

MEDIA CULTURE BRAINWASH FOR NOW PEOPLE

GOING BOING

\$3.95 number 13

Dark Wave:
Goth Sharpens its
Fangs

Booby Prize!
Anka's Date Dishes
Out the Details

Adam Yauch:
Beasty Boy by Day,
Buddhist by Night

Human Branding

Ben is Dead, But
Darby Ain't



Why You Must Subscribe

There once was a green turtle named Theodore. Theodore lived on the bank of a pond next to a meadow full of beautiful wildflowers. Many other animals lived there, too: water skippers, minnows, frogs, and fat white grubs that would one day metamorphose into unsightly horseflies. The weather was always pleasant by the pond, and life for the community of animals was perfect, except for one thing: Theodore snapped at every animal that came within biting range.

You see, Theodore was a snapping turtle, and he couldn't stop using his powerful beak to attack other animals. The command to snap was hardwired into the little reptile's brain. It wasn't as though he minded, though. Theodore enjoyed biting other animals. It gave him a feeling of fulfillment.

Wanda the water skipper hated Theodore, as much as her tiny insect brain allowed her to hate, because the snapping turtle had committed mayhem on many of her siblings and friends.

Sylvester the Lizard harbored a dislike for Theodore, too. Once, when Sylvester was playfully chasing a blue butterfly, Theodore had lurched out from behind a clump of grass and snapped Sylvester's tail off.

All the animals wished Theodore would go away. But Theodore liked it at the pond and had no intention of moving.

Then, one day, a day like most any other in the meadow, a girl visited, and she unwittingly set off a series of events that would change the social dynamics of the animal community forever.

The girl had come to the meadow with a brown paper bag. She sat down in the grass and pulled from the bag a piece of carrot cake with cream cheese frosting, a thermos filled with thick coffee, and a copy of bOING bOING magazine. As she ate, drank and read her magazine, the terrified animals peered at her through the grass. Would the large, stinky ape stay forever? Some of the animals began talking about moving to another pond that a bee once reported seeing in a nearby meadow.

As they were making plans, a sudden gust of wind tore the copy of bOING bOING from the girl's hands and sent it into the pond. A small cry of despair escaped from the girl's plum-like lips, and she jumped to her feet. She tried to retrieve the magazine with a long stick, but the wind carried the magazine toward the center of the pond. She cried a little, then picked up her things and left.

After a few minutes, the animals cautiously crawled from their hiding places. The ants marched over to the spot where the girl had sat and gorged themselves on cake crumbs. The water skippers surrounded the copy of bOING bOING, and began reading the upturned page, which was titled "Why You Must Subscribe." They learned that bOING bOING was by no means a huge money-mak-

ing conglomerate. On the contrary, it was being produced by a few poor, but cheerful, souls who toiled endlessly in a cold and grimy city.

Wanda began to cry. "These poor, foul smelling apes that call themselves human beings do not deserve such a difficult life. If only there was a way to help them." The other water skippers nodded their minuscule heads in agreement. This was indeed a sad day in the meadow.

But, then, as quickly as the gust of wind had appeared, an idea flew into Wanda's head. "Magazines need trimming in order to look attractive to readers, do they not?" she asked the others. Once again, they nodded in agreement. "And do we not have the best trimmer in the world right here?" she asked, pointing one of her long legs at the chubby Theodore, who was sunning himself on a log at the far side of the pond. She and the other water skippers knew what had to be done.

As a group, they dragged the magazine to where Theodore was sitting. The turtle stuck his neck out and immediately snapped a strip off the magazine. It felt good.

"How would you like to snap at magazines all day long, Theodore?" asked Wanda.

"I could think of nothing better than that," snapped the turtle. "But it is foolish to entertain such notions. You can hardly expect that those ugly creatures will be losing magazines here every day."

"Of course I don't expect that," said Wanda. That is why you must go to the apes that make this magazine, and offer your services as a magazine trimmer. They will pay you to perform this valuable service!"

That was all it took for Theodore to roll off his log and scramble to shore.

"Wait!" cried Wanda. "The address! You need the address!" Theodore jumped back into the water and neatly trimmed the address from the order form, swam to shore and left the meadow without so much as a good-bye.

...

You can imagine our surprise to see a small turtle standing by our door when we came to work one morning. He told us his story, and we gave him a job. Did we make the right decision? Take a look at the issue you're holding and judge for yourself. Theodore trimmed it. Looks good, doesn't it?

We like Theodore a lot. Every once in a while he'll give one of us quite a pinch, but he says it's just his way of showing us how happy he is here.



Ok, this is the deal: Theodore charges us a lot of money. Not that we're complaining, he does a great job. But, frankly, at this rate we'll soon go broke. bOING bOING will have to fold up shop. But worst of all, Theodore will go straight back to that pond and begin terrorizing the other animals

again. You can keep that from happening. For just \$14, you'll not only get a subscription to the coolest zine in the Milky Way galaxy, you'll also make one small group of animals in a beautiful meadow somewhere very happy.

Subscribe today!

NOTE: REMEMBER IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE WHEN WE TOLD YOU THAT bOING bOING WOULD BE AVAILABLE BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY? WELL, WE THOUGHT THAT WAS THE PLAN, UNTIL A COUPLE OF THE FRIENDLY DISTRIBUTORS BEGAN COUGHING UP THE MONEY THEY OWED US, AND WE STOPPED WORKING WITH THE MAFIA-TYPE DISTRIBUTORS. NOW THE MAFIOSOS ARE MAD AT US, ALL BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE WHO REFUSE TO SUBSCRIBE AND FORCED US TO DEAL WITH THE MOB IN THE FIRST PLACE! THANKS A LOT!

Dear bOING bOING: I think what you are doing with Theodore the Snapping Turtle is just great, and I'm backing my claim with money, to prove that I'm not just flapping my gums! Here you go!

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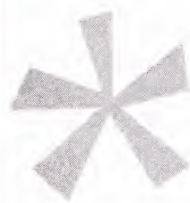
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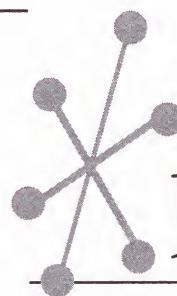
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W e l c o m e !

THIS SPACE FOR RENT



■ What an opportunity for the bargain-hunting religious leader! Model shown (Homo Sapiens) comes complete with paying job and a desperate need for spiritual fulfillment. Its 3-pound brain is designed for easy programming and control. But you must act now — only few of these 5 billion units remain vacant!

■ Greetings triskadekaphiles! Just what you've been waiting for - bOING bOING #13. Now I know some of you may actually be triskadekaphobes, but don't be scared off, the "thirteen" thread is very thin in this issue, so it won't give you any trouble.

When I first realized bb#13 was coming up, I wanted to make it a weird spooky issue. I wanted you to flinch before the pages, and cower under your covers at night. But then I thought of all the recent headlines in the daily papers . . . Outbreak of Flesh Eating Bacteria Kills 3 More . . . Mysterious Fumes from Corpse Cause 5 Nurses to Faint . . . Sumo Wrestler Has Cone Surgically Implanted To Add Height . . . What more could we say? The mass news media already covers enough creepy stories to put the fear in all of us.

My next idea was to pack the issue with stuff on religion, the occult, and superstitions. Unfortunately, the entire bb staff's got attention deficit disorder, and it's been flaring up big time lately. So as much as we tried, we couldn't hold on to that theme for very long.

Being a little superstitious myself (and already anxious to get to the next issue, think of new themes, etc.) I thought maybe it was best to just skip the 13th issue all together. That's what nervous city officials do when they get to the 13th street, and it's not often that you see a 13th floor in a high-rise hotel. Why not apply this irrational custom to a magazine? I was relieved to finally come to a conclusion, until I broached the notion with Mark, who shot it down with cold hard logic - it would screw up the accounting.

Finally, we just focused on stories that made us drool with delight, no matter what the angle. Who cares about a stupid old number anyway? And yet, as I read the new issue, I do feel a slight thirteenish vibe wafting through the pages. It just had to sneak its way in! You better grab your rabbit's foot before proceeding.



Carla

Dear bOING bOING:

Once again, an attractive and entertaining issue of bb. Things seem to be heating up for you folks *vis-a-vis* popularity and circulation (the local mainstream magazine store now carries it, and I keep telling people to go get it). As it is, there's about five people who read my copy after me. We all just love it. I like the consistent improvement on the layouts & the quality of the images. Also the shorter (one to two pages) pieces in #12 were particularly pleasing.

The death of Nixon a few days ago gave me cause to remember that it was the administration of the Supreme Dick himself that first proposed a sort of pre-Digital Revolution prototype of the much-ballyhooed Infotainment Turnpike. If I remember correctly, every American household was to be connected directly with the government via their television sets. Call me Winston Smith, but the idea of the Nixon gang wiring up the country is not something that gives me comfort. I should probably do some research on the subject, as I don't recall any of the juicy details. Until the next time, — R.J. Fildes, Kent, Ohio

We appreciate the kind words, R.J. We printed 15,000 copies of #12, and sold nearly all of them. This issue, we've printed 17,000. Thanks for telling other receptive primates about the zine.

Dear Carla:

I take absolutely no responsibility for Wayne Newton's actions. I also see my error; crossweird puzzle, now I get it. Thanque very much for clearing that up. Please don't hate me because I criticized your puzzle. 7-Eleven was closed so I have no napkin for you. Thanks again.

— Nuepi Hastsetsi (Formerly Retina Soybean)

P.S. Anybody who calls me "toots" is OK in my book.

Dear bOING bOING:

Picked up my first issue (#12) of your truly amazing zine yesterday — where have you guys been all my life? At last, a mag that manages to be hip and hilarious without oozing pretentiousness. My fave: Patti Parisi's "Ode to Dumbshit: Roommate From Hell." Reminds me of my college-dorm days and the roommate who liked to cover my desk with her very used Kleenex and say stuff like "Geez, my throat hurts and I think I have pinkeye!" right before my major choir/concerts/opera/chorus/performance/finals/etc.

On that pleasant note — back to my computer

BOUNCING BACK

search for the perfect piano concerto. Keep up the good work! — *Dyana Lyn Neal, Baltimore, MD*

boING boING!

That's the name of yer zine, isn't it? That's also the sound that my brain makes flopping around on the ground as it goes through withdrawal when it can't get the vital nutrients that your zine provides.

My brain has only been able to get these nutrients on an irregular basis. When I saw your zine in a local Weirdness shop, my brain tried to leap out through my ear canal and absorb the nutrients directly (as opposed to having the nutrients processed by my eyes and sent to the visual cortex) I was forced by an uncontrollable urge to buy every single copy of your zine and immediately subscribe once I got home.

If I don't start receiving your zine on a regular basis, my brain may revolt and try to escape, leaving the rest of me to fend for itself. Please help me keep my brain wet, smart and happy. Thank Phineas I finally found you. Hallelujahgobble! Hallelujahgobble! — *Antony W. Serio, San Diego, CA*

Dear Mark:

Thanks for the review of *Good Taste Gone Bad*. Hey, I like people, but only when they're in the trunk of my car trying to claw their way out.

I will be using the "warm puddle of Velveeta" line as the title of my next book. Of course, you won't be getting any credit. Your pal — *Mitch O'Connell, Chicago, IL*

Dear boING boING:

Loved #12. Laughed like a hyena all the way through "Refried Brains," but it probably wasn't amusing for the man with the \$2 and \$50 dollar bills. Didn't get "Farmer Bob's Good Life" though. Still confused, help me out. I absolutely refuse to order a shirt because vegetables should not be clothed. Why did they want shirts in the first place? Didn't they like running around nude? Kinda like being chased out of Eden isn't it? Whatever. Keep on doing the great work. Thanks — *Betty Shzu*

The farmer Bob story was inspired by the California guy who was busted for harboring pschedelic-oozing toads at home. The pigs have something against licking stuff that isn't food,

especially toads. It's a crying shame.

Hi Carla & Mark:

I just got myself online so I thought I'd drop you an e-mail to say hi, and thanks for making boING boING such a cool and essential part of my print intake. It just gets better and better and continues to bring things to my attention that I'd probably miss. #12 was the best yet — even had the first RU Sirius piece that didn't make my teeth hurt. Wasn't sure how "The Virgin Couch" fit into the general scheme of things, but it was a fun read.

Oh yeah, meant to ask: is "the original theme for this issue was women in cyberspace/cyberculture" a running gag, seeing how it appeared in both #11 and #12? Toodle-pip — *Nigel E. Richardson*

Dear Carla:

This is a desperate plea to contact Wiley Wiggins. Could you possibly give me his address? From — *Christina*

You can get in touch with Wiley Ramsey Wiggins by e-mailing him at weevil@io.com

To the Editor:

While generally thoughtful, Joe Matheny's review of my *Open Magazine* pamphlet, *Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of Signs*, suffers from the fact that the reviewer is apparently laboring under several illusions.

The first is that *Culture Jamming*: "frustratingly short and ... narrow," is a failed attempt at an exhaustive catalogue. In fact, *Open* pamphlets are topical broadsides in the tradition of IWW leaflets. At the editors' request, they are under 20 pages in length, and are intended to "focus like a laser" on controversial issues in the cultural arena. At the risk of immodesty, I would argue that my essay is remarkably encyclopedic considering its brevity: I synopsis and synthesize seminal critiques of the mass media as an instrument of behavior modification; reflect on the press's capitulation to power during the Reagan years and its manufacture of consent during the Gulf War; and consider the strategy and tactics of media hackers — culture jammers — in the information age. And I do so in 16 pages, in language intended to be accessible to the general reader.

Of course, my treatment of textual slashers,

wheat-paste snipers, billboard bandits, media hoaxers, and the like is necessarily superficial (more so than either Matheny or I would like); nevertheless, I manage to touch on most of jamming's myriad manifestations.

The second, more irksome illusion under which Matheny seemingly labors is that I aspire to Hakim Bey-like heights of rhetorical floridity. Naturally, his suggestion that my powers are inadequate to that task rankles, but opinions are non-negotiable. Even so, comparing *Culture Jamming* to Bey's hortatory prose does both a disservice. Bey addresses covert culture; *CJ* targets a more general audience. Bey is passionate in his exhortations; *CJ* offers a markedly more dispassionate critique. When it comes to style, Bey (whose writing I enjoy, incidentally) is a four-on-the-floor Dionysian, a celebrant of excess; by comparison, I'm a staunch Apollonian. The fist-banging "propagandarant" may be the preferred mode of discourse in zines, online, and among Marvel supervillains, but its effectiveness is limited to the converted. *Culture Jamming* is a reasoned argument that moves beyond preaching to the choir.

Finally, the observation that "[s]ome people may find themselves put off by the 'pomo' overtones" is somewhat misleading. *Culture Jamming* has been almost universally stamped JARGON-FREE™ by card-carrying members of Jargon Watch, and the sole postmodernist mentioned in it, Baudrillard, serves as a whipping post, called to account for his "disempowering stance." Not that postmodernism is anything to be put off by, at this late date: It has now been more than a decade since Baudrillard's *Simulations* shook the New York art world and five years since the movement percolated into the mainstream via *The Utne Reader* cover story ("Postmodernism defined, at last!") and Todd Gitlin's essay in *The New York Times Book Review*. Postmodernism, along with *Flashdance* and *Frankie Goes to Hollywood*, is the stuff of '80s nostalgia. Regards — *Mark Dery*



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Thanks To

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SHALINI MALHOTRA AT HUM

RANDY STICKROD

MUTATING SIMIAN BRAINS SINCE 1988!

Notices

by gossip girl



Adrian Tomine

■ Pssst! Hey you! I just got the latest scoop on *boING boING*. First of all, there's this book company called Riverhead, a new division of Putnam-Berkley. So *boING boING* totally tricked them into paying a huge amount of money to make this book, called – get this – *The Happy Mutant Handbook*. Can you believe it? So right away I'm on the phone with the Riverheads, and I'm all, "What is up with you people?" And they're all, "Well, they said it's going to be good." And the whole time, they've got this total "I'm a New York book editor" attitude. Anyway, it does sound like a tasty book, but now *boING boING* is probably going to be way late because the staff will be working their butts off to make the book deadline. They have to finish it by December. So if you expect to see another issue before, like, February, you're totally out of it. OK?

■ And you're not going to believe what else I have to tell you about *boING boING*! Ready? They're moving again!! This will be what, the 6th or 7th move in 13 issues? Good thing I've got my skateboard, or I'd never be able to keep up with them. They're new address and phone # is listed at the bottom of this page, so make sure to jot it down - in pencil!

■ Remember that story about Taco Bell in the last issue? The one where the pizza-faced boy at the counter didn't know what a \$2 bill was? Well, *boING boING* had found it on the Net and didn't know who the guy was who wrote it, but ran the story anyway. It turns out that this guy who calls himself "Captain Sarcastic" wrote the story. Cappy even has his own USENET group, and it's really cool. It's called alt.captain.sarcastic, and it's got all sorts of weird and funny postings that you'll have to check out.

■ Here's another tidbit about the Net: *boING boING* is now the proud owner of a World Wide Web page. They initially set it up so they could tease us with images and info about their new hot-shot book. Then they got really into it, and now they have fun *boING boING* morsels in there as well. But it's still in the totally embryotic stage, so I'll give you the address, but remember that it'll just get hotter and hotter as the delectable data mounts up. Keep checking in!

<http://www.zeitgeist.net/public/Boing-boing/bbw3/boing.boing.html>

■ When 87-year-old Rose Garfinkle of Oakland, California subscribed to *boING boING*, I called her to see if she was for real. She is! She said she subscribes because *boING boING* "is good for my soul." What a cool chick!

Oh! My pager just went off! I'm outta here. Catch ya later! – Gossip Girl

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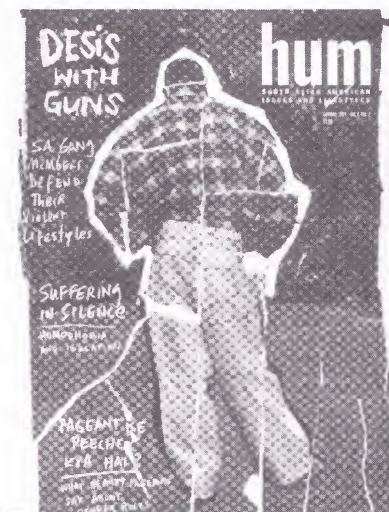
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now that superman is dead who will kick ass?



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you know you want hum



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neurotica

by Ward Parkway



■ Scientists working in Cardiff, Wales have succeeded in developing electronic trousers capable of recording the wearer's leg movements. The high-tech pants were originally created to enable people to interact in virtual reality environments, but are now being seen as a way to appraise progress in physical therapy. Fashion-conscious hackers can now download from their pants for a cool \$68,000. Low-voltage rechargeable batteries included.

■ A 19-year-old from Oakley, CA disposed of his automobile in a most spectacular way. Joshua Barritt towed his car to his family's vineyard outside of Antioch, CA, filled it with plastic trash bags inflated with acetylene, then lit it. The mighty explosion, occurring around 10:30 pm on August 4th, rattled residents all over a 10-

mile radius, leading to the sheriff's phone line being swamped with blast reports and inquiries. The following morning, officials found bits and pieces of the car, along with tattered plastic scattered over a wide area near the vineyard. Police spokesman, Sgt. Dennis Bilotti, described the method of car disposal, "highly unusual and exceptionally dangerous."

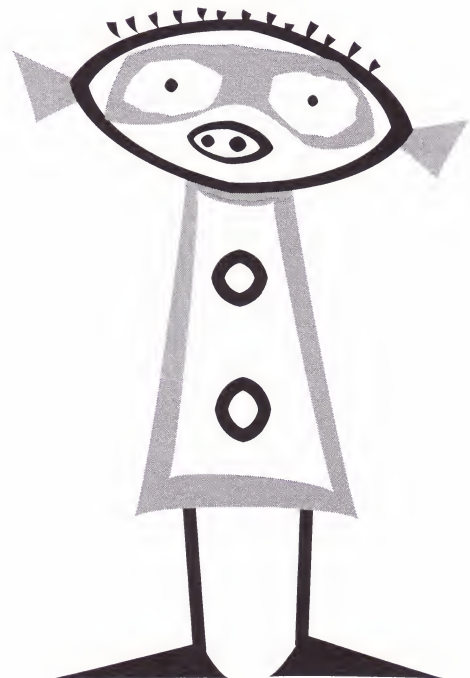
■ Necessity, being the mother of invention, led West Virginia inmate, Robert Shepard, to tediously braid an escape rope from dental floss. The finished rope was phone cord sized and allowed him to scale an 18-foot high

prison fence. At last report, the *al dente* fugitive was still at large.

■ In order to pass the height requirements, an aspiring young Japanese sumo wrestler has had *five* vertical inches of silicone pumped into the top of his head, thereby qualifying him. Doctors were unsure of what the result of a direct blow to this area would be. Fearing a tsunami of cone-headed participants, officials quickly banned further attempts along these lines. Upon seeing the youngster, one of the sumo officials was moved to quip, "Isn't that something?"

■ A Lakewood, California company called Safeguard (no, not the deodorant soap people) are offering a new self-defense system called DYEWitness. A small hand-held sprayer, similar to a pepper or mace canister, unloads a 70 lb. blast of bright green foam dye into the face of your assailant. The hosing takes all of four seconds. The foaming gunk temporarily blinds your target while making his entire head look like a human Chia Pet. The gooey green dye stains the bad guy's face for up to a week, helping police to identify him: "Excuse me, Ma'am ... have you seen any green persons in your neighborhood lately?"

■ A biotech firm has joined up with medical instrument-maker Baxter International, to design genetically-altered pigs to serve as a universal organ donor animal. The pigs will live the life of Reilly, until some human needs a heart, lung or kidney, then it's bye-bye porky.



SATURDAY MORNING GEEKOUT!

by Julian Macassey
(julian@bongo.tele.com)

■ Once a month in Redondo Beach, computer fiends, ham radio operators, social misfits, and the terminally peculiar gather for the TRW Swapmeet.

What sets TRW apart from other geekmeets is that it covers both hams and computers, it has acres of stalls and it's free to attendees. Sellers pay only \$3.00 for a space to hawk their wares.

Run by the TRW Amateur Radio club, the swapmeet has been held on the last Saturday of the month for the past 10 years or so. When it started, most of the stuff for sale was tube equipment that helped win World War II. You can still buy tubes here. In fact, if you have some treasured bottle-driven equipment, such as an ancient amp, TRW may be one of the few places you can scrounge up a replacement glow FET.

Besides the old stuff, there is everything you need, like floppy disks, 1/2 mag tape, and RAM for your Sun Workstation, all at good prices. Some past bargains at TRW have been brand new \$3.00 keyboards, \$50.00 used PCs - with hard drive, and 286 motherboards at \$40 each.

But the best reason to go is to watch the weirdos. Oh boy do they get weird. Anytime you feel you need a reality check, go to the TRW swapmeet.

Here are some of the regular cast of characters: First there is the blind guy who looks at everything. He wanders from booth to booth with his white cane. He will walk to a table, pick up random articles and lift them to his face — about 3 inches from his nose — where he will slowly turn them around and then put them back on the table (I have never seen him buy anything).



Then there are the 300 lb plus monsters, with stained T-shirts and at least two walkie-talkies.

Hats are popular at TRW. Besides the regular baseball cap, there is the customized cap with your name or ham call sign. But the real characters have Anzac military hats in camo, or stetsons. The casual professor types prefer the floppy fisherman's hat — the sort of thing you'd buy from the L.L. Bean catalog for your eccentric uncle.

Of course, this is L.A., so there are celebrities too. But they're nerd celebrities. The guy who looks like Howard Stern after years of amphetamine abuse is Durk Pearson of Life Extension fame. He's easy to spot — no-one else is wearing black leather shorts with a cod-piece. Like many others he prefers to go incognito. Many "names" from the computer world drop in to TRW to browse or to pick up odds and ends.

This is a very male place, the odd girlfriend is in tow — usually wishing, no doubt, she could leave all these geeks and get breakfast. While there is the occasional nerdette, this isn't the place to pick up women (or men); there's a better selection at the mall.

But for cheap deals on floppy disks, mother boards, printers, short wave radios, components, test equipment, power supplies, connectors, cables, and hi-fi equipment, this place kicks ass over any mall.

Where is it? At the North West Corner of Marine Avenue and Aviation Boulevard in Redondo Beach California, near Los Angeles Airport.

When is it? The last Saturday of the month - every month. Time: 07.00 to 11.00 Hrs. Set your walkie talkies to channel B and waddle on down! ✕



Box Set



Their full length debut featuring "Kill the Crow"



© 1994 London Records USA



BRAIN CANDY

Reviews of mostly cool stuff

by Mark Frauenfelder

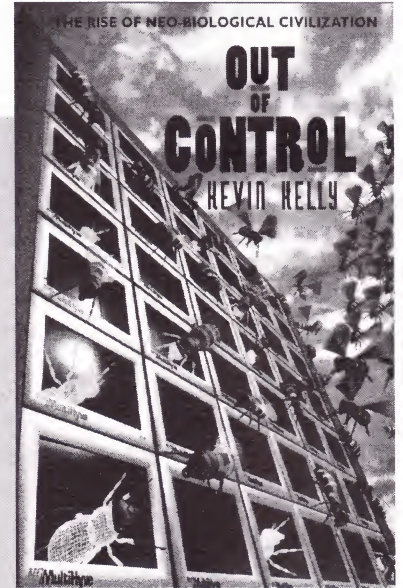
Out of Control

■ Human-designed systems have become so complex that they are no longer under our control. And this is a good thing, claims Kevin Kelly, author of *Out of Control*, a book that is as full of outrageously wonderful ideas as *Godel Escher Bach*, or *The Selfish Gene*. It's time to stop hanging onto the reins and start concentrating on making machines, computer programs and other systems that can seek their own solutions to problems. Sure, they'll make mistakes, says Kelly, but they'll also be able to surprise us by doing things we had never even thought of. Engineers have been borrowing designs from nature for thousands of years, now they are borrowing the way of nature to develop systems that learn, self-repair, and evolve.

In several chapters, Kelly explores the way that natural systems, such as bee colonies and ecosystems, operate, and then applies these principles to man-made systems, such as the Biosphere II colony and telephone routers.

This book covers a lot of territory in 500 pages, and some chapters, especially the ones on post-Darwinian evolution, went over my head. But there are enough cool ideas in its five hundred pages to keep your brain astounded for a long time. The final chapter, called "The Nine Laws of God," is a distillation of what Kelly learned from writing the book, and I'd recommend reading it first to get in the right frame of mind for the rest of the book.

Out of Control, by Kevin Kelly [\$28, Addison-Wesley: (800) 822-6339, (617) 944-3700]

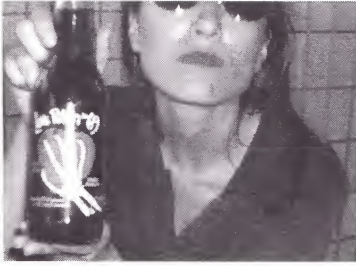


Fun With Liquids

■ Look at this squirt gun. You scream into the little Madonna-style microphone and water spurts out of a nozzle next to your temple. It's being sold by Rocket Science, the computer game company everybody is currently creaming over. I've seen demos of the Rocket Science games and I'm impressed. One of the founders, Ron Cobb, is a former Pasadena post-man and old hippy underground cartoonist, who started doing stuff for big-time movies and is now putting together what promises to be amazing computer games. I get way too many promotional T-shirts in the mail from all sorts of companies, and I give every one of them away to the guys who put together *Might* magazine (they work in the same building as us, and they'd rather wear a stupid-looking, but fresh T-shirt, than have to go home and do the laundry). Rocket Science sent me one of their T-shirts, and it is really cool, so I'm keeping it. And look at the mug they sent me: It's a Pyrex graduated beaker with a handle on it! I took it home, because somebody would undoubtedly rip it off if I left it on my desk.

Rocket Science Water Gun: \$29.95, Mug: \$7.95, T-Shirt: \$15.95, Rocket Science [800 98-ROCKET]





Boney Beverages

■ Everybody is making consumable products with pictures of skeletons on them: Death Cigarettes, Black Death Vodka, etc. Now an outfit in LA called Skeleteens is bottling soft drinks with happy skulls on the labels. The ingredients of the drinks read like a new age herb tonic label. For example, their Black Lemonade contains skullcap, ma huang, and mad dog weed. It also contains a whole bunch of artificial coloring to make it black. I guess that's the "death worship" part of the drink. Brain Wash has ginko (Remember when we used to think that smart drugs worked? Ginko was being touted as a "natural" nootropic.) and jalapeno. Love Potion 69 is a nice light violet color. I haven't actually tried any of these yet; they've been sitting like decorations on my shelf, and it's too late at night for me to get buzzed on ma huang, so you'll just have to try them yourself and tell me what they're like.

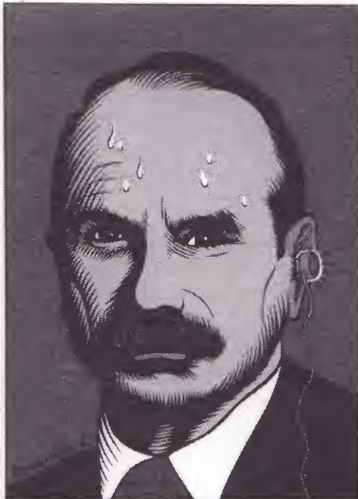
Skeleteens Beverages [about \$2 in coffee houses. (213) 721 332_ (they won't list the last digit)]

It Does Too Work!

■ I know I'm horning in on someone else's column (sorry Mark!) but I had a totally different experience with Happy Camper pills (reviewed in "Brain Candy" issue #12) than Mark did, so I just have to put in my 3 cents. Mark said, "I didn't get any kind of buzz at all," but I'm sure he would have felt like a happy camper if he hadn't been suffering from a bout of caffeine burnout. All I know is that I took a Happy Camper pill one morning, and about an hour later I was wondering why I felt so energetic and elated about nothing. I'm usually pretty muddled until my noontime cappuccino, but that morning I was feeling mighty fine. Then I remembered the pill. It really worked! I had the same kind of energy I enjoyed as a kid — I was reliving my childhood! Just like the bottle told me I would! Then when I read Mark's review, I felt sorry for the Happy Camper people. Their label is so cute - just looking at it makes me happy. I've already gone through 2 bottles of this stuff, and boy do I feel peppy! - Carla



Happy Camper [\$4.95/15 capsules; Pep Products: (800) 833-8737]



Supreme Weirdoes Trading Cards

■ WFMU is a listener-sponsored radio station in East Orange NJ. I've heard that they have some great programs and music, but I've never had a chance to tune in. I sure can vouch for the excellent brain candy they push to support their operation, however. The 50-page WFMU catalog offers such gems as CD reissues of the bizarre and trippy albums made by William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy in the early '70s, conspiracy theory books, Ernie Bushmiller (creator of the *Nancy* comic strip) anthologies, and a whole bunch of incredibly strange CDs, ranging from children's demented songs to the music of Harry Partch, who built instruments out of scrap yard trash. The descriptions of the products are fun to read and the catalog even has comics in it.

WFMU recently commissioned a bunch of cartoonists to produce two sets of trading cards, called *Crackpots & Visionaries*, Vol. I & II. They are full-color and sport an illustrated portrait of a supreme weirdo on the front, and a short bio on the back. Included in the sets are folks like Dr. Seuss, G. Gordon Liddy, Sarah Winchester, Forrest J. Ackerman, and Cicciolina. Each set includes 36 cards and comes in a nice little box.

WFMU Catalog, [Free], *Crackpots & Visionaries*, Vol. I & II [\$12 each, postpaid], WFMU (201) 659-7487, PO Box 1191, Montclair NJ 07042.



BOING BOING



THE WORLD'S COOLEST WAY TO SPEND YOUR MONEY!



BOING BOING BACK ISSUES

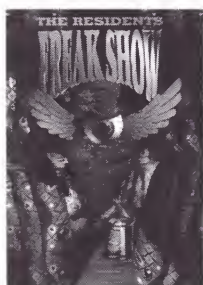
#8: The editor of *PIHKAL* bares all, Lewis Shiner interview, Antero Alli interview, Motorola's Urine-Sniffin' Fascists. \$3

#11: Pranks, fetishes, Internet fun, a role-playing game, creepy movies and cool cartoons! \$5

#12: William Gibson interview, Dazed & Confused director interview, the Roommate From Hell. \$5

FREAK SHOW

Hate computer games? Think most CD-ROMs suck? Then you'll love *Freak Show*, by Jim Ludtke and the Residents. It ain't a game. And it sure ain't a bunch of useless video clips or 30,000 pages of text you'll never read. *Freak Show* is a complete universe on a disc, just itching for you and your mouse to start exploring. Learn all about the wonderful freaks named Wanda the Worm Woman, Benny the Bump, and Jelly Jack the Boneless Boy by hanging out with them in their trailer homes. All the songs from the album and the complete *Freak Show* comic book (released last year by Dark Horse) are included on the disc. If you don't buy this, I feel sorry for you. *Freak Show* for color Mac with 4 Mbytes RAM, CD-ROM Drive: \$35



RIOT NRRRD T-SHIRT



Warning: when you don this shirt in public, you'll be the object of extreme envy. Other people, who desperately want to be as cool as you are, will try to take it from you without even asking. (Hint: Keep your hands in your pockets. That'll make it impossible for anyone to remove it from your body without ripping it or dismembering you.

Riot Nrrrd T-Shirt: White with black printing. \$14

Ward Dean, M.D.
John Morgenthaler

Smart DRUGS & nutrients

How To Improve Your Memory
And
Increase Your Intelligence
Using The Latest Discoveries
In Neuroscience

SMART DRUGS & NUTRIENTS

By Ward Dean, M.D. & John Morgenthaler. An introductory guide to new developments in neuroscience explaining how to use cognitive enhancement substances and how to get

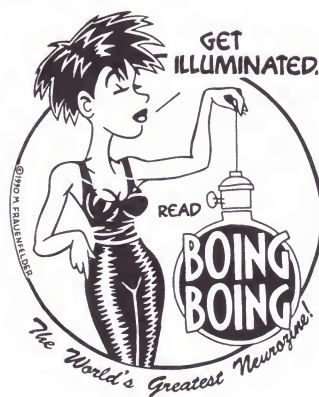
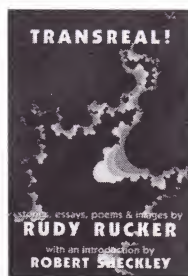
them. It lists the addresses of overseas mail order pharmacies for products which are not available in the United States.

Smart Drugs and Nutrients: Paperback, 221 pp. Was \$12.95, now only \$8.95!

TRANSREAL!

By *BOING BOING* contributor Rudy Rucker, the author of eight novels, four widely popular mathematics books, and several software packages. This collection contains all his short stories together with selected essays and amazingly nifty poems. The impressive range of his astonishing imagination is reflected throughout the collection in the graphics he produced with his software.

Transreal, Paperback, 534 pp.: \$15

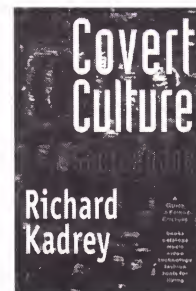


BOING BOING T-SHIRT

When the shit hits the fan, only those wearing white 100% cotton *BOING BOING* T-shirts depicting the wonderful Kata Sutra will be spared, unless the shit hits the fan at night, and then only those wearing the black glow-in-the-dark version will survive. *BOING BOING* T-shirt White \$12, Black (glow-in-the-dark) \$18

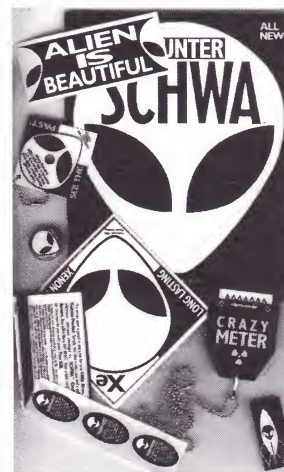
COVERT CULTURE SOURCEBOOK VOL 1 & 2

By *BOING BOING* contributor Richard Kadrey. A guide to the best and weirdest alternative music, books, videos, zines, fashions, software, technology, and "tools for living." It features commentary, reviews and descriptions, and provides contact names and addresses. There's no overlap between volumes 1 & 2, so buy both or risk being hopelessly out of it for the rest of your life. *Covert Culture Sourcebook*, Vol. I: \$12.95. *Covert Culture Sourcebook*, Vol. II: \$12.95.



SCHWA

You simply can't go wrong with *Schwa* merchandise. These alien defense products will not only give you power over the cruel saucer people who've invaded our little planet, they'll also spruce up the junky furniture, vehicles, comput-



ers, and bodies that you own. This photo shows just a few of the things you'll get when you order the Counter-Schwa kit. The stickers, books, badges, and devices will keep you and your loved ones amused and protected for years to come. *Counter Schwa Kit*: \$15, *Schwa Kit*: \$15, *Car Conversion Kit* (Instantly turns any car into a *Schwa* Corporate Vehicle!): \$7, *Black T-shirts* with menacing alien head (glow-in-the-dark): \$16, 1995 *Lunar Calendar* (beautiful wall poster with baffling imagery): \$7.

BLAM!

Cheap thrills, naughty pictures and rude shocks on CD-ROM. Pop this shiny little disc into your Macintosh and your computer will never be the same again.



Blam! CD-ROM for Macintosh: \$25.



BOING BOING



THE WORLD'S COOLEST WAY TO SPEND YOUR MONEY!



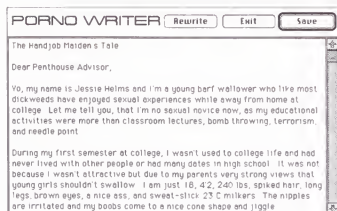
LAMPREY SYSTEMS SOFTWARE

Why settle for the type of software used by boring business types with no tolerance for fun? Robert Carr, proprietor of Lamprey Systems has toiled for years to bring you the finest sleazeware available. All programs are for the Macintosh.

F*ck 'Em: Nasty game in which you attempt to impregnate soft and warm stuff, and avoid cops, humorless feminists and religious types. You must be 21 years old to purchase this, or you will grow up to become a depraved sex-murderer. \$15

MacSpud: In this futuristic game, it is your job to haul potatoes to ethanol plants for fuel conversion. You'll have to use your brains and brawn to outwit mutant jackalopes and dodge rockets launched by freefire-zone hunters. This is Lamprey systems' "cleanest" game and their worst-seller. \$13

MacJesus: Holy Silicon! A savior on disk. Back when people used to drive to work, they would get a little Jesus doll with magnetic feet and stick it to their dashboard. Today's telecommuters insist on using MacJesus to protect them while they type. He talks! \$10



Porno Writer 3.0: You know how difficult it is churning out page after page of literary smut every day. You've probably dreamed about a machine that could do the writing for you, while you sat back and reaped the benefits. Well, your dreams are now a reality, thanks to Lamprey Systems! Porno Writer 3.0 produces high-quality Penthouse Forum-style episodes with a simple click of your mouse button. A steal at \$10. You must be 21 years old to purchase this, or you will grow up to become a bestiality aficianado.



ORDER FORM



DEAR BOING BOING: PLEASE SEND ME THE FOLLOWING PRODUCTS!

No.	Item	Each	Total
___	boING boING Back Issues (Issue No's _____)	\$3-\$5	___
___	Freak Show CD-ROM	\$35.00	___
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___	Smart Drugs book	\$8.95	___
___	Transreal!	\$15.00	___
___	boING T-shirt (___L ___XL)	\$12.00	___
___	bb Glo T-shirt (___L ___XL)	\$18.00	___
___	CC Sourcebook, Vol. I	\$12.95	___
___	CC Sourcebook, Vol. II	\$12.95	___
___	Counter Schwa Kit	\$15.00	___
___	Schwa Kit	\$15.00	___
___	Schwa Car Conversion Kit	\$7.00	___
___	Schwa Glo T-Shirt (___L ___XL)	\$16.00	___
___	Schwa 1995 Lunar Calendar	\$7.00	___
___	Blam! CD-ROM	\$25.00	___
___	F*CK 'EM Software	\$15.00	___

No.	Item	Each	Total
___	MacSpud Software	\$13.00	___
___	MacJesus Software	\$10.00	___
___	Porno Writer Software	\$15.00	___
___	4 issue bb sub (USA)	\$14.00	___
___	4 issue bb sub (foreign)	\$20.00	___
___	8 issue bb sub (USA)	\$25.00	___
___	8 issue bb sub (foreign)	\$35.00	___
___	Mystery Prize!!	\$5.00	___
___	CA res. add 8.25% sales tax		___
___	Shipping for first item (except magazines)	\$2.00	___
___	Shipping for additional items (per item, except magazines)	\$1.00	___
___	Overseas orders add (Canada & Mexico add \$3)	\$6.00	___
___	Grand Total		___

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150 4th Street, #650

San Francisco CA 94103

If ordering nasty stuff, sign here:

"I am over 21 years old, and am allowed to buy & look at nasty stuff."

NURSE FRECKLE'S



Prank Time

Nurse Freckle Says: I am a registered nurse. I am also a prankster! I enjoy interrupting the daily routines of robotic humans by throwing nerf-like monkey wrenches into their lives. Won't you please help me in my quest to demolish serious culture? Send your prank ideas to bOING bOING. But don't you dare try to prank me! I hate it when somebody screws with my life!

The Nurse sprouted a few more freckles when she learned about Joey Skaggs and his latest media hoax. She was so enthralled, in fact, that it threw her into a delirious state of nonstop clucking, and we just hope she soon snaps out of it so that she can keep her job as Prank Mistress here at bOING bOING.

The hoax started when pro hoaxster Skaggs sent the following letter to 1,500 dog shelters across America:

KEA SO JOO, INC

Kim Yung Soo, President

127 Macdougall St, Suite 986 • New York City, N.Y. 10012
Tel. (212) 254-0012 • Fax. (212) 979-7007

Dear Executive Director,

Excuse my English Please, Thank You. First congratulation on all your good work with animal. We support. We would like to help your company make money, so we like to offer help so you make money. Dog shelter kill million of dog, cost money. Dog shelter cremate dog cost money. Dog shelter need money to operate. Where it get money? Hard to get money.

Many people like to eat dog. People need to eat dog. Where do they get dog? Some people they raise dog to eat. Some steal dog, make some people angry, hurt some people. That not right.

We like make proposal to your dog shelter to sell us dog. You save money, you make money. We buy all dog, regardless of size or color. We prefer big, young, strong dog but we take all dog from your dog shelter. We cook dog in America. We can dog in America and sell some dog in America in Asian market place. Lot people in America eat dog. Most dog we ship oversea. Lot people eat dog. Many country eat dog. Korea, China eat dog. Philippines, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia eat dog. Dog is healthy for you. This way your cost of business is less. You make more money, more people happy. You get cleaner air. No burn up dog. No waste dog. People pet no disappear.

Everybody happy.

Cause we understand some people no like idea to eat dog. But they make trouble for people who like eat dog. Those people called two face. Those people eat cow, rabbit and mice, squirrel and frog and every thing else, but still give us trouble. But dog is good food. Dog is good medicine, make sick people strong, make old people young, make penis hard, make sex good again. Our business getting very big. Need more dog. We are prepared to offer you 10c per pound per dog. We pick up every day, so you also save on feeding dog. We like very much to speak with you and make deal. Please tell us how many dog available in your business. We have deal already to do same with dog shelter in New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts. We hope to be eventually in big city cross America. You can join us now, save money and continue doing your good job. We do big business together. We have big business already with many dog breeder and many dog hospital. Dog no suffer, We have quick death for dog.

Looking to hear from you soon,

Thank you

Kim Yung Soo
President

Many of the dog shelters were in an uproar over Kim's offer, and, as Skaggs had hoped, the letter soon got into the hands of reporters nationwide. The address on the letterhead was really a PO box, and the company's name, Kea So Joo,



Supreme Prankster Joey Skaggs. Photo: Blaine Michioka

Inc. means Dog Meat Soup. The phone number at the top was connected to an answering machine that left a message in both English and Korean, and featured yelping dogs in the background for dramatic flair. Skaggs got thousands of calls from all sorts of animal lovers, police officers, reporters, and hot-headed racists excited at the opportunity to vent.

The point of the hoax was to see how

reporters would handle such a bizarre request, especially one that would surely produce an emotional outbreak. As Skaggs later pointed out in his "Dog Meat Soup Hoax Exposed" press release, "The media helps to stereotype people and to enforce certain beliefs. The media can be reactionary, gullible, and irresponsible ... reporting on this satirical piece has been just that." And as Skaggs had predicted, the reporters fervently jumped on the story. They even went so far as to recount word by word conversations people claimed to have had with the Korean company, which was impossible, since Skaggs never picked up the faux business line.

Skaggs has been duping the mass media in this fashion for the last 28 years, fooling bigwigs like Good Morning America, Geraldo, CNN, and The New York Times. But he'll never fool Nurse Freckle!

— Carla

Send in those prank ideas!

O Mighty Anka

(Josh Cereghino) dishes out the the details
about winning a weekend with
Anka Radakovich

About that fame thing, I got my fifteen minutes, and I'll tell you, it kinda sucked. It didn't go by real fast like I was worried about. Actually it seemed to drag on forever. But forget the measly fifteen minutes. I'm kinda freaked by the whole notion of celebrity. It's interesting what happens to people when they become famous - the whole person vs. persona thing. I met this marginally famous writer, Anka, and now I keep thinking about the contrast between who she seems to be, and who she really is.

Details had run a win-a-date-with-Anka contest, so I sent her an irreverent entry letter. I guess it was a whim. I felt sort of loser-esque in my lonely tenement room, with plaster falling off the walls, a dingy light bulb hanging down, and me hammering away at a beat-up typewriter in my greasy underwear. From the darkness of my lonely room, I reached out. I was flattered when the mighty Anka picked me.

Having first encountered Anka through her writing, I had a certain set of expectations based on the persona she'd created. Reading her column, I thought I'd gained insight into her character. Something about her writing style made me feel I could relate to her. That she'd understand me. I fell for the persona, the Cleopatra of the Kama Sutra, the vixen of my subscription. O mighty ANKA, I read and I understand. Maybe I was unduly swayed by her "prowess" as a writer. I reasoned that if I could penetrate her writing, then by extension, I could at least know her mind. She was different. She was a light of humor and understanding, costing less than two dollars a month with my subscription.

At first we shared a few marathon phone sessions, and it was great. She was real. Herself. A person. I love to chew the fat. So does Anka. We have that in common. So after three hours of phone with the sexiest woman in print, I

was feeling euphoric. I was giddier than an Irishman on St. Paddy's Day. I took this to be a tell-tale sign of that ol' brass ring, chemistry. As Flintstone said, Yabba-Dabba-Doo.

I couldn't wait to see Anka in the flesh. Who was this tough girl from suburban Maryland, who dropped out of grad school to be a writer in NY? I believed her when she said she starved for years, trying to make it with only the support of her wealthy family to help her get by. I was excited to meet the real Anka, thinking she would rise up and greet me like she did every month, humorous and insightful and fun and sexy. But what I sought was a person made real only in print, constructed in high level editorial strategy sessions, the column incarnate. The Anka I sought was trapped in the pages of a men's magazine, inconsistent with the flesh-and-blood Anka.

We agreed I'd meet her at her hotel in San Francisco. Actually, she said "you may see me now." Anka said "Jump!" and I said "Yes mistress." I was feeling rather procreative after our steamy three hours of tele-play, so I hurried! She told me to get myself on over to the love hotel and then promptly hung up - I was there with a bouquet of flowers and a box of chocolates before the line went dead.

But hey, so much for young lust. If it had happened in real time - I'm sure you can remember analog dating, those golden days of yesteryear when you met 'em face to face - maybe it wouldn't have been so protracted. We'd have seen the light, our incompatibility would have reared its nasty head and I'd have inquired "Race you to the door?"

So what is she like in person? Is she totally hot? She looks like the grand vixen of Italian Cinema, with that sexy full head of hair, and chesty peasant blouse. A James Bond-moll-femme fatale look. So we played out our own Italian art film.



She was great as Maria, but she vacillated between casting me as "Marcello" or "Fabio." After a few drinks we settled on "Throbbio."

Speaking of exotic names, I couldn't wait to ask where she got hers. Anka Radakovich - turns out it's Serbian. Even though she goes by Anka, her given name is Nancy. Yeah, Nancy. *Tres exotique*. She told me herself. Don't tell anyone I told you! Well, Anka is her middle name. It makes sense. Back when she was born names couldn't be too ethnic sounding. That would have spelled out D-E-A-T-H on the playground.

After hanging out with her, it became clear that the writer I met was too far removed from the writing to be real. She told me she's thirty, but *Esquire* just dished the dirt on her. Turns out she's hovering around thirty-seven. And there she is on the cover of *Newsweek*, queen of the, ahem, X generation.

Details has a comic strip in the back, kind of a David Lynch thing. In the same issue as our dream date, Anka makes a cameo in the comic strip, where she talks about her career, and makes a reference to the woman's lingerie line, Victoria's Secret. She sets up this joke, like "Oh, and Victoria's Secret wants me to do a line of lingerie for them called Rated (Gen) X." A pun on that whole Generation X bullshit. The thing is, I heard her utter that same line three times - once on the phone, and once out in San Francisco, and then she tried it when I was with her in New York at a

fourth of July party in Little Italy. And now it's in print. It's as if she was testing it out to gauge its humor appeal.

She needed to finish her stories from beginning to end, as if, as if ... she was rehearsing. She no longer seemed to be relating her experiences to me for our amusement, but seemed instead to be stringing together various anecdotes, to see how they fit together as an *experience*. So much for spontaneity.

At first it seemed natural that as a neo-celebrity she would relate such tales, but I realized that she was slipping away from me, so engaged in her spiel that I couldn't keep up.

cocktail party circuit. So much for talking about things out there in the world. Jeez, get a library card, girl. Go to a museum or something.

I could've cared less about her fame - all I wanted was to know the smartass writer with the mental chops who oozed sex all down the pages of *Details* each month. But she was so paranoid, suspicious of everyone. Her extreme self-involvement was repulsive. Okay, I guess some people handle fame better than others. She seems freaked out by it all.

Finally the shit hit the fan when I stayed with her in New York. We went to a party in Little Italy, which had a great

found someone better than me, 'cause guys ask me out all the time now. Do you know how many guys wanna go out with me?" Then she took this acidic tone and apologized for not being tall, thin, or blonde enough for me. Can you believe that? What's with the blonde thing? I kept on waiting for the bell to ring and for this nighmarish high-school melodrama to end. But her most neurotic moment was yet to come: after all of her accusations, paranoia, jealousy, and spiteful words, *she still tried to get on me!* Sex after arguments is for lovers, not strangers. All I wanted from her was directions to the airport.

I could've cared less about her fame.
All I wanted was to know the smartass writer
with the mental chops who oozed sex all down
the pages of Details each month.

Anka talked non-stop through our conversations. Now, I have a lot to say and realized long ago that the other half of good conversation is listening. So I tried to pay attention to what was being said, and offered commentary that suited the chosen topic. She repeats herself endlessly, cycling through the same rehashed crumbs of conversations. At first I thought, "Well, she's just not good at listening," but then I realized something else: She wasn't listening to me because she wasn't talking to me. She was talking to herself, not so much to hear herself talk, but rather to hear herself think. She was writing her column in front of me, with me, and I wasn't even there. I could have been in the next room, I could have been three thousand miles away. But she kept on talking, right over the sound of my voice when I'd try to comment or agree or whatever.

She did the whole Star Trip on me, and ended up playing the same broken records again and again, her faves being "Celebrities I've Met," "How Much Money I Made Last Year," "Everybody Wants Something" and "The Next Big Career Move," which was a medley of "MTV This, Movie Deal That." Then there was the occasional refrain of "I'm a Regular on Conan Now." Save it for the

crowd. We met artists, editors and writers of prominent magazines, local musicians, and lots of dynamic people. But as soon as we got there, Anka started drinking, and preceded to get smashed. She became loud and obnoxious, conspicuously so. As everyone watched she kept on high-fiving her friend, until Anka missed and her pinkie jammed right into her friend's eye. The woman fell to the floor in agony, but Anka didn't even notice. When I tried to point out her behavior, she dissed me for still being in school at age 27, and told me I just wanted to use her. She kept on saying, "You're going to get all famous now. All these girls are going to want you. I'm going to make you look so good." It was so weird.

So we had a huge fight, and it got ugly fast. She accused me of talking to girls and getting their phone numbers at the party. In reality, I had made it a point to interact with men only, knowing that she'd bite my head off in a jealous rage had she seen me talking to another girl. No matter how many times I told her that I wasn't interested in other women, she wouldn't believe me, and in her paranoid defense informed me that 3 guys had asked her out. That's quite a haul for one night. "That's okay if you

When we first met she kept on talking about how I was going to get all this attention, girls calling, writing, accosting me, etc. But now that I'm undeserving of this "power" she gave me, she decided to take it back. She refused to put my last name in her account of the date in *Details*. This was her way of remaining in the forefront, and relagating me to the status of a stage prop.

I'm sure she'll leave *Details* behind - can't ride a one trick pony too far. I don't doubt that she'll make a transition to some other gig - maybe an MTV thing, or a Miller Genuine Iced Draft Reserve ad campaign. She has to, to survive. Or maybe she'll end up as the "Ann Landers of the Slacker Set."

When I went out with Anka, I was reluctant to be exposed as her new flavor of the month. I felt weird about it, I felt exposed, conspicuous, etc. But at the same time I welcomed the idea. We had established a rapport, and things seemed promising. Regardless of her celebrity, my thing was the person, not the persona.

All I wanted was the real deal, y'know? But she kept going off on her career trip, and that got tired fast. I mean, who's got the time, and who really cares? ✕



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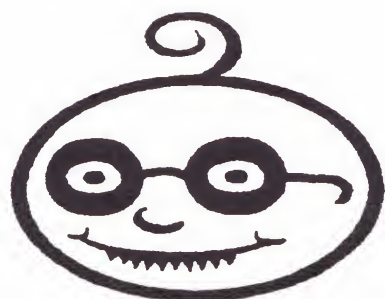
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BRAIN IN A VAT

■ **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING CASE:** On Twin Earth: A brain in a vat is at the wheel of a runaway trolley. There are only two options that the brain can take: the right side of the fork in the track or the left side of the fork. There is no way in sight of derailling or stopping the trolley and the brain is aware of this, for the brain — unlike Bo — knows trolleys. The brain is hooked up to the trolley such that the brain can determine the course which the trolley will take. On the right side of the track there is a single railroad worker, Jones, who will definitely be killed if the brain steers the trolley to the right. If the railman on the right lives, he will go on to kill five men for the sake of thirty orphans (one of the five men he will kill is planning to destroy a bridge that the orphan's bus will be crossing later that night). One of the orphans that will be killed would grow up to become a tyrant who would make good, utilitarian men do bad things, another would grow up to become John Sununu, while a third would invent the pop-top can.

If the brain in the vat chooses the left side of the track, the trolley will definitely hit and kill a railman on the left side of the track, "Leftie," and will hit and destroy ten beating hearts on the track that could (and would) have been transplanted into ten patients in the local hospital that will die without donor hearts. These are the only hearts available, and the brain is aware of this, for the brain knows hearts. If the railman on the left side of the track lives he too will kill five men. In fact the same five that the railman on the right would kill. However, "Leftie" will kill the five as an unintended circumstance of saving ten men: he will inadvertently kill the five men rushing the ten hearts to the local hospital for transplantation. A further result of "Leftie's" act would be that the busload of orphans will be spared. Among the five men killed by "Leftie" is the man responsible for putting the brain at the controls of the trolley, and the author of this example. If the ten hearts and "Leftie" are killed by the trolley, the ten prospective heart-transplant patients will die and their kidneys will be used to save the lives of twenty kidney-transplant patients, one of whom will grow up to cure cancer and one of whom will grow up to be Hitler. There are other kidneys and dialysis machines available, however the brain does not know kidneys, and this is not a factor.

Assume that the brain's choice, whatever it turns out to be, will serve as an example to other brains-in-vats and so the effects of its decision will be amplified. Also assume that if the brain chooses the right side of the fork, an unjust war free of war crimes will ensue, while if the brain chooses the left fork, a just war fraught with war crimes will result. Furthermore, there is an intermittently active Cartesian demon deceiving the brain such that the brain is never sure if is being deceived.

QUESTION: Ethically speaking, what should the brain do? Justify your answer.

(story found on the Net, without attribution.)

As publisher/editor of Los Angeles's amazingly great zines *Ben is Dead* and the *I Hate Brenda Newsletter*, Darby Romeo became an overnight celebrity. Thrust into the world of *Vanity Fair*, national television appearances, recording contracts, and book deals, Darby had almost everything — except a pistol.

Interview by Carla Sinclair

zine

Ben Is Dead is a rag I really look forward to. It's fat, fresh, and improves with age. It also has informative, raunch-filled articles that keep the pages turning. What I like most, however, is the raw personality that emanates from Darby Romeo's words. She gets to the heart of things with a frank and youthful verve that lacks affectation.

Darby started BID 5 1/2 years ago. She was poor and in a bad relationship (yep, that was with Ben) when her dad gave her a \$2,000 tax refund, which she used to buy a computer. She thought the music scene was at a low point, and decided to create a "zine" (she wasn't sure what that meant at the time) to give away at shows. That way people would have something to do when the band sucked.

But apparently the high stress level and hair-pulling tension that BID induced was not enough for the gal, because Darby was also the mastermind behind the *I Hate Brenda Newsletter*, which nearly blew her off the planet. Fortunately she hung on, and now admits that her publishing ventures have given her a life. — Carla

CARLA: Tell me what Ben is Dead's "Black" issue is about.

DARBY: For the past few years I'd wanted to do a black issue that would come out during Christmas. I wanted to have some depressing, dark issue come out for the holidays, because I really hate holidays. They torture me. My gift to myself this year is to go somewhere where they don't know what Christmas is. If I can find a fucking place - if you know of any...

I don't know, but if I find any...

I don't know why I let them affect me so much, because I'm not religious, I just can't escape them.

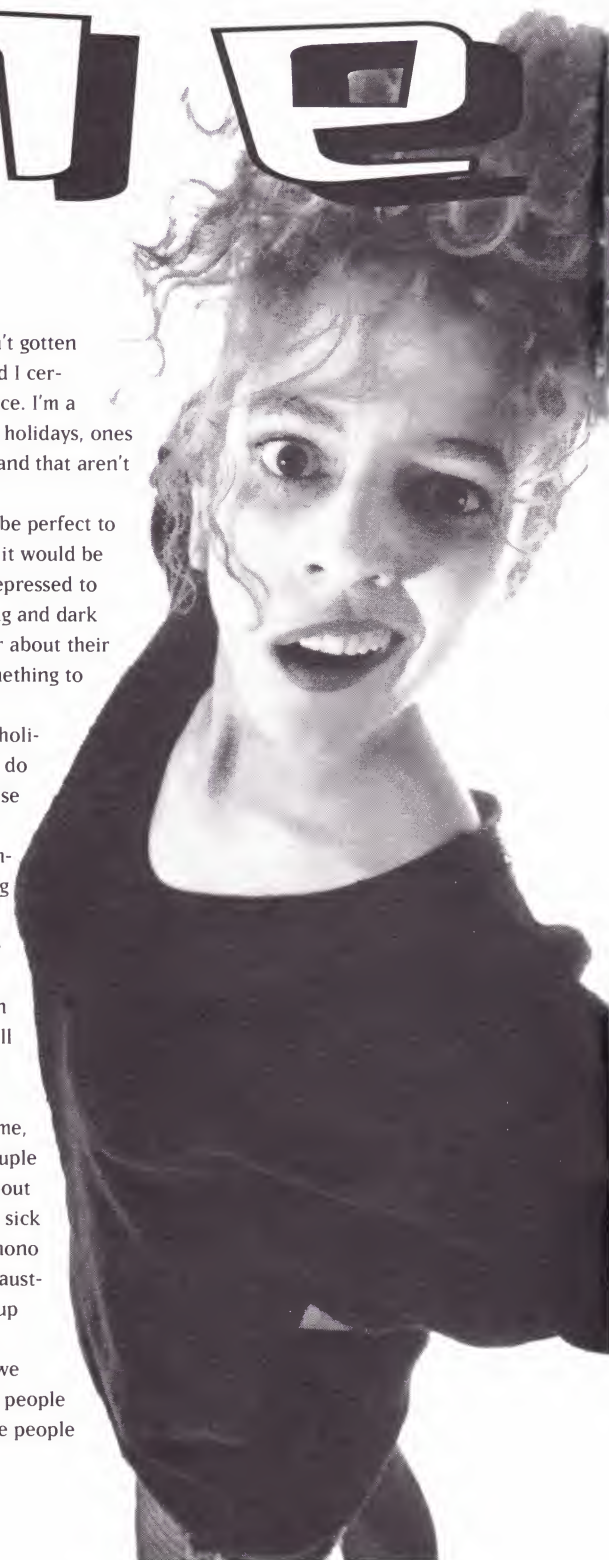
Did you hate them when you were little?

No, because I got presents. I haven't gotten presents since I was 14, though, and I certainly haven't enjoyed holidays since. I'm a firm believer in creating your own holidays, ones that have some personal meaning and that aren't repeated.

So I thought this issue would be perfect to come out during the holidays, and it would be great for people who are totally depressed to have something that's so depressing and dark that it might make them feel better about their pathetic lives. Or at least have something to relate to.

Besides getting it out for the holidays, the other reason I wanted to do the "Black" issue this year is because I had basically gone through the blackest period of my life (last summer). It was a combination of being completely worn out in the first place, and then on top of it all, we just put a magazine out, just finished all that Brenda hell, and then we had to do a book, a record ... all within a month and a half period. And the week I finished the magazine, my boyfriend broke up with me, after he had been on tour for a couple of months, and I was so excited about him coming home. Also I had been sick at the same time, I thought I had mono or something. I was just really exhausted, and after my boyfriend broke up with me I was in the gutter.

Of course on top of all that, we were just getting a lot of shit from people about the *Brenda Newsletter*. Some people



who I thought were my friends were saying shit about us.

Like what would they say?

Uh, I'd rather not get into that. I think the motive behind it had nothing to do with anything except the fact that we were getting a lot of attention. It was more out of jealousy than anything, 'cause really nothing had happened between these friends and me. Another thing that occurred is one of the people who was working for me on the magazine, the newsletter, and book tried to steal a computer I had let him use at his home, and he stole the letters that my boyfriend wrote to me while we were breaking up. I found them in his home in file folders that were for ad packages that he had lied about and said he sent out. He basically just fucked us up big time. He had the computer

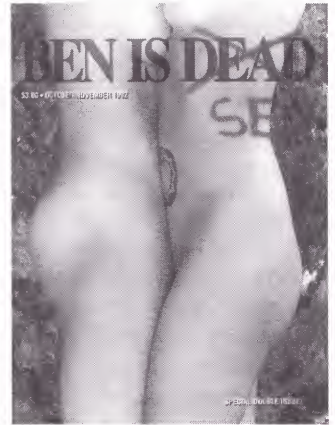
just a really good rule. It's an awesome rule. I'm really glad for that rule. I really appreciate it.

Is it a three day wait?

No, what is it? Fifteen days?

So when the days passed, you decided you didn't want to end it anymore?

Well, we had to do the video after I'd bought the gun. Then we had to go to New York. Then I'm like, "God, all these people are doing so much stuff to get this done, and I can't flake on them. So I'm just going to do the "Sassy" issue of *Ben is Dead*, and then I'm gonna do the "Black" issue (it's out now! -ed), and then that's going to be it. Because it's going to be great timing. I mean, how awesome is it going to be for me to die with the "Black" issue. I had even planned the cover where I'd have a gun go off while I was at the photog-



at his home so I had a key and went there and got it back.

I can't believe he would do that.

Yeah, neither could I. Especially since I was going through such hell at the time, and he knew it. There were just so many little things that happened during that period that were so incredibly impossible. I also had other relationships of mine go sour — relationships that were really important to me. It got to the point where I bought a gun. Actually, I had so many freaky things planned out, at one point I was going to jump off a building, and I almost did, and I would have. I mean, I've never ever really wanted to kill myself so much. I mean REALLY wanted to. Everyone's talked about it or thought about it, but I was set on it. I thought about it almost every minute of the day for the whole summer. I just couldn't figure out how to get out of it. I couldn't figure out any other feelings. When you're like that, you have no concept of what it's like to feel different, 'cause you're so far gone.

What about escaping. Like when Kurt Cobain died, it was hard to understand why he didn't just pack up and go to another state, or country. Especially with all the money he had...

Even if you have money, it doesn't really matter, because you can't realize any big picture. You're only in an emotional pit. What would make him think there was any solution in running off to the Bahamas? You just can't see any solutions anywhere.

So I got a gun, and if they didn't have that rule, where you have to wait before you can pick it up — it's

raphers taking a photo of me with the gun in my mouth.

Oh God.

I wanted that to be the cover, with me blowing my brains out and having him snapping the shot at the same time.

God Darby!

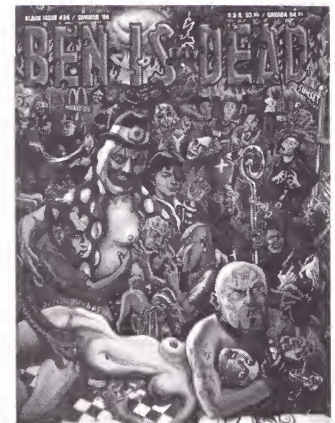
You don't understand, that was my good feeling. That (plan) was the only thing that was making me happy at this time.

Does the occult world interest you at all?

No, I've never gotten too fascinated about all that. Kerin is into that kind of stuff. I guess some of the stuff I'm into might be considered that — some "witchcraft" kind of things. But it's more for personal power. I'm not much into mixing potions and doing incantations and things along those lines, but I'd love to be able to sleep and go travel around the world at the same time.

You mean lucid dreaming?

Yeah, stuff more in that category. But I'm not into any of that so-called "magic" shit. I don't like placing faith in objects. I don't like thinking that if I pay someone they're going to give me the power to do things. I don't want someone to read my tarot cards and tell me what they think my future is holding in those abstract ways. I'm into astrology a little bit, the signs and their descriptions more than day to day prophecies, but the thing I'm into now is, obviously after realizing how



fucking weak I am...

Don't say that about yourself.

Well, I'm not what I want to be, and maybe it'll take all my life, but my destiny is not going to be a pill-poppin' TV-watchin' wine drinkin' hag-gard gray-haired chubby ugly bitch thing.

So where do you want to be?

I just want to be really strong, and if in the end it means I have power over things because of my personal strength, by investing in it, I feel that I could have powers that I don't have now, because now I don't have the resources, I don't have the energy. Man, I'm exhausted all the time. I have to sleep a few more years before I'm going to catch up. And I'm going to have to work on hiking and surfing for a few more years before I'll get close to where I was when I was younger.

What were your intentions for starting BID?

To work towards having a life, 'cause this guy I was having a relationship with whose name was Ben was really pathetic. It was one of those relationships where the man sort of puts the woman in her place in some way or another. You must understand, this was a place I



I had even planned the cover where I'd have a gun

thought I'd never end up in, 'cause I'm kind of a feisty chick. I like being in control.

What have you gotten out of BID?

It's given me a life. It's like trying to survive a calculus or philosophy class. You're just like, "oh god, there's got to be a solution!" Or kind of like juggling 10 balls at once, and learning how to do it. So I'm trying to figure out ways other than doing crystal meth and losing my mind. This is a really big challenge, and I've tried so many ways to be able to survive and accomplish this. I still haven't figured it out yet, but I'm on a different road now. It's pushed me so hard, and now I'm letting it push me in a different direction. I can't go into more detail, but I've gone from one extreme of just letting it totally fuck me up and practically kill me — you know what deadlines are like, and after 5 1/2 years of deadlines I should look like an old hag

by now.

Which you don't.

Yeah, but a few more years of it and I'd be the burn out zine queen.

So what's the new direction you're taking?

Well instead of just throwing my energy away at every turn, I try to pay attention to the things that move me — the things that are worthwhile, and the things that distract me and drain me. The magazine helps me see my weaknesses. One example is organization. When Mike Gunderloy [founder of *Factsheet Five*] did his first book, *How To Publish a Fanzine*, he never explained organization! You have to be really fucking organized, from file cabinets to an inner self-control and focus, to keep on the ball. You've got information coming at you constantly, every second. This is something that everyone is dealing with, and you have to learn how to keep what you need and filter the rest

out. You've got to clean the filter out, and I never cleaned my fucking filter, I just absorbed all the shit from it and was becoming a toxic waste dump.

At the end, last summer, the Brenda thing practically killed me. All these years of deadlines and staying up all night, I wasn't even able to eat. I had to be fed, and reminded to go to the bathroom. That's how bad I had gotten with

deadlines.

Although you were rushing to meet the deadline, were you late anyway?

I'd be late, but I was putting out like 6 or 7 issues (a year) in the beginning. Then I couldn't understand why it was getting harder and harder. Finally I realized that the magazine was 2-3 times the size it used to be. I was like "Oh my god, it grew that much? I wasn't watching!"

I stopped drinking a lot, and I haven't done crystal for three years. I am around so many fuck-ups because of the environment, the music scene and all that. So I'm fucked up, but in comparison to this person, that person, everybody, I'm really healthy and together, but what good is that? There ain't much worth in judging yourself "in comparison" to others. I realize that I'm not able to and don't want to beat my body up as much as most people around me.

So now you've gone to the other extreme.

I have. I'm — unfortunately — still a girl of extremes, good and bad. I didn't stop drinking as if I were an alcoholic, but I stopped wasting my time with it, because I'm not going to learn anything else from it. The main thing I realized is that I'm so over the top and so out of control already, and I don't need drugs for an excuse. I can now enjoy what a freak I am naturally.

I don't know how you did crystal for so long. I'm so fragile and crazed all the time, I think I would've been dead by now! I remember when I saw you last summer, you were doing your mag and newsletter and a million other things, plus taking singing lessons because you were going to record in 3 days.

Yeah, it was drugs, alcohol, no sex, AND trying to learn how to sing.

What happened to Kerin. Is she not doing BID with you anymore?

Well she was supposed to come over here today. She's working on this issue with us, but it didn't work out as far as her having a job here, because she couldn't really consider it a job. I'm not a bossy enough boss to be on my friend's ass all the time and say "wait a minute — we have work to do," 24 hours a day, and it just wasn't getting done. Her energy just turned on me, and all of a sudden I was thinking, "I don't like this vibe anymore, and I gotta get away from it, like, NOW." I think it was that way for both of us. But hopefully she's going to keep on writing, because she's a really good writer. She got a job at Interscope records, so

she's working there in publicity, and she's such the schmoozer that hopefully she'll do well.

Kerin worked on the magazine for about 3 years. She was the only so-called "paid" staff member. I end up paying most people in pizza or CDs — in this case I guess it's the thought that counts.

That's how I am too. I try to pay at least a little to people who work for us, but it's so hard.

Yeah, if you paid everyone you wouldn't have anything left. You just don't get enough in. It's hard to explain that to people. Chris Gore [from *Film Threat*] said there is absolutely no way to have a successful independent magazine without some kind of backing.

Yeah, I remember. I hate that though! I don't want to believe that.

I don't believe it either.

It's too negative. You know, it's easy for him

to say, because he sold his zine to Flynt, so I think it's a way for him to feel that he did the right thing.

A better way to look at it is it's really really difficult. I think there's some things that zine people need to do together. Like I was talking to the guys from *Monk*, and he said that some zines are getting together to get ads from companies that don't advertise in zines because the circulation is too low, but would if they got an ad in each one. They would pay one rate and the zines would divide it up between them according to their circulation.

If you ever do anything like that, let us know! So are you guys national yet?

Yeah, it's national. It goes to Canada and Europe too. Are you really going to stop using distributors?

Well that's what we thought. But then after we wrote that,

Maybe it'll take all my life, but my destiny is not going to be a pill-poppin' TV watchin' wine drinkin' haggard gray-haired baby only bitch thing.

so many of our distributors called and said they had wanted to order a lot more, some even want to double their order for the next issue, so we decided to continue with most of our distributors, but drop the few who just won't pay us.

How many do you guys print?

We printed 15,000 of #12, and will probably print 17,000 for the next issue. What about you?

It's 16,000.

That's great. Are you guys constantly growing in circulation?

We've been doing 16,000 for a while, but we went from doing 16,000 and giving 10,000 of those away for free, to printing 16,000 and selling them all.

God, that teaches you something.

Yeah, you can bring in another \$20,000. But we never get that, actually. I don't know what happens. It comes, and then you pay back people, and it never seems like there's any money. And, of course, you have to convince the distributors that they really do want to pay you.

I know, I know! So tell me about the I Hate Brenda Newsletter. Were you guys surprised at the response that you got?

Of course. After doing a zine for so long and barely having anything for a press kit ... we got more clippings for the *Brenda* press kit in two months than we got for *BID* in the last 5 years. So I was definitely surprised, and if I only would have known, I would have made it a little bigger and charged, like, 2 bucks. Then I'd be rich today. Boy, would I be rich! (laughs)

So will you do anymore newsletters like that?

No.

You guys have a phone number where people can just leave messages. Do you get weird calls from people?

We've gotten our share of weird calls - yes. During the *Brenda* thing we were getting threats.

Threats? Shannen lovers...

Yeah, it was people who claimed to be friends with her. Those calls were rather entertaining. We had some young girls do this fucking rap that they made about Shannen, *Brenda* I mean, or both. It was sooo good. I

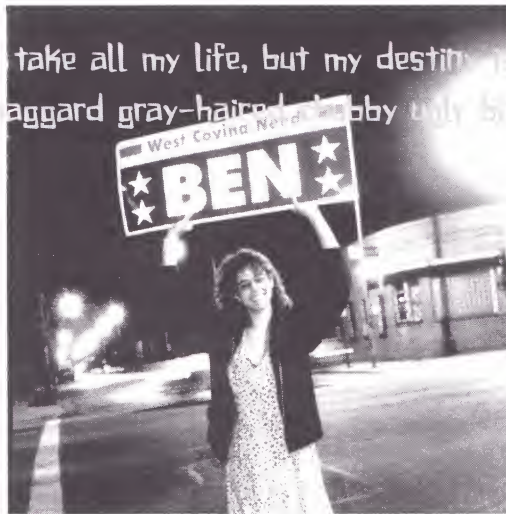
have it on a tape somewhere. We get someone singing songs, we get people telling stories, poems, or whatever. I should make a compilation of them. Some are pretty good.

I remember once I was at the Golden Apple [comic book store in L.A.] when you were there, and someone recognized you. They asked with goo goo eyes if you were Darby, and when you said yeah they got all excited and were fawning all over you. Did you get a lot of people recognizing you when all the Brenda stuff was going on?

I would say it was a lot, because people usually don't pay that much attention to me. So when people pay attention to me, I notice it. So yeah, it was a lot.

Did you like it?

I can never recognize people, so it's surprising when someone comes up to you 'cause they recog-



nize you. I guess it's 'cause of my hair, it being orange, and my nose is big.

Well you have a certain style about you that is recognizable.

Yeah, I sorta stand out, let's say.

So do you like it when people recognize you?

I don't want to be totally

out there and known. I feel a little bit too naked. It taught me that I don't like the idea of fame. It's so phony, and so many idiots are famous. It doesn't mean anything to me. To have certain people you admire appreciate you and gain things from what you're doing or saying is great, and more often it's worthwhile if you're feeling bad and you need a boost, but then it's just like a temporary boost, and it doesn't really mean that much.

Well since I've never had any recognition, to me it sounds fun. Maybe after a few people recognized me I'd get tired of it. [Not really - I'd never tire of it - just said that in front of Darby to be cool. - Carla]

Yeah, sometimes you'd rather not be known. One thing we got out of the *Brenda Newsletter* was writing assignments. Like we did something for *Vanity Fair*.

Yeah, congratulations by the way. That must've been fun.

Well I'm not one of those people who always dreamed of being a writer, so for me I thought it was kind of cool, but they totally edit you and then it becomes something completely different. And it's nothing that you wanted to write about in the first place, so I didn't pursue it. I mean, we could have gone after it and really pushed in that direction, but right now I have the luxury of doing so much, and doing it for myself, and really, in the end, the magazine has been the greatest learning experience, personally and emotionally. I have no intention of giving that up just yet. ✕

BID's Black issue can be found at well-stocked newsstands and book/record stores. Or you can send \$4/sample; \$20/6 issues; \$30/1st class sub to Ben Is Dead, PO Box 3166, Hollywood, CA 90028.



GOING GAGA

Gareth Branwyn

■ Anti-magician Penn Jillette loves to wag his red-nailed pinkie finger at the "newage" (pronouncing it so that it rhymes with "sewage"). As far as I'm concerned, the best thing about the so-called "new edge" ("newedge"), is that it can be reduced to a similar effluent.

This is not a conclusion I've come to from on-high. I'm not rejecting the newage, and its newedgery offspring, out of hand. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I was a crystal-packin' member of the newage during the 1970s. I joined out of desperation. I have a severe form of arthritis, and when western science failed to offer a cure, I turned to any and all forms of magic to find healing. I wanted so desperately to find relief that I embraced each healing system in turn, reading all the books, going to the workshops, and following the practices. The priests and healers of each "discipline" would always tell me the same thing: "We've had great success with arthritis. If you follow our program, in a few months, you'll experience dramatic results." And each time the same thing would happen. I'd follow the program almost to the letter. If, for instance, it was wheat grass therapy, the daily drinking and spraying up your butt of obscene quantities of liquefied wheat

grass, I'd do it every day for weeks, missing maybe one or two days. When I'd report no change in my condition to the therapist, she'd ask: "You followed the program to the letter?" I'd say "Yes, 'cept for one or two days." That was the loophole she needed. One day, one meal, one psychically-incorrect thought, and months of food torture was for naught. It was NEVER the therapy that was called into question, it was always me. On the rare occasion that I claimed a perfect score in following the regimen, my failure would be chalked up to karma. "You're just not ready to accept your healing, Gareth," I'd be told. Funny how they were perfectly willing to accept my money!

From my experiences, after years in the bowels of the newage, I offer a few observations:

Closed Systems are Toxic

It's never the system that's at fault. It's a closed loop. Any feedback that might alter the belief system is rejected. Only the success stories get attention (so, in the above instance, they can tell the next mark: "We've had great success with arthritis."). Once, I was reporting to a skeptical friend a whole series of psychic occurrences I'd had. He said: "Yeah,

but how many times do these premonitions and psychic hunches *not* pan out?" That insight doomed the closed system I was attempting to construct. From then on, as I paid attention to each premonition, I realized that tons of them didn't come true. I wasn't even hitting 50%. Before, I just conveniently forgot the one's that didn't happen.

Thinking: Don't Knock It 'Til You Try It

Newagers hate western science and logical thinking. Thinking is bad—the root of all evil. One scientist friend of mine went into therapy with his newage girlfriend. He was completely chastised by the therapist and his girlfriend for "too much head, not enough heart." The girlfriend was instructed by the therapist to remind him whenever he was "in his head" by gently tapping his noggin'. Whenever he and I would get together, we'd start talking, and she'd immediately come over and tap him on the head. What bullshit! It's not thinking that's the problem, it's having a lazy fat head. Your brain, like any other part of your body, needs exercise or it gets flabby. Newagers who hate "thinking" are just saying they hate the limited palette of thoughts they have to work with, and

most of those have to do with painful memories, dark obsessions, and politically-incorrect no-no thoughts.

No Sense of Humor isn't Funny

Newagers love to entertain the notion that they're opened-minded and zestfully ready for anything. That's the case as long as their closed system isn't jeopardized. Here's a perfect example: A friend of mine took a workshop on "Contacting Your Spirit Guide" (the unseen, benevolent forces that guide your life). The cul-

tarians, spiritually attuned and sensitive to everything around us. We'd "allow" others to be and do as they needed to fulfill their karma (as long as their choices were politically and spiritually "correct"). We'd recycle everything, bicycle to work at the Coop, and smile all day long. Critical thinking, science, and technology would be de-emphasized and feeling, "following your heart," and the music of Yanni and John Tesh would be emphasized. Peace, love, tofu. Switching from the newage to the cur-

concepts like "energy," "karma" and "chakras?" Their response was expected: "That's the channeler talking. He's translating Lazarus' ideas to relate to his newage audience." "OK, then why does he have this shitty Scottish accent? If it's the channeler talking, than why isn't he using plain English? Or, if it's the monk talking, why isn't he using a perfect 12th century Scottish accent?" At this point, everyone grew uncomfortable. When I continued to raise doubts and insisted on calling him Lavoris, they

Why I Hate the Newage

(and Why "Newedge" Still Rhymes with Sewage)

mination of the workshop was making contact with your spirit helper. At the time, my friend embraced all this newage jazz, but she also had an open mind and a wacky sense of humor. At the climax of the "contacting ritual," the participants, supposedly in trance, were suppose to see, standing before them, their spirit guide. She saw an image all right...it was Barney Rubble of The Flintstones. She started laughing and the workshop leader got very annoyed. After the ritual, the participants shared their supermarket tabloid visions of angels, fairies, and benevolent aliens. When my friend announced that Barney Rubble had revealed himself, the leader was incensed. She began making up reasons why ol' Barn could not be a "legitimate" spirit contact. "He's ... ah ... not real ... he's ... ah ... a fictional character." Excuse me, Lady? Let me get this straight? Fairies, unicorns, elves, and angels *are* real, but a lovable, happy-go-lucky cartoon caveman is less real? Look over this list, folks...who would you rather have as your astral side-kick?

Unity is Boring

Let's paint a picture of the dawning newage. Everyone would get along, there'd be no conflict. We'd all be vege-

rently-hipper newedge, not much changes. We get Terence McKenna instead of Ram Dass and the Orb instead of Kitaro, and we don't have to feel guilty about using computers. All-night Dead shows are replaced by all-night raves. Other than that, it's pretty much the same agenda. Peace, love, and smart drugs. Totalizing ideologies are a bore.

Logical Inconsistencies

Your average newager would probably giggle with delight at the idea of being held to logical consistency. He or she would give me that "Oh, you unenlightened little man" look. But it's fun to taunt newagers about obvious holes in their reasoning. Someone once sent us a tape of psychic readings from some fat guy in a flannel shirt called Lazarus. It was so goofy that our group house used to show it for laughs at parties. We called him Lavoris (like the mouthwash). I thought it was all a big joke 'til one day I was surrounded by newagers and I started telling them about the tape. They began defending this guy, saying that many of his predictions come true and that "he's helped a lot of people." I asked: "OK, so he claims he's channeling a medieval monk from Britain, right? Then why is he using

got really mad. One guy ran outside to do Kundalini Yoga to repair himself from my damaging negative energy. I'm not kidding!

Same Old Newedge

And, if you think all this newage stuff is old news, a relic of the '70s and '80s, go to a rave or a Zippie gathering. It's the same stuff dressed up in synths and CPUs. Technology plays a bigger role, but that's about it. The underlying concepts are almost identical. Just look at this quote from Ambient Temple of Imagination, a techno record we received for review today: "Ambient Temple of Imagination will transform what we know today as 'religions' into true laboratories of consciousness wherein the Will will be able to expand and express its super-human cosmic potentials and emanate LIFE-LIGHT-LOVE-LIBERTY beyond anything ever conceived in any previous civilization." WOW...all that from a crummy rave CD? I guess if I listen to it and it doesn't expand my super-human cosmic potential it's because I'm still not ready to accept my healing. Having hung out with the healed, the enlightened, and the cyber-shamanic, this is definitely the case. ✕

OUT OF CONTROL

Carla & Mark bug Kevin Kelly about A-Life, God, Clumsy

Kevin Kelly is executive editor at Wired, the former editor of Whole Earth Review, and a cool-idea junkie. Even though he calls his latest book, Out of Control, "brain spinach," we slurped up every word. This conversation took place, between bites of burritos, on a rare sunny day in San Francisco's tiny South Park. — Carla & Mark

Carla: What excites you about artificial life?

Well, I'm kind of bored with computers as machines, but the reason computers are interesting to me is that they provide us with a tool to create new worlds, to create synthetic realities of some sort. When the simulation becomes complex enough, and becomes something real in itself, you get to ask very interesting questions like "What is reality?" "What is life?" or "What is society?" "What is intelligence?" The suspicion I take away from this, that I report in the book, is that there really are different kinds of lives out there, and this "green" life that we have is the only example that we have to look at. Artificial life is a way for us to explore the space of possible lives. See, we only have one kind of life on earth...

Mark: DNA-based life?

Yeah. We have one example of it. We can't rerun it, we can't start it over again, so it's very hard to make generalizations about what life is. What artificial life is allowing us to do is to make 2nd or 3rd examples of life so that we can generalize and say these are the qualities of life. We can do that with evolution too. Right now it's very hard for us to study evolution because all we can study are the products of evolution...

M: Because it's too slow to observe the process?

Yeah. So if we had a machine — well, even if we could observe the process, we still only have

one case of it — but if we had a machine or a mechanical way to make real evolution, we could play it over again, we could fiddle with its parameters, have it run in a different medium, then we could see what evolution is in general. The same thing with our minds. It's very hard to talk about what intelligence is. We only have one example. If we had machines for what we call artificial life intelligence, we could then generalize and talk about what the nature of intelligence is. So that's why I'm interested in artificial life. It's a way to study real life.

C: Do you think it can get out of control?

Out of control? Where've you heard that? (laughs) I think it has to. I define "out of control" a little differently. Out of control means that it is not in our full control. It means it has its own governance, it has its own control. It's not that it has no ways of checks and balances, no way of retaining its own growth, it means it's not in our control. Children are out of our control in a sense. We raise them, we train them to behave in a certain way so we can let go of them, and they might do surprising things. But the value of children as people is that they have their own minds. The thing about making a synthetic kind of life is that for it to be useful to us, it needs to be automatic, it needs to repair itself, it needs to direct itself, it needs to replicate itself, it needs to maintain itself. To do that we want to let it go, not entirely, but we have to let go enough so it can do all of that. We have to sort of co-control it. We want to give it guiding principles — teach it, train it, direct it — but not control it.

I like to think of this kind of stuff (points to the grass and trees around him) as technology. This is very highly evolved technology. Green technology. Biological technology. It's all around us, it's self replicating, and the technology that we're making will become more biological and more like this (points at nature again). I look at a little ant as a machine, and I look at a computer as kind of a plant, and to

do that will help us to harness this new complexity in the machines we're making. And it may also help us understand the biology we already have.

M: From all that you learned while writing the book, has it changed any of your religious beliefs?

I think so. *Wired* asked that question to the brothers who made the *Myst* CD-ROM, "Did creating a little world change your idea about God?" That's a question I thought about a lot. It's really amazing to think about having to create the things we have here, to think about what is involved in creating that. What was surprising to me was the number of times these scientists used the word God, that God was becoming sort of a technical term.

C: Like how?

There are different ways to be a god. A god could be just a being that creates the material world, and then lets go. A god could be a being that creates a world and is constantly interfering with that world. A god could be a being that creates the world and only interferes on special occasions to keep it from completely crashing. A god could be a god who only creates the basic rules for the world, but doesn't actually create the world. There could be a god who's like a painter, who creates and molds every single creature in the world. Or there could be a god who just lets the world evolve. There's this idea that whenever you look at these worlds there has to be something outside that created it, and that thing has some relationship to it. So you get to think of the varieties of gods, what godhood means, how to be a good god.

M: Is it hard to imagine that the world we live in could've possibly come into existence without any god at all?

It's possible to imagine that our world has arisen through evolution, but at some point, a world was created. You have a choice. You can

ROL

Robots, and his New Book



say that god created the world, or that somehow or another out of nothing it created itself. To me I prefer the god explanation. It makes it more interesting, and it makes as much sense as the other one.

C: *I wonder if computers will ever wonder who their god is.*

Sure. This is what we get to try out. This is why artificial life is so interesting. Because we can ask all of these really great questions and try them - there's no longer this academic armchair philosophizing. We can actually make a world that has some creatures in it and see if they'll wonder where they came from. To me it's inevitable that that happens. That at some point you get a form of intelligence that asks about its origins. One of the things you learn about intelligence is that things have cause. That's a primitive logical function that you want to have. So once you start to ask the causes, you can say "What's the ultimate cause?" That's the same as asking, "Is there a god?"

Let's say you had the job of creating this world, how would you do it? One way is to sit down and imagine in your mind all the parts necessary and try to make them out of matter. Another one is to make a bunch of rules and see how it comes out. But what's interesting about researching artificial life is you find that when you take rules, and arbitrarily generate them at random, there's this great big vastland where nothing happens - the rules just kind of peter out - something happens briefly and then they're done. They kill themselves, it crashes and collapses...

M: *That's like most of the "Game of Life simu-*

lations" that you set up burn out after...

Yeah, they collapse very very quickly. And only a very very very tiny bunch of them will make a world that even has a chance of continuing and becoming more interesting and more complex. Chris Langton's great finding is that those worlds (that continue) are what he calls "at the edge of chaos." Those are worlds that aren't rigid with order, and they aren't completely chaotic, they're actually just shy of being chaotic. They're kind of constantly almost unraveling, and this constant almost unraveling is actually what you need to constantly build up. So it's really an important finding. People like astronomers have a whole bunch of interesting

"What was surprising to me was the number of times these scientists used the word God, that God was becoming sort of a technical term."

correlations, like if the density of gravity was 1-billionth of a difference off, either plus or minus, the whole universe would fall apart. There are all kinds of these constants that are set to a remarkable precision, just tuned right on this edge, and if it hadn't been the way it was, we wouldn't have this world. So this universe we're in is one of those rare areas in that if the laws of physics would have been different, probably nothing would've come out. So then you're left with this idea of a god selecting the few right rules to start with, where on it's own things are happening, and it never peters out, it always gets more complex. This is what A-life researchers are always trying to find. It turns out that it's very very hard to search for that. The possibilities are astronomical, searching for those rules, god's rules.

C: *Do you think that Maxis (producers of SimCity, SimLife, and SimAnt just to name*

a few) does a good job of finding these rules with their simulating computer "games?"

Yeah. In fact, if you talk to the people who make those games, they talk about those problems of having to find this right balance, so things don't get rigid and stuck, or unravel into chaos and die. They spend a lot of time trying to find this peculiar spot where everything keeps clicking.

M: *Is it possible that our universe is just a computer simulation running?*

Well that's my point. There is no difference between a really really good simulation, and reality.

C: *It's fascinating that humans can learn more about themselves by looking at computers and artificial life.*

M: *They become mini-gods.*

Yeah, my book actually reinterprets the story of Genesis in that same way, from the Old Testament viewpoint. It says that God decides to make this world, and one of the things he does for this world is make creatures that remain in his image. Here's this god, a very powerful, brainy, smart god, and somehow he has to make a replica of himself. How do you make a replica of God? It's a very difficult thing. You're trying to make matter into something that is god-like. So he makes the thing he calls humans, and they're kind of flawed, and one of the things he does is gives them this sort

of urge to create or to be gods themselves.

M: *He makes them out of control.*

He makes them out of control, and that's part of the thing, is that you can choose, "I give you full freedom, you can choose to create or you can choose to destroy, it's up to you. There are penalties for destroying and rewards for creating but for you to really create, I can't force you." That's the thing. How do you really get someone to create something? You can't make a robot create unless you give the robot an opportunity to fail and make mistakes, to do evil. So God said, "I created you to be able to create. By the way, that means you have the power to do evil."

M: *You can't have one without the other.*
Exactly.

C: *That's what gives the world its chaotic edge.*

Yeah, so what's happening now is that in fulfilling this creation, there's a second order of creation. The humans are now going to say, "Hmm, let's create another being that can create. This is what our quest is, is to make this being that will think and be creative. We'll make beings that will surprise us." So to do that, we have to allow it that space, that out of controllness I call it, and you'll probably have guidelines. In the Old Testament you have commandments, and as long as you obey these you can do whatever you want, and you might have to destroy the ones who don't obey that. So to me, in 3 generations (God, humans, A-life), we're in the middle, and my understanding of God is that he created every person to surprise him. God potentially could create whatever he can come up with, but it's much more fun to create something that would think on its own. Just like we could create whatever we wanted to, but it's much more fun to create something that would surprise us. I think that's sort of our goal in life, to surprise God with some very wonderful creation. ✕



Parking Lots o' Fun

Truth by Brendan Dunn

AT THE PLACE WHERE I WAS WORKING OVER THE SUMMER, there were four different locations in which you could park: parking meters on the street (.25 per 15 minutes — out of the question), a parking ramp (.25 per 1/2 hour or fraction thereof), a parking lot behind the toxic waste dump (seriously!) which was \$1 per day, and a second lot that was two blocks further away, but only cost .75 per day. Naturally, I always would park in the 75 cent lot.

So one day, I pull into the 75 cent lot and it's completely full. I check my wallet, and find I have only 3 quarters and a 20 dollar bill. The 3 quarters won't pay for the lot by the toxic waste dump (which is \$1), and I don't want to spend \$4.00 to park all day in the ramp. The lot by the toxic waste dump is self-service, so there's no one there to make change for my \$20. This is a fairly industrial area, so there's no real place to get change either. Finally, I come up with a brilliant plan. I drive into the ramp (.25 per 1/2 hour or fraction thereof), take a ticket, and drive right back around to the exit. That way I figure, I'll pay .25, get \$19.75 back in change, drive out, and park in the \$1 lot. Total cost: \$1.25. Not bad.

When I get to the exit, I hand the cashier my ticket. He looks at it, throws it away, raises the gate and says, "Go on through." I respond, "I'll tell you what, I need change for a 20. Can you give me some ones."

"No, sorry. The register won't open unless I'm depositing cash."

"Well, you should charge me 25 cents then."

"I can't. You've only been in here two minutes."

"Well, the sign says 25 cents per 1/2 hour or fraction thereof. Two minutes is a fraction of half an hour."

"Sorry, we don't charge people for less then five minutes."

"Well, we've been talking for about a minute here, so it's been three minutes already. I can wait another two."

At that point, I put the car in park and sit there. About 15 seconds later, I feel a tremendous impact, and my car lurches forward about 5 feet. Had the gate not been raised, I would have plowed right through it (too bad, that would have made a better story). I look behind me to see a woman leaning out the window of her car, looking confused. The front of her car is completely smashed. I get out to inspect the damage to my car (a 1976 Oldsmobile Battleship). There is none.

She says, "Oh, sorry. I didn't see you." I walk over to her car, and say, "Look, I don't want to have to deal with this right now. It isn't going to look good on your record rear-ending me while I'm paying in a parking ramp. So, if you give me a quarter, I'll forget this ever happened."

She gave me the quarter, I left, and parked in the \$1 lot. ✕

WOULD YOU BUY A USED TANK FROM THIS GIRL?

by John Bates

After working its special magic on comic book characters such as Popeye, Batman, the Flintstones and Dick Tracy, Hollywood has jumped into the sleeping bag with Tank Girl. We decided we'd better find out the story behind the upcoming Tank Girl movie before it either: a) bombed, and made the people responsible for the movie too ashamed to talk about it, or b) succeeded wildly, and made the people responsible unreachable snobs. **BOING BOING** correspondent John Bates conducted this interview by e-mail with Frank Wynne, editor of the London-based magazine *Deadline*, home of Tank Girl.

Who the fuck is TANK GIRL?

I think the more important question is who the fuck are you? TANK GIRL is the mutant love child of Barbarella and Hanna Barbera; she is Mad Max designed by Malcolm McLaren. She is, first and foremost a second-hand punk whose moneyspinner roaming the outback in search of Spunk beer, horny kangaroos, and shitheads to shoot at.

Who is set to play her, or is the film animated?

You don't really play TANK GIRL. It's more like demonic possession, so it doesn't really matter. You shave your head, strap the boots on, check yourself in the mirror and think: "Fuck, I'm cool. I'm ready for a crate of beer and quick shag, then blow away some innocent people." (Lori Petty is cast to play Tank Girl, after Emily Lloyd backed out when she learned she'd have to shave her head. Guess she never even looked at the comic before she originally said she'd take the job. Sheeit - ed.)

How closely will the characterization follow the comics (particularly sexual overtones - screwing animals in particular)?

MGM were a bit worried about what they saw as "the character's overtly aggressive posturing and aspects of bestiality" in the original draft script. There was a tense moment when we thought of selling out completely. Abandoning



the drugs, guns, beer and 'roo shagging and heading straight for a mainstream Steven Spielberg TANK GIRL. Then we woke up. Every moment of the film will be filled with bestiality, boozing, belching and ballistic missiles.

What will the budget be?

There's no budget. The actors and crew have agreed to be paid in beer, cigarettes and collectable Star Wars figurines.

What does TANK GIRL find so special about kangaroos?

Check your zoology books, techno fiends, and

you'll find that kangaroos have a forked penis - two dicks? Of course, TG really loves Booga (TG's kangaroo sidekick) for his mind.

What color was her hair to begin with?

Black and white, then she dyed it using some letratone.

Will TG beat the devil, fight ninja's, take her shirt off, take drugs, get drunk, and blow a lot of things to smithereens? Did Bill Clinton inhale? She'll be blitzed, blasted, bare assed and brandishing a bazooka before the credits roll!

Will we see the other characters from the strip - Camp Koala, Jet Girl, Sub Girl, etc.?

Yep. Jet and Sub are yet to be cast, but after his ground breaking role in Philadelphia, we have \$10 on Tom Hanks for Camp Koala.

Do Hewlett and Martin [the creators of the Tank Girl comics] drink coffee? What kind? Does it inspire their creative output? Yes. As part of his contract Jamie demands pure Kenyan Arabica to be fed on an IV drip hourly. Alan

is still hibernating, so I guess he drinks camp coffee with chicory, though a random test of their blood failed to determine levels of caffeine in the resulting chemical stew.

What kind of cartoons/TV/books influenced Hewlett and Martin as kids. 'Cause lots of cartoon characters turn up in TANK GIRL.

All of them. H&M's basic motor and linguistic skills were developed watching Scooby Doo, The Hair Bear Bunch, Banana Splits, Thunderbirds, Sting Ray, U.F.O. and reading Kafka. X

Zip.5 The Manual of



r u d y r u c k e r

january 7, 1994 friday 2:55 pm

No clear idea of what day of the week it is, I'm still in the holiday "broken clock" mode of vacation. It's times like this when it really pays off to be an academic. ¶ I'm on my way to Portugal, to be filmed by some guy who got a grant from the City of Lisbon to make a movie about Lisbon. Edgar Pera. Edgar's read some of my books in Portuguese and decided to have me be in his movie, also Robert Anton Wilson and maybe Terence McKenna.

Catarina, the producer, wrote to ask me my sizes for costumes. The movie may be fictional rather than the expected documentary, I don't know. She called again just before I left, and I asked her what the costumes were, but she didn't want to tell me. "It's better if it's a surprise." So the theory I've been promulgating to my friends and family is that I'm going to Portugal to be filmed dressed as a giant chicken scratching at the ground with my feet. My dog Arf has been scratching the ground like crazy recently, I think it releases musk from glands by his dewlaps. I've been studying him in preparation for my role.

If Edgar asks me to improvise, that's what I can do. My face will show inside the huge, open beak. Foghorn Leghorn. A wobbling feather duster wired to my padded fanny. Or, worse, the handle stuck up my naked butt. But, hey, don't laugh, they're paying me all expenses plus a nice fee.

january 8, 1994 saturday 5:45 pm

Well, I'm still in an airport 29 hours later. Newark was iced in, and my flight from Dulles was canceled. A lot of arguing with

United — I put on such a rage act that it gave my heart a twinge of angina, and I realized, hey, chill Rude-dude, this is not worth it. So I spent the night in the Dulles Hyatt, and went back to Dulles early this morning.

Here in NY, the tree branches are all covered with thick coats of ice. There's been an ice storm, which is why it took me 24 hours longer than expected. I have a boarding pass for Air Portugal; I'm hoping it takes off in an hour like it's supposed to. My suitcase got away from me at Dulles yesterday, so I've been wearing these clothes for two days now, and slept in the shirt as well. Supposedly it will catch up with me or I with it in Lisbon. If I ever get there.

saturday 6:30 pm

OK, we are on the plane. I have a window seat and the plane is completely full. This is going to be rough. Nobody on the plane seems to speak English. The loudspeaker is playing The Lettermen singing Christmas carols. A big fat stoic lady is sitting next to me

e v a s i o n

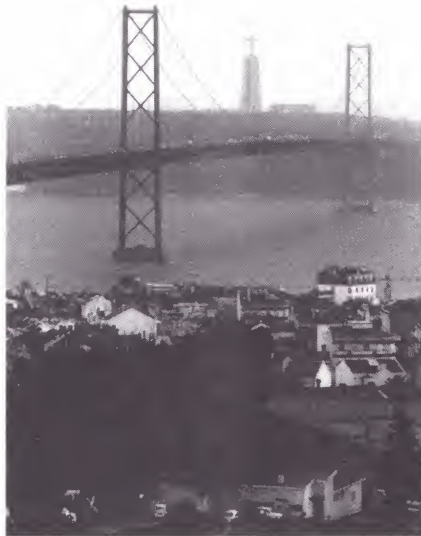
in all black, with a big purse and coat and shopping bags that she doesn't want to put in the overhead. Her face is covered with warts ... warts on warts like a fractal. Her arm is sticking way into my space. It's a good thing they're paying me to do this.

January 9, 1994 sunday

The plane sat on the ground for 2 1/2 hours before taking off. While we were sitting there, Robert Anton Wilson got on the plane, his connection had been late. I said "hi" to him; he looked pretty stressed, his face taut, red and mask-like. Later he told me that he's 62 and has high blood pressure. He also has post-polio syndrome, which makes him walk unsteadily.

When we got to Lisbon, it turned out that both our suitcases were lost. We spent a good bit of time giving info to the baggage people, and when we finally got out of the airport, there was, surprise, nobody there to meet us. So there I was, 36 hours after starting out from D.C., with my suitcase gone, no clue what to do, and old Bob Wilson on my hands. He was starting to really lose it, obsessively complaining about everything, like not having his medicine, and placing me unwillingly into the role of chirpy cheerer-upper that I'd just finished doing with Pop before I left for Lisbon. Wilson looks a bit like Pop, actually. I told him, "Don't be so surprised they didn't manage to meet us. I mean these are people who invited Rucker, Wilson and McKenna to be in their movie. These people have got to be nuts! These people are fucked up! It's like ... how long would you wait for Queen Mu to meet you at an airport?"

With Wilson at the Lisbon airport, I asked the Tourism counter to recommend a hotel, and we got a cab to their recommended Hotel Nacional, a depressingly anonymous place in the business district, new, soulless, with a lobby of stone polished to a fierce tombstone glare; it didn't seem as if anyone else was staying there. Wilson and I lay down for naps in our separate rooms. My heart was doing funny things lying there, palpitations you might call them, my poor overstressed heart



fluttering in my chest. I got up at 2:00, and Wilson was still asleep. Fine.

I found a little funicular and rode it up to the Barrio Alto, a neighborhood of old houses with laundry hanging out. As it was Sunday, most things were closed, but I did stop in at one hole-in-the-wall cafe for a 150\$00 glass of beer. (The Portuguese use the \$ sign for a decimal

"How long would you wait for Queen Mu to meet you at an airport?"

point.) The exchange rate is about 160 escudos to 1 dollar, so that means the beer was about ninety cents. Not that it was a big one by any means, it was a strange crippled-looking little glass, kind of like the stumpy Mediterranean men in there. It was a beautiful spot – tiled walls and a real wrought-iron lamp high on the wall, but the people in there were the kinds of guys who would be forced out to spend their time in the lobbies of the train stations in Germany, or the parking lots of 7-11s in California. Short guys with lined faces and thin lips.

When I got back to the Hotel Nacional it was about 5:00. The good news was that Catarina Santos was on the phone looking for me. I'd sent her a fax at 2:00 when I got up. She was the individual

who had been assigned to meet us at the Lisbon airport, that looked (to me anyway) comparable to the airport in Killeville, Virginia. It's pretty hard to miss someone at the exit, but Catarina had missed us, and had even given a frantic "Your father is missing!" call to son Tom, back in Los Perros, at 2 AM California time, which made me want to kill her.

Waiting for Catarina to come to the hotel, Wilson and I had a few drinks, then slept a couple more hours, and then she showed up, looking much cuter than expected, at about quarter of ten. And trailed by none other than Terence McKenna.

Catarina is *une jolie laide*, a woman with such lively complicated features that you love to watch her. She has large, highly animated lips which are often drawn twitchingly up to her nose for this or that badger/gopher face of mockery or emphasis. She has a cracking, charming voice because she smokes cigarettes all the time, like all of the people here. She was dressed all in black with a miniskirt and a black leather coat. Terence was glued to her like a limpet, apparently they were having an affair. I didn't envy him, as she's a sulker and a manipulator. But she was fun to watch; her face was like a circus.

It turned out that Terence had gotten to Lisbon three days earlier than Wilson

and me, and was angling to stay three days longer. He's divorced, unemployed, and was eager to stretch out the gig.

Terence is a person that grows on you. He's a tall skinny guy, about six feet and 160 pounds, with a kind of gold-pro prospector face, meaning a chin up near his nose as if he didn't have teeth, and loads of whiskers in no particular pattern covering most of his phiz. His eyes are large, thoughtful and brown. His forehead is low; I'd say the guy's whole face is about half the height of a standard horse-faced soap-actor's visage. He has a head like a cheerfully scrunched fist. He looks a little like what you get when you put two dots of ink for eyes on your index finger's bottom knuckle and bounce the knuckle up and down over your thumb with a

Continued on page 58 ...

Dark

It's a Goth World After All

by David Pescovitz

"I dare you to be real."

-Peter Murphy

It was a dark and stormy night. Well, it was night, anyway, and the club was dark. The music was also dark. And the clothes were, um, dark, too.

As the creatures of the night sway and prance in renaissance-inspired floor-length gowns and crushed velvet jackets, DJ Xavier "X" Haight spins the new soundtrack of industrial-influenced Dark Wave.

Goth, like most forms of music, didn't emerge suddenly, or from any one

source. The standard story is that the word "gothic" was first used, (apart, of course, from describing the marauding indo-europeans who stirred up the shit at the end of the Roman Empire, or the novels about people who hung out in castles) in 1978 on BBC television to describe Joy Division's musical style.

Joy Division

looked like your standard-issue post-punks, though. The distinctive goth look didn't really get off the ground until the early '80s, when clubs like the Batcave and Another Excess in London became the cool places to show off your new punk-Addams fami-

ly outfit and makeup.

The British press quickly caught on, and several bands of the late seventies got thrown into to goth corral: Bauhaus, Christian Death, Southern Death Cult, Sisters of Mercy, and Siouxsie and the Banshees.

All music genres have a look, but the music usually takes center stage. Not so

with Goth, where what you wear is at least as important as what you listen too. Here at Usher, I watch a young girl casually painting her nails blood red while she works a booth selling 'zines like *Propaganda* and *Ghastly*. She's oblivious to the potential customers lined up at the counter.

In another



Shawni. Photo by Debra McClinton



It's Tuesday, actually early Wednesday morning, inside San Francisco's House of Usher, a bi-level dance club named after the Edgar Allen Poe poem. The look is severe — more black eyeliner than a Wet N' Wild warehouse and enough white face powder to fill the Medellin Cartel's warehouse.



Photography by Brian McGilloway, unless otherwise noted.

WAVE



room, a more enterprising lad is working frantically to fit a group of people with custom-made fangs.

The guy looks to be about twenty years old, and wears none of the makeup or clothing that his customers have on. He sits at a long table covered with dental instruments, tubes of compound in various tints used as the material for the fangs, and a UV lightbox to cure them.

"How much does it cost for a set of fangs?" I ask.

"Forty dollars," he says without looking up from his work.

"Do they look real?" I ask him.

He sighs, nods his head at a girl sitting on a pillow and says to her, "Show him."

The girl has long blond hair and red-black lipstick. She smiles mechanically, exposing her fangs. They look perfect.

I tell the tooth maker that I'm writing an article for a magazine, and he warms up a little. He says he's a dental technician from Sacramento, and drives down to House of Usher a couple of times a month. Business is good.

"What does your boss think?" I ask.

"He doesn't like it."

"Why not? Do you mess up his equipment or something?"

"No. I stay up all night making fangs, and then I fall asleep at work."

...

What is it about Goth that's kept it from becoming a footnote in the history of music subcultures? Sure, if you look hard enough, you can find small remnants of other genres: mods, rude boys, and new romantics. But the goth culture is growing, even exploding.

(A test of goth's durability, however,

will take place this winter when Tom Cruise drives a Hollywooden stake through the heart of neo-gothic writer Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*.)

British singer Danielle Dax has a simple explanation for why goth is still around: "I think the goth scene has continued to survive to this day primarily because there will always be a demand for rock-based music and a good excuse needed to dress up."

Perhaps, though, goth has survived because the music has changed with the

times. Dark Wave bands, such as Das Ich and Aurora, are becoming more popular with the goth crowd, especially the ones who go for a more heavy-hitting sound and amped-up theatrics.

Brian McNellis, editor of the magazine *Nexis 6*, credits the resurgence of goth to the formation of the LA-based Cleopatra record label three years ago. "Goth was dead," says McNellis. Then Brian Perera started Cleopatra, against everybody else's better judgement, and

now goth is huger than ever. Brian pretty much did it single-handedly."

What is the appeal of goth, beyond a desire to wear cool clothes and hang out in dark clubs? Does there really need to be any other reason?

Yes, says 20-year-old Joseph Young, a regular at Usher. "It starts out as a very spiritual and aesthetic internal situation," he says. "Often times, as children, we found it difficult to identify with the people around us. I developed dark, romantic, dramatic ideals as to how I would like life to be."

Not surprisingly, Young was somewhat introverted as a kid. How many children in the 1980s dreamed of "running around a vine-covered monastery courtyard?"

Young is a quintessential example of gothic cul-



Xavier. Photo by Debra McClinton

ture. He's dramatic and unashamedly emotional. He doesn't like literature, he "adores" it. He knows that Albert Camus did not write a book based on the Cure's hit "Killing An Arab." He waxes poetically about existentialism and Buddhism.

In fact, waxing poetically is a common goth trait. Such melancholy meandering, along with wearing costumes appropriate for a Victorian funeral, help fuel the stereotype that all goths are terribly depressed.

"The somberness is my intellect," Young says. "We're very academic people. You're most apt to find us reading a book



Danielle Dax

fringe academy of arts and letters.

"There is a great interest in learning about the world," he says. "When we have a good time, it usually involves a great deal of creativity and role playing. When you love life, there is no greater choice to make but to be theatrical and dramatic

in a corner."

Listening to the House of Usher denizens talk about their interests is like taking a course in classic dark literature — heavy on the Brontes, Byron, Shelley and Yeats — only the male professor wears a dress and lipstick, and the woman professor wears a pair of custom fangs. Young considers himself and his goth peers as students in a

about it."

While every subculture has a dress code, the theatrics and elaborate costumes of goth are one of the most important elements of making the scene. But, says Bently, a friend of Young's, "It's non-judgmental. I would hope that none of us would judge someone because they're not wearing enough make-up."

Outside the House of Usher, however, boys who wear makeup aren't always appreciated for their sense of theatrics. In the humming fluorescence of the shopping mall, Bentley must adopt the drag of slacks and a button-down shirt when he heads to work at Mervyn's.

Bentley stresses he's not the depressed symbol-of-suffering he's often accused of being while wearing a "skirt to the supermarket." His only source of misery, he claims, is a lack of money.

Gloom is undeniably a part of goth and dark wave. But that doesn't necessarily mean that listening to goth will make you depressed. In fact, some people will tell you just the opposite. "Hearing someone express the same type of feelings that bum you out can make you feel better,"

Continued on page 45 ...

The Electric Goth

■ Peter Stone (below) is sysop of The Cyberden, the best BBS about Gothic, Dark Wave and Industrial music. The Cyberden uses FirstClass BBS software, and Stone, of the band Xorcist, has done a great job designing a system that looks cool and is fun and easy to use. The Cyberden is linked to a bunch of other music related systems on the Net, and also features Internet e-mail, news from independent record labels, files about music, comix and Japanese animation, and hundreds of Usenet newsgroups. A full access subscription is only \$10 a month. For information call (415) 507 0333 or e-mail bat@cyberden.com.



Photo: Gayle Grimes

Goth World Wide Web Servers:

The Dark Side: <http://gothic.acs.csulb.edu:8080>

Rob's Gothic Section: <http://web.cs.nott.ac.uk/~rji/index.htm>

Sisters of Mercy Home Page: <http://www.cm.cf.ac.uk/Sisters.Of.Mercy/>

The Gateway to Darkness: <http://155.31.1.201:2010/home.html>

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Cross Country on Kitchen Fat!

Greasy Riders

by Kristy O'Rell

"WAKE UP, ST. LOUIS! THE LARD CAR IS HERE!"

■ Julie "DJ" Konop is inside a 1984 Grabber Blue Chevy Beauville van, shouting into a microphone connected to a PA speaker. Making its way through a St. Louis suburb, the huge gas guzzler is a funky sight. DJ sounds strikingly similar to a Baptist minister praising the value of God, except here on the way to the 1994 Art Car Parade, DJ praises the value of kitchen grease as car fuel.

Sarah Lewison, sitting behind the wheel of the \$1,500 Beauville, drives the beast slowly so sidewalk spectators can take in its prowess. She waves to the crowd like a pageant beauty as pal Niki Cousino rummages through papers and maps. A large plastic container full of vegetable oil is wedged between Niki and the van door; they may need to stop and fill up the van's tank soon.

• • •

Savvy! Adventurous! Wacky! Real! Hyped as eccentric artists on an environmental crusade, Julie, Niki, Sarah, and Florence Dore, all San Francisco media artists, decided over a year ago to make a documentary about the biodiesel industry. The cross-continental road trip/video project titled *Fat Of The Land* has become a small-time success story.

While progress in the biodiesel field has garnered a lot of attention in the scientific world, much remains to be seen about educating the general public (hell, when I phoned The Sierra Club, SF chapter, and California's Air Quality Management earlier this year to get feedback, representatives didn't have even an *opinion* on biodiesel).

What better way to let the public learn about biodiesel than by giving the whole country a road test? The Chevy van runs on what is likely the cleanest burning combustible fuel processed today. Biodiesel (part vegetable oil/part diesel gas) has a reasonable BTU (British Thermal Unit) count; and with over 4.2 billion pounds of oil dumped god-knows-where each year, the scent of fryer fat on free-ways smells damn appealing. The machine's 6.2 liter diesel engine kicks booty, getting about 24 miles to the gallon and can cruise along at 85 m.p.h.

Making stop points at petroleum-pampered shrines like the Henry Ford Museum in Detroit, the group didn't expect the grand reception they encountered. "When we arrived at the Henry Ford museum, we were greeted by this nicely dressed guide who seemed delighted to give us the deluxe tour of the place," Julie recalled. "Henry Ford was a *verrrrry* interesting guy. He had this obsession with soybeans. The museum had this car that Ford built out of soybean materials and that ran on soy fuel. Really wild. It validated our reasons to do the project."

Fat Of The Land began its 4,000 mile odyssey on August 9th, through the quiet green landscape of Hurleyville, New York (home of guru eco-inventor Louis Winchesky, who saw the gals off). With thousands of dollars worth of their own equipment, donated supplies and cheap orange waitress uniforms to don for the press, the women wound through Pennsylvania, Michigan, down Indiana and into the heartland of Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado. On August 28th, they reached San Francisco.

The constant aroma of french fries

filled their nasal passages during red-eyed shifts of driving. Planning their itinerary kept their minds off the heat and humidity of an Indian Summer. And of course they over-scheduled themselves!

"Our schedule was insane," Niki says, laughing. "We'll know better next time."

I asked Niki how the press received them. "The media, while very supportive, seemed to want to take us less seriously than the public," she says. "Scientists have taken similar excursions in the past, but we were viewed a bit differently."

Florence agrees. "I did this radio interview in Tucson where the guy goes 'Oh! Girls! Where did you shower?'"

Showing off the van to flabbergasted onlookers wasn't the main objective of the trip, however. "Every stop we made, I made it a point to ask diesel experts how we could improve the batch," explains Sarah. The women went through about 50 gallons of homebrewed biodiesel during the course of the trip, with more donated by regional sponsors like the Nebraska Soybean Program. But the favorite fuel stops consisted of pulling up to a greasy spoon or burger chain and scrounging fryer fat from the management. In dusty parking lots, the crew would assemble for *transesterification*: mixing an alcohol with a catalyst, and then mixing this combination with vegetable oil. Glycerin soon settles out and water is used to wash out a kind of soap that forms; methyl ester and glycerin, the "gold" oil, is the result. Diesel is then added, so little or no alteration to the car's fuel injection system need be made. This works on diesel engines only. Don't try this on Daddy's new Lexus.

Sometimes it took an entire day to make the fuel, depending on the size of

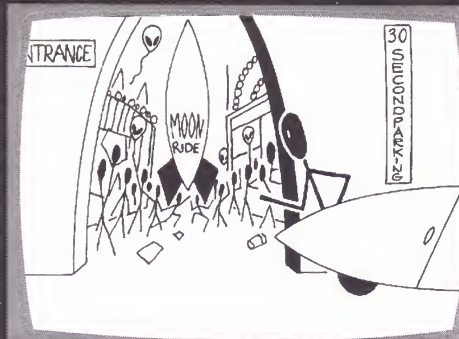
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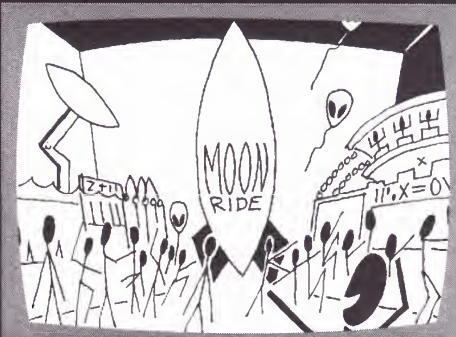
SITUATION: Spaceship pours various items into building and flies away. Car cruises into view.
SOUND FX: Humming/breaking glass/car.



SITUATION: Stickperson in car switches radio (starting soundtrack) on then makes a sudden left turn towards building.
SOUND FX: Music/all percussion.

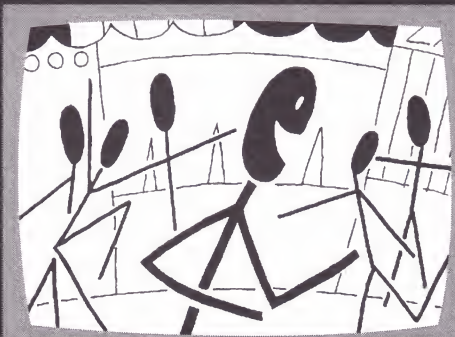


SITUATION: Stickperson parks and jumps out of the car, then walks straight into a carnival going on inside the building.
SOUND FX: Appliances being used.



SITUATION: Stickperson looks around and then sees the Moon Ride.

SOUND FX: Siren.



SITUATION: Stickperson runs towards the Moon Ride.

SOUND FX: Passing electrical carnival.



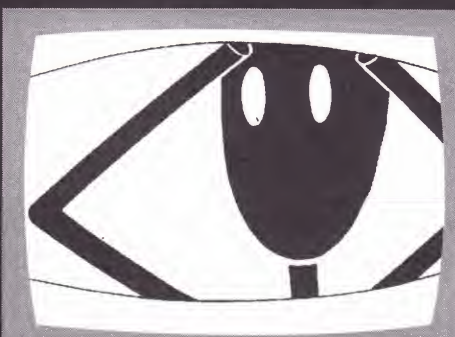
SITUATION: Stickperson slides into the ride.

SOUND FX: Heavy metal door.



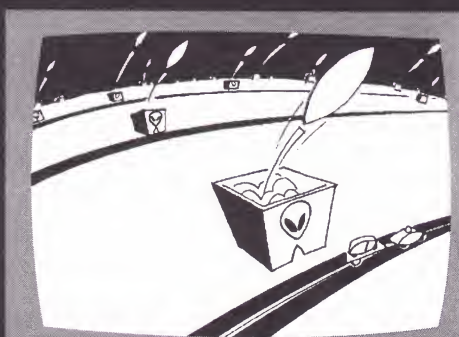
SITUATION: Ship blasts off, dropping fins and carnival sign.

SOUND FX: Skipping CD player.



SITUATION: Stickperson realizes this trip may not be a ride after all.

SOUND FX: Low humming/wind.



SITUATION: Stickperson sees that this is happening all over.

SOUND FX: Loud humming.

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the batch. The temptation to pull into a gas station and use the pump instead of busting ass over a 5-hour chemistry experiment was repeatedly ignored. "We were really frustrated at first," admits Niki, "but through the course of time, things came easier."

Sarah's lesson about "liquids and their specific properties," left me kind of dizzy, but here's the lowdown: by the end of the trip, the Beauville burned fuel made of 100% vegetable oil on a non-converted diesel engine. The

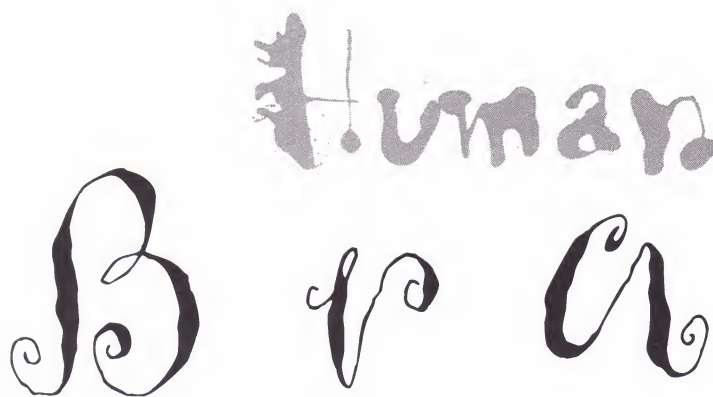


women also discovered that the Midwest is a virtual hotbed of new ideas and experimentation for alternative fuels. "A lot of people are learning about biodiesel at county fairs. The recreational thing is to hang out with your buddies and discuss solutions in making your farming operations more efficient," says Sarah.

From spending several days with Tom Reed ("The Granddaddy of Biodiesel") in Colorado, to bonding with farmers in Kansas, the trip provided immeasurable insights into an American public eager for change within the fuel industry. "The notion that consumers won't pay more for a cleaner fuel is a myth," Julie says.

Fat Of The Land is slated to open in theaters this coming February. Cousino, Lewison, Konop, Dore and Todus are focusing on post-production work but they still need help covering the costs. If you're bored with your investments or happen to be a trustafarian in limbo, drop them a line. Given the monopolistic business practices and sordid politics of the petroleum industry, biodiesel is a tres righteous, tres cool alternative. ✕

For more info E-mail Sarah at sarahlew@aol.com. Phone: (415) 941-6838. *Fat Of The Land*, c/o Julie Konop, 2365 Bryant St., San Francisco, CA 94110



Vaughn uses vice grips to pinch a small bit of sheet metal which he holds over a hissing propane torch. Almost instantaneously the metal glows bright red. He moves it away from the torch and steadily lowers it onto the shoulder blade of the young woman lying still on the couch beside him. Her flesh sizzles slightly when it's kissed by the hot metal. The woman doesn't wince.

The stench of burning flesh permeates the small back room of Body Manipulations. 34-year-old Vaughn owns the piercing, branding, and scarification studio in San Francisco.

Two more strikes to go to complete the pattern of 6 connecting burns to form a 2-inch Ankh—the Egyptian symbol of life.

After Vaughn nods in approval at his work, the woman jumps off the padded table and laughs with glee as she examines her shoulder in the mirror.

Heather Jenks, a 21-year-old massage therapist and student immediately knew that the total of eight hours driving time, \$30 for Vaughn's service, and unpredictable amount of future pain, were well worth the permanent design on her body. Her shoulder now resembles a piece of soft wood with a thin cross-like symbol carved deeply into the grain.

"I guess no one's going to be massaging my shoulder for a while," Jenks says as she casually, but carefully, slips her arm into the sleeve of her white blouse.

Jenks' roommate, 18-year-old Valerie Henson, also a student, is about to get the same brand. She removes her shirt to reveal a pierced nipple and navel.

Although branding is often categorized with other body modifications such as exotic piercing and tattooing, it hasn't even come close to their level of popularity.

While Body Manipulations may pierce over 100 people each week, only 10 to 12 branding appointments are made each year.

"Sure, people are curious about branding," he says, brushing his long blonde hair out of his face to reveal earlobe-holes stretched with rings as thick as cigars. "The idea of burning yourself just eludes people. It's going to take branding 10-15 years to get really popular. We've had a 10 or 20 percent rise already. But that amount of growth from almost nothing is still almost nothing."

The reasons people get branded are as numerous and varied as the motives to pay a stranger \$70 to force a needle through one's tongue or genitalia.

"I got my first brand, the Aleph [which, according to the Cabala, stands for "the pure and boundless godhead"], mainly because I thought it would look cool," says Steve Steinberg, a writer and grad student at UC Berkeley. "But the branding is inescapably ritual. From the preparation of the tools, to the heating of the metal pieces, to the smell of burnt flesh; each action becomes endowed with far more significance than would seem possible given my initially trite rationale for the brand."

Fakir Musafar, 63, an American resident of San Francisco, is known around the world as a guru of body modifications. He's an expert at piercing, branding, scarification, and every other type of manipulation. Musafar learned his art by self-practice, beginning as a teenager.

Currently, Musafar publishes and edits *Body Play and Modern Primitives Quarterly*, a journal documenting all forms of body alterations including everything from the use of corsets as a method of reshaping the figure to yoga contortions.

Branding

By David Pescovitz

Musafar also teaches body piercing in a private program. He says demand by students for information on branding was so great that he now offers a popular 2-day course on the subject for \$200. The students experiment on each other.

"People get branded for excellent reasons," he says. "Some are performing their own ritual, rite of passage or initiation. Women often do it to metaphorically reclaim their bodies. To some it's aesthetic, erotic or both.

"The fraternities are a perfect example of branding for peer acceptance and initiation," Musafar says. Even big names like Michael Jordan, Emmitt Smith, and Jesse Jackson had their Greek letters branded on them during initiation rituals.

Jenks, who has no tattoos or piercings other than the rings through her ears became interested in branding simply because of its aesthetic value.

"I saw a guy branded with a cactus in this music video and thought it looked really beautiful," she says. "I guess I'm sick that way. But I didn't know what it was."

"We know some guys with bowl burns," Henson adds. "They hold a pot pipe over a lighter, then burn themselves. That's just macho bullshit but it puffs up so we figured out the cactus was sort of the same thing. I was really attracted to the cactus' beauty."

According to Musafar, as more and more people learn to brand properly, and their human "canvases" are noticed by others through the media and on the street, its popularity will grow.

But what of the cattle brand and slavery images that often come to mind with the mention of branding? According to Musafar, branding could negate these

stereotypes or even transform a taboo into a turn-on.

"Branding has negative connotations in our society with stereotypes of ownership and property," he says. "For some, the negative stereotypes add a lot to the eroticism and the glamour of branding. But in other cultures, like several African tribes, brandings give you status, class and often put you in the category of a mystic or shaman."

Vaughn and Musafar agree that it is extremely important to dispel myths about how brands are performed. The implement does not resemble a cattle brand as one might think. In fact, cattle brands are too thick and tend to create only a smudged welt.

Vaughn's tools include a propane torch, vice grips and small pieces of thin sheet metal bent into parts of the desired pattern. The brand is done in sections and the metal touches the skin for a good full second - enough time to create a third-degree burn.

The burn takes several months to heal, and the finished product varies greatly according to one's complexion. Brands are much more visible as a raised pink scar on dark complected people. On light skin, the mark fades over time.

That uncertainty about a brand's permanence is what Vaughn thinks sways most people against being branded.

"Brands don't have much of an advantage other than that they're an alternative to piercing or tattooing," he says. "The product is not worth the procedure in my opinion."



But
Steinberg
thinks \$50

and a little pain is

well worth it. "Because per-

manently altering your body is somewhat taboo, it gives you a certain sense of freedom to do so," he explains. "Desecrating' my body with a sacred symbol has some obvious irony, as well as religious significance.

"As with my tattoo, there is a certain pleasure in waking up and seeing myself inscribed; but because the brand is more subtle, the pleasure is more secretive."

At work, Vaughn keeps his opinions to himself. He is only interested in performing his services in a safe and professional manner.

"It's your turn," he says calmly as Henson lies down on the couch. "Try and stay as relaxed as possible."

"Does it hurt?" she asks her friend, nervously.

"Kind of," Jenks responds. "But I was expecting it to be a lot worse."

Vaughn holds the vice grips tightly in the flame before moving slowly toward Henson.

An hour later Henson and Jenks relive their experience as they stroll leisurely to their car, their adrenaline quite a bit higher than when they arrived. Yeah, it hurts, but that's just temporary - a lot more temporary than their new skin art. X

"... when writers yarn their selves awake
and writhe in wretched abcedaria ..."

— James Joyce,
Finnegans Wake

Alphabet Noir

A Portrait in 26 Pieces by Wayne Alan Brenner



A is for Ambergris

My old girlfriend Sylvia collects perfumes that have been fixed with ambergris.

Ambergris is a waxy substance that's formed in the intestines of whales; it's found on the beach or floating in the ocean — extremely rare events — or it's taken directly from the whale's insides, which is done after the whale's been killed, which is supposed to be illegal worldwide and not a thing that Sylvia likes to think about. Anyway, ambergris is kind of rare and expensive, and Sylvia figures it's for her since she's kind of rare and expensive too. Also, she's had a thing for whales ever since she did her Master's thesis on Moby Dick and had it published in some obscure literary magazine.

B is for Bilingual

Sylvia has a very high opinion of herself most of the time, but not when she's depressed: then she stands naked in front of the bathroom mirror and hits herself until there are bright red marks all over her body. (At least, she used to do this, every so often, while we were living together. It's not a thing that she'd like anybody to know, I'm sure, so you might as well assume that it was just a phase she was going through and that she no longer does it, is now normal and well-adjusted and so on.) One of the things that she likes about herself when she's feeling good is that she's fluent in Japanese. Her parents were in the military, stationed near Osaka, when she was born, so she grew up over there and had an old Japanese woman as a part-time nanny. Sylvia learned Japanese even faster than she learned English, her father says, and these days she keeps in practice by tutoring students at

the local community college every Tuesday night. She's especially glad that she speaks Japanese instead of French or German or something, because, she says, the Japanese are eventually going to run the world and then she'll have a sort of inside track on the scene.

C is for Coffee

Sylvia's favorite drink is coffee, and when she has a cup of some new kind of bean she does this little tasting ritual, as if she were a connoisseur at a fancy wine-testing affair. It's kind of annoying, frankly, watching her go through it in public. She's done it for years — there are a lot of different coffees in the world — but it still seems pretty damned pretentious, especially when you're sitting with her in a crowded place like Quackenbush's or Les Amis and people start looking at you like you're sitting with a woman who's having some sort of epileptic fit. She's definitely serious about it though: two whole shelves in her kitchen are devoted to coffee, the bottom shelf of her big bookcase is crammed with volumes about the stuff, and with maps of Ethiopia and Java, and on the wall above her aquarium there's an original Too Much Coffee Man cartoon dedicated to her by Shannon Wheeler, and besides two electric grinders she also has a brass espresso machine from Italy that took her months of saving to afford. And she often goes to this little cafe on the east side of town, where they get monthly shipments from South America, and the family who runs the place treats her like a daughter.

D is for Dirigible

Sylvia's great-grandfather was one of the

people who died in the Hindenburg disaster. She's got these old sepia-toned photos of him on her bedroom dresser, and near the small dresser lamp are a bunch of letters he'd sent to his eldest and favorite daughter — Sylvia's grandma. She's got a newsreel video of the crash, too, and she plays it and lights this long white candle on May 6th of every year. Sylvia thinks it's cool, somehow, being related to a part of history like that, and one of her favorite sarcastic things to say about someone's slight misfortune is "Oh the humanity!"

E is for Emerald

Sylvia's birthstone. She has three small ones, gifts from her maternal grandparents. She wants more and bigger.

F is for Fossil

Sylvia no longer refers to her father as Father or Dad. Ever since her mother died, she's called him The Old Fossil. "I went to see The Old Fossil today," she'll say. "He's not looking so good." And she says the same thing to his face, too, except then it's sometimes Papa Fossil. Being a military man, he's retaliated, of course: her given name has been replaced by The Young Whelp. "Well," her father will ask me whenever I stop by to keep him company in the evenings, "what have you heard from The Young Whelp lately?"

G is for Gazpacho

Sylvia, who traveled all over Europe during summers from college, says there's this little restaurant just outside Toledo in Spain that makes the best gazpacho in the world, and try as she might there's no way she's going to find its equivalent in the States. Since gazpacho is pretty easy to make, she says, the chef in that restaurant must've used some special ingredient that no one else

knows about — although he wouldn't tell her when she asked. Sylvia's friend Leila, who traveled with her and who comes from New York to visit maybe once a year, tells me that the taste had less to do with the gazpacho than it did with the amount of dope Sylvia'd smoked before they sat down to eat.

H is for Horse

When Sylvia was four years old, her family was on R&R from Japan and spending a week at a relative's farmhouse in Nebraska. And there was a special corral out back, used for horses that hadn't been broken in yet. And one day while her mother and father and Uncle Richard were occupied with a new windmill, Sylvia climbed between the crossposts and walked over to the single dark stallion inside. The horse kicked as soon as she touched its leg. It knocked her to the ground and jumped all around her as she screamed and cried. Her father and uncle, running like their legs were on fire, were able to control the animal while Sylvia's mother scooped her up and got her outside the corral. At the doctor's office, Sylvia was treated for two fractured ribs and a slight concussion. She's been terrified of horses ever since.

I is for Intellectual

"The problem with most intellectuals," says Sylvia, "is that they've forgotten that their minds come equipped with these wonderful, handy-dandy physical experience machines — what we call bodies, you know — and all they ever do is hole up somewhere out of the light and discuss what's wrong with other people's discussions of things. Sweet suffering Jesus," she says, heading into one of her favorite rants, "there's nothing worse than a roomful of

militant navel-contemplators. Don't these people know what a beach is for?" Sylvia is quite pale and rarely leaves the great indoors for anything more than a Sunday jog along Town Lake.

J is for Julep

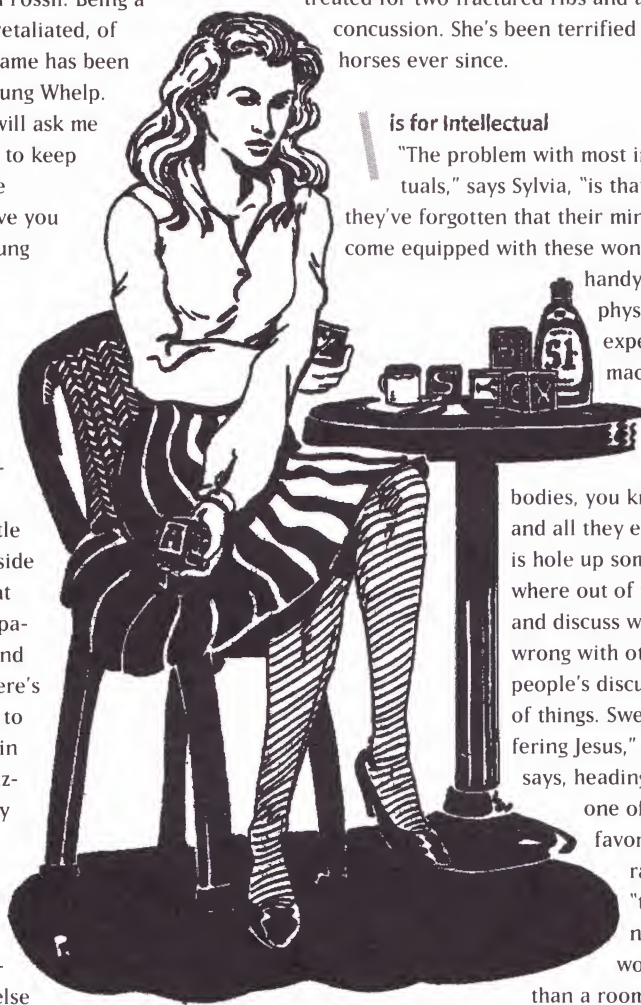
Sylvia hates the way bits of pop culture can creep into someone's mind and lodge there like barnacles in the water of consciousness. It annoys her that useless information is, without extreme conditioning, impossible to purge. It annoys her, for instance, that she will never be able to forget that, on Star Trek, Dr. McCoy's favorite drink is a Mint Julep. And that each time that bit of data surfaces, it's followed by the knowledge that it was acquired from the show's first season, in an episode called "Shore Leave" that was written by Theodore Sturgeon. On the other hand, Sylvia can never remember the phone number of her own apartment. And this, too, annoys her.

K is for Koala

There are two shoeboxes beneath Sylvia's bed, shoeboxes filled with stories that she'll never finish writing. One of the stories I remember is called "Underground." It's a melodramatic piece about this off-duty paramedic, a black woman, who chooses to save the life of a Nazi skinhead after a Puerto Rican gang tears into the skin in a subway station below Manhattan. And the young medic's got to use whatever's available, which includes her calf-skin belt, a pair of tweezers, a silk scarf, and this little clip-on Koala Bear ornament that some concerned yuppie-type has given her to use in clamping shut a torn artery. "Christ," says the paramedic, moving back to check her handiwork, "that's fucking ridiculous. But it should do the trick." Possibly the yuppie-type giggled, possibly nervously in response, but maybe not — the story ends right there, halfway down a sheet of Classic Laid.

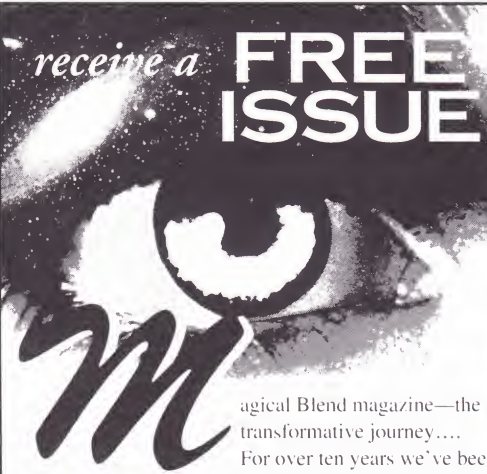
L is for Leila

They went to Smith together, shared a dorm, had a lot of the same classes, both majored in English. It was like discovering a long lost sister when they first met, Sylvia says. They were wild and crazy. They were inseparable. They were lovers, too, briefly — partially because they wanted to see what it would be like and partially because there was no male they cared for as much as they cared for each other. They ceased their lovemaking soon after return-



Paul Pope

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ing from Europe the second time, though, because Leila had met this guy named Hank in a bar in Boston. And Hank was really great for a couple of months but eventually he up and left for Seattle with some performance artist who had a pair of wings tattooed on each of her small breasts. Now Leila lives somewhere in Brooklyn and works behind the United counter at LaGuardia and goes through men like she's trying to meet some quota on an assembly line. Sylvia says.

M is for Marijuana

Sylvia has this bong that she bought at a head shop when she was still in high school; it looks like the plastic model of a bathyscaphe that's being attacked by some transparent mutant octopus. Since Sylvia rarely smokes anymore, the thing is usually stashed away in the top of her junk closet. When she does smoke, though, slightly reducing the baggie of her ex-neighbor's homegrown that she's had in the freezer for about a year, she brings the bong out and fills its chamber with cold Absolut before lighting up. If you're going to do a thing, she says, you should do it right. She says that almost every time she lights up, perhaps without realizing that she's said it so many times before.

N is for Narcissus

When the mirror isn't Sylvia's worst enemy, it's her best friend. She can stand in front of it in the bathroom for half an hour at a time, not even fixing her makeup — mascara is all she uses — but just looking at her face, examining her skin, the bone structure beneath, the way the light from the cracked window moves as she tilts her head first one way then the other. She makes faces in the mirror, observing — or maybe practicing — what she'll look like when she's annoyed or delighted or bored. She writes messages to herself on the mirror, too, after a shower has steamed the glass slate-like. SEE YOU SOON, she wrote once, then licked the moisture from her finger, smiling.

O is for Oscars

Sylvia has, in the living room of her apartment, a 40-gallon aquarium in which swim two very big fish called Oscars. They're kind of ugly, actually, and they eat crickets and frogs that Sylvia buys at a pet store downtown. She's named the fish in reference to their generic name: one is called Madison, the other is called Meyer. She used to have a third — de la Renta — but it died of some mysterious disease a few months after she bought it. Sylvia likes the idea of a couple of big fish instead of a bunch of tiny ones, but what she'd prefer is a roomsize tank that could hold at least a lemon shark, and in her wildest dreams what she has in a tank in her living room is an honest-to-God Coelacanth. But that, of course, is out of the question.

P is for Publishing

After four years of working for Cheshire House Publishing, Sylvia has finally got an office — a glorified cubicle, really — with a window view. She's a Senior Editor with the company now, and in fact supervises their small line of travel guides. She doesn't get to work until ten o'clock each weekday morning and usually doesn't leave until after six; this

allows her to miss rush hour traffic, which is no end of cheer to her. Still, it's a half-hour drive each way, so she listens to tapes of fiction or whatever — she's two-thirds through Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, currently — while she drives. She shares a secretary, Valerie, with two other Senior Editors, and every Friday morning Sylvia brings Valerie a chocolate éclair from this mom & pop bakery near the office.

Q is for Quintuplets

Before Sylvia's mother, Claire, was married, she lived next door to a woman who was an aunt of the Dionne Quintuplets. To Claire, this was a most remarkable thing, and, in fact, she remarked on it frequently — to anyone who would listen. "Constantly," says Sylvia. "Mom's single claim to fame. That, and living in Japan for part of her life. God bless The Old Fossil for giving her that, at least."

R is for Random House

One of the first things Sylvia did after graduating from Smith was to get a job with Random House in New York City. A month later she left, escorted from the building by two security guards. That's all Leila will divulge, and Sylvia refuses to talk about it at all. She used to get letters from their legal department every couple of months, but she'd always throw them into the kitchen trash, in there with coffee grounds, eggshells, and the tops of carrots.

S is for Subaru

Sylvia's is a dark red one, with a Tune-Up Masters decal on the rear window and a small dent — my fault — near the right front fender. The bucket seats recline all the way back, which is how she transported her mother to the hospital the day she died. Sylvia's father was at a Veteran's Conference in Washington at the time, and Sylvia was spending the week-end with her mother when the stroke hit. Sylvia said Claire kept going on about the car, slipping in and out of consciousness, mumbling about how she hoped it wasn't a Datsun because didn't the Datsun people kill whales and what did whales ever do to deserve such murder they were such harmless creatures. Sylvia assured her that it wasn't a Datsun — although she suspected the Subaru company was similarly involved — and tried to tell Claire about her perfumes, how they could come from whales without the whales being hurt in any way. But by then she was crying and trying to watch the traffic through her tears and all she could do was keep saying "It's okay, Mom, it's not a Datsun," over and over like some kind of prayer.

T is for Tensleep

Jack Tensleep is one of Sylvia's favorite authors, and the only good thing about her time at Random House, she says, is that she got to meet him at a cocktail party two years before he died. Sylvia's father is currently engrossed in Tensleep's last book, released posthumously, a birthday gift from The Young Whelp. It's a thick novel called *Brutally Frank*, about an Olympic boxer growing up in the urban tangle of Lynn, Massachusetts, and it's based on the life of one of Tensleep's boyhood heroes who is now a United States Senator. Tensleep died from complications resulting from AIDS; this fact,

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and the book's powerful writing, is causing Sylvia's dad to scrutinize his lifelong homophobia. At least that's what he said the other night, after we'd had a few Shiner bocks and were sitting in the semi-darkness of his screened porch. "I started thinking," he told me, "I started thinking that people shouldn't have to die just because they're, well, because they're faggots. And then I started thinking, well, what should happen to them because of it? And I thought, who the hell am I to say? What the hell have I done that gives me the right to, I don't know, pass judgment, I suppose. On a man like Tensleep. Or this Senator he's writing about. It's just that, when I was a young man, they were, the queers were. . . well, things weren't so out in the open. Like they are now. It didn't seem so, well, I don't know, who am I to say? To say anything?"

U is for Utopia

In Sylvia's idea of the perfect world, a lot of things are different from *Life As We Know It*. There are no wars, of course, and everybody has enough to eat. The rain forests survive, the whales and dolphins are left alone, cars are built with engines that run on bacteria-produced alcohol and don't pollute the air. All mechanical weapons or regular tools that are used for violence cease functioning when approached with malicious intent, leaving only sharp objects, blunt instruments, and human-powered projectiles — which, Sylvia figures, is perhaps a necessary serpent in Paradise and will keep things from becoming too boring, besides. All drugs are legalized and quality-controlled and if you get addicted there are people who will help you quit if you want but otherwise it's your own goddam choice and you have to accept responsibility for your actions. The penises of rapists explode before penetration can be forced. Anyone who tries to mandate what is Art and what is Not Art is stripped naked and spanked by a giant robotic Mommy, in public, with full media coverage. And, not last nor least, part of World Law states that someone must buy Sylvia a Ghirardelli chocolate bar at least once a week.

V is for Virginity

Sylvia relinquished — which is how she puts it — her virginity two months before she was fifteen. Her Uncle Richard and Aunt Carrie's son, Morris, who had just turned fifteen at the time, was her cohort in debauchery. The two of them had been play-

ing with the backyard hose, trying to cool off in the heavy heat of Nebraska's mid-summer. They were soaked, both of them, their clothes stuck dripping to their bodies like garments that had been painted on and begun melting under the imposing sun. Morris suggested the loft of the barn, which hadn't been completely stocked with hay, as a good place to dry off. Of course, in order to properly dry, he said inside the huge building, they would have to take off their clothes. Sylvia agreed without hesitation, but said that Morris would have to remove hers for her. And when he began nervously unbuttoning her waterslick blouse, she leaned down and kissed him twice, first on the cheek. They didn't leave the barn until it was suppertime, and for two days afterward Morris was unable to meet her eyes without blushing.

W is for Winter

When the sky is obliterated by thick white clouds and the bare trees look like giant nerve-endings protruding from the barren ground, that's when Sylvia is happiest. She likes the cold weather, the way a chill breeze stings her face and her bare arms and legs. When she's in a good mood she rushes about the dreary scene as if she were one of the few living things left on the planet. And when she's depressed she can pretend that the entire world commiserates with her, that it helplessly reflects her bleakest of funks and will not leap into Springtime until she's feeling pleased enough to release it from misery. Out here in the Southwest, she misses the Winters of her college days in New England, and she grinned like a madwoman last year when Leila sent her some snow in a Thermos via Federal Express.

X is for Xenophobia

Sylvia thinks that a lot of people who have a fear or hatred of strangers are that way because they're afraid of being considered strangers themselves — that if they can follow, or incite, others who bind together against someone of a different sex or skin color or sexual preference or whatever, they — the xenophobes — are less likely to have their own unique but less obvious qualities questioned or attacked. Fear of nonconformity, as well as its mirror-twin fear of conformity, is a powerful force and can lead to all sorts of insane behavior. "I mean," Sylvia once said to Leila at a bar downtown, "when you hear the phrase 'well-

adjusted individual,' you don't picture some guy with a sheet over his head calling himself a Grand Dragon and setting fire to a cross, do you?" "But all that sheet-and-cross stuff is just strange behavior, so aren't you the xenophobe in this case?" countered Leila, playing devil's advocate even though — or maybe because — she's half-African. "Not when that strange behavior is the practice of a group that gets its jollies by harassing and killing humans who aren't White and Christian," replied Sylvia. "Point taken," said Leila, winking at the bartender who was White but possibly Jewish. And with whom Leila would spend most of the next weekend.

Y is for Yeti

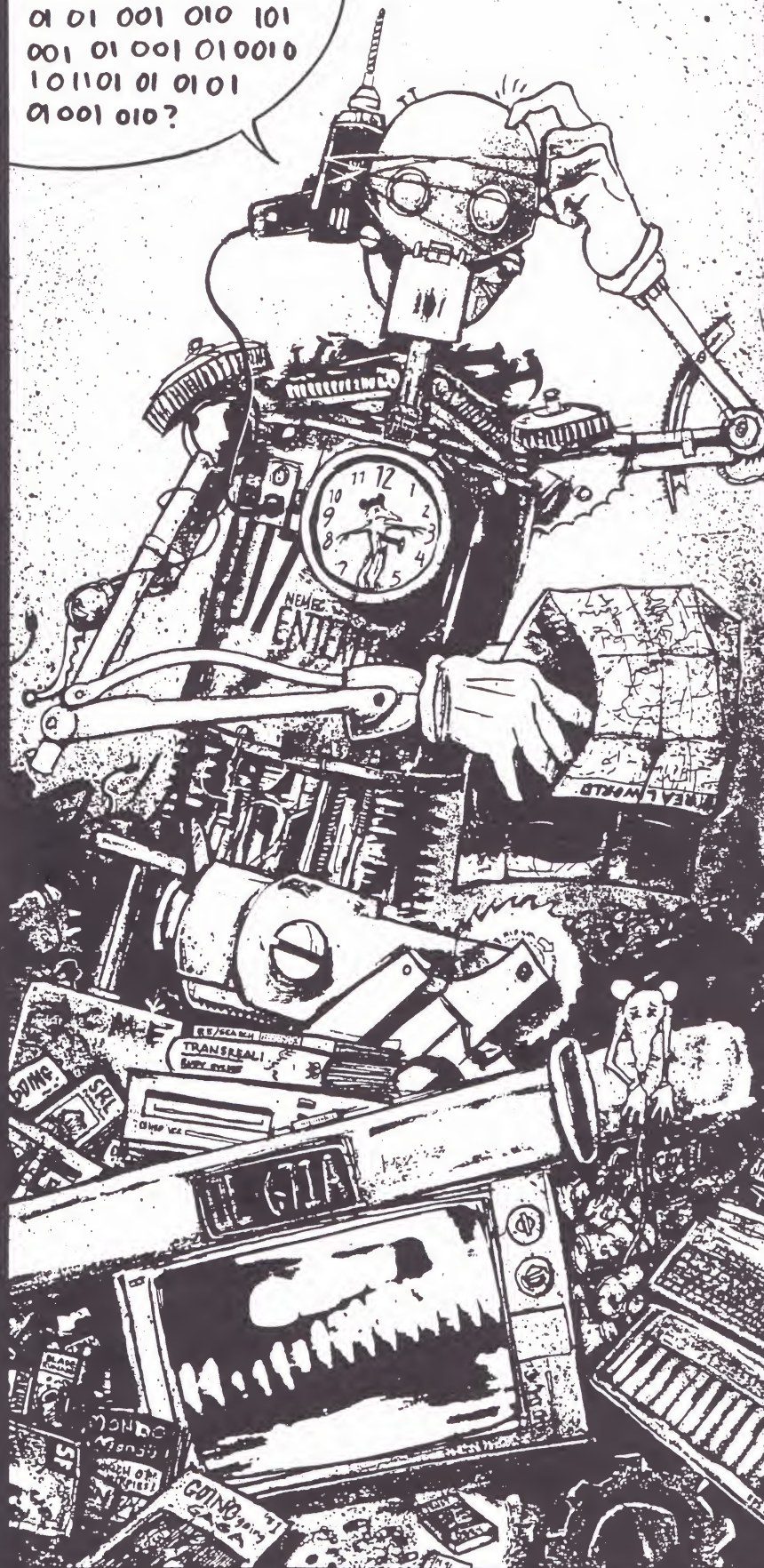
Sylvia doesn't believe that they exist. She tends to think that those who do believe are missing a few cubes in the old icebox.

Z is for Zimbabwe

Leila's father came to the U.S. from a township near Zimbabwe, but Leila has never been there — nor anywhere in Africa. Lately, though, she's had a desire to visit the land of her ancestors, especially since she's been to Europe twice already, and she's always calling up Sylvia and they're talking for hours about taking a trip out there next Summer. Sylvia likes the idea herself, thinking that maybe she can do some travel writing there and chalk off part of the trip as a business expense. She's started bargaining with Leila about the itinerary, though, because all she can take off from Cheshire House is two weeks and she refuses to go to Africa without stopping in Ethiopia — home of the first coffee plants. Sylvia's father is against the whole idea, thinks she should just do a tour of the States and get to know her own country better. He doesn't say it, but it's obvious he would worry about her traveling over there. "It's not the most stable place in the world," he says. "Right," says Sylvia. "As opposed to Los Angeles." "Well, now," says her father. "Los Angeles," he says, "well, that's a whole 'nother animal." Sylvia shakes her head. "The Old Fossil went through two wars and now he's worried about stable places," she says, giving me a look. But she's grateful for his concern. X

Wayne Alan Brenner lives in Austin, Texas, and seldom sees Sylvia these days. He's currently at work on numerous short stories, paintings, performance projects, and his first novel, *Suicide's Paradise*.

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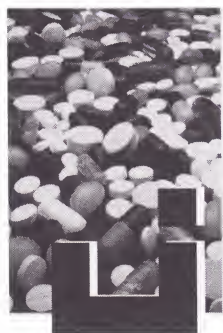
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THE GENTLE ART OF CORPSE



FICTION BY WALT MYNEN

Jane, about to congratulate herself on the success of her first salon, suddenly notices the state of her longtime acquaintance, Bob. Her eyes widen in abject terror. Bob, a mid-level computer consultant turned zip-pie, slumps in his chair, jaw slack, face unnaturally green. His pasty, puffy hands loosely grasp a bottle of "Terrifying Pink Enlightenment," his favorite alternative beverage. A silver thread of saliva, glistening in the late morning sunlight, dangles from his chin.

The possibilities flit madly through Jane's increasingly concerned mind. Is Bob asleep? Has Bob slipped into one of his Tantric trances? Is Bob yet again dabbling in performance art? Or did Bob just get some "Terrifying Pink Enlightenment" down the wrong pipe and quietly snuff it? Jane nervously tries to maintain a semblance of attentiveness to her guests' oblivious conversation, while sneaking quick, sidelong, peeks at Bob. He looks pretty darn indefinitely indisposed.

Now our beloved Jane is put to the task of discovering the nature of Bob's sudden withdrawal. She must do this quickly and inconspicuously to avoid causing a scene; allowing a guest to bite the big banana during her first salon would not be a favorable entry on her social resume. Unfortunately, Bob displays conditions easily attributable to either death or insipid conversation. Distinguishing between moribund mammals and those lulled to sleep during particularly tedious interlocution can be tricky. However, with a few household items, a gallon of varnish, and a little creativity, Jane can discretely detect, remove, and conceal any corpses who inconsiderately appear at her little fetes.

Signs of death vary greatly from the rather overt to the extremely subtle. It is therefore incumbent upon the host to examine the suspected departed very closely. Somewhat telling hints of fatality include:

- Sharp objects (other than jewelry) embedded in the abdomen, back or neck.
- Large, open, gory wounds.
- Absence of limbs or head, especially when accompanied by heavy bleeding.

- Apparent decomposition.

Presence of any or all of these symptoms would probably be justifiable grounds for skipping the remainder of the essay. Unfortunately, many people 'go west' without leaving such unambiguous clues for the baffled host to interpret. Vague indications that one has debarked for the Stygian shores may be:

- Unnaturally bulging eyes.
- Odd skin coloration.
- Failure to breathe.
- An overly relaxed posture.
- Unusual lack of vim.

This latter category poses quite a problem. Any of the mentioned characteristics could denote abuse of valium, alcohol, or Yanni. Millions of citizens nationwide display one or more of the above characteristics during a daily holy observance called 'television'. Clearly, some investigation is in order.

If Bob is merely asleep, a small jolt to his system should be all it takes to rouse him from his boredom induced slumber. Such a shock can be administered verbally. For instance, Jane could lean over and whisper:

"Hey Bob! I heard the Information Superhighway collapsed in on itself today, taking all the Internet accounts in the world down with it!"

Too bad Bob is far too busy dumpster diving, growing purple fungi on cow feces, and driving cross-country in dilapidated VW pop-tops in search of cool tattoo parlors and hot fucking dance music to really give a beetle dropping about the Information Superhighway. Good thing stimulation can be administered physically! If Jane houses animosity toward Bob, she might try waking him with a small acetylene torch applied to the nape of the neck or fingertips. Otherwise, the best tactic for resuscitating any dozing guest is dangling under the laggard's nose a copy of that book with the strap-ping buck naked Howard Stern picture on the cover. Whether or not Bob responds, Jane gains coolness points with the conscious invitees for behaving so *avant garde-ly*.

For our hypothetical situation, let's assume Bob

DETECTION

fails to react to both blowtorch and Howard's hairy, bare thighs. Jane is now bequeathed the unenviable task of removing the cold, lifeless shell of her departed visitor. The first step is to drag the former Bob off to some discrete place, explaining to others that Bob had a bit too much "Ambient Emerald Rapture" and fell into deep, alpha meditation.

This ruse, of course, becomes slightly untenable if Bob is missing limbs and/or bleeding profusely.

Having schlepped the insensate Bob-carass into the

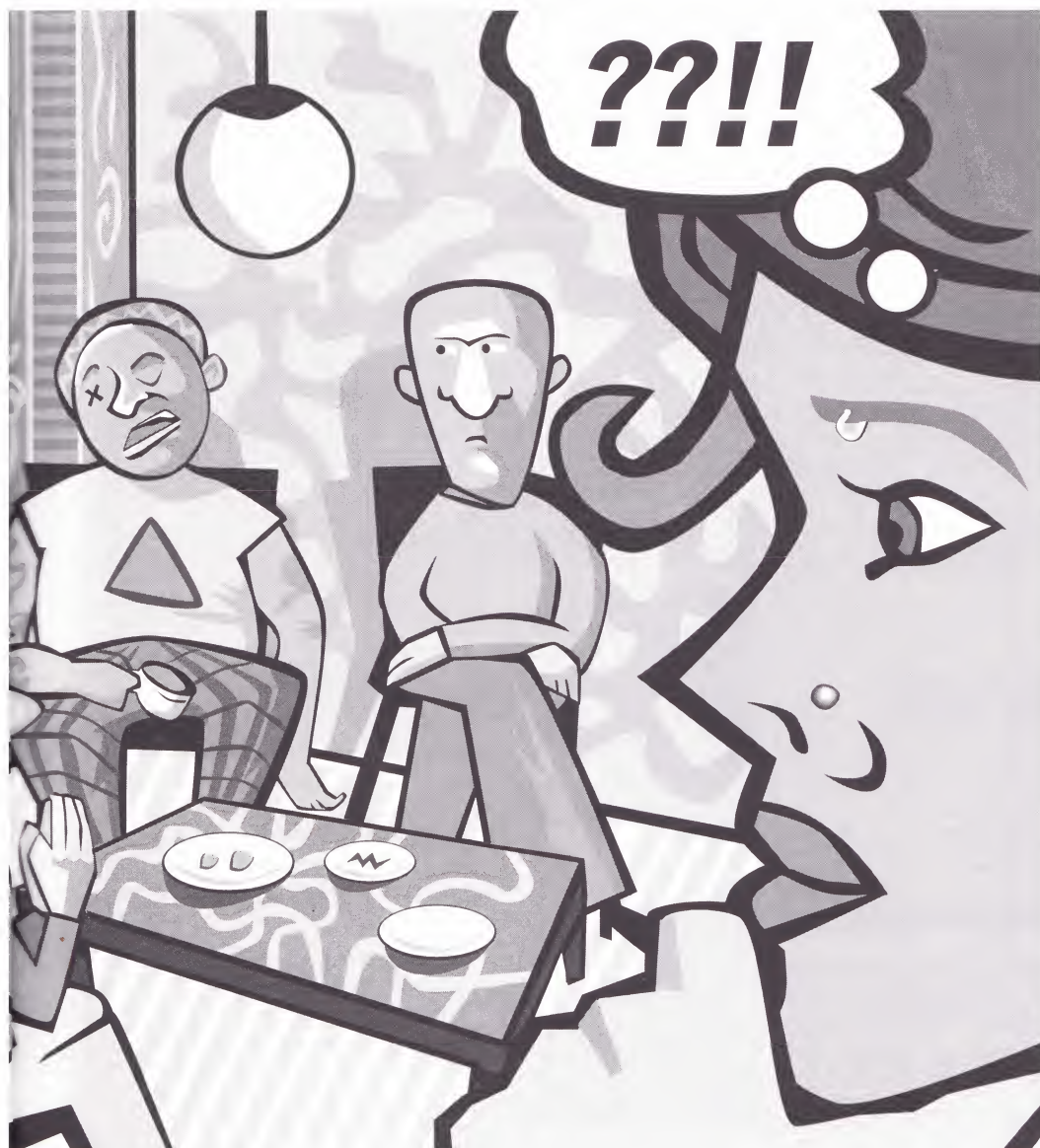
garage, Jane takes stock of her situation. The natural instinct of most would be to ditch the stiff bastard in some remote backwoods or river. This would be extremely un-P.C. because Bob has consumed enough espresso, twinkies, homemade hallucinogens and "Screaming Teal Ferment" to fell several large tapirs. The toxins released during his decomposition would certainly kill off most indigenous life within a large radius and likely piss off Albert Gore. This also precludes interring Bob in the backyard.

Usually when Jane is confronted with an unwanted object, she stuffs it behind the refrigerator. If Bob were a little skinnier, this would indeed be a practical solution. Pondering, she notes the festive beauty of Bob's patchwork clothes, green hair, and ample tattoos. Jane thinks:

"Gee whiz! With a few coats of preservative varnish and some strategic positioning, Bob would certainly brighten up my sitting room!"

In no time at all, Jane realizes, she can create a beautiful and functional footrest, sideboard, or endtable.

Knowing how to handle the Bobs of the world, Jane finds herself increasingly confident in planning small social gatherings. She goes on to host many more salons. Word gets around, and her prestige and coolness points grow in leaps and bounds. Her guests constantly compliment the good food, scintillating conversation and unusually colorful furniture. No-one ever suspects the secrets to her success are Sakanayama's take out sushi, plenty of "Gushing Ochre Garrulity," and a bucket of varnish she keeps in the garage. X



David Eggers



BY EL JEFFE

■ One day, I got this letter. It had no return address or name but just said:

"I don't have any psychic powers, but somehow I appear to be right about the future a whole lot. I am going to tell you who I think is going to win the ball game next Monday between the XXX and the YYY. Watch the game, read the papers. Next week I will send you another letter with another prediction."

The letter was right. A few days later I got another correct prediction:

"As you see, I was right. This week, just for the fun of it, in the second game of the double header between AAA and BBB, BBB will win."

Soon, I got more correct predictions until it was four games in a row. This was impressive. The next letter was different.

"This is your last free prediction. I hope you make good use of it. You are a fool if you do not use it properly. Impress your friends. Whatever. Anyway, CCC will beat DDD in Cincinnati this week. There's never any guarantee that I will be right, but I have been right four times in a row. THERE WAS NO LUCK INVOLVED ON MY PART. I know exactly what I am doing. Some would say it's occult powers, that I am in touch with the darkness. But it is no such thing.

The system I have discovered works with mathematical certainty. Has anybody else given you such a string of readily checked, specific, short-term predictions? If you want one more prediction made by the same methods, send me \$1000, cash, by U.S. Mail to Box 5126, before August 12th ... You can figure out how to make your money back quickly!"

I've told this as if I received the letters, actually, I'd rather send them. I love this scam, since a lot of your victims actually make money on the deal and you can come back for more later. And you do it while on vacation for a month or so. You can play this racket with ball games, whether the stock

market will go up or down, or any other events with simple outcomes anybody can look up. Playoffs and World Series time (if you can work fast; try this stunt with home fax numbers) are good. Hockey fans are more gullible than most.

Here's how it works. Go on vacation somewhere far from where you live, get someone you meet at a bar to rent you a post office box. Give them twice as much as the box costs and tell them it's for love letters and you don't want your live-in partner to know. Send out 1000 letters, half of which predict that one team will win, half the other. Choose names and addresses from the phone book, from areas that have likely marks living there. This is the closest thing to hard work in the whole deal cause you have to keep records of who you sent what to. It costs you maybe \$400 for paper, stamps and stuff.

And you have to wear gloves to keep the fingerprints off and use a sponge to lick the stamps so they can't get any mouth cells off the backs of the stamps and trace your DNA. I use a computer, but don't ever save any of the lists on the hard drive — use floppies. These I erase with a tape demagnetizer and reformat them. Nobody can read them after that. I also use an inkjet printer, if it's got some oddities that can be traced, they disappear when you change ink cartridges. You want nothing to link you to the letters. An ounce of prevention and all that.

You keep track of the ones you sent the right prediction to. There'll be about 500 of them. These suckers get a second letter, and you're down another \$200. Half of them are going to get the right prediction. Now you got the whole picture. 250 people get the third letter, you're out another \$100 bucks, and for a last \$50, you just sent 125 people a fourth prediction and you've got 75 marks who think you're a Nostradamus. You're down \$750 plus the cost of the box and you invest another \$25 to send out the 75 letters asking for \$1000. You get one sucker and you're even, dollarwise, get two and you're ahead. Four or five is a good haul. It's up to you to send out another 75 letters with a fifth prediction, but I like to. You said you would and you haven't lied yet. Keep a record of only the final winners on a floppy hidden somewhere away from your abode. Half of the marks, if they play their cards right, will win a bundle and if you do get caught, will be great witnesses in court. I mean, the government might be able to find one or two people besides the guy who complained who sent you \$1000. Maybe not, even you don't know who they are any more! But you can find a bunch of guys who'll swear by you! ✕

Dark Wave ... continued from page 30

says X, co-proprietor of House of Usher and member of the band malign. "That's why the music makes me happy. It isn't sad at all."

People in the goth scene usually shrug off outsiders who can't handle the way they look or how their music sounds. But it's harder to ignore accusations of being a blood-sucking Satanist.

"Most of our scene is against organized religion of any kind," says X, sitting up. "Fire and brimstone don't make sense anymore."

X and Usher co-promoter Shawni both lean toward neo-paganism for their spirituality. The Native American and Buddhist tracts that Young studies are also threaded into many goths' spirituality.

None of those peaceful philosophies have anything to do with Satanism or vampirism, X and Shawni are quick to point out.

While Anne Rice and her vampires are to goth what Burroughs was to the beats, X explains that the only connection between Stoker's brand of horror and Usher is that the story of the vampire is, like the gothic scene, a romantic one.

Reading about blood is one thing, but gulping it down is quite another. Just ask the crew from *Hard Copy* who came to Usher looking for "baby-eating" satanic vampires and left with empty tape.

"Some people will adopt 'vampirism' and think that will get them more into the scene. They are totally looked down upon because it gives us a bad name. We go into a store and get asked moronic questions because someone who dropped into the scene 6 months ago wants to piss off his parents so he says he's a vampire."

"What kind of fool sucks blood in this day and age?" asks Shawni, laughing.

Misery may love company but that companionship is not readily found at the House of Usher.

"This scene has nothing to do with a fascination with death," Young says. "This is a celebration of life." ✕

Goth 101: An excellent history of goth music can be found on the double CD set (\$19.98), "Gothic Rock" and the companion book (\$18.98) of the same name. It's distributed by Cleopatra: 8726 S. Sepulveda, Ste. D-82, Los Angeles, CA 90045. (310) 305-0172. Cleopatra has an extensive catalog of goth albums.

The Disease of Lady Madeline, a CD compilation of darkwave, gothic and industrial music played at House of Usher, is available for \$15 postpaid in the US and \$17 overseas. Anubis recordings: PO Box 470666, San Francisco CA 94147.



Does Snowboarding Bring Out the Buddha in Us? The Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch says "Yeah!"

Interview by Pierre Bourque

BEASTLY

I'm sitting by the phone, seconds away from a call from Beastie Boy Adam Yauch, who's playing at Lollapalooza. Like all the Beasties, Adam's a skilled buffoon onstage, but what is he like offstage? Will this be a chat with a merry prankster, a one way tongue wag with Marcel Marceau, or something all together different?

Phone rings. Wilf from the tour calling. He tells me that Erin Potts will also be on the line. She runs Adam's Milarepa Fund (see sidebar). A moment or two of dead air while I wait. After chit chat and howdy dos, I launch right into asking Adam about Buddhism. — Pierre Bourque

In a recent issue of your fanzine Grand Royal, you wrote a bit about the Tibetan situation. Are you following that closely?
Adam: Yeah. I'm trying to keep abreast of what's going on there.

How did you fall into that?

Actually ... ironically enough ... I was in Nepal, hanging out with Erin. I was just visiting ... she was living there. She was a Tibetan studies major. We kinda ran into each other and went to visit some monasteries. We went to a Tibetan wedding, different stuff like that. I just got exposed to the Tibetan people ... and I started reading

about them and learning about their plight when I came back to America. I picked up on it like that.

Did you also get a chance to visit India?
Not this time, I went to India about three-and-a-half years ago.

It's a different way of life over there. Their perception of reality is so different from ours. Did your interest in Buddhism and so forth start there?

I don't know exactly what it was. There is something about the altitude, the people and the combination of the two. There's a kind of real magic. It's not the same heaviness that I've sometimes felt while being in India, the tension. In India, there was some serious battling going on, between the Muslims and the Hindus. They were really goin' at it. There was a lot of negativity and I was in some of the hostile regions. I was in Jaipur and there was rioting and stuff — [roar of the Lollapalooza crowd drowns out the phone.]

The Smashing Pumpkins are taking the stage. [The three of us chuckle]

Bob Thurman [Uma's dad! -Ed.], one of the founders of Tibet House in New York, has just come out with a new treatment of the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Have you taken a look at that?

No, I haven't seen Bob's translation but

I've been meaning to pick it up. [at this point, Adam yells out to someone in Spanish to close the door]

You speak Spanish ...
Si.

Erin, Can you speak Nepalese?

Erin: Just enough to get around in taxis. I speak a little bit more Tibetan.

Adam, you've set up a fund to aid Tibetan causes. How did that come about?

Basically we decided to set aside some publishing money from the new album, *Ill Communication*. It came about 'cause we were sampling some Tibetan monks chanting and some aboriginal sounds and we decided that we wanted to give money back to those peoples to help out their cultures. So we formed an organization, Milarepa Fund, to handle the money. Erin knows a lot about what's going on in Tibet and has worked with different non-profit organizations so she seemed like the ideal person to handle this. She's figuring out what to do with the money to best help out. She's also running a booth at Lollapalooza here to give out information about what's going on in Tibet. We feel like America has to be more aware of what's happening in Tibet. For a change to come about, there has to be more pressure

put on the government from individuals. Once the American government takes a stand on it other countries will probably follow suit. That's what will bring about change. We're just trying to raise awareness and also use this money in some more specific way to help individuals in refugee camps and stuff like that. There's a group of Tibetan monks here that we're helping to support. They're doing some traditional sacred music and dance, so people can check out their culture and see how cool it is. And maybe once they see how interesting this culture is they can compare that to the demented things the

Zen, that's even more tricky. There is the definition of Buddhism as: "One who follows the three jeweled path." [Laughs]

Tell me more about Milarepa.

Erin: He was a Tibetan who enlightened others through his music. He overcame a lot of obstacles. At first he learned sort of the negative side, black magic. Then he learned the Dharma and became a great practitioner. He sang a hundred thousand songs. There's a book called The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa. There's even a cool comic book about him.

I like being at a high altitude and getting into a "flow." That's nice.

Earlier this year, I skied out west and watched a couple of snowboarders cut the first tracks after an overnight storm had dropped a couple of dozen inches of fresh powder. It was almost poetic to watch. They were going so quickly yet in such a controlled manner. They made brush strokes in the snow.

Yes! Fresh snow is amazing. The board is real different ... it floats on the powder and goes really fast. If you're riding a long board it's more like surfing than skiing. If

B U D D H I S M

"We were sampling some Tibetan monks chanting and some aboriginal sounds and we decided that we wanted to give money back to those peoples to help out their cultures."

Chinese are doing to these people. This is our thinking, you know?

Are either of you actually Buddhists?

That's a tricky question. I haven't met anyone who's given me a good definition of what a Buddhist is. Do you have a good definition for us? When I get that definition, then I'll be able to tell if I am one or not. I do follow the teachings a lot and read the Buddhist literature. But then, I read a lot of things. I'm tryin' to figure out what works for me.

I've read on Zen and I've studied Zazen. You know what Zen is? It's everything that it's not. [laughs all around]

Do you find, Adam, that the other members of the band are interested in the Tibet question, or your interest in it?

I'm probably the most focused on it but those guys are interested. They're just kinda checkin' it out.

They don't kid you about it?

There are a few things that we don't kid each other about. But hey, there's nothing wrong with kidding. It keeps the world spinning.

Adam, what about when you go off snowboarding? Is there something to being alone, the challenge of racing down that slope, of losing yourself ... how does that affect you?

you find some steeps, you really can't get hurt because the snow's so deep. You can get going insanely fast. It's fluid on fresh snow, that's about the most fun I've found.

What about the meditative aspects? Like the point when the physical actions come about without conscious effort. You end up watching yourself go down ... it's kind of just happening.

Yeah! It enters that realm of nothingness.

Do you get that way when you're on stage?

Sometimes. I have to close my eyes sometimes and let the music touch me ... sometimes I'm just gone ... X

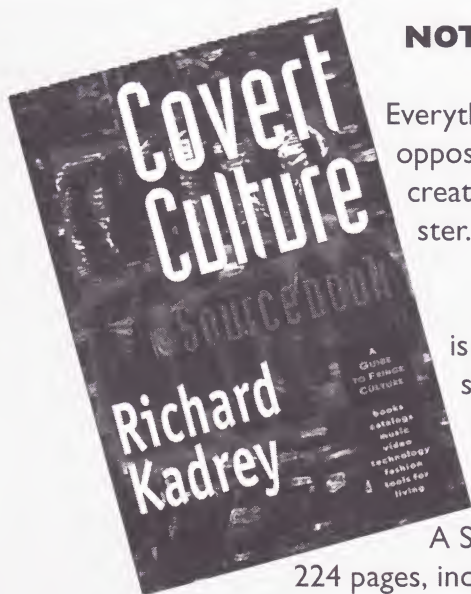


Photography: Rodolf Noël (514) 286-2527

Adam's baby, The Milarepa Fund, is a non-profit foundation set up to inspire understanding and support for the people of Tibet. It's run out of San Francisco by Erin Potts, a Tibetan studies major who Adam met while moping around Katmandu jonesin' for a chance to play his bass guitar. Friends introduced him to Potts who set him up with a local band.

The fund is currently being fueled by Yauch

and will receive royalties from the song Bodhisattva Vow, included on the Beastie's album, Ill Communication. The Fund seeks to shed light on the crimes committed against Tibet by the Chinese since 1959, to promote Tibetan culture and religion, and to encourage distribution of Tibetan books, videos and articles. For more information, contact The Milarepa Fund, 76 Uranus Terrace, San Francisco, CA 94114.



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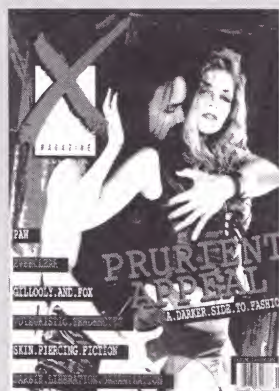
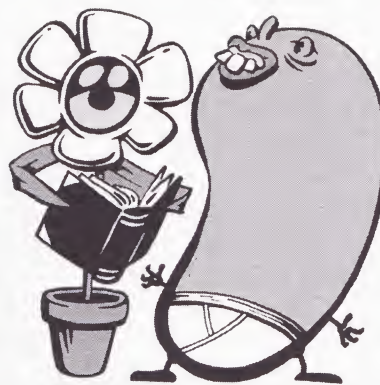
—CLAY GEERDES, *COMIX WAVE*

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MEDIA FREAK



X: *X* is an inexpensively-produced mix of pop culture, music, and soft-core porn from Portland, Oregon. I especially liked the satirical story about Fox TV's grab for Jeff Gillooly. Even the music articles were interesting (I usually can't stomach more than two sentences about some neato rock band). The pictures of women and men pretending to get it on are much more fun than what you'll find in *Playboy* or *Penthouse*, and instead of the usual filler text such as, "Our beautiful brunette Katrina is an animal-rights activist, poet and beer-commercial model who loves to pick lonely guys out of bars and have sex with them," *X*'s pictorials have things like Kurt Vonnegut's kickass public testimony at Edwin Meese's 1987 Commission on Pornography. And here's a novel concept in zine publishing: Instead of 128 pages of stuff that mainly stinks, *X* has 38 pages of good stuff. — Mark

\$3.50. 625 NW Everett, Suite 107, Portland OR 97209. (503) 241-4317, fax (503) 227-4682



Deep Girl, by

Ariel Bordeaux: Ahhh, how satisfying! *Deep Girl* is autobiographical, my very favorite kind of comic. Ariel Bordeaux lets us peer into a slice of her life, where she exhibits her insecurities, politically incorrect thoughts and frustrations, and embarrassing situations. In issue #3, her life stories include "Lezbo Hellhole" (and no, she's not homophobic), "Why Do You Put Yourself Down So Much" (yeah,

she's talking about

herself), and "More Horrors of Romance." I think it's cool that Ariel can be so candid and entertaining at the same time. I love hearing her problems about boys and roommates and self-hatred and life in general! It makes me feel so good! — Carla

\$1.50. Self-published (xeroxed zine-style)
573 Scott St #L, San Francisco, CA
94117

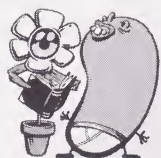
Doggy Bag, hyperfictions by

Ronald Sukenick: Yummy yum! Sukenick has served up some scrumptious Pomo in this mouth watering collection of hyperfictions. Reminiscent of his predecessors, there are kibbles of Joycean off-the-wall, yet-on-the-mark, absurdities mixed with bits of Bill Burroughs' bizarre crudity. Yet *Doggy Bag* has an innovative freshness that make this Avant-pop dish unique.

Sukenick is brilliantly interactive with his readers. I tripped through Europe looking for culture, not knowing what culture was; investigated the manufacturing of 'Thot' by the White Voodoo Financial Wizards; and discovered that humans were becoming infected with a fatal computer virus. The best part was the successive *menage a trois* in 'the burial of count orgasm' written in the style of an erotic Mad Lib ... you fill in the blanks. This guy is clever and hilarious — I was tickled! — Michelle Reynolds

\$7.00. Fiction Collective Two: Publication Unit, Illinois State University, Campus Box 4241, Normal, IL 61790-4241

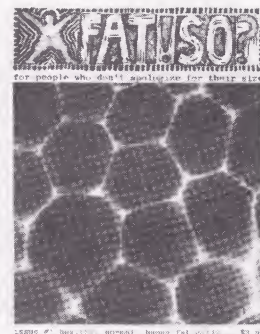




MEDIA FREAK

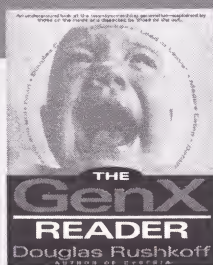
Fat!So?! One night at a zine gathering inside a trendy San Francisco club, I stepped into an elevator with another girl. I asked this stranger what her zine was called, and she told me - *Fat!So?* I tensed up. I took a second look at her and realized that she was a little overweight. 240 pounds to be exact. Not that I even cared, but I'm not used to talking to fat people about weight, and I was a little uncomfortable. I didn't want to say the wrong thing. I hope Marilyn Wann didn't notice my awkwardness. I read her zine, and it's pretty cool. Through stories, pictures and poems, *Fat!So?* ("for people who don't apologize for their size") focuses on what it's like to be "fat" in a skin 'n' bones-obsessed world. Wann does a great job of showing the strong prejudice and idiotic attitudes about weight that prevail in our society, and does it with irreverence and charm. — *Carla*

\$3.50. PO Box 423464, San Francisco, CA 94142



The GenX Reader: by Douglas Rushkoff: "It is the reader which demonstrates — in the words of GenX members — that while twentysomethings may indeed have dropped out of American culture as traditionally defined, we also stand as a testament to American ingenuity, optimism, instinct and brilliance." — Douglas Rushkoff, from the Introduction of *The GenX Reader*

Rushkoff's unabashed admiration for the Generation X label was immediately apparent, and almost refreshing. I say almost because, while it's refreshing to hear my generation praised for a change, the other extreme is almost as bad. Rushkoff pulls it off though. It's a combination of his ardent belief in the accolades he heaps onto Generation X and the truly brilliant, imaginative and entertaining pieces he pulled together from



a number of different sources.

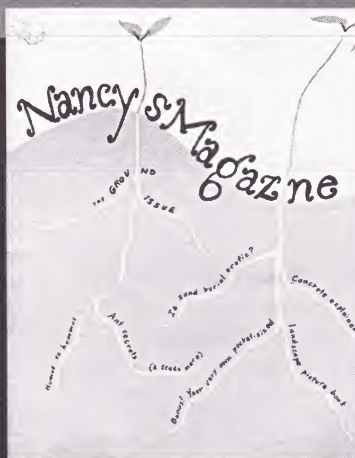
He's thorough in his scope as well. All the major twentysomething classics of the past ten years are given their due. A review of an episode of *Ren & Stimpy*, the *I Hate Brenda* Newsletter, an interview with Beavis and Butt-head, performance poetry, and of course, Matt Groening and Doug Coupland. I had a good time reading it, especially the articles

I had never seen before, like Hugh Gallagher's "Seven Days and Seven Nights Alone with MTV." Some of these writers may be bitter toward the anti-Xer's but, they are funny, unlike most of the self important garbage that's been written about what a group of losers the Xer's are. — *Julie Fishman*

\$13.95. Ballantine Books

Nancy's Magazine: How interesting can dirt be? Yeah, I mean the stuff you walk on, the stuff weeds grow out of. I never paid much attention to the subject myself, until I read Nancy's totally perfect zine. I have the "ground issue" (back issue themes include "moods," "power," and "lite") which was very entertaining and informational.

My favorite piece was about the "sandhogs" who helped build the Brooklyn Bridge. They were laborers who suffered or died from Caisson's Disease, the bends, and who knows what else while digging dirt out of the bridge's caissons, which were filled with compressed air. Then there's sensitive Hans, the academic scientist, who felt a spiritual bond with soil. His story is told in comix-style. More than just interesting articles, however, Nancy also has cool graphs, charts, and polls that give you fun meaningless dirt trivia (like a percentage chart



on how being buried by sand makes people feel: stupid - 4.3%; erotic - 18.8%; claustrophobic - 2.9% etc.).

The very best part of *Nancy's Magazine* is the way it's put together. It has different kinds of paper, a page that pulls out with neato info tucked inside, and she even gives you little goodies that are better than the ones found in cereal boxes. The treasures are tucked inside the cool folder-like flaps on the inside covers (front and back). But I'm not gonna tell you what they are -you'll

have to get your own copy of NM to find out. — *Carla*

\$3. PO Box 02108, Columbus OH 43202



The Roaches Have No King, by Daniel Evan Weiss:

This utterly twisted work of fiction is one you won't soon forget. Intelligent, funny, and disturbing, the story is told from the perspective of Numbers, a roach. Numbers names himself after eating the binding of the *Book of Numbers* from the Bible, which gives him knowledge of the Christian god. Numbers lives with his roach colony in the apartment of attorney Ira Fishblatt and his girlfriend, Gypsy. These humans have unknowingly been good to the Numbers clan, especially

Gypsy, who's a slob and has propensity for throwing food in fits of rage. These are indeed prosperous times. However, when Gypsy leaves Ira, the good times come to an end.

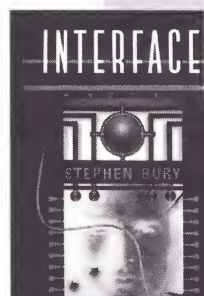
Enter Ruth Grubstein, the new woman in Ira's life, whose cleanliness is a scourge to Numbers and his colony. It is here that our unlikely protagonist

begins his great quest, to ensure the survival of his sister and brothers. With the reluctant assistance of his friends, he sets out to disrupt this new status-quo that has brought famine and turmoil to his colony.

Determined to change the new order of the human dynamic in the Fishblatt abode, Numbers resorts to all manners of manipulation. First he tries to steer Ira into infidelity with the hot but married neighbor. After that he hitches a ride in the hair of a cocaine dealer in search for Gypsy, and in the meantime preaches Christian propaganda to his half-starved fellow roaches to keep morale up. And yet, no matter what lengths Numbers goes to, he is faced with greater and more complex obstacles as well as a growing crisis of conscience.

The newfound Christian knowledge has a deep affect on our six-legged friend, and is a constant theme in this story that covers such issues as individuality, sex, racism and genocide. Though at first it may be difficult to relate to a roach as a character, and what's more a heroic protagonist, the author manages to make it believable. So believable, in fact, that in the future I might find myself thinking twice about reaching for a can of Raid. - Troy Hardy

\$10.99. High Risk,



Interface, by Stephen Bury: Ever wonder why presidential administration after administration adheres to the criminally-negligent and utterly illogical policy of borrowing money to finance the government? Neal Steph...er, Stephen Bury's novel *Interface* casts illumination onto

this and other political mysteries in a frighteningly astute exercise in conspiracy laced with cutting-edge biotech.

Finding ourselves approaching the '96 presidential campaigns, we enter the converging lives of a gaggle of politicians, professional spin doctors, hackers, neuro-surgeons, and finan-

cial managers, most of whom are active players or unwitting dupes in a plot orchestrated by the omnipresent Network. This age-old clique of billionaire financiers intervenes in American politics to ensure return on certain investments. *Interface* serves as a perfect vehicle for a searing critique of modern poll-and-respond TV politics.

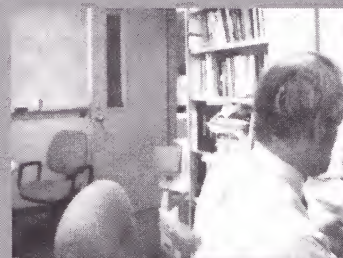
Much of *Interface* reads more like a screenplay than a novel, even slipping into some gratuitous action sequences. Terribly relevant and exceedingly entertaining, *Interface* must be recommended to any sentient being with a political bone in her body. — Dr. Strangeloop

Bantam Books



Amazingly Stupid (but still kinda cool) Web Sites: You've probably heard of Internet Coke machines, but have you had any virtual beans from the Internet coffee machine? The Trojan Room Coffee Pot lives at the University of Cambridge in England. A special camera is trained on the pot, taking a picture of it every second. That picture is then digitized and made available to the Cambridge World Wide Web server. If you have Web access (and a graphic-capable browser), by typing the URL <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/coffee/coffee.html>, you can access the current image of the pot. Viewing it may not give you a buzz, but you won't get the caffeine jitters either.

And how about a little recreational surveillance? The University of Maryland, Baltimore Computer Science Department has cameras mounted on its computers. By logging onto their video snapshots site, you can view up-to-the-minute shots of what's going on in the department. The pictures are boring as dirt, but I live under the vain hope that one night some thrill-seeking, exhibitionist students will sneak into the department and do the wild thing in front of the random net-viewing audience. C'mon UMBC co-eds, make this online lecher happy! Take a peek at http://www.cs.umbc.edu/video_snapshots/ - Gareth





Chip's Closet Cleaner: Chip isn't kidding when he calls his zine a closet cleaner. He digs up all sorts of campy personal relics as well as newer mementos from his closet, which he shares with us. CCC #11 starts off with a cover shot of little boy Chip from 1975, and my, what a cute bowl cut he had! Inside he shares all sorts of stuff he's pulled out of the woodwork, including a 3-issue "comic book" he did with crayons when he was little, called "Super Dum Dum" (it's actually very clever!); a hilarious chart from a Sony stereo instruction booklet aimed at morons with an IQ of 20 or less, and photos of Chip's eight favorite t-shirts modeled by his girlfriend, Charlotte. A letter to Chip (from 1977) from an old children's magazine, Stone Soup, is displayed on the back, explaining that they loved the story he submitted, but would have to reject it because "It didn't seem right to us that the farmer should live happily ever after, even though he had killed a man out of greed."

CCC has more than just Chip memorabilia, however, with articles, poems and comix. I love the "Catalog From Hell," printed on special pink paper, which displays all sorts of cheez-o-rama, like the Andy Rooney Television Collection Videos and Budweiser Beer Can Slippers (which you can't really order through Chip. Darn.) And for an added bonus, Chip slips in an illustrated (not by him) unused envelope just for fun. Of course I'm a sucker for extra goodies! — Carla

\$4. Chip Rowe, 826 Aspen St. NW, Washington D.C. 20012-2510

Counter-Schwa: The moment the large alien-head envelope arrived in my bunker, I knew Schwa had undergone some major changes since its debut a couple of years ago. For those of you not familiar with graphic artist Bill Barker's groundbreaking book *Schwa*, it's a graphic novel with no narration, only a series of black and white scenes from a world of stick figures and aliens. The book was accompanied by a merchandising blitz, with everything from Schwa pendants to t-shirts, all designed to help the wearer detect and avoid otherworldly invaders. Now the *Counter-Schwa* book is out, and the aliens are running for cover.

Counter-Schwa retains the same format as its predecessor, alternating the story's full-page pictures with minimalist pages that are either blank or contain small virtual devices, such as the "Zen X-Ray Sticker." Barker has extended the original *Schwa* into a number of different styles, ranging from pop art to Picasso. Some scenes are overloaded with information, while others are as simple and brutal as a robot steamroller crushing fleeing citizens. The stick figures are no longer expressionless, but these superficial displays of delight and horror tend to obscure their true feelings.

Not just for alien detection anymore, Schwa Corp.'s other products have also taken a new direction, expanding from alien detection to assisting neoprimates in all areas of life. These items include the Crazy Meter ("to understand what's going on"), luggage tags, and even Bomb Squad™ T-Shirts.

The stick figures are depicted as using/needing the same devices that are available from Schwa, further blurring the line between them and you. After all, if these devices were real, wouldn't the aliens want you to believe they were fake? Schwa Corp. never lets on if it's joking at you or with you, and the answer 'lies' somewhere within these drawings. — Andrew Robert Volk

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\$3.50 Fantagraphics

Coil

Wrapping around
Reznor, Hellraiser,
Burroughs, and
Spirituality.



Interview by Jessica Wing

Buddhist fundamentalists, born-again pagans, Zen anarchists, and psychedelic monks of a sometimes frightening liturgy, Coil's John Balance and Peter Christopherson paint with sound and pray with technology. Coil's recent releases include their full-length album, *Love's Secret Domain*, and the resulting *Snow EP*, 40 minutes of beautiful, obscure, occasionally housey electronic music (including two remixes by Jack Dangers of *Meat Beat Manifesto*). Their forthcoming albums will be released on Trent Reznor's label, *Nothing Records*. In this interview, the Coil boys speak in intertangled phrases of polite British, with a propriety that belies the psychic strangeness of their music and their world — Jessica Wing

Do you see a psychedelic content in your music?

John Balance: Some of it. Unfortunately, most people come across a sort of evil element in our music, and shy away from it, especially in a psychedelic context, unless they're up for a headfuck situation. People say they do like taking drugs and listening to our music. They love it!

Peter Christopherson: But it's true that most people perceive a dark side.

Where does the darkness come from?

JB: Deep in our hearts. [laughs] Well, we don't see any reason to be unnecessarily happy or jolly when sorrow drives most of the world, really.

PC: I think we live in times when the restorative power of tragedy has been

ignored.

Throughout history, tragic or dark or painful truths have always been part of existence and human life. In the past maybe fifty years, there's been a conscientious attempt, especially among middle-class, respectable people, to deny the positive and restorative power that these truths have. So now we have a society where it's very difficult for people to relate to death, or any of these perfectly natural things - pestilence, disease, or riot.

JB: The perfect Buddhist ideal is to face the pain, the suffering. And we feel that it's part of our duty, in the lineage of William Burroughs and John Giorno and Diamanda Galas, specifically with the AIDS crisis, to confront and occasionally frighten people into enlightenment.

What is your next album going to be like?

JB: We have two albums running together. Coil has been around for about 12 years, and it's about time that we splintered and became different entities. One album is called *International Dark Skies*. It's ... well, we hate the word ambient, but it's sort of dark ambient.

PC: We used to not like the word "ambient." We just discovered that ambient - *ambiente* - is Mexican slang for gay. So we

decided that it might not be so bad to be in the Mexican gay sections of record stores.

JB: We have stickers saying "File Under Ambiente."

And the second album?

JB: I think it's either going to be called "God Please Fuck My Mind For Good" — which is in fact a Captain Beefheart quote — or "Backwards." This is going to be more vocal, since I haven't done lyrics or vocals in a long time. And it's going to be more aggressive, more violent, more up front.

Peter, you've shot some videos for *Nine Inch Nails*. What happened recently with the *March of the Pigs* video?

PC: Basically, I did two. One which was a good video, but it wasn't exactly what Trent wanted to show in his return to the public eye. So we made the one which appeared in public, which is a one-shot video just of the band, because it represented the way he wanted to be put across more completely.

What was the first one like?

PC: [pause]

JB: [cough]

PC: Does that answer your question?

Excuse me? [now intrigued]

PC: Uh. ...

JB: Mmmmm ...

PC: Well, I'm not sure if I really want to go into it. It just wasn't exactly what they were looking for. It was kind of interesting and weird and strange, but it wasn't exact-

ly right, and Trent has the habit of being a perfectionist, so we decided to try a different avenue.

JB: I think that Trent is torn between what the record company wants from him, and what Trent's mind wants for him, which is extremely extreme. We did video scripts for Trent involving rooms of meat breathing in and out, which he loved, but we couldn't possibly do them, because they would never be shown.

What happened with the Hellraiser soundtrack? The original songs that you wrote for it were taken out of the movie?

PC: That's correct. Clive Barker, the director, came to us with about half of a script. He was a fan of our music, and came around and looked at our library and all of our weird stuff — Crowley paintings, piercing magazines, people with hooks through them, stuff like that — and he was inspired by these things, and wrote what we thought was a really good script *[the original one]* and asked us to be involved with the music for the film. So we worked on it for some time; but unfortunately, he was put under a certain amount of pressure from the people who were investing in the movie to make it more mainstream and actually less scary.

JB: Hollywood became involved with about five times more money, so he changed the script; he reset it in America and made it a normal Hollywood film.

PC: Friday the 13th, part 13.

JB: The producers actually said that our music was too scary, which sounds ridiculous.

PC: It's funny - now Clive often gets asked to sign copies of that record, which wasn't even part of the film.

Tell me about your involvement with William S. Burroughs and the video for Ministry's "Just One Fix."

JB: We've known William for god knows how long — Peter's known him for almost 15 years. We got the chance to shoot him for the video for "Just One Fix," which was about heroin and also a metaphor.

What was the metaphor?

JB: Well, it's no secret that Al Jourgensen

[of Ministry] was a heroin addict at the time, but it was also about society needing more and more and more. We went to Lawrence, Kansas *[home of Burroughs]* and we had a great time, spending about a week there. We also recorded him for a specific as-yet-unreleased Coil track, with him doing magic spells, sort of a latter-day cut-up using computer stuff. We saw his paintings and talked to him about magic and how nature should take its revenge on mankind.

PC: We're developing a film project based on William's work, but it's in its early days as yet.

What is Burroughs doing now?

JB: He's painting a lot. He's switched from the word to the image. He was always trying to eradicate the word, anyway; and now he thinks he's done that, and he's painting extraordinary automatic paintings.

What are they like? Are there images, or are they mostly abstract?

JB: There are millions of images contained within what seem like random brush strokes. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they fail. I think each one is a magical spell on paper. I think he's trying to trap the spirits or the demons in the paint. They're fantastic, some of them.

Does he sell them?

JB: Yes, he sells them. The major pieces go into exhibition now and again. He's got a stockpile of them; I don't know what he's going to do with them. Maybe he's scared to release all his demons.

What is his house like?

PC: Well, it's in the outskirts of Lawrence, in a very pastoral, natural neighborhood ... there's running water and trees and ...

JB: Tornadoes!

PC: He's obsessed with animals and nature. He's become a shaman. He stays in his back garden talking to his toads and his frogs and cats. He's not exactly in retirement, but he's, what, 84 now?

JB: He's 80.

PC: So he's taking life a little easier than the hectic New York of the '60s.

JB: But he can still shoot a target with a double-barrel shotgun, both barrels, and survive the recoil. He's a very strong, snake-like man. He may not be human, as he suggested all along.

Peter, where did you first meet William S. Burroughs?

PC: I first met William in New York in the '70s, because I was a fan and I contributed a lot of photographs that I'd done to his archive; he was going to use them in an illustrated book of one of his novels. Shortly after that, my record company, Industrial Records, released an album of the early cut-up experiments called "Nothing Here Now But the Recordings." This was one of the first publicly-documented issues of the cut-up tape manipulation experiments that Burroughs and Brion Gysin and Ian Sommerville made in the '60s, which were the father, if you like, of the modern approach to sampling, cut-ups and also the MTV style of film-making.

JB: Their intentions were magical, drug-induced, based in ritual. They seriously believed that through these processes they could dissolve reality. Brion Gysin's paintings did the same thing; they were intended as magical gateways to new realities. In some way, we try to consider some of our songs as doing the same things.

So there is a spiritual or supernatural element to the music?

JB: Everything is supernatural. Yes, there are psychic intentions behind a lot of the stuff, definitely. You need to be taught how to have magical empowerment. Half the neuroses in the world are caused by people misunderstanding perfectly natural — so-called supernatural — events. Dreams are just as important as so-called reality. It's difficult for me to talk about this, because my lifestyle is so wrapped up in paganism and animism and the spirit world that I find it hard to relate sometimes to what so-called normal people are thinking.

PC: Hopefully the imagery or sounds that we use draw on a much deeper well of the unconscious that is present in everybody; and if more people could draw on their own psychic imagination, it would make the world a much richer place. X

audible signals

Praxis: *Sacrificist* (Subharmonic)

■ Praxis manages to make speed metal sound like academic electronic music. Maybe it's because the music is violent in a strikingly unscary way ... it's too intellectual, too abstract, too contained, and too noisy somehow. This album has bits of funk, jazz, speed metal, and techno all mixed together, but jarring and colliding with each other — it's the antithesis of every new band's bio. Maybe it's the squawks and squeals in the background that sound like a managerie seen through a waterfall of guitar which make me doubt Praxis' seriousness. I dunno ... I don't really understand it, but maybe someone else will. — *Jessica Wing*



to make me adore this band. But after hearing their tape, I have even more reasons to be a fan. This band is what Green Day was two years *before* they were Green Day, and six years before they got played on MTV, but with Australian accents and

crooked teeth (just a guess about the teeth, of course, but they are Australian, you know). Their masterpiece is the song "I wish I were him," written about Evan Dando, singer of the Lemonheads and alternative-rock pinup boy, which features amateur guitar and a still-high voice singing wistful teenage lyrics such as "He's got six different flannel shirts, Airwalks, not thongs, / he even understands the words to Pavement songs." — Can I take them home, please? Sigh. — *Jessica Wing*

minute, 'cause I swear this CD is so great it's kinda scary. NYC's Lotion has the textural vibe of a feistier early REM, but with bigger teeth. With a fierce sound too weird to be copped from any one place, they zigzag through considerable tempo and instrumental effect changes. Their thick, generous guitar and vocal hooks have a tough, organic feel to them. Singer/guitarist Tony Zajkowski's voice falls somewhere between the earthy, husky side of Stipe, and recent British noise-rock bands. All the while, the Ferguson brothers (Jim and Bill) and Rob Youngberg are helping to create a deceptively intricate mesh of rhythmic guitar, grandiose bass lines and playful, ambitious drumming. All sorts of orchestral instrumental sounds by guest players add to what a friend called their "almost symphonic" sound. Kurt Ralske's production is precise, yet lets Lotion let it all hang out. There's not a bad song on here. — *Adam Gropman*



Miranda Sex Garden: *Fairytale of Slavery* (Mute)

■ Miranda Sex Garden is basically Dead Can Dance backed up by Rush. They are also possibly the world's most annoying band. The singing is kinda cool: renaissance harmonies that sometimes verge towards the banshee. But the prog-rock guitars, drums, and atonality have got to go. Maybe if I was in high school, I would have listened to them after class on my walkman while I waited for the bus in a long black skirt and cast stony looks at my sunny, inferior peers. But now I just wish they would go away. — *Jessica Wing*

Noise Addict: *demo tape*

The idea itself of fifteen-year old Australian boys with a four track is enough

Type-O Negative: *Bloody Kisses* (Roadrunner)

■ Type-O Negative consists of a mega-goth singer reciting psycho-religious lyrics over woo-hoo, chug-chug rockers. The music is gothy, pretty and full — and I actually might like them if their lyrics didn't make me break out laughing. Some prime examples of their penchant for horrible, horribly annoying puns: "An erotic funeral/For witch she's dressed"; "Dark side of the womb"; "A dying God-man full of pain / When will you cum again?" They covered "Summer Breeze" (you know, the one that blows through the jasmine in my mind). Is that cool? I don't know, I mean, the song sounds pretty good, but it's so EMBARRASSING! — *Jessica Wing*



Lotion: *Full Isaac* (Columbia)

■ Let down your hype force-field for a

Hex: *The Percussive Rakes of the Amish* (Swordfish Records)

■ Perhaps the oddest album I've heard this year comes from a remastering of an obscure recording made in 1974 of Pennsylvania Amish rake percussion. Techno heads and noise freaks alike should get a kick out of this odd piece of Americana. Beginning with the track "Harvest Song,"

the sometimes grating, sometimes soothing rhythmic scrapings and chattering of Amish rakes beat out in odd sequences. Three sizes of rakes were used, ranging from an average 2 foot rake head, to a mammoth 6 foot wide rake head. Most "songs" are excerpts from full length Amish religious rituals, and they left me wanting more. A bit like Aphex Twin meeting Crash Worship or Test Dept. — *Peter Lasell*



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handkerchief wrapped around your hand to make a kind of puppet. (Sorry, Terence, I'm exaggerating!)

So Bob and I went out to dinner with Terence, Catarina and Edgar Pera, the director of the movie, which is called *The Manuel of Evasion: LX94*. LX stands for Lisbon, or an alternate Lisbon, and the production is funded by the city of Lisbon in honor of the year-long festival of the arts called Lisbon 94. We went to a place near the water, at ten (typical, as I found out) and then had some beautiful olives

even though I repeatedly asked for one. Bob showed up in a white T-shirt and a camel's hair coat, and they made him put on something black, which pissed him off.

There was a yacht waiting for us by a monument to the Great Navigators (a big theme in Lisbon). We got on the boat and motored around the wide Rio Teja while being filmed answering questions about time. The questions were posed by Carlos, a TV reporter who was playing a reporter. Bob, Terence, and I were cast as the Shaman, the Neuro-Magician, and the Master Of Chaos. (They use X for CH in

there are Saboteurs who are changing the speed of time in various parts of Lisbon, and that they are being helped by the Xaman, the Neuro-Magician, and the Master of Xaos.)

We went up the hill to have lunch in a small town with a name something like Alameda. I waited with Carlos in a square, and noticed a woman filling up big plastic pitchers at a fountain. "I can't believe that woman has to haul water to her house," I said. Carlos answered, "You have to understand that Portugal is the end of Europe and the beginning of the third world."

Eventually I got a good rap or two on film,
talking about my idea that we are like eyes which
God grows to look at himself with – God being
thus like a giant snail or mollusk that extrudes eyestalks.

and salt cod ceviche.

The best part of the day was that we took our backpacks (no luggage yet, guys!) out of the cold, shiny Hotel Nacional and brought them to the four star York House Residencia. I should mention that on the way to dinner, and on the way back to the hotel, we got high in the car smoking hash. Walking up the three gardened flights from the street to the York House in Lisbon, well it felt pretty cool.

As we checked in, Wilson started a big fight because the clerk wanted to keep his passport overnight; I evaded, and went on to my bed.

january 10, monday 1994

I was awakened by a liveried man knocking on my door to bring a tray of breakfast at 7:30 AM. Outside it was raining. I phoned TAP ("Take Another Plane" seemed more and more apposite), and there was no news about my suitcase. The deal is: TAP's origination airport for the NYC/Lisbon flight alternates between JFK and Newark. So my bag was 48 hours out of phase. I put on the same clothes for the fourth (!!!!) day in a row.

A woman showed up at the hotel to put make-up on me, Bob and Terence. Catarina and some film-crew people were there with a bunch of clothes, but they figured my overcoat and beret looked fine. They were fresh out of giant chicken suits,

Portugal, so actually, we were the Xaman, the Neuro-Magician, and the Master Of Xaos.) I was kind of stiff and jockeying for position, worried the others would talk more than me, but eventually I got a good rap or two on film, talking about my idea that we are like eyes which God grows to look at himself with – God being thus like a giant snail or mollusk that extrudes eyestalks.

[I could tell this was a good rap because when I saw the rushes of this day's film on the 12th with Edgar, he squinted up his face and shook his head and clicked his tongue as if to say, "Great, thank you Rudy, thank you Cosmos."]

The technology of the filming, which I didn't understand at first, was that the video cameras would be on most or all of the time, but the heavy-duty 35 mm cameras would only be on for occasional bursts of three minutes. A three-minute role of 35 mm film costs \$300, and another \$200 for processing. Given Edgar's finite budget for the film, he is sparing with the 35 mm, preferring to wait around until there is a feeling that all is ripe and the key scene can be shot – almost always in one take with no repeat. The final film may include some footage from the videos to pad out or vary the 35 mm.

Eventually the boat docked on the other side of the Rio Teja. They filmed us arriving – [the idea of the movie is that

After lunch we went to shoot film in a winery. This is where the Xaman, the Neuro-Magician, and the Master Of Xaos were meeting the Saboteurs. I got in a couple of good raps about transrealism and the central teachings of mysticism. For a long time we sat at a huge picnic table covered with wine-bottles, some open, pretending to get drunk. It was up to us how much we actually drank. It was weird to have an infinite amount of wine in front of me – a moment I'll remember during thirsty times. I kind of held back on the drinking — after awhile I actually didn't even want any more wine.

Terence was quite funny, saying things like, "Gentlemen, the question on the floor is What is Reality?" and then going into all sorts of raps about time-machines. He has this idea that logically we can't see a time-machine before one is invented (because as soon as we see a time-machine, then we can copy it and invent one). So as soon as the first time-machine is invented (in Terence's estimation, 2012), then time-machines from all down the future will show up, and the arrival of all this novelty at once will cause some kind of information explosion. It's fun to hear him talk about time-machines with that same wild, unschooled excitement that I had about them as a teenager.

The river had gotten rough, so we

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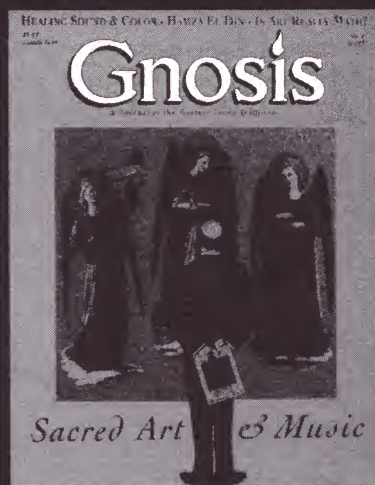
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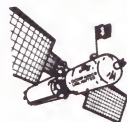
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drove back to the hotel instead of taking the boat. When we got back, my suitcase was finally there! I took a shower and changed my shirt three times in a row. My four-day underwear could have been cut into squares and sold to dysmenorrheic women needing testosterone therapy.

In bed I turned on the TV, and saw a Portuguese news story about how six people on a yacht had drowned in the Rio Tejo today!

January 11, Tuesday 1994

The next morning Catarina drove Bob, Terence, and me to an astronomical observatory for the day's shooting. Bob was in a foul, sulky mood.

On this day's shooting there were three actresses and two actors as well as

about, and so on. They were doing shots with us standing on a ladder next to a huge brass telescope.

After lunch Bob was complaining and being a downer as usual, and I said to him, "Stop complaining." He said, "What?" I said "Stop complaining. Stop complaining or I'll give you something to complain about."

And then we got out of the vans and a Portuguese guy ran up to me with this ice-cream-cone shaped cigarette and said, "Rudy, would you like some psychedelic? This is tobacco with hashish." We all smoked some and the afternoon got funnier. Bob cheered up a bit, but then was cranky again, and when I said enthusiastically, "We're going up on the wobbly observing ladder to be filmed again," he

show reactions to the bumps. Finally, in fact, I pulled out my handkerchief and started polishing her bent leather butt — much to the filmed outrage of Terence who was just then holding forth to me about liberating oneself by pursuing the erotic element of life, and, noticing my polishing of Juanne's butt, complained that I wasn't listening to him. I think it came out funny.

This was all to the amusement of a hip young guy named Daryl Pappas, who had moved to Portugal from L.A. He was taking publicity stills for the film. When we finished shooting, he was hitting on Juanne. "Are you a virgin?" Juanne: "I'm saving myself for God." Daryl: "Well, I'm him!" Juanne: "No, God has no head." Heavy. Juanne's way of showing height-

I pulled out my handkerchief and started polishing her bent leather butt — much to the filmed outrage of Terence who was just then holding forth to me about liberating oneself by pursuing the erotic element of life

Terence, Bob and me. The funniest actor was called Durte (pronounced do-art-ah), who looked like Bela Lugosi with slicked back hair, lab-coat, and a pasted-on goatee. He had a huge mouth, and liked to do crazy laughs.

They made us go up a creaking ladder to be near the eyepiece of this huge non-mirror telescope, a telescope with a big lens at one end and a little lens at the other; the traditional idea of a telescope in other words. The place was trippy and rundown but still actually functioning. The telescope was in a giant cylindrical room with the traditional penis-like slit silodome on top. A rotating slit. There was a balcony/catwalk all around the edge, with windows looking out on this part of Lisbon.

An actress named Marguerite Merino had lunch at a table with Edgar, Bob and me. I'd been watching her pretend to be an astronomer adjusting a telescope during the morning's shooting. It really taught me something about acting to watch her seemingly endless free flow of improvisational gestures; different ways of twiddling the dials, looking surprised, moving

said, "I don't like to see sadism in a man," and I said, after a minute or two of it sinking in, "I didn't mean to sound sadistic, I was just trying to be cheerful," and then Terence chimed in, "I hate to think of all the atrocities that have been committed under the name of trying to be cheerful," and I said in German accent, "Vell, ve vere chust trying to be cheerful." That moment was bum, but much else was wavy during this stony afternoon.

In the milling around, I happened to walk up the stairs behind Durte and Juanne, a striking woman who turned out to be a professional model, aged 19. She was wearing thick-soled sexy boots and tight leather pants, oh my. I filmed her a little with my own video camera. And then they filmed a big scene of me and Terence talking on the room-circling balcony, and Juanne was supposed to turn a big crank on the wall next to me as I talked, and I'd been flirting with her a little, and she said, "In the scene, I will bump you, yes?" And I said yes, so then she kept bumping me with her leather butt while I was talking — what thrills these sporadic contacts sent through me! I tried to act a little, and

ened sexual interest was to chew her gum a bit faster.

Back at the hotel, I had a few drinks in the hotel bar with Bob. He cheers right up when he's having drinks or drugs. We might do a story together sometime.

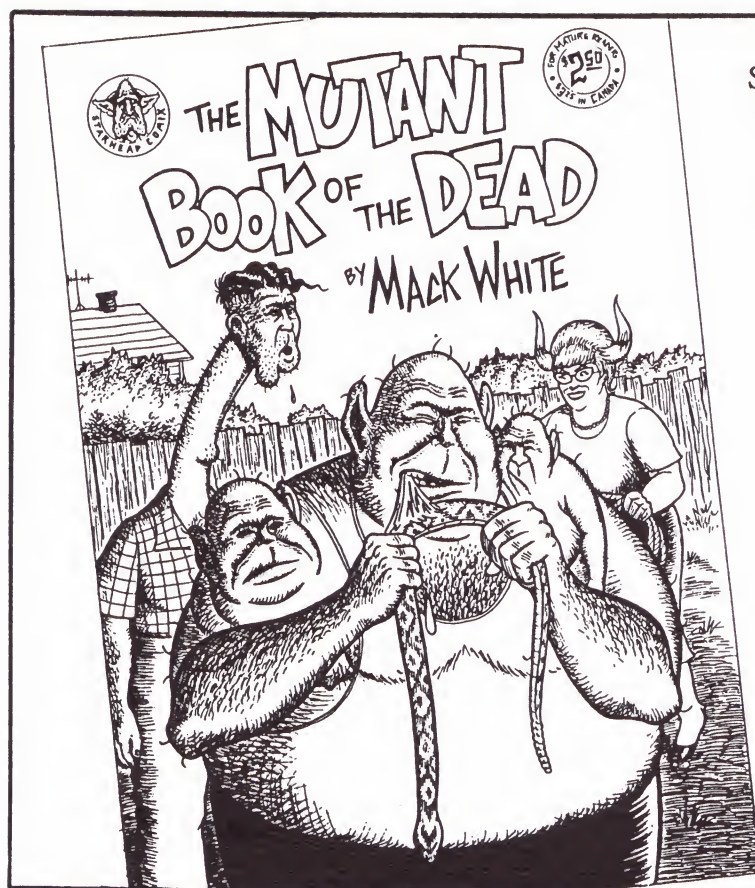
January 12, Wednesday 1994

I slept late, till 10:30, and woke feeling like shit. In the morning we went out to shoot on location in Lisbon.

Terence was friendly and full of gossip about all the Mondo people on the way over.

First we were in a giant free-standing outdoor seven-story elevator that goes down a cliff into the shopping district, known as Beixa. I talked a lot to Carlos, he was explaining a headline I saw about a man named XANANA being arrested. What a cool first name.

Speaking of first names that begin with an "X", Terence told a story about going into the Amazon and taking a weird drug with some short brown natives, and how after about an hour, he's looking at them, at their eyes that were "black and glittering like a cockroach's" (Terence's



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quote from Burroughs), and start wondering if like his new friend Xlotl is going to kill him. Xanana and Xlotl. "How do you spell Xanana?" "Like banana with an x."

Then we drove to Edgar's studio and had lunch in a dive next to it. Inside Edgar's studio was the Time Lab, an amazing set with lots of clocks all going at different speeds, and a smoke machine, and colored lights, and dials and meters and big weird gears to roll back and forth and make strange shadows. The set was in the shape of a cylinder, so that standing inside it, the cameraman could pan, and never pass a wall-corner, giving the effect of the lab as being huge, even though it was only about twenty or thirty feet across.

We shot our last scene in the Time Lab. I cranked up my adrenaline by singing some songs for the actors — they videoed me doing my Dead Pigs version of "Duke of Earl." Bob had a tantrum just before this scene about his clothes — they made him take off his camel's hair coat and white T-shirt again, so as to match his other scenes — and he kind of did his best to spoil the scene by complaining about his clothes in the scene instead of talking about time. And then he had a tantrum about getting our checks from Catarina. A difficult man, but a genius, able to quote page after page

thought this was particularly late!

Before dinner, Edgar said something to me in his sincere way that really made me happy. "Everybody loves you. All of us on the movie." That felt so good. He was very satisfied with my work for his film. I'd made a point of mentioning his plot line several times during the filming, which will be a help in trying to make the movie feel like a coherent whole.

During dessert, one of the guests passed around tobacco and hash jays. It was like the Seventies again — nicely dressed lively young people having some civilized tokes together after a fancy dinner at home. I haven't seen anything like that in the U.S. for 20 years. Maybe I travel in the wrong circles — or is it that

Americans really have gotten more puritanical?

After dinner, we watched some rushes on Edgar's TV — mostly of Terence, as the rushes lag two days behind. There were some really funny scenes with Terence; he has a golden tongue.



Lisbon will be satisfied that the movie is "about" the city — even though it is science-fiction.

Terence came up with a rant on how all great cities are transtemporal and trans-spatial, and that Lisbon has a bridge like San Francisco's. And in one of my scenes, I made the point that if you go across the Golden Gate bridge and look at San Francisco, the ocean is on your right, but if you go across the April 25 bridge and look at Lisbon, the ocean is on your left, implying that Lisbon is a mirror-image of San Francisco ...

I liked acting. It was a big adrenaline rush; you'd know when your scene was coming, and you'd get ready for it, trying to think of what you'd say and what mood

you'd project, and then it comes, and it's over in a rush. Once the company applauded after I did a scene ranting about time, chaos and temperature (as requested), and it felt wonderful. You get this big ego boost; it's addic-

"You are such a great talker," I exclaimed to Terence, and he answered, "It's the only skill I have. If it weren't for that ability, I'd be sleeping under a bridge."

of Pound, Joyce, Shakespeare, the last words of Dutch Shultz, you name it. But egomaniacal much more than I. I think I saved the scene anyway by waving around a giant wrench and starting a mad scientist laughing jag which Durte got into.

By now it was eight, and Edgar had invited us to his house for supper at ten, so I killed an hour or so walking around the neighborhood. When I got back from my marvelous walk, they were through shooting, and I rode over to Edgar's house with him. It was me, Edgar, Marguerite, Edgar's friend Pedro and his wife Lourdes, Durte, Carlos, then Catarina and her production higher-up Marie-Juana (what a name!), also Terence and Bob. Dinner was served at — get this — 11:15 PM. And nobody

"You are such a great talker," I exclaimed to Terence, and he answered, "It's the only skill I have. If it weren't for that ability, I'd be sleeping under a bridge." Another time I heard him introduce himself to someone saying, "I'm a criminal and a bullshit artist." Not a pretentious guy. I hope some of my scenes come out well. And I hope there's some good ones of Bob, too. After watching all the rushes of Terence we were both wishing there was more of us.

With any luck, *The Manuel of Evasion* might be a psychotronic classic of cinema. Or at least a highly respected work of surrealism. It's supposed to be about 55 minutes long. Edgar's trick was to have some of the action take place in front of landmarks of Lisbon, so that the City of

tive, a true fix. After their scenes everyone is trembly and smoking cigarettes. Another great thing was to be working in a group instead of working all alone, as I do when I write.

I can't believe I'm going to have to go back to work. Well, it's still over a week away...

Now it's much later. TAP fucked up and I missed my connection in Boston, so I'm flying to SF via Denver. I don't have a clear idea anymore of what time it is or how long I've been traveling. In California it's 5 PM now. If we don't miss the connection at Denver, I'll be in SF about 11 AM. And, yes, my suitcase will be lost again. Air travel is so bad. But, as we say in California, oh well! ✕

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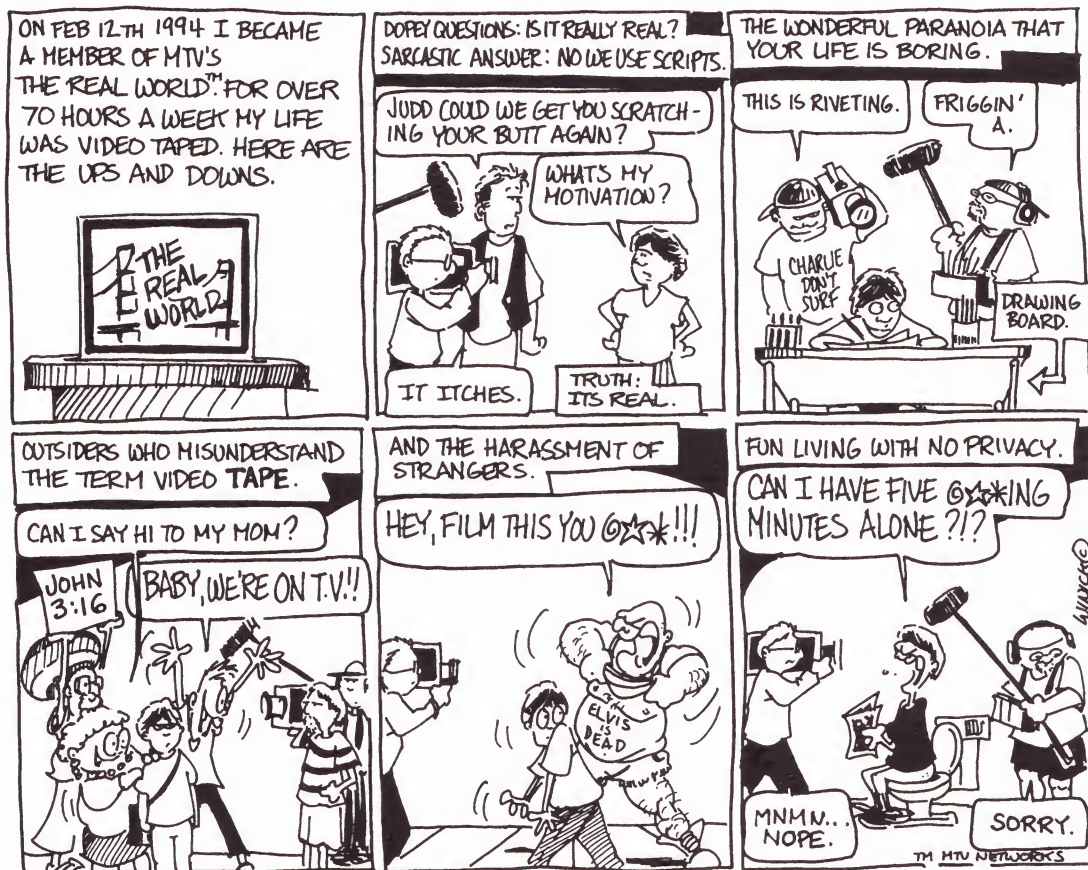
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What does the Mad Ave crowd buy with all the money they make? Many wonderful jewel-like things that you'll never be able to afford. But there is one thing that you can be sure they'll never purchase: a garment made from the so-called "Miracle Fibers." They know that "Miracle Fiber" clothing does not "breathe," and leaves wearers bathing in their own bacteria-laden sweat. They know that such clothing does not "hang" properly, and makes the wearer look slatternly.

No, the Mad Ave crowd goes for 100% cotton clothing. Cotton is comfortable, cool in the summer, and warm in the winter. Who cares if it gets wrinkled! They hire somebody to iron it! Who cares if it gets stained with beluga caviar? They throw it in the trash and buy a dozen more just like it! Don't you wish you could be like the Mad Ave crowd?

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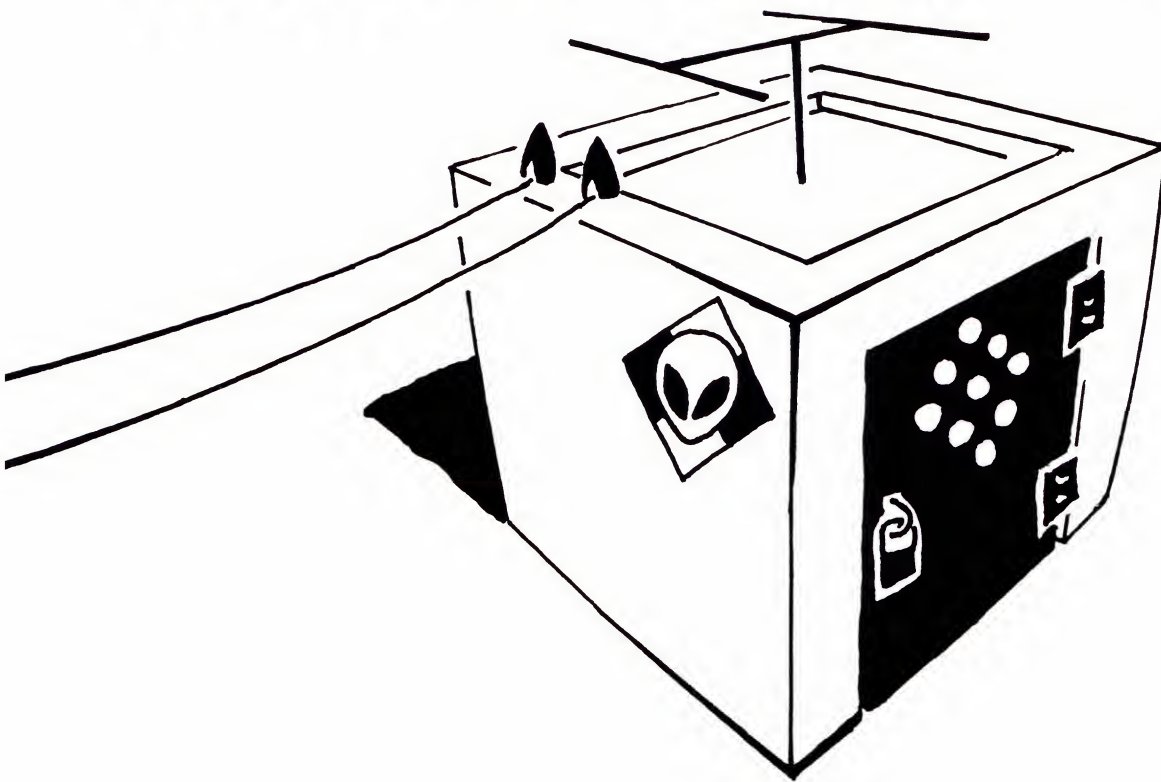
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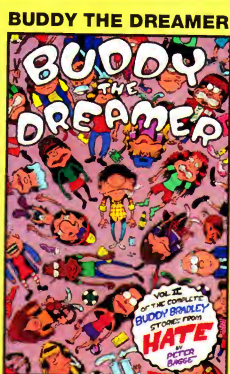
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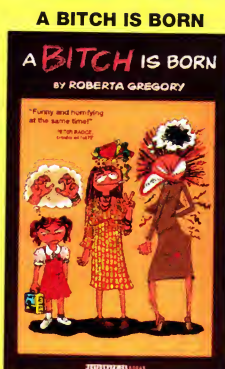
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