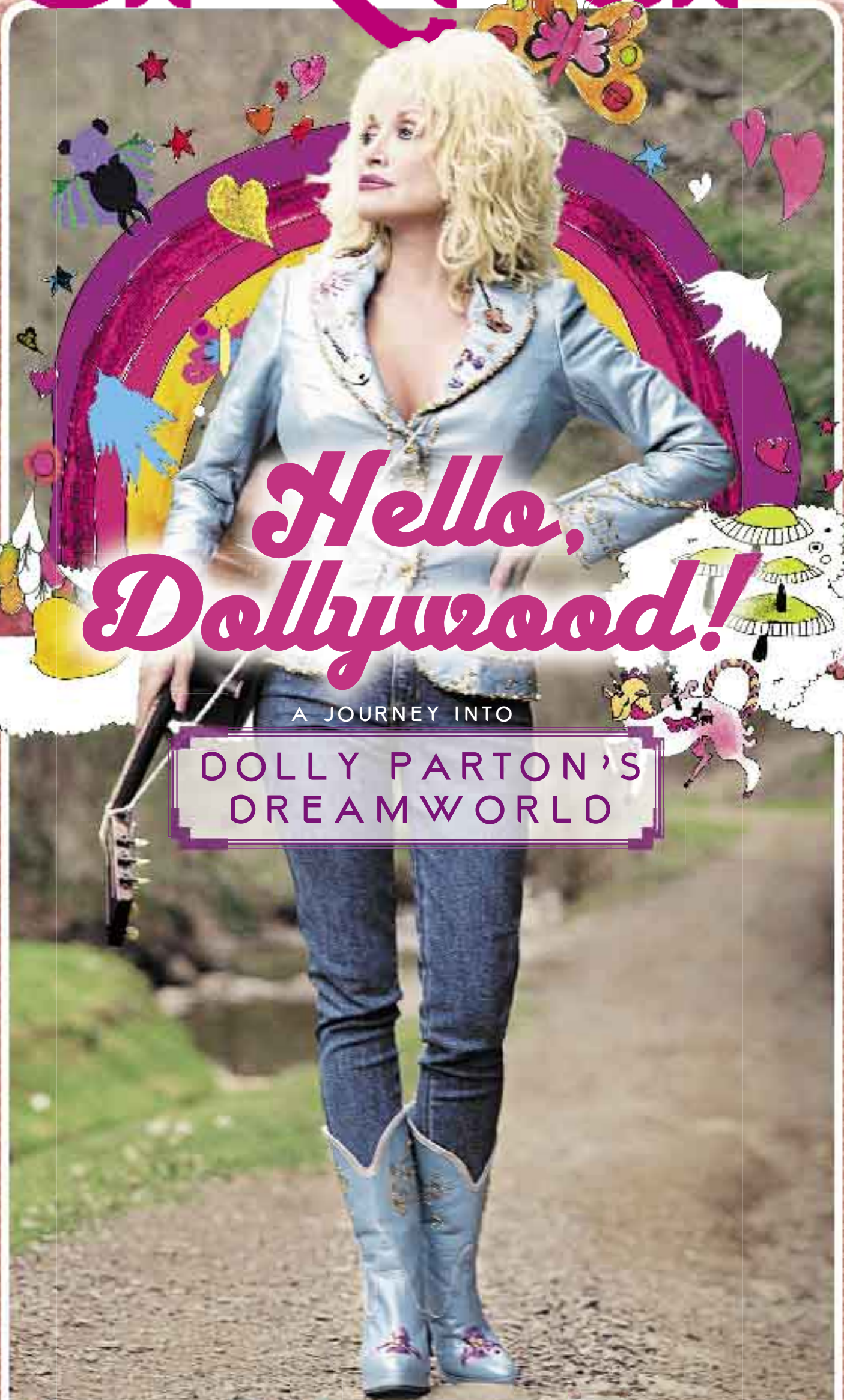


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#8 | January 2003

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ON THE COVER:
Collage of illustrations
by Emily Ryan with a
photograph by Annie
Leibowitz

T-Model Knows Better

T-Model Ford says a lot. He says he's 79 years old. He says he's "the Boss of the Blues! The Taildragger! From Greenvillellllllle...Mississippi!" He says he doesn't need his cane anymore. And he says he can help us.

So, every two months, Arthur's humble editor calls T-Model and asks him some pressing questions. T-Model gives his answers over the phone, then we at Arthur HQ transcribe the conversation, with some help from Bruce Watson at Fat Possum Records, T-Model's record label. And bip-bap-boom, there it is. If you have any questions for T-Model, and we suspect that you do, email them to editorial@arthurmag.com

Arthur: T-Model one of our readers wrote in and said, "I'm worried about one of my longtime friends. He's been hanging out with this woman who I know smokes crack. I'm afraid he's going to start smoking crack too. What should I do?"

T-Model Ford: Well, be worried. If you like him, and he in it, best for you to stay away from him much as you can. Cuz you'll get in trouble. You'll be doin' what he be doin', or what the others' doin'. That crack helped cause a-many young people to mess up. I don't know what it do, but some I hear say it mess the brains up. It must do somethin' 'cos they all want to fool with it. They wild, they don't do right. They stay in trouble, meddlin', breakin' in, fightin', do anything. I never seen none of it when I was a young man], and I ain't never smoked none of it. Now I done quit smokin'...quit about 20 years... I wouldn't smoke another cigarette. Ain't got no feeling for it. And I do good and I feeel good. As old a man as I is, I'm still gettin' up and goin'.

How can you tell when someone is on crack?

I seen some of 'em since they done got *way* in it. Everywhere that smokin' that crack got a good thing going, it breaks it up. Greenville looks like a ghost town now. You don't see nothin' hanging around. That crack? I hate to even see anybody smoking that mess. They don't look right, they don't act right. They look wild and stupid. If anybody smoke it, you can tell it. In the way they acts. Get on away from 'em.

Is there anyway to get 'em someone off of crack who's already in it?

Not hardly. Not 'til they get in enough of a mess, then they *have* to get out of trouble.

Okay. Next question. One of our older readers writes in to say, "Dear T-Model, I thought I was a good father, my wife and I have been very loving, we have a beautiful daughter, she's 15 years old, but we're worried that she's started to have sex."

"That crack helped cause a-many young people to mess up. I don't know what it do, but some say it mess the brains up. It must do somethin', 'cos they *all* want to fool with it."

Uh-ohhhhh.

"She hasn't admitted it to us, but we think it's happening. We don't know what to do. Should we leave her alone?"

Yes. Leave her alone. Cause next thing she'll start sassin' you, blessin' YOU

out, tellin' you what you can't do! What SHE can do! "I'm grown, I can do what I wanna do." Blowin' back. First thing you wanna hearin'. See you can't raise your children now. You have to let 'em go til they get their selves in trouble or mess up. Then they go to see anybody but it

be too late. They all do.

Is there a way for these parents to tell if their daughter is having sex? Can you tell?

Yeah, you can tell. Watch the breasts. They get sassy and nasty and ... Once it get started, then let 'em get their own place to stay. That'll whoop 'em quicker than anything! That's right. They'll find out they can't. That a home's where they at. It's somethin' else. You wanna go and get out like that, remember one thing gets turned over to the Good Lord. Ever where she head, let her go. She get into somethin', don't get her out, let her get out the hard way. Once she get out, she'll make something out of herself.

A reader in his late teens writes, "Dear T-Model, I gotta buy a new car. I'm just drivin' around town. I don't need a truck. What should I look for? You got any suggestions on what kind of car I should get?"

If you gon' do that, just to ride around in, find you an old model. The Lincoln, if it's in good shape when you get it, take care of it, keep the oil changed and filter changed, and it'll last a loooong time. Or a good Chevrolet or a good Ford or a good Buick.

You like those American cars.

Yes indeed. They all been good to me. They go longer. They last longer. And I had good safeties out of 'em. I love 'em. I got a '79 Lincoln here. It's an antique, I want to buy an antique tag for it. It look good right now. *Everybody's* trying to buy it. They want me to sell it. I told 'em, It ain't for sale. But still they want it. They *like* it.

Now, you know how to fix cars, right?

Well I can but I'm not able now, I done got broke up that limb. Tree fell on me and I can't get around. Before that tree fell on me, I'd work on and build motors and everything.

How did you learn how to do all that?

Go 'round where people workin', and WATCH em. Watch em. I can't read and write, can't spell nothin'... but I never did carry my car to the shop. ☺



Holly's Mashed Roots

Submitted by Holly Golightly of London, England.

In the winter I like to make this dish whenever I roast poultry or game. I have fed some minor celebrities on it and thrown it at boyfriends. It's very versatile that way. And very tasty.

**Four large carrots and four large parsnips
Large knob of butter
Ground black and red pepper
Peeled, crushed garlic to taste**

Peel and cut vegetables in evenly sized discs along the length, place in pan and cover with cold water. Add a pinch of salt. Bring to boil and simmer until soft (about 8-10 minutes) on low heat. Strain off water and chop roughly with a sharp knife. Add butter, pepper and crushed garlic and mash until smooth. Serve piping hot with roasted poultry or game (stuffed with chestnuts and apricots) and slow roasted potatoes, bread sauce, green beans and port gravy.

Letters of Comment

From Our Perspective? Both. Our We're Post-Dualist, Man...

I'm writing in response to an ad placed in *Arthur* No. 6 by Dean's Beans concerning my father's company, Newman's Own and fair trade coffee.

As a point of clarification, Newman's Own Organics is owned by Peter Meehan and me and we produce this line of coffee, not Newman's Own.

My father has been very supportive of our venture into the world of organics, but he lets us do as we please and does not direct us in our choice of product or suppliers. Therefore Mr. Dean's accusations were falsely directed at my father rather than at Peter and me.

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters was chosen by Newman's Own Organics for their ability to provide us with National Distribution for our fair trade, organic

coffee, and for their commitment to these issues. The very act of doing business with Green Mountain on a national scale grows their commitment and volume as well as our own. From my perspective, is your coffee cup half full, or half empty???

Nell Newman

*President of Newman's Own Organics
newmansownorganics.com.*

Just Beyond The Horizon...

Jeezie-pee-zies, what a great magazine you've put together. I am sooooo glad not to be reading visual sound-bites. So far the only issue I have read is your Joe Strummer retrospective (March 2003), but I could not have loved it more. You have no idea what a relief it is to us thirsty folks in a land where the City Paper really stinks (used to

be good!) and there is no college radio (used to have that, too, but I digress). You see, unfortunately, you get used to these things, and you miss them when they are gone. You sense there are other things out there just beyond your horizon... Like when we take a road trip to New Jersey and discover college radio—real college radio—still exists. And there really are still people doing interesting things. Hooray to you!! And keep up the good work.

Your pal, Millie
Baltimore, MD

Thanks, Millie, we'll do our best. Sorry to hear that you haven't been able to find other issues of the mag. Arthur is distributed across North America (distribution points are listed at www.arthurmag.com) by a vast network

of amazing volunteer operatives working under the able direction of the soon-to-be legendary Cap'n Neema Enriquez. Unfortunately, copies of Arthur tend to disappear almost as quickly as we unload 'em. So the best way to guarantee that you'll get every issue of Arthur is to subscribe...which you can do at our website using PayPal, or through the mail with a check. If you're interested in getting caught up with back issues of Arthur, again, you may order them via our website...while supplies last. They're going quick, so don't dawdle! Arthur Magazine: confirming that there really are people still doing interesting things since 2002. ☺

Send a letter of comment to *Arthur* at "I'm Just Sayin'," 3408 Appleton St., Los Angeles CA 90039 or email to editor@arthurmag.com. *Arthur* reserves the right to edit letters of comment for clarity.

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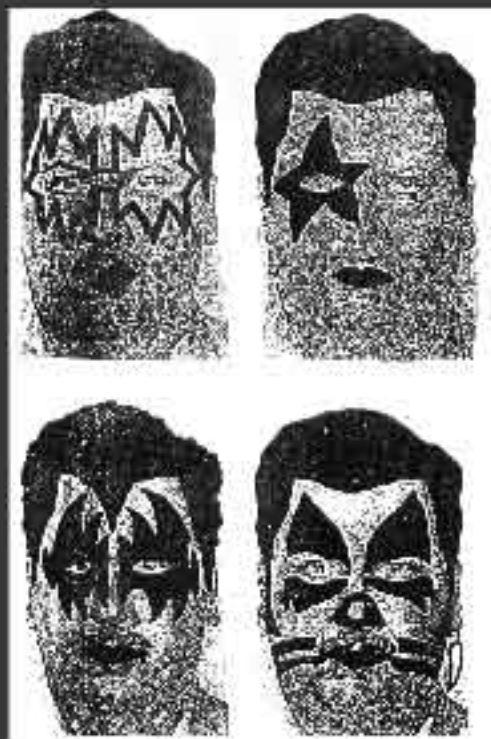
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FIRE'S CLUB

Rootsy or folk? Post-punk or blues futura?
The answer is:Yes. **THE FIERY FURNACES** might be all over the map, but **Margaret Wappler** finds out one thing's dead certain: No one else is gettin' in the band.

LISTENING to the Fiery Furnaces for the first time is like finding a pirate radio station while driving through the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. The map swears you're 100 miles outside Chattanooga but in the pitch-blackness, can you trust something as arbitrary as coordinates on a piece of paper to define place? What really locates you is that station at the end of the dial, with its strange accent and colloquialisms.

The Fiery Furnaces—Matt and Eleanor Friedberger, a brother-and-sister duo residing in Brooklyn, New York—are behind the latest pirate station in rock: they've flipped on a switch and defined a special place between the forest and the mountains. Sixteen songs appear on their debut *Gallowsbird's Bark* (Rough Trade); it's a trunk show of delicious oddities, lovingly stitched and fringed with twirls of piano, itchy funk guitar solos, lyrics like "In the Cracker Barrel dumpster I found a bag/Red-white striped, I opened it—gag" tickled along by prickly cool rhythms. It's blues, post-punk and a traveling vaudeville show pieced together with equal parts confidence, naivete (is it going too far to suggest that songs all about foreign lands are a tad Peter Pan?) and a kind of manic curiosity that sees the Friedbergers grabbing hold of a sound from one decade, giving it a good shake and then setting it down and running off to the next decade—or several ones previous—sending the listener into an enjoyably vertiginous tailspin. Matt might be a little too fond of those noodly solos that made more than a few Led Zeppelin songs deflate and I cringe each time Eleanor sings that line "Mummy, Mummy, Mummy"—though I'm not sure if it's because I really love it or can't stand it—but who cares? The Fiery Furnaces' gawky moments pose problems that are actually *interesting*.

The first 15 minutes of my Saturday afternoon conversation with the Furnaces were spent catching up (by the way, I went to junior high and high school in Oak Park, Il., with Eleanor) but soon enough, it turned to other things—blues, identity and the comfort of being a brother/sister band. Throughout our talk Eleanor and Matt, her senior by four years, played a funny game of cat-and-mouse-teasing, then supporting—sometimes sounding like the squabbling siblings from Wes Anderson's *Royal Tenenbaums*. Here are some outtakes:

According to the pithy and droll liner notes of Gallowsbird's Bark, Matt and Eleanor's struggles to finally become the Fiery Furnaces in 2000 was proceeded by great violence, nothing less than Eleanor being "hit over the head, stabbed in the knee and smashed on the foot for coming down in the basement," where Matt "guarded the scene of his humiliation," i.e., prior failed recordings.

Eleanor: Matt was very mean.

Matt: I was a horrible stupid kid.

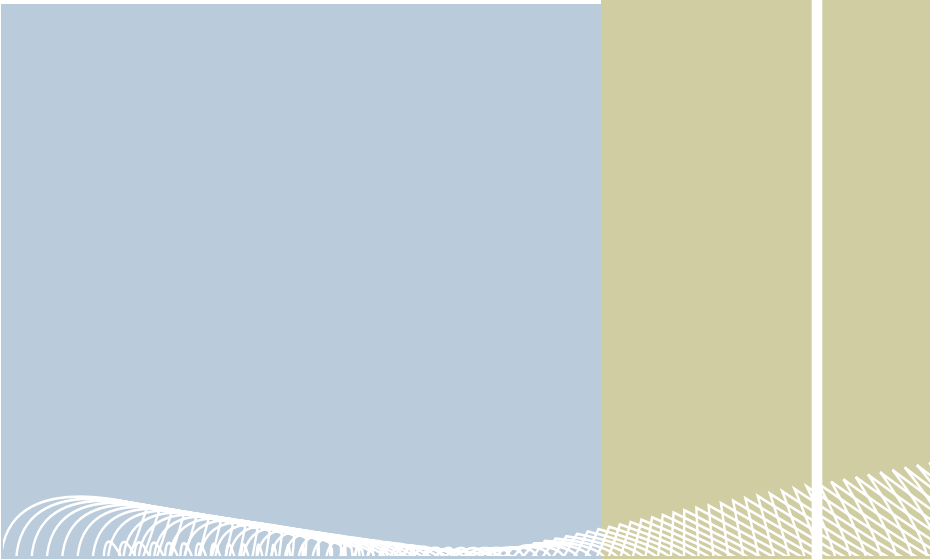
Eleanor: He beat me up.

Matt: I would never beat you up—I would hit you.

Eleanor: He was very abusive. As soon as he got a little bit older, though, he was the most supportive, the most generous. He completely turned around. But now he's reverted back to the old way. Just kidding—I think.

One of the rituals of the high school we attended was going to the Chicago Blues Festival every summer; you and your friends camp out, surreptitiously drink cheap beer and listen to the likes of Howling Wolf or Bo Diddley playing to a crowd of tens of thousands. I asked the Friedbergers if growing up in Chicago, where tourists pile nightly into the clubs of Rush Street to hear a more commercial form of the blues than what we typically heard at the Blues Fest, affected their music.

Matt: I love Chicago '50s music, people like Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf ... but I wasn't going to try to sing like Lightning Hopkins, or certainly not Howling Wolf. Not that Eleanor sings like that either but Eleanor, from the first moments we were trying this, Eleanor could sing over these very normal blues riffs in a way that sounded good



The Friedbergers: brother and sister are gonna work it out.



Eleanor: I felt really stupid trying to play rock music. I wanted to sing quiet, soulful songs.

Matt: If we are any good live, it's because of Eleanor. She can pull it off, yet she's not pouring beer on herself or jumping around or doing Debbie Harry impersonations.



to me. Hopefully as we go along, we can take advantage of that more in a way that doesn't sound anything like the White Stripes. I think I like the kitchen sink approach to the Chicago blues sound. It's very different from the revivalist garage stuff that's been going on in the past few years.

For most of 2000 and 2001, the Fiery Furnaces played at several rock clubs around New York, not thinking of themselves as, in Matt's words, an official band, "like, here's our name and here's our sticker and that kind of shit." Towards the end of 2001, things had changed. They were a band, all right—but what kind? I asked them whether they practiced constantly, trying to develop and hone their sound, during those first months when they were playing at clubs.

Matt: It's funny you should say that because we didn't develop a damn thing. We just went to our shows, we had some songs and we'd just show up and start playing them.

Eleanor: I thought we were going to be like a folksy act.

You thought you were going to be a folksy act?

Eleanor: That's what I thought, yeah.

Just the two of us, singing our songs.

Matt: I thought live we were going to be as rootsy as possible because we couldn't be bothered with anything else. We could hardly be bothered to get anyone else to play with us. I never thought of it like trying to be folksy, though. I like to say 'rootsy.'

Eleanor: I, for a long time, thought I didn't want to be a loud rock band. I felt really stupid trying to play rock music. I had sort of a complex about being a girl and trying to do this. All the girls who were doing this were either dressed up in some kind of ridiculous outfit or you were like this punk rock ... [searches for the right word]

Tough ass.

Eleanor: Yeah, and I didn't want to be any of those things. I wanted to sing quiet, soulful songs.

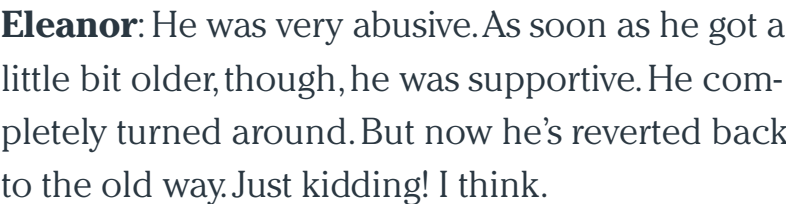
Matt: But what I thought from playing a few shows with Eleanor is that she did seem confident and more authoritative so I thought what works well for us live is to play as a proper rock band.

Eleanor: Well, now it feels that way.

Matt: So slowly we started to play that way, as opposed to trying to sound 'interesting'—or we'd just try to be as spontaneous as possible. Now on our record and live we play like a rock band for better or worse. It's good because if you're playing in rock clubs, it's helpful to be a rock band, if only because you do a lot better. No, actually, if you're playing in front of a bunch of people talking, not necessarily interested in you and more interested in a girl across the room, it works better to play as aggressively as possible, as a way to try to work something out that's interesting. It's useful sensationalism. Some of that Pete Townsend 1965 stuff is true.

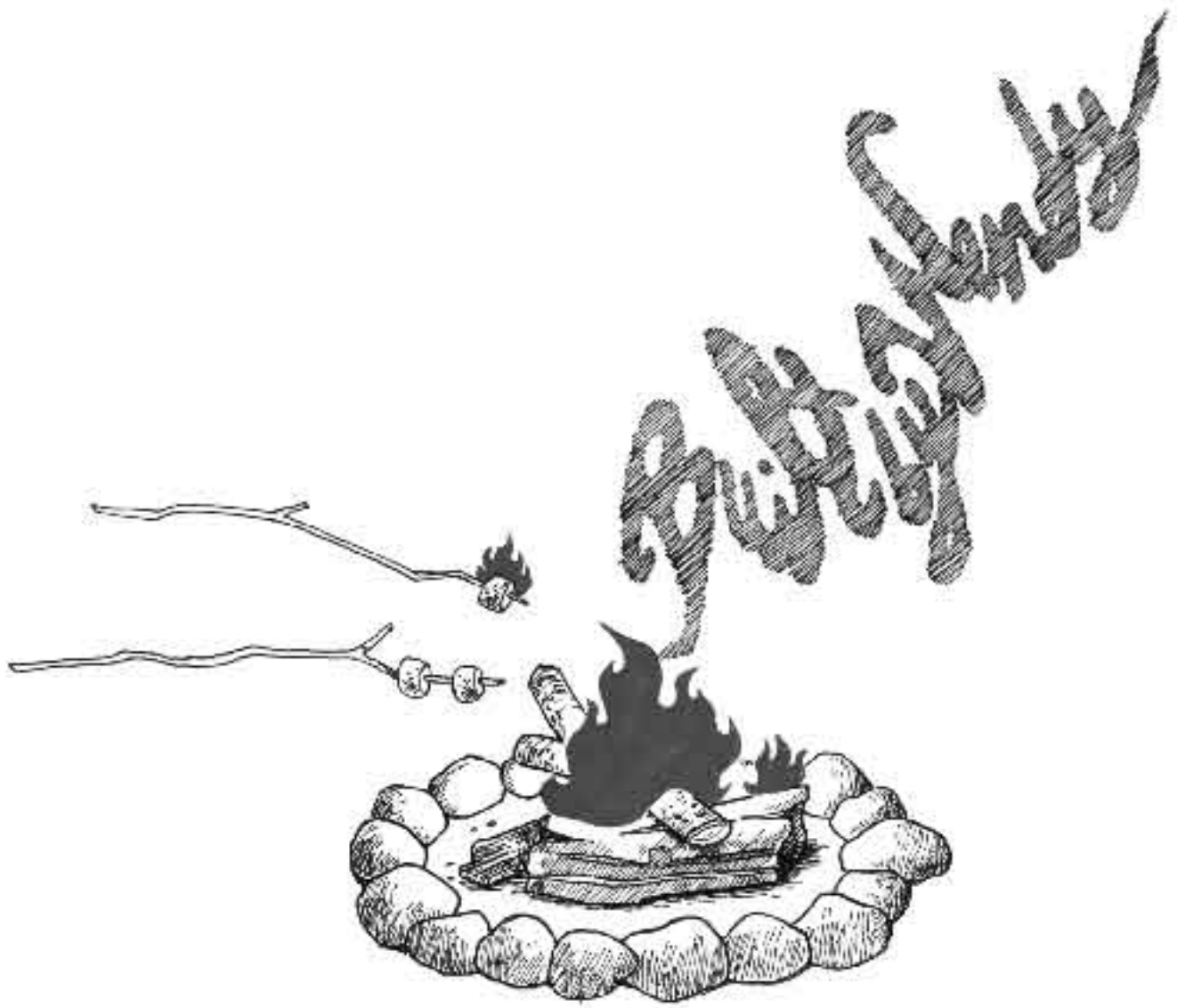
So, you found yourself adjusting to whatever the audience was giving you? For instance, if they were mumbling and what not, you'd step up your playing?

Matt: For me playing in bands, I always feel ... pissed off when I'm on stage. Like I look at people and I think, what are you doing here? It's sort of a hegemonic attitude. It's really a defense mechanism because I'm nervous. When you're nervous you get agitated. For me, it's more of a reaction to what I think Eleanor is good at doing, or what she has that's different. It's a loud rock band, and she can pull it off, yet she's not pouring beer on herself or jumping around, and she's



They are the sign of the fish. Fish travel in large groups, called "schools," but you hate school, which makes you an unusual fish: a romantic, loner, James Dean-style fish. Part of a new "me generation" in the fish world, wary of social conventions such as getting a job and playing and gill use—and engaged in individual freedom. It's a very American outlook and one which many in the fish world resent. They see your insistent individuality as selfish and bad for the survival of the species, especially if you represent a turning point in evolution. You, on the other hand, see them as conformist drones, bound by stifling tradition. Make a graceful gesture toward them to allay their fear; tell them you haven't given up on school altogether, you're just taking a year off to find yourself.

Well your forebears before you
all seemed equally confused;
Sun Ra wore a dress
Nancy Sinatra wore those boots
Ray Davies sang about "Lola";
autobiographically?
McCartney mistook his major
for a suffragette lady
Morrissey swore celibacy
Jane Wiedlin kept lips sealed
but your 'Prince-ly' hermaphroditic
natures
cannot be concealed



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Cancer

The crab announces its gender on its chest through a particular design emblazoned on its shell. As a Cancer, you similarly announce your gender through your hairstyle and choice of clothes, even through your manner and affections. In so-called Western culture, respective gender differences are highly exaggerated through style and prescribed social behavior so as to accentuate sexual contrast. If you're a woman Cancer for example, sometimes you'll wear a skirt or a brassiere. What's the deal with that? Are you some kind of floozy?



Leo

The gazelles which you normally feast upon are getting scarce. They've all moved into a group house and just play video games, never going out anymore. You've heard that they think you're a jerk and you must admit, it's not a completely unfounded idea. It's a depressing development since it probably means your ultimate starvation. Maybe you should move to Portland and start a band.



Virgo

While perhaps you're not technically a virgin, your spiritual "maidenhead" is intact, meaning that you've never let your pretense of purity be trampled underfoot by the hordes of lecherous hucksters. You are the unsullied ambassador of your aesthetic ideal. This is why the various witch doctors are so intent on dragging you to the mouth of the volcano and spilling your blood for their various deities. In an age when Faust can't get a large french fries in hock for his soul, you are still a coup! Of course, nowadays there aren't deities per se. There is only one god and his name is Moolah. The high priests are agents, ad execs, bankers et al. whose might is represented by their ability to read and bend the ideological and the artistic vision...they want you in their bed! Resist their humping postulations at all costs! Or at least hold out for "total creative control."



Libra

Astrologers typically discriminate against one sign or another, using the forum to promulgate their own biases toward certain signs and the people who inhabit them. This is an absolutely unprofessional approach, as an astrology column should never be used to serve a single individual's sicko agenda. All the star signs must be dealt with according to a scientific reading of the stars and a quick survey of animal entrails. Many astrologers particularly dislike Libras, who are such self-righteous, status-seeking jerks. Then there is the other kind of Libra who tends to be more like a pile of moss, just totally weird. Oh, and also Libras steal A Libra stole my bicycle once. Maybe one day you'll find an astrologer who is inclined toward your sign and who won't put you through that kind of discrimination.

Die History

SECRETLY CANADIAN

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WORD OF MOUTH: WE DEFEND ON IT

MANISHEVITZ
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A bunch of misanthropic, their hardest to make electro-wise music but they got it. Showing, showing, showing and meaning to show, they have created a pop record that will be there.

OKKERVIL RIVER
Down The River Of Goshaw, Down The River Of Goshaw CD
Okkervil River's new full-length album is a masterpiece of indie rock, pop, and indie rock, but it also evokes the same sense of Dylan's Blood On The Walls and the dusty balladry of Nick Cave.

ASPERA
On Paradise CD
The music is so good, it's like a bunch of sounds like nothing else. Epic '80s pop production, better than any other, and it's all in the name of a new kind of music, one that is not just a new kind of music, but a new kind of music.

SPCKANE
Abandonment CD
OUT NOW! Spckane is not for people who want to be like a rock star. Spckane is for people who want to be like a rock star.

ONLIDA
Goshaw, Down The River Of Goshaw CD
Down The River Of Goshaw is a new kind of music, one that is not just a new kind of music, but a new kind of music.

RICHARD YOUNGS
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BROTHER FROM THIS PLANET

"A good myth or poem ... addresses our appetitive anarchies, and offers safe conduct to some life-enhancing energy by giving it a name; and a bad one does the opposite, 'binding with briars my joys and desires.' But in the absence of an authoritative myth or poem, the lights simply go out and the soul is closed down: no name, no game. In other words, we have to play; and if we refuse, our robotic bodies are simply wired up by this week's television commercials."

—Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War, Dudley Young

Not to get too evangelical—although given his name and interests, perhaps some fervor is only appropriate—but both the prodigious output and the career-shape of the man they call Brother JT offers just the type of myths and poems, in song and words and drawings and deed, that Mr. Young is yapping about here.

Listen to the beautiful smeared mess—homemade and lush and voluptuous—that is *Maybe Should We Take Some More?*, one of the two albums JT released in 2001: noise-covered melodic pop; flute-and-tambourine folk; pastoral instrumental epics; dubspace recorders self-replicating into Jajouka horns; Hendrix jamming in Bombay with street musicians, remixed by Cabaret Voltaire; and so on. And that's just one album—there are many more where that came from (see David Katznelson's enlightening sidebar on page 14). This is boundary-dissolving, spirit-ennobling music: aural stuff that can help you as you hang out in back in the garden of your mind. Or something.

BROTHER JT was born John Terleskey in 1962 in Easton, Pennsylvania. Starting in the mid-'80s Terleskey lead The Original Sins, whose mission, he notes on his website, was to "merge pop and garage/punk, taking inspiration from the Lyres, Buzzcocks, Stooges, and that whole 'Paisley Underground' thing from the early '80s." The Sins continued to record albums through the '90s, but beginning in the early part of that decade, Terleskey began releasing solo records under the "Brother JT" moniker. ("Brother JT" is a nickname given to him by underground journo/advocate (and now-*Arthur* columnist) Byron Coley after hearing JT's *Descent*, which, JT says, was "kind of my version of Coltrane's *Ascension*, only it was supposed to be Jesus descending into hell while he was dead and freeing the saints or something. And side two, 'Kabbalah,' was pretty much an acid Gregorian chant with just voices. I think he felt the music sounded like the work of some twisted monk or something ... [It] just kind of stuck.")

On the phone from Easton (where he's living again after a 12-year-interim in nearby Bethlehem), JT is soft-spoken, funny, precise and open, with a disarmingly humble matter-of-factness; when I ask him how he's managed to put food on the table through all these years of limited commercial success as a musician, he mentions one of his favorite jobs: "I drove a newspaper delivery truck in the afternoons, throwing bundles out for kids A lot of songs came out of that route." Of course: Brother JT delivers.

I opened our conversation with some remarks about *That's Life*, a set of harrowing spoken-word (the Brother had to rap!) pieces JT recorded sometime in the early '90s that could be described as Bitter Surrealist. They're stamped with the same inventive, humorous spirit that marks all of JT's work, but these rants' bad-trip, freaked-out disgust seem miles away from the more, shall we say, positive outlook of his more recent albums...

Hallucinogens, Ukrainian Catholicism, NASCAR town alienation, the Tao De Ching and the Beatles helped make **Brother JT** the homegrown musical genius he is. Jay Babcock interviews America's least-known national treasure.

Arthur: You sound so angry on that spoken word CD.

Brother JT: I was probably a lot more angry then than I am now. When you're younger you have this block that makes you think that there's just no hope at all—basically you keep going but you always just think you're practically at the verge of something or other. A lot of the early stuff that I did was a purging of sorts. What I didn't know then was that things might work out okay. [chuckles] Not that they have per se, but they have worked out better than I thought they would.

I wrote them in a fever of ... automatic writing, trying to get some sort of a subconscious thing going and connect with what I *thought* might be my subconscious. But you really don't know—there's a lot of things going around there all the time. Usually you edit your thoughts. In this case I just tried to let it spill out, and that was the result. Those were done on a mic in my room in Bethlehem, trying to do 'em without any breaks. If I tried to do a spoken word thing now, it would be a lot more soooooothing, make it a little more positive, and not just *drop* this on people.

Why? Somewhere, probably around the mid-'90s, I started thinking that whatever creative process I do, I'd better try to think in a little more positive way, because a lot of the songs that I had written with a negative tone had sort of come true! [chuckles] I felt like it sort of comes back on you, or it's a self-fulfilling prophecy, or something. And also, just getting older, you feel like you've got all this off your chest. You've been doing it for 10 years—10 years is enough for expurgating all these demons—you should be out of demons by now. I'm not, but I do feel more of a responsibility to try to make some things of beauty too, and not just all this catharsis.

There's all these religious references in your work: your band was called the Original Sins, you have these kitschy photos on your covers of religious iconography and roadside graphics and so on. Yet it's obviously not completely a wink, or scornful—

there's a huge spiritual element in your work. And you lived in a town called Bethlehem for 12 years. What exactly is your religious background?

I was raised Ukranian Catholic which is very close to being Eastern Catholic but not quite. It's still under the Pope. It's the next best thing to being a Byzantine or whatever. I went to catechism, and had holy communion. I went to church up to my early teens and then it just fell away. But, as I'm sure a lot of younger people experience, it stays with you—maybe moreso than if you were Protestant or something, where it's not such a big deal and there's not so much ceremony involved and not so much attention paid to this kind of mystery thing going on. Which always appealed to me.

Over the years I've gone back and forth between thinking that there might be something to this and thinking Well, no, I doubt it. Somewhere along the way I consciously decided, "There's gotta be something more. There's gotta be a little more to this than just happenstance." I think I forced myself to start thinking along the lines of spirituality, if only to enrich my life. My upbringing definitely played a role in all that. The Masses are ingrained in me from when I was a kid: there was a lot of incense, a lot of droning kind of hymns in Ukrainian. It was spooky. Very spooky. And when that gets in you when you're a kid, you don't ever really dispose of it. The Christ story is there in you, almost like a universal archetype. So it gets to be where you don't know whether it's really something real or if it's just inculcated in you to that extent, that it has become a reality of belief, or faith.

Your records and writings are rants are pretty open about your interest in hallucinogenic drugs. Did they play a role in this spiritual opening up you're talking about?

Yeah, but I think just sort of getting through life teaches a lot of things about the possibilities. Just things that happen where you would have to say, There's gotta be a point to this because why else did these things happen. There seems to be some kind of scheme, one that anyone could see, something where most people would say, There's a lesson



Illustrations on this and the following pages are excerpted from *The Big Picture* by Brother JT (1999).



to be learned here. But yeah, hallucinogenics were kind of an opening back open of a door that I'd shut during my teenage years. I was a very straight teenager and really only got into hallucinogens in my early 20s. It had a profound effect: something similar to flipping a switch in your brain that had been switched to "off" onto "on." You know, thinking, "Geez, no wonder all this stuff is the way it is." A lot of people these days probably don't even need it. But for me, given the upbringing I had ... [chuckles] I came up in the '70s, you know? Which, to me, like having layers of brown and orange gauze taped over my head. I remember being completely clueless as a kid and a teenager and *this* was a big revelation. Whereas I think maybe kids these days are just sorta like "Eh, so what." Or that they already know, and they don't need any help in knowing that there is sort of a oneness in things. It's not so much of a revelation. Maybe it's just bred into them now. I hope so! I I really do sense that there's evolution taking place—I don't know in exactly which direction: outward, or inward, or what. But people do seem a little different than when I started out in my observations.

I was the last of four children, and I was significantly younger than the others. It was almost like being an only child, to an extent, because by the time I was coherent they were pretty much out of the house. My parents were both 39 years older than me when I was born. There's a major gap there. They were great people, my mom's a great person, and so was my dad, but there were certain things they just couldn't relate to, and certain things I couldn't relate to with them. So there was a certain amount of alienation from the start. I probably had a pretty good intelligence as a kid. I did pretty well in school, but I think as a result of being kind of in my own world a lot of the time, I became alienated from everything. I can't say I had a terrible childhood or anything but I just missed out on a lot of it because I was so withdrawn. When that happens I suppose it just builds up in you like wondering what all this stuff is about that other people are doing. [chuckles] As I said, the '70s had built up a lot of frustration in me. It's like American society was in its teenage years then too: People didn't really know what was going on. They were getting all these shocks from Watergate and Vietnam and so on, which resulted in this slightly off-kilter, out-of-control culture. I think it's finally kind of righted itself to an extent. It's a lot more sophisticated these days. I don't envy kids these days, certainly not—in a way, I probably had it a lot easier, but... Also, I never developed this easiness with people that I see in a lot of people. If you're like that, you get left out of a lot of things. And that probably built up a good deal of frustration which eventually came out via music.

How did you end up doing music with a band—making records, performing in front of an audience and so on—if you were so lonely and alienated?

My brother Greg, the next youngest, showed me some bar chords on the guitar when I was about 15 and I just kinda fell in love with certain kinds of music. I was big into the Beatles when I was a kid. And instead of going to college, I went to a school for audio engineering. I'd started to write some songs by then, it was just the year out of high school, and one of the projects was you had to record songs. I thought, "Well, I might as well do one of mine." It showed me that gee, I can do this. It wasn't that hard. But it took me a few years to get up enough contacts or whatever to actually get into a working, or a group. It was like '83 or '84 when I started playing bass in some minor groups and eventually switched to guitar again.

It was just a process. Music had always been around. I remember my brothers getting Beatles albums when they came out in the late '60s, I was only 6 or 7 maybe, but I still remember listening to *The White Album* and just being

A WITNESSING

David Katznelson guides us thru Brother JT's vast and beguiling career.

For the past 20 years Brother JT has made records that exemplify the “freeness” and dark-green/blood-red hazy warmth of true psychedelia. As a songwriter, he is so proficient that no one takes notice; as a guitar player, he subtly outshines any slinger around (besides the Cheaterslicks’ Dave Shannon) with riffs, leads and solos that are consistently bewildering; as a rock star...well, he was just born for the job, regardless if anyone ever figures it out. He writes one–liner bits of philosophy that are as memorable as those of Yogi Berra, H. L. Mencken, or Will Rogers. JT is, in short, the most hidden of greatest treasures.

I have been a big fan of the music and vision of Brother JT since first hearing his mind–altering tour de force **Meshes In the Afternoon** in the early ‘90s. As I am prone to do, I have since collected his entire output ... carrying my fanaticism so far as to release a record of his on my own label. If you are able to find a Brother JT record in a store–and it can be difficult (see bottom of page for record–location people who can help you)–know that it will most certainly do all the things you assume it will do: it will move you, it will rock you and it will uplift you. You will be swept away to a cloudy island where ideologies of a time long past are channeled through a devout soul whose musical prowess and ability to create a perfect melody welcome all and conquer all.

The following spew examines the mind-blowing, intolerably underappreciated recorded output of Brother JT. Please note that it does not include the great recordings of his band The Original Sins, who deserve their own, separate celebration.

Descent

Brother JT
(1991, Twisted Village)
JT's solo debut was a standard-setter for the mighty Twisted Village label and a good launching place for our now-Original Sins-less psychedelic hero. Beautifully packaged in a Folkways-meets-Impulse handmade black-and-white homage to John Coltrane's **Ascension**, this platter features two sidelong drones. The Spacemen 3 called such constructions “ecstasy symphonies,” but these two are dirtier and much less calm inducing.

Meshes In the Afternoon

Brother JT
(1992, Twisted Village)
A masterpiece of stream-of-consciousness psyc. **Meshes** consists of one piece spread over two sides, with haunting yet hopeful songs coming in and out of the fuzz. “In The Afternoon” is a particular favorite, with a resolution that brings the whole record to a magnificent finale. Similar to the brilliance of Bill Holt's **Dreamies**, **Meshes In The Afternoon** sees JT fusing his garage pop know-how (always present in the Original Sins) with basement chemicals to create the warm, buzzing sound that would become his trademark. An essential artistic presentation.

“Ice Cream Cone/Moon Pie” 7-inch single

Crush Nova
(1993, Mind Cure)
The year after **Meshes** was rather quiet for Bro JT, with the exception of a few releases under different names. The best of these is this single, a tour-de-force homage to JT's favorite treats and a showcase for JT's pop-garage flavors.

Vibrolux

Brother JT
(1994, Bedlam)
The first of JT's beautiful vinyl-only homemade silk-screened releases. These introduce the basement-recording, song-oriented era of Brother JT hinted at within the mesh of **Meshes**. Side A is full-on stand alone hits, with “Time Was (...but now it isn't)” the in-house chart-topping classic of swirly guitar vibrations and ghost like vocals. The second side is a returns to long-jam land (and what a good place it is to re-visit).

Holy Ghost Stories

Brother JT
(1994, Bedlam)
Number two in the homemade recordings series is a strange look into Brother JT's acid-tinged, almost child-like obsessions. Songs like “From the Throne” examine that particular bodily function which infants first appreciate and soon become proud of. **Holy Ghost Stories** may not be a great place to start listening to Bro JT, but it does give the fan positive insight into the workings of JT's imagination. And once again, the silk-screen cover is beautiful.

Music for the Other Head

Brother JT and Vibrolux
(1995, Siltbreeze)
The cover looks as though it might be a Bedlam release, but it is actually a release from one of the classic underground labels in America, Siltbreeze. The first side of this platter, entitled “The Comet,” is epic: as Fuzzhead did with their rendition of Can's “You Do Right,” JT and Vibrolux infectiously repeat the song's grooves while JT proclaims that “The comet will come.” Mind (rot), on Side Two, contains the classic JTsism, “I don't mind if you get out of your mind, do you mind if I get out of mine?” This record is groove-driven heaviness with long jams and lots of repetition. Bliss. Somewhere on Side Two, there's even a piece of “Fortune Teller,” a song that was covered by all bands that mattered in England in the late-'60s.

thoroughly entranced by this stuff, like “this is the only group in the world,” and “they make the only music in the world.” It's a very good album for kids, actually. There's a lot of good stuff for kids there, and also a lot of scary stuff. That probably had a [chuckles] profound effect on me too, mind-wise. But you never moved to a bigger town to try and get your music career going. I never did have any desire to move to a city even if it would have made more sense because it would have been so much more expensive. We could pretty much go there for the shows, anyway. There were a whole lot of showcase shows in New York. Nothing really came of it. But we went through that mill and eventually just gave up trying. I was in Bethlehem that whole time. People in the group had lives too, y'know. It was never like a real working band. It was an unusual situation, dictated probably by my own lack of ambition. [chuckles] But not lack of ambition to write songs. Just lack of ambition to do the things necessary in order to make it a working band.

So where you live, is it rural or ...? I'm living in the heart of NASCAR country. We've got a speedway in Nazareth. That's where Mario Andretti lives. It's kind of that sensibility. [chuckles] It's that kind of area: it's an older area, people know what they like, and are a little bit set in their ways, probably. It's pretty alienating, but ... Maybe to understand why I never moved away, it would help for me to

explain my character... I go where the wind blows, you know? And basically it's just not very windy. [chuckles] It has not been a very windy life for me. I read all the existentialist stuff in high school and it seemed like kind of a dead end. I was really looking for something that made sense to me. I got this Alan Watts translation, this Tao De Ching thing. I lapped that right up, cuz I was already pretty lazy. It said “The best good is to flow like water” or something like that, and to NOT try to make things happen, but just to let things happen to you, to become part of things and all that. And that's really been my guiding ... anti-philosophy. It was the one thing that really made sense to me. As a practical guiding premise for the way I've led my life, that probably was pretty instrumental. Not to say I'm a Taoist, or I take it really seriously, but just to develop into that kind of being was something I probably was interested in doing.

As a result, it's sort of like, if somebody HAD called me up and said, and even today, “You have an opportunity to live in Madagascar at a parrot plantation, you have to feed the parrots, that's your job.” I'd probably do it. [chuckles] I am a completely passive type of a guy. I'd say, “Well okay, sure.” But as it is, no one ever gave me the opportunity, and nothing ever really came up to say, “Well, why don't you join our band out here in Portland or something or Florida” or whatever, so I just kinda stuck, waiting for the universe to move me, rather than me moving the universe.

But you still say in NASCAR territory. It's not aggravating, alienating enough to move?

Well, it gets a bit much sometimes but really I'm not sure where I'd fit in. [chuckles] I really don't know. I've never fit into any group. I never felt particularly at home anywhere that I've visited, and thought, Gee I could really see myself living here, moreso than where I live. That's another thing about that, it's like saying it really doesn't matter where you are, it's where your mind is. I'm not sure what the exact phrase is. That probably partly somehow explains it.

The cover for your new record is a close-up of a crucifix. And the title is Hang in There, Baby.

I hope people don't take that the wrong way. It'd be very easy to think, “Oh he's being a wiseguy saying to Jesus, ‘Hang in there, baby.’” But it's more like me saying—to everybody—including him—to just hang in there and not... It was like a lot of the album covers I ended up with: the image came first and then the title. I saw that photo and I thought, “I gotta use it,” and then it occurred to me that would be a good hook there. If you hear the music, I think you'd know that that [denigrating Christ] is not where I'm coming from. On the back, there's a guy we saw in Austin when we were there driving through town on Good Friday and the guy evidently wheels along this cross probably every Good Friday. I don't know how far he was going, but ... It just seemed to fit in.

You used a title from Maya Deren's Meshes of the Afternoon for one of your albums. Are you a fan of her work?

I didn't even see *Meshes of the Afternoon*, til after I had used the title. [chuckles] I'd seen the title and a still from the film, of Maya looking out the window, in a book about avant garde film that I'd been reading. I had no idea what it was

about but it just struck me, so I made up in my mind what it would be about. [chuckles] I liked the title.

Maybe We Should Take Some More is like a survey of different kinds of psychedelic music from around the world. There are parts on it that remind me of the Jajouka musicians from Morocco, and so on. Are you familiar with that stuff?

Oh yeah. That and parts of this other record I did called *Holy Ghost Stories* back in the mid-'90s were sort of an attempt at making the suburban middle-class equivalent of bush folk recordings. Just trying to get that spirit into it. I had this album, just incredible stuff, called *The Secret Museum of Mankind*, that had an influence to an extent, cuz these pieces were all real short and crudely recorded, but they'd really got something down there. This was from the '30s and '40s. Just incredible things, incredible sounds.

What are you listening to right now?

Usually I listen more to stuff in my car. Right now I've got a tape of Lee Perry, a tape of fairly obscure ska reggae stuff, dub stuff ... and also I made a tape of recent hip-hop stuff that I listen to a lot, the more progressive stuff like KAOS and Outkast and Ol' Dirty Bastard. The stuff where you can tell there's some brains behind it. All the other stuff I have no interest in. That stuff really moves me. It's touching to see people literally trying to turn a culture around with music. I think that's wonderful. So much music is for nothing, you know? Just to make money.

To me that's the only stuff currently going on that seems like it's moving anywhere, to be blunt. It's not just those artists, cuz I don't know enough about it to really speak like ... But as far as futuristic music, stuff that I think where music probably should be going by now, a lot of that hip-hop stuff seems like the way. Maybe even moreso than techno, which WISHES it was that.

And there's probably a Neil Young tape in the car, too.

If someone unfamiliar with your thing showed up at a Brother JT3 gig, what would it seem like to them?

If you're talking about the full-band thing, usually in the last couple of years I've ended up having four people. Another guitarist, usually, one of the two guys that are featured on *Hang in There Baby*. Some people would think

I go where the wind blows,you know?
And basically it's just not very windy.

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GREG ASHLEY
Medicine Fuck Dream
"Homemade colorful bliss from a new
major American songwriter. Check back
brighten and Syd Barrett"



Rainy Day Fun

Brother JT
(1995, Drunken Fish)
The masterpiece of Brother JT's basement era, with solid songwriting throughout. The album opens with the fragile "Is It Soup Yet?," boasting backwards guitars and poignant narration. The sequence shown on the CD itself is wrong, so I'm uncertain if the next song is the reported "This Is The Life" or if it is the one after. Regardless, the first is a groovy pop ditty while the second is a sing-along smile of a track that makes ya wanna shimmy. "Beginning To Smile" is another classic ... one to sing to your girlfriend while embracing in a field of poppies (lyrics: "Have another hit, and then lets get down to it"), "Oh Mother" is JT-going-T. Rex with grinding guitar leads and confident vocals surfing the electric waves. "Slowly" is a great re-make of a song that appeared earlier on an obscure seven inch. The electric guitar is all swirls on this solid, loveable record. A classic.



Doomsday Rock

Brother JT and Vibrolux
(1996, Siltbreeze)
Originally released as a Bedlam artifact LP with silk-screen cover; Siltbreeze provides the digital issue with completely new artwork. **Doomsday Rock** is a thoroughly entertaining mind warp with epic grooves and brain damaging soundscapes. Doomsday is here, and JT gets political with his prophetic preview, "The President's Brain Is Missing." "You can stop the clock," he teaches on "Planet June"; "Now you're gonna die," he promises on the heavy "Grok." Guitar solos on top of guitar solos ("In Her Space", "Infinity") weave the heaviest of Rye to fall through (and not be saved). A rockin' good time.

Come On Down

Brother JT
(1996, Drunken Fish)
A melancholy, trapped trip of a record with somber, very fatalistic lyrics, the very minimalist **Come On Down** is composed mostly of tremolo guitar, wah-ed out lazy bass, an electronic mosquito and JT's light, effected vocals. "Try Not To Try" and "Red Cathedral" are very laid back, almost Smog-like, sing-a-longs. The between song banter ("It Keeps Raining," for instance) is laced with mind-altered collegian philosophy that pales to the righteous one-liners that often appear in JT's music. **Come On Down's** highlight is the closer "Little Man," a stripped-down post-Syd-Pink Floyd-era whimsical toe tapper. An oblique release.

Dosed and Confused

Brother JT and Vibrolux
(1998, Bedlam)
Music for the Other Head-era concert recording, JT's version of **Live At Leeds**, with extended heavily-rocked up versions of songs you have come to know and love, some incorporated into medleys a la "My Generation." "The Comet" comes alive on this offering. As a live act, when Brother JT is **on**, the souls of Rob Tyner and Jimi Hendrix are called to order. A heavy motherfuckin' ram job of a rock record.

Way To Go

Brother JT3
(1999, Drag City)
The first of JT's Drag City releases, produced by Royal Trux, is an all-out rocker with a good dose of JT as guitar god. But Way to Go! lacks the intimacy of JT's previous releases; it often sounds more like a JT-fronting-the-Trux record than a Bro JT3 record. That said, the title track alone is a monster and worth the price of admission.

Maybe We Should Take Some More

Brother JT
(2002, Birdman)
A Brother JT record on my own label. While I don't think it's as cohesive as, say, **Rainy Day Fun**, there are many fine JT moments here. "SOS" (Son Of Sam) is a beautifully sparse track about the serial killer (among other things). "Whatcha Gonna Do" has inventive frog-belching responses and air-guitar-inviting riffs. The groover "Lay It On" lays down a killer bass line while JT asks "Baby, won't you lay some light on me?" But it is "Honeysuckle" that is the jewel amongst this CD's jewels: a wonderful Sunday morning favorite that sounds like a sun rising and naked lovers stretching. **Maybe We Should Take Some More** is a strong outing in the basement/bedroom recording category of Brother JT's thang.

Spirituals

Brother JT3
(2002, Drag City)
Released a few months after **Maybe...**, **Spirituals** nicely displays the other side of JT. This time, the Hagerty (Royal Trux)-producer/JT-performer team clicks and the resultant platter has the rock (as you would want JT to rock) as well as the detail of his basement recordings. Some of these songs, such as "Be With Us" and "Summer," were originally presented as simpler tracks for **Maybe**, but JT rightfully wanted to flesh them out in the studio. "Mellow," my favorite track on the record, has that signature recorder sound, biting into the memory of all that were blowing it in elementary school. The "Mellow" vibe is reminiscent of the Ophelias' opus "Mr. Rabbit," with a chorus that is shower-singable and a frolicking groove that induces buffalo chasing. "Lord You Are The Wine" is a top-notch rocker, and the traditional song "Mole In The Ground" is a perfectly arranged head-bobber culminating with a trance-inducing, let's-all-speak-in -tongues musical freak-out...and get a load of that killer slide-guitar action! Really strong stuff.

Hang In There, Baby

Brother JT3
(2003, Drag City)
Possibly one of JT's finest moments and the definite highlight of his Drag City work. Just listening to the catchy psych-pop brilliance of "Gettin' There." "Lets Not And Say We Did" showcases the soul-stirring aspect of JT's voice, presenting a depth that is uncommon in JT's ouevre. Strong all the way through, **Hang's** highlights include "Shine Like Me" ("Went to the mountain...the mountain in my mind") which is a guitar-led flying rocker and "Head Business," wherein we get yet another classic Brother JT line: "What I do with my head is my own damn business/CAN I GET A WITNESS?!" What kind of witness is he looking for? Dunno, but **Hang In There** is probably the best place to start listening to Brother JT. Everything is here: great songs, amazing layer-upon-layer psychedelic guitar mayhem, and lyrics that will stick in your head like powerful propaganda.



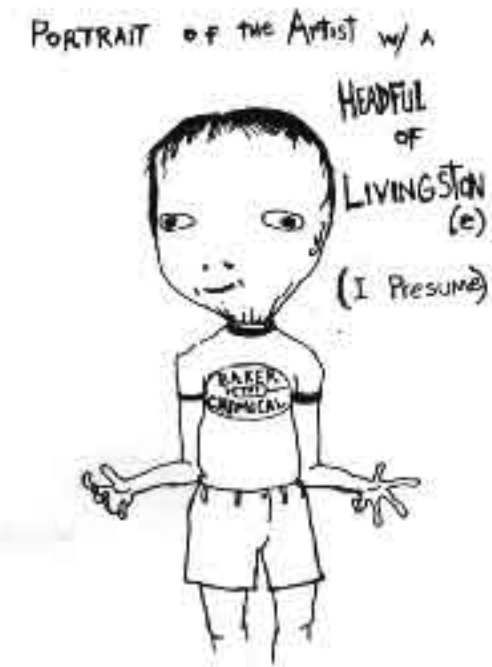
Where to find Brother JT's recordings:
Your local mom-and-pop record store will most likely have the Drag City releases, and maybe even the Birdman and Siltbreeze releases. But Brother JT's catalog is generally not well stocked. Here are some places where one can get most of the Brother JT offerings reviewed here:
Revolver Mail-order Website: www.midheaven.com
Aquarius Records: www.aquariusrecords.org
Brother JT himself, whose site offers many amazing exclusive musical items: www.brotherjtfreeservers.com

it's kinda jammy—you know, there's really rudimentary songs, basic chords, raw-sounding, and there's this guy up front, he's kinda pudgy and he's got kinda straight hair, he looks like he's been drinking, maybe. [Babcock laughs] He'll start playing guitar or singing. The one thing that stands out probably is just how much I *try*. [chuckles] Maybe more so than is fashionable at this point. I really try to put it out there, either singing or guitar-wise. Usually it's just three-chord songs, the songs are usually something to do with some kind of spiritual concern, and we just get into some two-guitar freak-out thing while bass and drums are bashing away. You get into interesting things. It's not like a jam group doing a blues jam, it's more like trying to find holes in the sound and trying to go against rhythm, soloing, and get it... trying to get close in our own half-assed way to some kind of jazz thing. Like free jazz. *If* it's a good night. [laughs] There have been some really beautiful nights over the last couple of years but it's sorta like what mood's the lead singer's in, you know? [chuckles] It's lightning in a bottle. There have been great, great nights. Usually I'd start with an a capella version of some old folk song and then kind of work our way into ... People would probably recognize a garage

element that's always been in my music. But also heavy psych via these very loud screaming guitars. **You've been doing a traditional folk song or two on each of your recent albums. Is that a recent interest?** It's more recent. I used to know some old particularly blues things, I was always into acoustic blues. But more recently, I think when I was out west back in '98, somebody let me borrow the *Harry Smith Smithsonian Anthology* that had a lot of these songs, particularly the ones that I did, or re-did. It struck me that this was a way that maybe the songs could be realized in a different way. Not taking anything away from the wonderful originals, just like ... If you're gonna do a cover, you might as well bring something to it, and I thought I could do something. They suggested themselves to me that way, heavy guitar for some reason.

There's songs on that *Anthology* that when I hear them, or when I *sing* them, I *still* get chills down my back. I *know* there must be something about those songs. I think it is a connection back to something we lost contact with through all this crap that we've surrounded ourselves with. Those people didn't have anything back then. They were probably surrounded by all this mystery that to them was probably de rigeur, you know? It's a wonderful thing. I think there's not much mystery left in the world, and these people seemed to be kind of hooked into it. **They were confronting, or dealing with, the Mystery in those songs, whereas we're sort of distracted from it.** I think somewhere along the way people got angry at this Mystery, or whatever you wanna call it—this other-ness of the world—and just decided to content themselves with worldly things. This society really plays that up, makes it a very seductive thing to just be eaten up by all that. And yet when you dip back into that well, it's unmistakable that there's something there. And it's a valuable thing, I think.

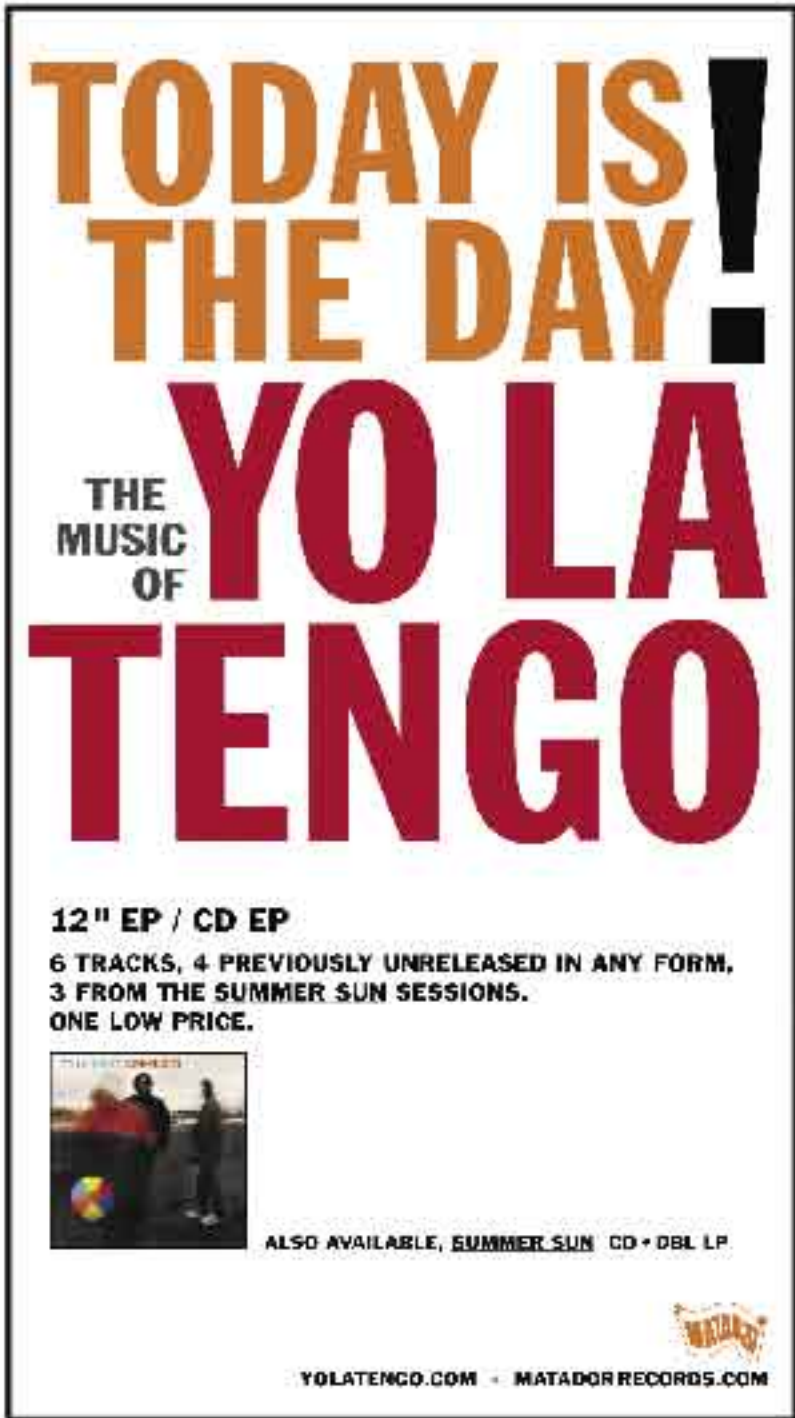
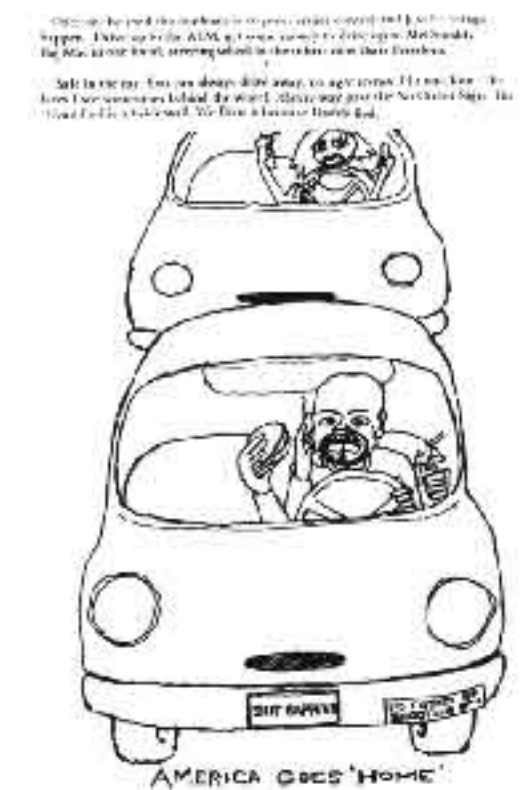
That's just one way. That music is just one way. There's a lot of great music and great things that can take you back into



I think somewhere along the way people got angry at this Mystery, or whatever you wanna call it—this other-ness of the world—and just decided to content themselves with worldly things.

that Possibility that people have ruled out for so long. I wish I could make something as good. [chuckles] That's one what I'm shooting for eventually. It probably will just take a long time but at least it's to have something to look forward to.

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scorpio

Everyone knows the legend of the frog and the scorpion. After the frog kindly gave you a ride across the water, you repaid him by striking him with your stinger! While he deteriorated, you explained that this was simply "your nature." Everyone thinks you're a real stinker for this incident, but perhaps they should think about things from your perspective. The frog always had it pretty good, with those big eyes and luscious lips. He sat on his picturesque lily pad, had amphibian powers and a versatile tongue. Every human child studied his progeny, the miraculous tadpole. Bards such as Three Dog Night and Burl Ives sang his praises in hit compositions. He was a legend. You, in the meantime, weren't even born with a face. Perhaps the frog's "kindy" gesture was really intended to show off his ability in regards to your limitations. Perhaps he forgot that, even if you can't hop or swim or catch flies with your (nonexistent) tongue, you do have a pretty cool stinger. Perhaps he deserved everything he got.



sagittarius

ACT I SCENE I
Stage is dark, trees and lichen betray an ancient and primal forest. The sound of flutes emanates from stage left, giving way to the sound of hooves. Two centaurs center to the center of the stage. Sagittarius 1: We are despaired for our lower nudity and our interminable rutting. Sagittarius 2: Aye, but 'tis not our fault! The design of pants does not extend itself to our form. St: So we are accursed to roam pantsless forever? Outside of society? S2: Aye. 'Tis our destiny. St: Then curse be on those who wear pants everywhere: the closet freaks and moral arbiters who leave us a wandering, trouserless people! Exit stage right.
Stage Dark, curtains down

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Reviews by
C & D

Unicorns:
Who Will Cut Our Hair When We're Gone? (Alien8)
C: Who?
D: Who's that?
C: Who, Sir, or will cut the Unicorns' hair when they're gone?
D: Ah, yes.
C: You don't really care, do you?
D: Can't say that I do, no, not really. These guys are wacky.
C: Sub-Ween wacky pop.
D: He's a sucking stoner.
C: Queasy synthesizers.
D: A Replexist artist goes Dr. Demento.
C: [puzzled]
D: [sighs] I'm hearing someone you're not interested in taking drugs. Boring drugs.
C: Maybe too much Fighting Lips for them.
D: There's some talent here—"Child Star" sounds like a Radiohead parody....
C: You know, it's not easy pop and comic relief.
D: There's what? This is the what? It's not one of my cups of tea.
C: And you have a lot of China.
D: I feel I do.

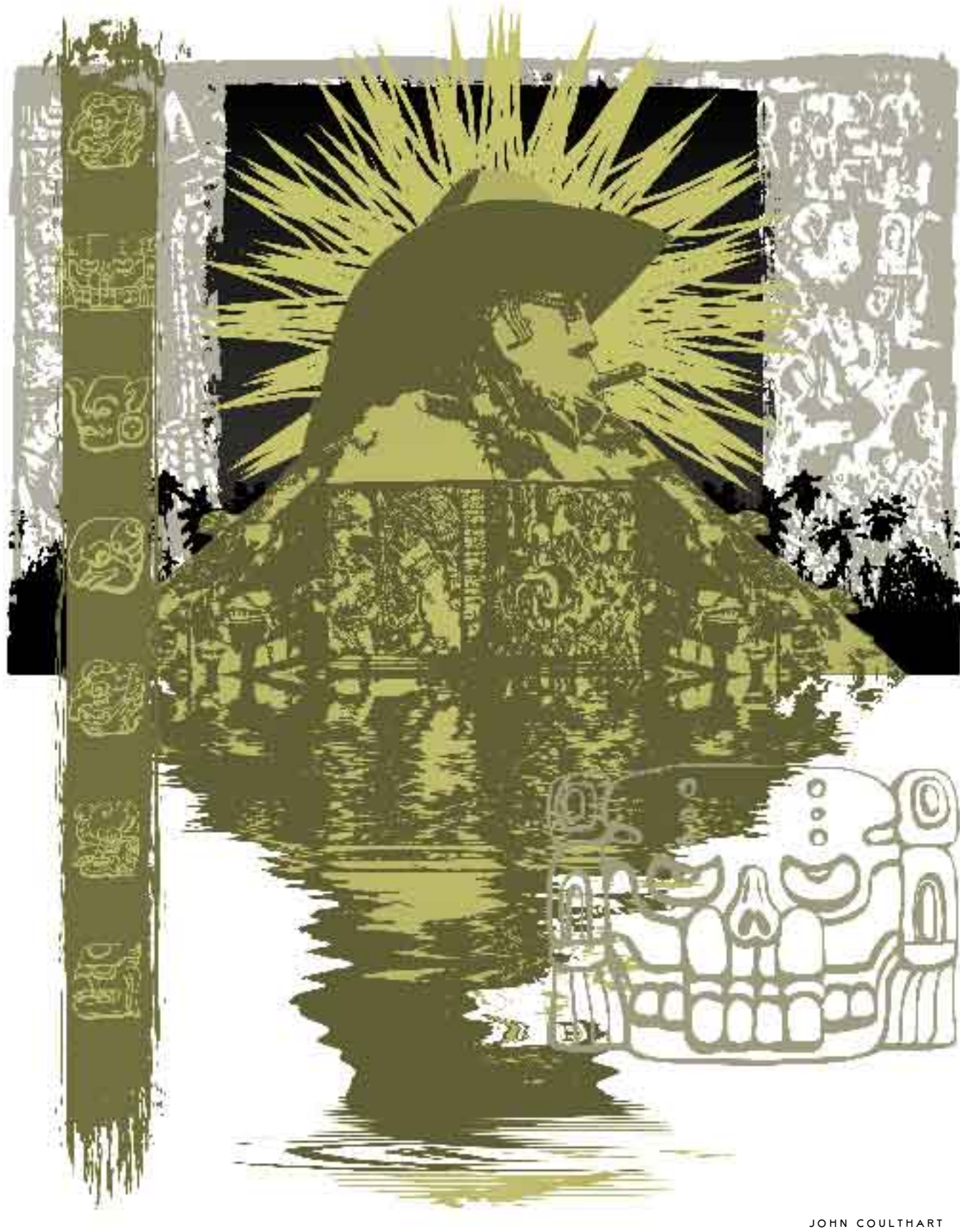
Eugene Mc Daniels the
Left Rev. Mc D
Outlaw
(Water/Want)
D: [reading] "Eugene
Mc Daniels is the soul
anarchist." Then it says here,
"Under conditions of national
emergency [the] people are
only two kinds of people
— those who work for
freedom and those
who do not... the good
guys... the bad guys."
C: [sing along]
to opening track "Outlaw"
D: [singing] "I know, she
don't wear a bra." UH,
yeah... I don't know if
it's me, but this doesn't
sound like you aged well.
D: This came out in the
early '70s.
C: The guy has reced,
supposedly he gets
singing all the time. And you
can hear why... there's a
nice feel to these songs.
Ron Carver on bass,
and a couple of guitarists.
D: But the lyrics are
terrific! And his singing
is totally affected. "La
linga a smoke a joint"
blah blah.
C: The yea I don't get what
the big deal is either.
None of these songs
sound like they're a good
way, at least. [laughter]
D: The cover looks
amazing, though.
C: It's like a classless
thing, in front of va-

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JOHN COULTHART

ENCOUNTER WITH MAXIMON

While investigating Guatemala's folk-magic patron saint of thieves and whores, British travel journalist James Marriott made a serious mistake...

THE FIRST CHILDREN I asked to show me the way to the house of Maximon, Guatemala's 'evil saint,' turned tail and fled. The next boy I approached was unable to escape, hobbled by a pair of oversized rubber boots, and pointed me in the right direction. The building wasn't much to look out—unpainted concrete blocks with a corrugated iron roof—but once I was in I knew I'd come to the right place.

Maximon sat at one end of a dark room, the life-sized dummy of a moustachioed white man wearing a suit, sunglasses, a felt hat and a silk scarf, with a garish handkerchief over his mouth. Candles were arrayed before him, and towards the entrance, at the opposite end of the room, tarot and palm readings were taking place. Another doorway led through to a courtyard, beyond which was a shop selling cigars, magical potions, herbs, candles and anything else the devotee might need.

There was a fire in the courtyard, around which a Mayan woman with gold teeth, a *ladino* woman and two boys of around 6 hyperventilated on huge cigars, working themselves into a sweat. The Mayan woman offered to read my palm. When I foolishly declined, she shrieked with laughter and returned to the serious business of her cigar. The *ladino* woman didn't even look at me—Maximon is the patron saint of thieves and prostitutes, but I couldn't very well ask her if either of these applied—and when the nicotine-crazed boys started to run around my legs, I went back into the main room to take a seat at the back and make myself as inconspicuous as possible.

New arrivals would walk straight past the tarot readers and into the courtyard, where they consulted with the Mayan woman before puffing on cigars and preparing themselves for a consultation with the saint. They would then approach the impassive figure and speak to him, stroking his arms and laying money and other offerings in a bowl in his lap. A smartly dressed man standing by the saint appeared to be his keeper, putting offerings of cigars in his mouth and tipping *aguardiente*, a fiery local spirit, down his wooden throat, or gently lashing the devotees with a bundle of herbs during a *limpia* or soul cleansing.

The children came in, one looking demonic as he threatened the other with a bottle, then tied his feet together with a length of twine. The keening victim tried to hide behind me, crawling into a safe position sheltered by the gringo as the increasingly demented bully giggled and made throat-slitting gestures, the pain and anguish in his victim's face only spurring him on to greater fury. For a terrible moment I thought that I was mistaken—they weren't children at all, but rather stunted adults, their growth arrested by heavy nicotine use—but the pitch of the victim's whine reassured me. As the bullying grew nastier in tone, I wondered if I should intervene, but it seemed patronizing to do anything—the only attention the other adults paid was to motion to the weaker child to be quiet. Eventually the bully left the room, and his charge fled. It seemed a fitting introduction to the world of the Judas of the Western Highlands.

Nobody's quite sure where Maximon comes from. Most sources maintain that he is a syncretic conflation of a pre-Columbian Mayan god, Mam, and the Christian Saint Simon. According to this tradition, the name derives from a combination of Simon and *max*, the Mayan word for tobacco; many people still refer to him as San Simon. His powerful influence has traditionally been feared by the Catholic Church, which has attempted to suppress his worship by portraying him as Judas, and at Easter in Santiago Atitlan figures of Christ and Maximon are paraded through the streets for a powerfully charged symbolic confrontation.

But their efforts have been in vain. Maximon is equally popular among the Mayan and *ladino* populations of Guatemala, and the plaques lining the wall of the largest Maximon shrine, at San Andres Ixtapa, are testament to the faith many have in his power: to help financial ventures, to bless journeys or to cure disease. Maximon is a worldly saint, recognizing the needs and failings of normal people; like them, he likes tobacco, alcohol and the trappings of wealth, such as leather shoes and silk scarves. He is well disposed to granting blessings in exchange for offerings of the things he likes. To visit Maximon and leave nothing is considered a serious mistake.

He has five shrines in Western Guatemala—in Zunil (the shrine described above), Santiago Atitlan, Nahual, San Pedro de la Laguna and San Andres Ixtapa, and in each he appears different. In some he is life-sized and recognizably human; in others he is little more than a bundle of clothes topped by a roughly hewn mask.

Myths of his birth vary, although most sources maintain that he was created by

Maximon is a worldly saint, recognizing the needs and failings of normal people; like them, he likes tobacco, alcohol and the trappings of wealth, such as leather shoes and silk scarves.

rearranged them while telling a young couple what their future held. At some of the other shrines the keepers spoke only in various Mayan languages and looked askance at a gringo visitor, a tourist treating their deity as just one more stop on the well-trodden trail. At one shrine I was driven away by the choking fug of air-freshener a devotee continually sprayed over the figure. The keepers looked bemused when I began to cough, their lungs inured to chemical abuse from years of living near the capital.

Some people refused to tell me where the shrines were, pointing to someone else and telling me to ask them; and occasionally my searches took me to interesting places by mistake. A woman who worked in a museum near Antigua told me about a Maximon shrine just 20 minutes away by bus, so I went to check it out. Getting out at the end of the bus line, I asked a local where the shrine was. He looked puzzled, then asked if I wanted the witch. I agreed, assuming that here Maximon was considered witchcraft, and he told me how to get there; another couple confirmed his directions.

I knocked on the door I'd been directed to and a Mayan woman answered. She told me there was no Maximon there, and that I had the wrong house; but I persisted, sure that there was something here, and reassured her that I had no camera and wasn't an American, hoping this would stand me in her favor. Why, I asked, did three people tell me that this was a witch's house if there was nothing going on here? Finally she let me in, and showed me a shrine. It looked much like a normal Christian shrine to me, and when I pointed this out she took me to a back room, where the real weirdness lay. Here was a crowned saint with a death's head: Rey Pacual. I was told later this was a syncretic mixture of Ah Pook, the Mayan death god, with imagery from Catholic saints. In front of the figure were arranged a number of brandy glasses full

of water, each containing a conch shell.

She told me that she could read water; that people came to her to invoke spirits and that the answers the spirits gave could be seen in the water. We discussed the dangers of uneducated straying into the spirit world and different ways of conjuring spirits, until finally I left. On my way to the cenral plaza I asked a man where the *artesanía* market was—the town was renowned for its weavings—and he told me that there wasn't one here; it was in the next town along. I hadn't been where I thought I was at all; I'd come to the wrong town.

Magic and religion are inextricably linked in Guatemala. The disapproval of the Catholic Church has done nothing to stop the worship of the country's very own Baron Samedi. Christianity may have strong roots here, but it is of a kind resembling the early Christian era, during which even the blackest grimoires adopted a pious tone.

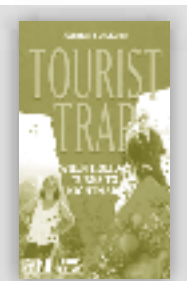
Fertility rituals can still be seen at Mayan sites throughout the country, a contemporary phenomenon that escapes the attention of tourists more interested in the dead stone of Tikal. A wizened farmer took me to one at the hilltop site of San Francisco near the Pacific coast, showing me on the way an ancient Mayan carving at which he'd made offerings, after which he was given better land. He told me that Maximon was a living god, unlike those worshipped on the hill, and took vengeance on those who visited him without leaving anything.

There were two stones on the hilltop, and I watched a woman tend a fire before one of them, limes, eggs and charred chicken feet still visible in the ashes. The procedure followed at the stones was similar to that at a Maximon shrine, with *aguardiente* drunk and splashed over the carvings—one a full-figure relief of a god, the other a large bald head, half-sunk in the ground—and money and flowers left on the ground. The teenaged girls who were presumably the objects of the ritual giggled and ate a picnic of takeaway chicken nearby, apparently oblivious to the events unfolding around them. When the family came to leave, I was warned that I should go with them: a decapitated body had been found nearby recently, and *mara*—Guatemalan youth gangs—were active in the area.

I wondered if other Mayan ritual practices were still common, and attended festivals half-hoping to catch glimpses of ecstatic bloodletting, obsidian spines passed through penis or tongue; perhaps I'd see some reptilian teenager showing off his ritual tongue bifurcation, or encounter a cone-headed child, a noble heir whose skull deformation had been engineered from birth. But this religious bloodthirstiness seemed long since to have passed from them, chicken now the only animals to feel the priest's blade; a boom in other magical practices filled the void.

The shops surrounding the shrine at San Andres Ixtapa sold a huge variety of magical artifacts—from home exorcism kits to potions for every conceivable need, from making yourself irresistible to the opposite sex to silencing a nagging wife. Even villages lacking such an obvious focal point would feature pavement vendors hawking small paperbacks with an unvarying range of content: teach yourself karate, attract women, make money fast, learn spells.

At first the widespread belief in magic in Guatemala seemed romantically appealing to me; it was fascinating, imaginatively charged, and colorful



James Marriott's book about tourist crime, **Tourist Trap: When Holiday Turns to Nightmare** (published by Virgin Books, under the penname Patrick Blackden), is out now.

The Starvations
Get Well Soon
(GSL)
C: We haven't got off to a real positive start here...
D: Who chose these CDs, anyway???

C: The editor.
D: Hmm... Hey, I like this one. Very Gun Club! Do you remember "cowpunk"?

C: Yeah. [shudders] Actually I think this is better than, say, the Bo Deans or something.

D: The Bo Deans! Now there is a name from the distant past.

C: These guys are from L.A... Kinda makes sense. Countryish rock, some punk aggression...

D: A bohemian. C: But anyways, you can totally hear the L.A. heritage: not just the Gun Club but also the Blasters and the Geraldine Fibbers...

D: Nice to hear an accordion too. This is good!

22-20s
05-03
(Astralwerks)

D: Who'd Who is this???

C: They're like 20 years old, from England. It's like the Starvations, yeah?

D: But more banging. Blues-rock with punk balls!

C: Yeah the hooks are bigger, the playing is better. Hard to believe they're not Americans. They've got the Gun Club in there too...

D: That solo is like that stuff the white guy who plays with R.L. Burnside does!

C: Kenny Brown. Yeah you're right, I hadn't noticed that. He totally does slide solos like Kenny.

D: You can dance to this stuff.

C: Yeah that's the R.L. influence maybe, I dunno. This track ["Messed Up"] is a march but it's also real soulful... That's hard to pull off. The dude's voice reminds me of a non-fucked up Shaun Ryder, a little.

D: "King Bee," that's an old one.

C: Big Chicago blues stomper. This is something. Pretty good for a debut EP—there's not a weak track. I see why there's such a fuss about these guys. Too bad we missed em when they opened for Jet and Kings of Leon last month. Oh well.

when compared to the drabness of much of modern Europe. But the inclusion of magical texts with the street vendors' other product soon made me think that perhaps this was a dangerous distraction for the Guatemalans: a dishonest promise of power for those who have none. Rather than trusting in Maximon, or Rey Pascual, the indigenous Maya people should be working in land reform movements, fighting the inequities of land ownership in Guatemala through political pressure—and through force, if necessary.

But belief systems such as that surrounding Maximon serve another function altogether. In a country that has seen its indigenous culture threatened by colonization, religious conversion, military dictatorships and, finally, tourism, Maximon and contemporary Mayan rituals provide a focus for something which is uniquely Guatemalan, a cultural form that if anything has grown more powerful through being suppressed. It may be a distraction in one sense; in another it is one of the strongest currents in indigenous culture.

The warnings finally got to me. Maximon wreaked revenge on those foolish enough to visit him without leaving anything. I had even asked for something—the commissioning of my third book, *Tourist Trap*, a grisly collection of holiday tales from hell—and had the request granted, but I'd left nothing except the gringo fee

levelled at a few of the sites.

I consulted the books as to the best offering to leave for gratitude, and found that I should light three yellow candles and leave some cash. It seemed easy, and as I took the bus to San Andres Itxapa I had a sense of having come full circle; of finally paying a debt. I lit one candle, then held it almost upside down as I used the flame to soften the base of another. A woman ran over, anguish distorting her face, and grabbed them from me. She explained that I shouldn't use one candle to prepare another—or at least that's what I thought she said. I took the candles back from her, grinning broadly, and again held a lit one upside down, dripping wax on the table to prepare a bed for it to stand in. The woman, who'd been watching anxiously, shrieked and again grabbed the candle from me. Now it dawned on me—lit candles should not be held upside down at a Maximon shrine.

I should have known. I'd seen the same symbol outside London's Victorian cemeteries: an inverted torch, signifying death, the extinction of light. But I continued my ritual anyway, thanking Maximon and leaving my money in his palm and my candles forming a triangle on a nearby table. The woman who'd tried to stop me making a grievous error smiled uneasily as I left. I didn't think much more about it until two events occurred toward the end of my trip in such rapid succession that I feared I had offended the gods. Or, more specifically,

The woman who'd tried to stop me making a grievous error smiled uneasily as I left. I didn't think much more about it until two events occurred towards the end of my trip in such rapid succession that I feared I had offended the gods.

a god.

The first was when I had my backpack stolen. It could have happened to anyone, but along with my passport, airline tickets and one of the notebooks I'd been using for *Tourist Trap*, one of the objects stolen was a large Maximon souvenir—one meant to confer good luck.

A week later I lay in twitching agony on a hospital bed as six large parasitical worms were removed from my back. They'd been there for a while, but I'd waited until the holes in which they lived were bleeding heavily—it happened mostly after they ate—before contacting a doctor. He seemed stunned that I'd waited so long, and called a nurse over as I lay on my front to tell her, 'Look! You can see its head coming up to breathe!' He even gave me the worms afterwards, and I kept them in a jar until they died from lack of food. The largest was about an inch long, with a ring of black bristles.

I'm not sure even now if the curse of Maximon has lifted. The odd brutal synchronicity or run of appalling luck can

still be blamed on his malign influence, as can the insect hum of anxiety providing the backbone for my existence since my return from Central America. But his victims are said to die from stomach infestations, something in which I am happily lacking. And there can't be any strict, sub-Tutankhamen curse applying for such minor misdemeanors as failing to leave an offering, then botching one. Can there?

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Sun Kil Moon
Ghosts of the Great Highway (Jetset)

D: What's going on here? Are we reviewing for Some Depression now?

C: No Depression, you mean.

D: Whatever... all of this so far is roots-ish.

C: Looking through CD pile! Yeah, and there's more on the way. Must be the season or something.

D: So, who is this?

C: Mark Kozalek's new band. He used to do a band called Red House Painters. Pretty popular with the NPR crowd.

D: Never heard of 'em.

C: Yeah, well... What a voice, eh?

D: It is a pretty voice... This kind of music reminds me of seaside towns. Long sad afternoons in the winter.

C: Yeah, it's sad but it's beautiful, it's not depressing. Long, droney folk songs...

ooo, lookit that, here come the drums 3:45 in to the first song. Always a nice touch.

D: I would say there's a bit of Neil Young to him.

C: Yeah, for sure. This song "Salvador Sanchez"...fantastic electric guitar. Listen to that simple riff and then the endless solo... People should turn in their copy of Greenville and get this instead.

2: Greendale.

2: Whatever. When he cuts the strings behind his falsetto, whoa. This is almost too intense to listen to in sequence. You know what? This is what Jay Farrar from Son Volt wishes he could do...

2: It is bittersweet music.

2: Stunning, really. In first listen, I gotta say I'm stunned. That doesn't happen too often.

Jolie Holland
Catalpa (Anti/Epitaph)

2: She sounds a little like Karen Dalton.

2: Yeah. She was in his group the Be Good Lamas for a little while, guess. It's good, huh. Acoustic guitar, ukulele, and what a voice.

2: Sleightbelly!

2: Yeah. Country-blues-olk... Very pretty, kinda spooky. She's got that white-girl Billie Holiday thing going for her, just like Karen Dalton did. [listening] Did you hear that? She sang "3 a.m." like "three-eye-am."

2: She must be American...

2: She is.

2: There's a song in here credited to "Holland/Partron/Syd Barrett"...?

2: Hal! How appropriate for this job of Arthur... [reading the sleeve] "The Littlest Birds." hafta admit, I don't know exactly what she's doing here... I guess this is a medley?

2: It must be. [repeating lyric] "The littlest birds sing the prettiest songs..." That's true, you know.

SILLY BEASTS IN SACRED PLACES

BY KARIN BOLENDER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY EMILY RYAN

...AND ME *astride a mighty rooster, with a raging red crown and swelled breast and silver claws, and it running: but suspended, rising and falling slow like tides, like a horse in a dream who gallops without going anywhere—rising and falling with hydraulic and dream-like monotony, round and round, the same dim motion ascribing its circumference of colored lights and warped music round and again like a lathe into the world's great big empty bowl. The next time around, it was a goat I rode.¹*

Oh it may have all started way back, when I was 9 and saw a unicorn while on a honeymoon in Mexico. It was 1984: the beginning of the end for so many of us, God's children. Of course, nobody believed me. We also saw the Love Boat on that honeymoon, docked in Puerto Vallarta. It was my mother's second marriage, the real one. But what does it matter now, anyway? That was another age, a virgin country.

And I can tell you, because you already know, how the paths that bring us from childhood to this are crooked and fraught with pitfalls. And this is what we get for our troubles: a soul full of rusty fish hooks and bullet holes, eyes that squint, hands that shake. But there are certain little comforts of adulthood. Whatever your poison happens to be, you seek succor where you can. In a time of great need—starvation, privation, aggravation, a broken heart and a broken head—I found succor at Dollywood.

I suppose I should thank the Bearded Menace, because I never would have discovered Dollywood if he had not smashed up a dream and sent me packing. So it was a fine gift he gave me, in the end. This hotblood from down-home Georgia who said, "Come on baby, let's go down south where I am from: I'll build a mansion in your name, we'll swim in the black creeks, lay down in the weeds, anywhere we want, lay back on the front porch or on piles of old tires and rock and rock until we are old and wise and ugly to everyone but each other, ourselves. And we'll hold hands and murmur this dreaming talk with dogs at our feet, licking and scratching, rolling in play with our naked children, who will cackle in raucous joy and swing from the scuppernong vines—wild flesh, dying light, faint music wafting in from somewhere. Ripe peaches and pokeberries'll be washed clean and brought to the porch steps for us by possums and coons. Fruits of the land collected and carried to us by the crows and ants and snakes, who will all gather 'round in the evening to hear us speak in tongues and sing tales of these very days we are living now and the glory days to come, full of moon-age romance and steamy concupiscence, and don't forget adventuring, on the sea, in the air, by camelback and purple Triumph: come on baby, let's go down. Go down with me."

Back in 1984, when I saw the unicorn in the month of November, I knew that you only had to believe in something enough to make it come true. I knew this because my mama told me, and it was confirmed by Robert Vavras's 1984 "Unicorns I Have Known" calendar, which advised the following: "to the pure of heart: watch carefully entering each forest glade as though you were the first human to set foot there; take time to sample pollen carried on a golden breeze; do not use deodorants or insect repellents or wear leather shoes or belts; and believe. Yes, above all, believe, and you will surely meet as lovely and noble and snow-white a single-horned creature as any who pirouettes upon these pages."

And so I did. All over 1984, I scrawled with the new calligraphy pen that was also a Christmas present that year: "I BeLLeVe! UniCorNS arE ReAl! UniCorNs LiVe in 83! I ? UNiCOrnS!" And almost a year later, on the honeymoon, it came true. Nobody saw it but me. Not even my mother, who was wrapped up in her own love dream in the Mexican jungle, brighter and more free and happy than she had ever been before, or has ever been since.

"Women are so wise. They have learned how to live unconfused by reality. Impervious to it."² This comes from William Faulkner. But it might just as easily come from the pages of Dolly Parton's autobiography, *Dolly*, if you read between the lines. Or it could be painted like a motto in 20-foot letters, alongside a gigantic pink butterfly and an even more gigantic image of Dolly herself, all a-sparkle with sequins and high nest of golden hair, on one of the billboards along the highway in northeast Tennessee, advertising how many miles are still to go before the pilgrim shores up at Dollywood.

But of course, that couldn't be. Because what lies under the however-many square acres of the Dollywood park is not the glitterful attractions and family entertainments that lure people in, but an old organic thing buried beneath. A mighty powerful secret. Primeval, even.

But oh, the unicorn: it's not that I ever really forgot it, it's just that after a while, in time, that quarry was overrun with the dream of other beasts—boys and men, but mostly boys. And with pubescence, I began a metamorphosis into a new and strange kind of being myself: some kind of rootless, hairy, hallucinating mushroom with linguistic and motor skills.

As if the hormones of pubescence themselves are this bewitching and infinitely powerful kind of hallucinogen, the effects of which never quite wear off, and make you hear and see, and more so believe, all sorts of beautiful monstrosities and warped miracles that fall under the rubric of sexlove. Wild imaginings like "I saw a unicorn" get replaced by wilder ones, like "I will love you forever."

And somewhere along the seam between childhood and this circus that is sexlove, we are supposed to weed out illusions and fantasies and find out what reality is.

A dark time is had by all, for a while anyway. But most of us make it out of adolescence somehow, and emerge as more mature human beings with hopes and desires and, heaven help us, beliefs. Beliefs are great and all, until they stray toward the sayings and doings of other people. Then, we are all screwed. Yes, that's exactly what we are.

Well, that's how I got screwed by the Bearded Menace anyway. Hell, you heard what he said! Let's see you try to not fall in love with somebody who vows, with an avowal disturbingly familiar to the last letter—every pitch and note and rhythmic twang—to work to construct the world newly every moment, build it with words and woods and other raw materials into what he believes it should be, all the forms and lights and glories that seem to be exactly what you have been longing and working for all this time, and trying to build, alone. Just see if that doesn't get all your electrical juices flowing. Silly beast, you believed in this—that the words and deeds building up between the two of you were plank-for-plank making something real and solid of a dream, and not just playing around in funhouse mirrors.

Well, when the blue lightning was over down in Georgia, the darkness that followed was profound. I was thinking all this over one evening, lying there alone in twisted sheets, in the fall, in his parent's attic, when it was dead. That is when it came to me like a startling burst, hovering over the dark filthy futon, in the sheets full of our scabs and little bloodstains left over from the plague of seedticks we had suffered together with our mutts. And the last kiss—a desperate end-kiss. I will tell you. It was something I had never thought of before, but suddenly there it was.

DOLLYWOOD. That's how it came, a vision, like Jim Morrison's Indian. Except it was not a figure but a booming sourceless voice that came into my head, out of nowhere, and commanded, "YOU MUST GO TO DOLLYWOOD."

What? You mean Dolly Parton's theme park? What the hell? "NO, NOT HELL. DOLLYWOOD. GO THERE. GET THEE."

And how can you argue with a booming sourceless voice that commands you to go somewhere, especially when you are no longer welcome where you are and have nowhere else in mind to go?

I lit out of Athens early the next morning, after I looked up on the Web where Dollywood was. I had never heard of Pigeon Forge, Tenn. By a stroke of luck, it was only about four hours north of where I'd been dumped—a straight shot up 441, straight out of Georgia and right up through North Carolina to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, through the flames of autumn foliage. But the scenic beauty was the least of my concerns, just then; I just needed to get to Dollywood, as soon as possible. It was like a fierce hunger or a full bladder. Somehow, overnight, the vision of Dollywood had blossomed into a shining new hope, something rising out of the ashes, perhaps. I just had to get there. It had become a quest.

There isn't room here to chronicle the tribulations of that daylong journey, in a doomed silver wagon I bought down there from a Bible salesman. But with every setback, every breakdown, every hold-up in some roadside gravel spit or tourists' gold-mining village in North Carolina, I knew with more panting urgency that I had to make it to Dollywood somehow. That if I could only get there before it closed at 6 p.m., I—and my children, and my children's children and so on and so on—might be saved. It was a race against time, and maybe fate even more so.

I hit Gatlinburg, the famed Smoky Mountain tourist village just south of Pigeon Forge, at around 4 p.m. I made it this far by the blessing of electrical tape and a nomad named Uel who roamed the country selling machines that make snow. The silver wagon just made it over

the mountains, barely topping 20 mph and coughing a thick black smoke.

Then, in the tunnel through the last mountain between Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge—so close now—the traffic jammed. Sitting there in the semi-dark, staring at the wide rear of a Volkswagen camper, that grayer version of reality struck again. It was late; I could see through the mouth of the tunnel ahead that the gold post-meridian sun was streaming low through the reds and oranges and still-greens of the old oaks, and Dollywood was still half an hour away. I knew from the website that the admission price was 30 bucks, and I had just handed over my near-to-last silver dollar to the Bible salesman in exchange for the sputtering slab of rust I had been patching all day with coathangers and rubber bands.

But even as these reasonings thudded through my brain, I knew I wouldn't give up, not so close. I was determined at least to see it, at least to lay eyes on the giant pink butterfly. So when the traffic started to move several minutes later, I crept out of the tunnel clutching the last scrap of enthusiasm, crazy as Clark Griswald and more determined than ever to make it to Dollywood before the sun went down, maybe for good.

The sign of the giant pink butterfly is where the ordeal ends and the dream begins. I am not just talking about my dream, either. I am talking about Dolly's.

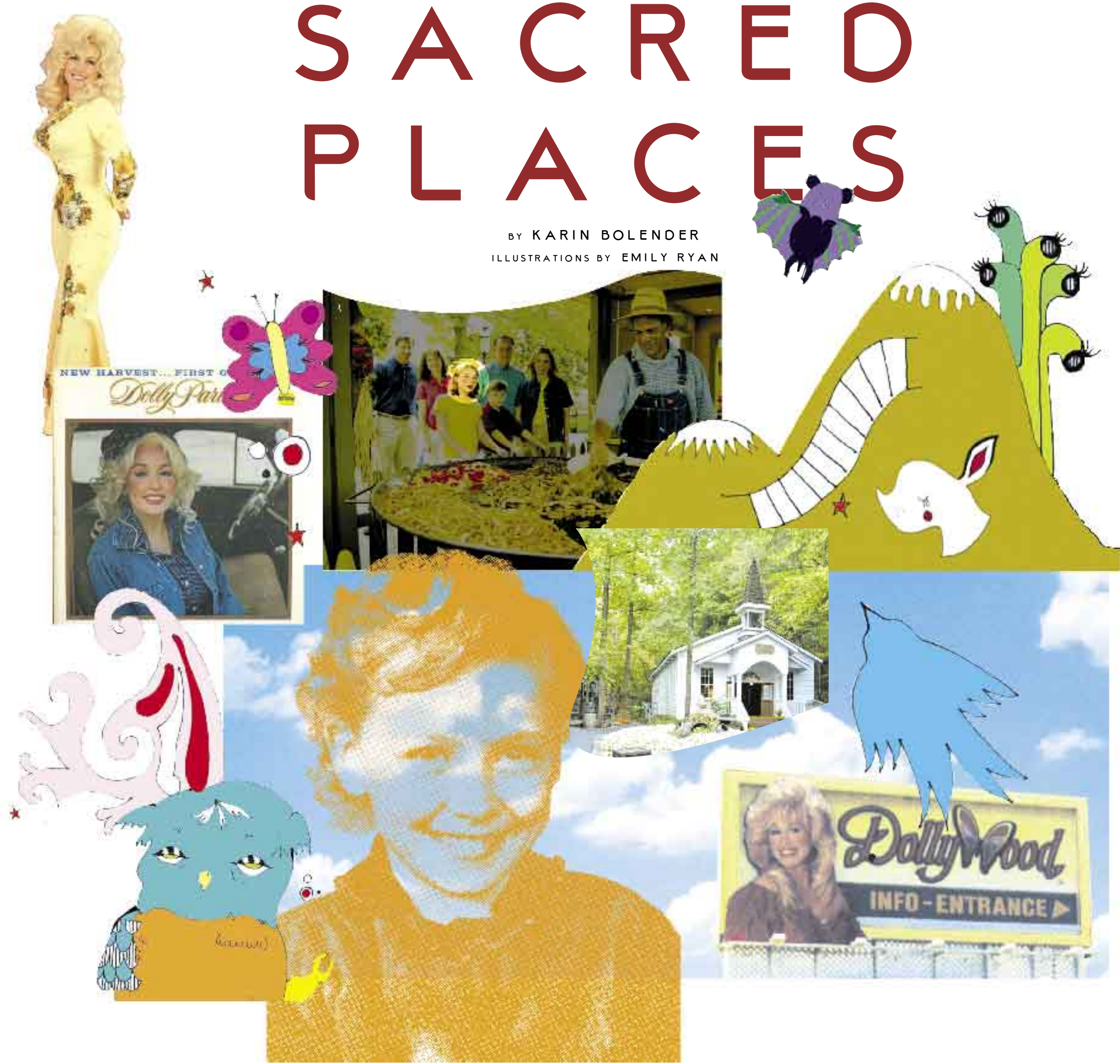
When you push through that shiny silver turnstile into the theme park, it's clear to one and all that you are passing into a dreamworld. That is brightly obvious. But the secret of Dollywood, well, that is something you have to search for, beneath the shimmering surface. But seek and ye shall find. Among the old, old rocks, in the mud and waters and crevices and tiny caves of lizards and bugs, and in your very mitochondria, it is there. And Dolly knows it, too.

It was 4:30, almost early evening, late in the season. The park was nearly empty. Maybe it was the perfect weather—that slight fall chill with warm sun just knocking through, the leaves rasping in the little benevolent winds, the warm asphalt stretching on toward unknown wonders. Welcoming doorways every few feet, inside of which people were baking or candle-making or carving wood into animal shapes or talking quietly and smiling.

I know it seems unlikely, and I admit I was drunk on Coca-Cola. Sure, there were all the expected kitsch monstrosities and cliché "down-home country" entertainments. A replica of the tiny shack where Dolly grew up poor with her flock of brothers and sisters—all the rags-to-riches platitudes. And of course a profusion of images of Dolly herself, starring as the queen, the angel, the sticky-sweet little gal. But there was something else, too. In the late evening sun, as I wandered alone along the flower-banked paths, I swear to you, in the spell of that evening, I truly felt Dollywood was one of the most comforting, mysterious and beautiful places I had found in this world, since I was launched from my mother's lap.

Gone for a while was all of my anxious megalopolitan darkness of soul—lostness in love, in geography. There you are nestled into the earth, tucked into the mountains. A place. I sucked down the Coca-Cola. It was everywhere, like manna. Coke reigns in that country. I had always known that Coca-Cola is of the earth, loamy, molecularly similar to rich, dark dirt: elemental. Never did I feel the truth of it more than at Dollywood.

But the day was waning fast, and I had to make the most of it. First thing I did was rush to the Emporium: I knew I needed physical artifacts—memorabilia, sacraments—because our days on the earth are so easily forgotten. Inside the gift shop, I was overwhelmed by the surreal colors and variety. I gathered an arm-load of baubles and trinkets, gifts and raw evidence. I paid and stuffed them into my bag, then emerged blinking back into the sunlight, with a



A Listener's Guide to Dolly Parton
by **Paige La Grone**

A highly accomplished songwriter, singer, actress and performer, Parton has embedded herself into the American psyche. A veritable five-foot-by-buxom celebration of womankind, Parton predates (and easily dominates) Madonna in terms of reinvention. And long before the Dixie Chicks were a glimmer in anyone's eye, Parton was glittering it all up with ticked-up subversive glamour of the blonde, paint-for-filth variety, and playing her own banjo, too. But her enduring legacy will be her songwriting: "Jolene," one of Parton's earliest hits, has stood the test of time and worn incredibly well, most recently evidenced by the White Stripes' cover, a live-set staple that finds Jack singing the song straight. Some kind of wonderful peculiar beauty, that.

HOLLY PARTON

What struck me most that afternoon of the first trip to Dollywood was that the prevailing symbol of the enterprise is not what you would expect—Dolly's famous feminine endowment—but the butterfly. Like the crucifix in a church, the butterfly symbol is everywhere at Dollywood: napkins, ticket stubs, trolley cars. This is what's interesting: this is the subversive gesture that hints at how the whole show is not about an icon in the form of a single person, a country star, but something much broader, much more human. And, significantly, much more androgynous. I submit that this is Dolly's greatest triumph.

Scrabbling with the rudiments of language one dim winter afternoon in a new century, I managed this elaboration:

Carved into the some of the oldest rocks in the world, though. She is powerful. There was so much more going on there than met the eye, on that clear day when a person fled there to escape the Bearded Menace. I need this; I need to get my sexuality back from the Bearded Menace who battered it, you see. And Dolly can help; beautiful, sexless Dolly, disguised in her glitter and sequins and sparkles, inside there hides her dry, prehistoric, insect soul.

Dolly Parton is an insect. You think the butterfly image is a coincidence? Dolly Parton will lead us out of the bondage of sex; a beacon, a glow we will follow into the sexless world. Yes, as sexless as the bugs, the rocks, the physics of pinball, the colors of the rainbow, the light, oh the light, and the stars.

The first Monument recordings were marketed to pop audiences, though a listen to this early material from sides and the recordings "Hello, I'm Dolly"—later piece-meal chronicled on both the Monument Records Story and The World of Dolly Parton, Volumes 1 & 2—show the young Parton to be thoroughly adept at hard-edged twang and tune. Two Monument singles, "Dumb Blonde" and "Something Fishy," both penned by Parton, were hits. They showed Parton as a young woman to be reckoned with: simple though strong melody, a thin mountain-inflected soprano gracefully quivering and pure, able to put across clever and thoughtful lyrics with emotion and a charismatic innocence underpinned with subversive strength and actualized sensuality—qualities that continue to ripen and mark the artist's work throughout her decades-long career.

The World of Dolly Parton, Vol. 1

I sat for a while on a bench beside the banks of the raft ride. The dirty pale blue water churning riffling gurgling in its concrete chute. Every so often one of the round eight-seater yellow rafts floated by, spinning empty and bumping against the sides. I got up and wandered on, haunting Dollywood as the purple dusk approacheth. In

A collage featuring a portrait of Dolly Parton, a rainbow, stars, a snail, a butterfly, and a sign that reads "DOLLY'S SPLASH COUNTRY". The portrait of Dolly Parton is in the bottom left, smiling and wearing a patterned jacket. The rainbow is in the top right. The stars are in the top right. The snail is in the top left. The butterfly is in the middle right. The sign is in the bottom right. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds.

The Best of Dolly Parton (RCA)

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youthful sexuality. I spent a lot of time looking at them, studying the way the sexual organs had been drawn and at times trying to add to them.

Also inside the church was an old piano, with a cracked sounding board and rusting strings, that had been left behind when the congregation moved on. So, here in one place was God, music, and sex. My fascination was complete. I picked up the flat pieces of ivory that had been the tops of the piano keys and kept them as treasures.

I once took some strings from the soprano section and affixed them to an old mandolin I had found in our barn. It was more like a dulcimer, really. And when I strummed it, it sent up a droning sound that I could sing to. I wrote a lot of songs with that old mandolin. And so I would sing hymns to God for a while and look at dirty pictures for a while and pray for a while, and one day as I prayed in earnest, I broke through some sort of spirit wall and found God. Away from the stares of boys and the mothers and the preachers, I had met him not as a chastising, bombastic bully but as a friend I could talk to on a one-on-one basis. He is our father, after all, and that's the kind of heavenly father that made sense to me. Here in this place of seemingly confusing images, I had found real truth. I had come to know that it was all right for me to be a sexual being.



I knew that was one of the things God meant for me to be.

I also knew that my dreams of making music, of traveling outside the Smokies and pursuing a greater purpose, were not silly childhood ideas but grand real schemes ordained and created by my newfound heavenly father. I was validated. I was sanctified. I was truly reborn. I was happy. I thanked God long and loud . . . I sang with a strength and conviction that only God, and possibly Curt Dockery, could have understood. The joy of the truth I found there is with me to this day. I had found God. I had found Dolly Parton. And I loved them both."⁵

It is just this. Here this . . . no, wait. This is delicate. I mean, it needs delicacy. It needs honor. It needs honesty. I have tried to peel back the layers and look at Dollywood as I saw it that day. How a person can ride the cock with new dignity and calm, and learn that sex is not a burden, but maybe a great flowing gift, from old times on. And forgive the Bearded Menace or the bitch who broke you, because no one means to harm the love dream—they only appear and lend it flesh for a while, breath, and



sometimes that's the best one can do. So then go on: you hang upside down over the old mountains, the green tangle, rollercoaster rock. And find something truly wholesome. And by wholesome I do not mean morally—it's not that kind of bestiary. I mean a real wholeness, hidden substrates keeping up appearances—a sense of elements in place, being in place. Being in a place: a Smoky Mountain home.

There in the land of Tennessee, Dollywood exposes an open seam of a dream of who a person wants to be, who and what one wants to love and behold. The strange beasts we are born, and the ones we become. Along the way to this becoming, we get lucky sometimes; we find sanctuary where belief in some wild dream meets land and flesh and machinery. Imagined forms mingle with architectures, hills and hollows—the sacred spaces where we sometimes find ourselves.



NOTES

1. I owe much inspiration for this and other things to William Faulkner's story, "Carcassonne," found in Faulkner, William. *Collected Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House, 1950.

2. William Faulkner, "Carcassonne,"
Collected Stories, p. 895

3. Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels* (New York: Grove Press, 1991).

4. O Suttree.

5. Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1994), p.77.



yod.com family fun page!

hey kids! can you spot which one of



these record collectors



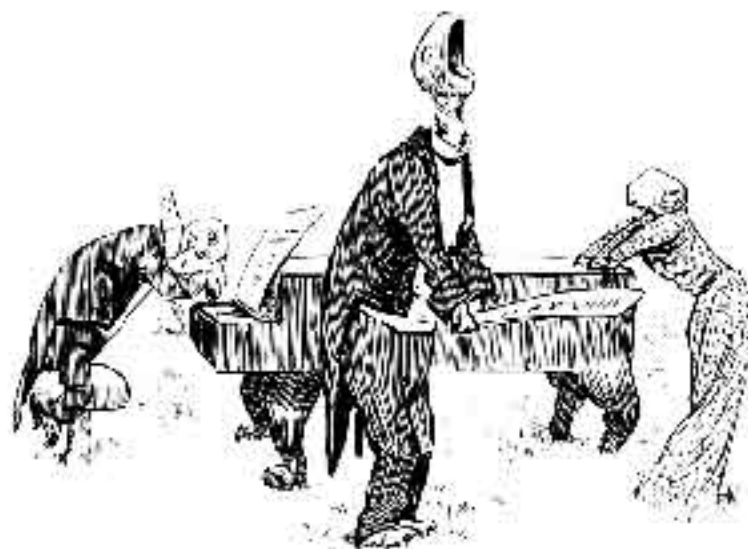
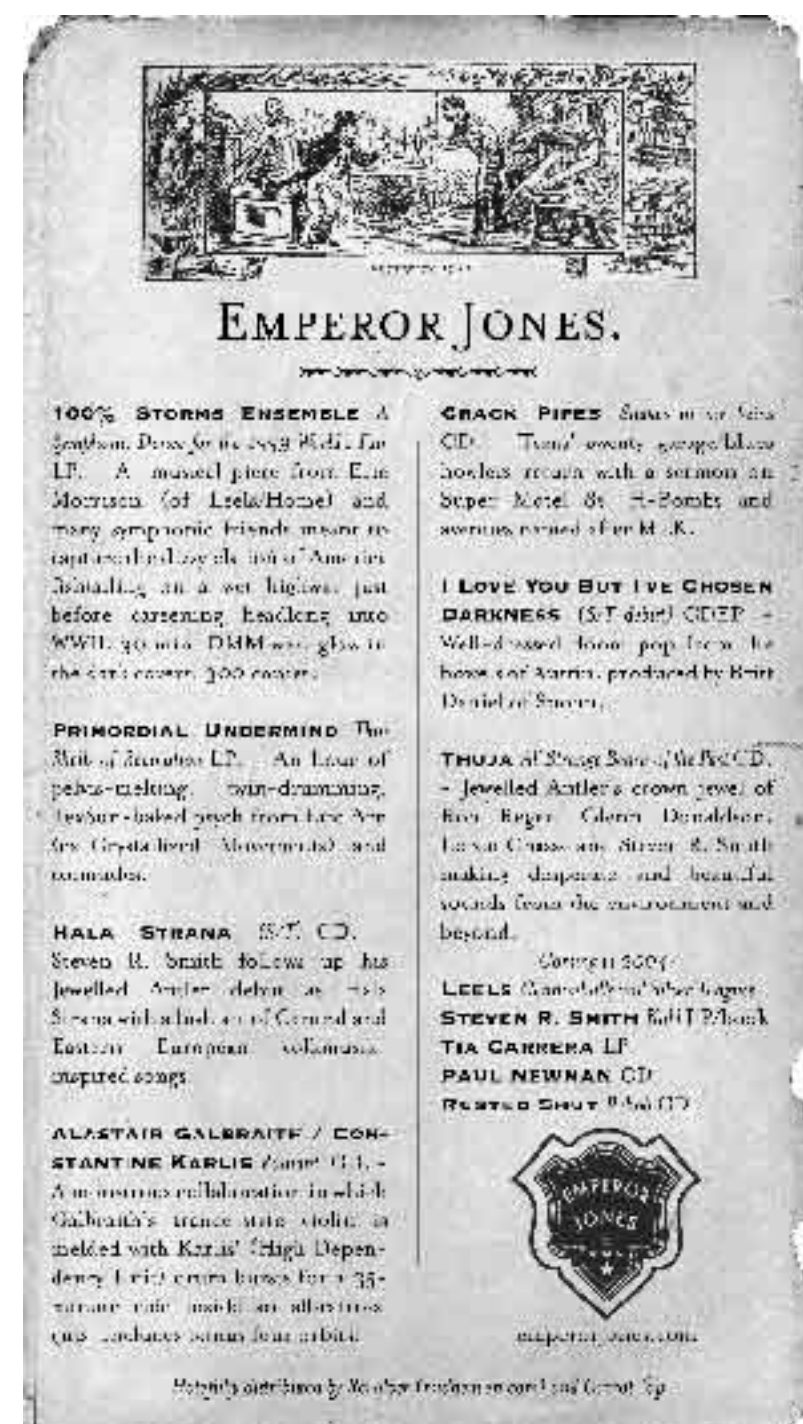
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Andrea Kubat
Million Year Old
Sand
(Times Beach Records)
D: I was ordering Indian
food.
C: Oh, right on. Perfect.
D: What were you
playing?
C: Skullflower, that shit
is awesome.
D: Well, put it back on,
you scum-suck!
C: "Scum-suck"? Dude
chill out. Listen to this
record here...
D: This is nice, who
is she?
C: Audra Kubat. I think
this is her first record.
D: Kind of like Beth
Orton.
C: Yeah. And Joni, and
Nick Drake. And Miss
Cat Power. This could
be very big in the college-
town coffeehouses
of America. For sure.
She's a good singer but
she doesn't over-do it
like those Li'lith Fair
bitches. So nice to hear
music like this coming
HD.90K

Polmo Polo
Like Hearts Swellin'
(Constellation)
D: We are not listening
too much rock music this
time, are we?
C: 22:20s and The
Starvations were pretty
rockin'.
D: (drinking beer) Yeah,
but I don't think I'm
not rocking, although it
is something very good.
What do you call this
kind of music????
C: Well it's from the
Golden Age of the Black
Emperor camp, or at
least from the label that
they do. I've lost track
of who's in whose band
doing which project.
D: It's Parliament.
Funkadelic up there
now, and Polmo Polo
is Parliament or something.
But who is George
Clinton? Is he the
disintegrator scene? There
is the question...
D: (thoughtful) This is
very scary music,
very dramatic. It's like
something terrible is
just about to happen,
something I don't want
to know about...
C: Very dramatic. The
next track skips to
after the event, doesn't it?
It's like build-up and
aftermath, but no
actual event. They circle
it, and then...
D: (dreamily) This stuff
makes me want to drink
wine and light some
candles, or go down to
the main yard and look
at the stars and maybe
hop a train out of town.
D: ...And there's some
slide guitar! This is the
best! ...!! (doorbell
rings) And there is
our food!

Double Leopards
Halve Maen
(Eclipse)
D: This is not eating music.
C: You're right... Why don't you go in the room and I'll finish this [D exits.] He is useless, totally useless. We have a job to do here! For the Arthur readership! Okay... Ambient haunted house stuff, no real instruments or tunes. Scratch that: more like a whole haunted city. Reminds me of Coil, a bit. Amazing cover and sleeve. Like that "Aumgn" song on Can's Tago Mago—if you did that, which we all have at one time or another, right? then here's two records' worth. Hums. Buzzes. Very cool stuff for the headphones I bet, and good music to end a party with. This is some seriously dark



Evah Fan likes to grub on papas fritas. She thinks "murmur" is a funny word. Evah has bad grammar and is drawn to onomatopoeia... shhhhhh! www.potatohavetoes.com



The Mattress Has You

Steve Aylett pulls you from the pod



Steve Aylett: There is a spoon, actually.

Maybe the *Matrix* trilogy will make mental activity glamorous by making it synonymous with kicking the hell out of people, but in doing so it may remove people's understanding of how and when to physically do so.

a free agent in the third *Hellraiser* movie, he was no longer Pinhead, just a declaratory tosser. (In fact, *Hellraiser III: Declaratory Toss* was one of the titles mooted for that sequel.) In *Matrix Reloaded* the balanced repartee of Weaving was taken up more successfully by Lambert Wilson in the character of the Merovingian, for whose scenes I woke up briefly. Even his girlfriend (Monica Bellucci) was a nice departure, in that she appeared to weigh more than a kilo. Meanwhile the good guys, two-note characters in the first film, were reduced here to a single robotic note—to the extent that the blank Keanu and stonier-than-thou Fishburne were often replaced with

CGI stunt borgs.

The *Matrix* movies have opened up "meaning-spotting" to the casual viewer, with a few very deliberate meanings and the most impressively inadvertent ones since Willem Dafoe's 9/11 prophecy in *Faraway, So Close* and the characters Mac and Windows in Carpenter's *The Thing* (which one contains the nasty bug? which one will last longest and operate most creatively?). The "there is no spoon" notion of changing the *Matrix* by thinking differently about it is meant to push the Buddhist/postmodern folly that believing something makes it so, thus removing the expectation of having to physically do anything about it. "There is no fact" is beloved

of government because it helps people to accept anything that's done to them. And it's more glamorous to talk about evil machines (or aliens, demons, vampires, Satan...) than it is to deal straight with the utterly bland human bastards who actually fuck us over. Real evil is too crass and low-res to work as an industry pitch. This is the problem with science fiction—the more compelling the world created on screen, the less likely that anyone will translate it back into an active meaning in the real world. So this remains a story about energy-battery humans plugged into VR, and not about the constant re-examination of thought premises leading to practical action.

I liked the first *Matrix* okay but I wish it was braver and more specific. The IRS is mentioned in passing but not the PNAC—such surgical opportunities are regularly missed. Fans look for rabbit references—*Night of the Lupus* is on TV in the Oracle's apartment—it's a safe little parlor game. Maybe the *Matrix* trilogy will make mental activity glamorous by making it synonymous with kicking the hell out of people, but in doing so it may remove people's understanding of how and when to physically do so.

I briefly hoped that *Revolutions* might throw some folds into the cyberpunk lite routine, with Smith ending up as a deadpan stand-up comic in the style of Richard Belzer. The "humans and machines should work together" bit—obvious enough to be unavoidable even for the arch-evaders directing this mess—could in fact have been dodged at the last minute in favor of a sploody, wading pie fight like something out of *The Great Race*. Get in there, Monica! But no—the requisite lusty enthusiasm and flushed, giggly humanness would have been a universe out of place.

I was hoping that at the very least the wasteland and Zion could turn out to be another digital reality inside another inside another etc all set up for the amusement of the cat which Neo saw twice in the first film—the cat is called Ramone and is having the time of his life. "And that's what I did for the weekend," the sock-puppet cat says in the final frames of *Revolutions*, and smiles open-mouthed like Kermit the Frog. Fade to black. Instead we have Smith the Terrorist, designated villain, ultimate cop-out distraction from the real manipulators.

Like Nebuchadnezzar, the namesake of Morpheus's hoversub, viewers will always evade what the dream really means, for fear of having to actually do something about it. Don't really get out from under, just pretend you're Neo and that you could any time you wanted. It's a portable adventure you can carry anywhere and superimpose over any situation as a prophylactic against real action. There will be no Revolution. You're still asleep, smartass. The mattress has you. ☹

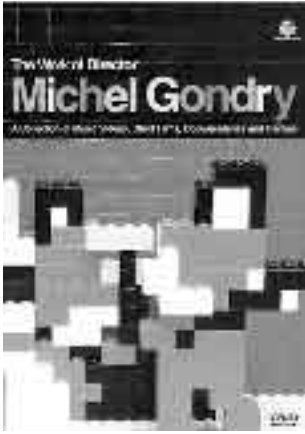
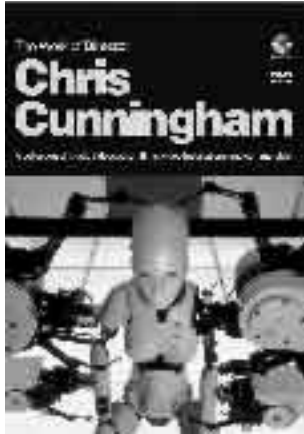
Steve Aylett is the author of *Slaughtermatic*, *Atom* and *Shamanspace*. www.steveaylett.com

Reviewed: The whole *Matrix* bollocks.

Camera Obscura

"The Golden Notebooks"

by PAUL GULLUM



"There is no need for you to leave the house. Stay at your table and listen. Don't even listen, just wait. Don't even wait, be completely quiet and alone. The world will offer itself to you to be unmasked; it can't do otherwise; in raptures it will write before you."—**Franz Kafka**

"One day I found a big book buried deep in the ground. I opened it, but all the pages were blank. Then to my surprise, it started writing itself...."
—**Bjork, "Bachelorette"**

K Street is getting really good.

The half-hour HBO series, which just completed its initial 10-episode run, features a real James Carville and Mary Matalin at a fake D.C. lobbying firm on the real K Street inside the Beltway, with fake characters, real cameos and real events driving the plot. Working from sketched outlines by screenwriter Henry Bean, whose **The Believer** is the most politically provocative film in recent memory, each episode is directed, shot and edited by Steven Soderbergh five days before airtime in furious run-and-gun fashion, literally buzzing on instinct and the exquisite threat of failure.

When Soderbergh directed **Schizopolis**, his \$250,000, quasi-comprehensible, bilingual absurdist farce, virtually everyone was mystified. He vigorously defended the film at the time, citing the need for raw experimentation to reenergize his filmmaking. And with the effervescent **Out of Sight**, the almost Cubist **The Limey** and Oscars for **Traffic** and **Erin Brockovich** following it up, it's hard to argue with him. More recently, the dismally received **Full Frontal** was, in retrospect, merely a working template for the callous immediacy, oblique editing and telegraphed detail of **K Street**, now much improved from the watertight op-ed pieces of its earliest installments.

The freedom to experiment and fail has been bred out of American movies—or, rather, reversed: filmmakers are free to experiment only after their fame, on their own time and their own dime. Studio fare has become largely critic-proof precisely by court-judging diminishing expectations, just so it can rise incrementally above them.

Which is one of the incidental pleasures of viewing the collected short works of music-video mainstays Spike Jonze, Chris Cunningham and Michel Gondry, being released simultaneously on DVD through the Directors Label, their imprint at Chris Blackwell's Palm Pictures. (Blackwell, whose Island Records brought reggae to an unwitting world, remains the consummate billionaire-fan — financing short-film magazine **RES** and the touring **RESfest**, or releasing the 10-hour **Creomaster** cycle.) Working from a shared lexicon, with often the same bands (Daft Punk, Chemical Brothers, Bjork), Gondry in

France and Jonze as part of the crew at Satellite, the vanguard subsidiary of Propaganda, are credited with reviving the moribund music video form in the early '90s. And the British Cunningham, with a pedigree that includes heading up the FX crew for David Fincher's **Alien 3** at 19 and doing animatronic design for Kubrick's abortive **A.I.**, is arguably the most famous filmmaker under 30 who hasn't yet directed his own feature.

Viewed together, these compilations of music videos, short films, commercials and documentaries—each with a 52-page booklet of interviews, photos and drawings—all demonstrate a surprisingly coherent style, whose permutations may well play out over dozens of features. It's easy to spot the world view of Jonze's **Being John Malkovich** or **Adaptation** in Daft

from Spike Jones, the 1940s satirical big-band leader whose most famous hit was "Der Fuehrer's Face," to accommodate an already pronounced trickster ethic that would one day dream up **Jackass**. In addition to documentaries on Houston bullriders and Fatlip, formerly of the Pharcyde (who deserves a standing part in any future Spike Jonze film), there are 16 videos included (of the 40-plus he has directed). These are invariably conceptual one-offs (the Pharcyde rap backwards in "Drop"; Christopher Walken dances and flies in Fatboy Slim's "Weapon of Choice"; kids play Biggie and Puffy in "Sky's the Limit") or outright jokes (M.C. 900-Foot Jesus mails himself home in a box in "If I Only Had a Brain"; the Beastie Boys mix cop-show clichés in "Sabotage").

This is the side of him apparent

robotics—in his words, "the evolution from flesh to machine."

But it's his two videos for Aphex Twin, aka Richard D. James, that are his masterworks. "Come to Daddy," against an onslaught of harsh industrial drones and urban collapse, uses ghostly video images and gangs of angry children, all of them with James' bearded face superimposed, to sustain a deep irrational fear—tapping into the same disturbing imagery as **Don't Look Now** or Cronenberg's **The Brood**, or the same sudden terror that David Lynch used to access so effortlessly. Following up with "Windowlicker," his stated effort "to make a more commercial video for Aphex," he opens on a strident parody of hip-hop stereotypes, rolling in a low-slung convertible on the freeways of downtown L.A., where two players

White Stripes in Legos in "I'm in Love with a Girl" and then makes them into stop-action human time-trails in "The Hardest Button to Button." A born inventor (his grandfather, Constant Martin, invented one of the earliest synthesizers, the Clavioline, which can be heard on the Beatles' "Baby, You're a Rich Man"), he is constantly shown attaching wires to Bjork's fingers to create a keyboard-triggered Spirograph or scratching into the groove of a record and yelling, then playing back his own voice. (Bjork is clearly the unsung hero here, having discovered Gondry, championed the others early on and introduced them all to each other. At their L.A. premiere at the Egyptian Theater, Bjork was the guest deejay.)

Gondry's images seem mostly rooted in a pre-adolescent scatology and the fear of sex: The disc includes animations about farting and a short film where David Cross plays a life-size, papier-mache turd. (Even the name of his former band, Oui Oui, is a homophone for urination.) And according to his mother, four times a week between the ages of five and nine, Michel had the same nightmare, where the letter I enters the letter U. As George Carlin once said about the train going into the tunnel at the end of **North by Northwest**, "You don't have to be Fellini to figure that one out."

In fact, much of Gondry's raw material appears undigested from his dreams. Actively ridiculing Freud (even as his work resembles an open case study), he attributes a survival function to dreaming: Natural selection has carried it through half a billion years to release deep forgotten emotion at night, which re-bonds monogamous mates every morning, thus preserving the structure of the family across the millennia.

Dave Grohl, whose Foo Fighters video for "Everlong" features a couple's dueling dreams, recounts how Gondry justified the giant prosthetic hands he was forced to wear by admitting he was once plagued by similar nightmares.

"It was insane and ridiculous and inane," says Grohl in the documentary, "and it didn't seem like it made any sense. But then after he explained it to me, I thought... Maybe every one of his videos is some crazy nightmare or phobia or something inside of him that he's afraid to tell anybody else, and he just makes videos or puts it into film. It's a head trip."

In raptures it will write before you. A second trilogy of discs from Mark Romanek (**One-Hour Photo**), Jonathan Glazer (**Sexy Beast**) and Sanji (Propaganda) is reportedly in the works. ☹

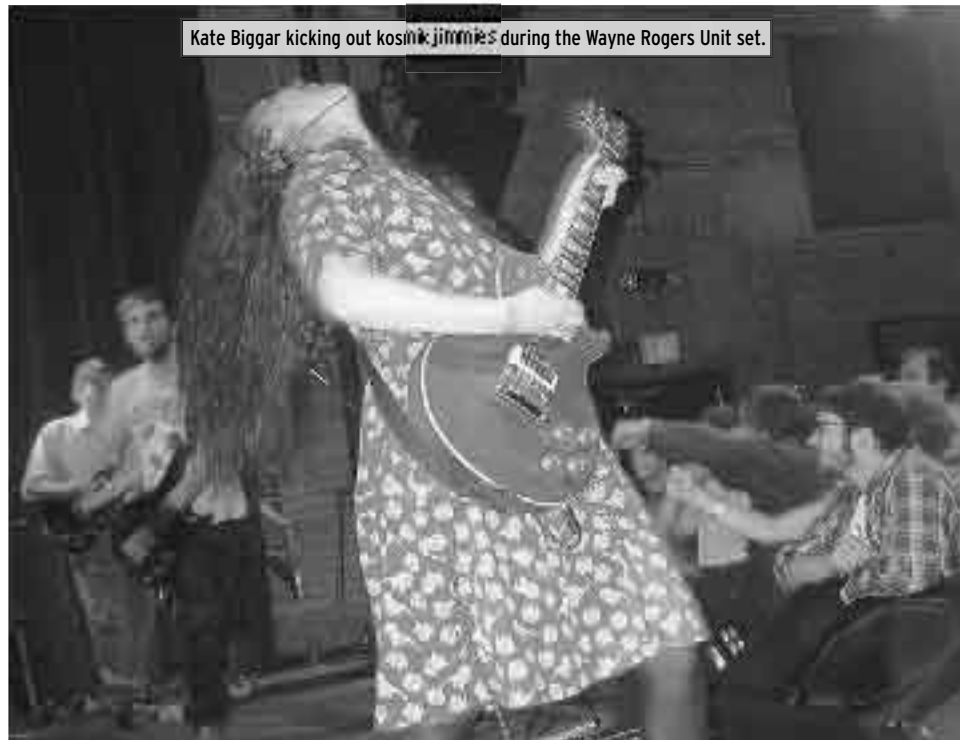
DVDs/videos discussed in this column:
The Work of Director Spike Jonze (Palm)
The Work of Director Chris Cunningham (Palm)
The Work of Director Michel Gondry (Palm)
Schizopolis, directed by Steven Soderbergh (Criterion)
K Street, directed by Steven Soderbergh (HBO, not available on DVD/video)

DVDs/videos courtesy of Cinefile, the official video store of Arthur. Contact Cinefile at (310) 312-8836 or www.cinefilevideo.com

Bull Tongue

Exploring the Voids of All Known Undergrounds

by BYRON COLEY and THURSTON MOORE
photographs by SETH TISUE



Kate Biggar kicking out kosmik jimmies during the Wayne Rogers Unit set.

INTERESTING to see and hear the **Tarot or Aorta: Memories of a PRE Festival** CD right now. It's one of the first three CDs released by sex-muzak kingpin Tom Smith's rather recent label stab The Smack Shire (www.smackshire.com). Along with the remarkable Georgia peach new wave sci-fi teen toilet graphic is the actual document of what was an outsider-music festival, curated by the sad pockets of Mademoiselle Smith. When Tom sent the call out to the chosen sensualists to partake in the **Tora Tora Tora fest** it seemed then, in 1997, as an incredible venture. Surely he was nuts; this was already proven through his years as slaughter-poet/vocalist with To Live and Shave in L.A. and Peach of Immortality. What was exciting was Tom's vast net slithering through and past the most obvious noise-boy contenders in search of deeper, more bizarre authentica. And it was beautiful: Loren Mazzacane Connors, Davy Williams & LaDonna Smith, Monotona, Harry Pussy, Liquorball, leslie q., and a dozen or so more true American genius originals. If you were there it must've been swell, if you weren't it all seemed to come and go quickly and the wild flurry of post-post-noise underground mania pulsed forward in bunny-fucking multiplicity—to the point where the Tora Tora Tora festival was a faint memory of some lost Mayan era. So much has come and gone with babies and grandmas and pas making all kinds of wonderful free-rock racket. There's a whole new stream of blood-contingency today and Tom's issuing of this live document is goddamned timely.

Stopping for a quick breath (or smoke, if you wish) and flipping thoughtfully back to the mid-late '90s, when Harry Pussy was a wholly magical signifier to new noise rock newness, makes some kind of holistic sense. Particularly since Adris Hoy (drum/vox of HP) has been seen returning to the stage as of late with a fascinating, new-thought edge. Listening to the throwdowns that run through this snapshot of Tora Tora Tora is at once quaint and curious. Most of the music freaks involved are still locked in devotion to their

creative light, either in the same guise or anew, but some of them are possibly relevant only as historical archaeologies. Regardless, they're all excellent or near-excellent in being consistently exhibited on stage so as to run home and cook up whole fresh turkeys, pot roasts and soup pots for the rumbling artist appetites. For a real live punk freak he's a bonafide super chef and last I heard he was in deep sushi prep studies. Destijl, in contrast, has a rather low-key stance, releasing very limited recordings of super-lost folk/psych woodsmen. No catalog listing or website presence but a recognized and honorable profile. It is also the label that initially spearheaded this event and it is a token of its appeal to absurdity that they would actually conjoin themselves with the rampant lunacy of Freedom From. It was a meeting destined for either total hell breakdown or magical mystery success. Fortunately, for all in attendance, it was the latter.

Friday, October 3rd was the pre-festival night at a hip rocking bar in St. Paul called Big V's. **Hair Police** from Lexington, KY, who we squawked about a couple of **Arthurs** ago, hit the stage and were sick. We mean **literally** sick. After playing guitar as if it were

tempered by LSD-driven Captain Kangaroo positivism. His other love is the culinary arts and he paused hardly once to see how much greatness was being consistently exhibited on stage so as to run home and cook up whole fresh turkeys, pot roasts and soup pots for the rumbling artist appetites. For a real live punk freak he's a bonafide super chef and last I heard he was in deep sushi prep studies. Destijl, in contrast, has a rather low-key stance, releasing very limited recordings of super-lost folk/psych woodsmen. No catalog listing or website presence but a recognized and honorable profile. It is also the label that initially spearheaded this event and it is a token of its appeal to absurdity that they would actually conjoin themselves with the rampant lunacy of Freedom From. It was a meeting destined for either total hell breakdown or magical mystery success. Fortunately, for all in attendance, it was the latter.

Next up was **The Dream/Aktion Unit** which was Chris Corsano drums, Paul Flaherty sax and Jim O'Rourke and T. Moore guitars. It's a conflict of interest for us to talk about our participation here but let us just say

an alien bursting from his Whitehouse t-shirted chest, lung shredder Mike Connelly proceeded to puke into his upended guitar case. Many electric devil signs and middle fingers and power fists were flailing as Hair Police moved through a set of experimental action rock which proved that they, and Michigan kingpins Wolf Eyes, are the most exciting bands from the American Midwest since The Stooges and MC5. A number of sporadic sonic releases by Hair Police exist on vinyl and cassette but this weekend saw the band celebrating their new cassette, **Probe Cutting**, on Mike Connelly's own Gods of Tundra label. This tape is remarkable as it offers an alternative view into the band's group sound. While some may write them off as just another spazz attack, here they seriously delve snuffle-deep into warp group cosmosis. An insightful interview with the boys Mike, Trevor and Robert can be read at the **bettawreckonize** webzine.

Up next was **Metalux**: two women in association with the amazing Bride of No No, whose second, possibly posthumous, LP on Atavistic is in frantic rotation here. Like that group, Metalux give off a distinctly

moist nips were way erect by gig's rosy dawn. And speaking of moist nips, it was a gas to catch the legendary **Michael Yonkers** romp through a set of hard blues slice-and-bake guitar rock. Yonkers has been busting with intensified singular outsider yowl in Minneapolis since the '60s, when he led teen garage dynamos Michael & the Mumbles, to the '70s, when he weaved improv slink with Milo Fine's Blue Freedom's New Art Transformation, into the '80s/'90s/'00s, where he continually pumps shards of gut from his axe unlike any other electric six-stringer around. All this is apparent on the **Microminiature Love** LP which Destijl released in microminiature quantity. Thankfully, it has been rescued again and is easily attainable as a Sub Pop CD. At this fest he was slipping a few of his new **It's Only Yonkers** CDRs around and it's already being touted as the most fried-inside of modern Yonkers yet. It demands release.

The next day was the official first day of the fest and **Aaron Dilloway** was chosen for the opening invocation. Dilloway is the one connective tissue 'twixt this event and the six-years-prior Tora Tora Tora fest, as he had appeared at that affair with the trio known only as Hercules. Dilloway is like the hitchhiker in **Texas Chainsaw Massacre** (original Tobe Hooper film, not the MTV rip), but instead of googling the knifeblade along his arm he transubstantiates noise-gore energy through mind/machine improv. The last couple of years have seen him primarily involved with the ultra-ruling Wolf Eyes so to see him play this solo lunchtime slot was a precursor to an unflagging mindblow of a trip. With stringy locks hanging, black boots kicked forward, he drove his machine like a pit mechanic investigating a sweet ride. Dillo delivered an ace. He also runs the longstanding distro/label Hanson Records where you can seek out some solo Dilloway laceration as well as a host of other fine meats.

Up next was **Metalux**: two women in association with the amazing Bride of No No, whose second, possibly posthumous, LP on Atavistic is in frantic rotation here. Like that group, Metalux give off a distinctly

Photographer
Seth Tisue
lives in Chicago.
See www.tisue.net.



Bull Tongue

dispossessed alien zap. Songs take on a grey whoosh with blurposette whizzing vox and oddball sampled guitar crackle to make you maybe think you're drunk on the moon. A curious display and not too far removed from the hep qualities found on their **Fluorescent Towers** LP available on Hanson. A forthcoming split LP on the Belgium Veglia label with the UK's phenomenally fucked Evil Moisture has us all panic sweating.

Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice is the new project of ex-Golden Calves Money Band and this performance had ringleader James Jackson Toth joined by Tovah O'Rourke (of Dead Machines), Matt Krefting (of The Believers) and a few other sprites out for adventure. It all slipped from some faerie aether into a sweet lyrical pronouncement from Toth and within eight minutes he bailed into the audience and sang his way into the basement, thus winding the rather extended ensemble to a finish. WW&TV's future plans are that they will hitchhike-tour across the USA. Give 'em a lift and maybe they'll turn you on to their **Book of FM** cassette released on their own Polyamory label. It's an initial clatter of a session and downright weird but no weirder than what will be their future LP release on Destijl.

Emil Beausoleil, the performing guise of RRRecords' resident genius Ron Lessard, blew the house down. He plugged a table lamp in, and set it up on stage next to a couple of Ron-rigged turntables. A semi-circle of curious elves gathered to see what this hurried man was up to. He chose his materials and set the needles down and listened to the front of house speakers emit their conservative rock and roll output. "Can you please turn up the PA?!!!" he yelled to the soundman, who obviously had NO idea how to deal with Emil. The soundman, in his learned judgment, thought that the noise was loud enough as noise, unlike some lame hard rock band which he'd probably knee-jerk to deafening decibels. But this was obviously wrong and to have it any louder would be criminal but Ron pleaded, "Turn it up! I am a professional!" The pleading became part of the show and Emil mixed it up with the great noise blowing out from the electric stylus hotcha, all the while infuriating the soundman. After about 20 highly entertaining minutes of this back-and-forth Emil went into a wonderful choreography of preparing his self with the adornment of a button-down sweater and tie. Now he was ready to go! But the soundman had to remind Emil that his time was pretty much up. Everyone was told to stay at the 30-40 minute mark as there were so many acts. At Emil's 30 minute mark he exclaimed "I was just warming up!" and from there he



Dead Machines' Tovah O'Rourke and John Olson: "Whoa, who cut the fuckin cheese?!"



Keith Connelly of No Neck Blues Band: pixie-fried as usual.



Jim O'Rourke of Dream/Aktion Unit, comin' down hard.



Jack Rose plays new blues for beard-os.

fucking thrashed. He always does.

We were spent and ran out to fish for some liquids and missed Devendra Banhart but returned duly to be melted by the exquisite vocalese of **Bridget St. John**. Bridget released four dark folk LPs whilst traversing 1960s psychedelic London, Greenwich Village and the West Coast. She was a confidante of Nick Drake and had played in settings with Kevin Ayers and Mike Oldfield, amongst others. Her four-and-a-half solo LPs **Ask Me No Questions** (Dandelion 1969), **Song For The Gentle Man** (Dandelion 1971), **Thank You For** (Dandelion 1972), **Jumblequeen** (Chrysalis 1974), and **The First Cut** (Shagrat 1996), are haunting masterpieces of folk-charmed drama. Many thought her vanished but she has been alive and well on Bleeker Street, NYC for some time and appeared shockingly a few years back at a memorial concert for Nick Drake in NYC. Destijl plans on recording a new Bridget LP soon (a CD, **Take The Fifth**, containing a pastiche of odd session tracks was released on the UK See For Miles label, which also reissued the Dandelion sessions) and if her appearance at this fest was any indication of the beautiful nature that LP may contain, then be prepared to have mind and heart embraced. What was most telling of this festival is how much the boundaries between extreme noise slash and classic hippie dawn folk have blurred. The new generation's appreciation of all outsider music as common aesthetic is as remarkable as it is organic, yet it's also nutso in its record collector absurdity. The one performance I saw Wolf Eyes noise queen John Olson stage front at was the Bridget set and he was obviously digging the honest sublimity flowing like sweet clotted cream through his oracular scope. Or maybe he was just trying to cadge a beer from someone.

As soon as Bridget began to head for the basement zone she noticeably stopped and turned in quizzical response to an immediate sound happening back on stage. **Fursaxa**, the lone figure of Pennsylvanian Tara Burke, had immediately begun a chime tree incantation of readiness. All minds seemed to gravitate towards this non-break in action and it took the classicism of Bridget's world and delivered a wholly other 'scape of folk/psyche contemplation. Fursaxa swept the audience off its collective squat, emoting swirled long note vocal lines floating atop mystic pump organ balustrades. Her closing piece was a layered accordion texture composition that dropped all to enchanted grace. She has two new self-released CDRs on her site: **Trobairitz Are Here From Venus** and **The Cult From Moon Mountain**, both of which are highly recommended.

We took another spill into the



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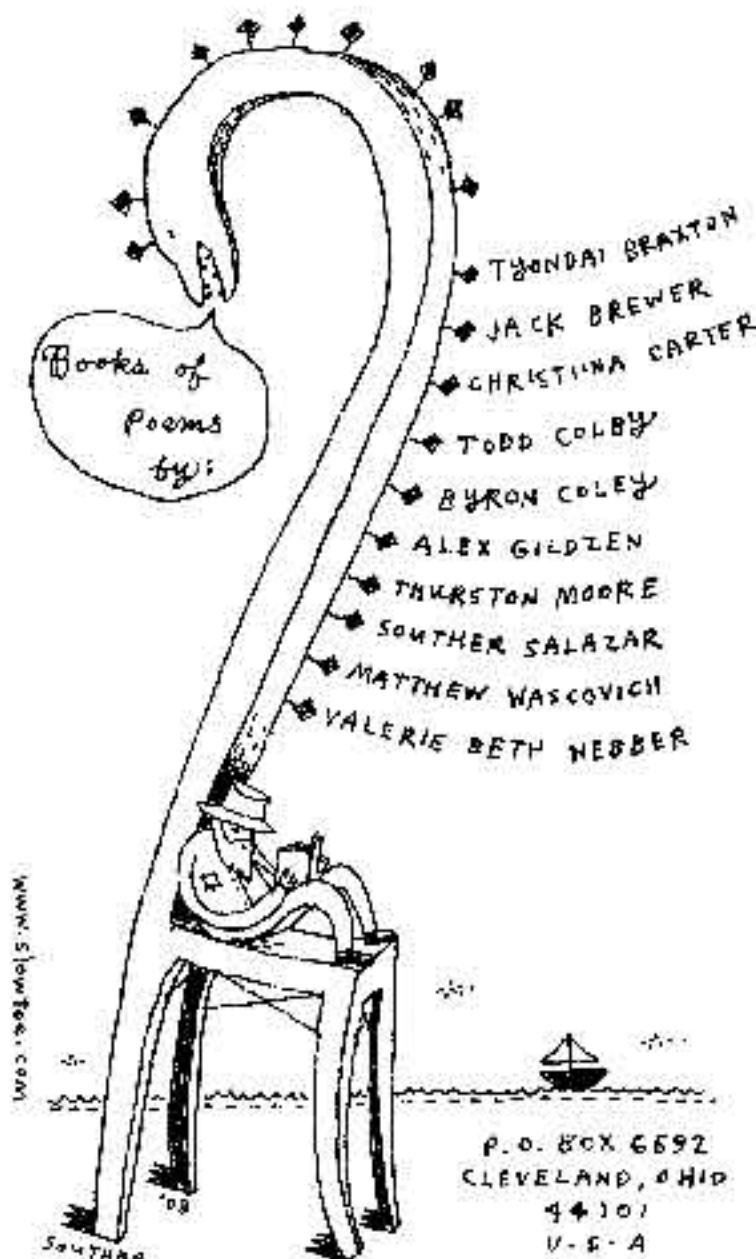
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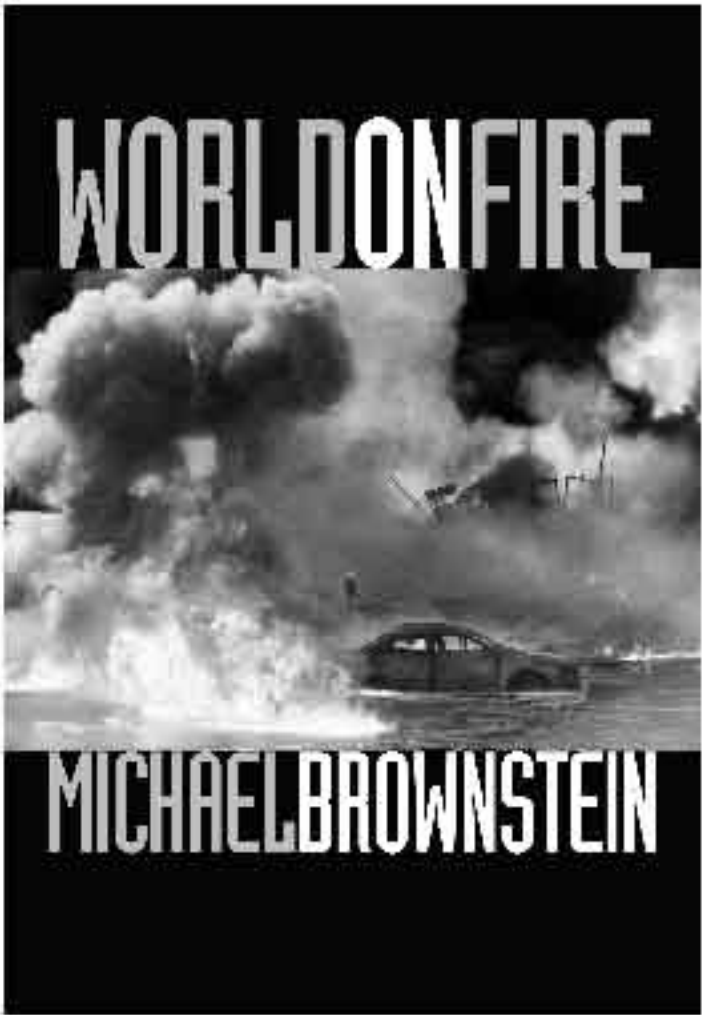
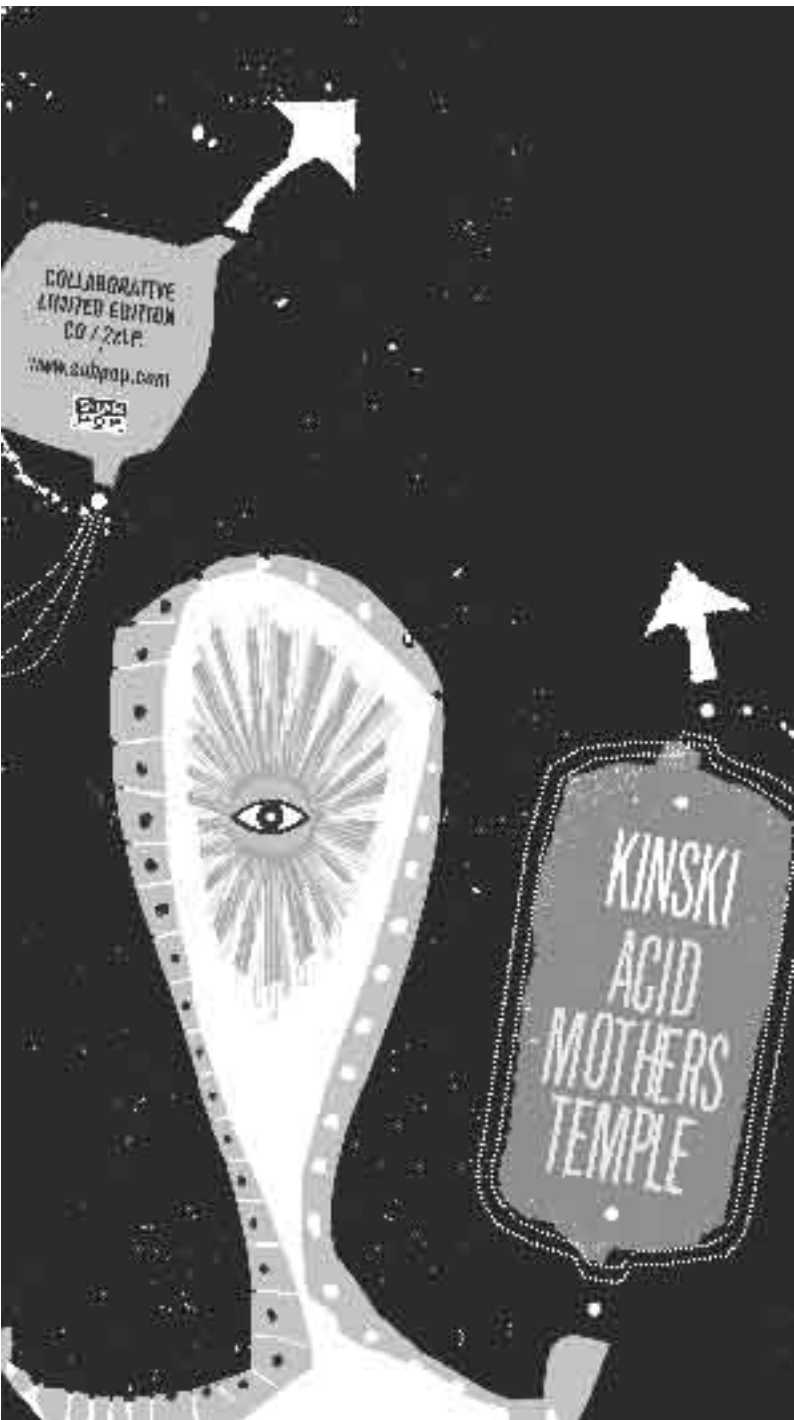
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Arthur No. 7 (Nov 03)

Cover by John Coulthart and W. T. Nelson: My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields; Paul Cullum on Sun Ra; underground psych bands Sunburned Hand of the Man, Comets On Fire and Six Organs of Admittance profiled; Peaches advises readers; Joe Carducci on Charles Bronson; photos by Susannah Breslin; John Geiger on the Dream Machine and the Beats; T-Model Ford on home schooling; Steve Aylett and Brian Evenson on terrible diseases; comics by Sammy Harkham, Gary Panter and Jordan Crane; Byron Coley & Thurston Moore; a horoscope by Ian Sienonius.

Arthur No. 6 (Sept 03)

The Return of Iggy & the Stooges, with long interviews with Iggy and the Ashtetons, Miek Watt tour diaries and amazing live photos. Plus: Holly Golightly, the L.A. Cacophony Society, Weather Underground, T-Model Ford, Erin Cosgrove's 'The Badger Meinof Affair', Mrs. Nugent's memoirs, Ian Sienonius horoscope, Paul Cullum, Byron Coley & Thurston Moore, and comics by Jordan Crane, Megan Kelso and Souther Salazar.

Arthur No. 5 (July 03)

Arthur Against Empire special featuring David Cross, Chris Hedges, Alan Moore, David Byrne, Michael Moorcock, Art Spiegelman, the GLAMericans, Michael Brownstein, Charles Potts, Amy Trussell, Daniel Pinchbeck, Sharon Rudahl, Robbie Conal, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, John Coulthart, Patti Smith & Jem Cohen, Carol Swain, Peter Kuper, Megan Kelso with Ron Rege, Bill Griffith and David Lasky. Plus: the Electric Six, June Carter Cash, Paul Cullum, Byron Coley & Thurston Moore.

Arthur No. 4 (May 03)

Alan Moore on art, magic and consciousness; Plus The Black Keys and Sleater-Kinney on the road, 'Ask T-Model Ford,' Othar Turner and Bernice Pratcher, Alissa Quart on how corporate marketers target kids, comics by Martin Cendreda, Renee French, Luster Kaboom, Steven Weissman, Johnny Ryan, Jordan Crane and Sammy Harkham. Plus Byron Coley & Thurston Moore.

Arthur No. 3 (Mar 03)

A wake for Joe Strummer, with a lengthy interview by Kristine McKenna and magnificent photos by Ann Summa; Gabe Soria on The Polyphonic Spree; an excerpt from Ashley Kahn's *A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album* by Ashley Kahn; John Lurie deals advice artist Shirley Tse spotlighted; comics by Sammy Harkham, Jordan Crane, Johnny Ryan, Sam Henderson, Marc Bell and Ron Rege Jr. Plus Byron Coley & Thurston Moore.

Arthur No. 2 (Jan 03)

Unseen '60s photos of the Velvet Underground, Lenny Bruce, Anita O'Day, James Baldwin, Marlon Brando, the Black Panther Party by Charles Brittin; Sue Carpenter joins the circus; Gabe Soria spotlights Devendra Banhart; Douglas Rushkoff talks with Genesis P-Orridge; Steve Aylett on Jeff Unt; excerpt from Caetano Veloso's autobiography; T-Model Ford tells it like it is; comics by Kevin Huizenga, Jordan Crane, Anders Nilsen and James Kochalka, and a drawing by Sammy Harkham; Byron Coley & Thurston Moore; and Peter Relic remembers Jam Master Jay.

Arthur No. 1 (Oct 02)

Premiere issue featuring Mat Hoffman; Peaches interviewed by Ian Sienonius; Daniel Pinchbeck; at home with Arthur C. Clarke (I), with new portrait by Geoff McFetridge; a frightful fairytale by Dame Darcy; Eddie Dean's Blue Ridge Mtns ice cream truck memoirs; Joe Carducci on contempo culture, with painting by Camille Rose Garcia; one-panel comics by David Bertram; a profile of Lift to Experience; Neil Hamburger gives advice; Paul Cullum on Eagle Pennell; and Byron Coley & Thurston Moore.

Bull Tongue



Metalux: "Calling Courageous Cat, can you hear me?"



Chris Corsano of Dream/Aktion Unit: the club ran out of mic stands.

streets in search of reality and missed **Espers**, a folkish conglomerate from the East Coast, but made it back in time to catch a formidable excursion by **Nmperign**. Like John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Nmperign (Greg Kelley-trumpet, Bbob Rainey-sax) evince music from small free actions and are fully inside the compositional propulsion, granting the listener a steam head experience of fresh born creativity. A helluva time; but you got to be right up in it to let it flip and canoodle around your psyche, otherwise it becomes so much tick-tock inside the environment. Which is not altogether a bad alternative. They had unboxed their new double-LP, handsomely packaged by the Siwa label, entitled **We Devote Every Effort to Offer You the Best That You Deserve to Have for Your Enjoyment**. Siwa takes great care in producing high quality editions. This Nmperign LP is downright beautiful and it wonderfully captures the work style of these cats.

The MVEE Medicine Show is Matt Valentine and Erika Elder and, as evening began its nudging arrival, these good practitioners of earth/magic love played a welcome set of radical animal head jam. It's Matt and Erika's Child of Microtones outfit which put on the Brattleboro Free Folk Fest that **The Wire** splashed on its "New Weird America" cover and, in a more outside/rural way, pre-dated this now full-blown orgy of groove.

At this point, the group mind of the audience was in superbake mode and it was due time for some regal ass-kicking, 'though we weren't quite in agreement as to how that should take place. **The Wayne Rogers Unit** took the stage and a cynical perspective took hold. These guys are gonna play some psych-rock noise jamz? That might be a cornball bummer! Within 30 seconds of Kate Biggars' awesome rock + roll guitar goddess power swings and Wayne's zapped lead scorch, the club was a burning hole of high time energy. Completely and totally ass-blasting, the entire dumbstruck audience lit up with raging rock energy and pushed this band into sheer sonic epiphany. They shut down with a weepingly great rendition of Thunderclap Newman's "Something in the Air." The night time is the right time and all systems were jumped. Wayne and Kate have plenty of different sides available from their record label/store Twisted Village. Hopefully they'll kick out a Wayne Rogers Unit disc quick. (A new Wayne Rogers album is out now from Drag City; it includes his cover of The T.N. song - 'Helpful' Ed.)

Before exiting the smoked stage, Kate raised both hands in the air and yelled "**Borbetomagus!!!!**" as that was indeed the next salacious course. We've been tracking the

Borbetomagus monster since its mid-'70s inception and tonight they strode onto the stage like feted royalty. It was legend time and in celebration of such mythos, Don Dietrich sported an oversized Jimi Hendrix t-shirt which was a visual call to arms. Dietrich and Jim Sauter, within a hot minute, locked their horns "bells together" and sent out snaked multiphonics careening with total life over the guitar-driven field of concrete miasmas courtesy Donald Miller. Unusual for Borbetomagus, at least in our experience, the trio actually got into some quietism, which opened their palette of intensity to a neo-sophisticated, freakish level. To the delight of everyone, the reedmen whipped out rubber hoses and attached them to their horns and blew out jets of grunt ending with Dietrich on his back gurgling up a mouthful of beer through the sounding rubber. This was sex Nyack, NY-style and the room was dripping.

The midnight hour threatened as last call would be in effect and it was in giddy anticipation as **Tony Conrad** dropped a white sheet across the front of the stage and set up his violin/electronics unit. Tony Conrad=fucking heavy. In collaboration with LaMonte Young in the '60s Tony formed the Theatre of Eternal Music, where a newfound investigation and reckoning of drone music dynamism was put to action. This was a direct current through John Cale into the Velvet Underground, a premier influence on just about everything moving in this room. And that's but a segment of Tony's history in multimedia. Long, sonorous electric bowed tones filled the space and at each pause a percussive moving **whomp** of a signal punctuated the environment. All the while, a surrealist shadow of the performer bellowed in gargantua across the stage. This was pure and utter mesmer music. As heavy as God. First night over. All crawled home and slept for the coming Sunday.

A different vibe this day, as second days usually are. Bleary-brained mortals ready to bust a second nut but knowing they really need to find some fucking java and soon. We missed **Ian Nagoski's** opening set but heard it was a sublime offering to the rising tribes poking about the ether.

Neon Hunk decided to caffeinate the gathering heads with hard-spiked electro slap adorned in knitted tumble-wear. Each hyper-bonk karate chopped its way through our skulls, not unlike their wicked LP on Load Records **Smarmymob** or the bonkers cassette **Neyan Honkies** (on Twig from Nautical Almanac's label Heresee). This duo-Jennifurmium on lead synth/ vox and Pink Diamond on drums, modular 'tronics and vox-are always a sweet kick to catch but we



GARYPANTER.COM - ONE THE BEATCH WITH

Bull Tongue

were still seeking the sex charm left the night previous.

It was within the grasp surely of **Burning Star Core**. We raved about these little fuckers an issue or two ago and they've only grown in amazingness. The violin-slicing Spencer Yeh, electronix arbiter Mike Shiftet and drummer Trevor Tremaine had spent the last 36 hours noise slamming in the pits, from the Hair Police Friday kill-down to last night's Tony Conrad mind-crush. They were ready to slay and they did and in their own time. They didn't beat off and blast, they let the music take its own path and guided it masterfully. Zipper fuck violin amp rock intershot with improvised quarktronix grabbed us back into the beast. It was topped off with Hair Police's **Mike Connelly** joining for a vocal necksnap and we were on our way to a fucking killer day of sickness. Connelly's Gods of Tundra label has just released the **Amplified Body Sound** cassette and we suggest you grab a couple now.

Into a room abrim with pariah visions, shuffled the crown prince of outsider U.S.A.: the soul-blamming persona of **Arthur Doyle**. Arthur has heard the noise of God penetrate Satan's sacrum in more ways than most of these pups have had teeth in mouth, but does he lord this wild wind about their shells? Naught! He calls a dog a dog, and today he was the diva with the hand cream notion. His recorder and voice songs were gracious Nivea to the grey matter of towelette consciousness. The ladies in attendance I saw, Heather Leigh Murray of Scorses and Rita Ackermann of Angelblood, silently evoked this man's great hands in bliss everlasting with smiles and eyes bewinked. Arthur Doyle can lay waste to any jaded preconception and though today's salutation was noteful for its brevity, it was nevertheless relentlessly religious.

An event a lot of us were salivating for was the appearance of **Dead Machines**, the romantik-noise union betwixt John Olson and Tovah O'Rourke. Olson runs American Tapes, possibly the most recognized of contemporary U.S. underground noisetrax labels. It's also one of the most infuriating as releases come roughshod out of the gate in extreme micro numbers (editions of 15 are not unusual) and are discontinued post-haste. And their iconography is hardcore psychoslash making them rather difficult to differentiate. Which, of course, is their beauty, as it constitutes a universe of living music. The label is just past its 300th release with no sign of slowing down. Since Tovah (ex-Golden Calves) relocated to Michigan to take Olson's hand in sacramental rite, as well as to do her own thing, she's released some of the coolest sounds from the American Tapes factory to date. Together



Arthur Doyle calls out for "more Nivea!!!"



Trad Gras och Stenar in deep psyche trance.

they've exhibited stretches of improvised junk machine counterplay which bring to mind a feminized Wolf Eyes with a gonad butter dish of bohunk. Olson is insane in his fabric-splitting military fatigue T-shirt and drink-fight-and-fuck keychain belt and Tovah is resplendent in her natural gorgeousness. When Olson walks over, kisses her, grabs the mic and proclaims "fuck the cops," you know you're at the center of the universe. If only just for a while. They have a one-sided handcut LP "**The Things**"

(edition of 15-available as of press time but probably long gone). There's a great cassette in a large edition of 40 called "**Future Funerals**" which is really the real deal.

Jack Rose, continuing his investigation into folk blues guitar text, sat his ass down and ripped through his blue mountain repertoire. Jack came out of the mighty drone psyche world of Pelt and with the same southern charm that combo identified itself, Jack does so in solo stance. The process of breaking-through is as

meritorious as the actual blow-out and Jack languishes at this acoustic door showing us all things we may have been dulled to by through the years of post-Tora Tora exposition. He has just released a great document of this time of his travel on the Eclipse label called **Opium Musick**.

What seemed like a dude-laden day got busted as **Angelblood** made a completely rare appearance on the live stage. Angelblood forms from the uncategorizable flares of NYC's Gang Gang Dance, Diadal and No Neck Blues

Band as well as the ricochet finger jab-guitar licks of Orthrelm. Indeed it was Orthrelm's Mick Barr who was responsible for a lot of the compositional guitar action, but his lickage is now played by a strapping Swede improviser who gave the group a new sense of metal flow. And metal is the elemental catalyst of this odd yet sultry swagger. What began as a three-woman night-trip (Jess Holzworth left for warmer climes) is now just Rita Ackermann and Lizzie Bougatsos singing/chanting/evoking/crying/screaming the spirits of earth and moon, driven by the right-on dark metal skin pummel of No Neck's Dave Nuss, who got this shit down cold a long while back whilst a lad named Bambi in the Texas metal circuit with Angkor Watt. Rita moves with a sensual Hungarian nightclub liit with a smile and a cigarette and a voice howling into the soul of dark dreams while Lizzie stands in black with an early Ozzy intensity, her banshee shrieks breaking any freak spell within 9000 miles. The tunes were killer and the girl/girl sex possession rituals were uncaged eros. The scent was dizzying. After the **Angelblood** and **Masses of the Daggers** CDs on the Japanese Captain Trip label, they now have a new CD of this crazed line-up being readied for issue by Printed Matter.

With boners engorged, we crawled to a bar around the corner to drown the heat, missing the over-excited hard rock of **No Doctors**. But we returned in time to see the last half of **Noxagt** who were on a rampage of crushing blackball bass (Kjetil Brandsdal), whamming drum constructions (Jan Christian Kyvik) and hyper violin shard spray (Nils Erga). These three Norwegians have been at it for a few years now and recorded a killer document of their moves released by Load Records called **Turning It Down Since 2001**. This disc just plain slams and tonight's gig showed the crux of their group gush. A perfect soundtrack to our horn-dogged oats.

Jackie-O Motherfucker played an extended piece of music completely beyond anything we've ever heard them do. It was an exhilarating display of mass instrumentation in active repetition. They had the sophisticated wherewithal to let the composition have its own accord, whilst gracefully directing it to now wide-open levels of positivism. Astounding and assured and joyful. Head honcho Tom Greenwood runs the U-Sound Archive where much JOMF is available (as well as a new limited edition book of illos by legendary Chocolate Monk/Prick Decay/Decaer Pinga wizard Dylan Nyoukis-brilliant). (There's also a new double-album by JOMF on ATP Recordings.-Helpful Ed again.)

After JOMF warmed the club to a sweet sizzle, the mood was buzzing in warmth and grooviness. **No Neck Blues Band** set the stage up with their classic array of urban fire music

percussion and prepared guitar/sax. And there was Michiko, long-haired Japanese woman adding a vibe of actual Noh-wave spontaneity. And Keith Connelly with Stooges aviator shades and wildstyle red beard. People were ready for this. Many here knew No Neck as some mythical sub-world improv outfit. All the band had to do was do what they do best: wrap the music round their heads and let it rip. It certainly started off this way and the audience was latching on, but then it went into bloopersville. An attempt at living danger was in effect, but to a crowd of hardcore Midwesterners this was about as dangerous as the Knick City Dancers. Drums and cymbals flew into the audience, ashtrays were tossed off the balcony blasting glass bits around the onlookers feet (cool!), blindfolds were worn across the stage (though there was obvious peeking going on), and a beer bottle shard was used to cut into skin (ouch...fuck!). It was entertaining, regardless, especially Keith's antagonistic "they why dontchyou shut the fuck up?" patter to the heckling crowd. The club owners threatened to pull the plug on the festival after witnessing the backstage fruit tray being tossed in the air nearly shattering hanging light fixtures (cool!) and demanded to Clint Simonson, the Destijl organizer, to stop the band. Clint was digging it, we all were-retardo chaos is a gas-so he refused. It ended with most of the band winding down in apologetic disengagement. There was the feeling of divisiveness and regret, as a chance to prove how good No Neck can be was overshadowed by a food fight. A general review of "whatever" was handed down. It certainly would be one of the more discussed sets of the event but for total mindblow it didn't even enter the race.

NNBB had been touring around with **Trad Gras och Stenar** (Swedish for, Trees Grass and Stone) and everyone was waiting to see these legends from Sweden. They came out to a riotous welcome, four elder gentlemen with shirts tucked in, and proceeded to trip out into a long classic drone rock groove. Lead guitarist Bo-Anders Persson was 60-plus years old and severely kicking everyone's ass. A mainstay of TG+S, Bo first formed the group Parson Sound in 1967 as a way to explore minimalist rock rapa. The band changed their name to International Harvester in 1968 and re-arranged members a bit, and got very involved with hippie "free" culture, recording two excellent LPs **Sov Gott Rose-Marie** (Love Records) and **Hemat** (Decibel Records). In 1969 they got more into it, traveling throughout Sweden, playing outside any mainstream confine with a freaked light and happening performance aesthetic, changing their name this time to Trad Gras Och Stenar and proclaiming "**you are the music we**



Don Dietrich of Borbetomagus: the only real way to play the sax when you get right down to it.



Tara Burke of Fursaxa.

are just the band." The next four years saw them release a self-titled LP on Decibel, **Rock for Kropp och Sjal** (Silence) and **Djungelns Lag** (Tall records). They split up in 1973 and released the posthumous **Mors Mors** LP (Tall), but regrouped every once in a while (once during the 1981 punk days as T. Gas). The 17thinden label released a 1970 live CD in 1995 called **Gardet 12.6.1970** and a double CD of Parson Sound music, both which are awesome, and Silence issued a 2002 session on CD "**Ajn Schwajn**

Draj." And now they are in fucking Minneapolis jamming heavily and we are more than mellow. Jim O'Rourke is passing out free LSD to anyone who's ready and much to everyone's pleasure, Rita Ackermann comes dancing onto the stage to muse the men into a higher key. Sweet!

For almost everyone in attendance this was the end, but one more act was ready to go and it was **Dwight Frizzell**, the man who released the weirdo 1976 out jazz LP, **Beyond the Black Crack**. The talk was that this LP was going

to be recreated live tonight but instead...well it was a rather softcore take on mid-'80s Arkestra action and pretty cornpone. We bolted to get some sick pizza around the corner and returned to see **Matt St. Germain** boogieing like a mouse on fire as the club personnel swept away the dust of goddamned good time.

Where a festival of this consistent greatness can lead is only to a next generation. What seems to be in the cards is the idea that anyone can put on a festival like this if they have the

focus to do so. Also 3 to 5000 dollars helps. The next one in the works right now is the No Fun festival in Brooklyn this March 2004, as curated by Carlos Giffoni of Monotrack. What distinguished the Tora Tora Tora fest and the Freedom From/Destijl fest was the curators' devotion to the tapestry of artfulness and original soul power running through avant garde jazz to dark folk dreams and buzzbomb noise power. Note to Giffoni: can't fucking wait, dude. ☺

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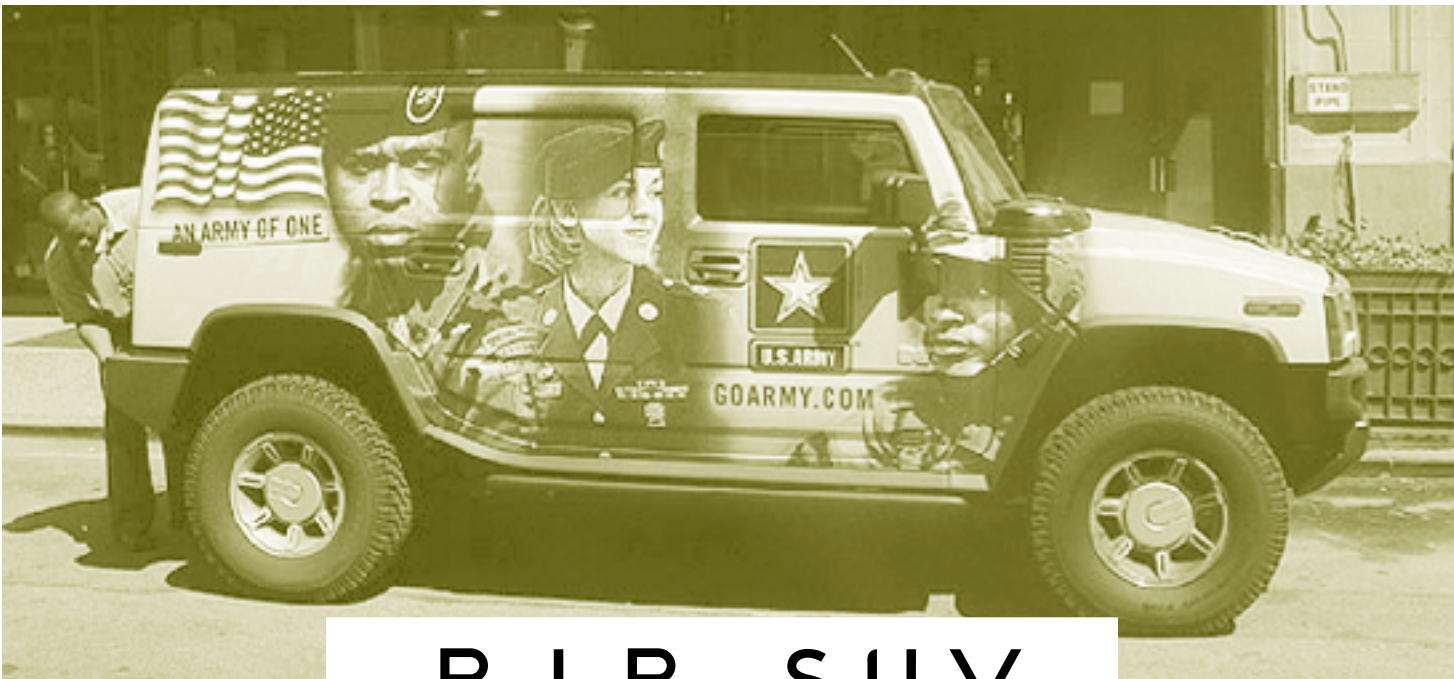
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Gary Panter, the artist best known for his comic strips featuring neanderthal punk Jimbo and his set designs for *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*, lives in Brooklyn with his wife and daughter. In 2000 he was awarded a Chrysler Design award. More of his work may be seen at garypanter.com

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"The [United States] military is teaming up with hip-hop bible *The Source* to recruit black urban kids with pimped-out Hummers and off-da-hook merchandise.
"You have to go where the target audience is,' says Col. Thomas Nickerson, director of strategic outreach for the U.S. Army Accessions Command, who says that the Army just reached its recruitment goal of 100,200 enlistees this year. 'Our research tells us that hip-hop and urban culture is a powerful influence in the lives of young Americans. We try to develop a bond with that audience. I want them to say, Hey, the Army was here—the Army is cool!'" —*Salon.com*, Oct 17, 2003



R.I.P. SUV

BY CHARLES POTTS

The ELF's set fire to San Gabriel's SUVs
Blowing the horn of sympathy for earth and man
Promising to never rest until the rest of us get it right
After Herr Gropenegger steered one of his recalled Hummers
Straight into the governor's unstable mansion.

Automobile addicts kick the habit
Downstairs by saving space in the volunteer army
For rip rap hip hop artists
From the defense department with unlimited budgets and
Pitiful powers of persuasion to morph enough
Niggers with Attitude into Niggers with Gratitude
Jacked up from grand theft auto to Hummer.
Join the American Foreign Legion.
Save the rich white men's empire from its diaper full of policy.

Target practice on the target audience.
Show us people we can shoot and get paid for it
Where men can't find work and volunteer
Uniformly for a job, a few meals, a chance to leave the streets
Of their hometown, their hoods, their barrios.
Go from the curb to the pinnacles of power
Reeking with criminally incompetent mischief
Dreaming of war without casualties.

Let us all now wallow in spent uranium
Spending enthusiasm for Gulf War Syndrome's
Inexplicable diseases except by the poisoned atmosphere of fear.
You want terror? Wake up to the nightmare grapple of
Mortal combat with abstract nouns
Produced by paranoid projections.

The American system of criminal free enterprise
Camouflages its intentions as public good
Promoting private desire.
Meet general disillusionment,
Camouflage, sabotage, subterfuge.

Carlot after carlot of unsold steel and chrome basks in
Zero interest for new cars quadrupled for the used ones
Poor people are conned into borrowing to buy.

A yellow Hummer coming down a one way alley
Forces me to wait in the left turn lane
For Bobcat to come home to papa
Now detained in Texas on a DUI.
Joy is a ride we all want to take.

Poet CHARLES POTTS lives in Walla Walla, Washington, where he operates The Temple Bookstore, a temple for poets. His *Little Lord Shiva: The Berkeley Poems*, 1968 was recently reprinted by Glass Eye Books.

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