

LOOKOUT!

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Number 12

YOUR MEDIA FUTURE:

San Francisco Examiner

Are We Having News Yet?



When we ask, to what sorts of questions is the answer a number, and try to focus on the meaning or the reasons for the emergence of the quantitative, we are once again looking at a decisive moment of our estrangement from being.

IN THIS ISSUE:

More Music/Less Politics

7 SECONDS

Reviews:

DESCENDENTS

CIRCLE JERKS

RUBEN BLADES

RHYTHM PIGS

FAITH NO MORE

15 All-Time Great Rocknroll Records

The Real Folk Music

San Francisco Examiner

THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE OR A BLAST FROM THE PAST?

"The Next Generation," trumpet the ads for the "new" San Francisco Examiner. An unfunny journalistic joke for as long as anyone can remember, the onetime Brand Ex-paper has started laying out big bucks for some major talent. With the Chronicle likely to expire the day Herb Caen hangs up his typewriter for good, the Examiner looms large in northern California's media future.

With its hip, breezy format aimed at the baby boomers, the Examiner bears few traces of its former stodgy persona. Languishing for the past few decades under the increasingly senile and never quite literate William Randolph Hearst, Jr., the paper is now passing into the hands of the third W.R. Hearst, and this one seems to have a lot more in common with his infamous grandfather than the intervening Hearst.

Grandpa Hearst, as most people know, distinguished himself by inventing yellow journalism and starting the Spanish-American War. There being no evidence that he had anything else to gain from launching the U.S. on its way to becoming an imperial power, one can only presume that his principal motive was to sell more newspapers.

And sell them he did, so much so that he soon had publishers everywhere scrambling to keep up with him, the result being the inexorable transformation of the American newspaper from a source of information into one of entertainment. The reptilian Rupert Murdoch and his National Enquirer-style of journalism that is quickly becoming pre-eminent in the English speaking world are the spiritual legacy of the first Hearst.

San Francisco papers have always been the object of derision anyway, primarily at the hands of East Coast types who still haven't realized that news, like history, is essentially gossip. The handful of credulous hyperintellectuals who still think of the New York Times as anything other than the American equivalent of Pravda are unlikely to realize that gossip and opinion columns, even comics and letters to the editor, carry more weight in the real world than endless gray columns of leading economic indicators (which threaten to become our domestic version of tractor production quotas).

When one understands that, it becomes clear why the San Francisco papers have completely dispensed with news coverage except for a page or two that no one reads. With that in mind, the LOOKOUT presents a brief guide to some of the Examiner's pronounced features, with an eye toward pointing out underneath its almost radical facade there still beats a black Hearstian heart.

First on the plus side, we find above all WARREN HINCKLE, an all-around good guy and one of the best writers in town. One day a week we also get HUNTER THOMPSON, who could be even a better writer than Hinckle were it not for his too-frequent lapses into Hemingwayesque bravado. And of course there's the new Examiner's centerpiece, ZIPPY THE PINHEAD, as close to an all-encompassing fount of wisdom as any of the Bay Area media are likely to get.

Then there's ROB MORSE, who's got Herb Caen's subject matter, style, punctuation, type face, and left of Macy's layout down to a tee, and appears to have more than a smattering of his talent, too. And that's about it except for an occasional burst of sanity from a syndicated columnist like MIKE ROYKO. Oh yes, can't forget BILL MANDEL, who's beginning to rival BOB GREENE as a raconteur, and probably thinks that's a compliment.

But a glance at the op-ed page reveals the Examiner's true mind-set. There, on a typical day we might find WILLIAM BUCKLEY, that fatuous little sycophant so large of vocabulary and so devoid of morality, or R. EMMETT TYRELL, who, with a name like that, ought to be break dancing through the streets with a ghetto blaster in tow rather than beating the drums for his soul-deadening brand of whitebread fascism.

And that's not all. There's CHARLEY REESE, a porcine-jowled hater who writes for something called the Sun Belt Syndicate, which is just what it sounds like, a sort of right-wing Mafia with cultural roots in places like Las Vegas, Phoenix, and San Diego. And as token colored person, there's THOMAS SOWELL, a Stanford-bred Stepin Fetchit who, while waiting for scientists to perfect a black-into-white race change operation, spends his time vilifying Hispanics, Arabs, his fellow Negroes, in short, anyone less white or more open-minded than his patron saint Ronald Reagan. Though Sowell himself has been feeding at the bountiful trough of the neo-Nazi Hoover Institute, his idea of opportunities for less pusillanimous minorities consists of creating more sub-minimum wage jobs at McDonald's.

Got the picture? There's more, but I'll just mention a couple in passing. HOWARD MEANS, a bespectacled Bircher still searching under beds for those ubiquitous Commies, and DAN WALTERS, a sullen Republican thug who not only can't write, but probably has to have his spelling corrected for him, are just two examples of columnists that the Examiner probably got as part of some discount package deal.

And proving that ignorance doesn't need to be nationally syndicated, we have local boy GUY WRIGHT, a neurotic homophobe and racist whose attempts to project an avuncular small-town charm (read: small minded) more often than not come off as the hallmarks of incipient senility.

As a philosophical counterweight to the aforementioned disgraces, we are presented with the likes of ELLEN GOODMAN, almost a caricature of the overwrought, handwringing East Coast liberal than one wishes would have ridden off into the sunset with Jimmy Carter.

But then anyone who's ever read an Examiner editorial or attempted to struggle through one of W.R. Hearst, Jr.'s laboriously reasoned (?) explications of der Reaganfuehrer's brilliance knows where the Examiner is coming from. If they didn't have ZIPPY THE PINHEAD, probably no one would care.

San Francisco Beat

It may come as good or bad news depending on your cultural perspective, but the boys down at the Stud (the handful of them that are still conscious, that is) have started incorporating some fairly serious punk-rock moves into the traditional disco-bop bump and grind. Given the Stud's past record of featuring future trends, we can no doubt expect to see franchised thrash emporiums springing up soon in suburban shopping malls across the land.

But after nearly nineteen years as a subcultural oasis, the Stud appears in danger of becoming a victim of its own notoriety. The other day it was mentioned prominently in Chronicle society reporter Pat Steger's column, a paragraph ahead of First Mommy Nancy Reagan.

Another development on the disco scene that we could probably do without: the spread to these parts of the East Coast custom of roping off the entrance to nightspots and denying admission to those judged to be lacking in cash, cachet, or drugs with which to bribe the doorman.

The purpose of this snobbish rig-amarole is ostensibly twofold: to keep out the riffraff and to provide a suitable ambience for the "celebrities" who are supposed to frequent these joints. Since places where the riffraff are not allowed are usually boring as hell (you don't believe me, try Switzerland) and anyone living in San Francisco is ipso facto not much of a celebrity, you'd think there wouldn't be much demand for these urban country clubs.

But the opening of yet another new wave disco on the site of yet another defunct gay leather bar (AIDS, it seems, is functioning as the biological equivalent of the neutron bomb for those real estate speculators anxious to clear undesirable tenants out of areas ripe for yuppification) saw hordes of eager trendies queuing up for inspection.

Clad in glad rags from Emporium-Capwell's new South of Market Shop (well, the Emporium is on the the south side of Market St.), the glittering throngs made the DNA Club an immediate financial, if not aesthetic success.

The all-important doorman, imported for the occasion from last year's ultrahot New York niterie Area, could be heard muttering that the absence of proper ropes at the door was allowing too many of the "wrong" people to slip past him, but this tragic flaw has by now no doubt been remedied.

The DNA's second night saw a compound crime against art and good taste, ordinarily something I would be highly in favor of, but even Lawrence Livermore must maintain some standards.

This event honored the "installation" of an objet d'something called Vend'Art. The perpetrator was one Oona Lindquist, the sort of person who of late has been giving artists the kind of reputation previously reserved for real estate brokers and attorneys.

It is Ms. Lindquist's good fortune that art lovers are not generally given to the excesses that characterize the religion business; otherwise she might find herself crucified, on grounds of blasphemy, atop the Billboard Cafe.

Earlier this year a big to-do was mad about the fact that prominent 60s counterculturalist PAUL KRASSNER was resuming publication of THE REALIST, the magazine most famous for revealing what really went on on Air Force One's flight back from Dallas after the Kennedy assassination.

Krassner, an outstanding writer and satirist, made the rounds of the talk shows and interviews drumming up subscriptions to his new venture, and finally a September-October premiere issue appeared, consisting of eight LOOKOUT-sized pages selling for the princely sum of two dollars.

Well, Krassner's got quite a rep, and eight pages of him at his best might be worth two bucks to them that's got it, but as it turns out, Krassner didn't even write most of the stuff, and his major contribution is a rambling interview with GRATEFUL DEAD junkie emeritus JERRY GARCIA.

Since that time (and may I remind you, if necessary, that it's now December), zilch. If Krassner needs the pressure of a formal deadline to get him to produce, I suggest he talk to the folks at the San Francisco Examiner. I hear they're looking for new writers.

If it weren't for the irony of it all, life might be just a bad joke... Chronicle columnist Herb Caen's persistent bad-mouthing of the noble pigeon caused me to ruminate that when the lovable old curmudgeon finally shuffles off this mortal coil (and let's hope that won't be for a long time) someone in this monument-minded city is bound to erect a statue in his memory. If it's like most statues, it will soon be host to more pigeons than the average tourist in St. Mark's Square.

Since no LOOKOUT would be complete without a Mayor Fineswine item, I am pleased to report the appearance in a window on Haight St. of a new R. Crumb masterpiece, which portrays Darling Dianne as a spike-heeled dominatrix under whose City Hall dome-shaped hoop skirt a pack of brutish policemen are engaged in beating hell out of a bewildered citizenry. Tattooed on Her Swininess' garter-belted leg is an arrow-pierced heart inscribed "Mo" to commemorate our favorite fleet whore's devotion to the nuclear battleship Missouri soon to be adorning the waterfront.

AND CROWN THY GOOD WITH BROTHERHOOD...

Riding an A-C Transit bus through West Oakland the other day, I was struck by a sense of deja-vu. It wasn't the first time I'd been to the part of Oakland--I'd lived there for a short time in the 1960s--but the passing views seemed familiar in a different way, as if out of a movie.

Oh, right, that's where I'd seen these scenes before: it was on the 6 o'clock news, only then it was a place called Soweto on the other side of the world. Everybody's eyes are on the racial problems of the other USA, the Union of South Africa; if they weren't, they might notice that racism is alive and well in our own country, and, as in South Africa, threatens to tear the sucker apart.

Although America had officially ended its own apartheid system by the 1960s, things haven't changed all that much. Sure, you can see well-dressed Negroes with white accents selling deodorants on TV and passing laws in Congress, but the vast majority of black people still lead separate and unequal lives.

But even the black people have it pretty soft compared to what happened to the original Americans. Did you think the Nazis invented genocide? Guess again. Hitler himself said that he got the idea for his Final Solution to the Jewish "problem" by studying the way white European settlers dealt with the American Indians.

Hitler was stopped before he could complete his plans to exterminate the Jewish race. White America came much closer to achieving its goal; though some native Americans did survive, very little of their culture did. The broken remnants of a people who had lived for thousands of years in relative harmony with nature and each other were forced onto reservations (in South Africa they call them "homelands") consisting of the most barren and worthless land available.

End of sad story, right? No, even now while well-meaning liberals wring their hands and march against South Africa's displacement of its native populations, it's still going on right here in our own country. When the Indians were herded onto their reservations, they were promised that the land would be theirs forever, as long as the sun will shine, blah, blah, blah, etc...

But what the government really meant was: until we find some other use for the land. For 10,000 Navajo people, that time is now. The greed pigs who run the government for the benefit of corporate consumption have found out that there's a lot of coal and uranium sitting under the land where the Navajo have been grazing sheep for the past century or so.

You can guess what that means. Up and at 'em, redskins, back on the Trail of Broken Treaties, where a few million of your ancestors died. As compensation, the government's going to give them some prefab tract houses plunked down in the desert near the Mexican border. My first reaction on seeing pictures of these instant slums was, why not just machine gun the poor folks and get it over with; it'd be more humane.

Remember, of course, that the government is doing this for your benefit, so you'll be sure to have enough electricity to leave the lights and TV on all night, and God forbid, we wouldn't want to run out of atomic bombs, would we?

As Frank Zappa once said, "You know, people, I'm not black, but there's a lot of times I sure wish I wasn't white."

AND ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT..

As further evidence of its commitment to human decency, the Reagan administration has reluctantly agreed to stop supplying electric cattle prods to Central American dictators as part of its counterterrorism program. What's the difference between terrorism and "counter"-terrorism? Depends which end of the cattle prod you're on.

Other humanitarian aid to Central America will continue, including muchos dolares to the Nicaraguan contras to enable them to continue blowing up schools, hospitals, peasants, and similar enemies of the American way.

Playing right into Senor Reagan's hands, the Sandinistas have extended censorship, abolished many civil rights, and drafted most of Nicaragua's young men into the military (it's my opinion that if people believe in a cause enough to fight for it, you don't need military conscription, as the original Sandinista revolution amply demonstrated).

Reagan's vicious ignorance is producing exactly the result he supposedly is trying to prevent: another Cuba. Not that Cuba's all bad; at least people don't go hungry there, or fall victim to death squads the way they do in the U.S.-supported "democracies."

But with cooperation rather than hostility from the United States, both Cuba and Nicaragua could have developed into so much more, into models for the future instead of just two more pawns in the East-West struggle for planetary extinction.

Or as an anarchist might put it: just another good argument for the abolition of all governments.

MUSIC CAN MAKE YOU STUPID

One of the musical "trends" being served up to us by the purveyors of corporate culture is the alleged folk revival. Thus we have novelty acts like the WASHINGTON SQUARES, who, complete with paste-on goatees, mimic the musical styles and attitudes of 25 years ago.

I think someone is missing a point or two here. The concept of folk music predates PETER, PAUL, AND MARY, the KINGSTON TRIO, PETE SEEGER, and the WEAVERS by several thousand years. The word folk comes from the German Volk, or people (as in Volkswagen - peoples' car). Folk music through history has been the music of the common people. While kings, nobles, and capitalists commissioned symphonies and operas for their private listening pleasure, ordinary people in the fields and factories made what music they could with (or without) whatever instruments they could get their hands on.

This tradition continues up to our present day. While bloated pop stars loll about their multi-million dollar studios, garages and basements around the world resonate with the heartfelt sounds of people to whom making music is not an occupation, but a part of life as natural and inescapable as eating, sleeping, breathing, and making love.

The real folk music is far more than the tremulous warblings of caffeine-drenched neurotics like Joni Mitchell or Suzanne Vega. It includes, obviously, punk rock and a lot of other non-corporate rocknroll, blues, reggae, salsa, flamenco, and thousands of other kinds of music from all over the world that we here in the USA will be lucky to ever learn about. All of the reviews this month are of groups that can truly be said to be playing "peoples" or folk music.

CHRIST ON PARADE, THE NOT, 7 SECONDS, DESCENDENTS, CIRCLE JERKS at the Farm, Nov. 22

"The show of the century," promised KALX DJ Kenny Kaos (himself the DJ of the century in some peoples' minds). Well, not quite, though it turned out to be one of the better, if not the best show of the year.

"Another Paul Rat fiasco," griped my regular concert-going buddy Richard, but that wasn't quite true, either. Richard was steamed because the Farm was so jammed with people that any kind of movement was difficult, and someone could have easily been trampled to death without anybody noticing. But we all love each other, right? So we should enjoy the opportunity to be in such close proximity with all our brothers and sisters from the scene. Right?

No, I'm not really being that sarcastic. One thing I noticed right away was the much wider than usual variety of people in attendance, from skinheads to straight edge, from heavy metalloid to hardcore hippie. Despite this volatile mix, there were no fatalities, and I didn't even see any fights, though I helped stop one when, in a fit of uncharacteristic bravery, I stepped in between an outraged jock and a cloddish stage diver who had just kicked the jock in his freshly shaved head.

(Speaking of stage divers, my patience with the breed has just about run out. There don't seem to be any left with the grace to avoid hurting people, and most of them seem to be trying to kick as many heads as possible. I used to try and help catch them, but now I just get out of the way and let them splatter on the floor. One exception: the guy who executed a one and a half gainer off the speaker tower. Poetry in motion).

And so, on to the music:

CHRIST ON PARADE This band wasn't listed in the advance advertising, so when I saw them setting up, I felt like grabbing Paul Rat and demanding to know why I hadn't been warned. But as it turned out, I liked them way better than the last time I saw them. Still a bit too much metal influence, apparently the work of the guitarist with the sideways mohawk, but I'm beginning to think I might be fighting a losing battle on this cause. Even MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL seems to be falling victim to the metalloids these days (yes, that especially includes you, Kent Jolly, and Pushead is apparently a totally gone case).

THE NOT I must confess to not paying real close attention to this band; I was in the other room during most of their set. Still they sounded pretty decent, if a little rocknrollish. Sorry about not being able to give a more complete review, but even Lawrence Livermore can't be on the job constantly.

7 SECONDS A big disappointment. Hard words to say about my totally favorite band, but that's how it was. All week before the show I'd been going around complaining about how ridiculous it was that the world's greatest band was only third-billed, but maybe Paul Rat knew something I didn't because 7 SECONDS played no better than third best.

Maybe touring nonstop since at least last spring has worn the boys out. Maybe they're not yet totally in sync with their new drummer (Belvey, formerly of the Syracuse NY metalcore band CATATONICS).

Singer Kevin Seconds, the band's only remaining original member, now has hair and was missing his traditional blackened eyes. He looked tired, and, dare I suggest it, not particularly straight edge.

The sound mix was terrible, and I have to blame that on lack of interest on the part of 7 SECONDS, because it was fine for all the other groups. The guitar was muddled, and the trademark backing vocals could barely be heard.

Sure, even a mediocre 7 SECONDS set is better than about 90% of the world's rocknroll. But I think it's time maybe for Kevin and the crew to take a little time off to recoup their energy and rethink their direction. But don't worry, guys, I still love you!

DESCENDENTS This is a band on its way to the top. Ordinarily I'd complain that their lyrics don't have all that much to say, that they're not politically correct, blah blah blah... But the DESCENDENTS' music is so great that I really don't care. They equalled or topped their October performance at the Novato Theater, and there's not much else I can say. One of the best sets by any band this year.

CIRCLE JERKS I haven't bothered to see the CIRCLE JERKS since 1980 or 81, thinking of them as essentially a punk nostalgia act, so I wasn't expecting much. I figured Paul Rat had booked (and top-billed) them hoping to draw in the suburban crowd.

But they weren't bad at all, better, unbelievably enough, than 7 SECONDS. Though they couldn't hope to match the intensity of the DESCENDENTS, they didn't embarrass themselves, either.

Their set leaned heavily toward material from their second and third albums, which I'm not familiar with, but they also demonstrated that they haven't forgotten how to play their big hits from the golden days of hardcore. One difference: back in 1980-81, concert sound quality was often so bad that you could hardly tell what song the group was playing. During this set, classics like "I've Got the World Up My Ass" and "Beverly Hills" came through more clearly than on the record.

Like I said at the beginning, some of my friends thought Paul Rat let in too many people. I asked them if they would have felt the same way if they'd been outside unable to get in (the show was sold out by about 10 o'clock), and they suggested that he should have done the same show on two nights instead of one. That's probably not a bad idea. There are even some fanatics like myself who would probably show up both nights. But the minor problem of overcrowding aside, I had a great time.

SOUND CHOICE



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CONJUNTOS CESPEDES, RUBEN BLADES
at the Fillmore, Nov. 23

The music wasn't the only thing happening here; this was the grand re-opening of Bill Graham's original Fillmore Ballroom, which closed its doors back in 1968 when Graham's largely white audience stopped feeling safe about coming to concerts in the then all-black neighborhood.

Well, the Fillmore District is fast becoming gentrified and Graham's audience is no longer lily-white. These two factors made for a scene that was a far cry from the Fillmore of the 1960s, despite Graham's valiant efforts to re-institute old traditions like the bin of free apples at the entrance.

In the first place, this was a thoroughly upscale crowd, as one would expect with a \$20 (!) door price (don't worry, Lawrence Livermore didn't have to pay), many of whom were wearing suits and ties and similarly bizarre attire. It was also a thoroughly integrated crowd, and for this I have to give Bill Graham credit. For all their talk of unity, punks have a hard time getting a couple hundred identically dressed suburban teenagers into the same room without violence breaking out; here were thousands of people of every race and color happily dancing together (I did notice a few Latin godfather types glowering at the Grateful Dead-style twirlers flitting around them).

CONJUNTOS CESPEDES, an Afro-Cuban aggregation, was flashy to look at, but their music didn't amount to much. A lot of drums accompanied by some lengthy jazzish noodlings sent a lot of people in search of one of the new Fillmore's five or six bars (remember when people who drank alcohol were scorned as "juiceheads?";

But everyone was clearly there to see RUBEN BLADES, the first salsa performer to have a chance of making it in a big way outside the Spanish speaking world. Purists might scorn BLADES for tampering with the salsa tradition in order to reach the gringos, but all he's really done is to replace the horns with synthesizers (a change this gringo could have done without) and provide English translations of his lyrics (another non-improvement for me, since I'm trying to learn Spanish).

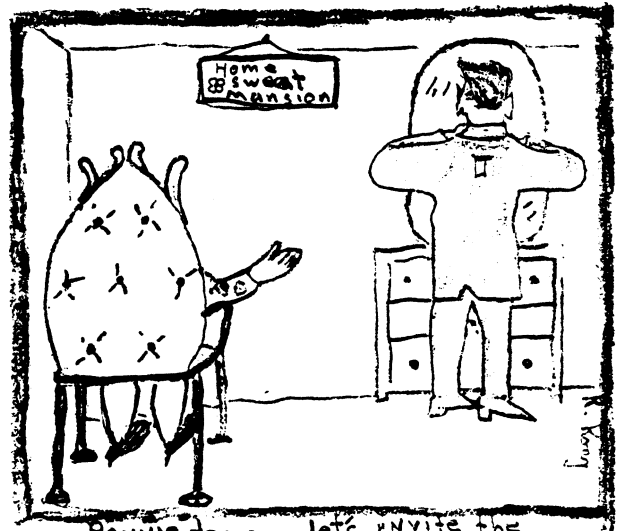
More remarkably, BLADES seems bent on becoming the JELLO BIAFRA of Latino music, prefacing nearly every song with fairly lengthy political dissertations, which got on some peoples' nerves, but didn't bother me, but then I enjoy BIAFRA's diatribes, too.

BLADES didn't seem to be speaking so much out of rage as from a genuine desire to build bridges of communication between the two major cultures of the Americas, and for this I can't give him enough credit. I find it outrageous that most Anglos, including, until recently, myself, are almost completely ignorant anything more Hispanic than where to get a good burrito.

But the hell with politics, let's dance, right? And if there's a better music for dancing than salsa, I haven't discovered it yet. It's not for the weak of body or spirit; some of the songs go on for ten or twenty minutes, and though the Fillmore closed at its normal hour with the playing of the traditional "Greensleeves", I'm told that south of the border the music would have continued at least until dawn.

So I had a great time, although I was bothered by the fact that most people I know who would have really enjoyed both the music and the cultural experience couldn't afford the price of admission. I also had to wonder how RUBEN BLADES reconciled his political message with the fact that he was delivering it exclusively to a very affluent and well-fed audience.

This contradiction was brought home very clearly to me after the show as I waited in the rain for the bus (for half an hour, Fineswine!). In the days of the original Fillmore, so many concert-goers would pile on to the Muni that the 38 Geary and 22 Fillmore would appear in danger of tipping over. After the RUBEN BLADES show, out of several thousand people, I was all alone at the bus stop.



Ronnie dear... let's invite the Gorbachevs over for some dinner, then we can have some nice tea and show them the bomb we'll blow them up with if they don't shape up.

RHYTHM PIGS, FAITH NO MORE at the
V.I.S. Club, Nov. 30

This was the first time I'd ever been to the VIS and my first impression was that it was a pretty good place to play or hear music. One annoyance: an electronic message board just to the side of the stage that repeats over and over the scores and descriptions of every sporting event taking place anywhere in North America. It could have been safely turned off during this show; I don't think there were too many hockey fans in attendance.

Another drag: high prices. Some clubs make their money at the door and others make it on the drinks, but the VIS tries to do it on both. I wouldn't mind the \$5 cover charge so much if I could be sure the bands were being well paid out of it, but \$2.50 for a bottle of beer? The VIS is, as I said, an agreeable enough place, but neither the neighborhood nor the clientele are particularly upscale.

I missed the first two bands, and got there right after the beginning of the RHYTHM PIGS' set. The RHYTHM PIGS are a three-piece band out of El Paso, Texas, recently arrived in SF to engrave some vinyl for Mordam Records. They play a style of stop and go thrash that is both more polished and more complex than is typical for the genre.

They were playing their hearts out, too, when I came into the room, and at least half the crowd was looking at them and a couple of people here and there were tapping their feet. But a big semi-circle in front of the stage was totally empty except for one zany who without warning launched into a 70s-style sideways pogo.

But for the most part the RHYTHM PIGS might as well have been flailing around in a vacuum. Why? Well, most of the crowd seemed more interested in drinking and being seen than in going crazy on the dance floor. But I have to give a little blame to the PIGS, too. Though they are excellent musicians and have good songs, they seem to be missing that certain something that grabs hold of people and pulls them into their energy field. Charisma, maybe?

One solution might be to have a lead singer/front person. But Ed, the bassist, told me that they preferred being a three-piece. One thing they don't need in the way of flash is the guitarist charging and leaping across the stage like just about every heavy metal axe grinder who ever breathed. Be yourself, guys. Anyway, the RHYTHM PIGS are a welcome addition to SF's anemic music scene. The energy they put out should serve as a good example for a lot of local bands.

FAITH NO MORE is a great band. More than that, it is a unique band. If they've copped their style or sound from any other group, it would come as startling news to me.

All the limp neo-60s bands currently clogging up local brain waves would do well to give a listen to FAITH NO MORE to learn how to be truly psychedelic without dwelling in the past.

At the same time, FNM serves up some of the best dance music around without falling into the repetitious rut of so many rhythmically oriented bands. A lot of credit for this goes to drummer Mike Bordin, simply one of the best drummers I've ever seen anywhere.

So why was the VIS Club crowd standing around like a bunch of new wave slugs? Afraid of wrinkling their leather jackets? The first time I saw FNM, at the short-lived WHY-NOSE Club, the dance floor was wild, it was jungle city. At the VIS Club, a handful of boppers and strutters occupied the area in front of the stage and the rest of the people gawked and swayed.

But FNM seemed a little distant themselves. Like at the WHY-NOSE gig last spring, they were sweating sixteenth notes; at this show they seemed a little like...rock stars? Couldn't be possible, could it? After all, their first record just came out (the VIS gig marked its release; a review follows). Their set was way short, too, though a couple of encores stretched it to near normal length.

Kind of an off night for FAITH NO MORE, maybe. They're still a great band. Go see them first chance you get.

FAITH NO MORE "WE CARE A LOT"
LP on Mordam Records, POB 988, SF 94101, \$5.00

Very well produced, crisp and clear sounding, this record does a good job of capturing the essence of FAITH NO MORE. It feels a little chilly to me, but I don't know if that's the record or the fact that there's no heat in the room where I'm writing.

Readers familiar with my usual tastes should be advised: FNM is no way a hardcore thrash band (yes, it's true, Lawrence Livermore is taking countless readers' advice and broadening his cultural horizons). I call it tribal music, the tribe being that collection of wild and free spirits that used to roam the city streets before the yuppies and "artists" moved in.

Hearing FAITH NO MORE gives me hope that the SF I loved in my younger days isn't totally dead yet. If you can spare the \$5, buy this record. Support your local scene and help keep FAITH NO MORE in incense.

15 ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL ROCKNROLL RECORDS

ROLLING STONES "Out of Our Heads"

(M)ick the sick and the rolling uglies before they went uptown but after they'd learned to play more than American R&B knockoffs. Contains "Satisfaction", the definitive Rolling Stones song.

BEATLES "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band"

The alpha and omega of psychedelic music. Without this album the BEATLES would be remembered as one of the great pop music acts of all time. With this album they belong to the ages.

BOB DYLAN "Highway 61 Revisited"

All of Dylan's albums from "Freewheelin'" through "Blonde on Blonde" are classics well worth owning, but if I had to choose just one... Contains "Desolation Row", as savage and incisive a chronicling of the American nightmare as you're ever likely to hear. Vintage folk-punk.

THE DOORS "The Doors"

Los Angeles has produced a lot of pop music successes but few truly great bands. THE DOORS stand head and shoulders above them all, if only based on this, their first record. A sound track for the apocalypse (a fact also noted by one F.F. Coppola).

HANK WILLIAMS "24 All-time Greatest Hits"

Wait a minute, this ain't rock'nroll... Well, no, not exactly, although Mr. Williams obviously taught a thing or three to folks like Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, et al. Pure hill-billy soul. Dead at the age of 29, HANK WILLIAMS had already produced a body of work that justifies his inclusion as one of the greatest Americans of the 20th century.

JEFFERSON AIRPLANE "Surrealistic Pillow"

To me this represents the "San Francisco Sound" far more than the hysterical squallings of JANIS JOPLIN or the ersatz blues noodlings of 60s-era GRATEFUL DEAD. The only thing depressing about listening to this album is being reminded of the depths to which lead singer Grace Slick (now singing with the hideous corporate pop-rock group STARSHIP) has sunk.

MC-5 "Back in the USA"

Though the group's first album works better as a documentary of the first band to successfully combine rocknroll and revolution, this, their second outing, has songs that are more accessible while sacrificing none of their political immediacy. Most of them hold up amazingly well today.

GRATEFUL DEAD "Workingman's Dead"

The Dead after they'd learned to play their instruments but before it went to their heads. If the GRATEFUL DEAD had kept up in this vein, they'd still be a major force today instead of an embarrassing relic of a bygone age.

DAVID BOWIE "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust"

Though Bowie has fallen on hard times in recent years, doing TV commercials (that's television, not transvestite) for the "Coffee Achievers" and cranking out a series of insipid disco-synth albums, this 1972 release virtually created the genre of glitter-rock and provided one of the few glimmers of true creativity in the morass of self-indulgence that characterized the music of the early 70s.

SEX PISTOLS "Never Mind the Bollocks"

Argue all you want that the SEX PISTOLS weren't ideologically pure or politically correct; this record launched the punk era and was like water to a drowning man for those of expiring of terminal boredom during the heavy metal and disco dominated 70s.

DOA "Hardcore 81"

When punk, in danger of becoming a caricature of itself, was ready to take its next big step, this Vancouver-based group was one of those who led the way. Having now opted for a more polished pop-rock sound, DOA is unlikely ever to top this record.

VARIOUS ARTISTS "Not so Quiet on the Western Front"

The quality of the cuts on this double LP varies widely, and it could easily be pared down to a single disc. But with 47 Northern California and Nevada bands represented, this compilation put together by the MAXIMUM ROCK-ROLL people captures in time what was arguably the most vital and exciting punk scene anywhere ever.

CODE OF HONOR "Fight or Die"

Impassioned suburban youth at its noblest. Possibly the best overtly political rocknroll record ever. Alas, CODE OF HONOR was only the most fleeting of shooting stars in the cultural firmament.

Actually this is only half an LP; the other side is given over to SICK PLEASURE, featuring the same musicians as CODE OF HONOR, but a different singer. SICK PLEASURE provides an excellent case study of the mindless nihilism that went a long way toward destroying the punk scene. One song, "Let's Kill the Muni Driver", is funny, unless, of course, you're a Muni driver.

MDC "Millions of Dead Cops"

Did I just say CODE OF HONOR was the best political record ever? I must have been suffering from an incredible case of amnesia. Lyrics and music to rattle Amerikkka to its foundations. "John Wayne Was a Nazi" alone is worth the price of admission.

7 SECONDS "The Crew"

Pure white light encapsulated in vinyl. The lame walk, the dumb speak, and the dead rise from their graves when you slide the needle between these grooves. Shares honors with MDC for the ultimate thrash record.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Actually, I sort of wish I hadn't even written this article. Greatest hits lists are stupid. Not only will I get people mad at me for leaving out their favorite groups; I'm already mad at myself for leaving out some of mine.

The CIRCLE JERKS' first record, for example, clearly belongs on this list, and it's hard to forget about the GERMS' classic "GI". Then there's a whole lot of artists like the VELVET UNDERGROUND, RAMONES, ELVIS PRESLEY, CHUCK BERRY, and more, who turned out enough great songs to fill one or more albums but instead scattered them over several records.

And I can't forget about the DEAD KENNEDYS, who produced an LP, "Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables", chock full of classics but with such attenuated sound quality that it really interferes with the listener's enjoyment. And I know there are others I should have mentioned; I'm sure my readers will help fill in my memory blanks.

from: THE IDEALIST
10607 Sagewind
Houston TX 77089

THEY AREN'T THE WORLD

There comes a time when rockstars ask for cash,
And that's how the world's supposed to come together as one.
There are people dying
And they just noticed
And they think that they're the greatest gift of all.

We can't go on pretending day by day
That record companies and media gods will soon make a change.
Each of us plays a part in a world that starves us all
And our cooperation is all they need.

THEY'RE NOT THE WORLD, THEY'RE NOT THE CHILDREN
THEY'RE JUST BOSSES AND BUREAUCRATS AND ROCK-N-ROLL HAS-BEENS.

There's a choice we're never given,
To run our own live....
Without that, you're "better day" is just a lie.
Buy the record, so they can think they care,
And their careers will be stronger and guilt-free.
As Michael and Lionel have shown us,
The world's just TV...
If children are starving, let them drink Pepsi.

THEY'RE NOT THE WORLD, THEY'RE NOT THE CHILDREN
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A CHANGE, START FROM THE BEGINNING.

There's a choice we're never given,
To run our own lives...
Without that, your "better day" is just a lie.

When you're rich and famous, there seems no contradiction at all
If you just have a number one hit, that solves it all.
Let us realize that no change will ever come
If we --- let CBS decide what's a problem!

LOOKOUT: POB 1000 Laytonville CA 95454
Lawrence D. Livermore, Editor and Publisher

ON LOVE AND HATE,
PASSION AND CARING

My Uncle Chuck, who's never been known for keeping his opinions to himself (it must run in the family), recently wrote to me saying that some of the writing in the LOOKOUT was "...so vitriolic it frightens me."

Since I've got a lot of respect for my uncle, I had to give some serious thought to his criticism. I wondered if people saw me as someone filled with bitterness and hostility. Did anyone understand what I was really trying to say?

What it comes down to is this: is there a nice, cheerful, upbeat way of saying, "Stop it! You're killing me!?" The words I write in the LOOKOUT and the songs I sing with my band may come across as almost inarticulate screams of rage, but face it, I couldn't get that worked up about things if I didn't care passionately about what goes on in the world around me.

Which is just another way of saying that I act out of love, love for my fellow creatures and love for the planet that gave birth to us all. If that makes me sound like some sprouthead hippie, too bad. In my book, love's something to be proud, not ashamed of.

In the theater of hate masquerading as modern American culture, it's easy to get disoriented. Punk started out mocking society's inbred violence, but a lot of would-be punks didn't get the joke, and apparently neither did society. Nothing's changed; as John Lennon said 15 years ago: "There's room at the top, they are telling you still. But first you must learn how to smile as you kill."

The streets are filled with well-dressed, well-fed killers with big smiles on their faces. Their three-piece suits are modern day executioner's robes and their briefcases are crammed full of death. Maybe they only feed data into a computer; somewhere, out of sight and out of mind, people die.

No, I don't hate anyone. Ignorance is the enemy, not my fellow human beings. Sometimes I make mistakes; I'm not immune to ignorance, either. But I'm not going to shut up for the sake of being "nice" or to spare peoples' feelings. The truth is the only weapon I have, and I'm going to use it.

