

MARCH
2005

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ACROSS USA
AND CANADA

INSIDE THE
HIDDEN WORLD OF
**HENRY
DARGER**

THE DAY THE
**SECRET
SERVICE**
CALLED
IAN SVENONIUS

No More Trembling

HOW SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE'S BEN CHASNY
MADE HIS ACID-FOLK MASTERPIECE

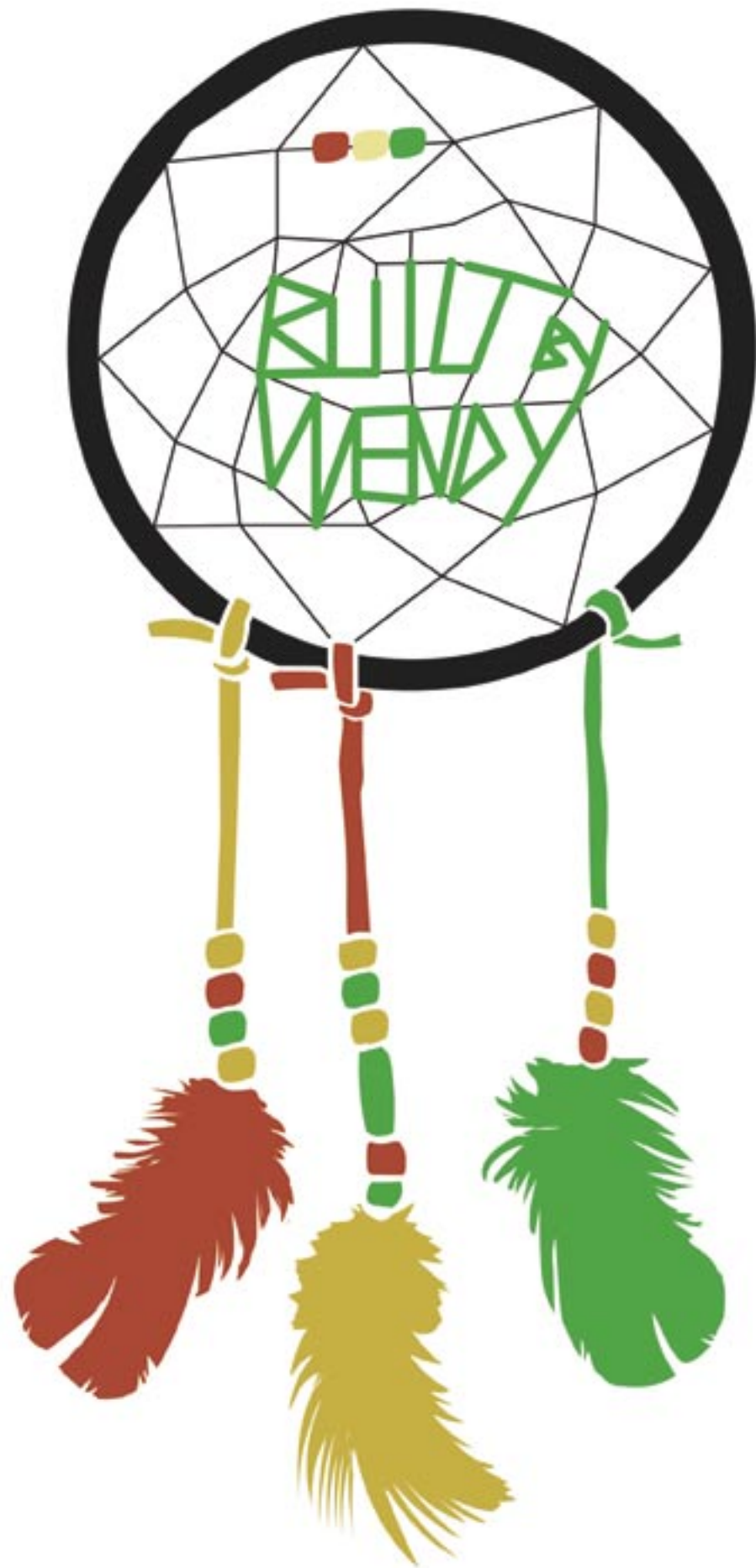
EVOLVE ALREADY
SAYS DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

MEDITATION
AS A
SUBVERSIVE
ACTIVITY

T-MODEL FORD
KNIVES, ANTS & FEMALE COPS

PLUS:
POST-ELECTION FUNNIES





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(Above) Dead-Car Wagon: Fincastle, Virginia, June 2004

PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICHARD LUCYSHYN

The Dead-Car Wagon made a three-day journey in the summer of 2004, traveling backroads from a Southwest Virginia speedway to an empty parking lot in Eden, North Carolina. Aliass and Bronson pulled the stripped 1980 Ford Pinto, with Jack Christian and Karin Bolender on board, and Passenger and Mosey accompanying. More info: www.deadcarwagon.com

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On the Cover: Ben Chasny by Allison Watkins



A DISPATCH FROM THE ARTHUR HEADQUARTERS

Life During Pre-Emptive Police Actions

I thought 2004 was over but at this writing, it seems like it's headed into its record-breaking 14th month with a full head of steam. The trendlines are clear and ominous: ignorance and fear times technology equals an elected government run by cult-think paranoids and a culture of know-nothing vapidty. Great. The only thing to do now is figure out how best to deal with what seems to be a rapidly deteriorating situation.

We didn't mean for it to work out this way, but somehow this issue ended up being a meditation on the current scenario: it sketches out the situ, and offers some possible solutions. Author J.G. Ballard locates the Fear in an almost existentialist place—the fear of meaninglessness, the fear of fundamental inexplicability—and sees the Bush Administration's doctrine of unilateralist pre-emptive

strikes as simply another iteration of the insane game theory ideas that have always been present in American foreign policy discussions (and which were so brilliantly forced up in Stanley Kubrick and Terry Southern's *Dr. Strangelove*). Meanwhile, Ian Svenonius, amongst other things, shows how far government surveillance has gone, and what provocative artists—no matter how obscure their project—can expect from their government.

What to do in the face of this daily, mounting madness? The comics artists in this issue's "Post-Election Funnies" feature (edited by Tom Devlin) speak explicitly about the artist's struggle in this situation, and more generally about the way we all try to reconcile

our responsibilities to our muses and needs with (broadly and admittedly grandiosely speaking) the needs of the world. We can retreat into our own universes, as secretive artist Henry Darger did for decades; that will inevitably be the answer for some of us, or part of the answer, and perhaps his example will offer some inspiration. Or we can go in the opposite direction—leave the cocoon and the couch, and become *more* social, working and playing in new kinds of collectives, as Douglas Rushkoff suggests in his first column

as *Arthur's* resident thinker guy. Michael Brownstein suggests that by using simple and time-tested techniques, we can reach inside ourselves, into previously untapped resources, in order to better

deal with the outside, and to change that outside to something that is better for everyone. The conversation with Ben Chasny touches on many of these issues as well.

Sketches, ideas, musings, suggestions, funnies: hopefully something in this issue of *Arthur* will resonate with you. Let us know—we welcome your comments at editor@arthurmag.com and also on our message board at arthurmag.com.

Finally, I'd like to salute *Arthur's* art director, W. T. Nelson, who has wonderfully redesigned this magazine for our new format, and as always, a big bravo goes out to all of our contributors and distributors, without whom you wouldn't be reading this. Thanks, everybody, for doing your part to end 2004.

—Jay Babcock
Los Angeles, California



Hotel & Farm by Ben Katchor



Ben Katchor/Hotel & Farm #106



LETTERS OF COMMENT

Eating Magic Mushrooms Won't Help You Overthrow the Corporate Oligarchy

I've been enjoying *Arthur* since issue 4. Here's some reflections:

Arthur seems to be embracing the role of Sixties revivalist in a lot of ways. If you're going to go that route, it's important that you avoid replicating the mistakes of that era.

There are a lot of young people who look back and have to conclude that drugs were the achilles heel of the Sixties peace movement. Trying to get stoners politically organized is like herding cats.

There's people who've been trying to start a NORML chapter at my college for like six years, but by their own admission, their drug intake means they always seem to lack the motivation and organization. The corporate media then-as-now loves drug culture because its emphasis on immediate gratification resonates so strongly with consumerist desire (cf. Thomas Frank's first book, *Conquest of Cool*). They glamorize and normalize getting fucked up through shitty movies

like *Dude Where's My Car* and shitty music like Pantera and Cypress Hill and Staind. For many of us, getting serious about overthrowing the corporate oligarchy means staying self-aware by not fucking with our brain chemistry.

So that's why it bugs me to see articles like Mark Pilkington's piece on magic mushrooms, replete with glamorous photos ["Re-Psychedelica Britannica," January 2005]. Pilkington adheres to a false binary between cool progressive hipsters who like drugs and stodgy old conservatives who wanna stop them. This oversimplification means that people who support decriminalization of drugs

but have strong reservations about their use are never represented. This is pretty much true throughout the

I don't want to come off as authoritarian or judgmental. Of course drug policy in this country is absurd, racist, and counter-productive. I'm

open to the idea that psychedelics might provide legitimate insights or heightened consciousness for some folks, though I'm certain that one can get there in other ways. And of course, I'd rather see the 14-year-old kids around my small rural town doing shrooms than meth or Oxycontin (seriously a big problem here). But I'd REALLY rather see them explode their minds in healthier ways. If you're going to try to start a consciousness-raising trend, why not publish a nice big feature spread on transcendental meditation?

I guess what I'm asking for is balance.

Also: more articles written by and about women and queers. Please? Thanks.

xo,
Kevin Erickson
Walla Walla, Washington

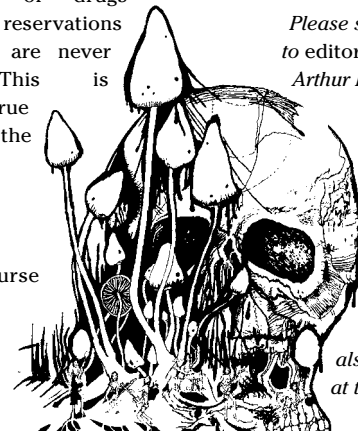
Kevin, *There will be more articles written by and about women and queers in Arthur's future. As for your request for an article on meditation in Arthur, please see page 36.*

It's never been our intention to be a "Sixties revivalist" rag. We do like aspects of the '60s, but we also like aspects of the '70s. And the '80 and '90s and '50s and 30s too. And '40s. And now. We'll take inspiration from wherever/whenever we can find it, basically. And for many of the artists and personages we have covered in Arthur, that inspiration has come, as a matter of historical fact, in the form of consciousness-expanding entheogens like psilocybin, cannabis and DMT. These are powerful substances, of course, and should only be used with due consideration. Dude Where's My Reality isn't a film for everyone, you know? ☺

Please send correspondence to editor@arthurmag.com or Arthur Editorial Lodge, 3408

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Arthur reserves the right to edit letters of comment for clarity, of course. (Believe us, you wouldn't want it otherwise.) You can also comment at length at the message board at www.arthurmag.com



MATT GREENE

HOROSCOPE

by Becky Stark



Aquarius

(January 21 - February 19)

Many of your judgments have allowed you to create a fortune, a palace and a miracle. You choose again, and you choose the miracle. In your vast explorations of horizons rising and falling, the delight you bring and the fascinations you lead are the priceless seeds of revolution, thought up on a ferris wheel ride!

Pisces

(February 20 - March 20)

It is in dreams that the water comes most. This mystery of you is everlasting, and rest comes from the sands. We take the sand as our character and our part. To feel the whole, we wash these small pieces through our hands. Return to the sand—walk on it, too!

Aries

(March 21-April 21)

Always beginning: the paradox of sublime sorcery. There is none more beautiful than the infant! Beautiful, perfect, divine child. You are weeping new tears that we can drink. Thank you for the new dance steps, too.

Taurus

(April 21 - May 21)

Dear sweet power of thought: I now devote myself to you. The miracle of thinking, and how magical this ability is to make reality—these thoughts guide my new world. I accept my leadership within this heaven on earth that is of my mind.

Gemini

(May 22 - June 21)

O my best friend, best friend of all life—the saddest and most funny—in your nature, human life rests its paradoxes. You are greatly loved as the keeper of the key as we enter the theater of utopia. Thank you for having carried this key with you all along!

Cancer

(June 22 - July 22)

You know everything! With this knowledge you also possess everything. The question is: how can you begin to not know things? Your perfect creative mind is manifested when you have the ability to choose what you see, what you hear, what you know, who you are.

Leo

(July 23 - August 22)

Forgive the sugar. Forgive the salt. Forgive the beginning, forgive the end. Forgive what you've taken, forgive what

you stole. Forgive when you waken, forgive when you're old. Love is the beginning, love is the end. Teach me how to waken, teach me how to mend.

Virgo

(August 23 - September 23)

Do you remember when you witnessed the animals coming to drink at the pool below your rock? You sat for hours as they came, some smiling at you. You tell this story to a stranger and the two of you weep with its tenderness. Remember your tenderness: it is the revelation of music.

Libra

(September 24 - October 23)

If a stranger offers you candy, you should take it. If taking it makes you fear for your life, then you should take two pieces. Then you should start also giving candy out to strangers, or maybe something more wholesome than candy.

Scorpio

(October 24 - November 22)

Hello children of desire! Be sure your passions are breaking upon the opening chances for life. Remember: choose ecstasy if it is new. When faced with the prison of before, choose the new ecstasy right now. You may experience this as the opposite of your previous or present body. Now prepare for your own godly power.

Sagittarius

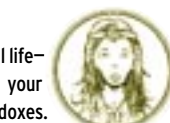
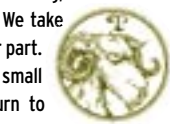
(November 23 - December 21)

O sweet love of the perfect aim! I know that your arrows can go anywhere. So you don't like those targets anymore? Go beyond the target and make your arrows return. This is your new practice. Now we all fly on the wings of your arrows! See how we fly! Your cooperative nature is the sexy side effect of such skillful flight.

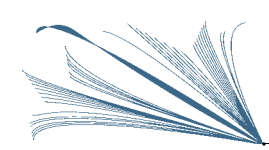
Capricorn

(December 22 - January 20)

If clowning was like flying, you are a kite! In this way, you catch electricity from the sky! Lightning travels to your paper and pen and we trust your words. This love is so strong around you that soon your comedies will manifest. Keep the comedies in your heart like you keep the money in your chest! If you are wondering, Hmm, does it matter if my soul lives or dies? The answer is yes—it matters! P.S. Your soul never dies. ☺



ARIK MOONHAWK ROPER



T-MODEL KNOWS BETTER

How's your health? A lot of people decide to go get a check-up as a New Year's resolution.

You live *longer* if you don't go to the doctor too much. It's alright to go if you have a little hurtin' or something, not too serious or nothin'... Every time you got something you wanting to be done, you [shouldn't be] runnin' to the doctor, runnin' to the doctor. They don't know all the time what they doctorin' on! So, I just go every now and then. I'm too old to let 'em cut on me.

What kind of blade do you carry?

It's a Case, the best knife I believe they made. A man's got to carry something. Someone told me years ago back, me and him was running together, and I know he had to see somebody

do somebody that away, and he told me, he said, Look T-Model, even if it ain't nothing but a pin, or a nail, carry *something* in your pocket. A folk can run up on you and make you do anything they want you to do and you aint' got nothin'. But if you got a nail or pin in your pocket... And that's true! I just love to carry something in my pocket. I wanted to carry a gun, but I don't need to carry it, 'cause folk can make you angry. And they done made me so mad, where I'm livin'. I'm trying to govern it down.

What's a good way to get rid of ants?

Get some diesel oil, burnin' in a tractor or somethin', find where the bed is at—don't dig it up!—and just pour it down in the little hole there. It'll get shed of

T-Model Ford is the 84-year-old self-proclaimed "Boss of the Blues," also known as The Taildragger. Every two months, Arthur calls up T-Model at his home in Greenville, Mississippi and asks some questions about things we have on our mind. T-Model gives his sage answers, then we transcribe the conversation with some interpreting help from the fellas at Fat Possum Records, the Mississippi label that releases T-Model's all-bets-are-off blues albums (more info at www.fatpossum.com). If you've got questions for T-Model, and we suspect that you do, email 'em to editor@arthurmag.com



them quick.

What do you think of the women's basketball league?

I don't like 'em too well. I'm particular about me. I don't like to see women hanging around too much together—there's a dead cat down the line, somewhere.

I heard you have women on the police force in Greenville.

I don't like that. That ain't no *woman's* job! That's a *man's* job. A woman'll arrest a man all for nothin'. They already want to do something to a man, and so if they get a chance, they stick it to a man. About a year or two ago, a black woman arrested *me* right here, sittin' by my car. I had to pay a \$144 for the fine what she give me and I wasn't even sayin' nothing.

The other guy was doin' all the cussing and talking. I'm just sitting there, listenin'. She said, One more word out of you and I'll send you down. I said, Yes ma'am. I was trying to *honor* her. But she didn't appreciate it. She came on out there and unbuttoned the handcuffs and locked me and they carried me down. We down there [at the police station] and the white lady says, What you got handcuffs put on you for? I says, I don't know. But when I had to pay that there fine, I told the sheriff, Don't send that black woman at me never no more. Send a *man* at me, not no *woman*. I says, Things might happen sure 'nuff if you send *her* back to arrest me!

What did the sheriff say to that?

He didn't say *nothin'*. ☹

COME ON IN MY KITCHEN

Have a Cup of **Brendan Benson's** Tea

*It's nice to know that the meticulous and charming nature of Brendan Benson's songwriting carries over into his kitchen as well. Thanks to the track "Tea" on his debut album **One, Mississippi**, letters from die-hard Japanese fans are usually coupled with a bag or two for Benson's boiling. His latest record, **Alternative to Love**, is out March 22 on V2. Here's how to make the perfect cup of tea, as told to Ben Blackwell.*

What you'll need

Water: This is the most important ingredient. It should be clean, but not loaded with chlorine or other such additives. I take it from the tap, but I'm fortunate to live in a city which boasts a premium grade drinking water. Others may not be so lucky and therefore should substitute using bottled water (just remember: no Coke or Pepsi products, as they undergo a heavy treatment process and are stripped of all character. I recommend Evian or Volvic). Water has flavor, however subtle it may be, and a little of that "regional essence" in the water is a good thing when making tea. If you dislike the taste of your tap water you might try letting it stand or "mellow" in a clean glass for an hour prior to boiling, thereby allowing the detergents to evaporate and the particles to settle. Pour the water into your kettle, taking care to not disturb the sediment.

A kettle: I have the electric variety which I like very much. You may also use the stovetop variety. I don't recommend using a cooking pot as it only provides for a poor aesthetic. Attention to such detail is critical in the tea-making process.

Tea bag: I've chosen to use the tea bag over the teapot for our purposes. Although the teapot method is more desirable, the tea bag will do just fine as long as it is of the highest quality. Twinnings, Red Rose and Lipton, contrary to popular belief, are not teas suitable for drinking at any time by any man. Avoid these brands at all costs. Ideally your tea should be purchased somewhere in the UK from an

ordinary grocery store. Brands such as PG Tips and Tetley are good. Barry's is a wonderful tea but not as common. If it's not convenient for you to travel abroad to buy tea then I suggest you search the Internet. I'm sure there is a service from which you can order tea from the UK. Yet another option is to buy Tetley "British Blend" bags if you can find them. Nothing else will do.

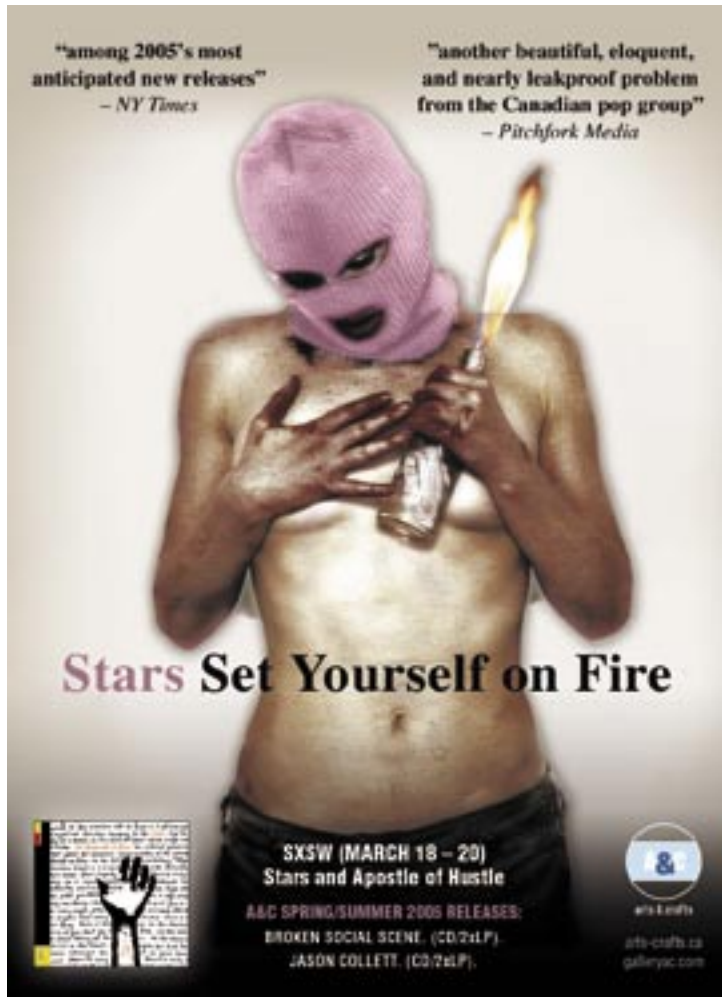
Milk and Sugar: Your tea must contain milk in order for it to be deemed proper. Milk neutralizes the tannic acid found naturally in tea. Cream should never be used. Organic, 2% milkfat is ideal; whole milk may be used, but often eclipses the delicate flavor

of the tea. Skimmed milk should be avoided. If you are lactose intolerant perhaps you might try an herbal tea (which I personally despise) instead, but under no circumstances should lemon be used as a substitute. Sugar, on the other hand, is an option which you may choose to forgo. I take a little sugar to excel and enhance the effects of the tea.

What to do

Bring water to a rolling boil and let stand for 30 seconds. Swish a little in your cup to warm it and pour it out. Drop the tea bag in and pour the water gently over the bag. Let steep, undisturbed for exactly four minutes. Do not stir. Use a small spoon to remove the tea bag, letting the water drain from the bag. Do not squeeze the bag and do not let the spoon remain in the cup, as it conducts precious heat and will prematurely cool the tea. Add sugar if you'd like, then milk. Stir and enjoy.

Some thoughts about tea: Tea has been enjoyed for centuries throughout the world by the elite and affluent as well as pauper and common man alike. For this reason, I believe its reputation should be upheld, its tradition maintained and the very ceremonious and calming properties, for which it is so loved, preserved. ☹



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A CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRET SERVICE

Was I being investigated as a threat to the president—or as a potential hire for a sinister job?

I have a suspicion that the current president might be assassinated. How do I know? I was interviewed for it.

About a year and a half ago, I took a call from people who identified themselves as the Secret Service. They expressed an urgent desire to see me, which in their highly considered psychobabble, was made to sound like a choiceless inevitability.

On the demand for an explanation, the agent, a woman, told me that they had intercepted an email which seemed to implicate me in a plot to harm the POTUS: that is, the President Of The United States.

I immediately surmised that her concern was related to a mass mailing I'd written in beat-prose to attract attendees to a night of record playing at a local club, called "Spilt Milk." Thinking that my audience would enjoy the same amusements as myself, I had perhaps contained some reference to a dispatched leader of the free world.

The Secret Service's responsibility was to check out every instance of a threat, no matter how far-fetched.

"We need you to come down to the office. It's extremely important," the woman insisted.

To get the initial sale, through, they used a female agent, knowing via a psychological assessment based on telephone and computer surveillance, that this would seem less threatening to me. Like a talented telemarketer, she was gentle but firmly coercive. In fact, the two professions are related,



DANGER IS MY BUSINESS BY THE PIZZ

**"WE NEED YOU TO COME DOWN TO THE OFFICE,"
THE FEMALE AGENT INSISTED.
"IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT."**

as the FBI and CIA's inquisition techniques are lifted straight from Nelson Rockefeller's bible for salesmen *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and feature the exact same mind control tricks. Of course, telemarketers don't have the weight of state security at their disposal.

"I can't come down, I'm really busy," I told her, though my inbred instinct was to obey.

"We'll come to your house, then," she insisted, another offer I evaded.

After much back and forth, I agreed to meet "them," the Secret Service agents, at a French bistro not far from my house. It seemed less likely that they'd kill or abduct me in a public setting.

Before I left my home, I alerted a few people as to the nature of my rendezvous and they agreed to witness the interrogation from afar, unannounced.

When I arrived, the officers were sitting in the outside cafe section

under a sun umbrella which said "CHIMAY." One was the woman I had spoken with on the telephone and she was accompanied by a man in a lowslung baseball cap with some rugged facial growth.

They looked drab and angry, respectively.

As the woman agent clasped the evidence and sat businesslike, her partner assumed the "bad cop" persona, searching me like a berserker and then scowling fiercely through the duration of the meeting. The implication was clear; if he were let off his chain, he would make quick work of me for god and country.

The purpose of this choreographed psycho-ballet is of course to draw the detainee into the maternal arms of the good cop so as to escape the paternal bad cop figure's wrath. This psy-op cliché was immediately transparent, but it still worked; psychological reflex is at least as dependable as the blood-and-guts kind.

Meanwhile, my own spy witnesses had taken their anonymous positions, taking snapshots innocuously in case I were later dangled from a helicopter by these freak thugs.

When the waiter came by, I ordered a latte.

The mama character drew the offending email from a folder dramatically, like it was a bad report card. She read it aloud, slowly and haltingly as if translating from hieroglyphs.

"Dear Spilt Milk..."

The email flyer was written like a Dear Abby column, with the advice giver having the name of the nightclub. I explained this to the concerned agents who didn't seem satisfied.

The mama kept reading:

"My partner and I recently had sex change operations to better understand the respective gender's perspective. It was a very enlightening experience. To better understand the plight of the aged, I've been attending sessions at a tanning salon and to better empathize with endangered wildlife, I've been listening to a Richard and Mimi Farina LP."

The agents pretended to be utterly literal and scanned me for signs of bursting hormones and imported genitalia.

I explained that I actually hadn't had a sex change but that this was meant as a fantastical scenario in the life of a mythical do-gooder.

Again, the berserker daddy looked like he was herniating.

The reading continued.

(continued on page 22)



EVOLUTION AS A TEAM SPORT

Nothing is around the corner. There's no threshold to reach, event horizon to cross, or moment of novelty to await. The change has happened. Indeed, you're soaking in it.

Those of us who like to think of ourselves on the progressive or countercultural end of the spectrum can't help but try to foment change. We want our revolution, after all, and won't be satisfied until we've won—and done so in a way that everyone notices. Catastrophe and climax are prizes for our long uphill battle. But by insisting on getting to notice change in dramatic ways, we guarantee it never truly happening.

There's a disturbing fundamentalism brewing in the counterculture these days—an aching towards apocalypse as dangerous as that of our counterparts in the reddest of states, and understood just as literally. We are to await the apex of novelty, that singularity when consciousness rises from the chrysalis of matter into a new state, beyond time and maybe even energy. And, of course, only those of us with proper spiritual or psychedelic credentials will be prepared for this inevitability, and make it through the bottleneck at the end of linear history. The rest, well, they finally get their comeuppance.

The story is no different in structure than any of the others we've developed over the last two thousand or so years since Aristotle identified the narrative arc of linear drama: create a character or group we like, put them into danger, increase the stakes until the audience can't take it anymore and then provide a solution: salvation, a political ideology, or even, in the age of marketing, a product that relieves the crisis and saves the day. It's the male orgasm curve that has dominated Western narrative for centuries: crisis, climax, release...and then you get to go to sleep. Winners and losers, saved and damned are properly categorized and justice is finally done. Just buy



JACK POLLOCK

I'VE NEVER LIKED REVOLUTIONS. THE DOWNSIDE OF GETTING TO "WIN" IS THAT SOMEONE ELSE LOSES, AND INVARIABLY THE CYCLE BEGINS AGAIN.

my product, believe in my god, vote for my guy, or suck my dick, and everything's gonna be alright.

The problem with this structure is that it postpones resolution to some distant and, for the most part, mythical future. Instead of taking actions and facilitating real, if only incremental progress at relieving human suffering, we dismiss reality as some temporary state—a precursor to the much more important light at the end of the tunnel. We keep our eyes on the fanciful prize, and relegate the plights of those around us to the category of distraction.

Whether we're setting out on the communist, capitalist, or Christian narrative journey, we're to endure or, a bit better, witness others' pain now for the promise of gain later on. The ends justify the present. For this, too, shall pass.

I've never liked revolutions. They just go in circles, after all. The downside of getting to "win" is that someone else loses, and invariably the cycle begins again. That's why I've begun to think about our current shift less as a revolution than a renaissance. It's not a whole new order coming into power, but

rather, as the word "renaissance" implies, the rebirth of old ideas in a new context. Renaissances are not events we work towards, but processes occurring in the present. Revolutions require faith, because movements generally involve killing and other nastiness that people won't generally commit without some spirited motivation. Revolutions happen in the future; Renaissances happen now.

The more I study the original Renaissance, the more I see our own era as having at least as much renaissance character and potential. Where the Renaissance brought us perspective painting, the current one brings virtual reality and holography. The Renaissance saw humanity circumnavigating the globe; in our own era we've learned to orbit it from space. Calculus emerged in the 15th Century, while systems theory and chaos math emerged in the 20th. Our analog to the printing press is the Internet, our equivalent of the sonnet and extended metaphor is hypertext.

Renaissance innovations all involve an increase in our ability to contend with dimension: perspective. Perspective painting

allowed us to see three dimensions where there were previously only two. Circumnavigation of the globe changed the world from a flat map to a 3-D sphere. Calculus allowed us to relate points to lines and lines to objects; integrals move from x to x-squared, to x-cubed, and so on. The printing press promoted individual perspectives on religion and politics. We all could sit with a text and come up with our own, personal opinions on it. This was no small shift: it's what led to the Protestant wars, after all.

The original Renaissance invented perspective—and out of that was born the notion of the individual: the Renaissance Man. Sure, there were individual people before the Renaissance, but they existed mostly as parts of small groups. With literacy and perspective came the abstract notion the person as a separate entity. This idea of a human being as a "self," with independent will, capacity, and agency, was pure Renaissance—a rebirth and extension of the Ancient Greek idea of personhood. And from it, we got all sorts of great stuff like the autonomy of the individual, agency, and even democracy and the republic. The right to individual freedom is what led to all those revolutions, in the first place.

For it was also during the first great Renaissance that we developed the concept of competition. Authorities became more centralized, and individuals competed for how high they could rise in the system. We like to think of it as a high-minded meritocracy, but the rat-race that ensued only strengthened the authority of central command. We learned to compete for resources and credit made artificially scarce by centralized banking and government.

For just one example, it was during the Renaissance that centralized currency came into widespread use. Before then, localities developed their own currencies, often based on real commodities, many of which

(continued on page 24)

Photo by Keith Burt

Static Films' second full-length, 'Love of Light' is a coherent work of urgency not unlike Nico's 'Desertshore' or Tim Buckley's 'Lorca'... an empowering call-to-arms rather than beaten-down surrender.

Static Films LOVE OF LIGHT

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FIGHTING SHADOWS, FINDING LIGHT

A close encounter with enigmatic psychedelic folk adventurer **Ben Chasny** of Six Organs of Admittance. By Jay Babcock, with photography by Allison Watkins.



Last summer Ben Chasny told me about his plans for the record he would be recording that August under his Six Organs of Admittance monniker. The album was already set to be a turning point for the project he'd started as a lark in 1998 in deep Northern California: it would be the first Six Organs album recorded in a studio setting, and the first album for his new label, Chicago indie perennial Drag City. But Chasny was after more.

"I told Drag City I want to go in there and have some folky stuff, but I also want to attempt something more freaked-out and free," he said.

School of the Flower, recorded during those August 2004 sessions with drummer Chris Corsano and released last month, *is* more freaked out and free than previous Six Organs albums. It's a front-to-end lovely, beguiling work that alternates gentle fireside folk songs with expansive, occasionally ominous instrumental tracks. Long, quickly fingerpicked acoustic guitar lines repeat and interlink into infinity, electric guitars toll and squall, drums skitter and bubble underneath. The album is like an owl—it sees and hears all, but is willing to communicate only some of what it knows. We are lucky—privileged, really—to be in earshot.

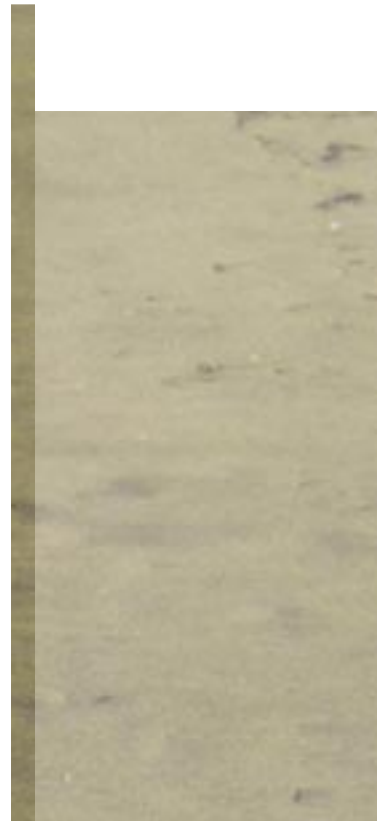
The following conversation was constructed from a long phone interview in early January and some follow-up laboratory emails. Chasny and I had been in touch off and on for the previous year or so by email, mostly hipping each other to recent discoveries: books, records, films. To be honest, Chasny was doing most of the hipping, and I was struck by both his strong passion for other artists' work and ideas, and the degree of erudition in his reading. His impulse may be towards hermithood and withdrawal, to living alone in the woods, but the reality of his life was more complex: he's a part of a web of consciousness very much of his own making, one that stretches around the globe and involves many of the planet's most idiosyncratic, hermetic artists. I soon realized that, just as Timothy Leary had instructed, Chasny had gone and found the others—the Japanese psych-folk group Ghost, the bizarre English goth-folk of Current 93's David Tibet, the utterly indescribable Sun City Girls, and many more I'd never heard of—and then, in the past whirlwind year, he'd actually toured or recorded with many of them, while, at the same time, continuing to be a full-fledged member of Bay Area combo Comets On Fire, whose 2004 album *Blue Cathedral* was their long-promised acid rock knockout. I tried to figure out how he did it all. Here's what Ben had to say.

Arthur: People often wonder if you're a practicing Buddhist, because of your band's name.

Ben Chasny: When I did the first record, I wrote "Six Organs of Admittance" on it because I had just read *Road to Heaven* by Bill Porter. He goes and explores a mountain range in China, encountering for Buddhist and Taoist hermits. One hermit was such a damn hermit that during the conversation with the author, he stopped and asked, Who's this Chairman Mao you keep referring to? That's amazing. And in that book I came across the "six organs" phrase—the five senses and the soul make up the six organs of admittance—and it struck me. I thought it'd look really good on the record cover. I put it out, without saying who was on the record or anything. Later, when I decided to put out more records, I figured I'd just take that name.

Tell me a little about where you grew up.

I was born in L.A. My dad was sick of the city, so he moved us way up in the middle of nowhere with redwood trees and chickens and bunnies. It was me, my mom and my sister. I grew up in Elk River Valley, a little south of McKinleyville. My dad was always playing shit on the stereo, pretty good popular stuff from the '60s. A lot of good folk too, Nick Drake and stuff, and even some weird experimental records like Tonto's Expanding Head Band. That was how I lived until I was 13 or 14. Then we moved into the city—well, Eureka's not really a city, it's just a little dirty town, or a dirty old town, to give it a Pogues description. After school,



there was only ever one other kid around, and I had to hike over a hill and go find him to make tree forts. That's probably why I'm interested in hermits, because I lived that way for a while. Hermits seem to appear in a lot of the literature that I read; when I come across them, it really sticks out in my head. Like Gaston Bachelard says: "The Hermit's hut is a theme that needs no variation, for at the slightest mention of it, phenomenological reverberations obliterate all mediocre resonance." You talk a lot about writers, quoting them on CD sleeves and such. I know you dig the writing of Peter Lamborn Wilson, aka Hakim Bey. Yeah. His ideas are not 100% original, but he makes such a beautiful synthesis out of anarchism, surrealism, chaos theory, Sufism and such. He has this essay about how in certain societies, musicians are the scum of the earth. They're there to serve a purpose, to do music, to give that, sure, but they're not elevated like *stars*. And when you think about it, in that situation, only somebody who really believes in the art itself—not about becoming cool or popular or making money—will actually want to make music. So he talks about the importance of art as *art*, not as buying, not as putting into museums—not that art can't be sold, but that art in itself is very, very important, just on the basis of giving to somebody else as a gift. It's not about selling your paintings for \$300 at the coffeeshop: it's for creating this subversive community—that is the way to start looking at this stuff, as subversion.

I'm not really that well read

or learned. I didn't go to college. Certain books just really grab me, and I become obsessed with certain authors. I have a few people who I like to read who inform my world. And almost everything I listen to or read translates into music in some way, or a reason to *not* do music. When I play music, that's just what comes out: it's the shit of all the books that are the food.

So you've been playing acoustic guitar for a long time, since the late-'90s. Why not electric guitar? How did you get started down this acid-folk path?

The first three notes of the first Nick Drake record hit pretty heavy, and made me think I should really think about acoustic guitar and put down the electric bass guitar I'd been playing. That opened me up to Leo Kottke, and later, John Fahey. The music just meant more than getting up there and being silly. At the same time I started to get into Fushitusha and Rudolph Grey and KK Null: really noisy electric guitar bands.

Who's Rudolph Grey?

Rudolph Grey developed action guitar, which is pure extreme playing. It's not free jazz. I mean, he's played with free jazz drummers before, and jazz musicians, but I think his music is more accurately described as action guitar. It stems from no-wave and free jazz. *He* is the guy who blew my mind. I got this Rudolph Grey record called *Mask of Light* and I'm thinking I know stuff about music, I've heard experimental music, whatever, and I put that on and he just *cleaned* the slate. Anything's possible. No note is more important than any other note. It has a correlation with a lot of

kinds of music, but it's *action guitar*. It cleared my mind of everything. Then I could listen to folk music, *new*. Any kind of music. Suddenly, Keiji Haino made sense to me. And Leo Kottke as well. Now, Keiji Haino is one of my favorite musicans of all time. Pure sound. Pure emotion. Kan Mikami is an absolute hero of mine: he once said that the only true musician is the musician who has been forsaken by God.

Anyways, I didn't really know how to put together the rock n roll aspect I liked with folk music. So I started listening to acid folk music, which melts the two together: Ghost were a really huge inspiration to me to start playing folk music, and there's that one Amon Duul record that's heavily acoustic. Through the Forced Exposure catalog, I found out that PSF [a Japanese record label] had these compilations called *Tokyo Flashback*, and on the third one, there's a picture of the guy sitting in what I guessed were the PSF offices, and there's records stacked to the ceiling, a total mess, with this box in the front that's labelled "acid folk." I remember thinking, I don't know what's in that box, and I don't exactly know what it would sound like, but whatever it is, it's probably really great. *I want to make music that you could put in that box.*

So I just made what I was looking for. I'm trying to shed it lately, though, trying to go for the folk thing, a more natural song thing. There's too many traps in trying to do "acid folk."

So it's more about songwriting at this point?

Kind of. But I'm not even that good of a songwriter. I figure that I'm *kind of* good at a bunch of stuff. I'm not really that amazing at one thing. I'm *kind of* good. That's enough for me. The first step in overcoming one's mediocrity is to be aware of it. Hopefully at some point I can overcome it. Artists like Tomokawa Kazuki and Kan Mikami play folk music like it is a beautiful knife (and not coincidentally were part of their own political resistance!). I always return to those two when I am in doubt about music. They are fire and a thousand hurricanes and the beautiful mist and the blooming garden. Folk is not some trend for them, but then again, their brand of folk is more volatile than any rock band I can think of. *That* is something to aspire to: to find the dirt in a melody and a flower in the chaos. I think I am about a million miles away from that. But I hope I can get closer, everyday, to be that strong.

Judging from your facility with the acoustic guitar, I assume you practice a lot...

Not anymore. Ten years ago, when I

"THAT IS SOMETHING TO ASPIRE TO: TO FIND THE DIRT IN A MELODY AND A FLOWER IN THE CHAOS."

started getting into acoustic guitar, I was really studying the guitar, learning things about it. I was only working two days a week. That went on for like three years. Then I realized if I studied any more, this is gonna be bullshit. I'm going to make music that's not interesting to anybody but guitarists. That's when I realized I better start working on actually communicating—writing songs and all that. At that time I was playing with this violinist who'd been playing since she was four. We'd duet, that's where I learned a lot of finger picking techniques. (Finger picking is using your right hand to play the strings and usually using your thumb to play the bass strings in different patterns.) But after that, it wasn't very interesting to me at all. There are other people out there who are really good guitarists and are doing really good things with guitar, pushing it out. But it just doesn't interest me. I'd rather become good at playing rocks. I'd like to be a fucking virtuoso of stone playing; knowing the right stones that resonate, how big, where to play them, things like that. That's much more interesting than guitar. I don't respect the guitar the way guitarists do. You can ask Ethan Miller [from Comets On Fire]. [laughs] Even my new acoustic that I just bought now has a big crack in it from me putting my fist into it.

You know, I was talking with Stephen O'Malley [guitarist in SUNNO])) and Khanate] a few months ago about how there was a time when the acoustic guitar was an instrument of resistance. I don't mean in the naive '60s, when to most people resistance meant putting up a picture of a Hindu god, smoking some grass and singing about getting it together. That wasn't the real *musical* resistance of the '60s (though the folks singing about getting it together really were resistant to a fucked war. I'm talking about a resistance of culture rather than a resistance of political stupidity and death). The

resistance was in feedback and a wall of destruction from rock 'n' roll, the very simulacrum of resistance today. But sometime in the late '90s, for me anyway, the acoustic guitar was a part of the culture of resistance, even against a resistant culture. Tomokawa Kazuki, Kan Mikami, and Ghost were right up there as my heroes. At the time, everyone was making noise records and noise from Masonna, Solmania, Hijokaidan ruled the underground. A lot of them were great, like the aforementioned and Michael Morley and Rudolph Grey and A.N.P. But like any trend, there became more and more derivative versions of it all. And so even though I loved Bob Banister and the Noggin records, I didn't want to join the pack, and I knew that my version would just be a derivation of a copy of a notion of wanting acceptance. To resist, I picked up the acoustic guitar. And that's it! That's the origin of it all. Now, years later, everything is flowing the other way. It makes me want to make that noise guitar record I always wanted to make, and I will.

And that's what I love about John Fahey. He was a man of resistance, even against himself. I could give a fuck about his finger picking or melody. I love his writing more than his playing. If you can't understand that his world was one of absolute hurt and resistance you will never understand any part of how beautiful his music was. He would burn it all, in his memory, again and again. *That* is a personal resistance.

You seem simultaneously attracted to these rebels, who are almost like modern hermits, and also to the idea of a community, which necessarily involves others.

I'd like to have a place to live where I lived all by myself somewhere, but... I've realized *I need friends around*. [laughs] Hanging out, community, is really good. I don't think I couldn't live all by myself, I'd get pretty depressed. All we have is our friends, and giving, and making things, as our



hope. I may be making records for a few people to listen to, but you better know that there are things going on that are much more important. Like dinners and gatherings against all the bullshit of the world. Like a letter for one. If something doesn't hold a trace of possibility, it is worthless. That is how I judge what is made, whether for the public or private. Because it is *all* worthless when it comes down to it. There is only inspiration—which is our analogue for the WANT TO LIVE in Eastern thinking—and there is Nothing, which we will all be faced with at some point. So hold on to your friends and laughter and family and hope. Nothing else exists.

You've told me before that you considered your records to be dark records but that you always tried to put a hint of light in there. The new record, though, doesn't seem as dark to me, overall.

The new one isn't dark in that way, and that's why—I think—I was able to explore musical ideas on *School of the Flower* that I wasn't able to explore before. Because before I was dealing with emotional ideas and emotions, trying to wrestle with this or that.

When I did *Dark Noontide*, I was really inspired by Current 93. I was listening to *Thunder Perfect Mind* pretty religiously for a while. They're always pegged as gothic, especially cuz [Current 93's] David Tibet's earlier life is influenced by Crowley, which he has totally renounced since then... *Thunder Perfect Mind* is the record where he started talking about more personal things. When I first heard it, I was really disappointed. His delivery was a little too dramatic for me at the time. I didn't get into it for a full year. Then I went through a super bad space where I quit my job, because I really couldn't communicate, I had this really bad

bout of depression, and *Thunder Perfect Mind* was pretty much the only kind of music I could listen to for some reason...I kind of just suddenly got it. It was as if his vocals were a veil to keep the listener away, and once the veil was lifted, his vocals became *amazing* to me. To me, it's not about magic or the gothic side or anything that a lot of people peg him as, but like, inside of all of that, inside of the darkest time, he's always looking for some little fraction of light. So when I started listening to it I felt pretty close to that.

About the same time I started getting into Current 93, I made the pinnacle of the crazy, emotional records that I've done is *Nightly Trembling*. It's called that because that's what was happening. Originally it came out in an edition of 33, just on lathe cut. (It was recently reissued on Time-Lag Records. We only did 500 of them. Eventually it'll be available.) The reasoning was... You know how when you have to take a piss really bad while driving a car, your consciousness focuses on one point, and you're not aware of much else? It's the same thing when you're depressed: your consciousness focuses on one point and it becomes a feedback loop, and it's really hard to get out of that. Which is really similar to what Bruce Kapferer talks about in *Feast of the Sorcerer*, which is about Sri Lankan Buddhist sorcery and anti-sorcery. When you're under a sorcery attack, you get this feedback loop that you can't get out of. So, they have these anti-sorcery rites that allow people to break out in certain ways. The ritual is called a Suniyama and it encompasses theater and music as well as the destruction and exhaustion of wealth, much like a potlatch. I thought that was what I needed to do. So I made this record. It was based on that book, and also on Marcel Mauss' *The Gift*, which is about potlatches: you know how certain cultures in the South Pacific islands, instead of warring, they give gifts! That idea—the power of the gift—and Hakim Bey is always talking about that—this project was totally based on all that. I made 33 of these records and I handpainted all of them. I got this beautiful paper from China. Every one had handwritten liner notes. The same liner notes, but on a whole page. Wrote out all the liner notes, painted them, and then just gave every single one of them away to different points that I knew where people were: one in Australia, Germany, London, New Zealand. If I had had friends at the poles I would have sent them there! The idea was to set up this web of consciousness

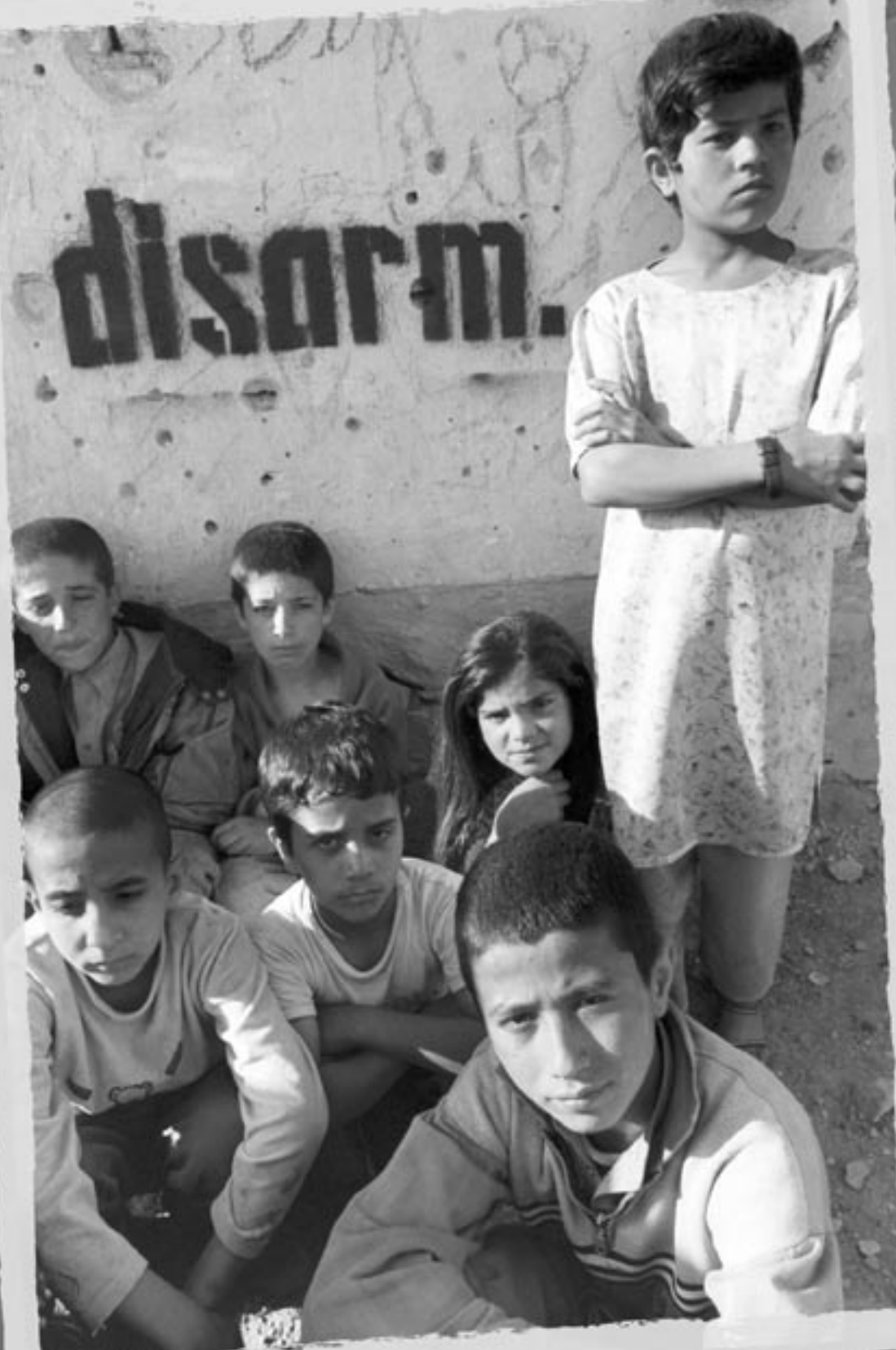
(continued on page 60)



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HOW DO WE MAKE ART IN THIS POLITICAL CLIMATE?



TICKER-TAPE PARADE



BY PAUL LYONS

DOIN' MY PART!

CURRENT EVENTS (A) NURTURE LOW-LEVEL OUTRAGE (B) WHICH ACTIVATES SMOKE ALARM (C) COBAR (D) IS CHARGED OUT OF BASKET KNOCKING LID (E) OFF, AND PULLING STRING (F), PULSES RE-DIRECTS FORCE AND THEN TUGS ON PISTOL TRIGGER (G). PISTOL SHOOTS BALLOON (H), CAUSING ATTACHED BOOT (I) TO DROP ON PET OCTOPUS (J) WHO SQUITS INK ON TO GRINDING SHEETS OF BRISTOL BOARD (K), CREATING RILEY-VANT POLITICAL ART (L). AFTER SMOKE ALARM HAS BEEN SUFFICIENTLY ACTIVATED, CHANNEL ON TELEVISION SET CAN BE SWITCHED OVER TO "GILMORE GIRLS".



The Cartoonist

IT'S NOT EASY TO SPEAK THE TRUTH IN A CLIMATE OF FEAR.



IT'S NOT EASY TO DEPICT TOPICS LIKE THE TORTURE OF PRISONERS.



IT'S NOT EASY TO DELINEATE SHAMEFUL ACTS COMMITTED BY ONES OWN NATION...



BUT IT'S REALLY NOT EASY TO BRING ONESELF TO DRAW THE UGLY MUG OF OUR CURRENT PRESIDENT.



by David Lasky Jan. 2005



AS RECORDED by D. ZETWACH, Nov. 2009
LOUISVILLE, KY ↔ ST. LOUIS, MO D.S.O.



by Greg Cook.

All in antique party reading I
attended shortly before we moved into our
current mess in Iraq, my friend James Cook read
"Statement for Percy as News" conference," which the
poet and translator Elliott Weinberger had
recently presented in New York.



In times of
political crisis like
today, Weinberger said,
pols have three models
of how to respond:

with nearly political point,
blatant striving for
political objectives,
in combining writing
compulsions and also
writing for the masses.



¹²People who are poets
probably know something
about writing. So why do
it never occur to them to
write something other than
poems? ¹³Winkler asked

I thought of his words often in the depressing days after George W. Bush narrowly won our recent presidential election.



One of the criticisms of the Left is that we don't have a clear, consistent, surprising response to the Bush administration's bloodlust.

If there's anything
artists and writers can do



He's help devise and
disseminate a progressive
political response, a rival
storyline for our culture.

Don't you plenty of
negotiations already on
this subject?



LANGE

by Greg Ciolek

Many artists have a
New-York bias against
making permanent material
art — or, women being

A lot of political art is
completing, measuring things,
but a lot of art is present



And remember, there are
lots of goldfish wants—Oscar
Dwyer's "The Great Violator,"
Joe Henry's "Horsefists."

George Giger's "What's Going On,"
the Immortal's "Imagine," Midge
Ure's "Vicious," Unknown
Mournful, "and the photographic
sculptures of Linge and others.



cit in the Farm Security
 Administration, documents
 the rural devaluation of
 Depression and showing
 desperately help was more

But political art doesn't always have to reach this level to be effective.
Remember how the 1943 comic "The Day After"



frankly you eat almost
nothing, aren't you? Tell
me just needs to get
job done.

So Let's Fight.
Let's make perestroika
political art. Let's



organize and protest
and campaign. Let's
form a progressive art
network and think it
thru.

To promote our goals and beliefs, contact me at gracek30@earthlink.net.



"Got something I could wipe up with ?"

(continued from page 9)

“Now I’d like to experience psychological derangement; to stand in the virtual shoes of a person who is a would be gunmen, bent on murdering the president. Any suggestions? Signed, Empathy Tourist”

They looked at me, bewildered and shocked, in a sublime pantomime of a 17th-century Puritan couple. As if the culture weren’t littered with so much obscenity and simulated bloodshed; as if these presidential fondlers weren’t de facto collaborators with some of the greatest mass murderers in history.

Still, the act was perfect; their collective civic virginity had been punctured by these rapacious words. They were awestruck by my audacity.

She continued, though the strain was evident:

“Dear Empathy Tourist,

My dear do gooder, you need look no further than Spilt Milk: each and every dancing lothario there is an aspiring revolutionary whose singular desire is to slaughter the president!”

The address followed but she didn’t read it.

Who was the Empathy Tourist?

Who is Spilt Milk?

Was this nightclub a gathering of would be assassins?

Would I like to kill the president?

A thousand “are you a lone nut” questions followed from a prepared questionnaire, which followed the cultural conceit that there is no ideology, only insane people, that to desire the assassination of the president (a person so fine and benign) one would have to simply be a crazoid mentalist.

Responding to their assumed persona of lobotomized dunderhead, I played the part of apolitic entrepreneur, a man whose sole desire was to see asses in seats.

Before this absurd charade was concluded, I declared officially that I didn’t mean to incite club goers to kill the POTUS.

Of course, like the various running dog lackeys who were tapping my phone and reading my mail, they already knew this. The interview was bogus but it wasn’t merely bean counting. In fact, it was maybe something far more sinister.

The whole experience was demeaning like a job interview for some corporation like Urban Outfitters.

And perhaps it was a job interview; there is a good chance that I was being screened as a possible patsy in the RITUAL BLOOD SACRIFICE OF THE FIRSTBORN GEORGE W. BUSH

BY HIS FATHER, GEORGE H. W. BUSH, the arch-satanist who has controlled the country for thirty years. Just as Kennedy was ritualistically murdered in Dallas by his inner circle in a magick invocation of a new age, maybe W. will be killed as an offering to moloch or whatever hungry diety demands satisfaction.

Think about it. He has been bred for this role.

The pathos of George W. is evident when one sees him speak. After the initial disgust one feels at his stupidity, arrogance and mass murdering, one is seized with pity at his plight. It’s a simple matter to see that he is merely a husk of a man, a mind controlled puppet; the sad, lame, brain-gone pawn of the various blood sucking high priests of the inner order.

His sobriety and “born again” conversion were really just a cover for an MK-ULTRA mind control program to which W, as a wayward loud, prone to suggestion, was the perfect “candidate.”

Just as Hinkley was H. W. ’s robot slave, a “friend” of the Bush family, designed to kill Reagan and therefore annoint the elder for the top spot, George W. is another mental muppet, a bizarre construct who must be cast into the flames to realize the elder’s pledge to his illuminated brethren to usher in the final stage of Novus Ordo Seclorum, “the New World Order.” While mass murder of Iraqis, Afghanis and Colombians is an appreciable offering, the firstborn is traditionally the “whopper” of sacrifice.

I was certainly just one of several patsies interviewed for the hapless job of taking the fall. After my encounter, the agents hurried down to the club in question and harrassed management there in an attempt to gauge public perception of me. They have very specific requirements, after all.

Not anyone will do.

Like Oswald, James Earl Ray, Sirhan and Hinkley, this new “Lone Nut” will be found with journals of scribbled free verse as evidence of his lunacy...



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(continued from page 10)

existed side-by-side more centralized currencies that were used for transacting with other regions. With the establishment of the nation state came the exclusive right of kings to create money by “fiat”—literally, by invention—and then force everyone else to compete to pay it back. To this day, people who want to buy a house must borrow, say, \$100,000 from the bank and then pay back \$300,000 over thirty years. Where does the other \$200,000 come from? The borrower is to compete for it in the marketplace. Only \$100,000 was loaned into existence. The rest must be taken from others.

The idea of competition between individuals was a potentially dangerous side effect of Renaissance thinking. Sure, competition has been a powerful motivator, particularly when applied to capitalism, and on a completely level playing field competition can yield some terrific innovation and growth. But we may have reached the end of what competition can offer us, and new models for innovation and interaction—the ones emerging out of our own renaissance—might prove more appropriate to our current situation.

While our renaissance also brings with it a shift in our relationship to dimension, the character of this shift is different. In a holograph, fractal, or even an Internet website, perspective is no longer about the individual observer’s position; it’s about that individual’s connection to the whole. Any part of a holographic plate recapitulates the whole image; bringing all the pieces together generates greater resolution. Each detail of a fractal reflects the whole. Web sites live not by their own strength but the strength of their links. As Internet enthusiasts like to say, the power of a network is not the nodes, it’s the connections.

That’s why new models for both collaboration and progress have emerged during our renaissance—ones that obviate the need for competition between individuals, and instead value the power of collectivism. The open source development model, shunning the corporate secrets of the competitive marketplace, promotes the free and open exchange of the codes underlying the software we use. Anyone and everyone is invited to make improvements and additions, and the resulting projects—like the Firefox browser—are more nimble, stable, and user-friendly. Likewise, the development of complementary currency models, such as “Ithaca Hours,” allow people to agree together what their goods and services

are worth to one another without involving the Fed. They don’t need to compete for currency in order to pay back the central creditor—currency is an enabler of collaborative efforts rather than purely competitive ones.

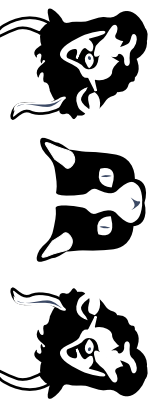
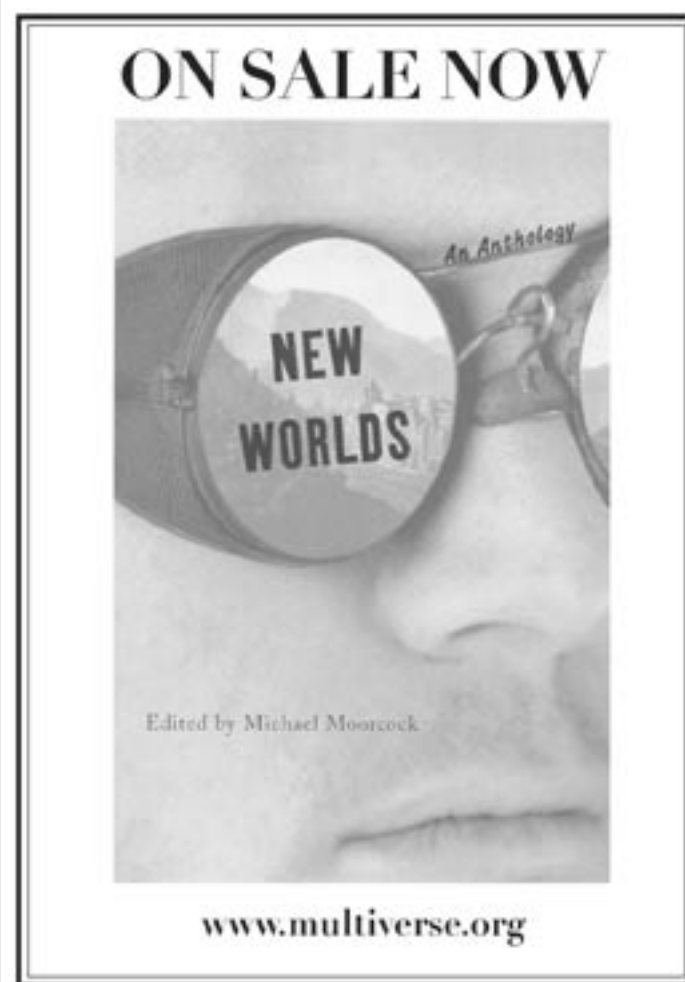
For while the Renaissance invented the individual and spawned many institutions enabling personal choices and freedoms, our renaissance is instead reinventing the collective in a new context. Originally, the collective was the clan or the tribe—an entity defined no more by what members had in common with each other than what they had in opposition to the clan or tribe over the hill. Networks give us a new understanding of our potential relationships to one another. Membership in one group does not preclude membership in a myriad of others. We are all parts of a multitude of overlapping groups with often paradoxically contradictory priorities. Because we can contend with having more than one perspective at a time, we needn’t force them to compete for authority in our hearts and minds—we can hold them all, provisionally. That’s the beauty of renaissance: our capacity to contend with multiple dimensions is increased. Things don’t have to be just one way or directed by some central authority, alive, dead or channeled. We have the capacity to contend with spontaneous, emergent reality.

As collaborators, we are no longer setting ourselves up for exclusion, conflict, or even the postponement of joy. We don’t need to dangle the carrot of cash prizes, salvation, or Bhoddhisatvahood in order to get others to join in our enterprises, because they are so much fun to do right now, for their own sake.

By the same token, our relationship to the human story changes, as well. Instead of aching towards conclusion, and seeing every global and personal crisis as a sign of impending cosmic state change, we evolve together as a natural course of events. We won’t get those dramatic, cataclysmic shifts to look forward to, but neither will we need them. New threads and understandings simply emerge from our collective engagement, just as new traits species and emerge from our exchange of genomes.

Evolution is a team sport, not a competition. There’s just one thing going on here, however many eyes and “I’s” it may seem to have. We all make it, together, or none of us do.

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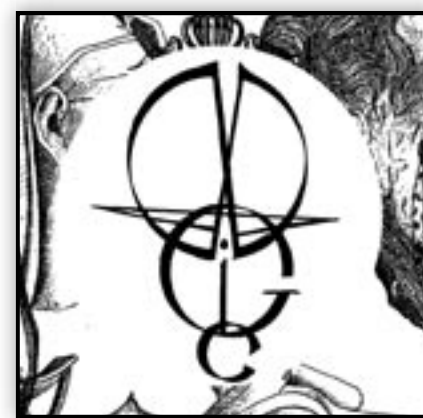
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NOT A KOOK

Filmmaker **Jessica Yu** explores the life and work of mysterious artist **Henry Darger** in an innovative new documentary.



In the Realms of the Unreal opens with shots of artist Henry Darger's dusty homemade books and scrappy art supplies, with actress Dakota Fanning relating how Darger sought solace in art after a childhood as an abused orphan. This bit of biography prepares audiences for Darger's own summary, narrated by actor Larry Pine, of his life work—a cryptic 15,000-page epic novel detailing a war waged over child slavery—at first illustrated onscreen by stills of Darger's startling art. But it's when one of his drawings comes to life—a girl flaps her butterfly wings and flies away—that you realize director Jessica Yu has taken biographical documentary to a new level.

Using animation constructed from Darger's artwork, Yu opens a door into Darger's hermetic world of evil, adult Glandelinians and their captive Vivian Girls—cute, Shirley Temple-ish girls who sometimes sport horns, wings, tails and penises. Lightning flashes in stormy skies, soldiers fire guns, and monsters called Blengins circle through the clouds. These nightmarish scenes, it turns out, harken directly back to Darger's own past: nuns, mean teachers, and childhood enemies from his early life reappear as Confederate army members, often slaughtered on the page as a way to recoup his mental losses. (One especially cruel bully morphs into General John Manley, head of the opposing regime.)

Henry Darger grew up in asylums for feeble-minded children, and spent his adult years as a recluse. A self-taught artist who made a living as a janitor, he lived in a small apartment in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago, secretly recording the war between the Glandelinians and Vivian Girls, down to the last casualties and debts accrued. Incredibly, no one knew of his prodigious artistic talents until his landlords discovered Darger's work upon his death in 1973 and began to share it with the public. Countless articles and several books have since been published on Darger, but never has his art been actively portrayed as it is here, embellished by a storytelling voice that sounds the way Darger's voice may have sounded: gentle but curt, impassioned but matter-of-fact. Add in several interviews with neighbors, including one with Kiyoko Lerner, and you get a fascinating—if necessarily speculative—picture of Darger inhabiting his strange fantasies.

Animating someone else's art is a controversial proposition, doubly so with Darger. His sincere, exacting artistic approach required that he dedicate every second of free time to perfecting his techniques. The boxes of pencil nubs, tall stacks of visual reference and piles of used watercolors that Yu's camera scans across demonstrate that Darger was his own harshest teacher and critic. Fortunately, Yu's animators kept the special effects to a minimum, going more for an old-fashioned, paper-doll like style rather than the gaudy Pixar look. The animation is charming and loyal to the work.

Yu's last two films—the Academy Award-winning *Breathing Lessons: The Life and Work of John O'Brien* and *The Living Museum*—also documented artists who overcame physical and mental challenges. She's friendly and open, making it obvious that she's doing what she loves. I interviewed her at her home in Los Angeles, as she was preparing to travel to Chicago, Darger's hometown, for the film's opening festivities.

In the Realms of the Unreal is screening in select theatres across North America through April.



Arthur: How did this film come to be?

Jessica Yu: I was giving a talk about my last film, *The Living Museum*, about a group of artists in a psychiatric center in New York. A reporter in the audience knew the Lerner's [Darger's landlords], and he asked me if I'd heard of Darger. The next day he took me to Kiyoko Lerner's house. Kiyoko showed me some paintings, then she let me go up to his room by myself. Before this, Darger had been an abstraction to me. But I felt such a strong

sense of his presence in his room. Everything in there said something about him. I wanted to tie together the feeling of that room with some comprehensible look at the work, so that we might get a sense of who this person was.

There's so much great footage of his room in the film. Did you shoot that footage on your first visit?

No, I went back to ask Kiyoko about making a documentary. She was open, but cautious. She doesn't want people to exploit Darger's work. I wanted the room to substitute for

Darger himself. To do this, I tried to get movement in all the shots, and we shot a lot from where he sat at the desk. I imagined how he might have looked at the room. He had his central point, gazing up at the stained glass window of the dove, sitting at the table surrounded by his work. It gives you a sense of how he lived.

Was your fascination rooted in a love for Darger's artwork or with his tragic story? Or both?

It was combined. Some art can stand on its own, but Henry Darger



lived through his art, so you can't separate his life and work. We only have Darger's mountain of work, a few supporting materials, and then his actual presence in the outside world. There's so little evidence of his life. I was tantalized by the fact that you can't really know him. I embraced the idea of the mystery. Nathan [Lerner] used to say, "Just because there are questions doesn't mean there are answers." Nathan took questions as a statement. This beautiful philosophy applied to Darger. In a film, you don't want mystery just for mystery's sake—that can be frustrating—but if you can say something about a person's life and impact, you can satisfy in another way.

The speculative aspect of the way the interviews were spliced together, with everyone guessing about Darger, was satisfying.

When we watch something, our brains naturally seek answers. I had to set the film up early on not to be that way. It's more an emotional or imaginative experience.

Did you feel like you got to know him?

I don't think we could now sit down and share a beer, but I do think I have a better appreciation for where the work came from and how it served him. I have a context for it. The problem with exhibitions of Darger's work is that they don't

give people enough context for the work. People come away thinking, "This work is amazing, but what a kook." It's easy to dismiss him as a man who couldn't control his imagination. But actually, he was extremely methodical and he had a strong sense of purpose. His world was bizarre, but you can see that he was shaping everything. The fact that he was creating it for his own eyes really shows how singular the work is.

You've said that you became Darger-like while researching. Did you get depressed? You clearly decided to imbue the film with as much hope as possible, rather than dwelling on the negative.

I only felt depressed while learning about his early life. There were so many orphans at the turn of the century. But since most of my research was about his work, and because his work operated as a wondrous substitute for the world, it was with a state of wonder that I faced this. Museums tend to focus on his most violent images, so people get the impression that he was this angry person barely capable of controlling his rage. But only a fraction of his pieces depict girls being crucified, raped, and torn apart. He used this other world as a place to release emotions, of course, but it was also the place where he enjoyed himself. I thought this was going to be a tragic story in lots of ways, and he certainly didn't get to live his early life the way he would have chosen, but I realized that while he appeared to be this timid, shuffling old man later in life, what he was doing was very audacious. To decide at an early age that you don't need the outside world, that you can live inside your imagination, that you can create meaningful relationships in your mind...? He was really bold.

He faced one of our greatest human fears, being alone.

While we imagine the horrors of living on a deserted island, he was grappling with the question, *Can a man be an island?*

Did you relate to his obsessions, in terms of being a director?

Definitely. Creative flow was so easy for Darger. He generated this excitement, this momentum, when he got home from work every day. That's part of what makes the novel difficult to read, however. But I admired this about him.

How do you feel about Darger being labeled an outsider artist? Part of that comes from the belief that he was probably schizophrenic.

It's ironic because he's the ultimate insider. He wasn't trying to be a

part of the outside world. My friend says that Outsider Art is any thing outside of Manhattan, and that's the commerce side. But on the other side, people label him because they need to. So it's not terribly harmful if it helps people understand the work. In terms of mental illness, it's not always useful to have a diagnosis. Darger just doesn't fit any diagnosis. After every single screening, people come up to me and say, "I know what was wrong with him," and the answers vary: Asperger's, autism, schizophrenia. The problem with that in art is that you tend to then see the creative output as some symptom of a disorder. That's such a reductive way of looking at it. It undermines the notion of willfulness, the idea that an artist creates work for a reason. The discipline. Darger would sketch clouds, then study different ways to color them. I saw some of these. There was an envelope full of brown clouds labeled THESE ARE GOOD, and an envelope full of blue clouds that said THESE ARE NO GOOD. He wasn't just obsessed with making the pen move. I wanted to show how meticulous he was. He held down a job, he paid his rent, lived by himself. How, then, does he fit the definition of a person with a serious mental disorder?

His neighbors were so generous to watch over him rather than to hospitalize him at the end of his life.

I know. Most people don't want to deal with it. He finally got his break towards the end of his life. It's hard to imagine now—especially in Lincoln Park since it's so completely gentrified—that he was allowed to keep his fire-trap of a room full of junk, that he was allowed to just work.

Darger seemed so nostalgic, sentimental, really longing for his past. When did you decide to use multiple narrators as a way to complement this idea? There's the Vivian girl [Dakota Fanning] alternating with Darger's voice [Larry Pine]. Pine has this great William Burroughs-y voice. Did you want the film to feel nostalgic?

I wanted it to have the quality of a radio play. They narration is nostalgic, but not overly-emotional. I didn't want an actor to do a *Rain Man*-version of Darger, or to inject emotion that Darger might not have brought to it. With Dakota's voice, I wanted to do something different. Usually in documentary, there's this voice of authority that we cling to and depend on to tell us what's going on, and instead, I felt like a little girl's voice could be more of

a draw into Darger's world. What's interesting about Darger's yearning is that it acknowledges that art is merely a substitute. He realized he was an old man dreaming of the past. People think of him as being stuck in the past, but really he was longing for it.

Were any other documentaries inspirational to you?

No, I tried to look at only primary sources. I was so absorbed in the research that it was hard to figure out how to work it. But when choices are limited, you're forced to be more creative. So it was fun, too. I had to really script it out. I like to do the writing and editing myself.

How did the animation style happen?

I came up with the 2-D concept. I wanted to animate the action already suggested in the paintings. I kept thinking of Hogarth, how he'd tell a whole story in one panel. And I wanted to use only elements already in Darger's artwork. The animators took this idea of preserving the texture of the painting and ran with it. For example, we left the paper seams in to acknowledge that we were dealing with physical materials. Finally, we wanted to invite people into his world. In the beginning, there's only a little animation, but once you better understand the themes in his work, you can follow along more easily with his story.

What about the Civil War parts? Was the war was more about sexual issues than religiosity?

His conflict with God was foremost in what was going on in the war. He couldn't bring himself to talk back to the nuns. He had an image of God as being Santa Claus. That if he was good, went to church, behaved, that God should come through, and he never did. Even though Darger

lashed out at God, renouncing his faith would've meant he was completely alone. His last journal entry was, "What will it be?" Did he mean heaven? And then he had two endings in his fiction. He knew he couldn't control what was beyond him. I wanted the film to suggest that although his life was sad, he had a richness. He had a fulfilled creative life. Tragedies became adventures rather than disasters. You know the lady with the tall hair?

The one who said, "If you're poor they call you crazy, if you're rich they call you eccentric. So we called him crazy."

She said he'd constantly walk the streets, reading the paper, and that he wouldn't even look up when he crossed a street. He finally got hit, though, and that's when his health started to decline. But I love the idea that he was so vulnerable, yet he had more important things to do.

What part of the film are you the most proud of?

When people have an emotional reaction—not if they burst into tears—but if they can emotionally respond to Darger. We'll never know who he really was, but we can appreciate him and have a deeper understanding of his artwork as being a fully-realized world rather than a scattered, random selection of alien images.

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"IT'S EASY TO DISMISS DARGER AS A MAN WHO COULDN'T CONTROL HIS IMAGINATION. BUT ACTUALLY, HE WAS EXTREMELY METHODICAL AND HE HAD A STRONG SENSE OF PURPOSE."





WHERE WILL IT END?

From his home in an English suburb, controversial novelist **J.G. Ballard** wonders if there is something fundamentally flawed about the American take on reality. Interview by **V. Vale**, with an introduction by **Micheal Moorcock**.

Born in 1930, J.G. Ballard spent his formative years in a Shanghai civilian prison camp, experiences which form the basis of his autobiographical novel *Empire of the Sun*, filmed by Steven Spielberg. In England he abandoned his medicine degree at Cambridge to become a technical journalist. His first stories in *New Worlds*, *Science Fantasy* and *Science Fiction Adventures* from 1956, including “The Voices of Time,” “Vermilion Sands” and “Chronopolis,” are in *The Complete Short Stories of J.G. Ballard* (2002). Three novels, *The Drowned World* (predicting climate change), *The Crystal World* and *The Drought* increasingly reflected his interest in surrealist painting. *The Terminal Beach* in *New Worlds* (1964) marked a new phase, dispensing altogether with the conventions of science fiction.

Also appearing in *New Worlds*, which by then I was editing, “The Assassination Weapon” (1966) was the first of Ballard’s “condensed novels” where iconographic personalities and events became the basis of narrative. Other stories included “The Atrocity Exhibition Weapon,” “You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe” and “Plan For The Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy” in *New Worlds* and, increasingly, in literary magazines such as *Ambit* and *Transatlantic Review*. His work encountered considerable hostility in the United States, where its irony went largely undetected. Doubleday, the publisher of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, ordered all copies pulped after it was printed. It eventually appeared from Grove Press in 1970. Meanwhile, “Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan” became the basis of a UK court case, while his “Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race,” “lost” by his U. S. agent, eventually appeared in *New Worlds* and *Evergreen Review*.

He remains a seminally controversial writer hugely admired by the likes of Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie, Fay Weldon, Angela Carter, Iain Sinclair and most of the best science fiction writers. Described as pornographic and psychotic when first reviewed, *Crash* (1973) was filmed by David Cronenberg starring James Spader in 1996. *Concrete Island* (1974) and *High Rise* (1975) continued similar themes of our psychological and sexual relationship with contemporary phenomena and iconography. *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) and *Hello America* (1981) are enjoyable satires; his autobiographical *The Kindness of Women* (1991) was a sequel to *Empire of the Sun*. Recent novels like *Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000) and *Millennium People* (2003) continue to develop techniques describing his unique experience and his notion that

contemporary bourgeoisie have become the new slave class. Today he lives in the same London suburb where he settled some 45 years ago and, as a widower, raised three children, eschewing electronics and still working at his typewriter. Combining the creative insight and originality of a modern William Blake, Ballard is our greatest living visionary writer.



Far left: Ballard at home in the early '80s. (Photo courtesy researchpubs.com) To the photo's right are three vintage covers, courtesy Michael Moorcock, from the Moorcock-edited era of *New Worlds* magazine, which published much of Ballard's most visionary work in the '60s.

The following is an excerpt from an interview conducted by V. Vale by telephone following the Nov. 2 elections.

V. Vale: I wanted to get your “take” on the neo-cons and Bush, and your perspective on what happened with this election in November, 2004.

J.G. Ballard: I'm sure you and your readers have had an absolute Niagara of comment on the subject, so I don't want to give anything but one European's perspective on it. But there's no doubt that most people over here on this side of the Atlantic were hoping for a Kerry victory. There's something very frightening about Bush and the neo-con group. Donald Rumsfeld is quite a scary figure—putting it mildly.

One feels that Bush and his closest advisors are entirely driven by emotions. They're no longer driven by a reasoned analysis of where the world is going, and what the U.S. response should be. They're driven by this visceral need to express their anger—you know, their anger and, really, rage at the world. One feels, listening to people like Rumsfeld, Bush himself, and one or two of the others like Richard Perle, that the world is seen as an extremely hostile place. And moreover, they want it to be a hostile place.

They need enemies who can be challenged and then destroyed. This is a kind of psychology that people in Europe are very familiar with, going back to the psychology of people like Hitler and his henchman, and then to Stalin and the whole paranoid stance that both the Nazi and the Soviet regimes had towards their enemies. If they didn't have enemies, they

would soon invent enemies. Because they're absolutely hung up—and I suspect Bush and the neo-cons, to a surprising extent, in a great democracy like the U.S., are hung up on this need to hate and this need to destroy. And of course it's frightening, because where will it end? Today Iraq, tomorrow Iran, and the day after, hmmm ... maybe France, you know, because given their mindset, there will be no shortage of enemies.

I think there's nothing particularly extreme about saying this. I think it's what people over here perceive of as part of the dangers of this situation. Nobody thinks there is a connection between the 9-11 attack and Saddam Hussein. There's no connection at all—it's quite the opposite. Hussein was running a secular regime. Bush and Rumsfeld have created a kind of unstable regime dominated by religious fanatics in Iraq, of the Khadafi kind they thought they were getting rid of!

So it is unnerving. It leads us to question many other areas of the American world view. Is there something fundamentally flawed about the American take on reality? I say that as a lifelong admirer of the U.S., by the way. But it does seem to me that a lot of the formulas that govern American life—in particular its entertainment culture—have leaked out of, say, the Hollywood films and into political reality. That's frightening.

I've got a feeling that Americans, who have always been admired and always been liked for the most part, don't take kindly to being disliked. Unlike, say, the British and French, who have been disliked since the year “dot.” The Americans don't like

being disliked; the reverberations of 9-11 are not going to go away. I'm sure there will be other attacks of a similar kind and they will keep the pot boiling.

Yes. And these days, the Bush Team seems to basically dictate press announcements to the press as “news,” and then the news media just gladly print them without any critical stance or analysis. Recently in the news there was the declaration: “Well, we think Iran has weapons of mass destruction.” Obviously Team Bush is gearing up for an attack on Iran—

Well, it does look like that. What's worrying is that that will be an automatic response: “So, it's going to be Iran next.” I can't imagine American ground forces are going to roll across the border, but I can see strategic bombing attacks designed to destabilize the present regime and knock out their nuclear research installations. But, the consequences would be disastrous for the world economy if the huge oil supplies locked up in the Middle East were interrupted. God knows what will happen.

We saw a preview of that in *Mad Max*, didn't we?

Yes, absolutely. It's a worrying time because Bush seems to delight in the sort of mythological version of himself which he's created: the swaggering Texan who is supremely confident of his ability to stare down any mean guys who get in his way. Rumsfeld seems to come out of the same corner of the fairground. Some of the others, like Perle, whom we see a lot of on British television, and Wolfowitz whom we also see, are much more intellectual and they

provide a smooth rationale.

Something worries me. This goes back to the period of forty years ago when strategic planners in the Pentagon were heavily influenced by game theory, John Von Neumann and others. They seriously believed there was a window of opportunity that the U.S. should take while it still enjoyed nuclear supremacy. This was the time to strike, before the Soviet missile deployment would match the U.S.'s. From what one reads, serious thought was given to picking a fight with the Russians and then obliterating them! One sees something of the same mindset at work today, and it's a little bit scary—

[laughs] To say the least. Wow. I'm very cautious of conspiracy theories because you can drive yourself crazy—you will never really know who killed JFK, for example. But at the same time I'm very interested in the underlying thinking that doesn't get publicized, like the game theory of John Von Neumann, who was the model for the title character in *Dr. Strangelove*. You don't hear much about that anymore, but that doesn't mean it didn't go away—

I think it's come to the surface again, hasn't it? It's something I've argued for a long while. In my last novel, *Millennium People*, I was putting forth the proposition that nothing disconcerts people more than an apparently meaningless act. If a hostile act in particular has some sort of obvious point ... if you're an anti-globalization protestor and you picket the offices of some multinational company, or even if you blow up their showroom



Interview excerpted from the forthcoming *J.G. Ballard Interviews* volume available from Re/Search Publications. *J. G. Ballard Quotations* is now available from the same publisher at www.researchpubs.com

the U.S. so much, there were other and better targets, in a way: the Capitol in Washington, the White House, the Pentagon itself—one plane obviously wasn’t going to do enough damage; all four planes could have gone into the Pentagon. The symbolic value of an attack, say, on the White House or the Capitol would have been far, far greater. By comparison, the attack on the World Trade Center in New York was really ... It almost comes into the category of a meaningless act ... and it’s this that people find so unsettling.

I think that when you’re faced with a meaningless act of that kind, the brain rushes around trying to find some sort of conceivable reason at work in the perpetrators’ mind. Although no one is prepared to come out and sort of back Samuel Huntington’s notion of “The Clash of Civilizations”—you know, the Christian West vs. Islam—people act as if the war against the Muslim world were already declared.

In fact, Bush constantly talks about war, doesn’t he? He refers to himself as the “War President.”

Whereas in terms of the huge enormous unlimited power of the U.S. military, I would regard the invasion of Iraq as a police action. I mean, it’s degenerated into a kind of huge police action now—it’s a “law and order” problem.

The reactive mechanism in Bush’s mind, and in the minds of the neo-cons around him, has been touched off. And also of course, the other thing that sort of worries us in Europe, is the way in which religious belief has begun to merge seamlessly into this sort of war mentality. That is something that is very scary, because it justifies anything. If “God” is on your side and you’re absolutely convinced of that, then you can do anything—

—And justify anything you did.

Absolutely. Going back to the Crusades and religious pogroms in Europe, the Dark Ages, the Inquisition in the 14th-15th century (or whenever), the religious wars ... One doesn’t want to get too carried away, but there are unsettling echoes—put it like that.

I think back to earlier American Presidents when I was younger—say, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower ... one can’t imagine them ever having gotten into this war in Iraq. Or into this peculiar mind-set, this sort of “Religious Warrior” mind-set. They weren’t riding an emotional horse ...

The puzzling thing is: Why has this happened? Is there something within the American view of the world, the way that Americans think, that is responsible? In other



“HAS THE GENIE ESCAPED FROM THE HOLLYWOOD BOTTLE AND GOT OUT INTO THE ORDINARY AIR WE BREATHE? THE LOGIC THAT UNDERPINS INDEPENDENCE DAY AND CON-AIR SEEMS TO BE DIRECTING AMERICA TODAY.”

words, has the genie escaped from the Hollywood bottle ... and got out into the ordinary air we breathe? One can’t help wondering that. The logic that underpins *Independence Day* and *Con-Air* and all these films seems to be directing America today. I’m probably wrong, but that’s the impression that people have over here.

Definitely. Those popular films perpetuate, or inflict, a mythology, upon Americans ... there are all these assumptions underlying those films—

Yes, it underpins those films, and it underpins the American comics that I read in the 1940s. I remember reading Superman comics in 1937, 1938 in Shanghai, and the hero could transform himself—which Bush thinks he can do: he goes into the War Room in the Pentagon and he comes out a cross between Richard the Lion-Hearted and god knows who else.

There is the idea that if what you’re doing is “right,” and “God” tells you so, you have unlimited power. That’s a very powerful combination, actually, if you happen to be President of the U. S., but it’s

frightening for the rest of the world. I mean, I can imagine a world where everyone is so frightened of the U.S. that we all convince ourselves that we admire it absolutely, and will agree with everything America demands of us, but that will not satisfy the man in the White House at the time. What he needs—or it may be a she, although I would think that Hillary’s hopes are rather slender at the moment—I mean for eight years’ time, whenever. But there seems to be a need ... Maybe it’s something as simple as the need for revenge—it’s hard to say. But I think it’s more than that; I think it’s the need to turn the rest of the world into a free-fire zone where anybody who puts his head up out of the nearest ditch is going to get it shot off. That way they’re “safe.”

But, it may be a passing phase ...

ⓐ

Michael Moorcock (left) with J.G. Ballard (right) at a publicity event for Ballard’s autobiographical *Empire of the Sun*. (Photo courtesy M. Moorcock)



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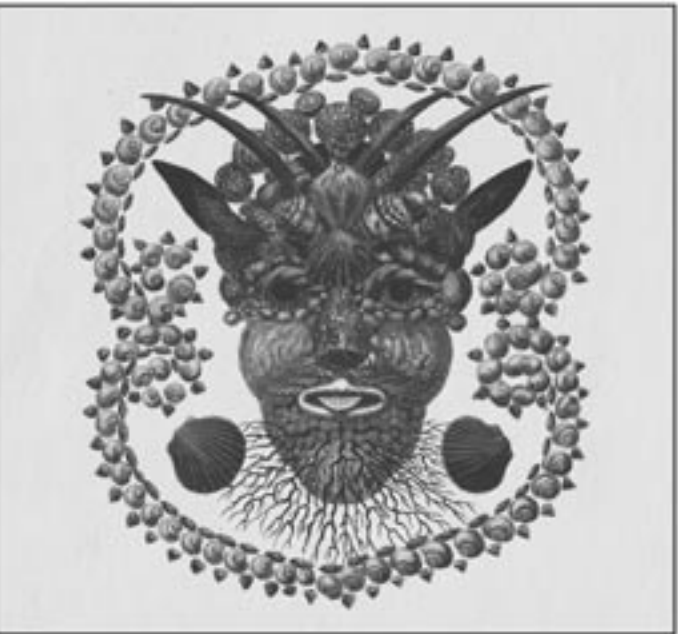
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KILLING THE MADMAN

What does meditation have to do with activism?

Plenty, says poet **Michael Brownstein**.

Artwork by John Coulthart

I've been a Buddhist for many years, and I am also an activist, committed to overturning the profit-driven monoculture which is destroying our health, our Earth, and our soul. How are these two forms of awareness—awareness of what's taking place in the outside world, and awareness of our internal processes—related? Can each aid the other in creating a sane, sustainable and just world?

Let's look at activism in terms of the negative emotions generated—indignation and rage, but also frustration, sorrow, resignation. These are negative emotions because of the effect they have on us, the people who experience them. Not on the object of our emotions, whether it be the World Trade Organization, Monsanto, or George Bush. Negative emotions are reactive. Their only impact is on us. What difference does it make to Monsanto that you're seething with indignation at something it has done or said? What difference does it make to the Pacific Lumber Company when you come upon a clear-cut old-growth forest in California and feel devastated?

Staying present with our emotions—anger, for example—means remaining aware of what we're experiencing without becoming lost in reactivity. It means liberating the energy generated by anger from the object that calls it forth. In other words, it is a form of meditation. Then, the possibility exists to work with the situation from a place of clarity, rather than be submerged in confusion.

So, the first revolutionary act—or fact—about meditation is that it puts you in touch with what you're feeling and thinking at this very moment. It puts you in touch with presence. Then you realise that you are the source of your emotions—not Monsanto or McDonald's. This does not imply that we shouldn't have these responses, but that we have to use them rather than be used by them. And the only way to do that is to become aware of their nature.

There are many misconceptions about meditation. Actually, meditation is simple, because there's no particular goal. There's nothing much to do. When

you meditate you are not required to erase all thought, or see the clear light, or have a big revelation about the meaning of life. All you have to do is relax and sit with a straight spine so that your breath is unimpeded. Breathe slowly, following the breath with your attention. Notice any thoughts or emotions or sensations which arise. Try not to chase after them or reject them—but if you do, that's not a problem as long as you remain aware of what you're doing.

The problem comes from lack of awareness, from unconscious fixation and attachment, not from the thoughts or emotions themselves. As long as you're alive, you'll have thoughts and emotions. But as soon as you identify them without resistance, they dissolve. Just be aware—without forcing anything, without keeping score—of what your mind is doing, of where your attention is going. That's meditation.

But being simple doesn't mean it's easy, because meditation involves dismantling habitual patterns which are very stubborn. That's why it's a practice, something we return to throughout our lives. Maybe while meditating you notice the sounds in the room, or how long a few minutes actually are, or that the voice in your head is going non-stop.

But sooner or later you also realise that what's enabling you to notice these things is a witness inside you, looking on from a place of neutral observation. A witness that's never upset, never afraid, never bored, never angry, but that also is never joyful or triumphant or serene. A witness that simply notices everything. In fact, that is simply present. This witness is called awareness, and it's usually obscured by our emotions: happy/sad, excited/depressed, loving/hating, desiring/rejecting, approving/disapproving, proud/ashamed, envious/generous—all of which depend for their existence on our reactivity to outside objects and conditions: our attachment, aversion, and indifference.

But the awareness underneath that reactivity is vast, luminous, and beyond thought, with no beginning

or end. It's unchanging, unmoving, and indescribable, completely out of category. Except that when we know where to look for it we're able to experience it, because it's the basic nature of every mind on the planet, the minds of all sentient beings. Every one of us has an open spirit not motivated by fear or greed, in spite of how out of touch with it we may be. Every one of us knows the right thing to do. Every one of us has the capacity to be compassionate and connected.

This does not mean, by the way, that we should disregard how people actually act toward us, and become doormats or passive victims.

In Tibetan Buddhism there's something called idiot compassion which says that you must never allow your compassion to make you a victim. It says that even if you would never harm a flea, when your survival requires it—when a madman is coming toward you with a knife in his hand—you have no hesitation in killing. You can do this without generating negative consequences as long as you're unattached to the emotion called forth, as long as you don't invest it with qualities of right or wrong. Killing the madman then simply becomes what has to be done.

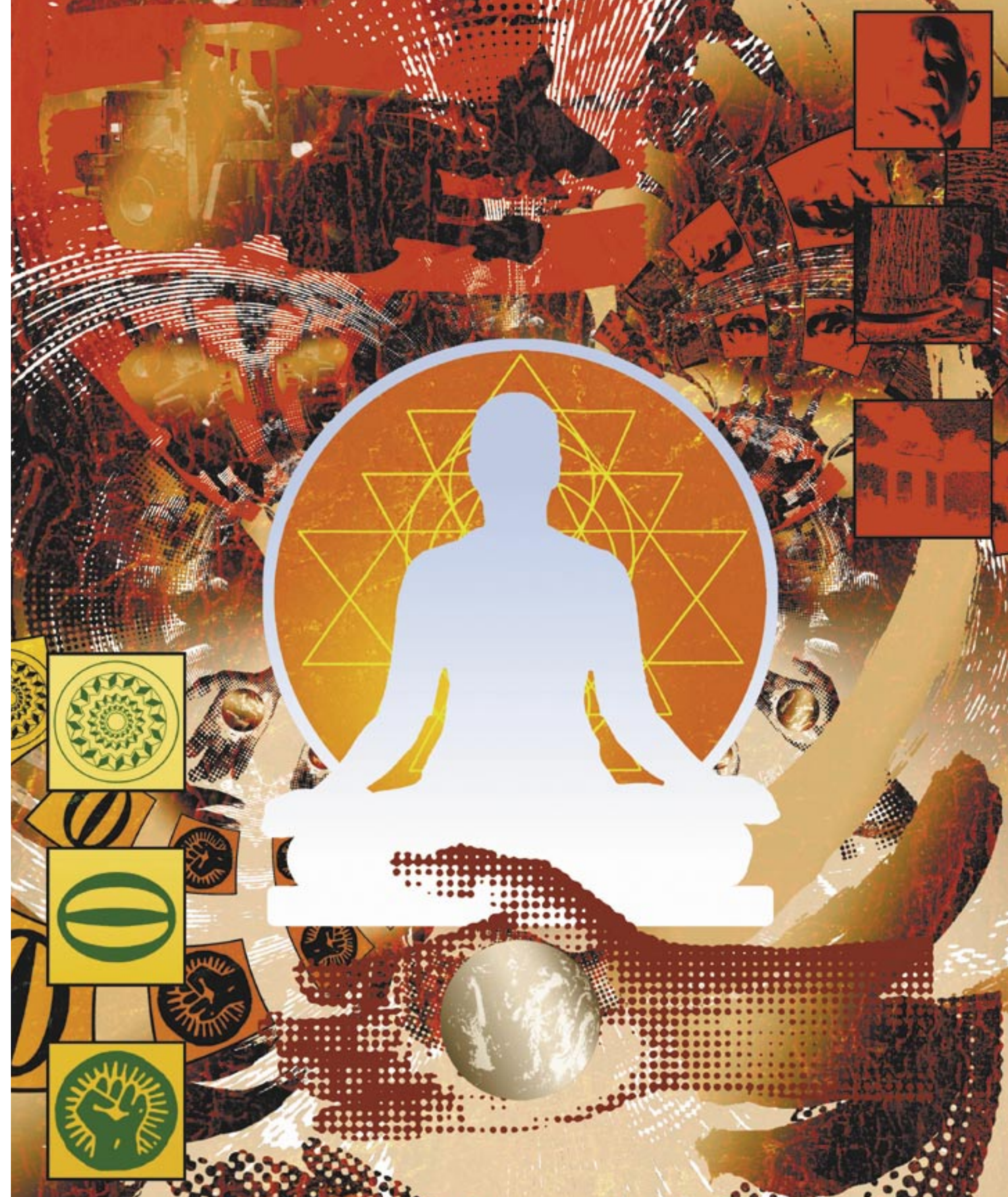
That's when the warrior quality within you arises. Once you've liberated yourself from reactivity, once you're able to separate yourself from your emotions and watch them come and go like clouds in the sky, you discover your fearlessness.

By realising that you are the source of whatever is happening, you begin to take conscious control of your life. And you find the right way to handle George Bush — because underneath his greed and arrogance, he's certainly not conscious. Looking at the depth of his confusion, we see that in addition to fighting battles, our path as activists involves bringing others to awareness. Political awareness and the awareness of nature of mind are the same. Once people become aware of what they're doing, most of them will not continue to destroy local cultures, or disregard the dangers of global warming, or sell

monstrous weaponry to one another.

Now let's look at the struggle for social justice, a sustainable economy, and ecological balance from the perspective of who we are as people. We see that the things that motivate us to become activists are baseline human qualities such as compassion, inclusiveness, and fair play. Deep inside we sense that the universe is good, otherwise why take the trouble to work for change?

Activism is as much about rediscovering our sanity and trust—our sense of belonging—as it is about righting perceived wrongs. The fact is that if we're looking for goodness or



POLITICAL AWARENESS AND THE AWARENESS OF NATURE OF MIND ARE THE SAME.

fairness in others, we're looking for what's inside ourselves. Otherwise, how could we recognise it?

We're looking for what we all share. Once we understand that, the larger goal becomes how to wake our brothers and sisters from their self-destructive sleep. In fighting for a just and sustainable global culture, we're also uncovering a globalisation of the spirit. That's because everything is connected: my body and your body and Earth's body, my spirit and your spirit and Earth's spirit, my mind and your mind and Earth's mind. And also my body and society's body, my mind and society's mind, my spirit and my culture's spirit.

In fact, it's only from ignorance of interrelatedness that people succumb to selfish behaviour, to cruelty and cynicism. No matter how many act in this manner, and for no matter how long, by definition they're isolated individuals. Destroying the Amazon rainforest, for example, in order to plant genetically modified soybeans: such colossal short-sightedness comes down to a lack of awareness that my body and mind are connected to Earth's body and mind. We can't have one without the other. We can't focus solely on our own physical well-being, going to yoga classes and eating organic food, while the earthly and social bodies continue to suffer. Otherwise, we're living in a cocoon of self-involvement, oblivious to the greater life around us.

Those of us who are spiritually involved must also have the courage to engage the world's confusion, demonstrating the commitment that comes from political awareness. We must risk activating our compassion. Without this engagement, our 'personal growth' will remain sterile and dry, and the status quo will only perpetuate itself. We cannot forsake our brothers and sisters who are needlessly suffering. Such behaviour ultimately is not spiritual, because it betrays a lack of connection. The warrior acts without becoming lost in attachment or reactivity, but nevertheless he or she *does* act.

By the same token, the problem is not only 'out there': it is also 'in here.' It's not only about agribusiness or pharmaceuticals or neoliberalism: it's also about self-awareness. That is, the problem is at once personal and planetary.

In addition to scrutinising the policies of the World Bank, we ourselves bear

looking at. Not from a judgemental place, but through disinterested awareness—that is, through the discipline of meditation. Everything we're engaged in now, from community-supported agriculture to grassroots media to green politics, is part of a global process. New forms of relating to each other are emerging from the dying dinosaur realm of competitive isolation.

But we can't forget that all of us have created this world. We're doing this to ourselves. We're all products of the same claustrophobic mindset. Consensus reality comes from a shared field of perception. To change it, we have to look at our own beliefs and assumptions in addition to looking at the acts of others. If we don't deal with what could be called the spiritual dimension of activism, if we don't examine the role of the ego, we're simply running away from the total reality.

After all, judgement of others never really gets anywhere. It's been going on for thousands of years. The names change but the mechanism of blaming and accusing remains the same. Our distrust of others stems from the compulsion to defend our identity as a kind of private property, whereas true revolution is courageous because it involves surrender of ego. It's not only about rearranging wealth. It's also about entering common ground.

For example, would terror and bloodshed between Palestinians and Israelis continue if, like Australian aborigines, they believed that no-one owns the land but they all belong to the land? How would they relate to each other if they saw all land as holy? 'I'm right and you're wrong' is a function of judgemental mind, which goes round and round. Unless we understand the source of the problem, how can we hope to solve it?

Not to surrender to distraction, denial, and suspicion, not to degenerate into cruelty and manipulation, means coming to know and accept ourselves, no longer living in fear and isolation, but in community. It means watching ourselves from a place of non-judgement: human community as well as Earth community. It means making friends with our awareness, staying in touch with it, being present in body, speech, and mind, here and now. It means seeing activism as a spiritual path.



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METAL FOR WINTERTIME

Reviews by James Parker

Jesu <i>Jesu</i> (Hydra Head)	High On Fire <i>Blessed Black Wings</i> (Relapse)	Om <i>Variations On A Theme</i> (Holy Mountain)	Dead Meadow <i>Feathers</i> (Matador)
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What a band was Godflesh. In the person of Justin Broadrick, with his combat boots, and his black clothes, and his electrode-ready shaved head, and his searing, clattering guitar tone, and his militant drum machine, and the traumatic circular lurching and nodding thing he would do onstage (which recalled to me unavoidably the movements of a cage-maddened polar bear I once saw in London's Regents Park Zoo), a particular

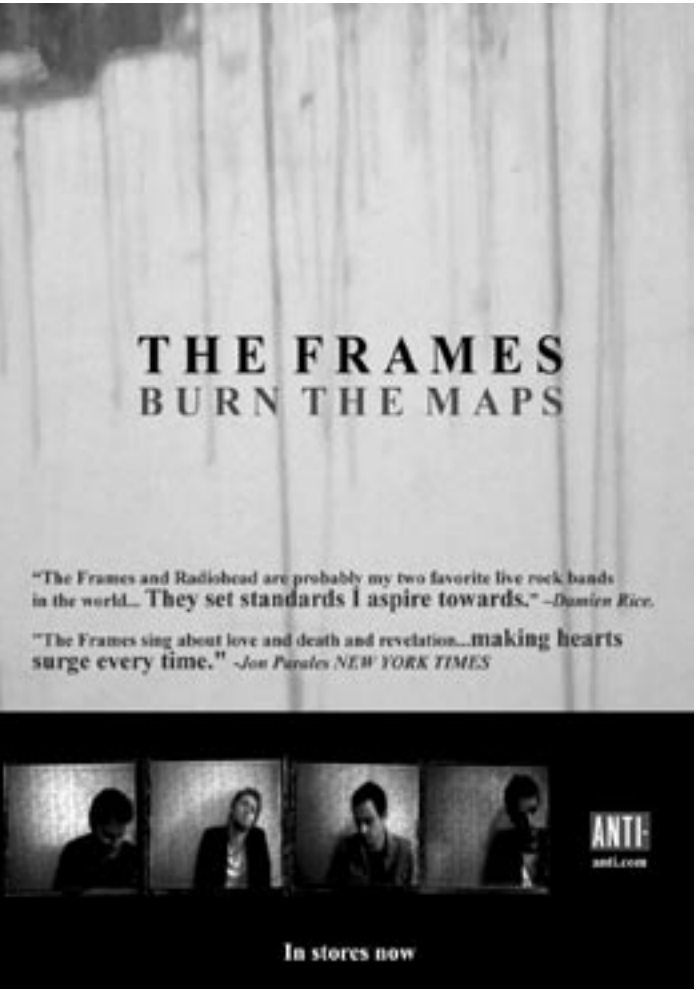
powerful human difference. He's playing again in Jesu, Broadrick's new thing, now here with a self-titled album. In Jesu all the high-low dualisms of Godflesh are magnified—decelerated, chilled down and magnified. The music moves with a dolorous processional slowness, at times hitting Swans-speed—that castigating trudge—but layered over the top is all manner of loveliness. Guitars prickle and expire over glacial, grinding bass-phrases.



strand of post-punk disgust seemed to have fused—at very high pressure—with a severe religious impulse: here, one sensed, was a real ascetic, a world-class world-rejector. Of course, there was a lot of it about at the time —Eighties, early Nineties. Plenty of bands were disgusted, there were plenty of bleak and black-clad zealots with guitars for whom flesh was pain, existence gao! and society nothing but a species of sausage-grinder, but with Broadrick all that grimness and refusal was sublimed into something beautiful. Like a proper heretic, like a martyr in an El Greco painting, he had his eyes on the beyond; he was going down to rise above; even in Godflesh's sickest, most imploded moments you could still hear that rage for transcendence. Slavestate... mindfuck... circle of shit etc (this was the tenor of Godflesh lyrics). Vivisection... the void... blah. But there was always beauty, somewhere about. On a chemical trace of melody Broadrick could compose an anthem.

Almost in passing, wrestling with machines, he invented industrial metal, Fear Factory and I don't know who else, but Godflesh was never so

much about 'musical development' as it was about the steady excavation and elaboration of a mindset, the dogged unburying of psychic material. The final album, Hymns, was the masterpiece—higher and heavier than ever. Ted Parsons (Swans, Prong) played drums, and that was beautiful—instead of the pedantic tang! tang! of the artificial ride we had the knelling cymbal-strokes of Ted, making his



Various Artists
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Brand new album from quartet counting two former **Jaga Jazzist** members and writers in their ranks, giving new meaning to the concept of progressive art rock. This is young, fresh and vital music with a sense of direction.

rune grammofon



Michael Mayer
Touch CD/2LP
Kompakt capo Michael Mayer's long-awaited LP. After slab after slab of sublime singles, the don of dream-techno drops "Touch", a loving reflection on dance music and dance life. An essential addition to any techno collection.

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Various Artists
Thai Beat A Go-Go Volume 2 CD
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BJNilsen
Fade to White CD
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TOUCH

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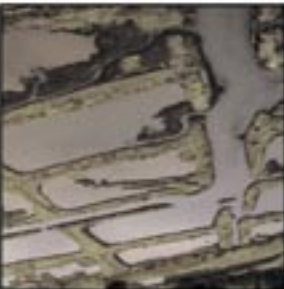


TBA
Annulé CD
Tusia Beridze, a 25 year old female music producer from Tbilisi/Georgia, returns with her second album on **Thomas Brinkmann's** max.Ernst label. Electronica that chooses subtlety and nuance over excess and overstatement, her gentle, interweaving electric piano and synth melodies dance about against a textured rhythmic base of clicks and static, creating a distinguished recording that never fails to charm. (max.Ernst)



Johann Johannsson
Virtuhlegu Forsetar CD+DVD
One of the most active participants in the new Icelandic music scene delivers an hour-long piece composed for 11 brass players, percussion, electronics, organs and piano. Performed by the Caput Ensemble, conducted by Gudni Franzson, with Skuli Sverrisson on bass and electronics, Matthias M.D. Hemstock on bells, glockenspiel and electronics, Hordur Bragason and Gudmundur Sigurdsson on organs and Johann Johannsson on piano and electronics. Double disc release includes standard CD and a hybrid DVD-Audio.

TOUCH



Pita
Get Off CD
Fourth solo CD from groundbreaking electronic musician Pita. Made over a two-year period, "Get Off" ranges from furious to subtle, always with the same uncompromising attitude.

Häpna



Various Artists
Monika Force CD
Tender, mysterious, playful, flirtatious, adventurous - Monika Force is the best and the rarest of the Monika sound, including: **Afghani** all-girl **Burka Band**, **Cobra Killer**, **Barbara Morgenstern** remixed by **Dntel**, **Masha Qrella** and many more - plus bonus video!!! Midprice label compilation CD.



Zbigniew Karkowski
One and Many CD
Karkowski's main concern is to create pieces out of electronic sounds and acoustic walls on scores developed from the architecture of ruins. "One And Many" is a highly delicate yet physical work, which can be seen as an ode to loudspeakers. (Sub Rosa)



but Cisneros and Hakius do make a lovely racket together, a fluid, inventive Sabbath-esque churn, and besides, monotony is clearly the point: chamber upon chamber of nullity: I mean, how high are you, anyway? Because Om are ready for you, they'll go there, they LIVE there, they'll play through these rocking sludge-cycles until Time peels back and the imp Infinity tips his tiny red hat.

Blessed Black Wings, High On Fire's third album, is produced by Steve Albini. What a pleasure that was to type. I'll do it again. Blessed Black Wings, High On Fire's third album, is produced by Steve Albini. It's a metalhead's wet dream: HOF's mad-dog pummelling preserved for us with the crushing exactness, the awesome pedantry of the recorder Albini, every 'i' dotted and 'l' crossed. HOF is of course the baby of Matt Pike, the other third of Sleep, and Blessed Black Wings is everything we'd hoped it might be. "Devilution," the opener, is fantasyland—Des Kense!s warrior-charge toms fading thunderously in, a riff that sounds like Hell clearing its throat and then Pike hits us with the screaming heavy metal prophecy: "MAN'S DONE! BABYLON! EAT THE FRUIT DIVINE!" You won't hear anything more thrilling this year. The chorus could be Discharge. Conspicuous lack of interest in tunes has never been an obstacle to heaviness; Pike's warthog shriek regularly falls to pieces and his solos have a kind of sealed autistic fury to them, but this is the glory of HOF—their bestial limitedness. Did I say bestial? I meant beastious, as in "Stepping on the curse/inflicting its beastious wounds" ("Cometh Down Hessian"). The point is, HOF keep it narrow. They keep it bloody. They keep it orc-like. Which is smart; there

are a couple of "interludes" on Blessed Black Wings, moments of quasi-lyricism when Pike dips the volume, climbs off the effects pedal and twanks a few melodically-organised notes, and it sounds like he's playing with mittens on.

A couple of things have changed. There's a new bassist here: Joe Preston. And while one regrets the exit of George Rice, with his

excellently un-metal name, from the ranks of HOF, Preston (ex-Melvins, Thrones) clearly has the pedigree for the job. Also, on Blessed Black Wings HOF have rediscovered forward motion, with that "Ace Of Spades"—style oompah! oompah! that no one really does anymore. It suits them, to a degree—they can flail along. Me, I liked it when their music just STUCK, roiling and roaring in circles and vortices, impaled on a single point of intensity (see "Hung Drawn and Quartered" from the last album.) But what the fuck, this is an amazing record. It kills. It's totally beastious.

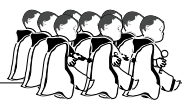
I'm sure DC's Dead Meadow have had quite enough of being called a comedown band, but really, the new record Feathers is such a nice place to regather your shredded faculties. Gently lumbering drums, body-temperature bass, Jason Simon's trailing, gaseous tenor and incense-laden guitar, now and then the leviathanic stirring of a riff—the brain's root gets a solid, loving massage. Anton "Send the waitress up here RIGHT NOW!" Newcombe, from the Brian Jonestown Massacre, has produced them (not this album) which makes sense; Dead Meadow have BJM's shimmering near-velocity, the airy jingle-jangle, but there's muscle in here too, some proper dead-eyed Om-Style groove commitment, boring backwards through hard rock into a gaping psychedelic sprawl. Fairies wear boots, as Ozzy observed. I don't have the lyrics in front of me, but I'm told that they are fantasy-encrusted, steeped in Tolkienry etc. Sounds fine—you can never have too many elves—although in the general drifting-off of Simon's vocals one hears not legends or narratives but fugues, suspensions—self-doubting orcs, doped-out dwarves looking muzzily at

their dropped tools. It's gorgeous, utterly. The ground shifts, the music raves and sways. Watch the princes shed their armor. Come on down!

Ⓐ



From the top: Blessed black winged hessians High On Fire; the fabulous furry Om brothers; and the Tolkien-encrusted Dead Meadowheads .



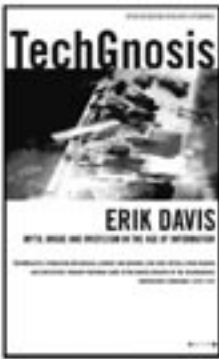
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sunn

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BULL TONGUE

Reviews by Byron Coley & Thurston Moore

80 Goddamn Good Things of 2004

1 **ALBERT AYLER** *Holy Ghost* box set (Revenant). As Sun Ra so aptly put it, "It's a motherfucker, don't ya know?" Seems quite unlikely that

there will be another release with such gushing importance and pleasure, mixed so sweetly, in our lifetime or the next.

2 Here comes **BLOOD STEREO** cdr (Absurd). Local Brighton UK house-cleaners Dylan Nyoukis and Karen Constance (has anyone there reading this ever hired these guys? curious...) continue to amaze after years of startling da-da dropdead music as Prick Decay and Decaer Pinga. Now they are Blood Stereo and are even more deadly.

3 **MARCIA BASSETT** *Assembling box*

Because I never actually sent her my piece I've never seen the finished thing, but Marcia's tribute to Flux collectivism and correspondence art sounded like the Project of the Year to me, and I bet it's fucking boss.

4 **JOHN OLSON's** stapled skull Minneapolis summer slice. Seen a lot of fucked shit happen on stage these last few decades but seeing Olson whipping a knight's mace over his head in sick noise frenzy only to have it shave a bit of cranio-meat and, hence, blood spoo all upon his tronix box and then keep on rockin for 40 more minutes was heavy.

5 **THURSTON MOORE** *nice war* (flower + cream press). Political shit box rattlers in non-prose form by a puissant who swigs where most swag. What's not to like?

6 **BILL KNOTT** *The Unsubscriber* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Out-of-nowhere mainstream piece of work by the poet both Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine pointed to as an aesthetic signifier to their own vision spiel back in the early '70s. Knott has been making and issuing self-published staple books for years, all great, and this is an easy way to cash his drift—a remarkable humorist/tragedist balance.

7 **GARY PANTER** *Light Show* with Joshua White at Anthology Film Archives & *Jimbo in Purgatory* (Fantagraphics). The new Jimbo book is totally

maxed-out, something like a core dump of everything Panter's head has consumed for a while. A better Dante I don't expect to read any

time soon. And the lightshow collaboration with Fillmore veteran White (plus a variety of musicians) was a shotgun blast to every brain that saw it. Sweet!

8 **JOSHUA** *Life Less Lost cd* (Spirit Of Orr). Joshua Burkett at one time was a dragon slayer of noise insanity with the late great Vermonster but the last few years has him journeying thru wonderful folk/acoustic passages. This latest CD is killer.

9 **JULIE DOUCET** *Journal* (l'Association). Hilarious new novel-length, illustrated diary by this always amazing artist. Supposedly an English translation will be coming along soon, but this is a great read even if your French is perfunctory.

10 **DEVILLOCK / CHARLIE DRAHEIM** *2xcs* (Tone Fiilh). The Minneapolis/Detroit nexus of suburban gore drone gets fully realized here with Minnieapple's own Devillock (headed by Tone Fiilh label honcho Justin Meyers) and Michigan street rat Draheim. Cities on flame!

11 **SAVAGE PENCIL** *Trip or Squeek in The Wire* It has been a long time since the classic Rock & Roll Zoo strip, but Sav's ferocious new comic strip has just been gathering strength and weirdness as it rolls along. For my money, it's the best work he has ever done. Total crack fantasia.

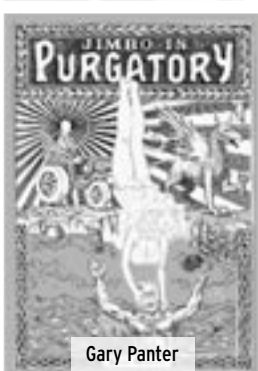
12 **VALERIE WEBB & PAUL LaBRECQUE** *Trees, Chants & Hollers* cdr. This fucker is sold out and we can't seem to get a copy even tho these two kids live next town over. Having heard these two as The Other Method as well as their participation in Sunburned Hand of The Man we know how awesome they are. this CDR must be the shit as it's just them—anyone got one? All reports is that it is "amazing"...damn...

13 **JOHN FAHEY** *The Great Santa Barbara Oil Slick* cd

(Water). Incredibly swank live Fahey sets from the Matrix in '68 & '69 with superb Glenn Jones liner notes and lovely packaging.



Albert Ayler



Gary Panter



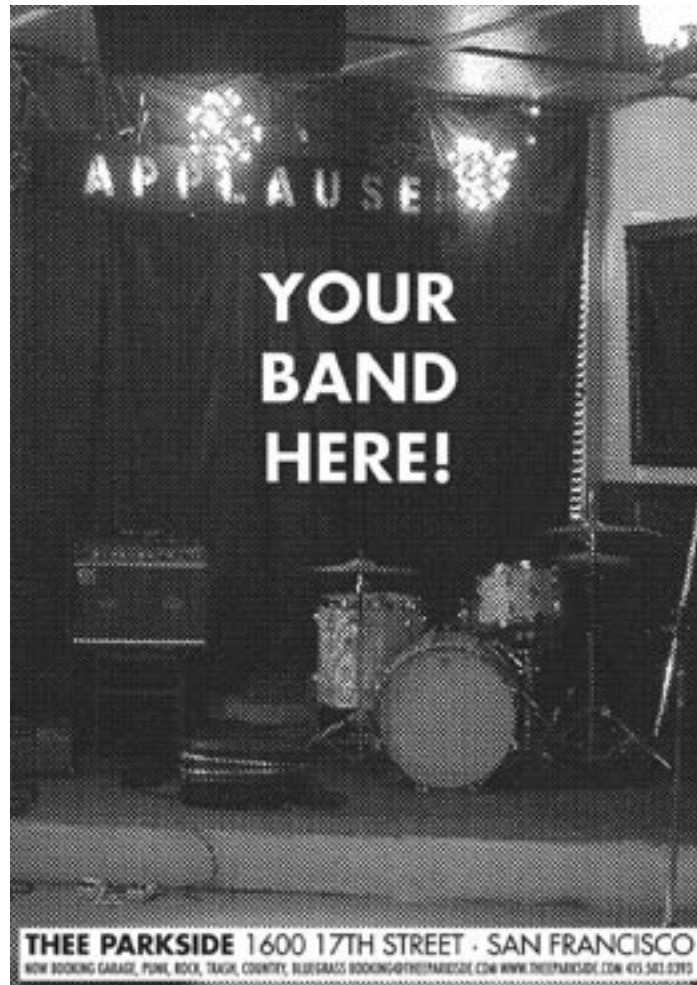
Joshua



Savage Pencil



Valerie Webb + Paul LaBrecque



Intermill

14 **BILL DWIGHT** radio grapple. Waking up every school morning to Bill Dwight's almost free radio show made 2004 that much easier to bear—but he was too good and they got someone who maybe tows the line more or something.—

whatever—Air America wants him—here's hoping he returns... somewhere.

15/ **SUB POP RECORDS.** After what can only be called a fallow period, this Seattle label has emerged with some of the most blasting and consistent shit around. Wolf Eyes, David Cross, Michael Yonkers, Iron & Wine, the Catheters, Jennifer Gentle, Comets on Fire, Beachwood Sparks, A Frames...sheesh.

16/ **DE STIJL.** Record label out of Minneapolis, MN. It's decided to blow our minds with a three-LP set of music by Hototogisu which is the partnership of Vibracathedral Orchestra's Matthew Bower and Double Leopards' Marcia Bassett. True to the evocation of the duo's name, that of a Japanese songbird heralding the coming summer, the music plays with contemplative bliss and edged rock psychosis. Edition of 300 copies and as fine a grip you'll find all year.

17 **MONDO MACABRO** dvds. Mondo Macabro has released some of the most spellbinding visuals I've seen this year. They are dedicated to producing super high-quality transfers of obscure exploito cinema from all over the globe. *Blood of the Virgins* and *Crazy Love* were among this year's beautifully fucked crop. Long may they wave.

18 **XBXXR** crazy hot pants gig at Flywheel, Easthampton, MA. One of the few bands we've seen where every member at one time or the other rampages thru the audience, not to hurt but to full-on boogie. Weasel Walter's drumming is maniacally great and seeing him as denmother to these irrepressible monster boys is a fuggin hoot.

19 **TIM KERR's** paintings. After many years focusing mostly on things musical, Austin's greatest citizen has returned to painting, and the results are fantastic. His portraits of musicians and radical cultural figures have great powerful uses of color and form, all underpinned by strong political and musical conviction. Great shit.

20 **TSIPI KELLER** *Jackpot* (Spuyten Devil). Harsh story where a girl, kinda mopey, goes on vacation with a livewire friend, only to lose herself in sick identity crisis. Good times.

21 **BILLY CHILDISH.** The Master of All He Surveys had another bonus year in 2004. His books, records, paintings and all else continued to extend his proletarian art vision deeper and deeper into the universe. What a crank!

22 **VAMPIRE CAN'T** tour. Well we missed it but we won't next time and their better well be a goddamned next time. Collab between Chris Corsano and Bill Nace as Vampire Belt and Jessica Rylan who is, indeed, Can't. Two of new England's most weird and great noise improv experimentalists.

23 **PETER BROTZMANN & HAN BENNINK** *Still Quite Popular After All Those Years* lp (BR0). First lp these two giants of the world free jazz community have cut together since '81 or so, and the combination of reed explosion and drum explosion is as monumental as ever. Great silkscreened cover art collab by the two as well. Just brilliant all around.

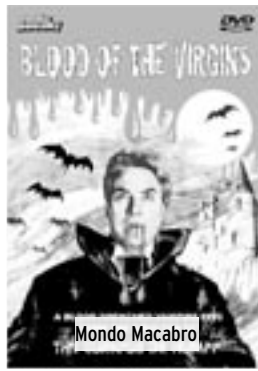
24/ **MAYA MILLER.** From Double Leopards. Insane t-shirt art and letter grafix on Chondritic Sound site. Maya's got thee touch when it comes to wasted yet elegant spook style.

25/ **KAREN L. JANIA** *John Sinclair and the Culture of the Sixties* (Bentley Library). A cool piece of archival gathering, issued on the eve of the Detroit Artist Workshop's 40th anniversary celebrations. It is a killer collection of words on paper and CD. Also very fine to have Sinclair back on the radio and accessible on the web!

26 *Hello Noise Kitty* picture disk (no label). As part of the 30th anniversary of the discovery of Hello Kitty, Kim Gordon was asked to create a piece of art honoring the revered feline. Together with Coco Hayley Gordon Moore, Thurston Moore and Chris Corsano, she poked some very ugly holes in the fabric surrounding god's ass. And the photos are very goddamn darling.

27 **RICHARD HERTZ** *Jack Goldstein & The Cal Arts Mafia* (Mineola). Amazing read put forth by the dead Jack Goldstein, an artist who was the strange and alienated force running through the California Mills College art grad takeover of 70's/80s downtown NYC art scene. One of the only real insights into the first punk-related art scene.

28 **NEW FAG MOTHERFUCKERS.** The latest aggregation formed by Cleveland's legendary John Morton (Electric Eels, X-X, Johnny &

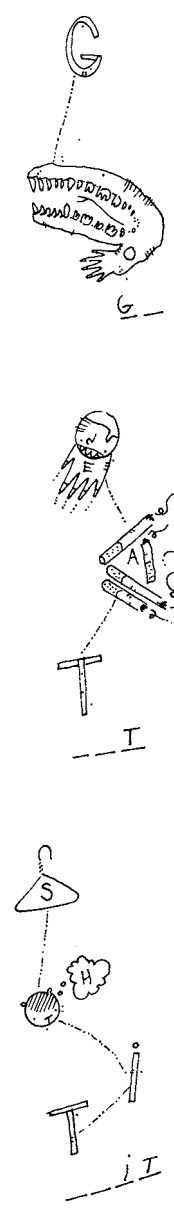


Mondo Macabro



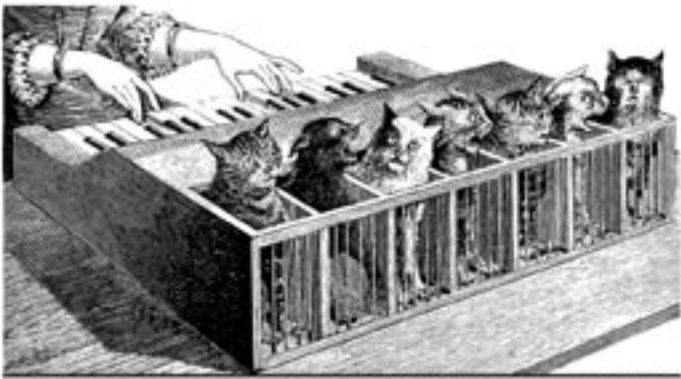
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Releases coming next:

Current 93 "How He Loved the Moon (Moonsongs for Jhonn Balance)" DLP
New mixes of the *In Mensfural Night* album by Steve Stapleton & produced by David Tibet

Thighpaulsandra "Double Vulgar 2" CD/3LP

Solo album from this Coil/Spiritualized/Julian Cope member. It's a mesmerizing blend of krautrock, 60's exotica lounge, musique concrete, rock out, avant opera,... Brilliant. Gorgeous artwork by Peter Christopherson sure to offend someone somewhere.

Kemialliset Ystävät "Kellari Juniversumi" LP+7"

The wide use of arcane instruments (toy pianos, shakers, flutes, mumbled voices, crumhorns?) at times approaches The Portsmouth Symphonia were it conducted by David Munrow (well, we enjoyed that reference at any rate).

La STPO "Le Combat Occulté" CD/LP

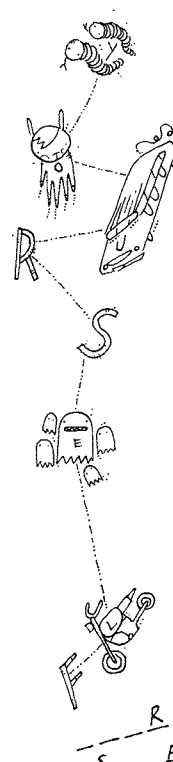
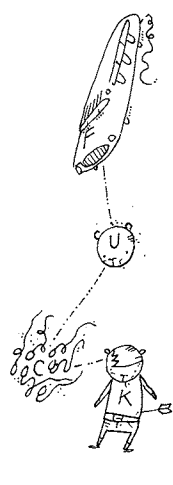
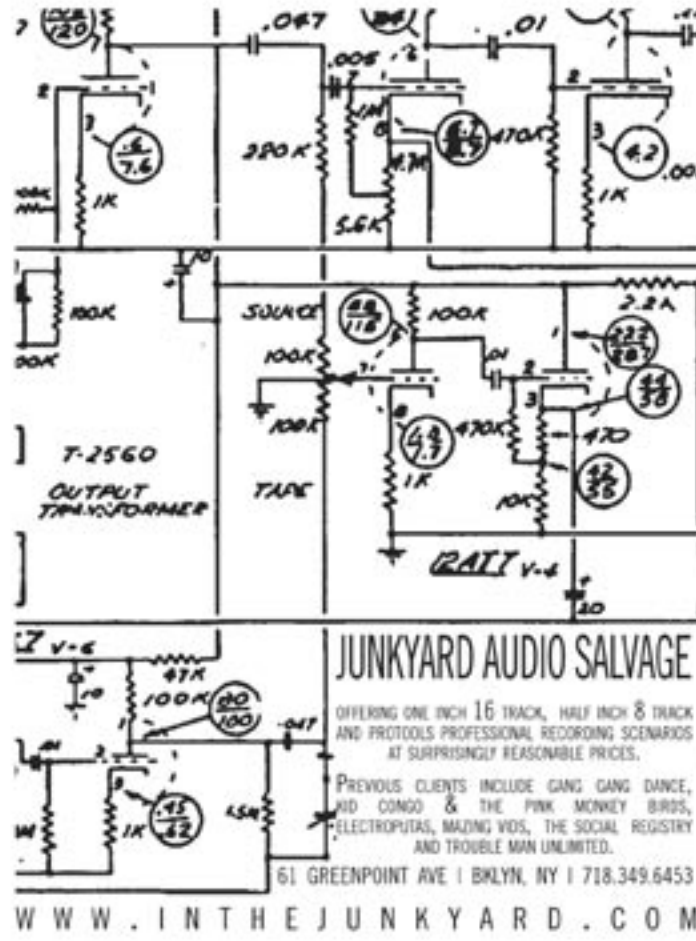
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Legendary Pink Dots 'Poppy Variations' CD/DLP

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Next: releases with Friday Group, La STPO, irr.app(ext.), Volcano the Bear, Christus & the Cosmonauts, Coil, Edward Ka-Spel, Romulus/Remus, Waldteufel, Armchair Migraine Journey, Green Milk from the Planet Orange, george&caplin, Romulus/Remus, Soriah, plus new exclusive distributed items by CrookedMirror and Romulus/Remus Records.

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the Dicks, Amoeba Raft Boy, etc.) is a classic Midwest punk-glam-cuss brawl-fest. They'll make you feel like your shoes are made of goddamn heroin! Alright!

29. **LINDSAY LOHAN** Actress. Did you check her out in *Mean Girls*? We have yet to see it but we hear it's good. Did you see her in *Jane*, man? Dude, she's nice. 18 tho-fuhgeddaboutit-goo goo ga ga.

30. **CYNTHIA CONNOLLY** Rural Studio Bonus Album. Cynthia's photos are part of the underground fabric of the U.S., whether as thee crucial documentation of the DC hardcore scene, as part of Lee Ranaldo's new book, *Lengths and Breadths*, or standing on their own. This is the latest in Cynthia's series of postcard sets, and her visions of the Alabama artist retreat where she spent some time are just lovely.

31. **DOUBLE LEOPARDS** *Circa 1999-2001* cdr (Polyamory). A mother of a release by this ongoing sit down and play drone improv unit from Brooklyn. Track 8, play it-it slays.

32. **LONGHOUSE PUBLICATIONS.** Bob and Susan Arnold have been cranking out top flight, intensely personal poetry & prose from all kinds a world class heavy-hitters for three-plus decades. Their stuff is still amazing, and Bob's reaction to the Debacle of November was particularly great.

33. **DEAD BOYS** *Live at CBGB 1977* dvd (MVD). Dude, I was at this frikkin gig. You can allmmoosst see me if you freeze frame 53

seconds into "I Need Lunch." The interview with Cheetah Chrome now is great as is the vintage one with the band.

34. **DREDD FOOL** *Child of Microtones Heroine* 78 cdr series. As though the recent Dredd Child of Microtone double cds weren't enough (and they're not), here are five more cdrs of various well-smoked out-takes, bits and pieces. Totally groovy mountain man gage damage. Grab a jugfull.

35. **NO NECK BLUES BAND** *Dutch Money / First Kingdom of the Ghost* lps (Seres/Sound@One). Just when you think these lads were being sideswiped with collective head up crack they land these two sweetheart lps. Really choice, better than most shit spun in 2004.

36. **SUN CITY GIRLS** *Carnival Folklore Resurrection Vol. 13* cd (Abduction). The hits just keep on coming. With their re-emergence as a live threat this past year, it's impossible to imagine anyone stopping them.

37. **HAIR POLICE** *Obedience Cuts* lp (Gods of Tundra). Jim O comments how a lot of the newer midwest noise boyz are picking up off the late demented Harry Pussy. Hmm, yeh, maybe-if so, then fuh yeh go for it-regardless, this is one dark monster drip of a slab.

38. **CHARLES PLYMELL** *Some Mother's Sons*

(Cherry Valley). Nice to see the great Cherry Valley imprint back in business, and starting off with a fine collection of new & old poems by the last of the red hot papas. Plymell is in a helluva friendly mood here, and the joy is infectious.



Double Leopards



Sun City Girls

Nice pics too.

39. **KATE BIGGAR.** Total asskick feedback goddess.

40. **ANTHONY BRAXTON.** Buying a copy of each available merch item from the Wolf Eyes table, after catching them at the Perspectives Festival in Vasteras, Sweden. No moldy fig, he.

41. **500MG** *Vertical Approach* lp (Eclipse/Galactic Zoo Disc). Bardo Pond's Michael Gibbons unleashes a swooping masterpiece of Philly style psyche spirit soul rock.

42. **STALK-FORREST GROUP** *St. Cecilia* cd (Rhino Handmade). Can't recall if it was actually released in '04, but I sure played it a lot this summer. The west coast psych roots of Blue Oyster Cult, with Meltzer lyrics galore.

43. **VOLCANIC TONGUE.** New distribution scene run by Heather Leigh (Charalambides / Scores) and Scottich love adonis David Keenan. Keenan "broke" the story to the world of New Weird America and here he puts his mouth where his heart is. Well, first into the arms of Heather, who as a prototypical visionary American wonder, is second to none. They both created VT and have been making available to you, the internet consumer,

a handpicked trove of global underground goodness with top shelf descriptive reviews. Their site will develop into a more zine-like thing as our time rocks on.

44. **ANN MENE BROKER** *Tiny Teeth* (R.L. Crow Publications). Superb book of very funny poems by this vastly underrated writer.

45. **AARON DILLOWAY.** His face on *Wire's* Wolf Eyes cover. That's what we wanna see-fuck all the bald serious DJ puds-Dillo: shreds.

46. **WALLY SHOUP TRIO** *Blue Purge* (Leo). Another combusive burl of wild and nimble three-way cluster-fucks from this great Northwest unit. They have soul, they have grace, they have matches, and they like to light them. That is Fire Music, little buddy.

47. **HEIRCRAFT TOTEM** *September 2004* cs (Polyamory). Satya Sai Scuppety and Wooden Wand from, where else, Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice, supertripping out in Brooklyn as the autumn descends upon metropolis and sluicing it all through some kozmik regurge. Nice, with the promise of more to come.

48. **CARLOS GIFFONI/CHRIS CORSANO/NELS CLINE** *Graduation* lp (free103point9). Totally wild, loose free-form blast by an ad hoc bi-coastal destruction squad. One side documents their brief moment, the other deconstructs it

via Giffoni's wiggling fingers. And the further he gets from reality the more you'll wish you had a third nipple.

49 **CONNELLY + THE MACHINES** *Worm Shrine* c60 (American Tapes). Hair Police's Mike Connelly burns rubber with John Olson and Tovah O'Rourke's Dead Machines and you know it's party time, bub.

50 **FURSAXA** *Mandrake* lp (Eclipse) & live at the Montague Bookmill. Great to have Tara Burke's dreamy debut in an easy-to-handle form, and her recent shows have been more fully tripped than ever. This night, with Black Forest/Black Sea was particularly looped and memorable.

51 **LITTLE HOWLIN WOLF**. 7" s unearthed and reissued on cdr by HereSee/True Vine. LHF is a taller than me dude, real name James Pobeiga, shadow drifted from south side of Chi-town



Sharron Kraus

as street howler '70s/80s, recorded at least 32 7" s himself—they've been slowly and recently discovered by the ears of such discerning madmen as Twig Harper (Nautical Almanac/Buzzardstain) and Ian Nagoski, who have compiled what they can on to cd. This shit is raw, real and on fire. The American soil will not give up sprouting visions to blow down the bullshit of right wing turdism. All rise.



52 **SHARRON KRAUS** *Songs of Love and Loss* cd (Camera Obscura). Exquisite second album by this wonderful singer. She conjures up visions of Karen Dalton, Shirley Collins, Judy Dyble and even early Joni. Live she was fantastic, too.

53 **MANIACS DREAM** cs (Lal Lal Lal). Stooged cousins to Finland's Avarus, Maniac's Dream are the sheeit as far as what is happening in the neo-fi underworld.

54 **VELVET UNDERGROUND** unreleased acetate of real debut album. Found by Northwest record scum and headed for ebay.

55 **NAUTICAL ALMANAC/VERTONEN** lp (SNSE/Crippled Intellect). Awesome split lp of hectic beyondism from Carly Ptak and Twig Harper's Nautical Almanac w/ the unexplainable solo groove game of Chicago's Vertonen.

56 **MIKE SHIFLET/SARAH BERNAT** cassingle (Gameboy). By now I hope you know that Sarah Bernat rules hard—she of 16 Bitch Pile Up and for a about a day or two a member of Polly Shang Kuan Band. Whilst with PSKB she flew home with this heavy jam and freemixed it for this badass release. Excellent. Flip it to hear Shiflet plug his patchcord into hot machine-meat.

57 **BRUCE RUSSELL** *Gilded Splinters* (Slow Toe Books). Cleveland's tireless Mr. Wasco got Russell to cough up this book of essays written over the past decade. It's a good pile of funny and perceptive musings by a guy who has spent a lotta time on the toilet, just thinking and thinking and thinking.

58 **FUCK IT TAPES**. Weirdo Bklyn cassette label which got our attention when they issued

some new country industrial hee haw gospel death blow form the strange angel troupe of Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice. Their *micHEL's portal and crow jane variations* tape is one of a few the band have delivered to various labels (including their own Polyamory) and it continues their roving story of folkside mesmerizations and dark cloud improv. Wooden Wand are one of the more super alive and interesting contingencies out there. They're trekking around with Hair Police this spring around the time of March's No Fun Fest in NYC so gas up and go see em. Most of the cassettes on Fuck It are sold out, including a great one by Racists who have some Wooden Wand affiliation but the WW&TVV one described above is, as of like now, still available. Maybe.

59 **WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN** *Rising Up and Rising Down* (McSweeney's). I still haven't come

close to reading the whole thing, but have spent various parts of the year poking around its many gory cavities. And it is really pretty amazing. I can't imagine the condensed Ecco version will really do it justice. 700 pages? Phaw.

60 **PALSY**. New cassette label, they've released some heavy sound crack by such crazed luminaries as Dylan Nyoukis and Smack Music 7. Not sure how available these are as they come in way way limited editions of 19 or less. Nyoukis' tape "inside wino lodge" consists of some dementoid guttural yowling and slooweed machine buggery while Smack

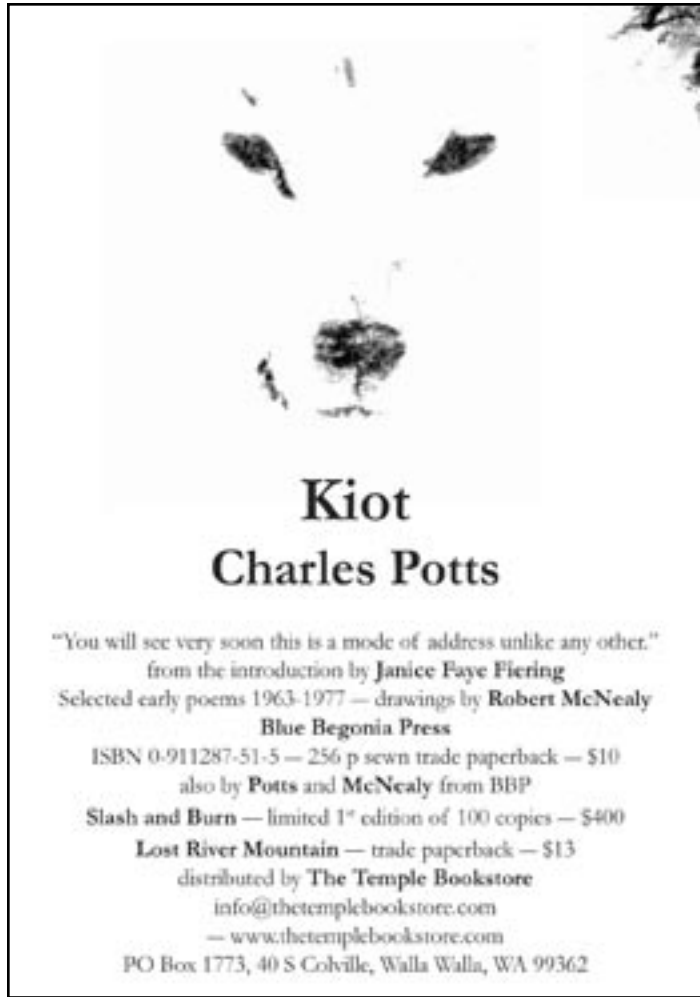
Music 7's "from pot to gut" further explores Karen Constance's flower noise mind grace. There's other shit from something called Ones and Ykeo and it's all decent street skum huzz. Check with label boss Daniel Mith for availability. He promises to unleash a Humectant Interruption/Can't four cassette box at some point so queue up.

61 **MC5: A True Testimonial**. It's a drag that this documentary about the 5 ran into such trouble and seems to have been knocked off the shelves for the foreseeable future. Because it is really a great tribute to a band and an era that deserve every ounce of devotion they get.

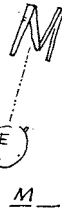
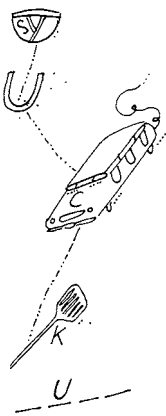
62 **RAYMOND PETTIBON** show at Zwirner gallery NYC. It's amazing how much a blue chip artist Ray is these days. But rightly so. His work/thought blows doors on most tripe as it did back in the ol' SST days. This particular show was remarkable with direct-to-wall paintings and lotsa great paperwork pinned around. Hung with style and more than a dark tripped smile.

63 **JIM O'ROURKE** non-stop Sparks tribute. A lifestyle more than anything else. Catch it while you can

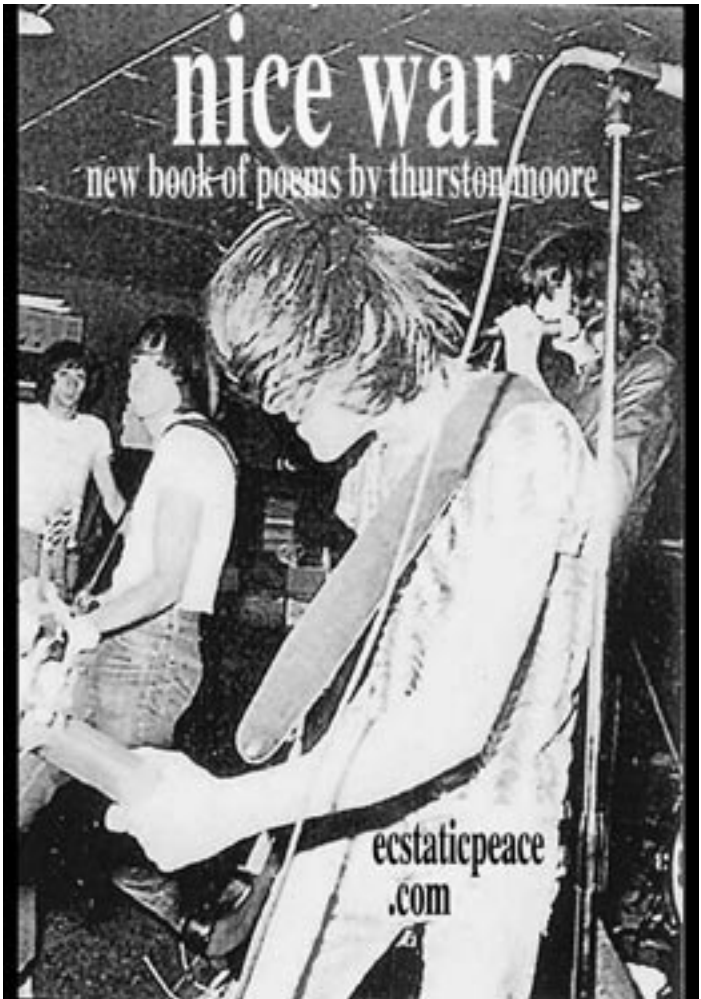
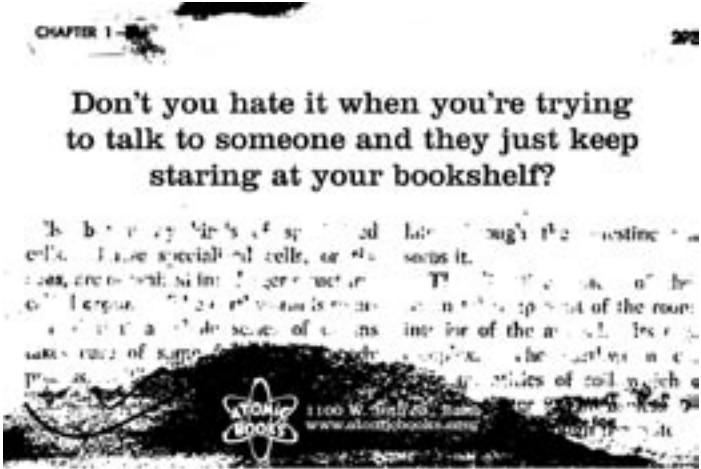
64 **SON OF EARTH FLESH ON BONE** *Carhole* cdr (Apostasy). It seems they've shortened their name to just Son Of Earth but who knows—the pioneers of Western MA post-improv already grown out of their school ties and striking weird glam and kraut blows. Crazy...and they have some new lathe 7"



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Raymond Biesinger



floating around.

65 Tam Tam Books' **BORIS VIAN** reissue series. Tosh Berman's Tam Tam imprint followed up their triumphal issue of *Vian's I Spit on Your Graves*, with a great new translation of the delirious *Foam of the Daze*. *Autumn in Peking* is imminent, as is a Rizzolli volume of *Manual of Saint Germain-de-Pres* (which Tosh edited along with Eva Prinzi), which'll also have photos by Paul Knobloch. Get hip. Today.

66 **ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS** reunion with Richard Lloyd. Fuck, we missed this but by all accounts it smoked. Even with Crocus sweating, huffing and sitting down a lot. Hopefully they'll strike again.

67 **CHRIS D** *I Pass for Human*. First feature film by this legendary punk musician and film archivist. Made for virtual peanuts, it is a real damn movie, and one of the best vampire junkie flicks ever.

68 **RUBBY BOYS** cdr (Spirit Of Orr). This label keeps issuing incredible documents from the real weird Boston underground in and around the Shit Spangled Banner mythos which has culminated in the great oomphalump of Sunburned Hand of the Man. Rubby Boys were a 1991 bastard rock combo with Phil Franklin fresh from Caroliner damage, Greg Petravoto, who's now in Feathers (from Vermont) and Sunburned's Rich Pontius. This is great, rambling chug informed by loose Xpressway cassettes and mystery dope.

69 *Goodbye Babylon* box (Dust to Digital). An insanely beautiful and over-the-top tribute to the fascinating power of raw gospel music and apocalyptic hillbilly visionaries. Even us atheists deserve something like this.

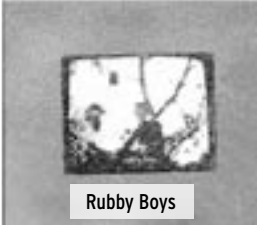
70 **200 LB UNDERGROUND** zine. While scouring eBay for old hardcore zines we kind of got depressed thinking about how there were no real good zines these days that had some spit, grits and tits. You know, like *Touch & Go* and *Forced Exposure* and *Sick Teen* when lo and fucking behold along comes a new ish of 200 LB Underground. Head "homo" is Tony Rettman and we think he feels the same way as the spuds from those aforementioned pages and has



Rocket From the Tombs



Rubby Boys



Goodbye Babylon



200 Lbs



Finland Rocks!

decided to say screw you to any kind of internet existence or overblown mag production and just put out a few crucial pages of good reviewing and debate. All with a heady dose of loserville gonzitis where no one is safe and rock n roll is like a monkey on your back. Besides Rettman's streetrock rants the newest issue #4 has an insane summer 2004 tour report from Magik Markers' Elisa Ambrogio to die for. This mag is available from some distributors like Father Yod or from Tony himself I'd imagine.

71 **AMBER SOUNDROOM**. This German reissue label has made available a whole pile of legendary Euro lps that have always looked dreamily perfect when described by dealer scum. Most of them don't actually live up to their reps, but it's a lot better to find that out for \$25 than it is to discover it for \$250. And some of them truly are monsters. So there.

72 **MARK GONZALES**. Various books published under the imprint of Cujo Arts and Literture. He keeps making these things and they're a whole new inroad to personal worlds of poetic creativity despite intense spelling issues. The humor and nowness are straight up and energized. He usually gives these away or sells them thru Printed Matter in NYC who sell them as "artist books" (which they are). An early skate legend in L.A. and a young disciple of sorts to Pettibon, MG is the real deal.

73 **ED ASKEW** *Little Eyes* lp (De Stijl). Retrieval of the great lost second ESP lp by this mystically dislocated singer & tipple-maestro. This has everything that a lotta "late night listens" claim to own.

74 **SWEEPERS**—live and killing in Ypsilanti. An impromptu solo performance by John Olson playing a little kids toy broom in front of hard grizzled Michigan noise killers. There's a video floating around of this and it's demonic.

75 **FINLAND** Most hipsters will tell you Finland was "so 2002," but what the fuck? I continue to be thrilled by the stuff that's coming out of there these days, from free jazz to communal folk to archival punk. Sheesh, I feel so 2002.

76 **DOUBLE DREAM LEOPARDS AKTION UNIT.** Live set at The Schoolhouse Hadley, MA. A show we all loved and wanted to, like, maybe release but no one taped it (supposedly).

77 **FAT WORM OF ERROR** NZZNZZZZNZNZNNNN cd (Yeay). Reviewed this last issue—let's just say these babe's kick butt and this cd is a great intro to their forthcoming Load record.

78 **Sideways/Napoleon Dynamite/Kill Bill 2** Because I live in the goddamn sticks, I am heavily reliant on studio releases for viewing pleasure. These were among the movies that somehow made it through the Hollywood grinder with enough meat left on their shanks to still knock my ass into the dirt.

79 **TO LIVE AND SHAVE IN L.A.** Tour and subsequent recording session: God help us all (bush is filth).

80 **GEORGE BUSH's ass-clam.** 'nuff said. ☹

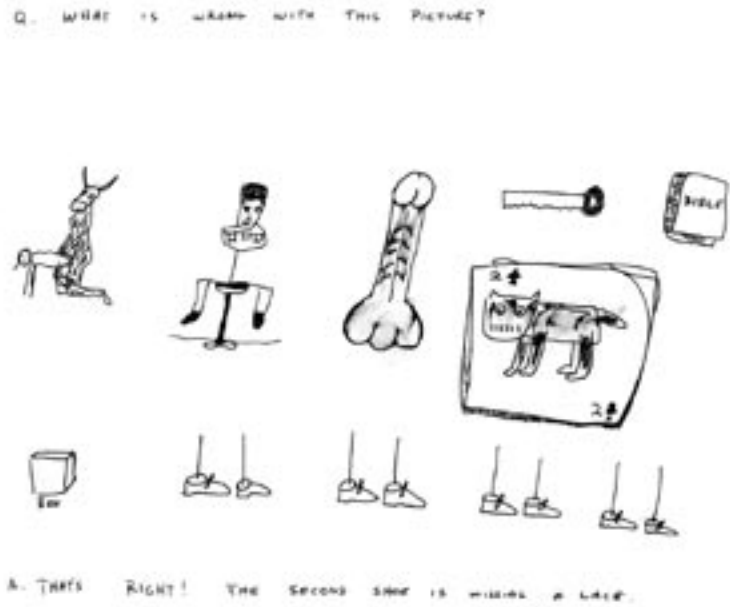
If you have treats you would like to be licked by the Bull Tongue (archaic formats: print, vinyl, vid preferred), send two (2) copies to: PO Box 627, Nortmapton MA 01061.

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C and D

Two guys bicker about new records.

NINA SIMONE

Baltimore

(CT/Legacy/Epic/Sony)

D: [to tape recorder] Hello. We are back!

C: [very formally] It is time to exchange views once again, after our brief vacation from these pages. A vacation, I might add, that was not entirely voluntary—

D: But we will speak of that some other time.

C: Everything was going well until they caught you putting the potato in that Hummer's exhaust pipe in front of the military recruitment center.

D: I told them I was removing the potato that I had just witnessed some crazy anarchist put there. I was actually de-vandalizing their truck—

C: But, strangely, they were not convinced. Especially after they found the grater in your jacket.

D: Yes, well...

C: [Yawns.] Please remind me to forget to call you next time something is going down, because I can't afford any more of these "vacations."

D: Soooo, Nina Simone's 1974

album *Baltimore* has been reissued.

C: Apparently she didn't want to make this record. She didn't like making the record. She didn't like the finished record. And it's such a good record!

D: The title track is the greatest Randy Newman cover of all time. I mean, Randy Newman done in a loping funk mode? If you've ridden the Amtrak through Baltimore, the route it takes gives you an unobstructed view of a horribly blighted ghetto, and her voice here really captures that sadness.

C: I'm guessing she thought the more pop-orientated /songs were beneath her, that it was somehow undignified for her to sing Hall & Oates' "Rich Girl," and maybe she was right on that count. But this is really a unique Nina Simone album, and frequently magnificent.

ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS

I Am a Bird Now

(Secretly Canadian)

D: Give me that. [looks at sleeve] I was happier when I didn't know what he looks like.

C: Hey man, everyone looks like something.

D: It's like if you heard Pavarotti singing and then turned out he looks like Pee-Wee Herman!

C: Well, how hard is it to just listen to the music? My goodness.

D: I'm just saying.



C: This guy's voice is known to have moved Lou Reed to tears. I might be wrong, but I don't think Lou Reed cries very often. The tracks of Lou's tears...

D: ...could not extinguish torch songs this strong. So very beautiful. [Towards end of album] Yet here we have

instance number eighty-seven-thousand-four-hundred-and-two of a greaseball, cheeseball Saturday Night Live-style saxophone solo ruining another otherwise faultless song.

C: Clarence Clemmons, so much to answer for.



THE KILLS

No Wow

(Rough Trade)

D: They still don't have a drummer? Another incomplete band...

C: That means that each get an entire half of the proverbial pie! Great opening salvo, it's the drum beat equivalent of a

strobe light in the face. They have a song about asking if you got the real good cigarettes from the store like I asked.

D: A frequently posed question around my house.

C: There's that chugalug thing they do so well, on the chorus of "I Hate the Way You



Love." You can ride that into the sunset. By taking instruments away, rock'n'roll has reminded us that at its core it's dance music. Fewer instruments means the sound has room to breathe. And breath plus beat equals boogie. Even if the beat is that of a machine. See? Drum

machines *do* have soul.

D: I am more enamored with their human qualities. Speaking of which, I'd like to give a hearty salute to VV for being that rarest of regional species: the untanned Floridian.

D: [end of "Rodeo Town"] That is so Velvets! She is fearsome yet vulnerable, a potent

combination.



C: The fella in the group goes by the nom de rock Hotel. I think Motel would be more appropriate. Somewhere where rooms can be rented by the hour.

D: [Listening to the three note piano riff on "Ticket Man"] They should use piano on

more songs. And they should use more of the piano, period. I think there's 85 more keys to

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M. Ward



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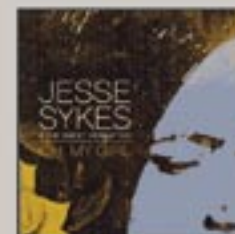
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be precise. It's like the music has been shaved to an inch of its life.
C: I've always said there's two types of people: the shaves and the shave-nots.
D: Not as catchy as the first album, but The Kills aren't dead yet.

M. WARD
Transistor Radio
(Merge)
D: [listening to "One Life Away"] He actually says, "I'm visiting my fräulein"! An inspired approach to breaking into the hofbrau circuit. How sweet is this... You could whistle or hum along to this entire album without feeling stupid once.
C: This guy seems unassuming. I'd like to hang out with him in an Airsteam trailer crossing the country. Easygoing, but clever. He's making lyrical origami out of the sad history of rock on "Fuel For Fire": "I've dug beneath the wall of sound/The song is always the same/I've got lonesome fuel for fire/And so my heart is always on the line." This album is genius. For fans of Dylan, Red House Painters/Sun Kill Moon, even Chris Isaak aficionados feeling frisky.
D: I have seen M. Ward. He has curly hair. And if the hair is curly outside your head, it means there is something curly going on inside too.

C: This song "Big Boat" is the dis track of the year! All about how this guy who says he's got a big boat really only has a tiny dinghy! HAHA!
D: "I'll Be Yr Bird"—a bird reference, just like Antony. The whole lot are ornithology-crazed.
C: What do you think the M in M. Ward stands for?
D: Megamensch. Obviously.

FIERY FURNACES
EP
(Rough Trade)
D: Ween covering Kraftwerk?
C: It's like they're playing the zaniest parts possible. Zappa plus Sandy Shaw plus Miami bass plus Peter Frampton talkbox plus "Da Funk"—era Daft Punk. [As song builds] You can hear why this band has such a good live rep. And there's the Disneyland Electrical Parade. Geniuses, pushing it forward: a band mashing itself up. And dig those fistfulls of piano notes!
D: Eleanor and Matthew Friedberger, I salute you. Or I would, except I am sitting on my hands in an effort to behave.
C: Somewhere, Neil Hagerty doesn't feel so lonesome anymore.
D: Todd Rundgren looks up, with interest.
C: Friedberger & Frampton has a certain ring to it. The law firm that rocks!
D: That's very similar to an Echo & Bunnymen song, "Killing Moon." [Tries singing along]

C: You can't sing along with this record. How you going to do "fireman Frank friendly fed fee-free/daznk dusty doughnuts den da dribble drank"? Can you imagine Fiery Furnaces karaoke?
D: Only after multiple pitchers of margaritas.
C: Pace yourself, please.
D: You may call me Margarita Friedbergerhead from now on.
C: I may not.

LOUIS XIV
Illegal Tender EP
(Pineapple/Atlantic)
C: More complex melodic pop, lotsa cool elements. One song goes into a violin and horn shuffle! Uptempo, Fall-Stones swagger.
D: "Are you ready Steve?"
C: Especially the garage-glam stomp here. I love the theatricality of these guys. Brian May type clipped, melodic, strutting guitar.

What a tone.
D: You know, it cannot be coincidence that Brian May and Louis XIV, I mean the historical figure Louis XIV, have the exact same hairdo.
C: There may be something to your curly hair theory after all.

KINGS OF LEON
Aha Shake Heartbreak
(RCA)
D: I can't understand a word he's saying but I like the way he's saying it.
C: Hawaiian washboard, dub reggae bass, tropical storm strumming... Prince Valiant takes a holiday in Waikiki.
Then it goes into a Strokes/Beefheart/Talking Heads thing, taut'n'funky.
D: These guys appear to be cooking up something in the shack in back. Remember that time we were driving through Llano, Texas in search of Cooper's Pit BBQ, and suddenly there was so much smoke in the road we had to pull of?

C: And we pulled right into Cooper's parking lot!
D: Yes, well, Kings of Leon have a compellingly smoky sound that make me think of that. Big britches and brisket.
C: This band is like, all brothers or cousins or both. And Fiery Furnaces are brother and sister. How come my siblings were never that cool?
D: I'm sure they feel just as highly about you.

WOLFMOTHER
Wolfmother EP
(Modular)
D: This rocks! Straight outta the penal colony commonly called Australia. "Purple haze is in the sky/See the angels wink on high!" I can understand and appreciate every word.
C: For fans of Blue Cheer and Black Sabbath. Of which we are two.



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D: When I was last in Australia, I drank beer made from Tazmanian water. It gave me special insight into the psyche of the Tazmanian devil. And, I believe, into the dark hearts of Wolfmother.
C: Dude, they have a song called "The White Unicorn"!
D: See, if they were from Brooklyn, that would be irony. But Australians rock unrepentantly and irony-free. This is the way for me.
C: Break out the two-hitter.
D: It's a no-brainer.



PARCHMAN FARM
Parchman Farm EP
(Jackpine Social Club)
D: [listening to Mirror Spirit] "Heyyyyy something's burning/Again." I know that feeling.
C: Cool screecher gnome there, doin' the bluesy shouter vocals. But he's got that yowl that echoes.
D: Some of the Grand Funk/Cactus/ZZ Top boogie woogie oogie.
C: Harmonica. Roadhouse! Makes me wanna pour some Jameson's in my latte. I'm still waiting for some piano or the proverbial blazing lead guitar. Like Dickey Betts, she takes a while to get into it but then --
D: She?
C: Yes, she. Guitar mixed too low. They really foreground the vocals and hi-hats.. [listening to "Too Many People" still] When she solos... She has a real good solo flow going, it's non-rushed, just thoughtful melodic lines. Hardly anyone plays like that anymore, it's a lost virtue, being able to jam it out without going all melismatic on the fret board. I am digging it, I just wish they'd turn it up more.
D: [listening to chant that starts midway "Chosen Child"] This is for the people who want to mellow their harsh.

C: *Another* Bay Area band. Shit! This and Comets On Fire and High On Fire, all from the same bioregion. Unbelievable.
D: The West Coast is in the roadhouse again! [looking at sleeve] Another EP??? First incomplete bands, now incomplete records...
C: I like how their songs can switch direction hard in the middle, or in the final third. There's a loosening of the song structure rules. They need a deeply psychedelic ballad with all the trimmings—Mellotron, phased vocals—and so on here somewhere.
D: That's the flaw in the flow.

HEARTLESS BASTARDS
Stairs and Elevators
(Fat Possum)
C: Another chick guitarist playing rock 'n' roll.

Cool voice, she can really siren-ate when she wants to, nice Nirvana chords, catchy vocal turns, not the best lyrics especially "New Resolution."
D: I resolve to skip this song.
C: Her name is Erika Wennerstrom.
D: Kind of a country voice.
C: I picture her hand on her hip on "Runnin"—

awful song titles by the way—scarf on her head, in a heat-fogged kitchen at the stove, kids running around, telling off her husband, at the end of her rope... "I hope there's a higher ground/Cuz I'm going steadily down."
D: Sounds like there's a piano under there, I'd love to hear her without a rock band, away from the plodding bass, although I kinda like the plod on "The Will Song." It does have a nice tug to it, that groove she's riding.
C: When it starts stomping on "Swamp Song"... look out! That's her tempo.



SUNDAY NIGHTS:
The Songs of Junior Kimbrough
(Fat Possum)
C: Featuring Heartless Bastards doing their righteous shitkicker

stomping on "Done Got Old"—weirdly defiant given its sad lyrics, so maybe that doesn't work on the conceptual level—why would you be so proud that you can't do what you used to? —but it sounds awesome. In a way, it's the Led Zeppelin treatment.

D: I'd buy this just for the Spiritualized track. That's a brainstormtrooper.
C: The Stooges, doing two versions of the same song, one of Junior's cruelest.
D: Hey it's the Black Keys rocking. Hey, it's our old friends the Fiery Furnaces..
C: Man, listen to that furrowed browbeating fleet-fingerfood fretwork.



D: That's like hillbilly Mahavishnu Orchestra stuff right there. Birds of Fiery Furnaces!
C: Thee Shams' track is a stomper too.
D: Stomp is the tempo of the year! Queens of the Stone Age, Kings of Leon, Louis XIV...

C: I gotta get some new boots.
D: More Stooges here at the end with Watt. Iggy is saying frankly unsayable things. And the band is getting down into the meat of the monster. Lock up everyone you hold dear.

LOVE'S A REAL THING:
The Funky Fuzzy Sounds of West Africa (World Psychedelic Classics 3)
(Luaka Bop/V2)
D: Not sure what's specifically psychedelic about this.



C: ...Other than it might expand some people's consciousness to listen to electric music from Africa. We always forget that there are kids who haven't yet lucked into hearing King Sunny Ade or Fela Kuti or Ali Farka Toure or Tinariwen, yet...

D: These guys shoulda been on the Junior Kimbrough tribute album instead of Mr. BUH-LOOZE Explosion, who is, after all, the worst kind of novelty artist: a failed humorist.

C: Mmm that's true, now!
D: "Better Change Your Mind" by William Onyeabor is the coolest homegrown soul-funk I've heard in some time. Like a home demo of a bitter-but-still-sweet-singing Curtis Mayfield giving a word of advice.

C: There's a Fela cover on here—I think, I could be wrong—"Ifa," by Tunji Oyelana & the Benders, what a monster groove that is.

Hey that's the beginning of theme song for "The World" on NPR!
D: "I'm Lisa Mullens."
C: "And I'm Korva Coleman!"
D: "Let's do the numbers!"

THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS
Push the Button
(Astralwerks)

D: Push the "off" button.
C: Drugs help with this kind of music, but not as much as they used to... So much machine repetition, like a child's TV program. If I'm going to live in a loop, I want it to be organically played, not by robots.
D: If I am not mistaken, and I seldom am, Keyboard Money Mark already had an album called *Push the Button*. Mark's button was better.

C: They always are lifting off other people. Remember when they started out, they were calling themselves the Dust Brothers? Bizarre. You can't sample someone else's name for your own name!

D: Unless you have good lawyers.
C: It's a severe breach of ethics. But, anyway, let's at least salute them for "Left Right," an antiwar electro-stomp song featuring American rapper Anwar Superstar. "What's the difference between Bush and Saddam?...If it's so important for us to fight for mankind/Why don't I see any of they kinfolk out on the front line?" Sounds like your standard-issue late-'90s know-nothing No Limit rapper, except he's pissed off and he's aware.
D: Maybe I'm a misty-eyed optimist but this could be an anthem. Somewhere, poor Soulja Slim is still crying.

IAN BROWN
Solarized
(Sanctuary)
C: Speaking of aware. I think Mr. Ex-Stone Roses

singer here has been reading his Galeano. This little chant at the end of "Upside Down" (which is the title of Galeano's book of fury): "Seven percent own 84 percent/Of all the wealth on earth/Oil is the spice to make a man/Forget

man's worth." That's some pretty heavy stuff. I always get the feeling that the music Ian Brown is most into is really rasta reggae, because that's what his political perspective and lyrical approach resemble, even if the music doesn't always.

D: [Listening to "Time Is My Everything"] Ladies and germs, you are witnessing the cheesiest horn recorded in the last four decades.

C: That really is outrageously bad. That's the kind of thing that people usually get disciplined for. Lose their jobs, no severance, future wages garnished by court order...

D: [listening to "Destiny and Circumstance"] I like his voice but this music is just embarrassing. That guitar work is just [haughty voice] dreadfully dull. I can't be bothered to listen to it. You bore me, Ian Brown musicians.
C: The lyrics are cool—listen

to the end here, this little chant at the end of "Upside Down," I think he's been reading his Galeano: "Seven percent own 84 percent/Of all the wealth on earth/Oil is the spice to make a man/Forget man's worth." That's some pretty heavy stuff. I always get the feeling that the music Ian Brown is most into is really rasta reggae, because that's what his political perspective and lyrical approach resemble, even if the music doesn't always.

D: [listening to the title track] It's better when it's more tripped out like this.

C: Yes, but...
D: ["The Sweet Fantastic" starts] There's that horn again.

C: All this electronic stuff is the wrong approach for him. He's so close to the earth, he should use as few electrical appliances as possible. Just natural human energy playing drums and guitars, and for godssake real horns. Street musicians in Morocco, or Cambodia, or Brazil. Anything but this.

D: Kiss and make up with Squire and Reni already, fer crissakes.

KASABIAN
Kasabian
(RCA)

C: British band, hot over there. Live in a barn.

D: Let's do the numbers. Obvious inspirations: Happy Mondays, Regular Fries, late-period Primal Scream.

C: Lads on LSD, into raves and comedown



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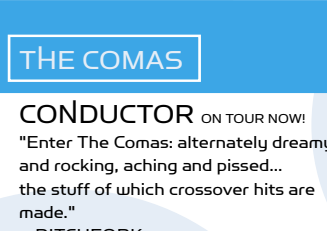
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music, but enamored by rock n roll's inherent mystique and power.

D: Plus Air.

C: [belches lightly] Pretty decent for a first record.

D: Yep.

C: They could write an anthem or they could become something embarrassing. We shall see.

COYOTE

Inside EP

(Birdman)

D: Based on the evidence before the court, the piano is really making a comeback in music...

C: This reminds me of the guy who shows up at your party and you have to figure out a non-confrontational way to make him leave. Sounds like Drive Like Jehu or the Rapture or Entrance at a full-moon piano recital at an ice skate rink. They've already got the organ there for these guys.

D: Reminds me of the circus scenes in *Wings of Desire*.

C: Always back to the German filmmakers with you. Well, I'd rather hear some Vincent Price narration than this guy's Crime and the City Solution impression. But the music's pretty good.

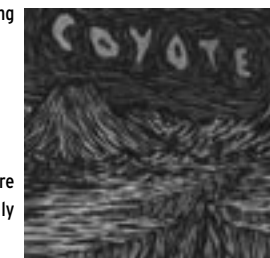
D: This last song ["Sharing Your Soul With the Group"] has a nice gothic flourish to it. And a decent chord change.

never remember. You know who you are. I sure as hell don't."

C: One gets the sense that the feeling was mutual.

JENNIFER GENTLE

Valende



(Sub Pop)

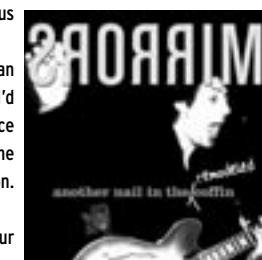
D: Michael Yonkers?

C: No, it's some varying-fidelity weirdbeard Italian psych band. At first this sounds like Animal Collective, without the dizziness, a little more twee. But you know, I'm not into sped-up voices.

D: Smells like Demento. "Fish heads, fish heads..."

C: But this ["Circles of Sorrow"] is gorgeous. Intimate, slow-dawning rural psychedelia.

D: Whispering is underrated, under-used. Morrison used to do it all the time, there was a



reason for that. I once heard Bjork whispering some Anais Nin erotica on the radio and I almost fainted. When your instrument is your voice, you gotta use every thing it can do. The ears will respond.

C: And beautiful birdsong here at the end of this nice gothic flourish to it. And a decent chord change.

D: Now they are birds. Please, gentle *Arthur* readers, stick with this album, its riches lie near its center, like a luscious basil-mint blow pop.

MIRRORS

Another Nail in the (Remodeled) Coffin (ROIR)

D: Cleveland band. The legendary Mirrors!

C: [listening to "If I Swear"] Very angelic voice, like if Peter Cetera was fronting the Feelies. I have a theory that all music that comes out of Cleveland reflects that state of its sports teams at the time. I bet this was from the era when World B. Free was playing for the Cavaliers. And Super Joe Charboneau was having his one and only big season hitting home runs.

D: Wasn't he Snoopy's favorite player? I think Snoopy wrote letters to Super Joe that went unanswered.

C: No, I think it's Charlie Brown that wrote letters to Super Joe. Anyways, I bet this was created the year the Indians had 10-cent beer night and there ended up being a riot. It was music made on the cheap for everyone to have a good time to, but things got a bit out of control and everything went up in flames in the end.

D: I think this stuff is just as important as Television, but of course Mirrors were not from New York City so nobody talked about them then, or now. Except for themselves. As frontman Jamie Klimek writes in the sleeve notes: "Dedicated to all the people I've worked with whose names I can

THE BIRD SHOW

Green Inferno

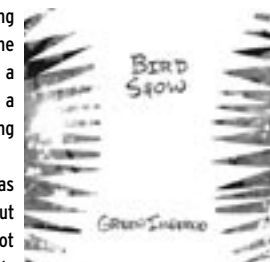
(Kranky)

D: Everyone's gone bird-crazy, like I said! It's an ornithology convention around here.

C: Birds, flute drones, gamelan, bells: meditative. Reminds me of Kraig Grady

and Brad Laner's "Music From Anaphoria" false ethnography. And Jon Hassell's fourth world records too, of course. And Holger Czukay. And late-period Talk Talk. Anything David Toop wrote about in *Ocean of Sound*, you know?

D: And like that other drone-unit on Kranky that we adore: Growing. Wonderful, brilliant lifebuzzing stuff. Birds taught humans to sing, but since then humans drowned them out with their own voice and instruments. That was our loss. Perhaps it's time for us to start listening to their song again. ☺



(continued from page 15)

around the world in order to reverse my own consciousness loop. And that's a kind of reverse—well, Anthony Braxton talks about creating webs of consciousness around the world. For good, not for your own personal bullshit like I was doing. He talks about doing particular concerts at particular places to create a web of consciousness. So I did sort of a reverse Anthony Braxton-style thing. But what happened was, it helped!

There's a certain person that kind of triggered all of this. I wasn't talking to them at the time—now we're best friends—but years later, they told me that they'd figured out that at that exact same time that record was released, they'd actually suffered a pretty bad, pretty weird breakdown: they'd started suffering from all the same things I was suffering from—couldn't go out of the house, couldn't talk to anybody, bed-ridden, they had to go into therapy for a while. Maybe that's coincidence, I don't know. [laughs] It was pretty weird shit. I'm never gonna do that again. That's one of the reasons I reissued it was to make those records a lot less powerful—reverse a lot of the power. That project was definitely the pinnacle of the depression.

But I've been feeling really good lately. Between that and going into a studio, I was able to do stuff that I've always wanted to do on the new album. Like that long song.

Still, some things stay the same for Six Organs, live: you always play solo acoustic guitar...

That's going to change. The new record has more electric guitar. Live, I want to loop the acoustic guitar and then pick up the electric guitar.

And you've always sat down.

That might change too! Cuz my girlfriend just got me a strap for my acoustic guitar...

Next thing you'll have a harmonica set-up like Dylan...

The strap and the acoustic guitar is a tricky thing, because you could end up looking like Ani di Franco—or you could end up looking like Neil Young. It's tricky. I usually prefer to sit so people can't see me at all.

Live it seems like you're on a tightrope... I can never tell what you're going to do next.

I rarely go up with a setlist. I just don't want it to get boring. I come up with setlists if I know there's going to be a lot of people out there, and I want a safety net, you know? But I think things are gonna change a little bit. I want it to be interesting for me, too—I've always been looking at performance from an improviser's point of view. It could fail, but when it's great, it's amazing—you really

break through something, you really feel something you wouldn't've done if you knew exactly what was happening. Mark Twain, when he had to go out on the lecture circuit, he just hated it. He only did it to make money. He was still great, just because his natural stuff was good, but he wasn't trying to improvise, to search inside of himself. The time for that was sitting at the table, writing something. I don't know. I'm not the most emotionally stable person, so I can get really bummed out onstage. Somewhere down South I just broke down and had this attack. That was my most shameful show, ever. Sometimes weird things happen when I play. I stopped playing and I told the audience that what they'd heard was *nothing*, it was *no good*. Just preaching nihilism and death. It was just horrible. Sometimes things get ahold of me. This year I've realized that there are shadows. Sometimes the shadows are really intense, they can take up a lot of space. Sometimes I'm fighting shadows... Sometimes the room is filled with shadows. I can't describe it, really. Once when I played in L.A., I don't mean to be all hocus pocus, but really, I was playing and there was only a few people there and I swear to God there were weird shadow entities, non-friendly shadows there, and I started to get super-freaked out.

Are you able to meditate at all?

I don't meditate. I drink. [laughs] But, by the time I was playing in San Francisco, on that tour last year with Ghost, I wasn't agitated at all. Everything was so peaceful and quiet. I wasn't stomping. Ghost have this internal peace within them. I would talk to [Ghost leader] Masaki Batoh after shows and he would ask me why I was so agitated on stage [laughs], he'd tell me that I should try and calm down. He taught me a lot about being peaceful onstage. Then of course a week after that I played with Sun City Girls and they just destroyed all of that. I'd see them just *take* it. It was *their* stage. You're gonna have a good time, and if not, man, you're gonna get fucked with. They taught me that it's war on stage. Which I knew it was. [laughs] Once Ghost left the country, I felt like my parents had gone and I could party it up. But of course Sun City Girls have a kind of self-confidence that I'm lacking.

How's it going playing with Comets On Fire? That allows you to do something different.

It's hard to divide my time between Six Organs and Comets. If I had my way I'd just tour with both of them, non-stop. We're all strong personalities, we don't write a whole



lot of music. We'd rather jam out bar band songs and drink beers.

You were working on a free-noise thing with Noel Harmonson thing the other day.

It's fun to do that. It's really important. It's important to be aware of sound as music, rather than music as a nominal and deterministic exercise or science. For me anyway. All things must be possible, at all times. Otherwise, what magic could music even hold? If I want a bunch of laws and rules, I'll go stand in line at the Oakland DMV!

But...I think we should have some sort of disclaimer here to let the folks know that I don't think anything I say has really much of an importance to anyone. It's just bullshit. But at least I recognize that. During the day I like to listen to Sun Ra, drink coffee and read about chaos linguistics. And at night I get drunk, and start raging and getting pissed off. And listen to Tomokawa Kazuki or Townes Van Zandt. For the last couple of years, Townes Van Zandt, he's just my buddy. He feels like my brother. I don't have a brother, but... I mean, he got really depressed. You listen to his studio records—they're super-happy! But he was dealing with a lot of stuff. On a music level I like him because, even today, I've listened to this one song for years, and just today I figured out these two lines and how fucking brilliant they were “mother was a golden girl, slit her throat just to get her pearls, cast myself into a world, before a bunch of swine” from “Dollar Bill Blues”—and they'd just passed me by because he speaks this language that isn't flowery. He's speaking everyday language but then a couple years later, you go, Holy fuck I get it, I can't believe he put those two words together. He's absolutely brilliant—anyone can listen to him and get more and more into him. Anytime I hear any music, I'm thinking about it in terms of, Oh that's a good idea, that's a bad idea, how does this relate to anything I do. Townes is the only person where I never, ever do that. He's the only musician I just *listen* to.

It's like listening to my brother talk.

Ⓐ

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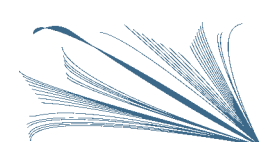
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NOTES ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Marc Bell has released several excellent books in the past year or so. We recommend them all: *The Stacks*, *Worn Tuff Elbow* and *Shrimpy and Paul and Friends*.

Raymond Biesinger's word "puzzles" are a distraction from the usual CanCon modernist pap found at his website, www.fifteen.ca

Ben Blackwell won *Rolling Stone's* 2004 College Journalism contest for a piece he admitted as being "shitty." The \$2500 prize check was delivered under the condition he surrender his social security number and promise to pay taxes on the award. He also drums in the Dirtbombs and runs Cass Records. www.cassrecords.com

Poet and novelist **Michael Brownstein's** most recent book is the anti-globalization manifesto *World On Fire* (Open City Books). *Fast Food Nation* author Eric Schlosser writes, "World On Fire engages the great issues of the day, mixing the personal with the political, demanding attention be paid, continuing in the American tradition of Whitman, Ginsberg, and Pound." Email michael@mustnotsleep.com

Tom Carey hand prints a lino-cut zine named Mantua Codices. Contact him at sadrobot2001@yahoo.com

Greg Cook used to be a reporter in a small town. He is now a professional drawer.

John Coulthart describes himself as eclectic, eidetic, splenetic, aesthesiogenic, diagraphic, hedonic and mantic. He lives in England's rainy city where he creates things. Website: www.atelier.abelgratis.co.uk

Columnist **Paul Cullum** is took a breather this issue. Like Brando says in *Missouri Breaks*: "Grandmama's tired."

Trinie Dalton's book of stories, *Wide Eyed* (Akashic Books' Little House On The Bowery series), is due out this fall, and *Dear New Girl*, an art book she co-edited for McSweeney's, is also coming out later this year.

Vanessa Davis is working on a forthcoming comic called *Spaniel Rage*

from Buenaventura Press. Please check out her website at spanielrage.com

Evah Fan lives in a cave and copy machines are her co-workers. She wants to fart in a jar and send it to a brother ikpuck. efan@pratt.edu

Andy Gilmore's drawings are simultaneously beautiful, fascinating and at times somewhat gruesome in their photo realism. It is a pretty safe bet that he enjoys the hurting peoples ears too: www.carbonrecords.com/andygilmore

John Hankiewicz self-publishes the inscrutable and excellent comic, *Tepid*. His work can be viewed at holysconsumption.com

Tom Hart has recently released his latest Hutch Owens collection, *Unmarketable*.

Mr. Intermill listens to the Flat Can Company, shops at the Bent Crayon, eats Uncle Velvet's fudge, chats under the name of barabajang and enjoys long walks with his friends Cosmo & Sputnik. www.witchbeam.com

Ben Jones admits an open debt

to *Alf* and Gary Larson.

Megan Kelso is probably the finest short comics writer in comics today. She's currently finishing up her first graphic novel, *Artichoke Tales*.

David Lasky will sneak up on you.

Amy Lockhart is an animator who occasionally dabbles in pictures that don't move. Her two-minute short *A Single Tear* is supposedly viewable at the National Film Board website—nfb.ca—although we can't find it.

Artist/musician/actor/human being **John Lurie** is always up to something intriguing. His website is www.strangeandbeautiful.com

Paul Lyons was the bass player in that same band. He is currently working on a 1,000-page graphic novel featuring zombie pilgrims.

Michael Moorcock's *Mother London* recently came in third in *Time Out's* poll for readers' favorite London book. The final volume in his holocaust sequence, *The Vengeance of Rome*, appears this fall. www.multiverse.org

The Pizz odes on canvas to internal combustion chariots, pirates, the glorious form of female and other salty adventures can be found at www.thepizz.com

Creator of the comic book character "Devil Chef," **Jack Pollock** recently provided illustrations for Barbara Rushkoff's "Jewish Holiday Fun For You." He lives somewhere the hell in New York State with his psych professor wife and super-intelligent dog.

Brian Ralph is a regular contributor to *Giant Robot* and *Nickelodeon* magazines. He also used to sing lead in a band called the Scared Stiffs.

"Peace Comics" artist **Ron Regé, Jr.** is primarily a drawer of lines. Although his creative output often branches out into three dimensions (be it toy design, performance, or sound), it always begins as a series of scribbles. "Peace Comics" is his second drawn collaboration with Becky Stark. The first, *An Introduction to the Mystical Union of Souls* exists as a cartoon booklet & 3" cd, available at buenaventurapress.com.

Bound volumes of his drawings are due to be released this year by Buenaventura Press in the USA, Drawn & Quarterly in Canada, and Coconino press in Italy and France.

Arik Moonhawk Roper is an illustrator/designer from New York City who specializes in phantasmagorical illustration for various uncanny clients. www.arikroper.com

Columnist **Douglas Rushkoff** is the author of ten books, including *Media Virus*, *Nothing Sacred*, *Ecstasy Club* and *Club ZeroG*. He makes documentaries for PBS Frontline, runs the Narrative Lab at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program, and plays keyboards with Psychic TV. www.rushkoff.com

Becky Stark is the founder of "Comedians for World Peace," a group that advocates for the proliferation of comedy. Her work as Lavender Diamond includes the operetta *Birdsongs of the Bauharoque* (a collaboration with Xander Marro), the album *Artifacts of the Winged*, and an upcoming album by the new Lavender Diamond Band (with Ron Regé, Jr., Jeff Rosenberg and Steve Gregoropoulos). She is also a founding member of the Mystical Unionists.

Ian Svenonius is the lead singer in Weird War. Their new album, *Illuminated by the Light*, will be released this spring.

V. Vale was a founding member of Blue Cheer. In San Francisco 1977, he began publishing the magaizne *Search & Destroy*, which chronicled the emerging punk rock revolution. In 1980, he founded RE/Search Publications to carry on that mission in a book format. www.researchpubs.com

Allison Watkins eats, sleeps, walks, talks, laughs and takes photos in San Francisco, California. aphoto@graffiti.net

Chris Wright is going to be your favorite cartoonist someday. He may or may not be working on a series called *Hubris*.

Dan Zettwoch has contributed work to just about every comics anthology in the past two years and he never lets you down. ☺

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"...a raw portrait of a 20-something disenchanted with his city, his country and his life. Not sure how to evoke change, Oberst does one better — he evokes emotion." S/S — *Alternative Press*, February 2005

"Whatever you may have heard about Bright Eyes...well, just forget about it. Because I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning is not only the best record he's ever made, it's quite possibly one of the best folk records ever made. And it just may prove to be a classic." — *Filter*, Winter 2004

I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning - ★★★★★ Q Classic — *Q Magazine*

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