

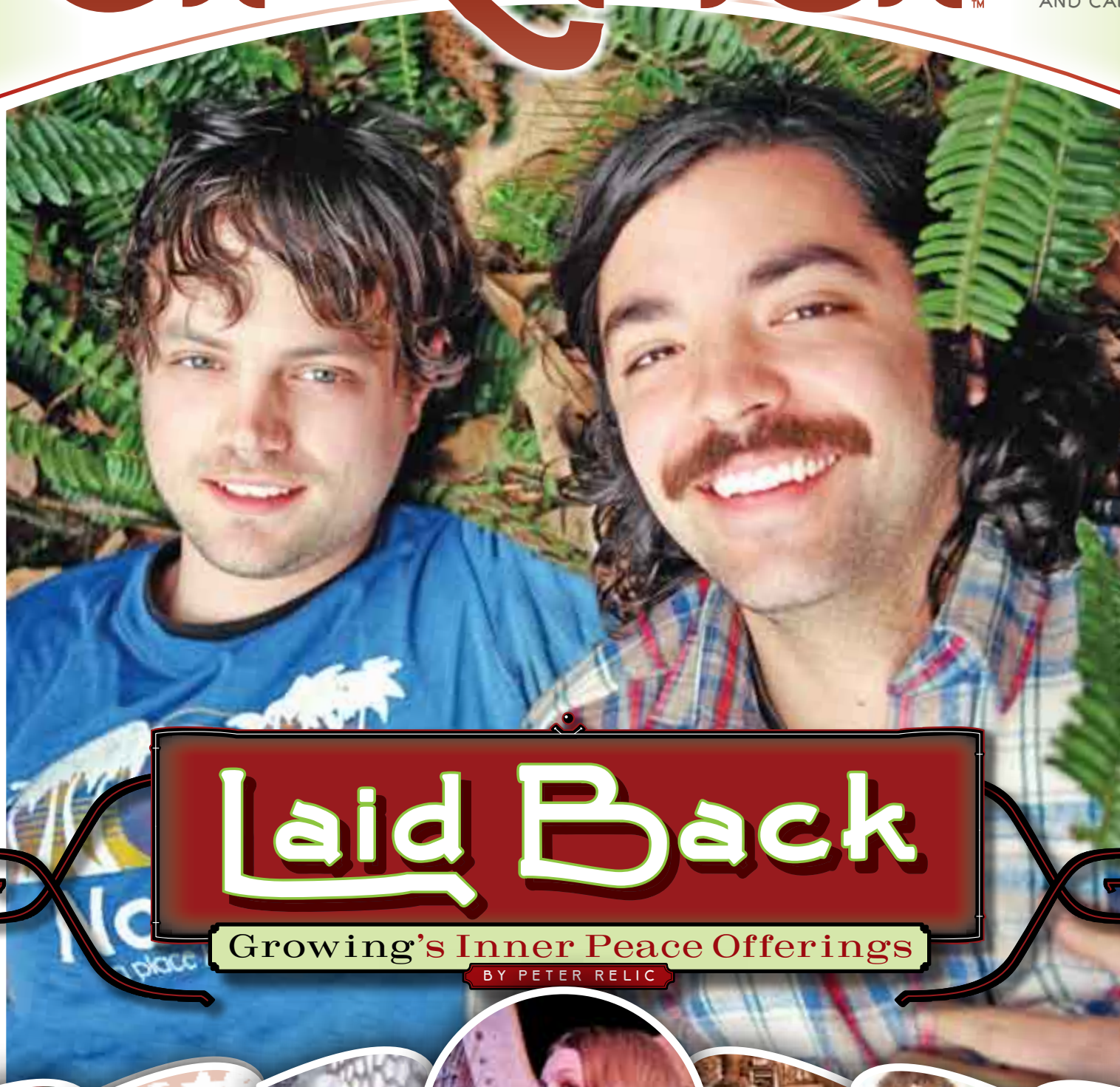
A (Very Heavy) Band Called OM  Mardi Gras in New Orleans

MAY 2006

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Cover image of Growing, 2006, photographed by Eden Batki: Doria and DeNardo take time out to smell the ferns.



CLOSE THE BORDERS

Masses teem at the border demanding to be exploited. The Christian nature of America obliges us to take our "border brothers" in after running them through a rigorous desert obstacle course to cull out the weak. The surviving braceros go on to make up the disenfranchised worker caste which the civil rights movement strove so hard to eradicate. "We shall overcome" has been overwhelmed.

Big business loves undocumented Latinos. They take less pay to work harder at jobs that black people won't do, they can't vote, and believe in a book which was written to comfort slaves called "the Bible."

Sense dictates that burgeoning populations should be checked with birth control, but the Bible won't allow it. Companies no longer pay well or offer benefits because it the bible says that believers must have unprotected sex, pick up serpents and speak in tongues. God has (intelligently) designed a situation where his true believers hope to be conscripted for a pittance into a foreign and hostile country.

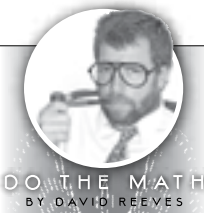
Latinos leave their homeland because their country's infrastructure is undeveloped due to



the fact that a majority of their nation's business is off the books. Mexican drug trade rakes in between 27 and 32 billion dollars a year, while the national oil industry, Pemex, brings in only 7 to 8 billion. Pemex tax pays for El Presidente and his entourage. Untaxed drug profits manifest into typical cheap money detritus: flashy cars, shitty bars and corpses in Tijuana wearing Dolce and Gabbana.

This vast economy of underground drug money sustains a system so corrupt that only a revolution can wipe it away. But the Great Overdue Mexican Revolution is deferred with every Mexican who flees to America to wash dishes.

According to CISEN (Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional) if the drug trade were to stop then the Mexican economy would shrink by 63 percent. If patriotic Americans would stop doing drugs for just one week, we could ruin the Mexican economy enough to get those wetbacks right where we want them: building us a 700-mile long, 100-foot tall Wall of Freedom. Think about it, America: a week without drugs and we could get the border sealed off that very weekend using those guys loitering around in front of the Home Depot.



DO THE MATH
BY DAVID REEVES

LETTERS



Visionary types disagree over existence of god

I have enjoyed reading Douglas Rushkoff for many years, but find his comment that "god doesn't exist" ("Godless," *Arthur* No. 21) to be rather amusing, coming a page-turn after Allen Ginsberg's fabulously right-on remarks about how to attain a societal state of ecstasy, which would then allow us all to search for the "highest, perfect wisdom."

I say this because Ginsberg, along with other visionary types such as Henry Miller, certainly had a belief in something which could be called "god," if not the concept subscribed to by your average religious, as opposed to spiritual, person.

I think the notion of an underlying cosmic force or magick (to use Rushkoff's term)

which animates all of being (and non-being—don't wanna slip into duality here!) probably resonates with a lot of "high" individuals, who would happily call it "god." It would be cool to see Rushkoff get his head wrapped around this idea himself.

I enjoy your magazine a lot and wish you continued success.

John F., Hollywood

Douglas Rushkoff replies: I just mean "god" as this creature sitting there, or that created us in the past. I am a believer in an emergent order, and even a universe with inherent direction. So that's basically "god" right there.

But the guy God? Nah.

Dude, just look at the gas tank
A note from Richard Pleuger, author of "Inside the Invisible Empire," the feature on Tav Falco that ran in *Arthur* No. 21: "Thanks to everyone who wrote in. A few corrections are in order. On page 32, Tav Falco is actually sitting on his Triumph Trophy 650, not his 800 Norton. On page 34, it should be noted that the Hellcats at the time had three leaders—Lorette Velvette, Lisa McGaughan (also in Panther Burns, Country Rockers, Alex Chilton Band) and Diane Green—and the drummer sitting next to Lorette Velvette is Bob Fordyce, not Ross Johnson. And on page 41, Alex Chilton is entering his mother's condo, not his parents' house."

Letters to the Editor are totally encouraged. Send to editorial@arthurmag.com or better yet, to Arthur HQ, 3408 Appleton Street, Los Angeles, CA 90039.

WRITING ON THE WALL

Seen any good slogans/commenary/poetry on the streets lately? Then take a picture of it. Send it to us at 300dpi, 100%. (If you don't know what that means, ask somebody who does.)

Include the time/place of the photo. If your photo is chosen as Arthur's "Billboard of the Month" you'll get a complimentary one-year subscription to *Arthur*. Send entries to editor@arthur.com



This issue's winner is from *Arthur* reader Ellie Blake, who writes: "This wall on Alvaro Obregon St., colonia Roma in Mexico City is slabbbed everyday. I took these photos on Sunday, April 2. The guard is watching the entrance to a restaurant. Security officers are common in restaurants, grocery stores, hotels. 'No hay amor mas puro y verdadero que el de este stencilero' translates to 'There is no love more pure and true that that of this stencil artist.'"

THE BEST CONDIMENT



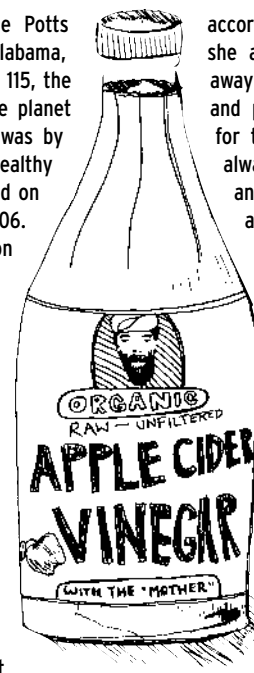
NEW HERBALIST
BY MOLLY FRANCES

In February, Mrs. Susie Potts Gibson of Tuscumbia, Alabama, passed away at a youthful 115, the third oldest person on the planet at the time. Mrs. Gibson was by all accounts a spirited and healthy SuperCentenarian who lived on her own until she was 106. So what did Mrs. Gibson attribute her extended stay on the big blue marble to?

Vinegar.
That's right young'uns: the "sour wine" just may be what flows from the fountain of youth. Not only has vinegar been revered for thousands of years for its life-extending property, but also as a remedy for a host of ailments: arthritis, digestive disorders, high blood pressure, weight control, laryngitis, migraines, chronic fatigue, warts, acid-reflex and sore throat. Hippocrates, ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Julius Caesar, Christopher Columbus and Japanese samurai warriors all made use of its awesome tonic properties.

Longevity's not your bag, you say? Then how about a little spring cleaning? Not only is vinegar a naturally-occurring antibiotic that heals your insides, it is also an antiseptic that will spruce you up on the outside too. It fights germs, bacteria, mold and viruses. Hot date coming up? Surprise your lady with a mold-free shower, sparkling faucets and streak-free mirrors and windows. A 50/50 combo of vinegar and water administered through a spray bottle beats any industrial cleaning product hands down and keeps you from trudging down the least savory supermarkets aisles. By using vinegar as your prime cleaning agent you are also saving money and reducing the amount of unnecessary chemicals in our water supply.

If you're feeling dull and down, ditch the coffee and booze and reach for a glass of apple cider vinegar instead. This potassium and enzyme-rich concoction made from fermented apples is the nutritive powerhouse of the vinegars and the primary variety for internal use and personal hygiene. Dry skin, fungal infections, ear infections, poison ivy, shingles, varicose veins, insect bites, sunburn and grey hair are all at your mercy when armed with nature's tangy nectar. Susie Potts Gibson knew this; not only did she splash it on everything she ate, but



according to her granddaughter, she applied it topically to chase away those meddlesome aches and pains. So go ahead and ask for that vinegar massage you've always wanted. It also makes an excellent de-toxifier when added to a hot bath, or a reinvigorating shampoo. Lord Byron consumed loads of the stuff to maintain the pale complexion that drove the ladies, as well as the boys, hog wild.

Every science nerd knows that vinegar is the essential ingredient in any homemade volcano, but did you know that a splash of vinegar followed by a quick dust of baking soda makes an unbeatable homespun, non-Alzheimer's-causing underarm deodorant? Just be aware of the possibility

that in addition to long-lasting, non-toxic odor protection, you may also experience the aforementioned "volcano effect." Do not panic. This is normal.

If you can't be bothered with using vinegar out of vanity, do it for the animals! A few teaspoons slipped into their water bowl will send the fleas and parasites in search of a new host. Your old dog may finally muster up the energy to learn a new trick or two.

What kind of vinegar should you buy? As you know, the industrial powers-that-be have found devious ways to produce visually appealing products while robbing them of their inherent benefits. Vinegar has not escaped this fate. The most common form of commercially produced vinegar is distilled, a process that destroys the spongy cobweb-like particles—known as "Mother" in vinegar lore—that linger in properly fermented vinegar. Don't be afraid of Mother. Mother is good for you. So do your part to crush the dominant paradigm, and embrace your Mother. Go for the cloudiest, most particle-ridden vinegar brew you can find. This will usually require a trip to your local health food store or farmer's market, or find it online at www.bragg.com.

You can drink two teaspoons daily of apple cider vinegar straight up, add honey and water to make a healing elixir, or just drizzle it generously over your veggies. It also makes a mean salad dressing when paired with olive oil and fresh spices. The prophet Muhammed didn't declare it "the best condiment" for nothing.

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ARTHUR CONTRIBUTORS

Eden Batki takes photos mostly all the time. Photographing Growing for this issue was a good time. She survived a hairy car accident during a recent trip to Iceland. Visit her internerd domain at edenbatki.com for more information.

Luke J. Cavagnac has a gallery of 1000 paintings and a rock & roll group of 100 songs. www.invisiblefountain.com

Byron Coley is working on his first collection for the Bastet imprint, *Diamond Turd Mountain*. He and Mr. Moore are also preparing the premier Bull Tongue compilation CD for the same firm.

Dennis Culver is a cartoonist who lives in San Pedro California. culver@funwrecker.com

Erik Davis lives and works and plays guitar in San Francisco. His beefy next book, *The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape*, with photographs by Michael Rauner, will be out from Chronicle Books in June.

Vanessa Davis is an Artist and she got at least some aesthetic inspiration from museums and galleries and concerts and the rest from her mother.

Molly Frances is brewing her first batch of kombucha in her kitchen. molly@crystalarchive.com

David Lasky continues to work as a Bread Delivery Man and most recently contributed what some people say is the only comic worth reading in the new Belle & Sebastian comic book.

Justin Limoges enjoyed a recent visit to the new public library in Seattle. halfhoursonearth.typepad.com

Thurston Moore is gearing up for summer Sonic Youth tour in support of their new *Rather Ripped* CD.

One Neck is UK based illustrator Iain Laurie. www.oneneckhatesyou.com

John Pantalici is currently perfecting his u.f.o. summoning techniques on the outskirts of Waco.

Kyle Pellet spends his weekends drawing dinosaurs and other creatures while listening to the radio; www.pelletfactory.com

Ed Piskor is currently drawing a graphic novel with Harvey Pekar called *Macedonia* for 2006 release.

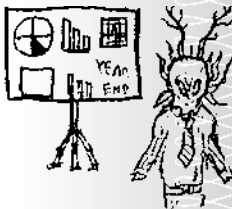
Pshaw will be debuting his newest comics, a limited-edition plush, and 7 inch record at the MoCCA Small Press Fest this June in NYC. More details about where to meet & greet him at www.pshaw.net

Arik Roper is an illustrator and designer living in New York City. He makes fantastic imagery for CD/album art, posters, t-shirts and other merchandise design for a variety of bands. He is a contributor to *Strange Attractor Journal* and does work for Bill Graham Presents, among other things. www.arikroper.com

Douglas Rushkoff—author of the new un-business book *Get Back in the Box*—is moving from Brooklyn into obscurity in order to work with greater focus on his comic book Testament, write a screenplay about social programming, and spend more time with his wife and daughter.

Gabe Soria is a husband and dad who aspires to be a bathrobe-clad, cigarillo-smoking, ornery science fiction writer of the old school. His incomplete list of essential New Orleans books begins with *The Moviegoer* by Walker Percy, *The Donkey Show* by Michael Patrick Welch, *Fabulous New Orleans* by Lyle Saxon, *When Gravity Falls* by George Alec Effinger, *Frenchmen, Desire, Good Children* by John Churchill Chase and *The French Quarter* by Herbert Asbury.

Chris Wright lives in the basement of a log cabin in rural Massachusetts or Massamont depending on your prejudices.





THEIR WAR

I was having lunch—gosh, it must have been three years ago—with Grant Morrison, Scottish storyteller, comics genius, and chaos magician. We were in Life Cafe, across the street from where I lived at the time, and we got on to the subject of 9-11 and the Bush regime and the state of the world.

What surprised me most was Grant's nonchalance about all of it. Sure, he hadn't witnessed the felling of the World Trade Center towers from his apartment window, but he was a worldly fellow, filled with tales of revolting against the consensus reality, maintaining one's own perspective, and beckoning the very fabric of creation to surrender to one's will. Given that so many kids and travelers read our work, don't we owe them some guidance as to how to approach the war?

"That's *their* war," Grant told me. "The adults have never listened to us and they never will. That's their reality. Their thing. So let them do their thing and we'll do ours."

I remained unsatisfied with that answer for some time. And I took a different tack. I wrote some editorials about what was happening, tried to decode some of the Administration's sensationalist rhetoric, signed those same anti-war *New York Times* ads that my literary heroes were signing, and read as much as I could about everything from Halliburton and Cheney to the Patriot Act and domestic spying.

Of course, the more I knew, the worse I felt. Even most politicians and world leaders who spoke out against the more heinous of actions—whether state-enacted tyranny or bottom-up violence—seemed to be doing so for short-term tactical advantage in some more petty or selfish pursuit.

Worse yet, the worse I felt, the less I felt like writing, speaking, or even thinking. Why bother? The whole system is corrupt, our votes are no longer counted, the redistribution of wealth from poor to rich in the past decade is the greatest in history, disease and environmental catastrophe are being ignored, and my baby's formula is too expensive to justify doing much of anything that doesn't go towards paying for it or the rent, anyway.

Even the students in my media theory and activism classes at New York University appear overwhelmed by the seemingly futility of taking a stand. Just the other day, they were debating whether going to a protest or rally even matters—especially when



DENNIS CULVER

DOES 'STAYING INFORMED' SUBJECT US TO MORE PROPAGANDA AND DISTORTED VALUES THAN IT'S WORTH?

it can be reframed by the mainstream media as almost anything. Besides, most young protesters' rally activities are betrayed by their real-life purchases and behaviors. Is futile or unconsciously hypocritical protest really no better than no protest at all?

Because over in the real world, Iraq is descending into civil war, Palestinians are suffering under repression from within and without, thousands continue to die by the day in Darfur—and all of this is due, at least in part, to one or another policy for which America or its allies are responsible. Mustn't we take a stand? A direct, informed, progressive, and potentially contagious stand?

Perhaps. But, as I imagine Grant and other committed artists would argue, not without a cost to our ability to see, think and feel clearly.

For example, to "learn" about the war in the Persian Gulf, we must wade through disinformation upon disinformation. Which news agency to trust, if any? How smart are the reporters at those "good" papers, like the Guardian, really? Smart

or voting strategies or even outright activism is a great thing, I can't help but wonder if I'm sending people further down the rabbit hole each time I attempt to deconstruct or analyze a Pentagon press conference or White House leak.

Meanwhile, I've been getting emails and calls for the past couple of months from some of the groups attempting to get down to the *real* story behind 9-11. They've pointed me to articles and essays calling the structural collapse of the World Trade Center into question, implying that explosives were planted in the building beforehand, or that George W. was not only responsible for the attacks, but part of the cabal that perpetrated them in a *kristalnacht*-like scheme to vilify all Arabs and invade Iraq. Won't I do research and write essays about this? Why not?

When I respond that I don't believe Bush and his team are competent enough to pull off such a scheme, the well-meaning 9-11 investigators call me part of the problem. Never mind that I'm only one person with only so many hours and so many competencies. To ignore the issue that *they* are most interested in—or, rather, the particular expression of that issue that they're most interested in—is to be part of the media whitewash. While I *am* concerned about a possible 9-11 cover-up (although not one of the magnitude many of those folks were suggesting) I'm personally much more concerned about how that concern itself has affected those who are obsessing on it. I mean, if we're going to play conspiracy theory, mightn't there be a concerted effort by the White House to ensnare activists in conspiracy theories about 9-11 so that they stay off the topic of, say, the invasion of Iraq or a war over in which currency oil is denominated?

There's something to be said for creating works of art and media that instead give people the tools and energy we need to disengage from story being told to us on TV, and to feel optimistic about our own potential to rewrite reality on terms more consonant with our hopes. But I can't sanction any strategy that leads people to shove their iPod earbuds further down towards eustachian tubes and ignore our wars and our mutual complicity altogether.

So while I'll admit that violence on TV is *their* war, and that no one involved in any of its decision-making will likely come in contact with me or my work or my vote, I won't make myself or my writing oblivious to its ever-present toll on the real lives of real people.

(continued on page 61)

Photo by David Torres



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John Pantalici



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Sylvanna Oor

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DONUT POWER

BY THE CENTER FOR TACTICAL MAGIC

Although people often associate the word "occult" with secret magical orders, demon-worshippers and ancient alchemical scrawlings, its root definition is simply "secret, concealed, or hidden." But strangely enough, "occult" is rarely associated with those who are perhaps most invested in secrets and concealments: that is, government, military, corporations and even performing magicians. Perhaps this popular tendency to view "occultism" through an anachronistic mist is ultimately a concealment of its own accord.

If we regard an occult force as "that which is hidden," it should come as no surprise to realize that we are constantly surrounded by the occult. Everywhere we look we don't see it... at least not at first. Otherwise it wouldn't be occult; it would be obvious and apparent. Unseen forces are indeed at play all around us. We often fail to recognize their presence for any number of reasons: the forces may seem insignificant to the situation, we are distracted by other factors, etc. Whether one favors ritual magic or performing magic, the first challenge is to recognize which forces are present, hidden or otherwise.

Fortunately, occult forces sometimes have a funny way of revealing themselves. In 2001, members of the Center for Tactical Magic were enjoying a leisurely tromp through downtown San Francisco with a few thousand other people protesting the 21st Century's first major display of government occultism: George W. Bush's inauguration. At the end of the trolley line at Powell and Market, the march lost momentum and gradually slowed to a jiggle. Some protestors scurried into cafes to get their latte fixes while others started break-dancing to boom boxes in the streets. Meanwhile, riot police began to huddle in the doorways of the GAP. There were other big department stores and icons of global capitalism nearby, but for reasons unknown the GAP seemed to be getting the bulk of police attention. (Perhaps it was one of those rare instances where Power reveals itself, as if the cops were hinting, "You're already gathered to fight injustice, you might as well protest conformist fashion produced by sweatshop labor, too.") At first, no one seemed to care, except possibly the few shoppers who hurried away at the first signs (namely, armored cops) that something might be amiss. Gradually though, activists seemed to take to the idea, and soon a small group settled down at the feet of the police line to sip their lattes and eat their lunches. Please see exhibit A, the photo we've



Exhibit A



Exhibit B

OCCULT FORCES SOMETIMES HAVE A FUNNY WAY OF REVEALING THEMSELVES.

provided for your entertainment.

To most observers the scene appears obvious: two opposing forces have squared off against one another; protestors staging a sit-in were blockading the entrances to the GAP, and riot police had formed a security perimeter to protect GAP's assets from looters and vandals. While this is true to some degree, those who understand magic(k) know better. Appearances are often deceiving. The nature of a good illusion is to cloak information by providing a specific perceptual framework. And the tendency to filter information leads to a hasty, oversimplified conclusion.

Upon closer inspection, one quickly realizes that the scene in the photo evidences no opposing forces whatsoever. In fact, the cops and the protestors are rather harmoniously accomplishing the same task. Both groups are blocking the doorway. Both groups are preventing patrons from entering. Both groups are preventing the GAP from doing any business whatsoever.

If you missed this dynamic at first glance, don't worry. You're not alone. The cops and the protestors lived it, and they didn't get it. In fact, whenever this photo is shown in talks, lectures, and workshops, the audience response is almost always the same. People are so keyed in to a perceptual framework dominated by dichotomies and binary

analysis (protester vs cop, good vs evil, black magick vs. white magick, etc) that it's easy to miss what's happening right before our very eyes.

Indeed, it has long since become a cliché of consciousness studies to say that at every instance our senses are bombarded by more information than our minds can process. In order to navigate the world around us, we learn how to filter information that we regard as unimportant. However, the act of filtering is not only influenced by matters of survival (predators, food, attraction, etc) but also by social cues and priorities (herd behavior, notions of productivity vs. leisure, conspicuous consumption, etc). Since the filtering process begins at such an early age and occurs at much the same time as socialization, it is often difficult to step outside of one's perceptions and recognize exactly what is being filtered when and/or why. At best, we can occasionally inhibit our filtering processes (either through drugs, meditation, dancing, sensory deprivation, or other "unproductive" activities) or we can make concerted efforts to focus our attentions in areas less considered. Even the harbingers of progress have to admit that the latter option yields positive results. After all, modern medicine owes a great debt to those who were willing to peer through microscopes at bits, mites, motes, and droplets that are regularly

ignored by the naked eye.

So where does this keen analysis get us? For starters, we become less inclined to take things at face value. While some would say this is a skeptical or even cynical approach to the world, we prefer to think of it as riddled with opportunity. The refusal of a static worldview opens one's eyes to the dynamic occult forces swirling around us. The next trick is to figure out how to work with these forces.

After a few more hours of chanting, "Whose streets?...Our Streets!", the miracle of the unified GAP blockade persisted, but the rest of the protest began to march down a reliable path. Buses pulled up and more riot cops in even more armor poured out. Tensions on both sides escalated, and the enjoyable expression of first amendment rights wavered under the immanent threat of the inevitable activist/authoritarian clash. For anyone who has ever been to a protest, this is familiar territory. This is the part where ugliness happens. Out come the batons, pepper spray, and plastic handcuffs. And anyone who gets beaten up also usually gets arrested and charged with assaulting an officer in order to justify any police misconduct.

Some would declare that this is merely a timeless confrontation between opposing forces. Perhaps. But we at the Center for Tactical Magic feel that occult forces were also present, active and largely unaccounted for. (No, we're not referring to cops dressed as protestors... we'll save that for our column on "disguise and infiltration"). Protestors and cops both fell victim to the same forces: they steadily grew tired, cold, hungry, and even a little bored. The activists want to leave, but of course can't, because, well, they're our streets. If we leave, then they'll be their streets again. We can't exactly let a hard day's work go to waste now, can we? And the cops want desperately to make it home in time for FOX sports, but they can't exactly leave, because, well... how would it look if they let a bunch of anarchists run around an empty financial district thinking that they own the streets? Besides, double (or even triple) overtime pay is hard to say "no" to. For the cops, growing stomachs, FOX sports and a can of Bud ultimately win out over a fatter paycheck. Out come the batons.

It was precisely at this moment that we decided to conduct a little experiment. Please note Exhibit B: the second photo provided for your entertainment.

Foregoing any ceremony, we quickly acquired a few boxes of donuts from a nearby Walgreen's and began passing them out to protestors and cops.

The Center for Tactical Magic is a moderate international think tank dedicated to the research, development and deployment of all types of magic in the service of positive social transformation. To find out more, check out tacticalmagic.org

alike. The action performed was the same for both groups; however, the responses were predictably dissimilar. Protestors responded with eager gratitude; happily stuffing their faces with the meager nourishment after a long day outdoors. The cops on the other hand were not so happy. They wanted the donuts. You could see it in their jaws-gone-slack and their craven eyes bursting out from behind mirrored glasses. But despite their hunger, they couldn't take them. Pride and professionalism prevented them from doing so.

Obviously, cops are sensitive about donuts. It's an old, played-out joke, and had we passed out cupcakes, maybe things would have been different. But isn't that one of the crucial points of magic(k)? To work with what's around you in such a way as to produce a desired outcome or effect? Within just a few moments, a single gesture shifted the dynamic between opposing sides. As activists giggled and jeered, the police officers shifted uneasily in their boots. Eager aggression and pumped-up adrenalin ebbed in the wake of sheepishness, annoyance, and humility. It was like watching a bully rip the seat of his pants in front of everyone.

In an effort to grab control of the situation, the commanding officer approached one of our agents (see photo) and threatened, "If you pass out one more donut, I'm taking you to jail!" To which our agent responded, "For what? Handing out food for free?"

EXERCISES

1. Go to the grocery store without the intention of buying anything. Bring a pad of post-it notes and a pen. Respond to the products you see by writing a note and sticking it to the product. You might consider the following: the packaging/marketing strategy used to encourage your purchase; the way the product makes you feel when you see it, use it, or eat it; a message or a question to another potential consumer or store employee; a critique of the product or the company; a creative suggestion for alternate uses of the product. * This is an exercise that shifts perception by changing the activity performed in an otherwise familiar environment. Like graffiti responding to a billboard, it encourages a dialogue in an otherwise one-way relationship and breaks the illusion of a "neutral" exchange.
2. Once a week for at least a month, prepare a meal that uses ingredients for their symbolic value. Start by considering a desired outcome (a different wish, goal, etc for each meal). Next, consider the events that have to unfold in order to accomplish your goal. Associate one ingredient for each event. Your associations may be literal or abstract. Perhaps you're not even sure why the ingredient reminds you of the event. The ingredients don't all need to be cooked in the same pot, and it's okay to use spices for flavor. Eat as much as fills you up. * This is an exercise which relies on a natural survival behavior to process and manifest a desire through mental and physical consumption, digestion, and excretion. It works best if you find a way to make strange foods tastefully co-exist on the same plate.
3. The next time you're confronted by a condescending authority figure (boss, school principal, parent, cop, etc), try this sleight of mind: Stare at their teeth while they are talking to you and act like you're not listening to a word they're saying. Then, politely apologize and say that you were distracted by the food that is stuck in their teeth. Proceed to direct them to the offending food/tooth by pointing out the approximate location in your own mouth. If performed successfully, you will completely subvert their power trip. * This is an exercise that exploits the hidden forces often connected to ego and vanity. Countless variations exist: food in facial hair, visible boogers, bad breath, etc.

CHALLENGE

Most magic illusions are based on visual deceptions; however, the Oxford Companion to the Mind insists, "All the senses can suffer illusions..." Everyone knows the old trick that involves tasting an apple and a potato while holding pinching the nose closed. What other illusions rely on deceiving the sense of smell? If you come up with any answers, please let us know.



The officer then replied, "Not for handing it out. For distributing it!" Clearly, reality and rationality had shifted in mysterious ways. Please don't misunderstand. We at the Center for Tactical Magic love a riot as much as anyone, and we're not claiming that this one act of impromptu hijinks saved the day or anything. But shortly thereafter the cops stood down. The police lines withdrew. And many of the activists left feeling like they preferred their kitchens and their bars to their streets.

Throughout the long histories of magic(k) and religions, food has often played a transformational role. Whether consuming "the body and blood of the Lord" or making bowls of rice appear from thin air, food has a power that reaches beyond the symbolic. And the roots of its power are concealed by its relationship to such hidden forces as hunger, nutrition, comfort, repulsion, and social relations to name a few. Like so many other hidden forces, these have the ability to shift perceptions, priorities and outcomes. But to do so we must recognize their presence and figure out how to work with them. The following exercises are designed to encourage further exploration of hidden forces. You can treat them as magical experiments, interventions, or alternative forms of entertainment. Have fun and good luck, and please let us know how it was for you by emailing to: goodluck@tacticalmagic.org

THE BEST THAT YOU CAN DO IS FALL IN LOVE



1. Mat Hoffman, Peaches & Ian Svenonius, Daniel Pinchbeck. Arthur C. Clarke, Geoff McFetridge, Dame Darcy, Eddie Dean on Ice Cream Truck driving, Joe Carducci, Camille Rose Garcia, David Berman comics, Lift to Experience, RIP Eagle Pennell, Neil Hamburger.
2. Charles Brittin, Devendra Banhart, T-Model Ford, Geneis P-Orridge & Douglas Rushkoff, Caetano Veloso, Sue Carpenter joins the circus, Steve Aylett, RIP Jam Master Jay, reviews by Byron Coley & Thurston Moore
3. RIP Joe Strummer, Mikey Dread, The Polyphonic Spree, Paul Pope, John, John Lurie, Shirley Tse. SOON GONE.
4. Alan Moore epic interview, Sleater-Kinney & the Black Keys by Peter Relic with Melanie Pullen, John Coulthart, corporate marketing to kids..
5. Against Empire issue with David Cross cover, Chris Hedges, Michael Moorcock, Patti Smith, Megan Kelso & Ron Rege, David Byrne, Alan Moore, Michael Brownstein, Charles Potts, Charles Brittin, Pinchbeck, Robbie Conal, Coulthart, Art Spiegelman, Bill Griffith, Godspeed You! Black Emperor plus RIP June Carter Cash. SOON GONE.
6. Iggy & the Stooges epic feature, Mike Watt, Wyde Rattz, the L.A. Cacophony Society, John Sinclair, Sam Green, Erin Cosgrove, Holly Golightly, astrology by Ian Svenonius.
7. Kevin Shields on My Bloody Valentine, Sun Ra, Sunburned Hand of the Man & Comets On Fire & Six Organs of Admittance, Brion Gysin, Steve Aylett & Brian Evenson, T-Model Ford, Peaches, RIP Charles Bronson, cover by Coulthart.
8. Dollywood & Dolly Parton, Fiery Furnaces, James Mariott in Guatemala, Brother JT, Holly Golightly, Charles Potts, Steve Aylett, John Coulthart.
9. Wino, Liars, MC5 documentary, MC5 listeners' guide, Sue Carpenter on pirate radio, Daniel Chamberlin on the Kinetic Sculpture Race, chef David Catching, Daniel Pinchbeck.
10. Devendra Banhart & Joanna Newsom & CocoRosie & Faun Fables & Melanie Pullen, Guy Maddin, Godzilla, Merric on cel phones, Marc Bell, Will Oldham on pie.
11. Kim Gordon, Noah Purifoy, Aleister Crowley,

Closet Deadhead, Pinchbeck, John Lurie, Kevin Huizinga, Lars Von Trier.

12. Grant Morrison epic interview, Josephine Foster, Johnny Cash, Jim Marshall, RTX, Bush's brain, Wayne Coyne on decaf, Gabrielle Bell.

13. Epic oral history of 1967 Exorcism of the Pentagon and the birth of the Yippies, David Cross & Eugene Mirman, Genesis P-Orridge, Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys, Le Tigre, Little Wings, Jason Miles, Haskell Wexler.

14. Jello Biafra, magic mushrooms in the UK, American bingo players, Superflex, moving to Canada, Pinchbeck in Hopiland, MF Doom, Dan Zettwoch, Bill Hicks. SOON GONE.

15. Ben Chasny of Six Organs of Admittance and Comets On Fire, J.G. Ballard, meditation as a subversive activity, Henry Darger film, High On Fire & OM & Dead Meadow & Jesu, Brendan Benson, making art in troubled times, Rushkoff column debut, Ian Svenonius & the Secret Service.

16. M.I.A., Peter Lamborn Wilson on secession, Erik Davis on Druid Heights, Scandinavian black metalists by Stacy Kranitz, Magma & The Mars Volta, sigil artwork by Sam Ott, Mike Patton.

17. Brian Eno, Hawaiian squatters village, Rushkoff on gurus, Pinchbeck on oil, chef Chris Goss, Jeff Lint, New York City before crack photos by Jamel Shabazz, Marc Bell, Rat Scabies and the Holy Grail.

18. Cover by Paul Pope, Jon Hassell, Alan Bishop, Afrirampo, David Reeves in Peru, chefs Dungen and Richard Hawley, Grateful Dead fans Animal Collective, Comets on Fire, Brightblack Morning Light & Erik Davis, Reeves versus SUVs.

19. Animal Collective, Daniel Chamberlin in the Middle East, James Kochalka comic strip, Shadow of the Colossus, RIP RL Burnside, Reeves on ginseng, Rushkoff on suicide bombings, fiction by Trinie Dalton.

20. Sunn O))) & Earth by Brian Evenson, David Lynch on meditation, Colleen, the Buddha Machine, Chamberlin in the Middle East Part 2, New Orleans native Henry Griffin goes home.

21. Delia Gonzalez & Gavin Russom; Pearls & Brass; Rushkoff vs. Religion; Charles Potts; Michael Brownstein; Tav Falco & the Panther Burns; pages of new Ben Jones art.

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Al Cisneros (left) and Chris Haikus (beard) play for Geezer, Tony, Bill and Ozzy.

NO CHOICE

WHY AL CISNEROS & CHRIS HAIKUS REUNITED TO MAKE THE MEDITATION-SUITABLE HEAVY METAL SOUND OF OM

BY JAY BABCOCK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARS KNUDSON & TINA GORDON

Sleep was a tightly focused, intensely dedicated super-heavy riff band from the San Francisco Bay Area who gained a small but devoted following during their time. Even if, like me, you never listened to a note of their music or saw them perform, you probably heard about these guys somewhere: they were the monastic goners who delivered an hour-long narrative song (about caravans of marijuanauts and weedians crossing riff-filled desert lands on an epic drug run) to their record label as their big-label debut (and third overall album)—and then disappeared in the proverbial cloud of smoke... The song/album “Jerusalem” was never released by London/Polygram, the band split up, years passed. Eventually, in 1999, “Jerusalem” was released under still-mysterious circumstances (a better version, entitled *Dopesmoker*, is now available) and the Whispers With Smiles From Those Who Know were proven right: this was a

breakthrough masterpiece—deceptively repetitive minimalist heavy metal of such single-minded all-vision that every ridiculous element of the project was rendered sublime by minute three.

When ex-Sleep guitarist Matt Pike’s new band High On Fire debuted in late ’99, it was easy to think this would be the closest you’d ever get to witnessing the now-legendary Sleep: the music heavy yet progressive, the songs endless, the lyrics suitably Old Testament. It was not a repeat of Sleep—there was more emphasis on high velocity—but it was innovative and staggering in its own right.

A closer (which is not to say superior) continuation of *Jerusalem*-era Sleep surfaced in 2004, with the release of Om’s debut album, *Variations on a Theme*. Om was ex-Sleep bassist/vocalist Al Cisneros and ex-Sleep drummer Chris Hakius: a power duo without need of a guitar. *Variations’* three songs clocked in at 21:16, 11:56

and 11:52. Cisneros’ lyrics—sung (“bravely,” as one friend put it) in an affectless drone-chant—echoed “Jerusalem” but had lost their weed-centricity and become even more hallucinatory; “*Approach the grid substrate the sunglows beam to freedom/Winds grieve the codex shine and walks toward the grey*” is a typical couplet. A new kind of drone-mantra purity—thinner but deeper, maybe?—had been achieved.

Om’s second album, *Conference of Birds*, is released this month. It has two songs, each over 15 minutes in length. The first, “At Giza,” takes Cisneros and Hakius’ music to an even sparer place of un-distorted bass, drums and vocals. As with these guys’ previous work in Sleep and Om, “Giza” points out new horizons even as the duo hone their own gaze ever sharper.

I spoke with Al Cisneros by telephone from his Bay Area home in late March. Here’s some of our conversation.

Arthur: What were you doing in the seven years between Sleep and Om?

Al Cisneros: For the immediate period following our last Sleep band practice, I honestly creatively and a lot of ways psychologically felt like I had died. It was near catatonic in terms of how depressed and shattered I felt. Chris and I had met in junior high school and then we had met Matt [Pike, Sleep guitarist and High On Fire principal] shortly thereafter. Sleep was a byproduct of that friendship. Of course we loved playing music, but it was kind of a bonus to us and the camaraderie we had during those years, in earlier life. It was a unit. What actually went down with the band?

It was the typical textbook bad situation. When our label actually started to remix the song that we had been working on, “Jerusalem,” around us—*despite* us... I’ve always compared the way that felt to what it would be like if one had to witness their child suffering and couldn’t leave the room. There is no more depressing, out-of-your-

control situation I can think of. I wouldn’t wish that on anybody on this planet. They starved us out after we had held our ripening work intact and endured all of the sacrifices to ensure that it would retain its core. We had really focused everything in our youth and life up to that point where that whole shabuckle took place. I had focused so wholly and entirely on doing Sleep, that’s all I could relate to, so that when I had to walk away from it... I mean, I *had* to, there was no choice. Worse than what had happened would be to have continued playing without sincerity behind it. I can’t do that. And so, yeah, it was a total blackout: not just on the creative level, just entirely. But eventually, the music came back...

It took years for that to re-establish itself where naturally lyrics and riffs, concepts and ideas began to come back to my consciousness. After Sleep disbanded, I got a job teaching chess at elementary schools, and used the other time to go to school. It was really an essential time for me to re-

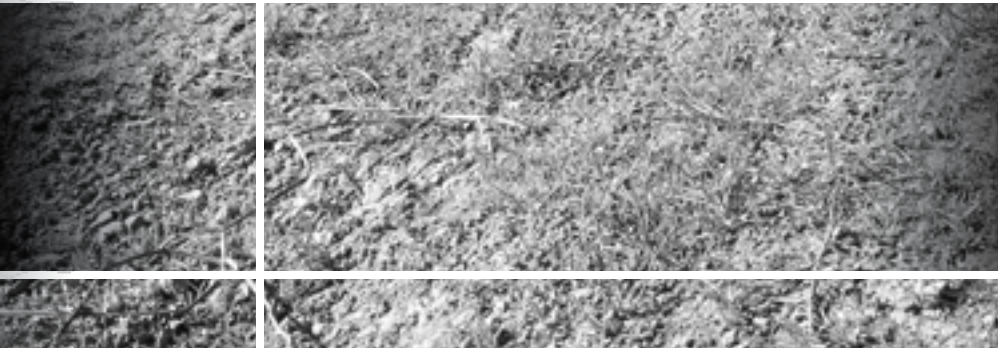
calibrate. When music did start to happen though, about four and a half years ago, it was a full flood of stuff. I’d be sitting in class, and I’d be hearing a song. It’s always been an undercurrent in me and it just increased in intensity. So I began to notate all the parts I was hearing, to hum them into a digital tape recorder. For the first year it started to build, and boxes of tapes started to appear. I got to this point where I called up Chris. That afternoon we met up in his backyard. And about a half hour after that, we were making songs in Om.

Is it frightening to have music making itself known to you in that way, as if it had a will of its own?

It’s confirming that you have to play music. You have to do something about it, because you’re not walking up to it and trying to tinker with it; it’s the other way around. I don’t sit and hammer out parts. I get stopped by them. I could be in the middle of a conversation, I could be at work, I could be driving, I could be doing anything—it just freezes



Cisneros and Haikus await the next riff cycle.



me and I have to stop and hone in on it. It's always been like that. It's one of the few things that makes me really happy, when that happens, when you can feel a part flow into its home. You can visualize where it's going to go and how it will be constructed, and you can envision its outcome. As soon as the current of it goes through, it's like a giant release. It's so uplifting. I try to leave an open space for decisive concepts or riff cycles, but if something continues to visit me, there's usually a total shutdown moment until I go grab my bass and capture it.

There's no guitar in Om. Why not?

It wasn't intentional. We felt immediately upon playing in the room, that first day, that there was so much to explore, and it felt so right just between Chris and I that no more augmenting was needed. There's a lot of interplay with the elements of rhythm drumming, the bass lines and the syncopation of the vocals. Purely sonically, the vocals actually play riffs. Obviously there's always the bass line, but the vocals and the way Chris plays coalesce to serve almost as a riff on top of it. Even since I was a teenager, I've noticed that breathing and rhythm, they're tethered together. The rhythm that you hear in drumming is comparable to a flywheel inside the central nervous system: the respiratory currents in motion, in a cycle.

Another reason there's no guitar in Om is we had already been in a so-called heavy guitar riff band. We wanted Om to go forward from where we were at the moment, not go back. And on a purely musical level, I dunno, I got kind of burnt on orthodox rock or metal songs, it's almost like a cookie cutter. If the song calls for a solo, more the better, but... When we made our first recording, we looked over to the side of the mixing board where there were a bunch of empty guitar stands and just started laughing. [laughs] It's nothing between us and guitarists! Good god, no. Highest ultimate respect to guitarists—that goes without saying.

Why are Om songs so long?

It's not preconceived. When Chris and I start to get something going, it tends to call for repetition. I mean, there's movement within that, and there's shift, there's change within that, but the overall expansion of it... It takes us where it leads us. We just do what they say to do: the songs, the pieces. Om is just who we are—where we're at in the journey of our life. It's a summary of the moment and the way the universe appears to our perception at this one second. It's real, to us.

Lyrics are obviously important to you: the vocals are enunciated and the words are printed on the album sleeve. But the tenses aren't always consistent, and sometimes the words aren't

“MUSIC TAKES US
WHERE IT LEADS US.
WE JUST DO WHAT THE
SONGS SAY TO DO.”

standard English: “The swans array — the crane stands veiled grace — tunnemet to the omen of the object form/And lighten pon day — as scintillate rays — augurate arrival of a seraphic form.” There seems to be a narrative, but...

The lyrics are just verse fragments—poem-prayers that spew forth from the mist. They're definitely not constructed in the sense of grammatical soundness. It's more cathartic in that sense.

The lyrics that you sang in Sleep were usually about marijuana, which was a big deal in the final part of the band.

And in the beginning and the middle too. At that time, I was just completely dependent on the creative space I had gotten into [with marijuana]. During that phase, it was a friend. It was an assist. Its use now is more centered around confirming whether or not a bassline is correct, or if certain parts are compatible. It's mostly used for analysis at this point. Then, it was used for the beginning, middle and end of everything. Today I don't actually like to listen to music when I use it; I just listen to the sounds around me. If things start to percolate, of course I'll go grab my bass, but... Everyone has their own relationship to it. I'm just speaking for myself. I definitely look at it as kind of a botanical shrine.

Is the audience for Om different than the audience was for Sleep? In Sleep, you'd look out from the stage, there'd be like 200 denim vests and the room would be

filled with pot smoke. In Om, there's still the pot smoke but there's people from all walks of life, from all different age groups. That's a noticeable difference. Whoever can relate to the music is welcome.

Your approach in Om is essentially devotional in its concept and execution. I'm reminded of spiritually minded bands like Mahavishnu Orchestra, which I know Sleep were into...

Yeah. I think I was 17. I was at a friend's house and he was saying, 'I can't believe you haven't heard this.' Put it on, put it on. It was *Inner Mounting Flame*, and on the song, “Awakening,” the break with Cobham on the kit... He throws down this one break after McLaughlin subsides these chords. It was so decisive that we just got up and left the room. There was no point in continuing conversation. It was *done*. That evening had been closed by that drumbeat. And to this day I think that in terms of drumming, *Inner Mounting Flame* with Cobham is Mount Olympus. There's nothing more. It's *all*. Saying Billy Cobham is a great drummer is like saying the sun's bright, but... I don't even know what to say about Mahavishnu. It was so humbling. It was an epiphany to hear the potential of these musicians and their conviction. Hearing something like that can make you feel like you've just been messing around in a sandbox your whole life.





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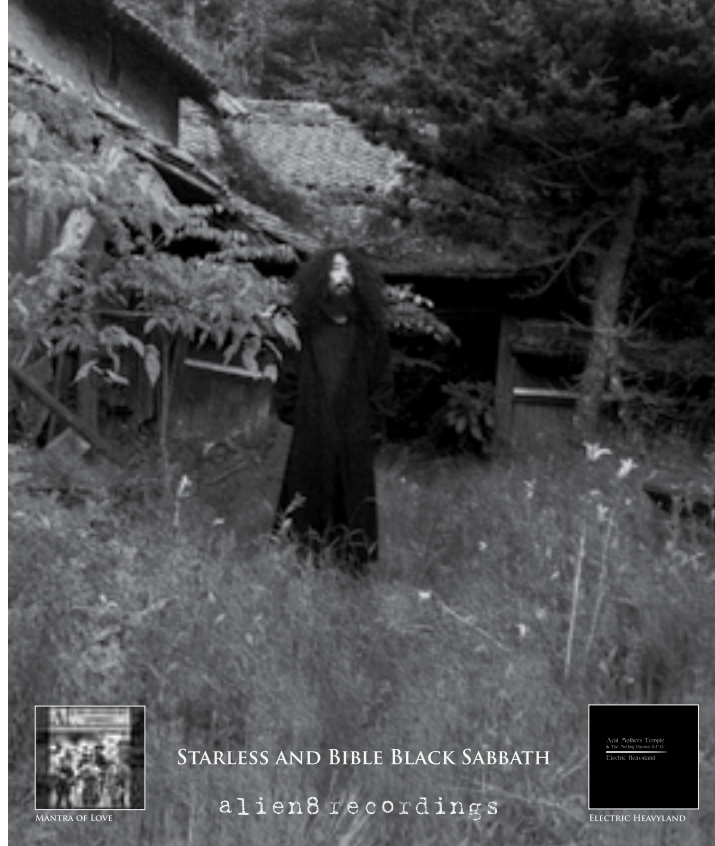
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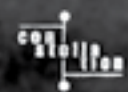
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Davis
2005



at that party—they're gloomy gusses and sad-lifed maidens who'd rather be in the woods than the castle, anyway. I'm speaking metaphorically of course. D: [continuing, rhapsodic] Or they they may be playing in that town called 'Machine' in Jarmusch's *Dead Man*. Which features Robert Mitchum in his last performance. [opens eyes, smiles] One of this nation's finest weedsmokers.

JOSEPHINE FOSTER

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
(Locust Music)

C: Okay, this is even sadder. D: An American woman singing all 18th or 19th century German folk songs for children, in German, is the personification of melancholy. It might not be the right music to listen to when you're deciding whether to live or die, deep at night in those grey hours. C: As Marvin would say, That's not livin'! But it sure is singing. Absolutely beautiful.

SCOTT WALKER

The Drift
(AAD/Beggars)
D: Excellent art-rock that doesn't rock from a living legend, but I'm afraid this music encourages morbid tendencies. This is immense, this record. But what is it? The mood somehow implies a seriousness that might not have to do with worldly events. It is religious? spiritual? There is an urgency! Dreadstorms coming. I think of Japanese ghost music... C: We're running out of time, D. I think this is one we'll have to come back to next time. D: At least we let the people know that the mighty Scott Walker has returned.

FRED NEIL

Fred Neil
(Water)
D: The great freckled Greenwich Village folk soul who wrote "Everybody's Talkin'," which Nilsson had a top ten hit with in 1969 off the *Midnight Cowboy* soundtrack. C: [puts on "That's The Bag I'm In"] Check out the morning he's having: "toast was cold and the orange juice was hot." There's so much soul in his singing, this is an album for the dinosaurs. D: Not the dinosaurs man, the dolphins! C: It's true, these are songs for the dolphins. Seriously.

BELONG

October Language
(CarPark)
C: I've been let down by NASA, what with the militarization of space and all, but this gives me some insight as to what it

feels like to be launched into space. Beautifully fluttered and static-drenched, like those between-song passages of *Loveless*-era My Bloody Valentine. D: [blissed out] C: [blissed out]

BORIS

Pink
(Southern Lord)
C: Okay. One more beer, we'll split it. This is the new Boris, the co-ed heavy guitar sludge march trio from Japan who in the last year have dropped the overt Melvins moves and become a band of varied powers— D: [Stands on couch with bewildered-in-happy-way face] Majestic dry ice fog riffage that can't be turned any louder! C: A landmark record, a virtual catalog of extreme rock guitar strategy—Godflesh/Jesu ethereal rings and reversed dread, overdriven High Rise-style rhythms, post-Sonic Youth squall, Kim Thayil-style tone, Grand Funk/Montrose laying-it-out-there vocals—all on the first two songs. I don't know if any of that makes sense but I'm trying to give people a general idea. D: Unbelievable, neighborhood-destroying pummel drumming here [on title track]. C: [listening to "Woman on the Screen"] Wow. Reminds me of really, really good Nirvana-style punk/grunge, only somehow much huger.

D: [listening to "Blackout"] A mighty behemoth from the Far East is throwing mountains! C: I think we are all in agreeance. Rock album of the year so far, easy. D: [Dancing to "Electric"] You can lose fingers to this album.

HOWLIN RAIN

Howlin Rain
(Birdman)
C: One last supergroup: Howlin Rain, which is Moloney from Sunburned Hand of the Man on drums and Ethan Miller from Comets on Fire on vocals and guitar, working out their common interest in that seemingly lost-forever continent of great 1968-1973 American rock 'n' roll, when the hippies went back to the land and kept on rocking until the Man pulled all but a few back into his lame grip. Allmann Brothers, Creedence, Grateful Dead, Neil Young... D: I sense benificent Jerry Garcia vibes coming from smiling visage of Ethan. C: He is singing at the edge of his capability like Jerry—it's a high, roasted voice. But, curcially, not shrieking. He sings like he's losing his throat. One of those guys whose vocals get quieter the louder he sings. He's got the goner's high moan. D: Like that guy in Canned Heat. [listening to "Calling Lightning With a Scythe"] Or Faces-time Rod Stewart. [laughs] I call this album *Another Side of Ethan Miller, Workingman Rock Star*.

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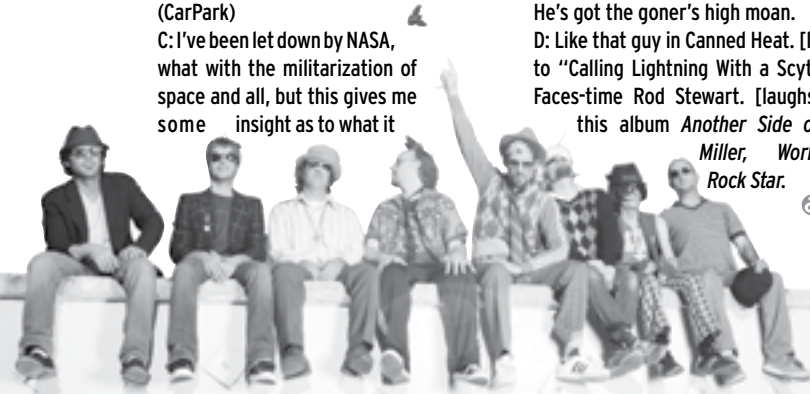
(continued from page 45)
you can also tell that they make some folks delightfully nervous. This can probably be best attributed to the bands in-between, resting music. When there's a lull in their routine and things calm down, the 9WMB's glockenspiel players start tapping out the theme from the slasher film "Halloween," with the tubas coming in every now and then to deliver an ominous "bruummmmmm." It's the film score equivalent of the fabled brown sound—you can tell by the looks on people's faces that they recognize the minor key tune, and they like it, but don't like it at the same time. It's a brilliant moment, and I want to buy whoever thought of it a beer or ten.

The Dead Zone
The night of Lundi Gras finds the wife and I and our friends Judson and Courtney taking a shortcut on a drive downtown to hit a Quintron/Peaches show. The shortcut takes us through the area of town known and Mid-City, where Courtney lived previous to Katrina. Her new home features a handful of possessions salvaged from her house and cleaned of mold, but she's basically begun anew. But driving through her old neighborhood... yikes. Once you get a few blocks off St. Charles, heading away from the river, a frightening change takes over the streets. They're empty. They're dark. Everything looks haunted and miserable. A few FEMA trailers are parked here and there, and on occasion someone seems to have managed to get a porch light working, but on the whole, it feels as if we've driven directly in a George Romero zombie flick. Any moment now I expect to see a shambling corpse slouch into the street, attempting to suck the brains out of our car's passengers. No such thing happens, of course, but I am glad when we eventually make a right turn onto relatively populated, lighted Esplanade. The fact that a few moments earlier I was half-joking about wishing I was armed with a shotgun kinda makes me want to cry. I've NEVER wanted a gun in New Orleans, not even in my worse moments.

Mardi Gras Day (and on into the night)
Mardi Gras morning rolls around and all seems to be aback to normal in the city, at least for a few hours. Working on a few hours of sleep, the wife and I roll out of bed and into our costumes (I'm going as a jerk dressed in a jumpsuit and furry cap; the wife's going the classy route by masquerading as a magical French schoolgirl). Walking over to St. Charles, we begin to see a parade of friends walk by; everybody seems to be well on their way to drunk before noon, but nobody's got a mean buzz on. It's all hugs, everywhere. Families lining the filthy parade route in their chairs and ladders look bleary-

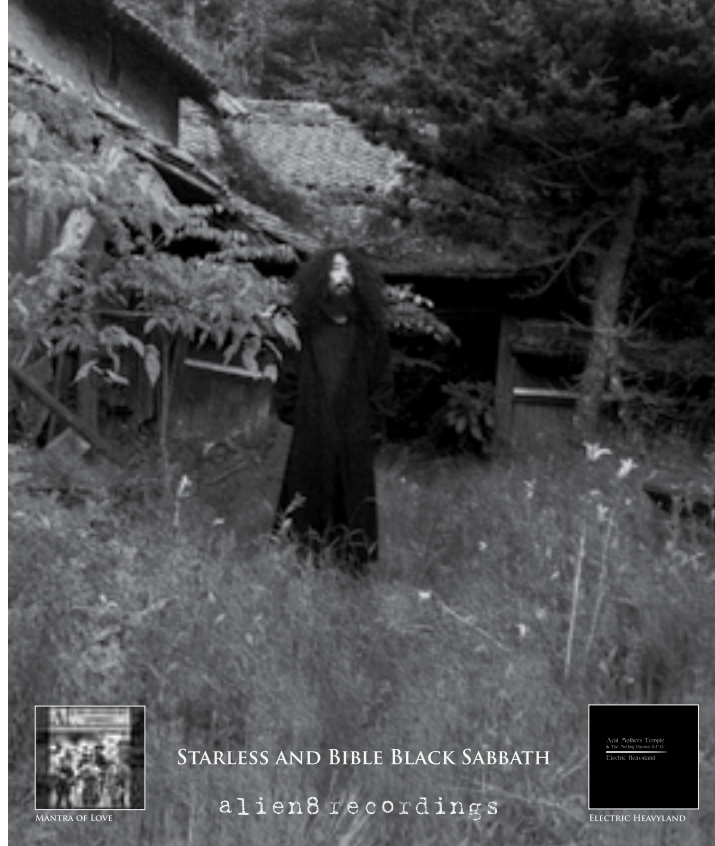
(continued from page 46)
For me, this means writing comics or books or screenplays that explore what I believe to be the issues underlying our propensity for violence, our belief in money, our surrender of agency, our fear of the "other." It means engaging with people as honestly and openly and availably as possible, without spreading myself so thin that I've got nothing of value for anyone. Sure, I'll take a stand and even take to the streets when I get the sense that a mass action is called for. But I won't fool myself into believing it is having an effect on anyone but the participants, themselves. Or that signing an email petition against the next cruel Bush atrocity is a more effective strategy for eradicating the damage than doing something kind, meaningful, or difficult for another person in the world where I live. Actions can trickle up much more effectively than rhetoric trickles down, because actions have reality on their side. And to the extent this means shutting off the war—whichever war—happens to be playing on the cable news, I will keep Grant's words close at hand: it is their war.

eyed and happy. When Rex starts to roll, you see people catching beads... and handing them to little old ladies and kids next to them. Everybody's saying, "Hey, darlin'," and "Excuse me," and you'd be hard-pressed to spot your usual line of sweaty guys being led plastic-cuffed into a paddywagon (though I'm sure it's happening somewhere—you can't buck tradition in one year). The hours melt away—at one point, the wife and I are eating hamburgers with friends, the next, we're at our home base eating red beans and rice cooked with a nice hamhock, the next, we're being dropped off downtown. But by the time the Morning 40 Federation hits the stage at Checkpoint Charlie's for their annual Mardi Gras night show, as the festival comes to its natural inevitable end, the feeling in the air is undeniably powerful, completely ecstatic. You can feel the desperate urge in the club to let loose, to raise one's arms high above and scream. And as the Federation lurches into their first amplified ode to boozing and 9th Ward living, everybody in the room does exactly that. I'm grinning from ear to ear—it's the feedback and the beer, most deinfinitely—but it's also the hope and love I'm seeing right now, that I've seen all weekend. Sure, folks are cynical and tired, but they still believe, much more so than I think anybody else in any city would or could, for they know that's there's an ineffable something to New Orleans, something that just can't and won't quit, ever.



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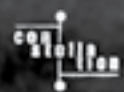
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STRANGE BREW



SWISS ANTHROPOLOGIST JEREMY NARBY ON WHAT HALLUCINOGENS LIKE LSD AND THE AMAZONIAN DRINK AYAHUASCA HAVE TO TEACH US.

INTRODUCTION BY ERIK DAVIS / Q & A BY JAY BABCOCK / ILLUSTRATION BY ARIK ROPER

Anthropologist and author Jeremy Narby hit the intellectual freak scene in 1998 with the publication of *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*, an audacious, intriguing and entertaining dose of righteous mind candy that grew out of his decades-long explorations—both personal and scholarly—of the ayahuasca-swilling tribes of the upper Amazon. While Narby’s head had definitely been broken open, *The Cosmic Serpent* did not spend a lot of time on the “spiritual” import of the jungle brew. Instead, he focused on one of the biggest claims made by the Amazonian shamans: that their ritual ingestion of the hallucinogenic brew not only brings them into contact with the spirits of animals and healing forces, but actually gives them *knowledge*—actual data—about the workings of the jungle around them.

Some sort of weird data transfer is going on in the jungle, though it’s hard to say if it reaches the increasing numbers of spiritual tourists who are now hustling down to the Amazon and transforming shamanic culture with first world dollars. The existence of ayahuasca itself may be one of the greatest mysteries. Ayahuasca is not one plant, but a relatively complex brew that requires a fair amount of preparation. How did the old ones know

that, out of the 80,000 some species of plants in the jungle, only *this* vine, combined with *that* shrub, and then boiled down into black gook, can produce the mother of all trips (not to mention some grade-A karmic Drain-O)?

In *The Cosmic Serpent*, Narby took the mystery one step further: could the shamans be right? Can the brew, which one informant calls “the television of the jungle,” facilitate the knowledge of the jungle and its inhabitants? To approach this question, Narby attempts to “defocalize” his gaze so that he can perceive science and indigenous understandings at more or less the same time. This trippy conceptual exercise leads him to the central mindfuck of the book: that the serpents that commonly slip into the visual field during ayahuasca trips are a figurative expression of the ultimate source of ayahuasca’s visionary communiqués: the coils of DNA. Ayahuasca is not just a head trip—it is a communication with the “global network of DNA-based life.” Narby is no true believer, and he is somewhat startled by his own hypothesis, but that makes it all the more compelling, and the book’s lengthy endnotes prove he is doing more than riffing.

After co-editing 2001’s *Shamans Through Time: 500*

Years on the Path to Knowledge, a powerful collection of first-hand reports of Western encounters with shamans, Narby came out with last year’s *Intelligence in Nature: An Inquiry Into Knowledge*. Rejecting the idea that plants and “lower” animals are mute mechanisms, Narby uncovers scientific evidence that impressive feats of cognition are going on outside the precious smartypants club of the higher primates. Narby looks at bees capable of abstract thought, and unicellular slime molds who are able to solve mazes. Perhaps inevitably, *Intelligence in Nature* is not as wild a ride as *The Cosmic Serpent*; for me, Narby spends too many pages describing his mundane journeys to research labs and not enough wrestling with how «intelligence» relates to choice, or awareness, or intention. Nonetheless, the book is a worthwhile example of Narby’s “defocalized” gaze—an undeniably scientific appreciation whose inspiration lies with the fundamental shamanic belief that other creatures, and even some plants, are, in their own world, “people” like us.

A Canadian living in Switzerland, Narby is no bug-eyed hippie prophet of “the tea.” He is a grounded, sensible fellow with a dry wit, an unromantic but respectful view of shamanism, and an allergy to vaporous supernatural claims. —Erik Davis

ARTHUR: You attended the conference on LSD held in Basel this past January to coincide with the 100th birthday of the father of LSD, Dr. Albert Hoffman. What happened there?

Jeremy Narby: What *didn’t* happen? I think one needs metaphors to get at it, really. When LSD hit in the ‘60s, it

was like a drop of mercury that went in all kinds of directions, broke into a lot of different shards. Because LSD affects consciousness and consciousness affects everything, LSD had an impact in art, in music, in thinking, in the personal computer industry, in biology, and so on. In Basel all the different little pieces

came back together and arranged themselves in a kind of mosaic that was psychedelic, multi-faceted and beautiful. All the chickens came home to roost after 40 years, looking good. One of my favorite moments was when Christian Ratsch came on the big stage with Guru Guru, which is the original Krautrock

band. He was walking around with amber incense and stuff, providing incantations and shamanistic energy during the set, and these sprightly gentlemen, who must be about 65, just rocked the house down. It was fantastic.

So, where does it go from here?

One of the aims of the symposium



“WE’VE BEEN DOING
PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH
UNDERGROUND FOR DECADES
AND GETTING RICH AND
INTERESTING RESULTS.”

was a kind of explicit political aim at getting psychedelic research back on the scientific map, and I think the point’s well taken. But you know, I’ve been working as an activist to get recognition for the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples and essentially despite a couple of decades of work and a lot of clear data (it seems to me), there’s really a fundamental resistance coming out of rationalism, coming out of Western cultures, coming out of the political systems. So I have the feeling of having led the horse to water but it didn’t want to drink. Sure, we can talk to the horse nicely and try and get it to drink the water some more, but finally I feel like more drastic tactics are needed. Like telling the horse to go and take a hike, or turning your back on it.

So I applaud these efforts to legalize psychedelic research, but... There are those among us who have wanted to use hallucinogens how indigenous people use them—in a serious way to understand the world. And we’ve been doing it, underground, for the last bunch of decades, and getting rich and interesting results. So, I’d say that I’d rather take hallucinogens and then write stunning books than make speeches about hallucinogens.

What was the repsonse of Western rationalists to your hypothesis in *The Comsic Serpent*—that Amazonian shamans were actually receiving information at the molecular level via the ayahuasca trance?

Scientists said that I hadn’t tested my hypothesis. Well, okay : I was just happy to have it considered testable! [chuckles] So how do we test it? Well, you try to falsify your hypothesis. You come up with a test to try to demonstrate that it’s wrong. That’s the scientific method. So, I thought, let’s send three Western molecular biologists with questions in their labwork down to the Amazon and put them into ayahuasca-induced trances. If they *didn’t* come up with any information then my hypothesis would start to look falsified. Now, it is a heavy thing

to ask people who have never taken mindbending hallucinogens before to submit themselves to the experience in the name of science. These people are making their psyches available to you and then you distort them with these powerful hallucinogenic plants. In terms of ethics, this is even worse than experimenting on animals. It’s experimenting on humans. They were consenting subjects and all, but sheesh, this is serious business. I mean, the first thing that ayahuasca does, before it answers whatever questions you might put to it, is it tells you about yourself. It puts its finger on your weak spots, fast. It encourages you to clean up your act. This makes it a hard path to knowledge for somebody who’s into ‘being objective’ in the lab. As a scientist, you’re not supposed to pay attention to your subjectivity—you’re supposed to jettison it. But when you end up in an ayahuasca experience, it’s your little subjective self that is the hot point. Your subjective self comes to the *forefront* in your acquisition of knowledge. For a scientist, that’s a rough one.

You were able to find volunteers, nonetheless. I gather they were colleagues... ?

Actually, no. Fishing for molecular biologists is a kind of special sport. One of these molecular biologists runs a lab at a federal research institute here that specializes in modifying plant genomes. After a talk I gave in Lausanne in 1997 where I said that I was looking for molecular biologists to test the hypothesis, she raised her hand and said, ‘I am a molecular biologist.’ This other French molecular biologist, who was 64 and about to retire, had written to me, saying how impressed he was with *The Cosmic Serpent* and so on. I corresponded with him and cultivated the relation. Finally there was this Californian woman molecular biologist who runs a genome sequencing lab with 60 people under her responsibility, and she showed up at the book launch of *The Cosmic Serpent* in San Francisco and introduced herself. It’s no light thing getting people to do this. But, as scientists,

they agreed, they found it too interesting to pass up.

They each had questions from their individual researches...

The French fellow was studying how sperm cells become fertile. When a sperm cell comes into the sperm duct out of the testicles it isn’t capable of fertilizing an ovum. But by the time it gets to the end of the sperm duct, it can fertilize an ovum. There’s something like 50 different proteins that work on in that duct, somewhat like automobile workers working on a car as it goes through the chain. So the question that he was working on is, Which of the 50 proteins is responsible for making sperm fertile? He was working on this at the French National Center for Scientific Research because he was looking for a male contraceptive. He had two other questions: Why is it that we’ve been looking for so many years without being able to find the answer, is it because this is ‘forbidden’ knowledge? (That was a kind of Catholic question.) And, Is the mouse the appropriate model for us to be studying this, because what interests us is humans, of course.

He got some fairly clear answers. In his third ayahuasca session, fairly early into the session a voice explained to him, he later stated, that the answer to Question Number One was that it wasn’t one protein, but the combination of all 50 that was doing it. The answer to the second question was, See my first answer. In other words, you’ve been not finding it for so many years because you’ve been concentrating on one protein rather than how the 50 interact. And the answer to the third question was, ‘This question is too small for me to consider. Ask me something else.’ You know, you figure out for yourself whether the mouse is an appropriate model for humans. He later stated that he did not have the impression of

accessing independent or outside information. The two women, on the other hand, had definite impressions of encounters with independent intelligences in the form of plant mothers: the mother of tobacco, and the mother of chacruna. We actually had to negotiate over words. I asked them whether they thought these were ‘outside’ intelligences and both of them preferred the word ‘independent.’ So the jury is still out on just where the information may be coming from...

At a minimum, though, the ayahuasca was an activating agent.

That, and the singing of the shamans. I was surprised by the extent to which they did come up with ideas and hypotheses in their visions. But when I reported this [at a 2000 symposium, later published as the final chapter in 2001’s *Shamans Through Time* anthology], nothing happened. It never got reviewed. Like I said, the world doesn’t seem to be ready for this stuff.

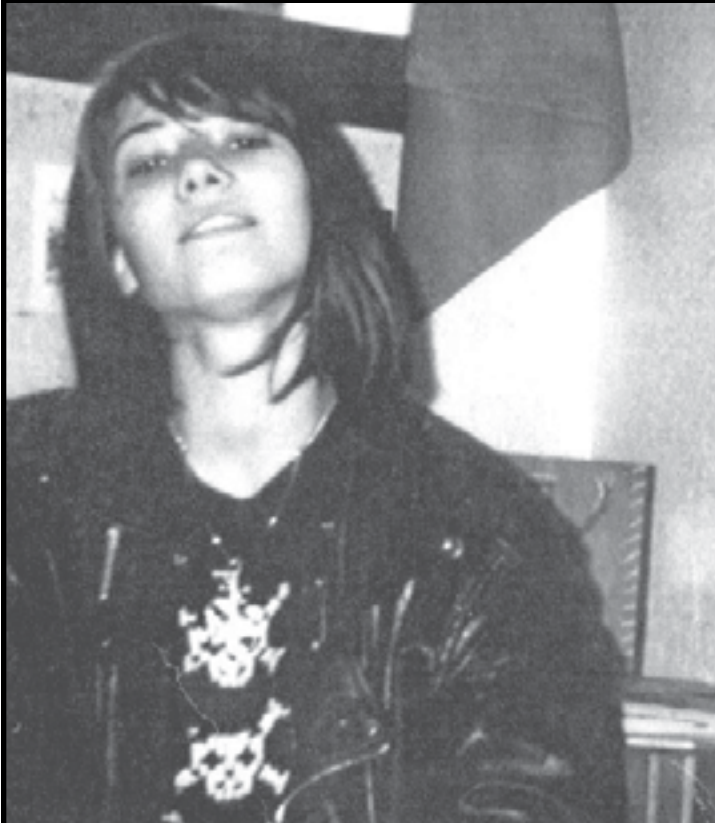
Your work seems to complement that of Benny Shanon, the professor of psychology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. That guy is a heavyweight. To me his book [*The Antipodes of the Mind : Charting the Phenomenology of the Ayahuasca Experience*, Oxford University Press, 2002] seems to demonstrate beyond argument that knowledge can be gained in altered states of consciousness attained by ayahuasca. He’s interviewed hundreds of people who are experienced ayahuasca users and he’s made sense out of their answers. So yeah... It’s very complementary. Benny Shanon pointed out to me when we first met, it might’ve been in ’97 or ’98, that he thought my hypothesis was rather *narrow*. He was one of the few people that said that. He said, ‘All you talk about is molecular biology, but there does not seem to be a limit



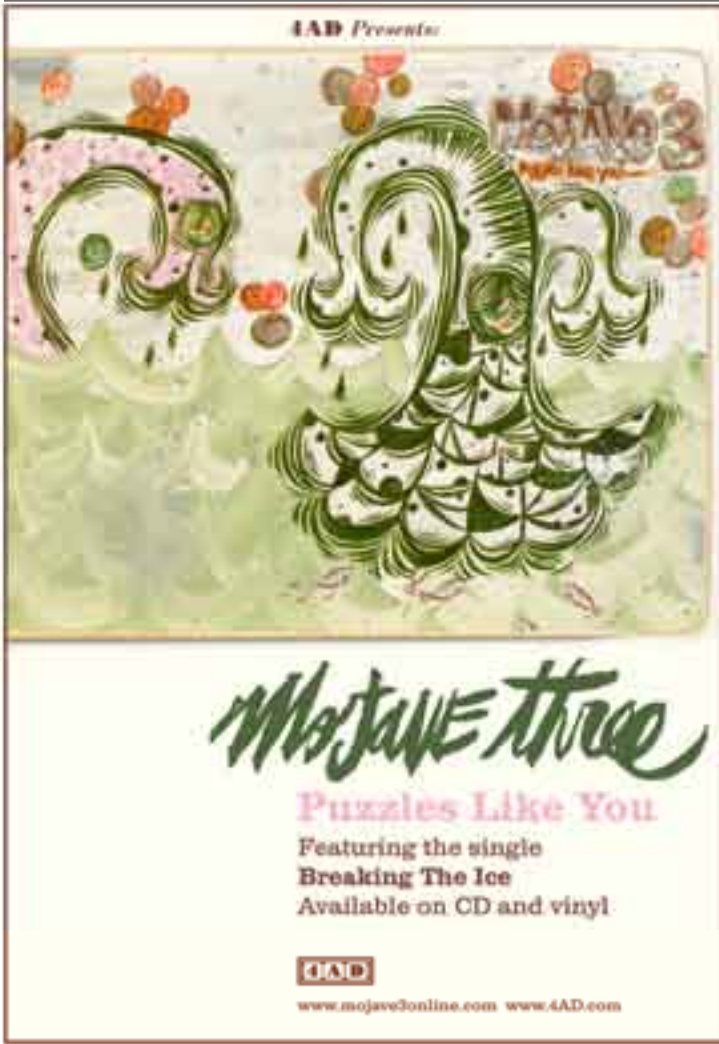
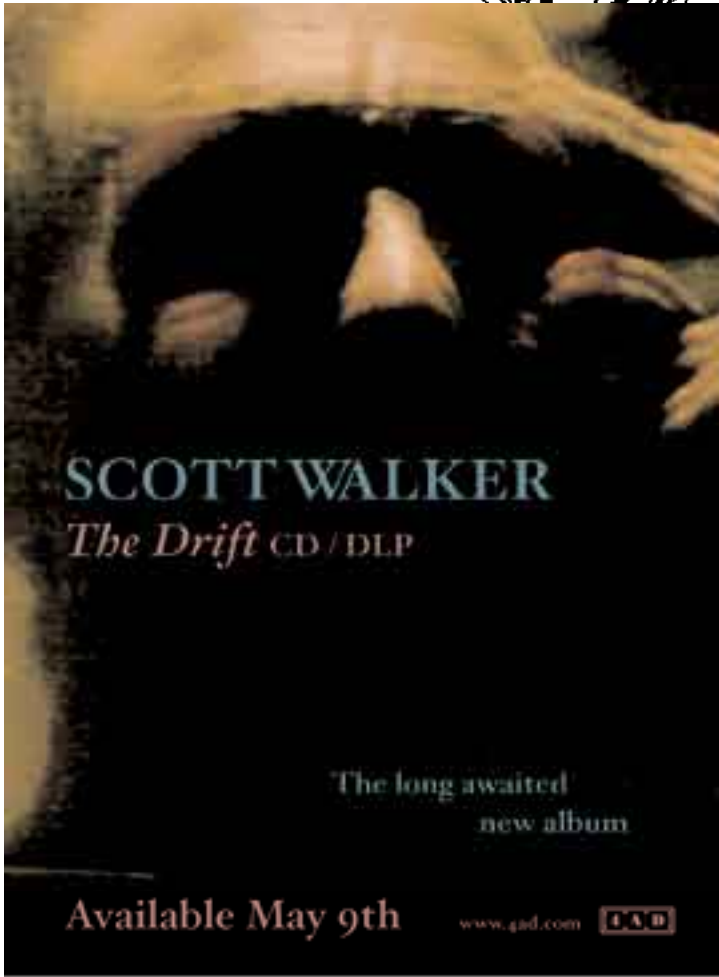
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to the domains that are pertinent to ayahuasca, where people can learn things about these domains via ayahuasca. You can have insights into all kinds of domains, not just molecular biology.'

What I like about Benny's work there is that he places us like the early European explorers in the 16th century, arriving on this new continent, without maps: the first thing they had to do was to get in those canoes and go upriver and make maps. So Benny took ten years to map the ayahuasca continent, to provide a preliminary map of these altered states of consciousness induced by ayahuasca from a scientific point of view. That hadn't been done before. I don't know if he's the Christopher Columbus or the Amerigo Vespucci of consciousness, but what that means is we're in kindergarten, or the 16th century, when it comes to understanding this stuff. More research is certainly needed. Benny himself is working on the philosophical implications of what he's found.

Where is your own work headed from here ?

If we are part of nature, as science indicates, and if nature is intelligent, as science and shamanism also indicate, then is there anything special about human intelligence? In other words, I'm looking at human specificity, reconsidered from a point of view that presupposes no separation between humans and nature, and appreciates the presence of intelligence in nature. So it comes down to the question: What are human beings? How do they fit into the scheme of things? What are we doing here, in other words. If Nature has got intelligence, what does it have in mind coming up with us?

Western thinkers like Terence McKenna, Richard Tarnas and Grant Morrison have suggested that humans are what happens when the universe becomes self-aware.

Well, there have been many things that have seemed to be uniquely human but when we looked at it closely we found out it wasn't so uniquely human. Shamans are telling us that the other species are human just like us in fact. We usually say that humans are the "symbolic species" but it turns out that DNA molecules *are* symbols, and that all of nature is shot through with symbols. We used to think we were the only humans, now indigenous Amazonians tell us "humanity" is a condition that applies to all

the beings in the world. We first think what does that mean? But if you think that being able to symbolize is specifically human, and then you understand that there are symbols in every cell in the world, you can see the whole thing more clearly. We as the symbolic species remain a quintessentially natural product. But admittedly a peculiar one. We do all kinds of things that other species don't do. This is true of other species, also, but we are a pretty surprising bunch. So just what is going on with these human beings?

If Western rationalism is simply catching up to the shamanic understanding of reality, why not just go native? Rather than spending time and energy translating these truths into words that Western rationalists can understand and maybe even accept, why not just embrace the shamanic worldview?

Well, I'm a Canadian, with blue eyes, and I like ice hockey, y'know? So I can put on feathers and start smoking pipes, but it'd be a bit of a fraud. Not that I don't smoke a pipe or anything, but... I think that [going native] would be a mistake. Part of my dayjob, as the Amazonian Projects Coordinator for Nouvelle Planete, a small Swiss NGO, is to live in the Western world, to be an outsider here, to explain to the Westerners indigenous reality in the Amazon, why it should be interesting to us, and to back the survival of indigenous people there. And these are very concrete projects: right now I am trying to get funding for people in Peru who are running programs to benefit Aguaruna Jivaro women and their knowledge about nutritional and medicinal plants, or to help fund the Cacataibo people's efforts to demarcate an area for non-contacted Cacataibo people in the central forest area. My role is to find funds for them here, in the West. I go to Peru once a year, I am in constant contact with the people there, but the money is here. So I've got to speak the language of these Westerners, I've got to know what motivates them. But I want to have a distance from it.

So you're constantly crossing between the Amazonian shamanic worldview and the materialist, rationalist worldview that you were raised with and are embedded in. There must be moments of jarring culture shock, right ?

I used to have that problem closer to 15 or 20 years ago, just getting back from the Amazon and stuff. I



went through a couple of years of, I dunno, cultural schizophrenia. For example... I'm not Catholic myself, but in this part of Switzerland people are. All you gotta do is read the last chapter of the Bible and you'll know who the cosmic serpent is associated with. So on the one hand I'm walking around with serpents and DNA molecules in my head, and outside there's the Judeo-Christian rational world. Probably when you go to the supermarket you don't want to get into the 'I am transforming into a jaguar' mode! [laughter]

But that's the profession of the professional anthropologist: to know how to feel at home abroad and how to feel abroad at home. So, okay: bi-cognitivism. Bilinguals have more fun! It's fun to have two languages, because there are things that you can say in another language that you can't in your own, so being able to go back and forth between a kind of rational view and a shamanic view. I think it's beneficial. To be able to know how to juggle points of view; to be able to look at your own presuppositions, it's something that your average citizen would gain from being able to do. The world that's currently unfolding in front of us where Pakistan and Denmark are linked and the same news bulletins about what's going on in Iraq are read on television in Japan, Switzerland and Venezuela [is one in which radically different points of view need to be better understood.] In other words:

everybody's gotta become a kind of anthropologist at this point. And to those of us in the West, this can be painful. It was shocking to me as a rationalist to discover that my way of looking at the world actually was pretty arrogant in its presuppositions, and that I had excluded *a priori* shamanism as being a 'real' way of knowing, and that the only real way of knowing I presupposed with most rationalists, is Rationalism. Opening one's mind to that I found rather painful.

Some basic presuppositions need to fall away, or at least be put up for debate. Which brings us back to LSD: a deconditioning tool that challenges what you know, and even how you know.

It's not for nothing that they call it a trip. You can go traveling and physically take your body to different countries and learn that people in different places do things differently. And that forces you to look at your own presuppositions. Or you can stay home and if you work with these psychoactive plants correctly, you can examine your own presuppositions in your living room. And I'd say, if you do both, it's even better.

I get a lot of strength from being specific—in working from particular cases and then generalizing from there. My beat has been the Western Amazon for the last 20 years. But I'm sure that one could make similar gains by going to Siberia or China or India or Lebanon or Africa. The *whole world* is interesting.

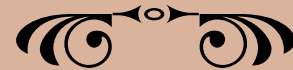
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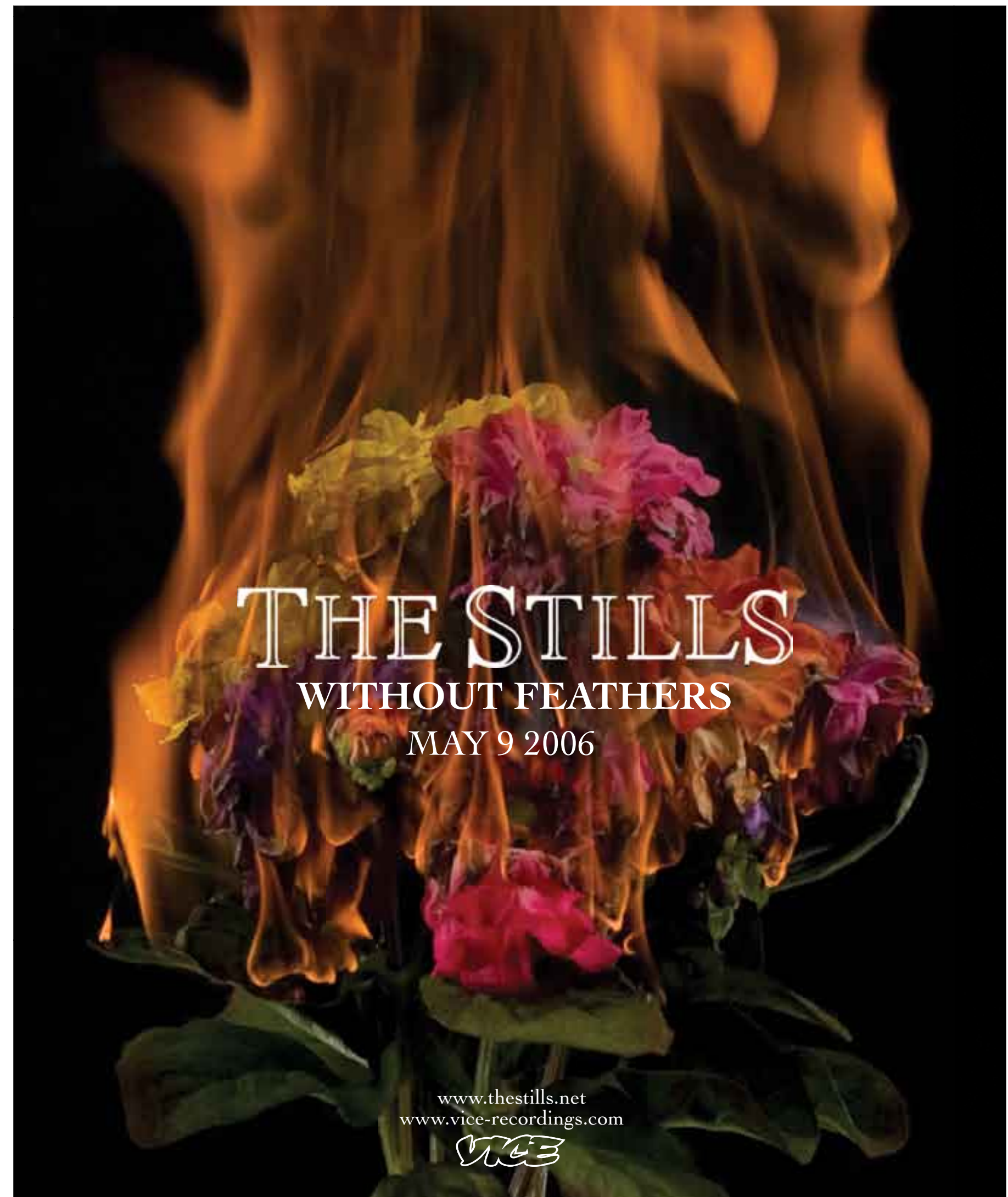
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LETTER TO RACHEL



end.





EARTH PEOPLE:
Kevin Doria (Left)
and Joe DeNardo out
standing in a field.

HAPPY MEDIUMS

HOW NATURE DRONERS **GROWING** FOUND THEIR FLOW

BY PETER RELIC / PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDEN BATKI

If Plato had had the necessary resources back in the day, he would have definitely buffed out his philosopher's Cave with black lights and fog machines. The old Greek dude never got the chance, but in the new millennium, Growing have done it for him, figuratively speaking.

Growing is Joe DeNardo, 26, and Kevin Doria, 27, two gentlemen who met at Evergreen University in Olympia, Washington. DeNardo is originally from the suburbs of Chicago, while Doria grew up in Richard Nixon's hometown of Yorba Linda, tucked deep inside Southern California's Orange County. Together they play a slug-paced, ocean-deep drone music without drums or traditionally recognizable melodies that nonetheless projects a palpable pulse and a sense of probiotic harmony. Over three albums, and assorted tapes and EPs, Growing have united the foreboding heaviness of doom metal with the reassuring beauty of placid ambience in songs stretching up to 20 minutes in length. The unlikely arranged marriage actually works. Call it life metal, or nature drone.

"We chose the name Growing because it seemed all-encompassing," Joe DeNardo says, on the cel phone from the duo's live-in bunker in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. "A lot of people didn't like it at first because they thought it was a reference to marijuana or boners. Not so. It does seem to describe the process of living and dying without being heavy and ominous. Which is nice."

For their newest album, *The Color Wheel*, Doria and DeNardo have expanded the Growing sound to encompass even more: now, discord and rhythm join the Edenic shimmerblasts and underlying

thrum of their past work. If Growing is an entity, *The Color Wheel* is the sound of it in adolescence: the bucolic innocence of childhood mostly lost, replaced by awkwardness, dark intimations of mortality and, of course, new joys. Adolescence is beyond volition—it just happens, whether or not you want it to—and Growing's growth seems to have happened in the same way: the band's sound has unfolded in ways its makers didn't contrive or foresee, yet they accept it nonetheless.

Speaking with DeNardo and Doria is not unlike listening to Growing: it ain't gonna work if you're in a hurry, and the less you pry for insight, the more revelations are likely to come. Then again, these guys are don't confine the big slowdown to their guitarwork. They do everything slowly, including going through college (Doria: "Took me seven years and I'm not even a doctor!").

"We're not very conscious guys," says DeNardo. "Like, we're not very aware of ourselves. We just kind of...float. We don't articulate ourselves all that well. We don't talk to each other much about this stuff; we don't line everything up like 'Okay this is the idea: I'm thinking about the French Alps right now, so let's make some music like that.'"

"We don't do that. It's just all kind of melts and flows together."

§
Growing was birthed in Olympia, Washington. For two years—or maybe three years, no one's really sure—DeNardo and Doria lived in a house with Joe Preston, a legendary musician with arguably the heaviest resume in guitar history, one that includes work with early Earth, mid-'90s Melvins, *White 1/2*-era Sunn0))) and now, High On Fire, as well as his

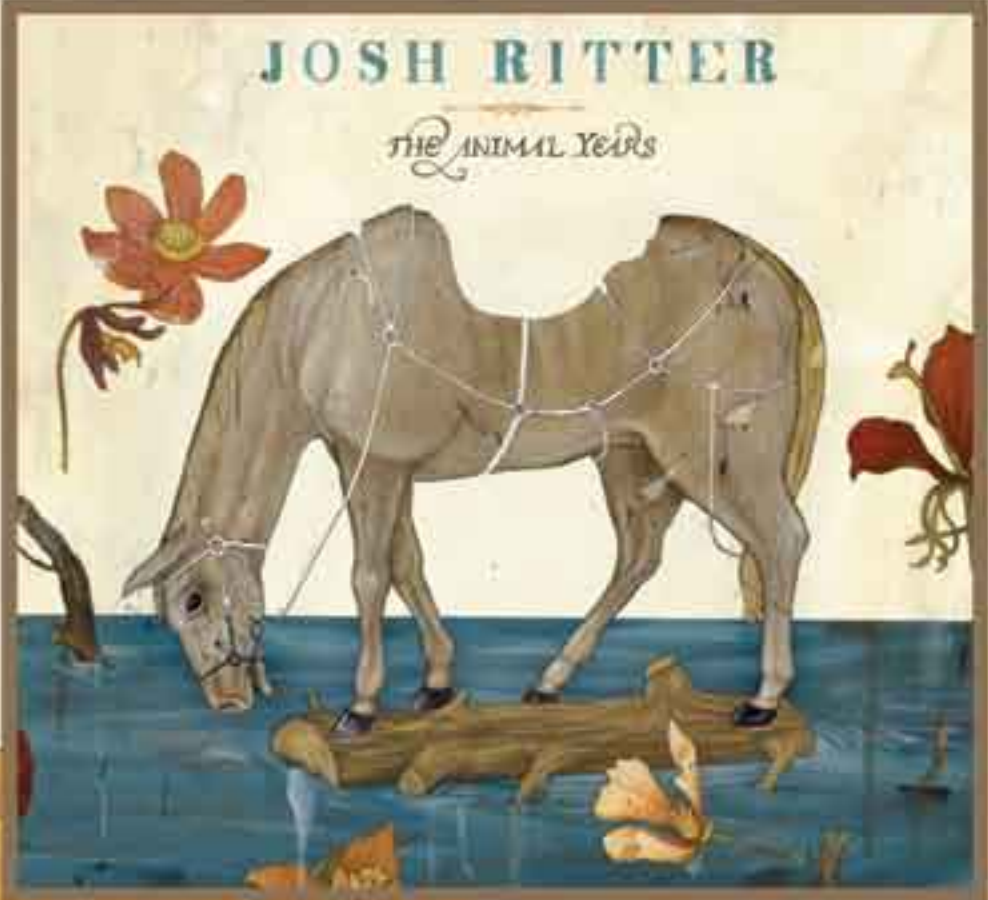
own one-man noise-drone-riff unit, Thrones.

"For the most part it was really just mellow times," says Kevin Doria. "We played video games, went to Taco Bell, hung out. Joe Preston never practiced, not once. Okay, I think he did once when no one was around, for like 15 minutes. I guess he just didn't like the way it sounded in the basement."

DeNardo and Doria didn't mind the basement sound.

"Before Growing, we had a little tape thing called 1,000 A.D.," says Doria. "It started out as Joe [DeNardo] and me fucking around in the basement: a lot more riffage, no drums or anything, just guitars and bass, really long tedious parts that went on for hours. We were simultaneously doing this other band called Black Man White Man Dead Man which, when it started was more hardcore stuff: fast, loud. As time went on, it evolved into slower heavier jams. Finally we realized that having two bands comprised of the same members was really stupid, so whatever, let's just have one band. The writing didn't dramatically change as far as the songs were concerned, but everything did get slower. I'm not particularly good at playing fast, or playing parts even—that had something to do with us getting slower—but also, we just kind of got bored playing hardcore. We got older. It was natural."

It's difficult to measure Preston's direct influence on how Growing grew—"He's a pretty secretive dude about how he works," says Doria; "I learned from Joe Preston how to combine multiple distortion pedals to get specific sounds," says DeNardo. Whatever the case, Preston's mere presence meant



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“IF MONEY WERE NO OBJECT, THERE’D BE A CRAZY LIGHTSHOW THAT WAS DYNAMIC AND COLORFUL AND RESPONDED TO EVERY NOTE WE PLAYED.”

the Harmony of Light” by one Bainbridge Bishop of New Russia in Essex County, New York. The essay combined Bishop’s modest philosophical musings on the relationships between “the principal colors of the rainbow” and the “harmonic series of music or sound” with detailed descriptions and schematics of the experimental keyboard organs he built that demonstrated those principles by displaying certain colors when certain notes were played (red for C, yellow-green for F, aquamarine for G, etc.). That Growing titled their new album *The Color Wheel* seems to show this interest in synaesthesia has not waned.

“The Soul of the Rainbow and the Harmony of Light is just a really beautiful phrase,” says DeNardo. “It’s a really nice description of what we wish we could get to. *The Color Wheel*, referencing color and sound... It’s just an interest, an inspiration—it’s nothing scientific, it’s very rudimentary. Everybody has theories about associating certain colors with certain keys. I think a lot of people see those combinations in their minds, but I don’t personally have any physical alteration in my sight when I hear a sound and I don’t think Kevin does either. Well, not when we’re sober, anyways. Maybe something we do with sound will give people some thoughts and ideas. We used to do more visuals at our shows: slides, videos. It’s become a lot harder to do since we’ve moved to New York, the place where everybody’s already done everything, right? If money were no object, there’d be a crazy lightshow that was dynamic and colorful and responded to every note we played. That would be the dream, of course.

“We’re gonna call the next record *If Money Were No Object...*”

§

The Color Wheel was recorded last fall over twelve 14-hour days in a studio north of Montreal called The Pines run by Dave Bryant of Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Craig Bowen. After last year’s EP *His Return* (released through their

new label home, Megablade), it’s a bit of a surprise to see another entire album with no vocals. DeNardo, who sang on *His Return*’s “Freedom Towards Death,” says nonchalantly, “It’s just a thing that comes and goes. I very rarely have lyrics that I’m excited about singing, or feel like fit a song that we’re making. They might show up again, they might not, who knows. If it fits, it fits.”

Doria: “We don’t necessarily go with a plan: ‘this is a part, this is how all this is gonna go.’ We just play. A lot of the time I’ll have a part or Joe will have a part and either they will magically go together or the other guy will have some other part that goes with it properly. Live, I always think things could get a little bit louder, which is probably not the best mentality. When we started it was just ‘play as loud as possible.’ Sometimes that’s a detriment. There’s a happy medium in there and I want to find it; it’s always part of the journey, trying to find and stay at that happy medium as long as you possibly can without losing control of your amp.”

DeNardo: “The longer you sustain the sound, the more time the listener has to concentrate and pick up on the sound. You can pare everything down to one note and there’s a lot of subtle harmonic ephemera. ‘Anaheim II,’ which is Kevin’s brainchild, is just a densely layered chord that shifts through the action of going forward and backward. The foundation of the track is one dense chord that’s a sustained note.”

It’s the power of the drone.

“A drone is just one of those sounds that can communicate a lot of subtlety,” says DeNardo. “Drone is one of the older elements in music. Many traditional musics have a drone element—it’s everywhere, if you dig deep enough. I’m not a scientist or a biologist or psychologist, but I think it probably has some really natural closeness or feeling to the womb. It’s always felt really nice and easy and pleasant even

to play. And when a show goes really well I feel really relaxed and more lucid. That's one of the effects that I hope our music has on people..."

Growing have caused people to lay down and bliss out en masse in nightclubs, at festivals (they played the Mogwai-curated All Tomorrow's Parties in London, 2003 as well as a packed room at ArthurFest 2005), and on a North American tour last summer with San Francisco Bay Area scorchers Comets On Fire. But the live situations they seem most excited about take place in the unconventional spaces that rarely hear the sound of amplified guitar.

"We've always wanted to avoid playing only in clubs," Doria says. "We've played in churches, and we played at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. At MOCA we set up our amps outdoors, in a quadraphonic sound environment, with the sound of the fountain right there too. It was a really laid-back atmosphere, people could sit down, plus it was free, so we got all kinds of people who were downtown and weird patrons of the museum who decided to show up for no reason. A success."

Some of Growing's music was actually conceived for specific temporal-geographic locations. "Epochal Reminiscence," from *The Soul of Light* is an 18-minute fugue that moves from the static to the ecstatic as its sonic undertow envelops the listener. The piece is something Growing originally recorded for a "home show" in Olympia.

"A home show is where we design each room in the house to have a different sound environment," says DeNardo. "People come over, they're invited to partake and stay overnight. Anyone can do it. It's a really pleasant way to hang out with friends. That piece was the soundscape in my bedroom, where it was playing on a prerecorded tape, and then there were a couple guitars and amps set up, and people were allowed to pick them up and play along. All the effects were in a box that they couldn't reach. They just had access to a guitar and a volume pedal."

This effort to involve the listener on experiential terms has its precedents; perhaps the most relevant recent example is the Dream House, an ongoing environmental installation designed by minimalist composer La Monte Young and his wife,

visual designer Marian Zazeela that involves slowly changing sound, shapes and color. DeNardo has visited the Dream House twice.

"It's right where Sixth Avenue hits Church Street in Manhattan," he says. "Basically the Dream House is an installation with a giant chord of slowly moving notes. The incredible thing about it is that you can be in one spot, and move your ear ever so slightly and the whole sound that's swimming around your head changes. You perceive different frequencies depending on the slightest change in where your ears are positioned. You can move a centimeter and all of a sudden you're hearing a whole different range of what's going on. But when you first walk into it, you think it's just a loud mega-noise going on. Then you feel it change. You actually play the room by moving around in it. It's extraordinary, beyond anything we're doing. It's pretty much a pure experience without having to analyze it all, and in fact, the second time I went, I fell asleep for a while. I woke up and La Monte and Marian were giving a friend of theirs a tour of the Dream House, and I was like, [dreamily], 'Whoa, La Monte Young's hanging out!'"

Impressed, DeNardo purchased *The Tamburas of Pandit Pran Nath: An Homage*, a recording of 1981 model Pandit Pran Nath style paired tamburas played by Young and Zazeela in the tuning "Jora Sa 120 Hz, Pa 90 Hz, Kuraj Sa 60 Hz (B^b pitch)" that fellow minimalist composer (and Pandit Pran Nath disciple) Terry Riley calls "an invaluable artifact, destined to become a cherished classic, valued or years to come by those able to appreciate the subtle vibratory qualities of this High Art." The La Monte Young-Marian Zazeela trip can get pretty heady.

Says DeNardo, "That philosophy is totally exciting and inspiring to me, although it's not something that I'm conscious of as we're making music. When they start getting into integer modal relationships... that's cool but I can't really follow it, and in a way I don't want to. We obviously feel an affinity towards the drones that appear in so many musics from around the world, listen to as much as we can. We would never try and actually play an actual [traditional] instrument. We're just trying to expose ourselves to it, to everything possible. You go to see the more academic concerts where it's some university professor or

"DRONES HAVE ALWAYS FELT REALLY NICE AND EASY AND PLEASANT EVEN TO PLAY. WHEN A SHOW GOES WELL, I FEEL REALLY RELAXED AND MORE LUCID."

digital sound students... some of the things that we've tried, they're working on the same kind of stuff."

In fact there are a bunch of albums that have come out recently that fit well into the loose contemplative rubric of life metal: Tim Hecker *Mirages* (alien8recordings); Christopher Bissounette, *Periphery* (Kranky); Thomas Köner, *Daikan* (Mille Plateaux); Chiehi Hataheyama, *Minima Moralia* (Kranky); and Oren Ambarchi's *Triste* (Southern Lord), to name a (very) few. Put these records on and do anything (or nothing) as they draw in and on all the sounds of the city or the country outside. (Listening to Growing while the ice cream truck drives past is a beautiful thing.) One thing that enhances the life metal home listening experience is hooking up a third speaker (even a small one) to your stereo system and attaching that speaker to the opposite wall (preferably above the couch) facing your two main speakers. This will have to do, until Growing starts playing in caves.

DeNardo: "A cavern would be good. Caves in general are just interesting sonically. We could play in a large cave where things are going to echo and move, and people can be traveling through it and at different points hear it differently. Caves have always been a real interest of mine. I've only been to one cave, in the upstate New York area when I was real young, for some school thing. I just remember being really amazed with how vast it was. It was gigantic. I picked up this old *National Geographic* with an article about this six-month stay that this scientist did in a Texas cave. Mostly it was an experiment on your sleep and awake cycle, what happens to it if you get no sunlight or direct human contact. Pretty quickly he lost all track of time. There'd be times when he

was only awake for six hours but he thought he'd been awake for 20. He kept a pretty extensive diary and they printed excerpts from it. He was totally going crazy—even contemplating suicide at one point—from lack of sunlight and lack of contact with people. Which I feel a little affinity towards, living in a room without any natural sunlight."

DeNardo chuckles, but you gotta wonder about these guys: obvious nature lovers who've ended up in a windowless basement in New York City. On the bright side, maybe it could function as a fallout shelter?

Doria: "If there's any kind of mass destruction I hope I'm taken out right away. If a giant asteroid hits the earth, I hope it falls on my head and obliterates me right away, instead of having to think of how a giant asteroid hit the earth 15 minutes ago and a wave of energy is churning towards me is going to wipe me out."

That's assuming we're still around when the next asteroid strikes. Between global climate change and our child President's itchy nuclear finger, the human race may be on its way out...

DeNardo: "I give it a couple more thousand years, if we can figure out how to deal with energy in an efficient way. Hopefully our brains will evolve, like a new species will come out of us."

"There's always going to be those rogue factions who are hiding underground," interjects Doria. "Hopefully they'll mutate and change what our idea of humanity is, but it could change dramatically much sooner."

"Considering we've been around for 8,000 years, it's awfully saddening to think we've done the most damage in the past few hundred," DeNardo says. "But the best thing about the earth is it'll keep on truckin'."



NATURE'S NEXT TOP MODELS: Doria (front) and DeNardo ('stache) are prepared for their close-up.

WHAT IS BASTET?

1. From Wikipedia: “In Egyptian mythology, Bast (also spelt Ubasti, and Pasht) is an ancient goddess, worshipped at least since the Second Dynasty. Originally she was viewed as the protector goddess of Lower Egypt, and consequently depicted as a fierce lion. Indeed, her name means (female) devourer. As protectress, she was seen as defender of the pharaoh, and consequently of the chief god, Ra, who was a solar deity, gaining her the titles Lady of Flame, and Eye of Ra. Since Bastet would literally mean (female) of the ointment jar, Bast gradually became thought of as the goddess of perfumes, earning the title perfumed protector.”

2. The publishing arm of **Arthur Magazine**.



BASTET DVDs

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Celebrated internationally for more than 40 years, and recently screened at the “Day for Night” program at the 2006 Whitney Biennial, Ira Cohen's film THE INVASION OF THUNDERBOLT PAGODA will be released June 1, 2006 by Bastet on DVD.

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“Part ‘Dr. Strange,’ part ‘Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome,’ [‘The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda’ is] so High ‘60s that you emerge from its 20-minute vision perched full-lotus on a cloud of incense, chatting with a white rabbit and smoking a banana.... ‘Invasion’ is a languidly opiated costume ball in which an assortment of masked and painted bohos, some sporting outsize elf ears, lol about a candlelit, Mylar-lined set, blowing soap bubbles and nibbling majoon.”

—J. Hoberman in the Mar. 16, 2006 Village Voice

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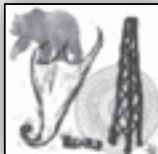
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“Birds and other Notes on the Condition of Humanity” - 8x11.5in, black and white xerox, stapled. *Edition size*: 50. \$10US/14Can/20world

2. **JESS RÖTTER**

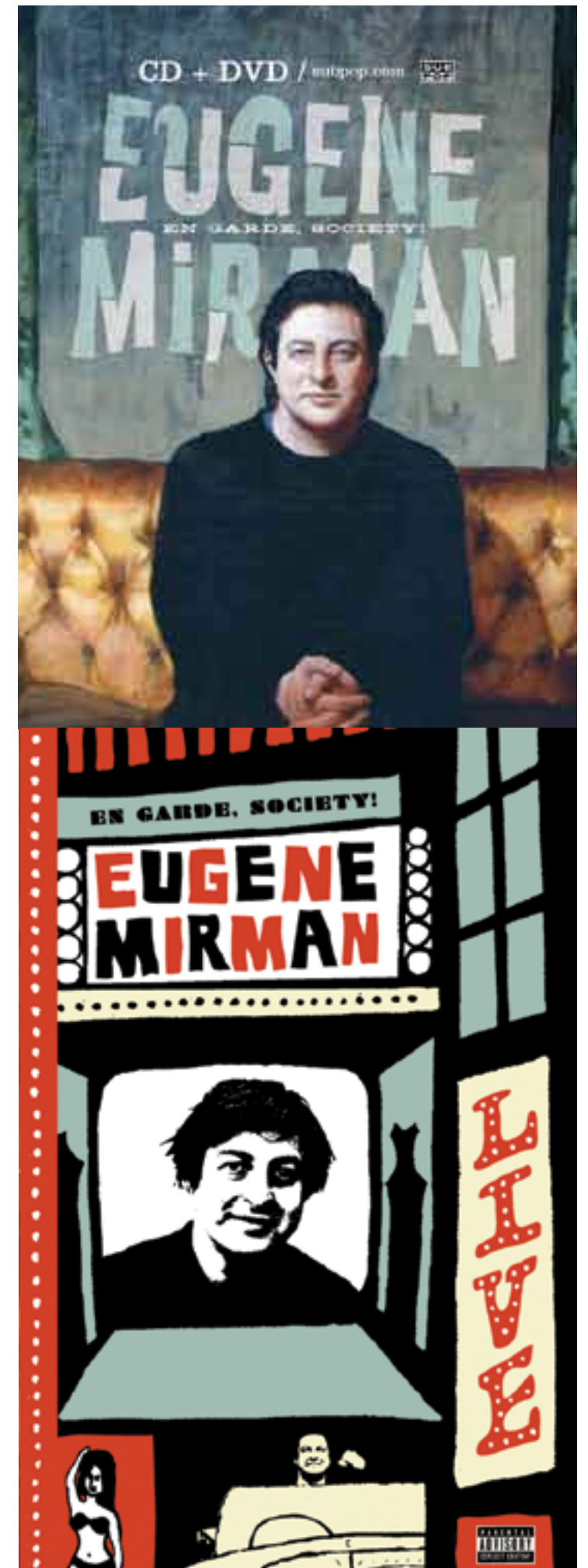
“Paradise” -- 8.5 x 11 in, black/white xerox, stapled, folded, signed/numbered black-on-purple heavy cover

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1. **JAMES FOTOPOULOS**

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MASTER OF BREATH

THE LIFE, WORK AND ASTOUNDING IMPACT OF NORTH INDIAN VOCALIST PANDIT PRAN NATH, GURU TO WESTERN MINIMALISTS LA MONTE YOUNG AND TERRY RILEY

BY PETER LAVEZZOLI

On Sunday, July 13, 2003, an intimate audience congregated at the Community Music Center in Portland, Oregon, to hear a vocal recital of North Indian ragas on a full-moon night. On the riser were a pair of tablas, two tambouras, and a sarangi, situated around a cushion reserved for the vocalist. When the audience was seated, Terry Riley, father of repetitive electronic music, entered in full Indian dress, followed by his accompanists. After making their bows to the audience, the musicians were seated. Riley announced that it was the evening of Guru Purnima, a sacred holiday celebrated in India and throughout the world. Every year on the full moon of July, students and disciples pay homage to their respective gurus and celebrate the spirit of the ancient guru Vyasa, the Indian saint who edited the Vedas and authored the Puranas and Upanishads. It is a day of gratitude for the teacher's guidance along the spiritual path. Although a disciple gives thanks to his or her guru throughout the year, Guru Purnima is a special observance of all gurus past, present and future.

This performance concluded several days in Portland, where Riley gave a series of vocal classes. Tonight, Riley would sing in honor of Pandit Pran Nath, who brought North Indian vocal music to the West. A month earlier, two of Riley's longtime friends and fellow disciples of Pran Nath, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, gave a

similar vocal recital in their New York City loft: an annual memorial concert held every June in honor of Pran Nath, who passed away seven years earlier on June 13, 1996.

Riley resurrected his guru with a performance of evening ragas, his sonorant voice resonating throughout the hall. The meticulous manner in which Riley manifests each raga stems from his training with Pran Nath; at the same time, it is pure Terry Riley. Riley's raga is a natural extension of his definitive minimalist composition *In C*, his extended keyboard improvisations such as *A Rainbow in Curved Air*, or his string quartets such as *Salome Dances for Peace*. On a fundamental level, each of these works reflects the same spirit of creating magic through sound, transporting the listener out of linear time and into a realm of transcendent beauty. In tonight's case, Riley was working with the oldest and most intimate instrument in music: the human voice.

It is no coincidence that Riley and La Monte Young committed 26 years to the study of North Indian vocal music with Pran Nath. The music that became known in the West as minimalism often shared the aims of Indian classical music: a cyclical approach to rhythm and melody; a sense that both performer and audience are involved in a transformative ritual that induces trance; an emphasis on purity of tone and precision of tuning; and an investigation into the nature of sound itself. For Young and Riley, the arrival of Pran Nath was a confirmation of

principles already evident in their work, but Pran Nath also guided them to the next step.

Pandit Pran Nath was born November 3, 1918, in Lahore, India, which is now in Pakistan. Lahore was the hub of musical activity in Punjab at the time, and many Hindustani masters had settled there, including Alla Rakha's guru, Kader Baksh, and the great khyal vocalist Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. As is still the case today in North India, Hindu and Muslim musicians were always seen practicing and performing together around Lahore, sharing compositions and discussing various aspects of music theory.

Pran Nath's parents were wealthy landowners, and although he grew up hearing professional musicians perform in his home, his parents had no intention of allowing their son to become a lowly musician himself. But Pran Nath felt a strong need to begin singing at the age of six, and decided that he would practice music in spite of his family's objections. At the age of thirteen, his mother gave him an ultimatum: respect her wishes and study law; or, if he wanted to study music, leave home immediately with no personal belongings. For Pran Nath, there was no doubt. He left that day with only the clothes on his back, a tinker in search of a teacher. After wandering the streets of Lahore, he heard Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan, master of the Kirana vocal style, singing in a music conference. Pran Nath immediately recognized Khan as

his guru. Abdul Wahid Khan had a vast knowledge of raga, and sang in a deep voice and measured pace that emphasized the meditative alap segment of a raga. Khan normally practiced only two ragas: *Todi* in the morning, and *Darbari* in the evening. He once said that if Raga Todi could last all day and night, he would drop Darbari and only practice Todi, such was his thirst for mining the essence of one raga.

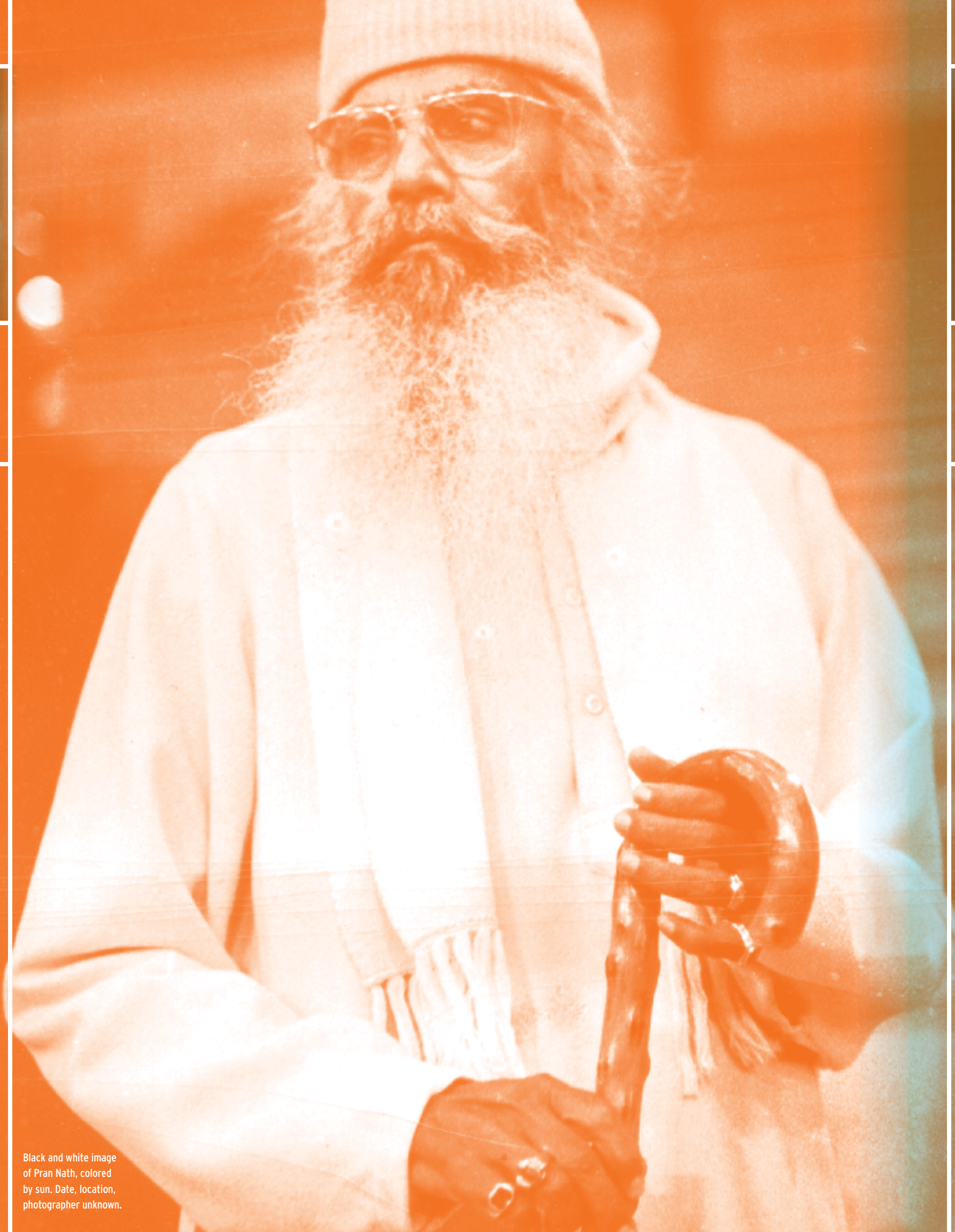
Pran Nath attached himself to Khan as a servant, although it would be several years before he would be accepted as a disciple. Pran Nath chose his teacher well; the Kirana gharana is one of the oldest and most advanced vocal styles in Indian classical music. Among all Indian vocal traditions, the Kirana gharana places unusually strong emphasis on accuracy of pitch, and perfection of intonation, while other gharanas focus more on vocal ornamentation and rhythmic flair. As La Monte Young would often describe, if one were to place all Indian vocal gharanas on a graph between the two extremes of either pitch or rhythm, the Kirana gharana would be furthest on the side that emphasizes perfect pitch.

The Kirana style was founded by a thirteenth-century *dhruvadiya*, or master of *dhruvadiya* music, named Gopal Nayak, who lived in Kirana, a small village located approximately fifty-five miles north of Delhi. Gopal Nayak was a Hindu court musician who worshiped Krishna, but also embraced Islam after encountering the teachings of Sufism. In the process, Nayak



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Black and white image of Pran Nath, colored by sun. Date, location, photographer unknown.

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L to R: Terry Riley (tabla), La Monte Young (tamboura), Pandit Pran Nath (vocal), and Marian Zazeela (tamboura) at Rothko Chapel, Houston, 1981.

IN THE QUIET OF THIS CAVE TEMPLE, AND WHILE WALKING AROUND THE SURROUNDING AREAS, NATHWOULD LIVE AS AN ASCETIC, SINGING ONLY TO GOD.

assimilated the Muslim style of khyal singing, which would give the Kirana gharana a foothold in both the dhrupad and khyal vocal traditions. Pran Nath himself would often go back and forth between the two, singing the fixed lyrics of a dhrupad verse, or the more open and flamboyant style of khyal. And like his teacher Abdul Wahid Khan, Pran Nath almost always spent the most time focusing on the serene alap that opens a raga. Nath would then treat the slow tempo (vilambit) compositions as a continuation of the alap, followed by medium tempo (madhya) singing—which would sometimes conclude the performance, unless he continued onto a fast tempo (drut) composition. Although Pran Nath favored the alap, he could always perform a lightning-fast drut composition while still keeping the pitches and mood of the raga intact, while many other vocalists would abandon the purity of the raga in such segments. For Pran Nath, fast-tempo singing was not merely for entertainment, and he was able to maintain the devotional attitude of a raga even while singing in drut.

AbdulWahid Khan was a spiritual and private man who rarely gave performances except for an audience of holy men and saints, and took few disciples. But Pran Nath gradually became one of the most advanced, by virtue of his unflagging practice and devotion. From the time Pran Nath first met his teacher, until Khan’s passing in 1949, as noted, Nath worked as a servant, performing household duties while waiting patiently for a lesson. Students could never practice in front of the guru, but only on their own time. Rather than sleep, Pran Nath chose to practice outside in the jungle duringmuch of the night. Hewould lie down whenever his guru did, but was always ready to jump at

any moment to serve. After years of demonstrated commitment, Khan finally accepted Nath as a disciple in 1937.

Almost immediately, Khan granted Pran Nath permission to audition for AIR in Delhi, and at eighteen Nath became a renowned vocalist. Quickly gaining respect as a technician who adhered to the strict principles of raga, famous singers like the Ali Brothers and Bhimsen Joshi would come to him for guidance. But Pran Nath was never drawn to commercial success as a musician. After a few years as a radio artist, Nath retreated to Tapkeshwar, a remote temple dedicated to Shiva, with a large, naturally formed Shiva lingum in the cave, situated on a river—perhaps the most famous Shiva cave in India, drawing pilgrims from all over North India. In the quiet of this cave temple, and while walking around the surrounding areas, Nathwould live as an ascetic, singing only to God.

Pran Nath remained Abdul Wahid Khan’s disciple throughout this process, including when Nath was living in seclusion at Tapkeshwar. One day in 1949, Khan came to Pran Nath and told him that he must forsake the contemplative life, get married, raise a family, and spread the teachings of the Kirana gharana to the rest of the world. Perhaps Khan had a sense of his imminent departure, for he died shortly after. Pran Nath could not disobey his late guru’s orders, and followed Khan’s instructions. But after finding a wife and starting a family, he eventually became a nomad, and would never remain settled in one place. Pran Nath knewthat he was charged with the responsibility of one day carrying his guru’s music to the West; he was not destined to be a family man.

Before coming to the West, Pran Nath continued gaining prominence in India. One famous incident occurred in 1953 at the

All India Music Conference in Delhi. Before an audience of five thousand, Nath sang the rainy-season raga Mian Ki Malhar, and as soon as the raga ended, a torrential downpour began, such was the legendary power of Pran Nath’s voice. Between 1960 and 1970, Nath taught Kirana vocal at Delhi University, but his students were usually so awestruck by the power of Nath’s singing, that most of them were unable to imitate what he was doing.

By the late 1960s, many Westerners had already been looking to the East, and India in particular, for musical and spiritual guidance. Terry Riley had seen Ravi Shankar and Alla Rakha in concert, and La Monte Young had been listening to Indian classical music ever since he heard Ali Akbar Khan’s Music of India LP in the late 1950s. In 1967, Young and Marian Zazeela were given a tape of Pran Nath by Shyam Bhatnagar, one of Nath’s students who was now running a yoga ashram just outside New York City in New Jersey. They were stunned at what they heard. Young told others—including Terry Riley, who was living in New York at the time—that Pran Nath’s singing was the most perfectly in tune that Young hadj ever heard. Coming from Young, who had an exceptional ear, this was significant.

In the spring of 1970, Young, Zazeela, and Bhatnagar arranged for Pran Nath’s first visit to the U.S. When Young and Zazeela met Nath upon his arrival in New York, they were drawn to him “like iron filings to a magnet,” as Young describes. They became his disciples, housed him in their downtown loft, and found him a job teaching Indian vocal music at the

New School for Social Research. In a May1970 *Village Voice* article, Young wrote an article about Pran Nath entitled “The Sound Is God,” the English translation of *Nada Brahma*, a phrase that Nath wouldoften quote to describe the divine origin of music.

That same month, Nath went to California to meet with Terry Riley, who had recently returned there with his family. Having already heard Nath’s voice on tape, Riley was deeply affected by their first meeting, and recognized Pran Nath as an old soul. Unable to comprehend what Pran Nath was doing in his singing, Riley was simply mesmerized by the sound of the voice. Nath felt an immediate connection with Riley, and insisted that he become a disciple. Since that time, Riley, Young, and Zazeela became like a family, spending as much time with Pran Nath as their collective lives would allow. As he recalls in our interview, Riley dropped everything in 1970 and went with Nath to India for six months of intensive training. Blessed with a supportive wife and daughter, Ann and Colleen Riley also ventured to India for the second half of this period.

For both Riley and Young, Pran Nath was a living confirmation of much of the work they had already done—between Young’s emphasis on sustained tones and Just Intonation, and Riley’s use of repetition and gradual melodic development. For most of his time in the West, Pran Nath took up residence at Young and Zazeela’s loft, and with Nath now dictating every aspect of their lives, Young and Zazeela became his servants, attending to his needs while waiting for their next lesson—very much the same scenario as when





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NATH WOULD ASK PEOPLE NOT TO APPLAUD BEFORE, DURING, OR EVEN AFTER THE PERFORMANCE, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE MOOD OF THE MUSIC.

Nath performed chores for his own guru, Abdul Wahid Khan. This was also the case whenever Nath stayed with Terry Riley. Young and Riley had become the first established Western musicians to become full-time disciples of an Indian master, living in the guru-shishya tradition.

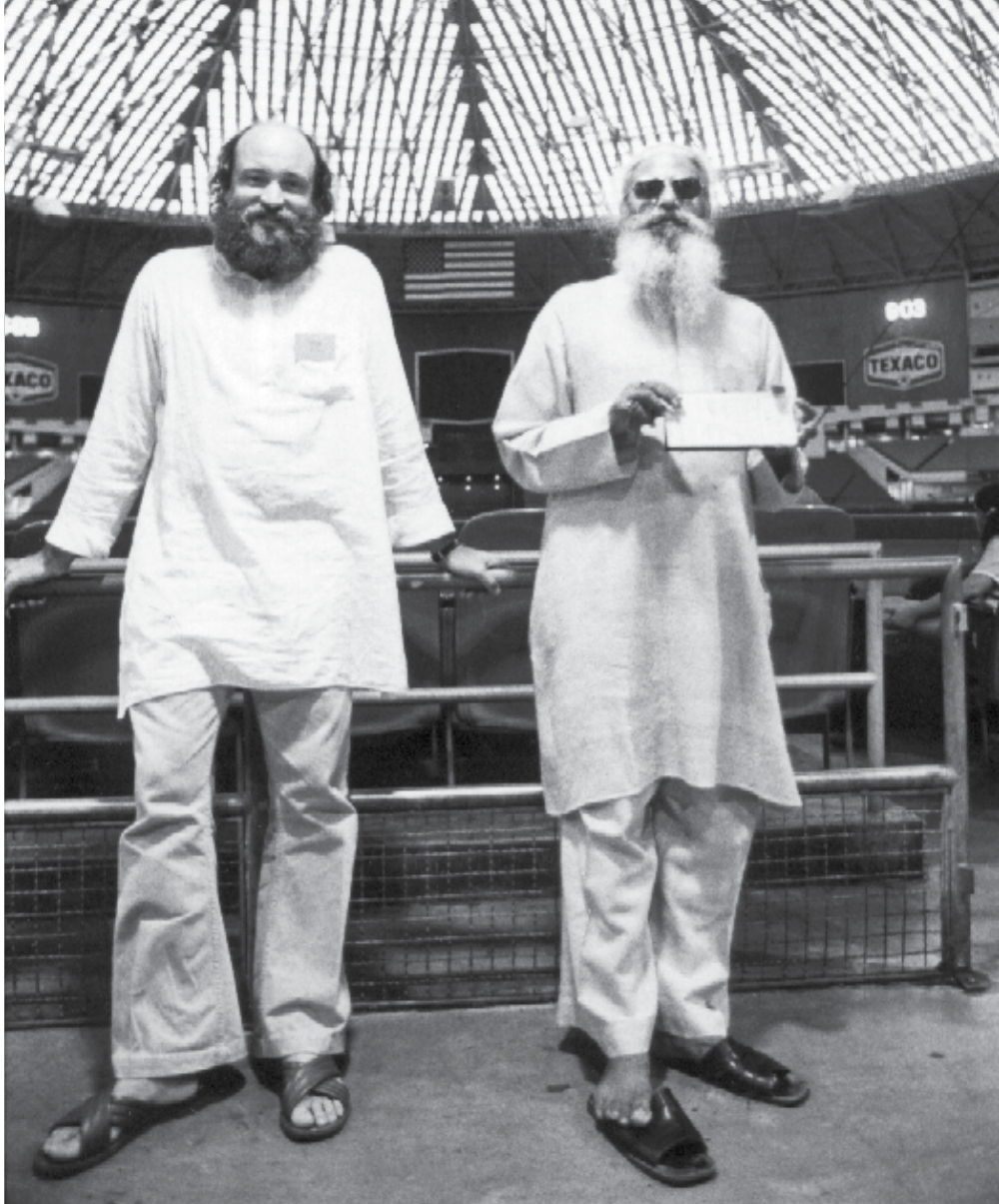
By all accounts, Pran Nath easily inspired this level of devotion, making every student feel as though he or she were the master's favorite. But Nath demanded nothing less than full commitment to a rigorous daily practice regimen that began in the pre-dawn hours of the morning. According to Young and Zazeela, Pran Nath also encouraged his students not to be strict vegetarians, but to eat chicken and fish, in order to sing with the power of Muslim vocalists. Nath believed that Muslims had stronger voices due to their meat-eating diet—although Nath still avoided beef and pork, which are forbidden to Hindus and Muslims respectively.

In 1971, Pran Nath gave the first vocal performance of morning ragas in the United States with a recital at Town Hall in New York City. Like Ravi Shankar, Nath became known for demanding a sense of decorum from the audience. He would ask people not to applaud before, during, or even after the performance, in order to preserve the mood of the music. He would not speak before the music began, not even to announce the name of the raga—partly because he did not know which raga he would sing until he sat down to feel the vibrations of the moment, but also because he did not want to make his choice of raga an intellectual curiosity for the audience. After the concert, people could find out which ragas were sung by asking the ushers, who were given that information at the end of the performance. Furthermore, Nath would remain silent within 24 hours of any performance, as he felt it necessary to focus his energies on the upcoming recital.

Above all else, Pran Nath brought greater recognition to the Kirana style of singing. The Kirana gharana is extremely meticulous in the way that it distinguishes between each raga. The differences even between ragas like Jaunpuri and Darbari, which both have the same scale, would be made exceptionally clear, and performers from the Kirana gharana have always been very careful to preserve a raga's specific nuances. Pran Nath took this concept so seriously that he became notorious for giving just as many morning and afternoon concerts as evening ones—not a common practice among classical musicians of the modern era. But Nath insisted on separating the ragas by their proper performance time. After all, certain ragas were designated as morning or evening ragas for a reason, based on an awareness of nature, and how the changing light throughout the day influences one's mood.

As his reputation spread, Pran Nath attracted a group of Western students, mostly in the jazz and new music community. After Young and Riley, Nath began teaching Jon Hassell, who would learn to apply Indian vocal techniques to the trumpet, discovering ways to make trumpet more mellifluous, with specific manipulations of his lips on the mouthpiece. Having previously worked with Young's Theatre of Eternal Music as well as Riley's 1968 Columbia recording of In C, Hassell would apply Pran Nath's teaching to a style that he would call "Fourth World Music." Hassell would collaborate with the ubiquitous ambient musician, Brian Eno, in this vein. Innovative jazz trumpeter Don Cherry also took vocal lessons with Nath. Other informal students included the jazz saxophonist Lee Konitz, and Jon Gibson, who was now a member of the Philip Glass Ensemble.

With the help of Young and Zazeela, Pran Nath opened the Kirana Center for Indian Classical Music in New York in 1972. In the



same year, he also established a base at Mills College in Oakland, teaching there from 1972 to 1981, with Terry Riley's assistance. Nath also returned to India every winter, primarily to Delhi, often accompanied by Young, Zazeela, and Riley. Like many other gurus, Pran Nath kept his training methods a secret, unavailable for public consumption. Nath believed that his tradition must be revealed only to initiates, not mass produced in books. This is because the training process not only involved the transmission of knowledge, but an intimate and personal bond as well.

Although he only recorded sporadically, Nath released an LP in 1986 for the Gramavision label (the same label who released La Monte Young's *The Well-Tuned Piano* the following year in 1987) entitled *Ragas of Morning and Night*. The album, currently out of print, featured Todi and Darbari, the two ragas practiced incessantly by his guru, Abdul Wahid Khan. In 1993, Pran Nath was commissioned by the Kronos Quartet (who had begun performing works by Terry Riley) to compose a short piece

for voice and string quartet. Nath agreed and recorded "Aba Kee Tak Hamaree (It Is My Turn, O Lord)" with the Kronos Quartet, included as one of the tracks on their *Short Stories* cd for Elektra/Nonesuch Records.

La Monte Young once stated in an interview, "I really consider Pandit Pran Nath the greatest living musician of our time. He has an extraordinary sense of intonation and an ability to differentiate and delineate the subtle intricacies of the structure of raga. Raga is a vast science." Pran Nath certainly influenced Young's *Well-Tuned Piano* in the way the piece gradually develops like the alap that begins a raga. Just as the notes of a raga unfold organically, the massive structure of Young's *Well-Tuned Piano* would slowly evolve out of the very first notes. As Young says in his liner notes to the Gramavision recording of the piece: "Although Pandit Pran Nath taught in the strict traditional way—never offering a comment about how to compose or perform my music—I attribute much of the amazing transformation that took place in *The Well-Tuned Piano* and

Terry Riley (left) and Pandit Pran Nath (right) relaxing at the Houston Astrodome, 1981.



Pandit Pran Nath outside Nizamuddin Aulia's darga, Delhi, 1994. Photo: Rose Okada.

in my ability to perform it, to the all-encompassing scope of the body of knowledge he represented, and the level on which he was imparting it to me."

Young certainly has reasons to feel this way. Each raga, if performed correctly, captures a mood or rasa; and each time it is heard, those same feelings are evoked. Young feels that sound and vibration is the highest form of perception that attunes us to universal structure. Sound registers in the brain in a way that enables us to understand the nature of rhythm and vibration, more clearly than through any other medium. Consequently, the practice of sacred music is Nada Yoga, the Yoga of Sound. When a singer like Pran Nath sings a note that is perfectly in tune, the vibration takes the listener out of their normal physical reality, and puts him or her in direct contact with God. Specific sounds and intervallic relationships achieve specific results, which is not only the science of raga, but of Just Intonation as well. This is what Young absorbed from Pran Nath as he was refining his material for *The Well-Tuned Piano*.

In 1978, Pran Nath suffered a heart attack and soon developed Parkinson's disease, after which time his health gradually began to decline. He helped inaugurate Young and Zazeela's newest installation of Dream House in November 1993 with a series of concerts in the New York loft, and gave his final performance there on May 17, 1996. He then went to Berkeley, taught his final lessons to Terry Riley and other West Coast students, and died there of heart failure and Parkinson's disease on June 13. Young and Zazeela were both devastated, and could not sing or hear Nath's music for

a year. Then Young and Zazeela began giving two annual concerts dedicated to Pran Nath at Dream House, marking his birth and death each November and June, a practice they have continued to the present.

Pran Nath named Young and Zazeela the executors of his estate and archive, and as with their own projects, they have exercised full control over every aspect of what is released. Young and Zazeela established the MELA Foundation as an official entity through which they could operate in the music industry, and MELA has been painstakingly slow in releasing Pran Nath material. At the time of this writing, there is only a two-cd set available entitled *Midnight*, featuring two different performances of the midnight raga, Malkauns: one recorded August 4, 1971, in San Francisco, with Terry Riley on tabla and Ann Riley providing drone on tamboura; the other recorded August 21, 1976, in New York, with Young and Zazeela both on tamboura.

MELA has also released a short documentary on Pran Nath, directed in 1986 by William Farley, called *In Between the Notes*. This lovely film runs under one hour, features Pran Nath in performance, and captures him teaching a group of students, visiting his old cave haunt at Tapkeshwar, and walking along the banks of the Yamuna River in Delhi, where he would often practice singing to the sound of birds. Along with Nath's own words, which are incredibly insightful, there are interviews with Riley, Young, and Zazeela, as well as New York Times music critic Robert Palmer. Narayana Menon, director of the Sangeet Natak Academy (a music, dance, and drama academy in Delhi), notes that Pran Nath was one of

the rare artists who perfected his craft without regard for money. In this regard, Menon compares Nath to Johann Sebastian Bach and South Indian dancer Bala Saraswati.

There are many highlights in the film, including a segment where Pran Nath himself is speaking into the camera, defining ragas as "living souls" that follow the time cycle of day and night. Nath then goes on to explain how the essence of any raga is found "in between the notes," in the same way as a person breathing. He compares the human body to the notes used in the scale of the raga, while the raga itself is akin to the breath that moves through the body, giving the raga its crucial microtonal inflections. Another memorable sequence is when Pran Nath returns to the cave at Tapkeshwar with Terry Riley and sitarist Krishna Bhatt. There, they meet with Nath's old friend, a Swami referred to in the film as Bengali Baba. While sitting in Baba's room with the other musicians, Pran Nath asserts (in his thick Indian accent, which requires subtitles) that musicians must seek out spiritual guidance, or their music will have no genuine effect. To underscore the point that music is a devotional practice, Nath then quotes a passage from the Bhagavad Gita where Lord Krishna tells Arjuna: "One who sings my name fervently . . . completely possesses me."

Pran Nath then points outside a window to a running stream where he used to sit and practice his singing, saying that in those days the sound of the stream was his only tamboura. In another scene, Pran Nath stands at the bank of the Yamuna River in Delhi, where he also used to practice, and points out the various birds in the vicinity. Without looking up, Nath instantly recognizes the sound of a nightingale or crow, explaining how they change their tone in accordance with the seasons, and how this helped him with his own practice, in terms of learning how to differentiate clearly the ragas

by their mood, season, and time of day.

It is significant that Pran Nath spent a great deal of time practicing near bodies of water. Nath refers to the outdoors as "the Lord's house, nobody's house." Perhaps the reason for this is simply that Nath's spirit was too restless to remain indoors. It is also clear that Pran Nath enjoyed singing to the sounds of nature: the rippling of a stream, the chirping of birds. Perhaps this was yet another confirmation for La Monte Young, who spent his childhood captivated by the hum of telephone poles, the wind blowing through the cracks of his log cabin, the incessant chirping of crickets, and other "drones" found in the real world.

What becomes most evident about Pran Nath in the film is his profound sense of inner peace. As he walks along the river or through a cave, his steps are slow and deliberate, his posture upright and his eyes down, as he moves with the poise and grace of a holy man. He breathes into each step, just as he breathes into each note. The name Pran Nath, after all, means "master of breath"; as Terry Riley has pointed out, it is ironic that Nath was given this name at birth. Perhaps his parents, even while dreading their son's pursuit of music, knew on a subconscious level that their child was destined to become a great yogi.

People tell stories of when Pran Nath was living in New York City with La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, and how Nath could occasionally be seen walking down Fifth Avenue in the heart of the shopping district: a bearded sage walking with absolute presence of mind while chaos swirled around him. One could sense that Nath was completely grounded and sure of himself in every situation. He knew who he was and where he was going. And whenever he opened his mouth, whether to sing or speak, his voice came from a deep place where there is no uncertainty.

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Gracefully balancing 60s/70s British Isles acid balladry and Middle Eastern traditional music with heady, jazz-cultural communal jams, Nick Castro's latest features a truly stellar cast of musicians whose combined resumes include folk and avant-rock ensembles Current 93, In Gowan Ring, Danno Suzuki's Network and Cul de Sac.

Paik
Monster Of The Absolute LP/CD
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Paik funnel their supersonic cyclones into a tightly focused box of thunder with *Monster of the Absolute*, their greatest balancing act of melody and dissonance to date. No other band mixes together such otherwise polar extremes with such grace and sense of purpose.

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BY GABE SORIA

(continued on page 61)

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at that party—they're gloomy gusses and sad-lifed maidens who'd rather be in the woods than the castle, anyway. I'm speaking metaphorically of course. D: [continuing, rhapsodic] Or they they may be playing in that town called 'Machine' in Jarmusch's *Dead Man*. Which features Robert Mitchum in his last performance. [opens eyes, smiles] One of this nation's finest weedsmokers.

JOSEPHINE FOSTER

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (Locust Music)
C: Okay, this is even sadder.
D: An American woman singing all 18th or 19th century German folk songs for children, in German, is the personification of melancholy. It might not be the right music to listen to when you're deciding whether to live or die, deep at night in those grey hours.
C: As Marvin would say, That's not livin'! But it sure is singing. Absolutely beautiful.

SCOTT WALKER

The Drift (AAD/Beggars)
D: Excellent art-rock that doesn't rock from a living legend, but I'm afraid this music encourages morbid tendencies. This is immense, this record. But what is it? The mood somehow implies a seriousness that might not have to do with worldly events. It is religious? spiritual? There is an urgency! Dreadstorms coming. I think of Japanese ghost music...
C: We're running out of time, D. I think this is one we'll have to come back to next time.
D: At least we let the people know that the mighty Scott Walker has returned.

FRED NEIL

Fred Neil (Water)
D: The great freckled Greenwich Village folk soul who wrote "Everybody's Talkin'," which Nilsson had a top ten hit with in 1969 off the *Midnight Cowboy* soundtrack. C: [puts on "That's The Bag I'm In"] Check out the morning he's having: "toast was cold and the orange juice was hot." There's so much soul in his singing, this is an album for the dinosaurs.
D: Not the dinosaurs man, the dolphins!
C: It's true, these are songs for the dolphins. Seriously.

BELONG

October Language (CarPark)
C: I've been let down by NASA, what with the militarization of space and all, but this gives me some insight as to what it

feels like to be launched into space. Beautifully fluttered and static-drenched, like those between-song passages of *Loveless*-era My Bloody Valentine. D: [blissed out]
C: [blissed out]

BORIS

Pink (Southern Lord)
C: Okay. One more beer, we'll split it. This is the new Boris, the co-ed heavy guitar sludge march trio from Japan who in the last year have dropped the overt Melvins moves and become a band of varied powers—
D: [Stands on couch with bewildered-in-happy-way face] Majestic dry ice fog riffage that can't be turned any louder!
C: A landmark record, a virtual catalog of extreme rock guitar strategy—Godflesh/Jesu ethereal rings and reversed dread, overdriven High Rise-style rhythms, post-Sonic Youth squall, Kim Thayil-style tone, Grand Funk/Montrose laying-it-out-there vocals—all on the first two songs. I don't know if any of that makes sense but I'm trying to give people a general idea.
D: Unbelievable, neighborhood-destroying pummel drumming here [on title track].
C: [listening to "Woman on the Screen"] Wow. Reminds me of really, really good Nirvana-style punk/grunge, only somehow much huger.
D: [listening to "Blackout"] A mighty behemoth from the Far East is throwing mountains!
C: I think we are all in agreeance. Rock album of the year so far, easy.
D: [Dancing to "Electric"] You can lose fingers to this album.

HOWLIN RAIN

Howlin Rain (Birdman)
C: One last supergroup: Howlin Rain, which is Moloney from Sunburned Hand of the Man on drums and Ethan Miller from Comets on Fire on vocals and guitar, working out their common interest in that seemingly lost-forever continent of great 1968-1973 American rock 'n' roll, when the hippies went back to the land and kept on rocking until the Man pulled all but a few back into his lame grip. Allmann Brothers, Creedence, Grateful Dead, Neil Young...
D: I sense benificent Jerry Garcia vibes coming from smiling visage of Ethan.
C: He is singing at the edge of his capability like Jerry—it's a high, roasted voice. But, curcially, not shrieking. He sings like he's losing his throat. One of those guys whose vocals get quieter the louder he sings. He's got the goner's high moan.
D: Like that guy in Canned Heat. [listening to "Calling Lightning With a Scythe"] Or Faces-time Rod Stewart. [laughs] I call this album *Another Side of Ethan Miller, Workingman Rock Star*.

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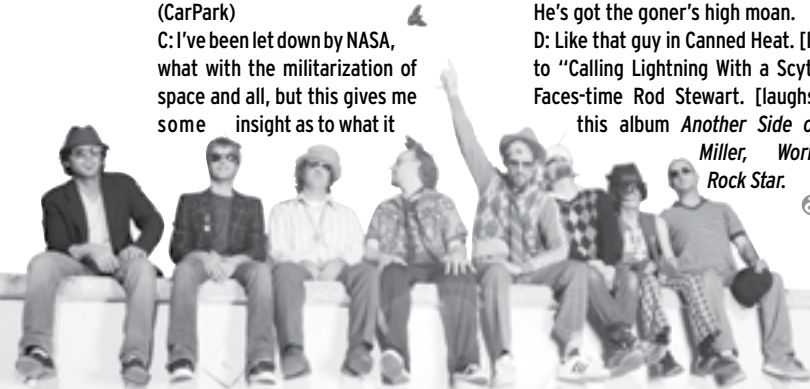
(continued from page 45)
you can also tell that they make some folks delightfully nervous. This can probably be best attributed to the bands in-between, resting music. When there's a lull in their routine and things calm down, the 9WMB's glockenspiel players start tapping out the theme from the slasher film "Halloween," with the tubas coming in every now and then to deliver an ominous "bruummmmmm." It's the film score equivalent of the fabled brown sound—you can tell by the looks on people's faces that they recognize the minor key tune, and they like it, but don't like it at the same time. It's a brilliant moment, and I want to buy whoever thought of it a beer or ten.

The Dead Zone
The night of Lundi Gras finds the wife and I and our friends Judson and Courtney taking a shortcut on a drive downtown to hit a Quintron/Peaches show. The shortcut takes us through the area of town known and Mid-City, where Courtney lived previous to Katrina. Her new home features a handful of possessions salvaged from her house and cleaned of mold, but she's basically begun anew. But driving through her old neighborhood... yikes. Once you get a few blocks off St. Charles, heading away from the river, a frightening change takes over the streets. They're empty. They're dark. Everything looks haunted and miserable. A few FEMA trailers are parked here and there, and on occasion someone seems to have managed to get a porch light working, but on the whole, it feels as if we've driven directly in a George Romero zombie flick. Any moment now I expect to see a shambling corpse slouch into the street, attempting to suck the brains out of our car's passengers. No such thing happens, of course, but I am glad when we eventually make a right turn onto relatively populated, lighted Esplanade. The fact that a few moments earlier I was half-joking about wishing I was armed with a shotgun kinda makes me want to cry. I've NEVER wanted a gun in New Orleans, not even in my worse moments.

Mardi Gras Day (and on into the night)
Mardi Gras morning rolls around and all seems to be aback to normal in the city, at least for a few hours. Working on a few hours of sleep, the wife and I roll out of bed and into our costumes (I'm going as a jerk dressed in a jumpsuit and furry cap; the wife's going the classy route by masquerading as a magical French schoolgirl). Walking over to St. Charles, we begin to see a parade of friends walk by; everybody seems to be well on their way to drunk before noon, but nobody's got a mean buzz on. It's all hugs, everywhere. Families lining the filthy parade route in their chairs and ladders look bleary-

(continued from page 46)
For me, this means writing comics or books or screenplays that explore what I believe to be the issues underlying our propensity for violence, our belief in money, our surrender of agency, our fear of the "other." It means engaging with people as honestly and openly and availably as possible, without spreading myself so thin that I've got nothing of value for anyone.
Sure, I'll take a stand and even take to the streets when I get the sense that a mass action is called for. But I won't fool myself into believing it is having an effect on anyone but the participants, themselves. Or that signing an email petition against the next cruel Bush atrocity is a more effective strategy for eradicating the damage than doing something kind, meaningful, or difficult for another person in the world where I live. Actions can trickle up much more effectively than rhetoric trickles down, because actions have reality on their side.
And to the extent this means shutting off the war—whichever war—happens to be playing on the cable news, I will keep Grant's words close at hand: it is their war.

eyed and happy. When Rex starts to roll, you see people catching beads... and handing them to little old ladies and kids next to them. Everybody's saying, "Hey, darlin'," and "Excuse me," and you'd be hard-pressed to spot your usual line of sweaty guys being led plastic-cuffed into a paddywagon (though I'm sure it's happening somewhere—you can't buck tradition in one year). The hours melt away—at one point, the wife and I are eating hamburgers with friends, the next, we're at our home base eating red beans and rice cooked with a nice hamhock, the next, we're being dropped off downtown. But by the time the Morning 40 Federation hits the stage at Checkpoint Charlie's for their annual Mardi Gras night show, as the festival comes to its natural inevitable end, the feeling in the air is undeniably powerful, completely ecstatic. You can feel the desperate urge in the club to let loose, to raise one's arms high above and scream. And as the Federation lurches into their first amplified ode to boozing and 9th Ward living, everybody in the room does exactly that. I'm grinning from ear to ear—it's the feedback and the beer, most deinfinitely—but it's also the hope and love I'm seeing right now, that I've seen all weekend. Sure, folks are cynical and tired, but they still believe, much more so than I think anybody else in any city would or could, for they know that's there's an ineffable something to New Orleans, something that just can't and won't quit, ever.



Future Pigeon



WEIRD SHIT'S STILL GOING DOWN

NOTES FROM MARDI GRAS IN NEW ORLEANS, 2006

BY GABE SORIA

I've been in love with New Orleans since the day in May, 1993 when I first set foot on its soil. Since then, I've been a resident of the city three times and have gone back over and over when I wasn't. Mardi Gras, for all its faults and gross public image, is important to New Orleans residents and expatriates alike, so when the chance came to visit my city for the first time after Katrina during Carnival, I jumped at it, but not without some second-guessing trepidation. What follows are rough impressions of my experience being back in town from Saturday, February 25th through Mardi Gras to March 1st, Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent...



Our tipsy author, right, with fellow revelers at the Rex Parade, Mardi Gras morning.

ONCE YOU GET A FEW BLOCKS OFF ST. CHARLES, AWAY FROM THE RIVER, A FRIGHTENING CHANGE TAKES OVER THE STREETS.

Touching Down
Disembarking from the plane and already the Twilight Zone schisms from reality are apparent. This scene happens in the first couple minutes of the episode, the part right before the credits when the Rod Serling voice-over comes in and lets the viewing audience know that some crazy shit is about to go down. What's Louis Armstrong International without its perpetually open souvenir stands and ersatz French Quarter bars? Too much like the Salt Lake City airport, that's what. Outgoing passengers ain't got nowhere to buy their last minute cans of Tony Chachere's seasoning, authentic cookbooks or Hurricane mix. Incoming passengers don't have anything, except for the baggage claim, and that is hardly a picnic. Everybody seems a bit haunted, a bit guilty.

Nothing makes you realize how much you've given up until someone's taken away the lights, and the "Arriving Flights" underpass of Louis Armstrong International is a third world kick in the nuts: the absence of ambient light is palpable, and the illumination provided by taxis, shuttles and pick-up cars feels like interrogation by headlight. At the same time, though, it's kinda eerily beautiful, as though everything is powered by steam and gaslight. We hear later that they're still working to restore normal power. The airport of a major American city still doesn't have full power six months after a disaster? What the fuck is going on here, I ask myself, resigning myself to joining the chorus of people asking that same question.

T-Shirt Slogans

The town is aswarm with bootleg

political shirts, jockeying for space in Decatur Street tourists shops with your typical novelty T-shirts about states of tequila intoxication. Most of these shirts feature embattled mayor Ray Nagin in Photoshopped Willy Wonka drag, making some sort of sport about his now infamous Martin Luther King Day "Chocolate City" speech, possibly the biggest effect a George Clinton song's ever had on the political scene. React how you want to the speech—reading a transcript in retrospect, it's obvious to this writer at least that Mr. Nagin's frustration with his black contemporaries is left him feeling a bit loose at the mouth, but I ain't mad at him—you can't help but realize that there's a little bit of smug racism at the core of the these shirt's makers, that they finally feel justified at putting the screws to a black mayor who, admittedly, said some dumb-ass shit. But then I realize an important fact: I don't think I'd ever really want to hang out with someone who wears their politics, left or right or straight up centrist, on their literal shirt-sleeve. I mean, I'm all for band t-shirt propaganda, but this? Nah. One T-shirt maker has gone the extra satire mile, though: for sale at the Circle Bar are "Ernie K-Doe for Mayor" tees,

featuring the smiling face of the late and lamented Emperor of the Universe. Bumper stickers can be had, too. One drunken night, I find myself fervently wishing that K-Doe wins in a write in. In the storied history of corrupt Louisiana politics, the election of a deceased and much loved R&B singer has got to be an improvement.

Chased on a Bike

Weird shit's still going down, though. On a perfectly fine afternoon, the wife and I mount bikes to ride down to a parade to meet a friend. Normally, yours truly is a bit more savvy about the safe routes to travel, but the hurricane-depleted lack of population has thrown me for a loop. Why *not* take a jaunt down a clear street a block closer to the river? The answer becomes clear when we make a left on Josephine Street towards St. Charles. A group of kids—12 to 14, black—are hanging out in front of a corner grocery/liquor store and begin shouting out warnings about how "Y'all don't know where you ridin'", etc., etc., and one kid's bold enough to do a little mock run after the wife, who's trailing behind on a too-small borrowed bike. The kid's pursuit is half-assed, and he stops almost as soon as

he starts, but it's a neon-lights reminder that New Orleans is still a fucked-up place, race-wise.

In fact, this little incident is an anomaly. While statistics may not prove me right, the general impression one gets during Mardi Gras is of détente, peace. Sure, fratboys might get beaten down by cops along Bourbon Street after one Huge-Ass beer too many, but for the rank and file of the city, a "we're all in this together and ain't it fine" feeling pervades, usually. If you say "Happy Mardi Gras," to anybody, they respond in kind, and mean it. But this little incident... well, they're kids, so it doesn't really mean much. It means that they're acting like they think they're supposed to act; it means that they actually think that their corner store is something to be protected; it means that they've learned that being young and black and aggressive can freak the fuck out of people going about their own business. Still, it's days before I can stop picturing kicking the kid's head in if he tried to touch the wife, and my subsequent murder at the hands of his numerous cronies. Yikes.

The 9th Ward Marching Band

Not that it needed saving by anybody, but the wife's and my Mardi Gras is definitely given a soul-rousing boost by seeing the Mr. Qunitron-led 9th Ward Marching Band parade with the Krewe of Proteus on Lundi Gras night. For the uninitiated, Qunitron and his wife Ms. Pussycat were and remain the owners and operators of the Spellcaster Lodge, a house/venue located on St. Claude Avenue in the 9th Ward. They're both musicians, as well as puppeteers. Long time fixtures of the weird underground of New Orleans, they're more like good spirit elementals rather than impeccably dressed scenesters, which they are as well. The 9th Ward Marching Band started as a loose-knit, almost renegade marching assemblage, but over the years they've gotten their weird act together, and while sharp and somewhat professional, they still make the squares nervous. While watching them march in their smart red and white outfits, playing "Rock me Like a Hurricane," I notice that the crowd lining the parade route is going BANANAS for them. Everybody can feel that this ain't no sarcastic, ironic hipster bullshit—it's true American weirdness and beauty at its finest. But

(continued on page 61)

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BULL TONGUE

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EXPLORE THE VOIDS OF ALL KNOWN UNDERGROUNDS.

Richard Youngs opened the new year with a sweet drop on the Jagjaguwar label, *The Naïve Shaman*. It's hard to tell where Youngs is going to go with each release. The dude travails in more numerous far-out tundras than mere mortals can only hope to experientially glimpse in a single lifetime. And lucky for us, he docu-records these tripped excursions. This is one of his more excellent forays—with percolating electronic bass guitar and frazzed guitar spuzz creating beds for lyrics of gentle fire thought.

And Jagjaguwar has other new goodnesses in LP form. **Pink Mountaintops'** *Axis of Evil* is another nice Funhouse/Barrett blend from Canada with a dollop of Bob Dylan blues overlays. **Parts & Labor's** *Stay Afraid* only has its CD version on Jagjaguwar, the LP is actually on Cardboard Records. But we're sure it sounds best on vinyl, so hear its beautifully spazzed prog-pummel in that format and you'll be happiest. It has been said that these Chicagoites sound best when they're instrumental, but the yammer here is really quite pleasing. Lastly, there's an **Oneida/Plastic Crimewave** split pairing Brooklyn muzz-harmonics with the metallic kraut shimmy of Chicago to surprisingly wonderful effect. On a related note, Oneida's Kid Millions guests on the new LP by **Ex Models**. Dunno if that's the reason that *Chrome Panthers* (Troubleman Unlimited) is such a lovely chalice of prog-vaunch aggression, but it's a possibility. Still, Troubleman's best recent Brooklyn-related release must remain **Mouthus'** *Slow Globes* LP. Spaced as they sound on this platter, the duo always stuns.

From a kozmik holler betwixt Massachusetts and Vermont comes the second release by **The Bummer Road**, *Suncatcher Mountain* (Child of Microtones). It's in all ways a patient ('though not without underlying stovetop rage) unfolding wind of charm-soul music. Each of these CDs is handmade with paper finger love in an edition of 99. Gorgeous. Paper finger love is just what brims from the new issue of *Sleep Tight*, as well. The content is mostly single page illustrations this time, and the visuals have really jumped up a notch on the intensity scale. They're much more disturbed and quite bodacious—just the kind of thing to read when you're deep inside your personal holler.

It's been too long since we've scratched our heads to an **Idea Fire Company** record and out of nowhere lands this hot rock—*Stranded* (Swill Radio). We were sick excited, thinking maestro Scott Foust was treating us to a new-mind rendition of Roxy Music's uber-classic. And this time surrounding hisself not only with his lovely betrothed Karla Borecky, but the twin dyna-

beautyism of Feathers' Meara O'Reilly and The Believers' Jessi Leigh Swenson. Indeed it is obvious that Roxy Music circa '71 is a primo informant for Foust aesthetically, but what IFC toss off here is from a whole other inner glam strata. Boss minimalism and true star experimentalism (O'Reilly plays pencil on one track, yeah!) make this one of the coolest blasts from Swill Radio's "The Anti Naturals" community ever.

Taurpis Tula is David Keenan (guitar) and Heather Leigh Murray (vocals, pedal steel)—proprietors of UK distribution wonderland Volcanic Tongue—abetted by drummer Alex Nielson (who's played with Jandek, Directing Hand). They've released a couple of fine dark drift noise docs, most notably the LP *Sparrows* (Eclipse) from a year or two back. Since Nielsen joined them on skins they've really let their brain-muse glowingly expand and it's all there in a fine smooch of Scottish spotted dick and Texas BBQ on the newly minted *I Can't be Satisfied / Kingdoms Come to Birth* CDR (American Tapes). Angel vision vox celebrate rising noise cloud guitar/amp and free fire drumming action to blast forth a wholly glorious spontaneity. Ruling, and the CDR is one of two, the other being label boss John Olson's ongoing zap journey sound world endubbed **Spykes**. Can't miss.

There's a good, funny interview with Olson (by Since 1972 label honcho, Drew Demeter) in the debut issue of a great new 'zine called **Ong Ong**. It also features a CD of Yann Novak field recordings, and words on Jennifer Gentle, Sublime Frequencies, a useful (if small) guide to European beers and a lovely silkscreened cover. Very eye worthy. It's available from dragon's eye.

A couple of nice spurts from two distinctive Carsons. First Carson being **Carson Cistulli** who has published a staple-bound book called *Assorted Fictions* (The Chuckwagon), which is an amusing collection of paragraphs steeped in sardonic philosophies—gentle, absurd and always with a slight bite. To wit: "On May

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3rd 1993, Pierre Boulez asked the question, ‘Does the Zeitgeist even exist?’ You’d call it poetic justice, I guess, if the Zeitgeist said the same about Pierre Boulez. Unfortunately, this won’t ever happen: the Zeitgeist is an abstract concept and possesses no faculty of speech.”

The other Carson is Carson Arnold out of Vermont with his musical foray, **Starbird**, releasing a debut CDR on his boss-looking Frost label. Starbird is Carson and his wife Becky and they’ve recorded a beautiful personalized soundtrack to the 1922 Robert Flaherty film *Nanook of the North*. Great, yet modest, swooshes of thought-tone composition. A second Frost release called *chorals* has just landed and it’s Carson doing “all voice,” though you’d be hard-pressed sometimes guessing some of these tracks are voice as source as they are waaaaay out there in the processed sound world. But it has an organic maple-like blend keeping it close and real to the earth.

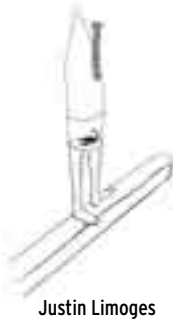
Believe it or not, New Jersey is spearheading some new excitement on the noise band scene, particularly with the dark and dogjaw blasting skuzzicity of acts like **2673** and **Ladderwoe**. We’re just guessing Ladderwoe is part of this scene as they seem to be connected via Larry Hernandez of Scientific Explanation Of Despair and Dave Sutton of Current Amnesia, both of whom we think are Jersey freaks. Whatever. Who cares where they’re from? They’re all seemingly pals and have a certain united aesthetic towards grey noise felch which’s pretty damn jake in its wretch. Ladderwoe ,in particular, have knocked our asses to the ice with their latest killer, *Rowboat Virgins on the Water* (Bone Tooth Horn). What sounds like overgrown kittens mewling through rusted vocorders in a bag of Don Dietrich’s chomped-to-shit reeds develops into tight and tense improvisations that really have that freaked edge so often missing from newcomer noise mung. Exciting shit on a label that seems bent on exposing more along these lines. They already have a handful of cool jammers from Asps, Human Adult Band, Penis In Vagina, Gerritt, the aforementioned 2673 and a sizzler from L.A.’s busy busy busy The Cherry Point. Totally recommended.

Bennifer Editions is a label outta Canada run by the fine fuck-noise gang who roam the Canuck basement

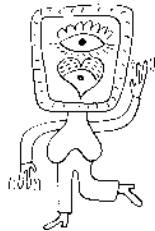
world as Gastric Female Reflex. Some nice CDR puh has been squirted by such legendary groovesters as id m theftable, Brian Ruryk and Witcyst, but the label’s sweaty hands-down mama-mia disk is the beautifully OUT THERE jammer by **Tovah Olson**. This is Tovah making moves both classic Dead Machines style and altogether beyond what we’ve come to expect—sheer heart grenade and supremely killer. Another sweet meat Bennifer Edition expulsion is the 7” by **Pan Dolphinic Dawn** which is pretty much just James Ferraro, he being of groove n’ ‘grease spatial harmony heavies, Skaters. Rich, textured and lo fidelity lovely. **Gastric Female Reflex** themselves have unleashed their first vinyl LP, *Lovers in the Midst of Eating Fries* (Bennifer Editions/Absurd/Gold Soundz/Humbug), and it’s a beeyootiful earful of sput n’ blonk not too unlike Prick Decay’s *Very Good* LP from moons back. A-side starts with a pencil point jabbed in your vestibular cochlear nerve and the B-side ends with a gorgeous femme hum with magnetic tape wave wash.

Third issue of new oversized art rag called **ANP Quarterly** is out and it’s pretty badass. It’s a freebie, edited by skate/zonk artist Ed Templeton, super Dogg and Pony visionary Brendon Fowler and Aaron Rose who runs the rogue Alleged Gallery. Alleged was the place, no matter where it was, that we first encountered such art babes as Mark Gonzales and Chris Johanson. Johanson and his wife, fellow artist Jo Jackson, grace this issue’s cover with their dog Raisin. Inside is full-on interviews with them by Rose, a piece on collecting by Templeton, a review of book stores that rule, and an interview with ex-Scissor Girl Azita, which alone should make you hunt this sucker down. It’s filled with nice layouts of new art and photo miasma. The previous issue with Raymond Pettibon on the cover was as choice. In the same vein are a couple more great homemade books by **Matt Chambers**, combining text, squibbly line drawings (often based on photos) and beautifully surrealist weevil to massive effect. These ones are called *I Taught Myself to Survive* and *Warm Pessimism* (Hello Trudi), but there are certainly more by now. And they surely RULE!

Another journal of a slightly different stripe is the first issue of L.A.-based **The Colonial**. Beneath its Richard Prince photo cover are thinking man rock n roll pieces by Alan Licht, Ian Svenonius, Oliver Hall and a killer LAFMS memoir by founder Rick Potts. Plus Ira Cohen, Greg Turkington and other lunatic punkx. Distributed by Forced Exposure. Meanwhile, Everett Rand’s great ‘zine, **Mineshaft**, continues to evolve from its lit roots into something that encompasses more and more of the underground comix tradition. The newest issue has stuff by Crumb, Frank Stack (aka Foolbert Sturgeon), Justin Green Bill Griffith, Kim Deitch, Bruce Duncan and more. And it’s still full of great writing as



Justin Limoges



HEMLOCK TAVERN April/May/June live: Skygreen Leopards, Old Time Relijun, Billy Childish, Magic Carpathians, Birds of Avalon, Lyme Regis, Club Chuckles w/Moshe Kasher & Sean Kelly, Sunburned Hand of the Man, OCS, Meric Long, Saviours, Excepter, Octis, Fuckwolf, Little Claw, Country Teasers, 16 Bitch Pile Up, Legendary Star-dust Cowboy, Howlin’ Rain, Citay, Oxbow, Mammatus, plus plenty of rockcation mayhem (just like Jarod here from Times New Viking!), gratuitious scene prosumerism, and our loss-leading \$1 bags of hot nuts.

June 10th: Arthur co-presents the Imaginational Anthem Tour w/Sharron Kraus, James Blackshaw, & Sean Smith.



well (Codrescu, Winans, Lifshin, etc.), so don’t delay.

We squibbled voraciously about that LP by Michigan femme no wave threat **Little Claw** in our 2005 end-of-year top 80. It’s on this label outta Ypsilanti called Ypsilanti Records. The label’s run by this dude in some band called Saturday Looks Good To Me and said dude is on the fuggin’ ball. We’re spinning the latest Ypsi LP *Tender Swarm by Genders* and it is a real squito bite skratcher. All kindsa zonked noise moves and tiny trash rock explosions make this one a gotta get.

Ass-blast garage pus of this go-round’s the third LP by Atlanta’s **Black Lips**. *Let It Bloom* (In the Red) is a fully realized slide between glottal garage punk maximalism (sucking root juice from three entire decades of munge) and cracked post-core corrosion. Pretty amazing stuff, even incorporating the kinda proto-beat action we haven’t heard often since the demise of Hangman Recs.

Craziest record from New Hampshire award goes to the Nauscopy label for their Zaat “**Hilary Gets the Martian Brainfreeze**”/”**Mystical Footprints of Asia**” split LP. Zaat is a Canadian band whose sound goes from doofus dunder-core into ‘70s Fall-type skreeking and onward—very messed-up power slub of a type not easily pigeonholed. And the flip is a sampler of classique Asian 78 tracks, in a sorta lo-fi Sublime Frequencies style. Anyone’s guess what was in the bong when this idea was hashed out. But it must’ve been killer, even if the Neos reference in the title seems a little gratuitous. More easily comprehended as a concept is the split LP shared by **Whysp** and **The Story**, *The Dawn Is Crowned* (Good Village). Whysp’s Santa Cruz sitar-dipped hippie-volk traditionalism is as great as ever. These guys absolutely nail the smoke, if you know what we mean. The Story are a UK duo led by the legendary Martin Welham (ex-Forest) and their coo is almost as drool-worthy as Whysp’s. Third fetching split LP is divided between **Skarererkaudio** and **Jerusalem & the Starbaskets** (Apop). Of the two we prefer the messed-up scum-rock-as-bumblebee sound of Skak to the screechier racket of Jerusalem, but there

are many moments inside the Jerusalem universe that also fetch hard. So what does that make us?

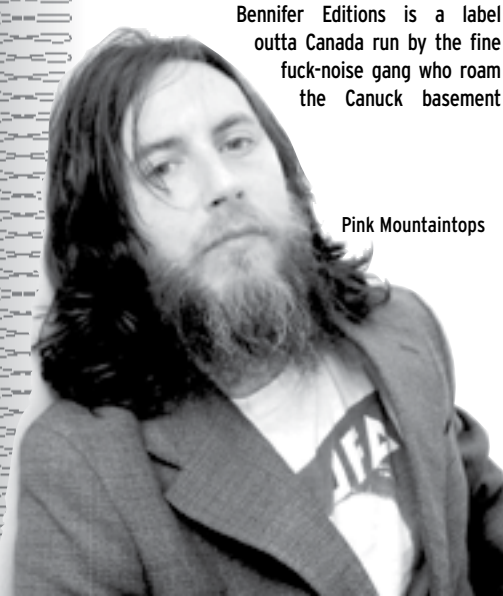
First time we saw **Noise Nomads** we thought it was gonna be some skull-sucking pit viper outfit. We was wrong, it was just one dude with amps tied to his body and a microphone plugged into it all with him chasing people around and yowling from the hefty sonic overload. Fucking cool. You can bet we’re jizzed (totally) to find this new Noise Nomads 7” on Bonescraper Recordings supposedly recorded next to a chicken coop last summer. No doubt, chickens rule.

Every once in a while a new journal of ripping writing, be it poetry, prose and/or all manners thereof drops into the box and shit sure has dropped with the brando newo first edition of **The Nightjar Review**. John Fell Ryan, current Excepter soundlord, ex-No Neck has some extra-strange ALL CAPS word-absurd play going on in here. Also a grippable reprint of Angus MacLise’s “Year” piece which, y’know, never really dates. Nightjar contributor **Shannon Ketch**, meanwhile, has a great new booklet of poetry, *City Sonnets*. They aren’t all sonnets, but they’re mostly pretty city, so that’s cool. Lovely surrealist grit images drifting past your brainstem like so much falling ash. Nightjar editor **Jeremy Rendina**, has his first solo poem collection out, too. It’s called *Lower Waters* (c/o Nightjar) and pieces are very lovely spatial recreations of time-sliced memories. A very fine production.

Another ripe rip is issue #18 of **Carousel**, a lit mag that comes out of the University of Guelph in Ontario. It looks slick as hell and the format—one page of writing/one page of art (more or less) is really easy to consume. The quality of effort is extremely high throughout and it includes such writers as Bill Bissett, plus such artsos as Devendra Banhart. Extremely check-worthy. The craziest music ‘zine we’ve perused in a while has to be the debut issue of **Quantum Noise**. Editor J. Fortunato Perez comes up with the damndest theories about music, and he’s happy to share them with all. Combine that with berserk naïf graphics, excellent sput on the contempo cassette underground, plus a full telling of his EMP presentation on Gnostic music whatsis (heavily focused on No Neck, Sunburned, etc.) and you are having cake and eating it as well.

Lambsbread have broken out running with a stinking stew of CDRs and cassettes all of which kumpletely kick butt. Sort of a more roughed up Mouthus but with less regard for smothering sonik dynamism. Lambsbread are into action, free and furiously gnarled. The drums keep these guys from being just another skronk and spew brigade, another similar trait re: Mouthus. Though that’s not to disparage

from “**Mystical Footprints of Asia**”



Pink Moutaintops



Knowledge Of Good Bought Dear By Knowing Ill

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bedsit poets
REDSIT POETS the summer that changed

NYC by way of UK duo Edward Rogers and Amanda Thorpe got their group name from Colin Blunstone and it is exactly what you'd expect - a sweet melancholy mix of Luna, Fairport Convention, Gainsbourg & Françoise Hardy (in English) that is literate and low key, a gentle breeze of summer. Here, Now, Forever. "disarmingly infectious" MOJO

JOHNNY DOWD
cruel words

Johnny Dowd is a startling figure in the film Searching For The Wrong Zyned Jesus. On this new CD, he's stripped down his sound to a dark and very swampy funk with Sally Timms, Kim Sherwood Cass, and Jan Langford adding their voices to the Greek chorus of Johnny's tragic mythology of death, guns, betrayal and suicide. Includes a genuinely threatening version of "Johnny B. Goode" - you'll never listen to it the same way again. 4 Stars! MOJO

CINDERPOP
A KISS MY ASS

Orchestral 60s flavoured pop like The Zombies meet The Left Banke with XTC, New Pornographers, etc. chiming melodic guitars. With Mark Jowett (ex-Mojo) & Erin Jane (Salsamba). Part of a very vibrant Vancouver scene that includes Destroyer & New Pornographers. Cinderpop may very well be the next band to emerge internationally.

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anyone else involved as all players are on the frikkin' money letting total blowout aesthetics merge with compositional design moves. Their label is called Maim & Disfigure and they've released a buttload of death-puh in the space of two months that has us all slamming teeth first into whatever blurry reality that happens to be in our way. We recommend the *Purple Wings* CDR, *Horizontal Gash* (3 for Shep) CDR and *Reaching for the Hammer* CDR. No site but you can check in with Volcanic Tongue in the UK or try Eclipse or Fusetron in the USA. Motherfuckers are go.

Having been familiar with neither **Carlos Batts'** erotic photo books, nor with his film, *American Gothic*, we were not fully prepared for what a synapse-burner his book, *American Gothic* (Scapegoat Publishing), is. It contains drawings, collages and other stuff in a style that is creepy, sexy and unambiguously violent. Visually some of it is similar to Romare Bearden, but that's only the iceberg's tip. There's also a vibe very much in common with the Davids (Lynch and Cronenberg) at their most fetishistic, and that's a fine vibe indeed. Equally tooth-chipping is *Me a Mound* by **Trenton Doyle Hancock**, published by the always-exciting Picturebox Inc. people. Hancock's book tells the story of a Darger-like conflict between cultures, in a style that combines a vast array of post-ratty-art influences. Some of the pages are huge and bold and colorful, others look like they were etched onto dead skin with feather quills. But it all holds together like a pocketful of magnets and is really a wonderfully insane project.

Back in the early days of hardcore, it was Washington D.C. and Michigan that reigned supreme in the form; but there was an even more intense concurrent hardcore scene happening in Finland. Seeing as how the new day noise scene of Michigan is the holy shit, it is all of a sudden fascinating to see new Finnish power electronic harsh noise groups springing up. And, like their hardcore predecessors, they up the ante on horror and basic blasting concepts. **S.M.S.R.** are one such example and on their recent cassette release, *Just Like Me* (Black Arts Productions), they leave your mind in scorched to sonoric dirt. Pure mid to high-whoosh frequency skinslicers that leave quite a taste sensation with titles like "Creation Through Depression" and "Take Your Drugs" with a front cover pic of a bondage practitioner either ready to be tied or just untied. We smell trouble.

And while we're so far up north, we might as well skip over to Russia and dig the harshness being sploored up there. Lotsa typical mortuary and death camp skum imagery in this hell-dark noise scene.

Some of it's great and disturbing such as **Tchernoblyad** with their cassette, or CDR—your choice—release on the Soviet skuzz label Operator Produktion. It's called *Love*. Along with fellow Russki rotten sound sickos **Narrowmind** and **Sudanstrain** (who have a split tape on Res Adversae), this is a welcome new community of insane and crepted out core.

Finland and Russia are emitting bowel crushing stench and we certainly do appreciate it, but right now, for our money, it's the Swedish mung that's really loosing our load. And most of it is from the newly minted Segerhuvu label with nasty nuggets of pervertoid pleasure by the likes of **Blod** (particularly their *Romantic* and *Deranged 7"*). A more vintage industrial violence can be sniffed on the *Blue Light & Blue Eyes 7"* by **Sharon's Last Part**, which we can totally recommend from the grave no prob. This label is ruling, no doubt; they have eveh released one of the most kill crazy Finnish records ever. By **Mnem**, it's called *Golyma*—maniacal metal crunching, tape head incineration. They've also done an LP by something called **Edwige**, entitled *The Inconsolable Widow Thanks All Those Who Consoled Her*. This one is a noise-eros collaboration by Mania (from Texas), The Rita (from Canada) and Sewer Election (from Sweden) in tribute to Euro thrill/porn queen Edwige Fenech. Heavy breath redblood rumble and screech will have you shaving your vagina in salutation.

The **Rita** have been really ramping up their activity this last year with surprisingly hurtful CDRs and cassettes. They're all worth your time if you enjoy blood dripping from your dick. But once you settle into The Rita's howling horror you may find yourself falling in love all over again. Maybe it's the uglier side of our maleness that draws us. The Rita's new split box set with **Mania** is on the Dada Drumming label. It's called *Stockings From the Rear* and you get a 7" and a cassette emblazoned with the words "True Ass Worship." Inside the box are b+w photos of female buttocks being sniffed and licked by female tongue. It's a pretty gritty all-anal manifesto to the ultra-crush bunghole action created by these two ass-obsessed maestros.

Ashtray Navigations is the musical nom de plume of UK'r Phil Todd, who ran an amazing tape label called *Betley Welcomes Careful Drivers* all through the '90s. Along with EF Tapes out of Minneapolis and Union Pole tapes out of Portland, BWCD was an aesthetic precedent to the contemporary cassette scene. Ashtray Navigations released consistently groovy expulsions but then the *Betley Welcomes...* empire ceased. It seemed Phil was taking a vacation, but in fact he's been throwing out juicy jammers

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left and right with various cohorts and on various labels. What's been killing us are these recent cassette releases on a label that has no name. So far it seems they're only available from UK distro Volcanic Tongue. There've been three so far, *Deader Pedal Jugend Reflecting North*, *Deader Neptune Thunder Creating East* and *Deader Reptile Machine Crashlanding South*. Each one is a better than the last and they're all completely wonderful. Great swirling psyched drone moves and gorgeously blissed zonk-fidelity freak folk. He issues each one in a paltry edition of 30, but some still seem available. This shit is heavy and massively recommended.

The Tapeworm label out of Kalamazoo, MI zapped out a couple of tapes last year by something called **Evenings** and the one we heard was a mother. High wire harshoid electric snap core and damn fine, so it's with nervous fingers that we clutch two new releases on this label—*Lowlife* by **Septic Sores** and *Feasts* by **Bottom Dweller**. Both of these are hair in the mud Midwest skrape n sludge. Ugly beautiful shit. Worth a sniff.

On the absolute flipside is the reward one gets from spending time with **Paul Metzger's Four Improvisations on Modified Banjo and Guitar** 2LP set (Metzger). Like the earlier work of this Twin City instrumentalist, the music here is brilliant long-form acoustic exploration of the cosmos' outer tears, free from cliché and dullness. Without falling into any very specific “known camp” (although some of the banjo work does recall Billy Faier's *Raga* LP on Takoma), Metzger really ranges all over the aether, producing one of the most satisfying string whomp of this or any season.

Providence, RI has some heavy history with Load Records, Prurient and Hospital Productions, Paper Radio, Lightning Bolt, Fort Thunder et al. Some new blood is drizzling through the streets by the name of Twonicorn, a label with a spartan design aesthetic and a greasy ear for excellent drone perversion. Like Load, this label doesn't deal with blatant localism as they got the hot links with the midwest and beyond. “Basement New Age Crawl” is their motto and it is manifest certainly through the work of **Tombi** whose *Cavern Tapes Vol.1 + 2* cassettes are stretched

and torn drone-flowers. Also represented is the *Untitled* cassette by the great **Glass Organ** which is some sinister project of Minneapolis' most destroyed son Justin Meyers. Hot cream.

Hot cream. Hot cream for all.

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:
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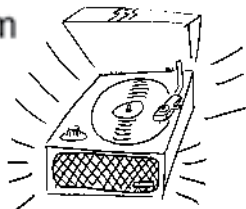
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songs and other things + around - CDs

Two brand-new albums from Television's Tom Verlaine- songs is a rock album, his first in over a decade. around is an instrumental album, a follow-up to the recently re-issued Warm and Cool. Verlaine and his band will tour North America in June.

Eleventh Dream Day

Zeroes and Ones - CD

Twenty-three years after the band formed, Rick Rizzo, Janet Bean (Freakwater), Doug Mc Combs (Tortoise), and MarkGreenberg (Archer Prewitt band) are back with their finest album yet, Zeroes and Ones.

Extra Golden

Ok-Oyot System - CD/LP

An International collaboration between: Otieno Jagwasi and Onyango Wuod Omari of the Nairobi, Kenya- based benga band Orchestra Extra Solar Africa, and American guitarists Ian Eagleson (Golden) and Alex Minoff (Weird War).

thrilljockey.com

C and D

TWO FELLAS REASON TOGETHER ABOUT SOME NEW RECORDS.

Note: *C & D* is a dialogue presented as a series of record reviews, and intended to be read straight through...

D: We have some severe time and space restrictions today because there's 25 records to examine and I only brought four beers.

C: [disbelieving] I told you all week.

D: Yes, well. We'll have to be efficient and precise, like the German defense.

C: Always with the soccer metaphors when he's supposed to bring the beer.

D: [looks at stack of CDs] Hmm, I like this pitch. [smiles broadly, uncaps a Foster's] Come on man! It's time for kickoff.

MARVIN GAYE

The Real Thing: In Performance, 1964-1981 DVD (Hip-O/Motown/etc)

D: Marvin Gaye, the sweetpeacelovevibe-tenormaster of all time.

C: Sometimes things really are essential, and this nine-dollar DVD is one of those times. Or things. Anyways, the reason I've been watching this all week long is pretty obvious. There's nobody like Marvin, no one even close; it's a blessing just to watch him lip synch.

D: [grabs DVD case] Give me that.

Especially when it's Marvin duetting with Tammi Terrell at something called “Swinging Sounds of Expo 67,” singing “Ain't No Mountain High Enough” in a futuristic phone booth under a plastic dome with a people mover going by in the background.

C: Look at those Dentyne smiles. It's like a commercial for some future utopia where they are the fertility king and queen.

D: [thoughtfully] A world where you're not afraid to have a baby

C: Hey, you'll like this: the a capella option lets you hear Marvin singing in the shower.

D: No it doesn't.

C: Okay it's actually just isolated studio tracks. Beautiful. He really can make you

swoon with just a voice and a snapped finger. That's all he needed.

D: Very efficient.

C: “War is not the answer/for only love can conquer hate... we've go to find a way/to get some understanding here today”—man, if you sing that today, you're called a master of the obvious, and yet maybe it's only a lovesinger who can bring the super-commentary that lasts. He reminds us there's better things to do with our time.

D: [musing] Lovers and poets make the best peace advocates.

C: This is footage from the film *Save the Children*—

D: —which should be released on DVD immediately—

C: —which includes live renditions of “What's Going On/What's Happening Brother” from a 1972 concert where they did the whole album, and you get Marvin at the piano and the legendary James Jamerson on bass guitar.

D: [sipping beer] Unbelievable. Total butterland.

C: Total ethnographic film of Black America in the early '70s: broken windowed skylines and gang graffiti, soul food joints and black pride bookstores, men in dashikis, women in flares and kids in corduroys with spaghetti on their faces, street basketball and barbecue, balloons and checker pants and sweaters.

D: Excellent fashion!
C: He sings like his voice is a horn—and his voice actually has the grain of one. So amazing. Plus there's multiple appearances on the Dinah Shore show—[notices puzzled D]—that was an afternoon TV show for bored housewives back in the '70s.

D: That was the time before they started making all the women work all the time too, in addition to the men. What happened?

C: [ignoring] He talks about *What's Goin On*: “I don't recall much about making it. I feel it was very personal, very divine. I don't hardly remember writing the songs, it was like I was in some sort of other dimension when we did it, so I know it was a very spiritual.” We could spend weeks talking about everything on here: the polyester jumpsuit future-Chic-soul-P-funk—

D: Somewhere the Juan Maclean is crying.

C: —about getting down on the moon with floor fog that is the promotional video for “A Funky Space Reincarnation”—
“COME ON BABY,



let's go peace loving and check out this new smoke/Naw this thing I got, it ain't classified as dope/Smoke I got from Venus/ Have had it all week, it's getting old/come on and try this new thing with me baby...." D: This song is my new national anthem. C: And your new wardrobe, if the world is lucky.

GNARLS BARKLEY

St. Elsewhere
(Downtown)

C: This is a collab concept duo album by two geniuses-in-progress: Dangermouse, the guy who did the Beatles/Jay-Z album-length bootleg mashup, and Cee-Lo, the short guy from Goodie Mob with the voice and the lyrics and the concepts. Goodie Mob, those guys were part of that Georgia crew in the '90s, all of them interesting—Goodie and the Dungeon Family and Organized Noize and Outkast and Witchdoctor and Cool Breeze—

D: Who had a dream, he was in a place called Butter.

C: Here's something bonehad obvious: this song "Crazy" is the song of the year—very apropos for these times, in so many ways that [looking at D opening his second Foster's] we have no time to count. Three seconds and you're hooked, three minutes and you're done and ready to begin again. [looking at promotional photo] These guys are total half-bus refugees.

D: The revenge of the nerds is neverending. [listening to the song's music] Somewhere, the Juan Maclean are crying another tear, alongside N.E.R.D. [repeating lyrics] "I remember when, I remember, I remember when I lost my mind/There was something so pleasant about that place/Even your emotions had an echo, and so much space/And when you're out there .without care, yeah I was out of touch/but it wasn't because I didn't know enough/I just knew too much/Does that make me crazy?" Whew. I've been to that place—I think I lost my mind there too once.

C: [laughs] Once?

D: [glares] SILENCE in the lower ranks!

Gnarls Barkley

THE RACONTUERS

Broken Boy Soldiers
(V2)

D: Yes meets the Eagles?

C: That's a bit harsh. I know you're a stict Megitarian, but come on: you've always liked both Jack White and Brendan Benson. There's some good cuts on here, especially the Deep Purplish stutter funk on this one ["Store Bought Bones"].

D: [sagely] Sometimes when you split the difference, the difference gets split.

C: ...

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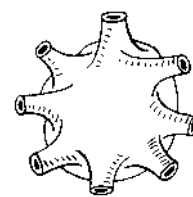


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EAGLES OF DEATH METAL
Death by Sexy
(Downtown)
C: Another supergroup, featuring Jesse Hughes and his boomerang of love, plus Josh Homme.
D: Unlike the Raconteurs, this group knows what it's doing.
C: And what it is doing is very simple: retarded Rolling Stones riffs that you can go-go to.
D: This music encourages sexual tendencies and is proud of it.

THE FIERY FURNACES
Bitter Tea
(Fat Possum)
C: Our favorite geniuses. Some may say this is the record they'll be remembered by, but I say this is just them scraping the gravy off the ground. The endless Disneyland Electrical Parade keyboard squiggery and backmasked vocals and whatnot sure sounds to me this is a band trying to stay ahead in the weirdness sweepstakes.
D: [smugly] It's not nearly as weird as Gnarlis Barkley, and not nearly as good. And I bet you they know it.
C: Don't they know competition is so 20th century? The key is to listen to the album in reverse order, last track first. That way you'll listen to all of it, and you'll be sure to hear the best song, "Whistle Rhapsody?", which is also one of the saddest songs I've ever heard.

THE CUTS
(Birdman)
C: Quality high-fiber retro guitar-and-organ pop and ballads from Bay Area sweethearts.
D: That the Raconteurs would, uh... raconteur for.
C: Dude, you gotta stop ranking on the Raconteurs. You need another beer. [hands fresh Fosters to D with ridiculously gay(e) smile] As Marvin would say, 'Here, my dear.'

FUTURE PIGEON
(RecordCollection)
C: Very nicely done modern retrodub from the *Arthur* office favorites, with guestwork from Ranking Joe, Mikey Dread, Ras Congo, the Scientist. You can't argue with a band that uses a six-foot-long papier mache electric doobie—with smoke machine and lights—as its onstage prop.

ESPERES
//
(Drag City)
C: Okay, this is sadder.
D: I like these Espers. I sense naked hippies dancing around the maypole. After dark. Drinking the stuff from the milk of the frogs... [closes eyes]
C: It does have a certain Sandy Denny/ Pentangle quality. I bet they get tagged with the New Wave of Ren Faire thing, but I bet they wouldn't be caught dead

AGGROLITES
(Hellcat/Epitaph)
C: Very nicely done retro rocksteady, with

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RAGE, RAGE AGAINST THE STUFFING OF THE COUCH

TWO POETS DELVE DEEP INTO WORLDS OF WORK AND NON-WORK

Alex Mitchell
Life Is A Phantom K-Mart Horse Starting Up In The Middle Of The Night
(Yahara Design Press, Madison, WI)

John Tottenham
The Inertia Variations
(Kerosene Bomb Publishing, Los Angeles)

If their styles couldn't be more contrary, they do have one thing in common: poets Alex Mitchell (neckburned nailgun grindhouse tripper) and John Tottenham (couch-crowned prince of lethargy) have both created, by force of will or resigned declension, their own poetic form.

Mitchell is a rock'n'roll-addicted sweetly emotional fellow traveler. His poems are as much about himself as the characters they co-star: a mushroom-juicing buddy from back in Pompano Beach with a suicidal brother; a friendly transvestite crackwhore outside a Hollywood 7-11. He is both of the barroom and anti-boardroom, his impulses leading us through corners of associative memory emotional and imagistic. There is a lot of power in his poems—they inspire you to write, my highest praise. In a poem called "if penguins could talk" Mitchell is a bruiser with a bruised heart ("once a speedfreak, always a speedfreak," he writes) trying to quit Starbuck's. After going without coffee for two weeks ("although I was feeling better physically I was jonesing for a blast") he caves: "I greedily slammed down some of / evil black poison." And then he's off on a tale that goes for five pages.

Tottenham's eight-line withdrawals from ambition barely give the reader time to get out of bed, and he wouldn't have it any other way. A resigned indentation is what he wishes to leave (if he aspires to anything at all). In poems like "Time Moves, But Not I" and "I'm Not Tired," he discharges himself of will, while subtly sublimating his own state of stagnation. He declares he lacks the energy required to laugh, and one chuckles. The brief nature of his poems allow him to maintain the guise that he isn't doing shit—but when you read them together, you feel the import of the block he pushes up against the eternal pyramid of poetic ambition, and one realizes: all progress is incremental...to the point of imperceptibility..despite any onanistic self-recrimination.

at that party—they're gloomy gusses and sad-lifed maidens who'd rather be in the woods than the castle, anyway. I'm speaking metaphorically of course. D: [continuing, rhapsodic] Or they they may be playing in that town called 'Machine' in Jarmusch's *Dead Man*. Which features Robert Mitchum in his last performance. [opens eyes, smiles] One of this nation's finest weedsmokers.

JOSEPHINE FOSTER
A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (Locust Music)
C: Okay, this is even sadder. D: An American woman singing all 18th or 19th century German folk songs for children, in German, is the personification of melancholy. It might not be the right music to listen to when you're deciding whether to live or die, deep at night in those grey hours. C: As Marvin would say, That's not livin'! But it sure is singing. Absolutely beautiful.

SCOTT WALKER
The Drift (AAD/Beggars)
D: Excellent art-rock that doesn't rock from a living legend, but I'm afraid this music encourages morbid tendencies. This is immense, this record. But what is it? The mood somehow implies a seriousness that might not have to do with worldly events. It is religious? spiritual? There is an urgency! Dreadstorms coming. I think of Japanese ghost music... C: We're running out of time, D. I think this is one we'll have to come back to next time. D: At least we let the people know that the mighty Scott Walker has returned.

FRED NEIL
Fred Neil (Water)
D: The great freckled Greenwich Village folk soul who wrote "Everybody's Talkin'," which Nilsson had a top ten hit with in 1969 off the *Midnight Cowboy* soundtrack. C: [puts on "That's The Bag I'm In"] Check out the morning he's having: "toast was cold and the orange juice was hot." There's so much soul in his singing, this is an album for the dinosaurs. D: Not the dinosaurs man, the dolphins! C: It's true, these are songs for the dolphins. Seriously.

BELONG
October Language (CarPark)
C: I've been let down by NASA, what with the militarization of space and all, but this gives me some insight as to what it

feels like to be launched into space. Beautifully fluttered and static-drenched, like those between-song passages of *Loveless*-era My Bloody Valentine. D: [blissed out] C: [blissed out]

BORIS
Pink (Southern Lord)
C: Okay. One more beer, we'll split it. This is the new Boris, the co-ed heavy guitar sludge march trio from Japan who in the last year have dropped the overt Melvins moves and become a band of varied powers— D: [Stands on couch with bewildered-in-happy-way face] Majestic dry ice fog riffage that can't be turned any louder! C: A landmark record, a virtual catalog of extreme rock guitar strategy—Godflesh/Jesu ethereal rings and reversed dread, overdriven High Rise-style rhythms, post-Sonic Youth squall, Kim Thayil-style tone, Grand Funk/Montrose laying-it-out-there vocals—all on the first two songs. I don't know if any of that makes sense but I'm trying to give people a general idea. D: Unbelievable, neighborhood-destroying pummel drumming here [on title track]. C: [listening to "Woman on the Screen"] Wow. Reminds me of really, really good Nirvana-style punk/grunge, only somehow much huger. D: [listening to "Blackout"] A mighty behemoth from the Far East is throwing mountains! C: I think we are all in agreeance. Rock album of the year so far, easy. D: [Dancing to "Electric"] You can lose fingers to this album.

HOWLIN RAIN
Howlin Rain (Birdman)
C: One last supergroup: Howlin Rain, which is Moloney from Sunburned Hand of the Man on drums and Ethan Miller from Comets on Fire on vocals and guitar, working out their common interest in that seemingly lost-forever continent of great 1968-1973 American rock 'n' roll, when the hippies went back to the land and kept on rocking until the Man pulled all but a few back into his lame grip. Allmann Brothers, Creedence, Grateful Dead, Neil Young... D: I sense benificent Jerry Garcia vibes coming from smiling visage of Ethan. C: He is singing at the edge of his capability like Jerry—it's a high, roasted voice. But, curcially, not shrieking. He sings like he's losing his throat. One of those guys whose vocals get quieter the louder he sings. He's got the goner's high moan. D: Like that guy in Canned Heat. [listening to "Calling Lightning With a Scythe"] Or Faces-time Rod Stewart. [laughs] I call this album *Another Side of Ethan Miller, Workingman Rock Star*.

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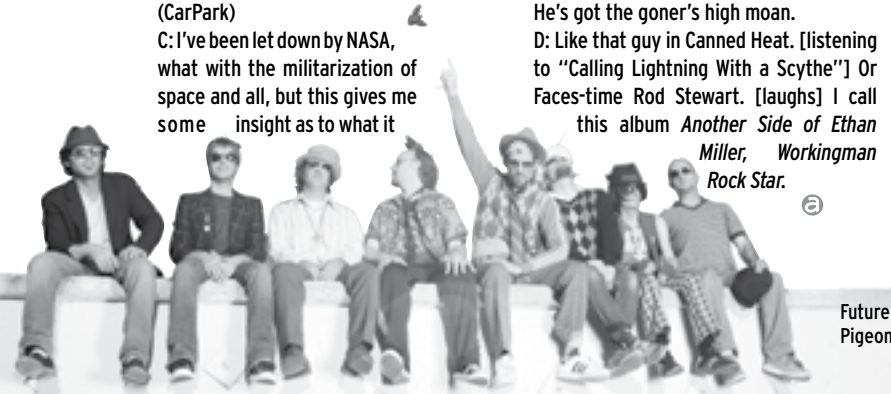
(continued from page 45)
you can also tell that they make some folks delightfully nervous. This can probably be best attributed to the bands in-between, resting music. When there's a lull in their routine and things calm down, the 9WMB's glockenspiel players start tapping out the theme from the slasher film "Halloween," with the tubas coming in every now and then to deliver an ominous "bruummmmmm." It's the film score equivalent of the fabled brown sound—you can tell by the looks on people's faces that they recognize the minor key tune, and they like it, but don't like it at the same time. It's a brilliant moment, and I want to buy whoever thought of it a beer or ten.

The Dead Zone
The night of Lundi Gras finds the wife and I and our friends Judson and Courtney taking a shortcut on a drive downtown to hit a Quintron/Peaches show. The shortcut takes us through the area of town known and Mid-City, where Courtney lived previous to Katrina. Her new home features a handful of possessions salvaged from her house and cleaned of mold, but she's basically begun anew. But driving through her old neighborhood... yikes. Once you get a few blocks off St. Charles, heading away from the river, a frightening change takes over the streets. They're empty. They're dark. Everything looks haunted and miserable. A few FEMA trailers are parked here and there, and on occasion someone seems to have managed to get a porch light working, but on the whole, it feels as if we've driven directly in a George Romero zombie flick. Any moment now I expect to see a shambling corpse slouch into the street, attempting to suck the brains out of our car's passengers. No such thing happens, of course, but I am glad when we eventually make a right turn onto relatively populated, lighted Esplanade. The fact that a few moments earlier I was half-joking about wishing I was armed with a shotgun kinda makes me want to cry. I've NEVER wanted a gun in New Orleans, not even in my worse moments.

Mardi Gras Day (and on into the night)
Mardi Gras morning rolls around and all seems to be aback to normal in the city, at least for a few hours. Working on a few hours of sleep, the wife and I roll out of bed and into our costumes (I'm going as a jerk dressed in a jumpsuit and furry cap; the wife's going the classy route by masquerading as a magical French schoolgirl). Walking over to St. Charles, we begin to see a parade of friends walk by; everybody seems to be well on their way to drunk before noon, but nobody's got a mean buzz on. It's all hugs, everywhere. Families lining the filthy parade route in their chairs and ladders look bleary-

(continued from page 46)
For me, this means writing comics or books or screenplays that explore what I believe to be the issues underlying our propensity for violence, our belief in money, our surrender of agency, our fear of the "other." It means engaging with people as honestly and openly and availably as possible, without spreading myself so thin that I've got nothing of value for anyone. Sure, I'll take a stand and even take to the streets when I get the sense that a mass action is called for. But I won't fool myself into believing it is having an effect on anyone but the participants, themselves. Or that signing an email petition against the next cruel Bush atrocity is a more effective strategy for eradicating the damage than doing something kind, meaningful, or difficult for another person in the world where I live. Actions can trickle up much more effectively than rhetoric trickles down, because actions have reality on their side. And to the extent this means shutting off the war—whichever war—happens to be playing on the cable news, I will keep Grant's words close at hand: it is their war.

eyed and happy. When Rex starts to roll, you see people catching beads... and handing them to little old ladies and kids next to them. Everybody's saying, "Hey, darlin'," and "Excuse me," and you'd be hard-pressed to spot your usual line of sweaty guys being led plastic-cuffed into a paddywagon (though I'm sure it's happening somewhere—you can't buck tradition in one year). The hours melt away—at one point, the wife and I are eating hamburgers with friends, the next, we're at our home base eating red beans and rice cooked with a nice hamhock, the next, we're being dropped off downtown. But by the time the Morning 40 Federation hits the stage at Checkpoint Charlie's for their annual Mardi Gras night show, as the festival comes to its natural inevitable end, the feeling in the air is undeniably powerful, completely ecstatic. You can feel the desperate urge in the club to let loose, to raise one's arms high above and scream. And as the Federation lurches into their first amplified ode to boozing and 9th Ward living, everybody in the room does exactly that. I'm grinning from ear to ear—it's the feedback and the beer, most deinfinitely—but it's also the hope and love I'm seeing right now, that I've seen all weekend. Sure, folks are cynical and tired, but they still believe, much more so than I think anybody else in any city would or could, for they know that's there's an ineffable something to New Orleans, something that just can't and won't quit, ever.





WE HAD A BALL

SCENES FROM ARTHURBALL LOS ANGELES - FEB 24-25, 2006

Smilin' **Joanna Newsom** (above) debuted the entirety of her forthcoming album—five songs, just under an hour—to a stunned audience... **The 5:15ers**—a long-rumored duo project by **Joshua Homme** (bottom left) and **Chris Goss**—gave their first-ever live performance, featuring reworked versions of songs from their respective oeuvres, some new stuff and a gorgeous cover of Mark Lanegan's "One Hundred Days." ... Beefheart Magic Band alumnus **Moris Tepp** (bottom right), battling a cold, thundered through a

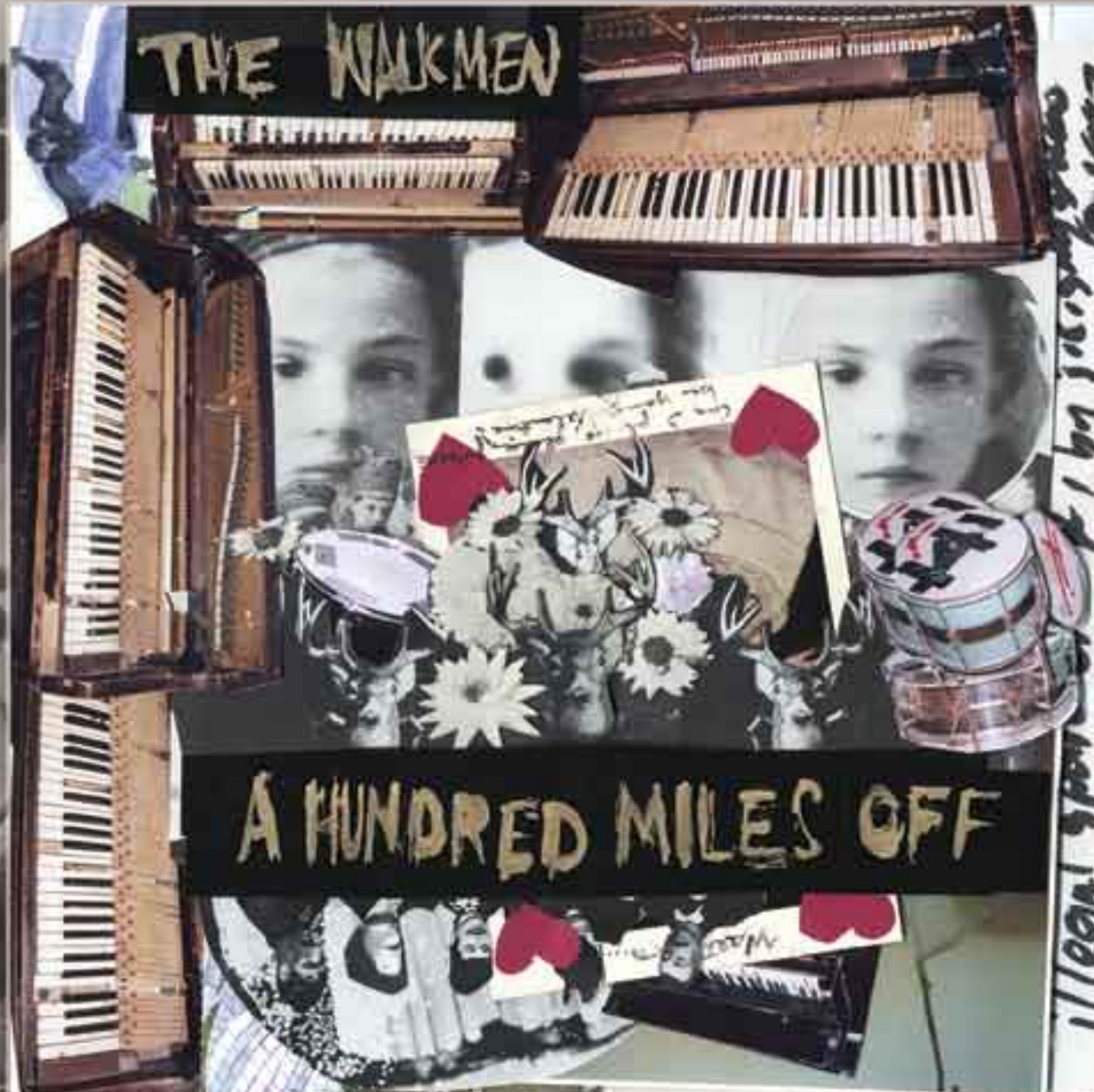
bracing set with his current trio, featuring bassist **Polly Harvey** and drummer Scott Mathers... Other guests included the Sublime Frequencies filmmaking crew, Grant Morrison, White Rainbow, Pearls and Brass, Erik Davis, Lavender Diamond (with a string quartet!), B+, Colleen, Brightblack Morning Light, Plastic Crimewave, Colleen, Mi & L'au, Unknown Instructors (Dan McGuire, Joe Baiza, Mike Watt, George Hurley with special guest Jack Brewer), Tarantula A.D., Om, Citay, Growing, Afrobeat Down, The Mars Society, Lewis

MacAdams & Kristine McKenna, Born Heller (featuring Josephine Foster), Indian Jewelry, Town & Country (and their Dream Machine!), Winter Flowers, Entrance, Leg & Pants Dans Theeatre, Society of Rockets, Earthless, the Matrushka garment makers and the DJs of Dub Lab... Many more pictures from the happy event are available at arthurmag.com, as well as Ron Rege Jr.'s official ArthurBall poster artwork... Best overheard line: "I need a plus-one for my grandpa."



THE WALKMEN

A Hundred Miles Off



NEW ALBUM IN STORES MAY 23, 2006

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