bam than others manage to accumulate over three full-length releases. Not for the faint of heart, but mandatory for the rest of us. —Jimmy Alvarado (Carthage Vs. Rome)

MCRACKINS, THE: Eggzit: CD

Let's start by wiping the slate clean. I forgive the Mcrackins. They named their latest disc *Eggzit* instead of *Eggzit Stage Left*. I would argue that the latter is funnier as well as being a courtesy from one Canadian power trio (the Mcrackins) to another (Rush). Others would argue that the joke is too obvious, too easy. Let's call it a draw and move forward. Fourteen years into their career, the Mcrackins still insist on dressing up as two eggs and a dog. That's as admirable and commendable as it is ridiculous. Like Bobcat Goldthwait's



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voice, it's a labor-intensive shtick that would be easier to drop but their act just wouldn't be the same. So after reviewing the title and the artwork the Mcrackins are in the black (+1). The songs on *Eggzit* are a different matter. I'm not certain whether it's the writing or the production, but the end result is too slick, almost commercial. The lyrics get goofy once in awhile, but a lot of the backing vocals and guitar solos are too radio friendly. The gloss masks the spark that marked their best records of the mid-'90s (I'm thinking of their releases for Shredder and Stiff Pole). —Mike Faloon (Cheapskate)

MEASURE [SA], THE: *One Chapter in the Book: A Collection of Standard Waits and Measurements*: LP

It's funny, I've gotten more and more into the Measure as time has gone on, but I've missed out on the bulk of their 7"s. Fortunately for me, now I have all of them, on one, theoretically larger 7" (hey, a 12" is larger than a 7"). Now, most of the material here has been reviewed here before, so I'm going to blatantly cheat and say to read those/better reviews to get an idea of the sound (though I don't think I'd called them a pop punk band). But, since design has been a prominent element with this band, I will say that this whole thing looks *gorgeous*, from the cover, to the swirled vinyl, to the bonus silk screened 7" (which rules if you can get it!), to the point where it makes this worth owning even if

you do own all these songs already. —Joe Evans III (Kiss of Death)

MEASURE [SA], THE: *One Chapter in the Book: A Collection of Standard Waits and Measurements*: CD

One of the most difficult facets of reviewing prolific bands that one likes is coming up with new ways to say "Hell yeah!" in a meaningful way. "Fuck yeah!" although appropriate, doesn't quite do it. And how does one do a review of a collection when one's reviewed all seven of the 7"s that made up that collection without a lot of repetition? ("Yeah dude, You've said that already.") Let's just stay that the Measure [SA] have accomplished one of those rare achievements—the audio equivalent to a collection of short stories, where all of the stories are strong and great on their own, but taken as a whole from tip to tail, is even more powerful due to the overarching, larger vision. *One Chapter* isn't a roughly stitched-together singles collection to capitalize on a more convenient format (in much the same way Tiltwheel's *Battle Hymns for the Recluse Youth* works). The Measure's [SA]'s range become readily apparent. It's a wonderful *album*—beginning, middle, end, and no "oh, that must've been the B-sides part," celebrating the (almost) collected 7" outputs of one of the most feisty, sincere, and warm punk bands making music today. Although I've heard all of these songs before (even the—according to the liner notes—previously unreleased

"Big A's Space Jam"), I got chills listening to Lauren charge into "Union Pool" and "The Moment That You Said Yes," even though I'd listened to both songs over and over again. So touching. So powerful. —Todd (Kiss Of Death / Team Science)

MEEMAW: *Glass Elevator*: CD & EP

Noisy pop that's instantly memorable. This is just all-around cool without really trying. More attitude than cute or fragile. It's pretty apparent these guys have fun. Jangley guitars and big drums. Weird time changes and the songs have a definite sense of space in them. If you like Half Japanese, then you will like this. This is the sort of record you share with friends. Great stuff, indeed. The CD has eight songs and the EP has four that are also on the disc. Two formats to suit your needs, I imagine. —M.Avg (Infinity Cat)

MESRINE / PRETTY LITTLE FLOWER: *Split*: 7"

Mesrine: Long-running Canadian grind that mixes it up with death metal. Guttural vocals mixed with high-yielded screams that reminds me of modern day Napalm Death. It's brutal and bottom heavy which should satisfy the most fans of this genre. PLF: I choose this side as my favorite. There must be something about the heat in Texas that makes bands aggressive. I love the speed of the band and that the songs are short and to the point. Note to collector nerds: purple swirled vinyl! —Donofthedeath (To Live a Lie)

MONIKERS: *Wake Up*: LP

Like many loyal *Razorcake* readers and contributors, I am a serious sucker for gruff-yet-poppy, East Bay-hayday style punk rock. When *Lame Gig Contest* or *Karin* are on the ol' phonograph, I can't imagine music sounding much better. My instincts tell me that the folks in Monikers would likely agree. If you thought that the tasty Jawbreaker-by-way-of-Crimpshrine jams on *Eat Your Young* were something to behold, than *Wake Up* will undoubtedly leave you grinning endlessly and have you heading right back to Side A once you reach the end. These last few months have been incredibly good for rough-around-the-edges melodic punk (Hidden Spots, Banner Pilot, etc.), and Monikers are smack-dab at the top of the pile. Wowee. —Dave Williams (Kiss Of Death)

MONIKERS: *Wake Up*: CD

One of those albums that reveals itself a little more with each listen. Not so much with complexity, but with charm. Tuneful punk from the neighborhood of Leatherface and the Strike, right down to the gravel throated vocals. A bit more hope, some defiance, melancholy, and reflection. "Them and Us" is the choice cut here. The lines, "Destroy the country, pollute the sea, then reduce our wages, security, freedom's all but gone we shut our mouths, all we do is sing these fucking songs" says it all. —M.Avg (Kiss Of Death)



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MOTHERSPEED / RETARD STRENGTH: Split: 7"

Motherspeed: Skate punk that reminded me of Stalag 13 and RKL merging into Voetsek. Two original punk numbers that keep up with any other skate punk out there on a mix tape. Energetic with a good and raw garage feel of bands from the past. Closing things out are two covers of the Circle Jerks that hold true to the original versions. Retard Strength: Straight forward '80s punk rock that has a very demo tape feel to it. Would like to see this band live or recorded in a better studio to make a judgment. Sounding like a live recording turns me off real quick. —Donofthead (Here's Your Warning)

MUTATORS: Secret Life: LP

Disjointed and minimalist compositions that reside in a midnight world of awkward creatures and desperate individuals. If this were NYC 1979 / 1980, the Mutators would have a home with the likes of Mars, Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, and other no wave luminaries. Their music is ugly and noisy, filled with shrieks, yelps, punchy bass lines over a scratching at the door guitar, and dry beat. Once you're in, you can't turn away. —M.Avrq (Nominal)

MY HEART TO JOY AT THE SAME TONE: Virgin Sails: 7"

Noisy emo-tinged post-hardcore stuff that would no doubt be a shoe-in to release something on No Idea. This stuff really ain't my thang, but they definitely

pull out the stops enough that I couldn't help appreciating their efforts. —Jimmy Alvarado (Triumph of Life)

NAPOLNARIZ: Self-titled: 7" EP

The A-side of this Puerto Rican band's first vinyl effort, "Somos Heroes," is a nice bit of Ramones-inspired punk that recalls many of the great Latin American bands that made the rounds and mined the same sounds back in the '80s. "Mañana Lo Mismo" churns not unlike San Francisco's Urban Assault, while the flip's closer, "Mami, Mami, Mami," falls along the same lines as "Heroes." Solid stuff, in all. —Jimmy Alvarado (TPVRecords)

NEW DUMB, THE: Let's Get Lucky: CDEP

This reminds me a lot of The Pixies circa *Surfer Rosa* and *Doolittle*. Frank Black's squeaks and yowls are mimicked and joined with bouncy pop/post punk melodies that make you want to sing along. The departure from this niche, "Dance Song," uses a drum machine and a tight bass line that just might inspire you to get off your ass. Recommended. —Kristen K. (Mighty Science)

NINJA GUN: Restless Rubes: CD

At about thirteen, I went to a Soldier of Fortune convention with my brother, who is currently a major in the Army. It was basically a swap meet for mercenaries. Being that this was the mid-'80s, ninja movies were being released daily and there were videos of topless women shooting automatic weapons for sale

at multiple booths. I remember putting having to decide what to do with my ten dollars: a throwing star (that my mother would not approve of) or a T-shirt that said, "Ninja, sminja. You can't karate chop a bullet!" with the silk-screen of a mercenary shooting a ninja on the front. I bought the T-shirt. There are some dumb hurdles one has to get over when approaching music. I couldn't get that T-shirt out of my mind when the band name Ninja Gun came up. I really liked that T-shirt, but I didn't want to listen to a band that reminded me of it. It doesn't make sense, I know. On the first several listens, I could admit that Ninja Gun were pleasant. Like Big Star pleasant: melancholic, melodic, measured—but with subtle country inflections. In fact, they reminded me of a lot of overlooked music from the middle of America in the mid-'70s, stuff that never got proper attention due to the progressive rock bloat weighing down the top of the charts. You know, bands that broke up due to "lack of commercial success" and then got rediscovered decades later because they put their songwriting and music first. The other thing that I had to wrestle with is that Ninja Gun—like the Hot New Mexicans I review in this rotation—has few outward trappings of punk, even if you have a very liberal interpretation of it. It's only with a close listening to the lyrics and the approach to the songs that you realize that, yes, you want these rural boys on our side when "shit goes down," or when you want for "shit to get real fun." A welcome, unexpected batch of songs. If you like

Whiskey & Co. and haven't picked this up, it's highly recommended. —Todd (Suburban Home)

NORTHWEST ORDINANCE: State of Ohio: CD

Those aren't drum beats. That's the sound of a fist crashing into the side of your skull. That's not a guitar you're hearing. That's the sound of your brain rattling around in your head as you're shaken out of your stupor. Bass? Nope. That's your heart pounding like it means something to pound. And that voice... It's not singing, it's calling you to get off your ass and dance to this fuzzed-out rock and roll mess. —MP Johnson (False Profit)

O PIONEERS!!!/ ANCHOR, THE: Split 7"

If I was romantically entwined with this record, we'd totally be in the "It's not you, it's me" stage of the relationship. I mean, all the pieces are present and amounting to what should be a great and loving arrangement: The Anchor provides two mid-tempo songs that wouldn't have sounded that out of place on Hot Water Music's *No Division*, with O, Pioneers!!! contributing a lengthy and impassioned dirge about seizing the moment—the band's come a long way since their Against Me! comparisons. So I just don't get it. I mean, between the actual music, the nice packaging, the colored vinyl, I should be all over this record. But there's just something about it—despite all intentions, we don't get, this record and I. It's no one thing in particular and certainly not

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through the band's failings (these are, generally, good songs), we're just not meant to be together. —Keith Rosson (Triumph Of Life)

OBSTRUCTION: Self-titled: 7"+CD-R

I've spent the last few weeks going back over my favorite hardcore records, and putting this on was a perfect way to continue my current "kick." Obstruction plays thrashy hardcore punk that could be compared to Faith or DRI. They push it fast enough to the point where you think that things will begin to fall apart, but then they pull it back in for a perfectly placed slow part. I'll have to keep an eye out for more from these guys. —Dave Dillon (Lunchbox)

OFF WITH THEIR HEADS:

From the Bottom: CD

This one's a bit hard to review 'cause when all's said and done, I like it lots. It's got some great lyrics that revel in the angst and frustrations that drive so many of us (some right into the ground) and the songs themselves are fine examples of anthemic modern punk rock when taken separately. My only gripe is that too often they cling to the same chord progression from one tune to the next. I don't think I heard more than two songs here that didn't include it. I know, I know, it's punk rock, no big deal, right? Well, okay, but there's two slight problems with that: 1.) Starting off with a whopper of a song like "I Am You" offers the promise of even better songs to follow; 2.) I'm the annoying sort that expects bands to push past whatever

boundaries surround them. By my reckoning, all the remaining tracks are on an even keel with the aforementioned opener, and it feels by slipping in the same riff song after song, that the band is fudging and hedging a bit, happy to turn in a "jeez, this is pretty damned good" album instead of a "sweet minty Jesus, that blew my head right off my shoulders" album. When all's said and done, this sits miles above nearly all the dreck claiming the same territory these days, but my personal hope is that next outing they opt to close their eyes and sail right off the cliff instead of just creeping up and peering over the edge. —Jimmy Alvarado (No Idea)

OFFRAMPS, THE:

Split the Difference: CD

Detroit's The Offramps play rock'n'roll that draws influences from The Clash, the country side of The Replacements, and various classic power pop bands. That list of influences may lead one to expect more of the same, but *Split the Difference* avoids all of the clichés that come with many of the bands that boast Replacements and power pop influences. They wear their influences on their sleeves, but still keep it original and avoid all of the cheesy hazards a band like this can run into. This will more than likely be getting some repeat listens from me. —Dave Dillon (Deluxe)

ORSO: Ask Your Neighbor: CD

I was meaning to ask my neighbor about her thoughts on this album, but she was too busy yelling at her kids about

paying her the fucking money they owed her. So I decided to embark on writing this review all by myself. This reminded me of a cross between Great Lake Swimmers and Lazarus with some other band I can't remember thrown in. There are lots of instruments involved (piano, clarinet, banjo, cello, guitar, organ, percussion, etc.), but none of the tracks are overwhelming. Most of it feels pretty simplistic, almost, at times, on the verge of falling apart. The vocals are mopey and uninspired, as though the vocalist did all the songs when he was really tired. It's not real exciting, to be honest. —Kurt Morris (Contraphonic)

OUTDOORSMEN: Wild! American: 7"

This isn't garage rock. This is a chunk of really cheap steak stuck onto a tree branch and left to rot in the woods. Unless you've been lost out there for a while and the sun has really baked your brains, you're probably not going to enjoy it. —MP Johnson (Wild American)

OVER VERT: Gagging + Swallowing: CD

This is seven songs of spastic and twisty hardcore. This band seems to fall right between The Bronx and Drive Like Jehu on the sonic spectrum. Musically, this is heavy bass pushed to the front, twisty and ominous guitar lines that often turn to feedback, poudy drums that constantly shift beat, and frantic vocals that are probably going to induce a trip to the throat specialist before long. This is recorded by Steve Albini, which you can tell in the signature "playing in a big empty

room" mix he excels at. This is a short but sweet album that would probably be at home on Amphetamine Reptile if it still existed. —Adrian (Renova)

PEDESTRIANS: Ideal Living: LP

I hear a lot of records that are good, but know they're not improving life any. Every so often comes along something that just rips, and the sky is suddenly a prettier blue, and the birds are whistling sweet songs, and everyone is your friend. This Pedestrians album, their second I believe, is one of those life-improving type of records. Sure, my life hasn't actually improved, but it's a little nicer. I can't remember the last time I heard a U.S. hardcore punk album, or band, this good, or should I say fantastic? They don't rely on thrash for intensity. Instead, they craft well-structured songs that move at a moderately quick tempo. There's no metal here either. I mean this is *pure* hardcore punk. Songs that are actual songs. The sort of stuff that inspires. That makes jaws drop. And the vocals are a dead ringer for Dez Cadena. It's unreal. If it were physically possible to have this band as a lover, I would go for it without a doubt. Regardless of what the neighbors might say. So fuggin' great! —M.Avg (A Wrench In The Gears)

PILLOWFIGHTS, THE: Demo: CD-R

Pop punk that's of a more modern style than mid-'90s rehashes. Overall, it sounded like the self-titled Lifetime record with Unlovables-style vocals. This demo also has a bunch of different

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stuff, ranging from songs that were recorded in a decent studio to some off a cell phone. I like it. And I haven't seen for myself, but I hear they actually have pillow fights at their shows. If so, that rules. -Joe Evans III (Self-released)

PINHEAD GUNPOWDER: "West Side Highway," "Anniversary Song" b/w "On the Ave.": 7" EP

The world is a much changed place from when I was listening to *Kerplunk!* on cassette in 1992. Some folks became millionaires and release multi-multi platinum records (*Dookie* sold over ten million). Other folks kept digging under an oppressive culture to write about a different kind of gold. Yup. I understand Green Day isn't Pinhead Gunpowder and visa versa, and a major difference, as far as I can tell, is PG's sustained, intentional naïveté, the lack of "progression" from one thing to another. Pinhead Gunpowder hasn't hardly changed musically at all (and they started out a little after Green Day). In the land of DIY punk, they're the Pete Seeger to Green Day's Bob Dylan (or the Slayer to Green Day's Metallica, if that helps). This is their first release of new material since their split 7" with Dillinger Four eight years ago, and it's a smoker: prototypical, tight, catchy East Bay pop punk, perfectly played by some of the folks who were instrumental in forming it in the first place. (One weird thing about this release, considering the band: photos of the band on both sides of the sleeve.) -Todd (Recess)

PINK REASON: "Borrowed Time" b/w "Scared Shitless": 7"

Music to watch bulldozers move mountains of trash to as crows peck at filled diapers. Music that's so consumptive that it almost elicits a smell. It's all coming from behind a veil of deep static, especially "Scared Shitless." The static is its own instrument, modulated, put in front, simultaneously abrasive and melodic. That brings to mind The Jesus And Mary Chain and The Birthday Party in snips and snatches—but in a way that sounds like the Functional Blackouts had flipped their van in a snow bank over those other bands' songs, and are crawling out of the wreckage. Cold, slippery, toothy, craven. -Todd (Self-released (?!))

PLAN 9: Manmade Monster: CD

If you can't tell what this band is all about by the name, then the following facts should give it away: They all have devillocks, their equipment is covered with images of the crimson ghost, their base player's name is Scary Only, and just in case you still don't get it, they cover two Samhain tunes and three Misfits tunes on this disc. Usually, I would have disparaging comments for a band that is so obvious about their lack of originality. I'm going to stow those comments because these guys are fucking rad. The only real non-Misfits thing they add is a cool guitar solo here and there. If you're tired of listening to the Misfits, but you still want to listen to the Misfits, you should listen to Plan 9. -MP Johnson (Nickel And Dime)

PRETTY BOY THORSON AND THE FALLING ANGELS / CORTEZ THE KILLER: Split: EP

Two contrasting bands on here. Pretty Boy Thorson are modern punk crossed with country. Sort of like something you'd hear on a jukebox at a punk bar in Orange County. Sing-along sort of stuff, and I guess it's drinking music. Cortez The Killer play sixties rock with a definite British influence. A bit on the freakbeat side of things. "Can't Quit Me" is a cold song, and sounds like a lost gem of that era. -M.Avrq (A.D.D.)

PSYCHED TO DIE: Demo: Cassette

New Jersey based super group, with members of bands you've most likely freaked out over before. Unlike the other efforts, this is more an early/straightforward SST and DC hardcore kind of band. I couldn't help but feel a little bit of early, thrashy F.Y.P. at times as well, but I guess that's a side of being used to most of the vocals belting out pop punk. Pretty solid for a demo, and looking forward to more. -Joe Evans III (Self-released)

PURE COUNTRY GOLD: P.C.G.E.P.: 7" EP

Showdown! The Mojomatics vs. Pure Country Gold! Two badass two piecers that ramp, jumble, and pounce back to the beginning of rock'n'roll without the Fonzie farts or 2008 rockabilly by way of the stale "rebel sins" of Sha-na-na-isms. This is what I like about rock'n'roll: direct, fun, explosive. I know I'm going all over on this, but if Scared Of Chaka or the New Bomb Turks were a two piece.

Or if Chuck Berry was a two piece. Or if fun was never outlawed in the lower forty-eight states. Or if Southern Culture On The Skids didn't market themselves as the hick B-52's. Let's pretend that electronica and emo were never invented together, and with Pure Country Gold, that's pretty damn easy. -Todd (Green Noise, www.greennoiserecords.com)

PYLON: Gyrate Plus: CD

Fantastic reissue of this Athens, GA, post punk outfit. If you liked anything about Gang Of Four, Mission Of Burma, etc., you will dig this. Or I will get your money back for you, no questions asked. They're playing around the Southeast now. If you get a chance to see them live, do not hesitate. "We eat dub for breakfast!" -Sean Koepenick (DFA)

RAMROD: Joy of Elaborate Yawning: CD

Full-tilt hardcore from these young upstarts from Bowie, MD. (Old or New Bowie, boys?) I have seen them live twice and I think their drummer creates new electrons with each beat—he plays that fast. Without even hearing them, I predict if you like the following song titles, you will dig them—"Tuna in a Can," "Hamburger College," and "At War with the Deli Man." But they also have some pretty intense instrumentals too. Good stuff. -Sean Koepenick (Cunt)

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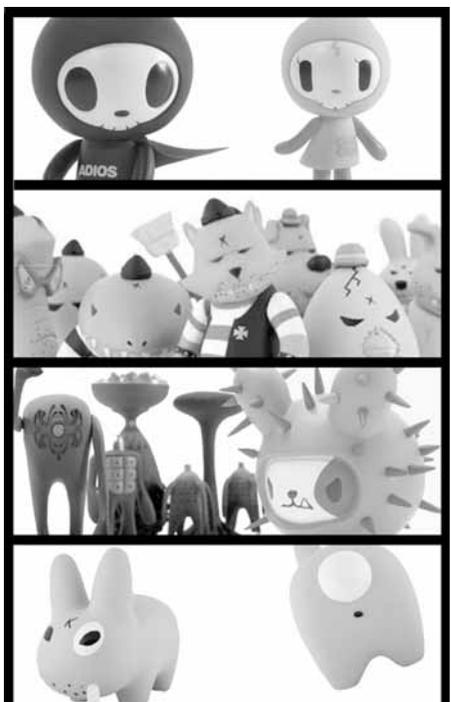
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This record brought Italian punk rock to the forefront to most Americans and around the world. As good as it sounded back then, it still stands the test of time as a powerful record. When punk and metal were melding together to create crossover, this band played it with originality and energy. I have seen the band live a few times in recent years, and when songs from this LP are played, people react with the most enthusiasm for these classics. It's good to see that it comes back in its original format to be heard the way it was intended. —Donofthead (Toxic Shock)

REAL MCKENZIES, THE:
Off the Leash: CD

I respect the Real McKenzies. Most people compare them to the Dropkick Murphys because they both do punk with bagpipes (so, clearly, Minor Threat and The Marked Men are similar because they both do punk with guitars). The Real McKenzies have been around for, I think, fifteen years or so and this is their sixth studio album. They manage to incorporate the bagpipe into most of their songs. There's a complication to this. You see, the bagpipe itself can only play in the key B flat and the Real McKenzies have written most of their musical career in that one key. They are the greatest example of variation on a theme that I have ever heard. Thumbs up times twenty. This is their second best behind *10,000 Shots*. —Bryan Static (Fat, www.fatwreck.com)

REAL MCKENZIES, THE:
Off the Leash: CD

This and the new Shot Baker are my favorite albums from this batch of reviews. Basically great skate punk that happens to have bagpipes, and unlike a lot of other "traditionally" influenced punk bands, this band never sounds like it's lost in mindless Pogues regurgitation. The songs manage to flit effortlessly from up-tempo pop punk to slower ballads, like the mostly acoustic "Guy on Stage." This is the first proper album I've got from the McKenzies, so I can't say how it stacks up to the older albums specifically, but I'll venture it safe to say that this stands well on its own. I do remember when I saw these guys live about five years ago. That was a great time, especially Paul McKenzie's insistence on singing "Surfer Joe" between songs, since the show was across from the beach in Malibu. I also got more than an eye full when McKenzie flicked up his kilt and told President Bush to kiss his dong. Seriously though, there's not a bad song on this disc, as many of them slip right into that sweet spot of being both fun and introspective. Some of my favorites are "The Lads Who Fought & Won," "Old Becomes New," "My Mangy Hound," and the almost pretty "Drink Some More." Excellent stuff. —Adrian (Fat Wreck)

REPTILIAN CIVILIAN: Dog Factory: EP
Decent garage rock with the vocals real lo-fi, as though recorded through a paper towel tube. The two songs on

the a-side, title track, and "Shoeshine Boy" are the choice cuts on this green record. Steady rhythm somewhere between laid back and rockin' out. And if you want to get particular, "Shoeshine Boy" is *thee* cut of the entire record. Catchy chorus and pace that runs smooth and never loses momentum. On the flip, "60s Beat" and "247-6911" are more on the freak beat side. —M.Avrq (Felony Fidelity)

REPTOIDS: Slayed: CDEP

Question for you: What band in the year 2008 sounds like L7? Answer? The Reptoids! Okay, so they do have alternating boy and girl vocals, but otherwise that very L7-ish metal meets rock meets some sort of vaguely punkish sound is all there. Although L7 was actually the first CD I owned, as it was the first to arrive in the mail during my initial scamming of BMG at the tender age of fourteen, I never really got into 'em. So, if you like L7, this'll be like Christmas or even a holiday that doesn't celebrate the Christ Child's birth! If not, this'll sound like abnormally sharp (metal!) granola! —Maddy (RRR)

RHYTHM SYNDROM:

Cobwebs from the Empty Skull EP: 7"
Snotty and recklessly thrashed-out hardcore soaking in Southern California bad moods and riff slaying. Hidden in all the San Francisco/Dam disaster images are seven songs of glorious, disgusting music along the lines of rudimentary F.O.D. and "No God, No War" D.O.A. I know Neswald

hates band comparisons, but I don't really care. —Daryl (Cowabunga)

RICHARD CRANIUM: Self-titled: CDEP

Richard Cranium? Oh. Dickhead. I get it. Clever. Thankfully, the music is better than the name. Spacey, atmospheric indie rock by way of Indianapolis, IN. The six self-released tracks by the trio explore soundscapes with a bevy of effects and echoes, occasionally at risk of being drawn out and jammy. However, the songs are finely balanced with well-timed, precise, angular, discordant rhythms, creating the equivalent of aural architecture. Reminiscent of the great, screamy, and dancey Les Savy Fav, it is music that comes across as being sincere and without pretense, as well as being music you can groove to. I imagine the songs documented here are best experienced live in a room full of sweaty and flagellating devotees. A+. Will listen again. —Jeff (Self-released, www.myspace.com/officialrichardcranium)

RUNNAMUCKS: Untouchable: 7" single

Whoa! Great song! Runnamucks have put more rock into their sound with excellent results. Sort of reminds me of the Abandoned, though this stuff is far more potent. "Untouchable" (from their *Inferno* LP) is the sort of song that gets played over and over, and loud. Fast with some changes here and there, and never losing momentum. F'n love this stuff! The flip is a Roky Erickson cover, "White Faces." —M.Avrq (Cowabunga / Gnarly Slaughter)

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RYDELLS, THE:

Rock N Roll Is the Answer: CD

As an inveterate Ramones loyalist, I have to ask: What exactly is the point of the existence of "Ramonescore" and all of these lame bands/records this unfortunate genre has spawned? Seriously, Joey and co. were a fantastic band not just because they had some excellent melodies, but because what they did was exciting and vital at a time when nobody else had the same kind of vibe or energy. Shamelessly and painfully ripping off those '70s icons for more than a couple of songs leads to some incredibly unimaginative filler, especially when you find shameless rips like the wholesale lifting of the structure of "Carbona Not Glue" with an overlay of bad new lyrics. To quote the venerable Ergs!, "Xerox your genitals, not the Ramones." -Reyan Ali (Cabana 1)

SCARED OF CHAKA:

Live at Jays!: 7" EP

Man, I'd be hating a review of this 7" if I was reading it. Here's a 7" of five live Scared Of Chaka songs recorded in Montana at a Jays Upstairs that served the quite excellently debilitating Moose Drool beer (and unfortunately closed in 2003). This record was made by the band as a single for one show in Chicago. The line to get the vinyl was longer than the amount of 7"s available. Some people went home vinyl-less. I got one and I wasn't even within 1,500 miles in the vicinity of the show.

(Thanks, Ms. Pants.) It's awesome. If you already celebrate the entire SOC catalog—as I do—these songs aren't anything new, but dammit, if they ain't a party on a platter. It's sort of like seeing chimpanzees in their native habitat; and they've figured out how to light fireworks and throw them right at you. -Todd (Slovenly)

SHANG-A-LANG / JONESIN':

Split 7" EP

Shang-a-Lang: Hang in with me on this. Imagine if the Dead Milkmen weren't goofy, and instead of the goofiness was a self-deprecating earnestness. (All of this through a DIY, 2008, slightly Crimpshrine'd punk rock lens, mind you.) I mean, shit alive, the Dead Milkmen were catchy as hell, made you sing along to things you wouldn't necessarily come up with singing by yourself, and it's cathartic to scream along to. They're the slightly stained, well-worn T-shirt to the Milkmen's paisley shirt with a collar. Land of Enchantment, indeed. Jonesin': From the ashes of Down In The Dumps. Sounds like Dukes Of Hillsborough by way of Gunmoll: burlaped voice, like someone's throat is a bedroll of knives, dirt, and glass shards. Florida-ation facial grown rock by way of NYC that's working on, and beginning to succeed, in sounding epic. Not bad at all. -Todd (Dirt Cult/ Dead Broke)

SHORTCUTS, THE: Self-titled: CD

Minneapolis girl poppy punk! The

vocals sound sorta like Tilt and the music is upbeat and bouncy! Yum! If this were a cereal, it'd be Frosted Flakes! Recommended! -Maddy (Self-released?)

SHOT BAKER: Take Control: CD

This is the second Shot Baker full length (or third, if you count that they re-recorded their first album and re-released it). I will say that these guys are one of my favorite straight-ahead punk bands right now. Great melodies, great contemplative lyrics, and great energy. Singer Tony Kovacs also has an excellent, tuneful, punk rock bellow that brings to mind Shawn Stern of Youth Brigade. Every song on here has at least one part that reaches out and slaps you, and reaffirms your life just that little extra bit, just like great punk rock should. Another winner from the Baker boys of Chicago. -Adrian (Riot Fest)

SHRED SAVAGE: 2007 Demo: CD-R

At times I hear traces of what made early Adolescents so swell (specifically not being afraid to let the bass and guitar occasionally diverge from each other, adding odd textures to an otherwise straightforward song) buried here and there in the four songs these kids offer up on this disc. Other times, though, I also hear a wee bit too much Maiden-type metal in their getars. Lotsa promise also in there, though, and I'm betting they turn into one of the greats soon enough. -Jimmy Alvarado (Small Pool)

SHRED SAVAGE: Demo: CD

What if the Adolescents liked heavy metal guitar solos, but enjoyed the rhythms of bands like Sexy and Scared Of Chaka? Yeah, I didn't think it would sound this good either. -Bryan Static (Small Pool, www.myspace.com/smallpoolrecords)

SILENT KIDS:

Dinosaurs Turn into Birds: CD

Breathily, slow indie rock that evokes long-time champions like Built To Spill at one moment and then modern rock radio favorites Death Cab For Cutie the next. I can't really tell if the changing comparisons makes for a good thing or not, but I do know that the disc gets better as it goes on. What would help this band out would be some louder singing, more interesting song arrangements, and some kind of fresh, personalized touch to separate it from the pack. Get all of those issues in order and this may be a future Saddle Creek signing. -Reyan Ali (Two Sheds)

SIX SIX CRUSH: On a Path: CD

These guys have taken to heart the lessons learned at the Motörhead School of Rockin' Rambunctiousness, turning out twelve songs that start off in overdrive and never let up. While the song titles make me a bit glad a lyric sheet wasn't included, the music makes me think I wouldn't have cared any less if they did. Loud, heavy, and pitch perfect. -Jimmy Alvarado (Six Six Crush)



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SLEEPWALL: Self-titled: 7"

"Come in from the Cold," the a-side, is a track that, if it were on a comp, I would scramble to find the case so I could find out who played it. The first few notes reminded me of Fugazi's "Promises," but faster. From there, the song builds up to a mid-tempo blast with melody, replete with desperation, urgency, and desire. The vocals come off somewhere between a romantic offer and a plea for forgiveness. The two songs on the b-side have a bit of a harder edge, but, nonetheless, remain hook-laden. "Sleepwalkers" is the hardest hitting song on the wax. It is in the vein of melodic hardcore with yelled vocals. "This World Is Too Dark" is much closer to the a-side—no yelled vocals, but still harder than the a-side and less aggressive than "Sleepwalkers" overall. It almost seems like this song should be wedge between the two others until towards the end of the track. The outro of the song really has the mark of an album closer. It's fuzzed-out, chaotic, and melodic. It's complete and encompasses all that the rest of the 7" conjures. While I'm not going to compare them to Samiam, I will say that they sound like a band that would fit perfectly on a bill with Samiam. There's a definite nod to the '90s in there. Thank you, Sleepwall. Thank you. —Vincent (Toxic Pop)

SMART COPS: Self-titled: EP

The latest bands from ex-members of La Piovera and Ohuzaru. Snotty punk that recalls early Italian punk. The

playing is loose yet solid. Hyper paced and all that. Sticks like glue to the formula. The b-side is the strongest, with the songs given more space. The a-side is okay, but the first two songs sound too much alike. This isn't bad, but it's one of those records that you won't remember listening to a couple minutes later. —M.Avrq (Sorry State)

SOLID DECLINE / RUIDOSA INMUNDICIA: Split: LP

Solid Decline: If I needed an ass kickin', this band came at the right time. Charging hardcore that brings thoughts of early Die Kreuzen, Negative Approach, and a little SSD. Thoughts of early U.S. hardcore comes to mind, but amazingly, the band hails from Germany. Manic and at times feeling like it's ready to fall apart while staying in complete control. Songs come and go and before you know it, you have to put the needle back on for another listen. Ruidosa Inmundicia: This band reminds me a lot of a Polish band I discovered recently called Slowa We Krwi. Fierce and abrasive female vocals over a full-force thrash attack. A no-holds-barred feel is received when they blast through song after song, not resting on their heels with unnecessary fills or breakdowns. The combination of speed and the vocals leaves me breathless from the short, fast, and loud formula they expel. I read that this band has a 7" out there. It's definitely on my want list. —Donofthead (Residue)

STARLA UBUIQTIUOUS: Self-titled: CD

This new untitled outing doesn't find Starla straying that far from her last album, *Another Train of Thought*, though there are a few noticeable differences. While it's still one woman and her guitar, and her lyrical canon remains firmly centered between the personal and the political, this new one seems a tad more stark and somber. Might be the musical arrangements—which are an improvement—or the fact that her vocals seem a bit more solemn, more restrained. My only complaints are that a few of the songs, while undoubtedly sincere, come across as a little corny. It may simply be my own cynicism taking hold, but I still have yet to come across many acoustic outfits that can tackle the topics of a.) unrequited crushes and b.) anarchism without resorting to drawn-out clichés. Unfortunately, Starla does a bit of both here. Overall, it's a pretty small grievance, though—the rest of the songs here are smart, pretty, calming; nice rainy-day music for those of us who don't flinch at the sound of acoustic guitars. —Keith Rosson (Sharpie Fumes)

STEINWAYS, THE: Gorilla Marketing: CD

This album suffers from what I will call *Boogada X3* syndrome. Basically, much like with the aforementioned Screeching Weasel album, it seems most of the components of a good pop punk album are seemingly in place, but I feel really indifferent to most of it. If

anything, the self-consciously nerdy and silly lyrics miss more often than hit for me (e.g. "I sit here with this McRib, My mind still wrapped around you"). I find the vocals a little annoying too. —Adrian (Cold Feet)

STREET LEGAL: Self-titled: CD-R

Five originals and a Wipers cover. Their bag of tricks isn't necessarily large or varied, but here and there the band manages a few decent swings. I do like the vocalist's rough-hewn screech. I don't like the fact that she feels the need to repeat certain lyrics about seventeen thousand times per song. For example, the entirety of "Death Rock Song" consists of the lyrics "We won't fight some more..." which are sung, like I said, long enough for me to go to the fridge, get a beer, and drink half of it while pondering when they're gonna come out with a new *Air Bud* film before the rest of the lyrics, "Gonna fight you, and your gonna die" come in. I mean, grammatical errors aside, I just don't get the sentiment of that song, much less the need for so much repetition. I mean, Street Legal, are you gonna fight some more or are you not? Anyway, I like the hazy, dirty recording and some of the really nice high-end guitar work, which the band seems to favor in lieu of straight bar chords or whatever. Decent raucous punk stuff; just had a hard time staying interested when certain lyrics were being repeated ad nauseam. —Keith Rosson (Street Legal)



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SUNNYSIDE:

Make Tacos Not Bombs: CDEP Demo

The lead vocalist sounds like he can never catch his breath, and it's always on the verge of cracking or giving out. That provides a nice bit of anxiety and momentum to these four songs. I'm not quite sure if I believe in resurrection and rebirth, but I do believe in solid songs by solid dudes who've been in other bands. (Sunnyside has Ross! formerly of Tiltwheel, Gene of Dan Padilla, Josh Mosh (co-owner of Fast Crowd Records), and a singer dude who wrapped his bandana over a microphone that was shocking him during Awesome Fest II. That didn't quite work, so a beer coozie was slipped over it. That worked; much in the same way Sunnyside does. Ingenious, DIY, and effective shit. For fans of early Fifteen (without the half-hour talks between songs) who will heckle the living shit out of Jeff Ott (almost to the point of tears) if he plays anything except the early Fifteen stuff in their living room. -Todd (Self-released)

SURRENDER / ACTS OF SEDITION: Split 7"

Surrender: When writing about Crass, one has to be careful, due to the length, depth, and diversity of Crass's catalog. One may only be familiar with "Sheep Farming in the Falklands" or *Feeding of the 5,000*. And they'll have a much different understanding of the band than someone who can't get *Yes Sir*,

I Will off of their turntable. Since members floated in and out, switched roles, and their musical cannon oscillated from classical (*Acts of Love*) to the downright chaotic (*Stations of the Crass*), your understanding of Crass might be different than someone standing right next to you with a Crass tattoo or assflap. That all said as a frame of reference, these two Surrender tracks are their *Penis Envy*: talky, wiry, collaged, and gender politics charged songs. Acts Of Sedition: Are pissed in the doom, melodic landscaping vein of From Ashes Rise. I like it when bands set up the stage: smokestacks, black sky, then gallop into the madness. Very cinematic. The vocalist sounds like a murder of crows smoking unfiltered cigarettes. Not bad. -Todd (Penguin Suit / Surrender)

TESCO VEE'S HATE POLICE: Gonzo-Hate-Vibe: CD

Long-awaited reissue of this classic out-of-print recording from 1992. Now beefed up with a whopping eleven bonus tracks. This sounds great and how can you go off course with song titles like "Big Giant Cock," "Fuckin the Dough," and "Judas Priest My Ass Hurts!" There are also choice covers of songs by Black Market Baby, The Fix, The Obsessed, Pat Smear, and even R.E.M.! You *cannot* go wrong with this one. Buy this now and crank it at your Halloween party. Don't forget to dress up like Henry Rollins. -Sean Koenig (Meat King)

TIMBER: 941-7"

Dischord/Rites Of Spring brand hardcore from Maryland. Pretty damn well recorded and well structured songs with enough punch to make it stand out. There's a lot of the color white in the packaging of this 7" and that usually turns me off, but, then again, there's a lot of white in that Rites Of Spring 7". -Daryl (Something Crucial)

TIMEBOMBS, THE: Nuke Everything: 7" EP

The Xeroxed sheet with handwritten lyrics has "WE DON'T GIVE A SHIT" scrawled across it, rendering it wholly illegible. While that may be true, they do lay down some mean fuggin' hardcore here, heavily reminiscent of RKL's first Mystic seven-inch EP, right down to the "Hi, we crammed all our gear into one of the bathroom stalls of the largest restroom we could find and let the tape roll." -Jimmy Alvarado (Cowabunga, no address)

TOTALLY FUCKED: Self-titled: CD-R

Loud'n'heavy hardcore with a wee touch o' that metalhead-friendly crusty sound, but not so much that I'm picturing 'em with bullet belts and shit like that. Pretty good. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Broke)

TOUCHERS: Blithe: CD

Dunno why, but I didn't really expect to think much of this, so I was a bit surprised at what I got—well above-average '90s type alt-rock from a buncha cats that sound like they take

their cues from the same puddle of influences that spawned both Nirvana and the Pixies. The songs are catchy, well structured and diverse, and delivered with much less morose moodiness than Mr. Cobain's crew and less arty snootiness than Mr. Francis and friends. Apparently, the vato responsible for said tuneage is no longer with us, which gives the proceedings an air of unrealized potential 'cause given the right amount of payola backing 'em, these kids could've had quite a career with enough hits to buy a small island for each. -Jimmy Alvarado (Mental)

TRANZMITORS: Self-titled: 12" EP

It's pretty well documented that I very much like the Tranzmitors. (See the cover of issue #42.) Imagine the best of powerpop—Jam to Buzzcocks to Exploding Hearts—and rearrange those delicate, perishable elements so they don't collapse, break, or tear. The Tranzmitors have figured out how to do that. It's sort of like watching scientists make microchips; although you can observe them in the process, you still can't really *see* how the magic is made. Yet the results, in the Tranzmitors' capable hands, are more than apparent when the needle hits the vinyl. That said, these four songs are "on the couch." I could easily see these songs being played by the band, not once getting off of the couch. (You know, like in a video, or sitting in the studio jamming.) These tracks are all pretty laid back. Not bad at all; just

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a warning if you're expecting some "can't stop shaking my ass" numbers. -Todd (Deranged)

TWO MAN ADVANTAGE: South of Canada: CD

Pentagram made out of hockey sticks? Check. Fixation on the number 69? Check. Seven band members? Check. Loud punk hardcore with some occasional cringe-worthy melodic vocals? Check. Not too original or groundbreaking by any means, with some cool moments, and if I knew any hockey lingo I'd drop a reference like, "The soundtrack to checking some weak motherfucker into the boards," but since I know nothing about hockey I won't bother. A big ol' lump of ice-themed hardcore. -Will Kwiatkowski (Rodent Popsicle)

UH OH: Underneath the Stupid Sun: 7"

Yeah, I'm pretty sure this was recorded in a cyborg's armpit. Somebody must have shrunk the whole band, instruments and all, and just shoved them into that dank mechanical crevice with some recording equipment and said, "Go to town!" And that's exactly what they did. Despite the bizarre recording environment, this record wins because of the band's completely unpretentious, sometimes angry, poppy punk and roll tunes. This is a loud reminder that music doesn't need to be coated with studio gloss to be catchy, doesn't need to be vapid to make you want to dance. -MP Johnson (Repulsion)

VALIENT THORR: Immortalizer: CD

Fourth full-length from these intense hard rockers from Venus. Yes, they are not of this earth, my friends. This platter was produced by Jack Endino, who gives this a spit polish that does the songs right. Head to the web if you don't know who Jack is. Double guitars played in tandem not heard this good since Buck Dharma and company did it back in the day. "I Hope the Ghosts of the Dead Haunt Yr Soul Forever" and "Parable of Daedalus" rock with utter abandon. Some may want this for the cover art alone, but trust me; there is more than meets the eye on this one. -Sean Koeppenick (Volcom)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: And You'll Spin: A Tribute to Big Drill Car: CD

The long wait is finally over for this holy offering tribute to veteran power rockers Big Drill Car from Itchy Korean Records. Glenn and Kevin (neither Korean, and will go Bruce Lee on your Adam's apple if called Korean) over at IKR have been painstakingly assembling this seventeen-song testament to BDC for over the last coupla years, and the result is a killer collection of 'Car tunes from a cross-section of bands from around the globe. Some of my favorites include The Bultacos (Spain) ripping out their version of "Ick," Dead Lazlo's Place busting out "Nothing At All," and Jeff Caudill's (USA) roadhouse/folk-tastic (trust me, it works!) take on one of my all-time fave BDC tunes, "Swanson." I must

note here that I'd be a lying mofa if I said I wasn't particularly fond (and proud!) of Cynical's version of "Take Away"—that track was actually taken from my old band's fourth and final record released back in 2001, some years before this tribute got shifted high into production gear. Let's make it clear that I'm in no way tooting my own horn—a helluva lotta other bands brought the rock to this tribute, as well. If you happen to partake of smoking the weed (you know who you are), put on Valve Drive's (Japan) version of "In Green Fields" and prepare to have a good time. A coupla of the BDC guys themselves were involved with the making of this rekkid, with the cover art by Bob Thomson and Mark Arnold pitching in his producing skills for The Tank's take on "No Worse for the Wear." Even long-time Descendent Stephen Egerton had a hand in the process with mastering this disc, so cut the shit and get some while the gettin's good, holmes. In fact, get this and grab any and all BDC records and 7 inchers you can get your hands on. Why? Because all in all, everyone on this tribute did a pretty damn good job of paying homage to one of the greatest bands that the music industry missed the fucking boat on at the time, and I mean *BIG* time. This especially rings true with the CD liner notes that some person named "anonymous" wrote. Turns out that I happen to know "anonymous," and believe me you, he knows *exactly* what the fuck he's talking about. Do

you? -Designated Dale (Itchy Korean, www.itchykorean.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: And You'll Spin: A Tribute to Big Drill Car: CD

I'm probably the worst person here at the magazine to review this, since my first exposure to this band will be when I see them live this weekend. But I really like Chemical People, so maybe the boys will give me a free hall pass? All the tunes are quite rocking, but, of course, a few stick out like a broken femur. Cynical, The Tank, and Dead Lazlo's Place bring the noise and add their own spin to the proceedings. Inspiring enough to want me to pick up some Big Drill Car merch ASAP. I think this is the point of tribute records, eh? -Sean Koeppenick (Itchy Korean)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Comp #2: CD

Plan-It-X rocks! There are so many great bands on this that it makes me want to purchase a trampoline and jump on said trampoline while shoving fistfuls of Lucky Charms in my mouth! Songs by the Carrie Nations, This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb, Matty Pop Chart, the Bananas, Paul Baribeau, the Devil Is Electric, the Dauntless Elite, and much more! Plus some bands I'd never heard before who are super awesome, like Delay, Four Eyes, and Soophie Nun Squad. (Note: Am I living under a candy-filled rock? What is wrong with me?) I've said it before, but I'll say it again! Plan-It-X is clearly experiencing a resurgence equivalent to communism in the 1930s! If this were a cereal, it'd

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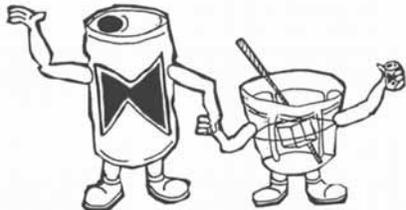
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be one of those single-serving box sets, including Lucky Charms (the Bananas), Cinnamon Toast Crunch (Carrie Nations), and more! Yum! –Maddy (Plan-It-X)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Death by Salt III: LP

This compilation is a little too hard rock for me. It reminds me of the bands that used to rehearse next to me in the San Fernando Valley, only all of these bands are from Utah. –Ryan Leach (8ctopus)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: I Don't Want to Be the One to Say It: CD

The person who chose this track listing has very interesting tastes. Some of the bands on here are amazing (Tiltwheel, the Urchin). And on the other hand, some sound like Saves The Day back when they wrote fast songs. In any case, I don't really know the names of the bands because the song list on the back is riddled with inaccuracies and I don't know who did what. Also, red text on a red background? Hindsight is 20/20, I suppose. –Bryan Static (Rabbit, www.myspace.com/rabbitrecords)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Solid: 7"

A great little grouping of Citizen Fish, MDC, Mouth Sewn Shut, and Embrace The Kill who contribute one track each. Citizen Fish: Always is a winner for me and could do no wrong, provide a mid-tempo number of their brand of ska punk. Mouth

Sewn Shut: Great live band that really gets the crowd going also contributes a ska punk number that has a bottom heavy hardcore vibe. MDC: I don't think I really liked anything after the *Millions of Dead Cops* LP and the *Multi-Death Corporations* EP, but I have to say that this is the best track from the band I have heard since then. Same energy and feel with better production. Embrace The Kill: The one band I have never heard of. For their offering, this band sounds like Citizen Fish on the slower ska tempos due to Dick Lucas's guest vocals on the track. But when the band speeds up, they come to their own: aggressive street punk with spastic, screamed vocals. The interplay of Dick and the vocalists when they sing together compliment each other well. –Donofthead (Rodent Popsicle)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Thanks for the Floor: CD

A tribute to the punk rock community's support for touring bands and punks! And this comes at a perfect time for me because I've recently been mulling over how, as much as I love the Ramones, the Clash, et al., I really need to give credit to the early '80s hardcore scene for really creating the DIY punk networks and structures that we now take for granted. Think about how different it would be if we were still looking for Sire Records to sign our bands! And if every band had a manager, even if that manager was Tommy Ramone! This CD

features songs by Captain Chaos, the Steinways, Max Levine Ensemble, and more! And, ironically enough, a Ramones medley by Two ThErgs (two of the Ergs in acoustic form!), including "I Want You Around," "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend," and "I Wanna Be Well!" I'm not into everything on here, but there's plenty of good stuff! If this were a cereal, it'd be one of those single-serving box sets, including, amongst others, Froot Loops (ThErgs)! –Maddy (Crafty)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: The Right to Assemble, Vol. Two: LP

While I've got a hard time calling The Ergs! or The Measure [SA] hardcore bands—this one's got the "hardcore" subtitle plastered all over the sleeve—I'll admit that as far as regional comps go, it's not a half bad piece of work. Actually, it's falling pretty decently within the spectrum of "damn good." Focusing on the New Brunswick, New Jersey scene, you get tracks from long-running bands like Ensign and Fanshen, as well as younger groups like the Flash Attacks and Static Radio NJ. Other standouts are The Degenerics, Seasick, and Killin It. The quality's generally pretty consistent throughout, which seems to be a rarity for comps based off of locale, and with over twenty bands featured, that's a feat within itself. Again, regional comps—despite whether the bands themselves suck or not—are pretty much the textbook example of a labor of love

and the very definition of "supporting your scene." This is true for both the label and the person buying the record. So when you get something like *The Right to Assemble*, with its snazzy transparent vinyl, thick booklet, a download card that features mp3s of all the songs here, as well as unreleased tracks and the songs from the first volume, the care becomes even more apparent and visible. Damn nice work all around. –Keith Rosson (Soul Rebel)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: To Live A Lie: Three Year Sampler: CD

Massive collection of music the To Live A Lie label has released so far in a short span of time. Fifty-one songs total, but many bands on here get more than one track. Grindcore, powerviolence, hardcore, and thrash are represented to the fullest. Standouts are: Final Draft, Bloody Phoenix, Mehkago N.T., ANS, Rat Byte, and Rhino Charge, to name but a few. Pretty solid collection. –M.Avr (To Live A Lie)

VEE DEE: Glimpses of another World: 7"

Three song serving (one long, two shorter) of dark, psychedelic garage rock that this Chicago three-piece has been known to unleash upon the unsuspecting world from time to time. The *Further* full-length has been in my regular rotation since I first came across it a couple years ago and I can't see this 7" being any different. Vee Dee is definitely one of

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my favorite bands—if not my favorite band—playing this style of music, and this 7” is just another example why. —Daryl (Criminal IQ)

VENA CAVA: *Weapons of Mass Communication*: CDEP

Vena Cava accomplishes something great; they manage to take the weird, quirky, yet interesting musicianship often found in post punk bands (like Hot Snakes, for a quick example) and put it into some damn creative DIY punk. This EP is another perfect example. —Joe Evans III (ADD)

VENA CAVA: *Weapons of Mass Communication*: CDEP

Yay! If I were an ‘80s skater reviewing this CD, I’d call this totally dical, awesome to the max, radical, and killer! (Note: I’d also have one of those cool skater “flip” haircuts!) A bunch of my friends compare Vena Cava to X, but other than the boy/girl vocals and the fact that they apparently cover X in a non-poser fashion while playing live, this really sounded more like just bombdigitty punk rock that you could picture playing a super show with the Chinese Telephones, Black Rainbow, and the Hidden Spots! Totally catchy poppy punk, but not pop punk, ya know? This CD doesn’t eat shit! I’d totally kickflip to this anytime! —Maddy (ADD)

VILE NATION: *Self-titled*: EP

Don’t know what it is, but certain bands can crank out intense thrash

and it blows me away. Lärm, Siege, D.R.I., Rapt, early Disorder. You’d think thrashing like mad would be easy to pull off, yet the truth is most thrash bands suck. Then you get some band like Vile Nation here, who are pushing such an ungodly amount of sound through the speakers. Turn the stereo up and you can feel the songs pounding you in the chest. Low end speaks volumes, literally, in this music. Six songs that blaze. I think I’ll have a couple more rounds of this. —M.AvrG (Cowabunga)

WAX MUSEUMS: *“Magnet II” b/w “Magnet Part I Disintegrated” 7”*

Hey, someone really likes The Urinals, and as someone who likes the Urinals, this is pleasing, down to the intentionally robotish sounds at the end of the song. Wax Museums = art rock that doesn’t suck because it sounds like ants are crawling through everything and the electronics are crude, naïve, and warm (Theremins do that to me). It’s music played by people who probably know how to play their instruments really well but intentionally chose not to. Too well formed to be mess-sloppy. —Todd (Fashionable Idiots)

WEEKEND NACHOS: *Punish and Destroy*: LP

Going off the name of this band, I was expecting some lame, wacky thrash band. Was I ever wrong! Instead, this duo cranks out some low end-drenched, Infest-influenced hardcore. Fast and thrashy and heavier than hell

at the same time. Twenty-six blasts of auditory misanthropy. They shift tempos throughout to keep things interesting, also allowing each song to stand out instead of blurring into the next. The title track is fast then shifts down into an agonizing, slow, lethargic tempo. They also pummel you with “Acceptable Violence,” “Transformed,” “Hated,” and the sort. Lethal. —M.AvrG (Cowabunga)

WELCOME HOME WALKER: *Don’t Let Me Go b/w Second Hand Store*: 7”

This 7” came with a note mentioning “members of the Soda Pop Kids and From Ashes Rise.” Well, color me intrigued. This is some garage-tinged power pop that’s pretty awesome. —Joe Evans III (Gone Home)

WORLD BURNS TO DEATH: *The Graveyard of Utopia*: LP

Amid the grim darkness of World Burns To Death, on this record, bring into focus a few of the atrocities Russia committed from the early stages of Communism to more recent times, as well as taking to task the Western intellectuals who turned a blind eye to it all. World Burns To Death do an excellent job at conveying the ugly mood and despair through their music and lyrics. As much as the music is dynamic and crushing at the core, this is some depressing music, which I imagine is what it is supposed to be. More convincing than a large majority of bands who attempt the same message. I’m not

saying this to discount the band. Quite the opposite. Truth is, World Burns To Death are one of the very few truly relevant bands out there. And this is perhaps their best release yet. “Wormwood Star,” with Ashley Marshall, of Signal Lost, adding vocals, is one of their best songs yet. —M.AvrG (Prank)

WRETCHED ONES, THE: *“Rut” b/w “Lady Boss”*: 7”

To support their recent, triumphant fourth album, *Make It Happen*, two of the best songs from that release appear on this great-sounding 7”. This single is well worth checking out for its hilarious back sleeve alone (a photo representation of the boss that’s “giving me a raise” in the song “Lady Boss”). I can’t get enough of this inexplicably amazing band. Few oi/streetpunk bands blend humor into their otherwise tough-sounding music as perfectly as The Wretched Ones. There aren’t too many bands left from the East Coast 1990s streetpunk revolution, but, luckily, the mighty Wretched Ones won’t die down. I’m ready for album number five already, but I’ll be in line even if it takes another near decade. Will listening to this record repeatedly lower your IQ? Maybe. But who in their right mind believes in IQ tests anyway? —Art Ettinger (Headache)

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Absent-Cause #1

308 #10, U.S. / Can. \$2 ppd., Int'l \$4 ppd., 5 1/2" x 4 1/2", copied, 28 pgs. A collection of short stories from earlier issues of *308* make up this fantastic piece of literature, which I can say is hands-down the best fiction zine that I've ever read. Don't be deceived by the plain layout; each page has all the beauty and creativity of any of the best-known fairy tales. Your inner child would be thrilled by stories with titles like "The Boy Who Owned the Forest" and "The Abandoned Castle." I'd absolutely love to see these stories illustrated, but they are so wonderfully told that the words on the pages will come alive in your imagination anyway. —Lauren Trout (Elizabeth J.M.W., 9638 Avery Lane, Windsor, ON, N8R 2A2, Canada, zine398@care2.com)

ABSENT-CAUSE #1, \$3, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 44 pgs. First issue of a zine with heavy nods to goth culture, body image, and surviving sexual abuse. A pretty mixed bag with tons of interviews and loads of contributors, visually and otherwise. On one hand, there's a fascinating interview with a young pro-Palestinian female activist that was really captivating, as well as one with Jessica Mills of *MRR* and *Less Than Jake* about her new parenting book put out by AK Press. On the other hand, there was some god-awful vampire poetry. Contributor-issues always seem to run the risk of some pretty marked jumps in quality, and I think that some of that happens here with *Absent-Cause*. Still, if you're into goth stuff, run with it; it seems like a pretty nice networking tool, and the dude's enthusiasm certainly shines through. —Keith Rosson (G. Butterfield, 754 Washington Ave. 4R, Brooklyn, NY 11238)

ARTCORE #25, £7.15, 8 1/4" x 11 3/4", 40 pgs. Another excellent issue, and perhaps better than the last. More

attitude and anger at what punk is becoming, but Welly is fighting the good fight, and will hopefully stick it out. Interviews are with Double Negative, Off With Their Heads, Violent Arrest, Aimee Cooper, and an excellent interview with Jeff Nelson. There is also a Four Letter Word U.S. tour diary. In the "Vaultage" section there's an article on the early releases from Lookout!, as well as a piece on the Nuns, Ripcord, and Beef People (as well as an excellent EP from this band). At the back is a page of reviews of rare records, and a spread of old band photos in the middle. This is one of the best out there, and captures what punk should be about. Anger, passion, and inspiring. Get this... —M.Avrq (c/o 1 Aberdulais Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 2PH, UK, www.fourletterword.org.uk/artcore)

BAD APPLES #1 & #2, stamps, 5 1/2" x 4 1/2", copied, 16 pgs. combined. Phil makes excellent use of a sheet of paper by folding it so that it reads like a four-page zine on the outside, then opens up for a full-page feature on the back side. *Bad Apples #1* has a vegan recipe, a story about a DIY iron chef potluck, and a few record reviews on the front. Reverse side is a full-page interview with Steve Larder accompanied by one of his badass drawings. *Bad Apples #2* talks about some of Phil's favorite podcasts, shares a few quick punk rock stories, and features a cool interview with Chris Clavin. These zines are damn good and more than worth the time it takes to email Phil and drop a few stamps in the mail to get a copy. —Lauren Trout (richpassivity@hotmail.com)

BEAT MOTEL #8, \$3 US, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 80 pgs. This jam-packed fanzine from the U.K. starts off with about a dozen different contributors ranting

against British nationalism in their columns. The rest of the zine then follows the standard punk zine format by including more columns, then articles, interviews, and reviews. I didn't care for the article about "What Filth Teaches Us," which pointed out some porn movie clichés. The "International Rules of Manhood" piece (example: "Women who claim they 'love to watch sports' must be treated as spies...") was equally annoying. If I were a guy, I would be pissed off by all the macho garbage—perpetuated by beer commercials and punk editorials alike—that makes men look like a bunch of moronic meatheads. The interview section is short, but the review section is monstrous, with like, twenty full pages of zine, record, book, and show reviews toward the end. The editor even included full-page lists of materials that they didn't have enough time to review. All in all, I think that like any multi-contributor music zine, *Beat Motel* was very hit or miss. If they were trying to pull off a kind of U.K. version of *Maximum RocknRoll*, then they definitely succeeded. But, you know, they could have set their sights higher. —Lauren Trout (PO Box 773, Ipswich, IP1 9FT, UK, andrew@cornog.co.uk)

FLINT RIVER FICTION #1, \$2, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 24 pgs. Listen, contributors: writing fiction means that you can write whatever the hell you want! Why are you boring readers with mundane pieces about an old man admiring a young woman, an asshole father trying to "fix" his daughter, and a woman lamenting the lies of an ex-lover? They're well-written and everything, but still pretty dull. Throw in some real drama and spice, ditch the ugly font and paper stock used for the cover, and the next issue will stand out from all the other

mediocre literary zines, for sure. —Lauren Trout (809 Rose Circle, Bainbridge, GA 39819)

GENEVA13 #2, \$?, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", printed, 72 pgs. *Geneva13* is a zine about Geneva, NY, and the life around there. This issue is primarily dedicated to the various barbershops and beauty salons in town. The editors talk to various owners and ask them all kinds of questions about their work. I've been shaving my head on and off for about twelve years now, so I'm not real interested in barbershops or hair salons, but I suppose, to the right person, this could be pretty interesting. There's also some poetry and a lot of random pictures. The layout is very well done and looks sharp. It's also nice to see a zine dedicated more to its local area. Hopefully, people in and around Geneva, NY, appreciate this. I'm not sure how applicable it would be to others, though. —Kurt Morris (PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456)

GREEN LIGHT #3, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8", printed, 22 pgs. This issue of *Green Light* is subtitled the water issue. It deals with trying to "make you think about your everyday water use and about ways to reduce the amount of water you use." There's some really informative tips, the bottled water vs. tap water debate, Oberlin College's clean water system, water pollution, Great Pacific Garbage Patch, and some other pieces. I've gotta admit I learned a few things and have no doubt that you will, too. —Kurt Morris (PO Box 272, Wickliffe, OH 44092)

MEND MY DRESS #6, \$2 or trade, 4" x 7", photocopied, 24 pgs. This quick one is all about one's tale as a young woman cutting herself. She talks about why she did it, how she grew up with it, how others around her

got involved, and her ongoing impulses. It's blunt writing, and definitely self-indulgent (but hey, it's a zine), and leaves you with a kind of unnerved and inconclusive feeling at the end. Kind of like this review. —Will Kwiatkowski (Mend My Dress, Neely Bat Chestnut, 221 S. 43rd, Tacoma, WA 98418)

MY FAT IRISH ASS #8, \$2, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 44 pgs. Billed as "The Ambivalent Issue," *MFAIA* is dumb humor for smart people that probably won't lead to indifferent reactions. That's partly due to the content: "Pundits I Have Loathed" (great piece; zines don't have enough political

they are in New Orleans means that there is some writing on the city, which, at this time in our history, is a fairly interesting topic to cover. However, nothing much develops except brief paragraphs that lead nowhere. Expounding upon some of the better pieces and ditching the short blurbs would be an ideal way for this to become a better publication. —Kurt Morris (PO Box 19482, New Orleans, LA 70179)

PLACEBO JANE #3, \$2 or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 36 pgs. The Riff Randells! Girl-fueled cinema! Letters! Stories from Catholic middle school! Um... a found journal entry or two...If

RUNK POCK, #1, #3, #4, \$?, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, various page lengths! Sometimes when you're reading through a zine with 18-point font and background images of celebrities, you almost feel like putting it down entirely and instead reading *King Cat!* Fortunately for my dear readers, however, I soldiered on through *Runk Pock*, because what I uncovered is amazing. Okay, I'm guessing many of you are familiar with the annual *MRR* April Fool's issue, in which *MRR* writers make up ridiculous policies and stories to annoy unwitting readers. Apparently, they recently wrote that they would no longer

very blunder! Hilarious. —Maddy (Old Man Maddy, 7227 US 290 E #3302, Austin, TX 78723)

SUGAR NEEDLE #33, \$2 or good zine trades or candy to review, 8 1/2" x 3 1/2", photocopied, 16 pgs. Yay! Another issue of *Sugar Needle*, the only zine that I'm aware of that's completely devoted to candy! And they even hand-color each issue! This issue is a compilation of previous "imaginary candy" columns, in which the mighty editors speculate on possible candy creations! My favorite? A candy called Metamorphosis. "The first layer would be some kind of

"Man, I bet Minor Threat just sat around at the Dischord house all day thinking, 'If only there were a website that would allow me to upload 'Straight Edge' next to ads for *Die Hard 3*, I mean, I'd KILL for that!"

—Maddy, *Runk Pock*

pundit coverage); "Family Funnies" (ten pages of *Blondie* and *Family Circus* cartoons with sex and drug re-writes—one of those jokes that's funny through sheer volume (there are about three dozen comics here!)); "The Slickest Trick in the Book" (you've heard of the old Nigerian email scam—this guy responded to that email, struck up an ongoing email exchange to the point where he annoyed the sender of the original email—twelve pages all told, again funny through staggering volume). And that's partly due to the style. *MFAIA* looks like it's right out of 1995. Simple, old school desktop publishing—familiar fonts, lots of white space, not a hint of Bush-era graphics. I like it. Other people are going to be repelled once they see the three staples running down the left margin. —Mike Faloon (PO Box 65391, Washington, DC 20035)

NOSE KNOWS, THE, Vol. 4, Issues 6-10, 8 1/2" x 11" folded into quarters *The Nose Knows* continues to be a zine I have a hard time reading. It's one sheet of paper folded into fourths, so there are eight panels on which there is material, although one of them is the To and From part for mailing. My frustration comes in that some of the content just seems frivolous and the material that is good isn't allowed to extrapolate because of the lack of space. Much of the content involves stories from the handful of authors who put out *The Nose Knows*. The fact that

any of these things sound good to you, you should probably send \$2 to Meredith Acne. This paper stack is made with care (minimal spelling/grammar mistakes = good reviews) and features a great drawing of some eminent seagull violence in the center spread. I am actually thinking about ordering a back issue which contains an article about her experiences at SF State. Cool. —Will Kwiatkowski (Placebo Jane Fanzine, c/o Meredith Acne, PO Box 7747, Berkeley CA, 94707)

PROFANE EXISTENCE #57, \$5, 8 1/2" x 11", glossy cover with newsprint, 82 pgs. Anarchist punk zine from Minneapolis. This issue is, to a great deal, about standing up against the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis this summer. I really enjoyed reading the section on the Attica Prison riots (thank you for using sources!). There are also music, zine, and book reviews, lots of columns (Mel's column on punk dads was cool)—and it all comes with a CD that includes artists such as: The Cooters, Homicide, Jesus Fucking Christ, Resist, What If God Lie and many other bands I had never heard of (well, I'd heard of The Cooters, but that was it). Many of the bands on the CD are interviewed in the issue. Much of this actually kept me entertained, even if I didn't know who these bands were. Any crusty, anarchistic, or open-minded punk should love this. —Kurt Morris (PO Box 18051, Minneapolis, MN 55418)

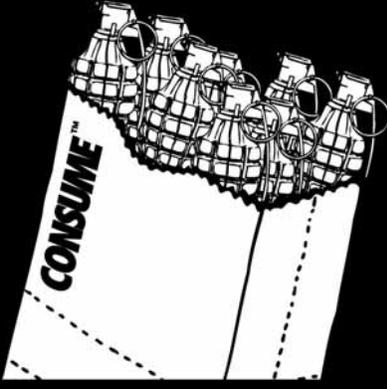
review or interview any band with a Myspace page, including any band with members who have their own personal Myspace page. This is, needless to say, hilarious, but the editor of *Runk Pock* apparently wasn't in on the joke. He angrily and gravely responds, "Why stop there? Let's ban all band web pages. Internet is not punk. And cell phones aren't punk either, so let's nix any band that has a member with one of those. *Maximum Rockroll* should only feature bands that communicate with smoke signals. That's punk." And then, he goes on, "Oh, please. While I agree that 99% of Myspace is bullshit, it is a free and convenient (sic) for bands to communicate, win fans, book tours, and get their name out there. Struggling punk bands of the 80's and 90's would have killed for this level of connectivity." Man, I bet Minor Threat just sat around at the Dischord house all day thinking, "If only there were a website that would allow me to upload 'Straight Edge' next to ads for *Die Hard 3*, I mean, I'd KILL for that!" It goes on to equate *MRR* with "white supremacists" that use similar tactics "to urge their whack foot soldiers into action." For the rest of this amazing—and ultimately quite embarrassing to the editor once he learns the error of his ways—commentary, you'll have to break down and buy this, which, in an odd way, may very well be worth it. So *Runk Pock*, maybe you'll even build an audience around this

round jawbreaker egg thing. As you sucked on it, a fat gummi caterpillar would emerge. And if you bit open the caterpillar, there would be little candy confetti butterflies inside!" This would be so cool! This zine should be an inspiration to zinesters everywhere to stop recycling the same old personal zine format and topics (breakups, depression, bike rides) and try something new! I love this zine! —Maddy (Sugar Needle, 310 Elm Ave, Easton, MD 21601 and Sugar Needle, PO Box 66835, Portland, OR 97290—both work)

ZINE 4 THE LADIES, A, \$4 ppd., 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 40 pgs. Really inspiring interviews with women who are doing unique stuff in the DIY scene. The badass ladies featured in here write vegan cookbooks, play in bands, book shows, and write zines. You might wonder why the editors decided to focus on ladies if you live in a city with a larger punk scene that is pretty much even in terms of gender. But those of us who grew up in smaller towns with more insular subculture groups might remember, that in some places, the most a girl can hope to achieve is still just to be the girlfriend of a guy in a band. This zine is proof that women can not only hold their own amongst the guys, but forget gender altogether and pioneer all kinds of new ideas. —Lauren Trout (PO Box 1398, Southampton, S016 9WX, U.K.)

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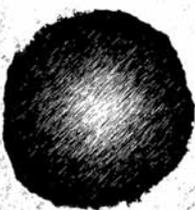
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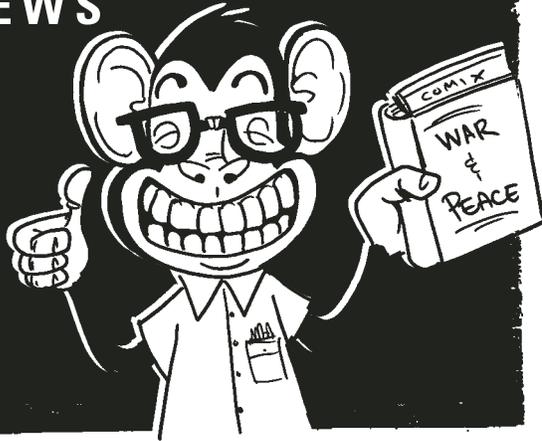
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BOOK REVIEWS



Diary of a Punk

By Mike Hudson, 160 pgs.

At this point in my life, I don't think I ever need to read again the history of bands like the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, and all that '77 NYC/U.K. stuff. And I'm beginning to feel the same way about the books on the Masque scene that have been cropping up. Those stories are interesting, but they've been covered and covered so much just I can tell you what you need to know in my sleep. Punk was happening all over the world, not just NYC, L.A., or the U.K., and, often, with more interesting results. So, when a book boasts on the cover, "Life and death in the Pagans" you have my attention. Never thought I would see a book about life in the Pagans. Stoked is I.

Mike Hudson, singer for the Pagans, lays out in 160 pages the beginning, middle, and somewhat end (though not quite yet) of the Pagans. The drugs, the sex, and the (self-) destruction. You do get information on the records and why they were pressed the way they were, the details on getting fucked around by Drome Records, inside dirt on band disputes, clashing of egos, and more. In short, it's an insider's view of life in a band in all its glorious dysfunction. I must confess, on the first read through I wasn't too impressed. On the second read though, I began to warm to it. I think my fault was in expecting something like *Get in the Van*. Different band, different times. Here you get a slice of what punk was like in the very beginning in the Midwest. Clueless, yet reluctant club owners, naïve bands, as well as a picture of life in the mid-to-late '70s, when the economy was in a low. They played once-glorious and swank venues that had fallen on hard times, in less desirable neighborhoods, and it seems they believed they were going to break through. There is bitterness, though I don't think it's ever admitted, over being shunned by the local press and ignored by stations like WMMS. At some point, you just gotta say fuck it and move on. The Pagans are definitely more interesting than most of the mainstream acts of the time, and put out some truly great music. A song like "Street Where Nobody Lives" is certainly not one you'll forget anytime soon.

Hudson isn't afraid to name names, either, over being treated like shit from the local bands like Pere Ubu, and underlining their differences between the art school scene and the working class scene that the Pagans were part of. But, for me, the most enjoyable parts of the book are when he's talking about hanging out with the Cramps and Dead Boys or telling stories of their early tours, capturing the feel of something new and just getting started. Then there are the stories behind the songs and the records, which, for record nerds, are always essential.

The writing style is easy to read, it goes fast, and it never gets dull. There is a bit of bravado in some parts, but there is also reflection over some painful times as well. So, instead of buying the millionth book about the Sex Pistols with the "never before seen photos" you have seen elsewhere, and "never before told story" you've read a hundred other places, get this. A worthy addition to any punk library. —M.Avrq (Tuscarora Books, PO Box 987 Falls Station, Niagara Falls, NY 14303, www.niagrafallsreporter.com/tuscarora.html)

Follow for Now: Interviews with Friends and Heroes

By Roy Christopher, 392 pgs., \$14.95

As far as interview collections go, I've got to come right out and say it, potential calls of smoke-blowing aside: this one's no *Born to Rock*, that's for sure. That's a pretty unfair statement, I know—Todd Taylor's interview collection is pretty much 100 percent music-centric, while Christopher makes much more varied leaps in his subject material—but the point here is not really the *material* covered as it is in the *manner* in which it's presented.

Divided into subsections of science, media, technology, music, culture, and literature and featuring interviews with various individuals falling under each heading, there was not one real moment where I was captivated or really that compelled to continue reading *Follow for Now*. The majority of these interviews are almost painfully dull to read. While dudes like Nardwuar, Todd Taylor (again: sorry, guy, gotta call 'em where I see 'em), or Dan Sinker of *Punk Planet* are masters at the interview—doing copious amounts of research, keeping things spontaneous yet structured, and not necessarily being afraid to ask challenging questions when someone starts to

Stoked is I.

shoot their mouth off, Roy Christopher seems to have done every goddamn one of these interviews through email. There's not a glimmer of spontaneity to be found and much of the time these things read less like interviews and more like promotional one-sheets for whatever product, project, or idea the subject's espousing. For example: the sense of genuine personality that *barely* shines through the fog in the interview with guerrilla artist/designer star Shepard Fairey is definitely the rarity here, and due more to the force of the dude's personality and less to Christopher's questions. Again, it feels as if either a) all the life has been stringently edited out of these interviews or b) they really were done through mass emailings.

There's just not much interesting material being covered, even in the music and literature sections, which I feel a lot more comfortable with than, say, the science section. Like when Christopher interviews Milemarker—and time has still not proven to me that they were anything but a pretty boring band made up of some decent writers—and in lieu of trying to make Al Burian squirm a bit or trying to bring a bit of *life* to a band that's always been celebrated for its coldness, he asks them "whom they read and respect." Honestly, man—I couldn't give a flying shit how some space-rock band has been using their library cards.

It's quite possible that *Follow for Now* was sent to the wrong reviewer. And yet you look through an issue of *Razorcake* and it becomes obvious pretty quickly that the interview *can* be a pretty entertaining format. When it's done well, it can be riveting, serious, and informative (take the Christian Parenti or Howard Zinn interviews for example) or just downright hilarious. There's a pace to an interview, a flow, a give and take. *Follow for Now* unfortunately seems more interested in the *ideas* being presented regarding technology, media, literature, etc. than the interviews themselves.

Considering the number of subjects involved—and to Christopher's credit, I recognized very few of the names involved, which definitely aided in my lackluster enthusiasm—the book probably would've made an amazing—or at least interesting—collection of essays. As it stands, when he asks scientist and author N. Katherine Hayles "...*Your self-referential analysis of the rhetoric of chaos theory tempted becoming fractal itself. Is language really able to exhibit emergent properties in the same way as other emergent systems?*" I want to punch him in the arm and be like, "Now tell her a joke, dude; bring the thing to life, then take it *back* to something on-point." But he never does—the *ideas* are important, not the fact that interviews like this are boring as hell to read—and *Follow for Now* stays mired, over and over again, in its own poor formatting. —Keith Rosson (Well-Red Bear, 4717 Stone Way N., Seattle, WA 98103)

Hymn California

By Adam Gnade, 181 pgs.

I just started grad school a few weeks ago. They sometimes assign up to three books to read in one week (which is impossible, but study habits in grad school are another story). So I want to make it clear that I actually made time for this book. It wasn't like, "Oh man, *another* book to read?!" No, I actually would take a break from my other books to read this because I enjoyed it that much.

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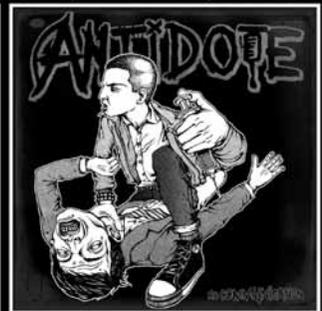
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FLEAS & LICE
PREPARE FOR ARMAGEDDON CD

Adam has been around for a while both as a musician and writer. *Hymn California* is described as an autobiographical novel and—from what I can gather—much of this happened to Adam in the past few years, but he also might have embellished a bit (à la James Frey), so he made sure all should know it's a novel. This monograph primarily consists of him driving back and forth across the country with friends and everything they feel, see, and do. To miss the connections to *On the Road* would be pretty hard. The characters here are trying to learn who they are and where they're going. But mostly they're floating along, going nowhere, very reminiscent of Douglas Coupland's *Generation X* but in a car. There are all sorts of vignettes about growing up, memories of childhood, events from recent U.S. history, and so on. There are also some hilarious moments, such as the Mexican father who scares his kid on the subway in NYC by pretending to be Chucky from the film series of the same name.

In the midst of a story told by one friend about a cat, another friend pipes in, "What?! This isn't the cat story I know! I thought this was the story where Karl hid in the bushes and jumped out and punched a cat?" It's a stream of lines like that which provide the book with unforeseen hilarity or poignancy, along with the description of life in Portland (a city which I miss), that kept me intrigued. (Although, where he and his friends came up with the money to drive across the country and buy all the things they did left me puzzled.) The similarity to so many authors I enjoy and the vague feeling of familiarity with the characters is what kept me interested enough to finish what I started, which is more than I can say for some of the books I've been assigned to read for grad school. —Kurt Morris (Dutchmoney Books, 239 Harris Ave., Providence, RI 02903)

On Subbing is highly recommended. Actually, it's one of the best scenarios of what a zine that transforms into a book can be. —Todd (Microcosm, 22 S. Rogers St., Bloomington, IN 47404-4936, www.microcosmpublishing.com)

Snakepit 2007

By Ben Snakepit, 95 pgs.

Quarterly too short? Snakepit is now available as a yearly collection. Ben draws three panels of each day of his life, and 2007 has Ben gainfully employed at a video store (welcome to manager-hood), in a steady relationship that lasts well over a month (hello kitchen table with matching chairs), and doing the things that Ben does. Bong rips. Toobing. Six pack bike tours. Parties (big, small, good, bad, filled with monsters). Eating buffets. Watching movies. Playing in bands.

Ben's comic is the visual embodiment of what I really enjoy about DIY punk. On the surface, and to the casual observer, it may not look like much. There's a lot of down time. There aren't a lot of showers involved and people from all over are constantly visiting around an invisible musical axis. There are tons of days where it's, "Woke up hung over, went to work, got stoned, pigged out, fell asleep." That's life. Mundane. It is what it is, and Ben keeps it unglorified. But then there are the watershed days, like with Lance Hahn's death and Ben choking up, unable to say much at Lance's wake, but feeling both a deep sense of loss and compassion for a great dude's passing. It shows that, yeah, music's important to Ben, but it's driven by the people behind it all, what beats in their hearts, and not what's on their T-shirts. It keeps Ben fastened to the life he's chosen. Great stuff.

Since I've already interviewed Ben a couple of times, I thought it'd be fun to mini-interview his special lady, Karen, to see if we could get some new insights.

Honestly, man—I couldn't give a flying shit how some space-rock band has been using their library cards.

On Subbing: The First Four Years

By Dave Roche, 127 pgs.

"It's really unnerving to see a kid with a blank expression screaming uncontrollably." *On Subbing* is a chronological collection of remembrances of substitute teaching in the Portland, Oregon, school system over a four-year period. It comes across as a mix between the memoir of a combat veteran and an examination of bureaucracy à la Orwell's *1984*.

"I found out the reason they needed a sub today was because this kid had head-butted the regular EA's jaw and sent her to the hospital. Awesome. I escaped with my jaw intact, but did receive two blows to the testicles." *On Subbing* was initially released in zine format. All of the zines have been collected here in book form and augmented with a prologue and a postscript. The author, Dave Roche (whose name appears nowhere on the cover, I suspect, due in part to the threat of being sued by the school district he served), does a great job of both setting the up the reader to fully comprehend what he's writing about while showing his deep compassion—and occasional frustrations—with the students and teachers he worked with.

"A little later, a student ran out into the middle of the ice-skating rink and started masturbating... I would just start talking to him about anything and he'd stop, but not for very long." Dave subbed for mentally and socially challenged and disadvantaged kids (and young adults). He sets the psychological and school-specific terms ahead of time (like explaining a table full of shaving cream as a tactile activity for the students) and is careful in his explanations of disabilities (like autism). What is also refreshing is Dave's restraint. The book focuses, first and foremost, on his experiences directly related to teaching in the schools and never strays too far from the topic at hand. As many of us know, zines—especially ones focused so closely on self experience—can fall into the dumpster of DIY narcissism and caffeinated self-pity. Dave deftly bunny hops right over that hole. He's both vegan and straight edge, but these details, along with his away-from-school personal life, come up in the natural evolution of the book, providing both backdrop and context.

Ultimately, Dave comes across as likable, caring, a little odd, and human—like a dude you'd like to drink a soda pop with as he tells you about his day, especially when it went well. "These kids were so sweet and trusting. They came up and grabbed my hand right away... the kids shaved crayons onto wax paper, then I put another sheet of wax paper over it and ironed it, melting the crayon shavings. The kids cut out the wax paper to look like butterflies."

Todd: What do you see as the biggest difference between comic Ben and real-life Ben?

Karen: This is tough, because I think Ben does a pretty good job with being honest about his life in the comic. A lot of his real-life self shows through in the comic book character.

Todd: What hesitations, if any, did you have of Ben and you moving in together?

Karen: Oh, man. Of course there were some hesitations. What a bummer to move in with someone only to have it crash and burn... and then you have to divide all your stuff up. So, definitely, we gave it a lot of thought. But it's been a year since we moved in together, and we're not sick of each other yet.

Todd: How did you become such a good chef?

Karen: My family's really into food, so I actually learned how to cook from my dad. For me, it's really a creative thing, so my favorite meals are when you get to point where you have all this random shit in the fridge and you come up with a dish that works. Ben's not picky, though. He's always trying to get me to cook combread.

Todd: Are you intentionally trying to fatten Ben up?

Karen: Yes. It's like that fairy tale where every day the witch checks to see if the little boy's gotten fat enough to eat.

Todd: Have you ever read over a day in *Snakepit* that you were involved in and go, "Huh, I didn't know that?"

Karen: Um, not really. Most of the time it's pretty straightforward, like doing laundry or something.

Todd: How do you feel being drawn into someone else's daily life? There's very little chance you'll be "recognized" from the quality of the drawings themselves, but have people come up to you and said, "You must be Karen" due to being in *Snakepit*?

Karen: It can be a little weird. I've had a few strangers come up to me, and also some acquaintances who've read the book without knowing I dated Ben. It's strange to have people bring up things that have happened, or—sorry, Todd—ask me all about Ben. The weirdest was when my mom looked Ben up on the internet and checked out his comics.

Todd: Best buffet in Austin?

Karen: Buffet Palace, hands down. It is truly the king of buffets in Austin.

Todd: What are your reflections on toobing?

Karen: Definitely one of my favorite things about Austin, and something I had never done before I moved here. It's the most purely summer thing I can think of: drinking beers with your friends on the river.

—Todd (Microcosm)

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You Idiot: The First Book

By Nate Gangelhoff, 316 pgs.

You may know Mr. Gangelhoff from one of any of the bands he has been in out of Minneapolis. He's kind of to Minneapolis what Paul Curran is to the Bay in the way that he keeps popping up in awesome bands playing bass. In addition to his many musical outlets, he also has had a few zines, two of which, *You Idiot* and *Whiskey Plus*, are completely compiled in this book. Well, they are almost completely compiled—a few cuts were made from *YI*, but nothing substantial, and abstracts of the cuts are given. *YI* ran for four issues; *WP* ran for one. In this comp, you get the equivalent of bonus tracks: the unreleased fifth ish of *YI* and the unreleased second ish of *WP*. That about wraps up the basics. Anyhow, both zines have an analytically comedic approach.

YI tackles what could be considered easy targets, e.g., anti-drug campaigns from the '80s, religion, get rich quick techniques, lose weight quick techniques, *He-Man* fandom, and rapping wrestlers. While his subjects might be considered easy, it must have been a real chore to find some of the nonsense he covers. Nonetheless, his argumentation is excellent however easy these subjects may or may not be. It definitely adds to the comedic value. In later issues of *YI* where he decides to be less exhaustive in his analyses than he was in previous issues, the humor is still there and the material is not to be skipped, yet it lacks a bit of the punch that the in-depth analyses provided.

WP was his music zine. Here he might be said to be shooting more fish in a different barrel. The two issues include pieces such as reviews of karaoke performances at a bar, Billboard Top 40, pro-Bush songs, bands at his practice space, and other various music related subjects. All of this is not done with a holier-than-thou attitude (though it could be said that the fish drowned before he got to the barrel); he shows a self-deprecating side and a willingness to turn the lens inwards by documenting his failure as a musician when it comes to buying equipment—and he admits to going to see Korn perform (I think he was stoned and reviewed it).

If you are looking for some light reading that will bust your gut, this book is for sure going to do it for you. (I wouldn't read it again while eating or drinking lest I choke to death.) And, without a single page left blank like so many other books, you will be hard up to find a more eco-friendly book. —Vincent (Arsenic, PO Box 8995, MPLS, MN 55408) 



Angus Valley Farms: DVD

The reasonable price and widespread availability of digital video cameras make it easy for anyone to create their own horror movie. Of course, there are some drawbacks, like the fact that most movies made on cheap Wal-Mart digital cameras look like shit. Clever filmmakers know how to use certain tricks to get around this problem, like having the screen filled with nearly complete darkness for the first half of the movie. Oh wait, that's not clever at all. That sucks. Anyway, if you just can't get enough of the *Blair Witch Project* and you're too cheap to get your friends together and make your own rip off, this movie has your name written all over it. —MP Johnson (CFC Video)

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Kettle Cadaver: *Among the Damned*: DVD

Do you want to see some dude hammer nails through his penis, slice up his flesh, and jack up his body in other exciting ways? Then I recommend that you skip this music video collection and move straight to *Sick: The Life & Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist*. Why? Because Mr. Flanagan had a philosophy. Hurting himself was his way of keeping control over a body that was fighting hard to see him lose control, a body with cystic fibrosis. He made self-mutilation into something very compelling. On the other hand, if you just want

Tad: *Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears*: DVD

Of all the Seattle bands to emerge in the late eighties, Tad were by far the most sonically heavy of the crowd. No other band could deliver the way they did. Many attest to that in this documentary. With a tax return in 1986, Tad bought a guitar, booked time at Reciprocal Studios with Jack Endino, and playing all the instruments himself, recorded what would become his first record on Sub Pop. Tad, the band, existed during a pivotal time in music, and this documentary portrays that well, from how Seattle was, to what it became. From how bands just made music with no intent for commercial

From how bands just made music with no intent for commercial success—much less any idea of how to turn it into a day job—to eventually doing just that.

to see hypodermic needles stuck into scrotums and you would rather pass on philosophy in favor of some pedestrian heavy metal, you might want to pick up this DVD by Kettle Cadaver instead. The self-induced bleeding here is accompanied by some fun scenes of the dudes in the band playing around with animal carcasses, as well as lots of stuff being smashed. It's shock for the sake of shock and it's been done before. Danzig and NIN both have great music videos with scenes of penis torture. They also have a key feature that Kettle Cadaver lacks: good music. Still, amidst all the contrived shock videos, Kettle Cadaver manage to succeed despite themselves, if only for one three minute segment. "The Crack of Dawn" is one of the most impressive Mad Max tributes I've ever seen. The band drops the gore schtick for a moment and gets post-apocalyptic. The care put into the battle scenes, the dusty car chases, and even the song blow everything else on this disc away. For a brief period of time, we see that this band actually does have some heart. Too bad they spend the rest of their time hiding it under a cover of gore. —MP Johnson (Horror Rock)

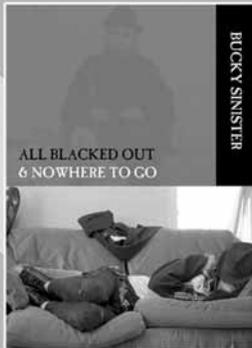
success—much less any idea of how to turn it into a day job—to eventually doing just that. There are also the stories behind each of the records, the controversies over cover art, and getting screwed by the major at the end.

From the inside out, just about everything you would ever want to know about Tad is covered here: interview footage from present day mixed with live footage, a TV commercial (!) for the first record, and commentary from friends and fellow musicians. You definitely get a feel of the times and how unique it all was. Starts off feeling fresh and new, putting out records, touring Europe in the late eighties with Nirvana, building a large following and developing an image, attracting the interest of larger labels, to eventually feeling run through and burnt out over the legal hassles and inner band turmoil. It's been some time since Tad were around, but the music still holds up well, and has influenced a few bands since then. But still, none were/are as heavy as Tad. There's only one. A bonus feature on this disc are five music videos. —M.Avrq (MVD Visual, PO Box 280, Oaks, PA 19456, www.mvdvisual.com)

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