

What So Proudly We Heil THE EMPIRE'S NEW IMAGE

Anyone who had a nodding acquaintance with consciousness during the 1960s probably heard a song called The Universal Soldier. Written and sung by an American Indian named Buffy Ste-Marie, and covered by countless other would-be troubadours, it could safely be dubbed the universal anti-war song.

So it was with equal measures of surprise and disgust that, 20 years later, I saw Ms. Ste-Marie on TV, performing

the theme song from the unabashedly militaristic film, An Officer and a Gentleman, accompanied by a detachment of U.S. Marines, who did a modified goose step around her in time to the music.

But far be it from me to waste time scolding an over-the-hill folk singer for recognizing that war is back in fashion and making haste to cash in. What was more significant to me was the subtle but powerful message: it's time to forget about the fuzzy-

(continued on page 2)

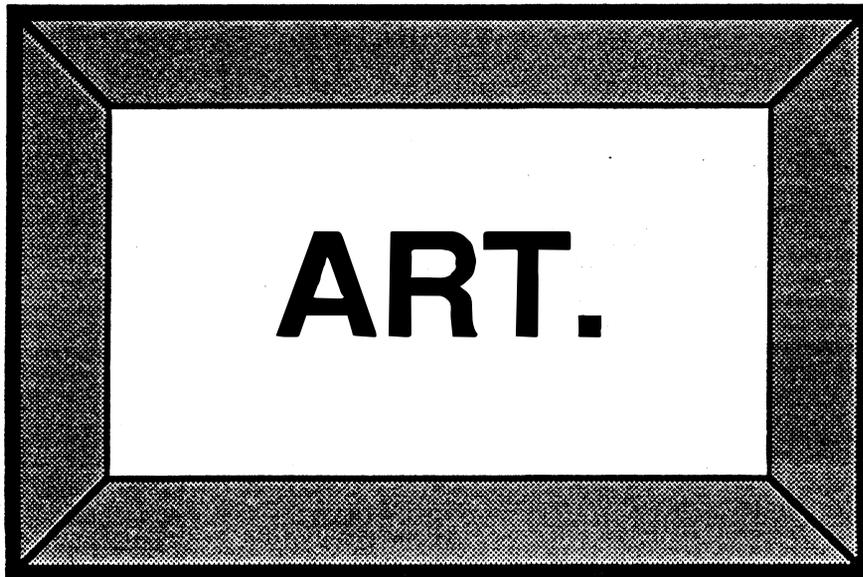


Graphic by David Hayes

LOOKOUT!

August 1986

Number 20



What's the Point?

See Page 3...

headed liberalism of a more idealistic era, and turn our attention to more grown-up activities, specifically, the pursuit of money and power without regard for conscience or consequences.

It is this sort of attitude that the New American Empire requires, and if public opinion polls are to be believed, is obtaining from its citizens. The upwelling of so-called "patriotism" that has been afflicting us since the onset of the 1980s resembles nothing so much as the mindless fervor evoked by one Adolf Hitler in the heady pre-war years of the ultimately-less-than-Thousand-Year-Reich.

Hitler was ahead of his time when it came to the mass marketing of political ideologies, but he was a piker in terms of today's media apparatus, which is so powerful that it affects even those who make a conscious effort to avoid its influence. Much of what passes for conversation these days, even among the relatively sophisticated, consists of catch phrases from TV sitcoms and commercials. If the media decide, seemingly as one, that patriotism and militarism are "in" again, the only subject left to argue is where, when, and how much killing should be done in fulfillment of those ideals. Left unmentioned is the possibility that love of country can be expressed by any other means than blind obedience to government and aggressive, football-style rooting for whatever murderous adventures our "leaders" choose to engage in.

The "We're Number 1, USA All the Way" psychology being used to sell everything from hamburgers to religious fanaticism is not a harmless way of blowing off steam when the combatants being cheered on are the world's nuclear superpowers. There is a violent, hostile streak in all of us -- if you doubt it, take an avowed pacifist and put him behind the wheel of a car stuck in rush hour traffic --

that can be drawn out and manipulated. Historians still ponder how Hitler managed to whip the seemingly civilized German populace into a wildly irrational blood lust. It's a good question, especially since there's no evidence that Americans are any less gullible, and Ronald Reagan is, if anything, a far more effective snake oil salesman than the mustachioed little tyrant of yore.

This is the Information Age, we are told again and again, and between communication satellites and computer linkups, global networks and mainframe interfaces, it's easy to start thinking of ourselves as mere cybernetic cogs in the one great techno-organism. And to an extent, willingly or not, we are. The frightening thing is the ease with which we can surrender our individuality. The need to belong is powerful and the pressures to conform are possibly stronger than they have ever been in history; the very idea of privacy is rapidly becoming obsolete.

But one of the first maxims coined by computer buffs was the seemingly self evident, "Garbage in, garbage out." If, in an age centered around information, we are fed a steady diet of manipulative imagery and outright lies, we can not expect the delicate balance between reason and instinct to remain unpaired. If our brains become dumping grounds for the basest residues of greed and ill-conceived ambition, should we be surprised when trying to carry out the simplest of good intentions seems to be an endlessly burdensome task?

A simple fact of modern life is that our awareness is constantly under assault by fellow beings of the best and worst possible motivations.

Tuning out is no solution; there is so much we must learn and know if we are to have a chance of surviving in any reasonable fashion on this planet. The climate of ideas may be dangerously polluted, but that doesn't mean we can afford to stop thinking, any more than we could stop breathing as a defense against polluted air.

In my more mystical days as a young hippie, I remember listening to tales of the ancient civilizations of Atlantis and Lemuria. In those times, the story went, humans had grown so advanced that there was virtually no distinction between the mental and the physical, and the concentrated power of a collective idea was an infinitely greater force for destruction or creation than any of the crude energy sources we employ today. Those civilizations supposedly disintegrated without a trace when the combined intelligence of their citizenry reached critical mass, leaving it impossible to prove or disprove the legends of their existence.

Whether these stories passed down to us from ancient times have any basis in truth is not important, but it is interesting how an archetypal mythology could so eerily mirror the situation in which we are fairly suddenly finding ourselves today. Outside the fevered imaginations of a few Doctor Frankensteins, the concept of artificial intelligence did not even exist when I was a young man; now we are told that within a few years much of the world will be run by it. If that is to be true, it should only make it all the more clear how vitally important it is that the intelligence coursing through our veins remains the real thing.

The LOOKOUT is available at these locations:

| | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Laytonville: | Grapewine Station |
| | Good Food Store |
| Fort Bragg: | Art Attack Gallery |
| Mendocino: | Corners of the Mouth |
| San Francisco: | Bound Together Books |
| | Rainbow Grocery |
| | Rough Trade |
| | City Lights Books |
| Berkeley | Rasputin Records |
| Portland OR | Laughing Horse Books |
| New York | See Hear |

LOOKOUT: POB 1000, Laytonville CA 95454

Lawrence D. Livermore, Editor and Publisher

Subscription rates:

USA, Canada, Mexico: \$10/12 issues
Overseas (via air mail): \$18/12 issues

*If You Have to Ask What it Means,
You Wouldn't Understand it Anyway:*

THE DISEMBOWELLING OF MODERN ART

The rise of popular culture that coincided with the arrival of the twentieth century must have been fraught with promise for egalitarians; at last, they could hope, control of the esthetic agenda would be wrested from the robber barons and inbred nobility who had patronized the arts since ancient times and handed over to the general public who would choose, by that most democratic of means, their pocketbooks, the sort of creative efforts that best embodied the values and aspirations of the human race.

At least that's what art is supposed to be about, isn't it? Let's make it clear right now that I'm talking about Art with a capital A, comprising music, dance, theater, as well as painting, writing, and sculpture, in short, all the ways that mystics and visionaries attempt to transform the barely perceptible into the universally understood. Which should also make it obvious that to me, above all, art is about communication.

But communication of what? It's an old, almost tiresome argument in the "art world" (as if such a world existed independently of the world we all inhabit): does the artist have the right or (conversely) the duty to imbue his or her work with political or social commentary, whether overt or subliminal? But is such an argument necessary at all? Now that art operates, theoretically at least, under the free enterprise system, isn't that a decision to be made in the marketplace?

Cynics will, of course, point to Madonna, MTV, *People* magazine, and *Friday the 13th* movies as proof that the democratization of culture has been no more successful than its political counterpart. But they would be ignoring the quantum leaps in consciousness made possible (though not necessarily achieved) by the ideal of art not only for the masses, but by and of them. The concept that anyone can, in fact, should be an artist has led to the still more radical notion that life itself ought to be lived as a work of art rather than a mere struggle against premature extinction.

There are those who find ideas like that both offensive and dangerous, and it's easy to see signs of a conservative backlash that would restore the creation, and more importantly, the marketing of art to an elite corps of "professionals". Those who make a living from the buying and selling of culture have an obvious interest in limiting the business to a closed fraternity. But economic factors are not the only, nor even the most important criteria determining who gets fat in the art game and who gets to romantically starve on the fringes of society. Though it would be a bit paranoid to posit the existence of a secret subsection of the CIA devoted to guaranteeing that only non-subversive material reaches the mainstream of public consciousness, an informal conspiracy among business, government, and academia limiting the parameters of expression to what is deemed "safe" is not all that far-fetched.

Until 1961, when the Supreme Court abolished most censorship in America, one very effective way of dealing with art thought to present a threat to the established order was to have it declared obscene. The striking down of that barrier was soon followed (though it would probably have happened anyway) by a general

flowering of political and anti-authoritarian music and writing that played a large part in fanning the flames of the discontent that nearly tore this country apart in the ensuing years.

It was no longer unusual for popular music, even some network TV programs, to contain overtly revolutionary messages. These forms of "low" culture left practitioners of the "fine arts" scrambling to keep up. By the time major playwrights, for example, got around to chronicling the 60s, their efforts were little more than exercises in nostalgia. Most established painters and poets became at best irrelevant, trapped in the ossified remnants of 50s-style abstraction.

The ironic thing was that abstract art (and its analogs in jazz and orchestral music) had started out as a much-needed rebellion against convention, but by then had become the new establishment. Painters risked ostracism by creating anything that might be readily comprehended by the general public; as a result, the most exciting art of the 60s was more likely to be encountered on posters advertising rock concerts or in underground comics than it was in the increasingly sterile galleries and museums.

60s iconoclasm eventually made itself felt in the most banal of creative enterprises, such as advertising, or for that matter, even in religious music. But as always, what was revolutionary yesterday becomes mundane today and reactionary tomorrow. Music, the cultural touchstone of the 60s, especially illustrated that tendency; by the mid-1970s, the wild-eyed radicals of the rock and roll world had become part of a bloated establishment fueled by enormous amounts of money, drugs, and ego, and as resistant to change as any of its predecessors had ever been.

Meanwhile, the seeds sown by the 60s cultural revolution (not to be confused with events in China, which constituted more of an anti-cultural revolution--not necessarily a bad thing in itself, either) sprouted in other fields, and painting, theater, the arts in general, in fact, entered into some constructive upheavals that were as exciting as anything seen since the 1920s. Prospects for the future looked great, until the progressive forces of the art world ran head on into the Great Leap Backward of America in the 1980s.

On the surface, art would appear to be healthier than ever: despite the predictable moaning about Reagan's cutbacks in funding (and I was never convinced that government aid to the arts was such a great idea, anyway; our museums and even our city streets are replete with monuments to self-indulgence and poor taste made possible by bureaucratically sponsored dilettantes), lots of artists are making a living from their work, and the less successful can always turn a buck in the real estate game, *a la* Soho in New York, South of Market in San Francisco, and similar cultural condo districts in cities across the land. Kids who a couple years ago were decorating subway trains under cover of darkness have taken their spray cans into nouveau-chic galleries and the sportswear sections of major department stores. Any halfway competent break dancer has to chance to appear on nationwide TV touting

the virtues of Pepsi-Cola, and nearly every week a new rock band lands a big-buck contract singing the Budweiser or Miller Beer theme songs.

And as for the more highbrow stuff, there are symphony orchestras and opera companies galore; tube-watchers have their *Masterpiece Theater*. But one thing the trashiest and kitschiest of pop art has in common with many of the noblest (and most pompous) of the "classics" is an overwhelming quality of pointlessness. Sure, Mozart, Beethoven, and the rest of the gang were geniuses, and it's amazing to hear the complexities of their music echoing down through the centuries. But face it, it's still just oldies but goodies, just like those rock stations that play an endless succession of greatest hits from the 50s and 60s. Great to tune into from time to time for some relaxation and escapism, but a steady diet of it can leave you feeling a bit discombobulated *vis-a-vis* the real world.

And that brings me back to where I started: does art exist mainly to provide us with an uplifting and strengthening diversion from our workaday cares, sort of like regular attendance at the church of our choice? Does it demean itself by becoming involved in temporal matters as opposed to the eternal verities of truth and beauty (which, of course, many artists will tell you are utterly meaningless abstractions)?

Many artists and critics alike make the case that the real changes effected by art occur *sub rosa*, in ways that the layperson can't expect to understand. Such arguments can take on an almost theological ring, as in this statement by San Francisco abstract expressionist painter Victor Hayden: "...it's about energy, about affecting it and moving it around...it's really about altering molecular structure." But does this serious business occur unbeknownst to those of us who don't know the code or lack the proper DNA structure? I get criticized a lot for using unnecessarily ponderous words in my writing (there you go again, as the Prez would say), and believe it or not, I try not to, because I want my work to be read by as many people as possible. Does that make me less than an artist, or, horrors, a mere "popularizer"? I think that ideas, well expressed and communicated, are the ultimate form of "altering molecular structure." And, conversely, when they are couched in in-group jargon or a private iconography, it's hard to see their effect going much beyond the artist's own personality.

Not that there's anything wrong with art as psychotherapy, but what I'm talking about here are forms of expression meant to be shared with the world at large. So go ahead and splash bright colors across the canvas with your eyes closed (or try to make it look as if you did). Grunt and moan into a microphone for three and a half hours and overlay it with multitracked sound effects fed through your word processor. Plop down a three story high concrete block in the middle of a city square, dangle some rusty I-beams over the edge and title it *Prometheus Waiting for the Bus*. Go ahead, I won't care, at least I'll try not to, even if it's getting harder and harder to make my way through society without being slapped in the eyeballs by your institutionalized ugliness.

Because all your mucking around is ultimately disposable, just as the words I'm typing onto this page will for the most part end up in some obscure corner of the cosmic dustbin. The fragile echoes of truth that resonate somewhere within even the most preposterous and self-indulgent of our efforts will remain, and as for the rest of it.... who cares? True art endures.

War on Literacy COUNTY SUPES BURN BOOKS TO FUEL POT CHOPPERS

Operating under the theory that an uninformed and ignorant populace is most likely to continue to electing them to office, Mendocino County Supervisors have voted to close two of the county's three libraries (Willits and Fort Bragg). Most of the money thus saved will go to pay for the wildly unpopular Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP), which this month began its fourth annual paramilitary assault against local residents.

TOURISTS SAVED FROM SKATEBOARD MENACE

The Supes also managed to tear themselves away from their lifetime work of paving over Mendocino County long enough to pass an ordinance ensuring that the pristine asphalt blanket they envision will not be besmirched by unsightly skateboarders who as of late have caused a considerable uproar by terrorizing our beloved tourists.

These reprehensible youths, many of whom come from underprivileged homes lacking even the barest amenities such as cable TV and who turn their noses up at perfectly good dishwashing and busboy jobs paying as much as \$3.50 an hour, have chosen instead to obstruct the sidewalks of the Mendocino Village theme park and make it difficult for visitors to go about their lawful business of shopping. One merchant, a "Tigerlily" Jones, recounted in horror how she had seen an errant skateboard go out of control and strike "a very expensive car."

The skateboard problem reached crisis proportions when the San Francisco *Chronicle*, a major daily newspaper steeped in the Hearstian tradition of the "yellow press", ran a front page exposé of the trouble in Mendocino Village, including photos of one youthful delinquent performing stunts in full view of a Bay Area visitor. The pictures were particularly disturbing in that the camera revealed on the underside of the young man's skateboard a decal reading JFA, which, as some *LOOKOUT* readers may not know, stands for Jodie Foster's Army, a nationwide cult of disaffected youth who idolize would-be presidential assassin John Hinckley, and plan to emulate him by attacking public officials with their skateboards.

The *Chronicle* article proved to be a public relations disaster for the newly formed Mendocino County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and phones at bed and breakfasts and exclusive restaurants were soon ringing off the hooks with cancellations and concerned inquiries. "We've got enough of this sort of anarchy in the streets right here in San Francisco," said Dr. and Mrs. Leon Firbank, frequent guests at Mendocino's Hill House and well-known collectors of driftwood art, "and we're not going to spend three hours driving up north for more of the same. If you people can't even control your own children, we'll just go to Carmel instead."

Faced with such a grave danger to the Mendocino economy, supervisors wasted no time in banning skateboarders during business hours. Held over for further discussion was a proposal requiring local residents to step into the street and politely avert their eyes whenever encountering tourists on the town's sidewalks. Also set for more study was a suggestion that a series of alleyways and tradesmen's entrances could make it possible for Mendocino residents employed in the service sector to go about their duties without annoying visitors.

LETTERS TO THE LOOKOUT

Dear LOOKOUT:

I read a paper called the *Fifth Estate*. It printed an excerpt from the LOOKOUT stating that the origin of the Universal Pricing Code was 130 searchlights set up by Albert Speer in the "Cathedral of Light" in 1934 at the Nuremberg Nazi rally?

What is your source for this? I have studied a lot of Nazi history and have never heard this.

Kenneth Tanner
Chicago

Dear Ken:

Although the graphic you saw was credited to the LOOKOUT, the one to talk to about it is its creator, Winston Smith (POB 1535, Ukiah CA 95482). I can't speak for Winston, but I suspect that he may have been bending the facts oh so very slightly for the sake of making a very valid point. But then again, you never know with these artists, do you?

LL

Lawrence,

I received LOOKOUT#18 safely and soundly. It was excellent as usual, and I enjoyed it immensely, yet there were a few things that I would like to comment on.

First and foremost on my mind is your article *Welcome to the Bimillennium*. While it is true that there have been a lot of very fucked up acts committed in the name of Christ and religion in general, I don't think Christianity or any religion deserves the kind of blanket condemnation they receive in your article. If you were to speak specifically about the New Right as manifested by people like Falwell, Pat Robertson, and others of that sort, then every allegation and argument in your article would be justified. However, you seem to overlook that there are a large number of Christians who do not exploit, with the Bible as their justification, as the New Right fundamentalists do. I am speaking of those involved with the ecumenical movement, the sanctuary movement, Witness for Peace, and other groups and movements that attempt to make the world a more livable, peaceful, loving, and just place. I am speaking of people like Desmond Tutu or Sister Theresa. I refuse to wholeheartedly accept the dogma of any religion, but there are things to be learned from every religion, belief system, or perspective. I also think people should be able to believe whatever they want to as long as they don't fuck with me or anyone else. One of the great things about America is that we supposedly have room for all beliefs, lifestyles, or any other expression of the gamut of individual differences.

One of the saddest things about America is that, at the moment, and in the past, it has not lived up to its promise. Sure, there are people who commit atrocities in the name of religion. There have always been people who will go overboard or who will use religion as a springboard for getting what they want. There is a precedent for selfishness in religious and secular groups. There are so many people, religious and secular, who are fighting against injustice; why should we attack

people who are striving for justice in the name of God when we are striving for the same thing out of the love of humankind?

Well, now that I got that across, I'd just like to say that the rest of the mag seemed to hit the proverbial nail on the head. *If Taxation is Theft, What About Property?* and *The Day the Music Died... Again* were very relevant.

What you say about the counter culture is very true. The modern alternative culture has threads going back quite a way: from the 60s counterculture to the beat movement to Emma Goldman to the Transcendentalists. I'm sure more examples could be mentioned going back further into history, but these are some of the most obvious (to me). Anyway, as far as the here and now, I would like to paraphrase something that you've written that I took to heart: "Create your own reality and let the world come to you." To quote the Fugs, "...refuse to be burnt out." Keep on keeping on; if we become discouraged and give up, that's just that much more of a loss for the world.

Dan /Third Rail zine
Salt Lake City

Dear Dan,

I wasn't attacking "people who are striving for justice in the name of God" or any other people for that matter; the object of my derision was the institution of organized religion, and Christianity in particular. I'm well aware that there are many wonderful people who subscribe to one religion or another, my own parents among them. What I think you overlook is that these people would be living good lives whether or not they belonged to a church; it is their own moral character that determines their actions. According to the logic you employ, one should not attack governments, either, because of the numerous good things that they accomplish (welfare and food stamp programs, medicare and educational aid, delivering the mail, among others). The danger of religions or governments is not the good people who for one reason or another align themselves with these institutions, but the great evil made possible when millions of people surrender their own reasoning power to an allegedly "higher" authority. I'd be willing to bet that most of the people and groups you name could achieve even greater things minus the spiritual impedimenta they currently lug around.

LL

Dear Lawrence:

Thanks for the explanation of the subscription price. Enclosed is my \$10 (I realize that while I complain about lack of bucks all the time, some people really are broke).

I just got LOOKOUT #19, and your 4th of July editorial made me want to share with you what I did on this most momentous of days. The Supreme Court's decision to allow the states the right to determine whether private consensual adult sexual behavior (or "sodomy") is legal or not infuriated me. My friend Ray and I went into New York City to join a protest sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Action Coalition (among other groups such as the Peoples' Antiwar Movement, Black and White Together, etc.). The protest was attended by about 5000 people (compare this to the several fold more who attended the Gay Pride march the week before). We were angry and decided to march to the center of the festivities, Battery Park.

To make a long story short, we were insulted, harassed, abused, detained by riot police, and generally looked upon as party poopers. Several persons were physically assaulted by revelers. I don't understand how people can participate in an orgy of commercialism and hypocrisy while the highest court in the land invades their bedrooms (and while the Liberty Fleet

contained a former torture ship, the *Esmerelda*, from Chile. Some drunken partiers accused us of being malcontents and picking the wrong day. Well, I'm not content to have my civil liberties stripped, and if not on the day allegedly celebrating liberty, freedom, and equality, then when? I'm so disgusted and frustrated; is this the beginning of the end or what?

Tom
Selden NY

Dear Editor:

The centennial of the Statue of Liberty has come and gone, and the more I think about it, the more I am appalled that the celebration, or hoopla, if you prefer, dwelt on what the statue is supposed to represent to Americans. Other than the almost mawkish tribute to what a beautiful sight "she" was, standing there in the harbor once again in mint condition, hardly a word was said about the statue itself and the civilization that made it possible.

Our gift from France, and that most beautiful of all great bridges -- the Brooklyn Bridge -- were erected during the same decade, and they stand today as two of the greatest engineering achievements of the modern world, besides being outstanding works of art in their conception and realization. They are worthy rivals of the wonders of the ancient world, and they are at least equal to anything that was accomplished in the 20th century with the aid of telephones and now copiers and computers to facilitate such ambitious projects.

As a youngster growing up in New Jersey, I climbed the steps inside the colossus from France and looked out at the entrance to the harbor from the crown, and I walked across the Brooklyn Bridge more than once as a young man, realizing perhaps for the first time the meaning of civilization.

Do we not owe the dreamers and artisans and builders of the 19th century our re-dedication to pursuits as peaceful and constructive as theirs were when they thought they were contributing to a future that would go on and on -- world without end -- forever? How many seconds will it take to demolish and even vaporize the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge if we allow the nuclear arms race to last long enough to bear its inevitable bitter fruit? The irony is that we will be doing this in the name of liberty.

Clem Droz
Smithflat CA

YET ANOTHER WIVES' TALE

Can you believe that people are still getting married? I can't believe that I was suckered into wearing a pink bridesmaid's dress and into acting civile for a few hours. My patience ended when reception time came and I changed back into black and boots. Sister happily married, thank God no longer kind of a spinster, boring shit to talk about, life is fucking hectic, why do I do all this? Finals on Monday after extremely long airplane ride with brats. I am so sick of drugs and drinking and smoking and living, but I miss my honey...

I didn't think that I would. I will talk about that. I still love my Filipino friend. Why my libido has been magnetic toward skin from the far side of the world I don't know, but that thin body, dark hair, just makes me wet between the legs sometimes, I mean to say I get tempted. Sin? Is it a sin to love? Oh yeah, I'm married, I guess the vows do say, "...and to forsake all others," as I was so conservatively reminded yesterday. But fuck, to forsake them all of what? It doesn't say that. If somebody's drowning, do I mind my own business because I'm married (I'll never forget the story of that old black guy in Detroit saying, "That ring don't stop up no holes") or do I jump in and save the dude because I'm a damn good swimmer? I really

want to love people, I care for so many people so deeply (I cried at the wedding, I was so happy for my sister and jealous that I had no such extravaganza) and it's hard for me to understand the concept of being faithful to one man all my life. A whole lifetime! I will love my man all my life, care for him the best I can, but...

I'm not really all that confused about this issue. I know what I'm supposed to not do. It all has to do with my body. I can't give it away so freely anymore, even though I'm 25 and as the years tick by toward 30 I've been getting more and more sexually aroused. It's just that I'm ultra-pissed off that I can't have my cake and eat it, too. I've got my security, but I miss the sensations of giving and receiving pleasure from different people, different souls. I feel sad about feeling this way because I'm still in love with and attracted to my husband, but it doesn't seem to fill me up. Empty feeling. Especially since as drugs leave my system, energy returns. Screw last month's letter, I wanna be straightedge so bad. I need some help, I need some love. And I love people so much I wish I could hug the world.

Shine on
Linda Lou
Petaluma CA
(moving to Novato)

Editor:

Kindly cancel my subscription.

Sally Howell
Mendocino CA

Gee, my first cancellation. I was starting to worry that I might be losing my touch.

LL

A Matter of Taste...

President Reagan said that he wished his son Ron would "find something more dignified" than writing for *Playboy* magazine, recently banned from 7-11 stores for its allegedly pornographic content. Reagan made the comment in an interview with that august journal of public opinion and current affairs, *People* magazine.

Oh Boy! More Chemicals!

Proceeding apace with its plans for the complete defoliation of Mendocino County, the California Department of Forestry has announced that it is preparing to resume the use of chemical herbicides, including the Agent Orange-related 2,4-D on lands under its jurisdiction (meaning about half the county).

The easiest way to defame someone and his opinion is to label him as 'loony' and 'ready for the funny farm.' It happens to me all the time.

John Hinckley, Jr.,
quoted in *US* magazine and its sister
publication, *The New Republic*

DRUG-CRAZED PRESIDENT VOWS TO LOCK UP COUNTRY

People have been overdosing and dying for thousands of years on a variety of substances, food not least among them. Alcohol, America's favorite drug, can safely be said to be responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths every year. So why all the hysteria and rush to find scapegoats when a couple of professional athletes overload on cocaine and find their careers, not to mention their lives, cut short?

Len Bias and Don Rogers were both young black men, part of a demographic group which can hardly be said to be of pressing importance to Americans as a whole. Hardly a day goes by in any of this country's inner cities when at least one or two other young black men don't die of drugs and/or violence. This isn't front page news; it usually doesn't make the papers at all, nor do we hear cries for special investigations and vigorous prosecutions of all involved. To put it bluntly, unless the young man involved is particularly talented at stuffing a ball through a hoop or carrying it down a field, a substantial number of white Americans would greet news of his death with reactions varying from total indifference to "Good riddance."

But the current hullabaloo over cocaine goes beyond its threat to the nation's stable of high-priced professional athletes; the drug-related deaths of other "hot properties" like film star John Belushi have, if anything, occasioned an even greater amount of hand-wringing. But not content to loudly bewail the passing of another rich and famous junkie, the authorities feel compelled to find someone to pin the blame on rather than admit than one of our national heroes was just too plain stupid to know when to quit. So we see the ludicrous spectacle of the departed celebrities' drug-taking partners being indicted for murder, which should send a clear message to the young, namely that they shouldn't get high with people more important than they are.

Now Ronald Reagan has lurched into the drug-fighting arena, reviving Richard Nixon's late-60s crusade for a "drug-free America". In addition to hinting that he favors the death penalty for dealers, he is also trying to establish a precedent for mandatory drug testing that could ultimately result in people being unable to step outside their doors without being asked to urinate in a bottle. Universal drug testing probably would cut down on substance abuse; for that matter, the abolition of search warrants and such anachronisms as trial by jury would no doubt go a long way toward reducing all illegal behavior. Though statistics aren't readily available, I suspect there wasn't a lot of street crime in Nazi Germany.

But what's all this really about? Does Ronald Reagan, who spends the greater part of his waking hours devising more efficient ways to kill people, really care about the ghetto youths, or even the white middle class students, who are frying their brains on the latest drug of the month? You'd think he'd be thrilled at the prospect of a whole generation of mentally impaired young people to populate the infantry needed for his next few wars.

No, the name of this game is control, control on a scale never achieved by any government in

history. The most onerous dictatorships of the past have generally been satisfied with an external display of obedience from their subjects; the emerging despotism is truly totalitarian in nature because it demands total devotion. Urine and/or blood tests are only a first step; it can't be too long before technology makes possible the brainscans that will take thoughtcrime out of the realms of science fiction and into the midst of our daily lives.

At the risk of becoming blue in the face, I'll say once more that the danger posed to our society by drug abuse is infinitesimal compared with the threat presented to not only our basic liberties but to our very existence by our pathologically stupid President. So quick to apply the principles of social Darwinism to nearly every other area, it's strange that Reagan doesn't see drugs as an effective tool for weeding out the mentally and physically infirm from the brave new America he has set about creating.

The truth, of course, is that drugs don't destroy the best and brightest of our youth, as the politicians and would-be moralists would have us believe. The people most likely to become addicted to drugs are the same sheep-like creatures who, in the absence of chemical distractions, can be counted on to fill the churches, armies, and factories that keep the whole system going. Some might argue that, as bad as such institutions are, they are a necessary evil of a functioning society. But then again, if Reagan and company truly believe in the free enterprise system, as they so monotonously proclaim, then they should be willing to allow citizens (or their modern-day incarnation, consumers) to choose their own opiates, so to speak.

If record numbers of people are willing to risk death or permanent brain damage to attain a temporary escape from the pressures of daily existence, what's needed is not more cops and prisons (ask anyone who's ever been in jail how easy it is to get drugs in there; not surprising, since police and drug dealers are often one and the same). But some serious questions ought to be asked about the kind of world we are creating in which drugs have become such a fact of life. In order to carry the Reagan drug program through to its logical conclusion, some 25 million people would need to be locked up or placed under some kind of supervision. That's one out of every ten Americans, and it doesn't even include quite a few million more alcoholics who present as great or even greater danger to themselves and society.

Human beings have passed most of their time on this planet without the benefit of drug laws, and there is no reason to suspect the survival of the species is imperiled now by those who see oblivion as more palatable alternative than the place offered them in society. It's worth noting that native peoples like the American Indians and Australian aboriginals had virtually no knowledge of or interest in alcohol until they were dispossessed of their land and hunted down like animals by alien invaders. Could it be that Mr. and Mrs. America, too, are starting to feel like strangers in their own land?

*The chief contribution of
Protestantism to human thought is its massive
proof that God is a bore.*

H.L. Mencken

*Is insincerity such a terrible thing?
I think not. It is merely a method by which we can
multiply our personalities.*

Oscar Wilde

BE A JERK, GO TO WORK

by Joe Britz

Do you ever feel a sudden, frenzied, mixed-up collision of emotions in your head? I'm feeling like that at this very moment (July 21, 1986, 12:32 A.M., to be exact). I was attempting to write something about the nightmare of work, but after allowing all of the day's experiences to settle in, I'd rather let my pen act as a sort of umbilical cord to my brain for a while and let fate take its own path (what the hell is he talking about?).

My day began, like most of them do, with me waking up. This in itself is an exciting event if you're in tune to nature, your environment, and all that crap (*starting to slip back into a little of that New York attitude, eh, Joe? -- Ed.*) Granted, not being required to drag myself to a boring job increases the enjoyment a millionfold, but it should be worth remembering regardless of your plans. After all, what if you never woke up again? Besides being a candidate for President of the U.S., there'd be little future in it. So after thumbing through the horrors of the daily paper (more aid to South Africa's government, more chemical weapons, more fighting, less food for the hungry.. you know the story). I listened to a few records and had a conversation with a couple of interesting folks. Definitely a relaxing method to prepare myself for another day in the outside arena.

Now it was time to bicycle my way through the rat maze of downtown San Francisco to meet my girlfriend for lunch (breakfast for me; us unemployed barely get up in time for 'normal' lunchtime). As I wove through the formidable busyness streets, I approached my destination: Embarcadero Center #4. It's a huge grey building with three ugly carbon copies (imaginatively titled numbers 1, 2, and 3). Once inside, life becomes even drearier. Few signs of individuality, dignity, or joy were noticeable. But hey, you're only forced to waste away 80,000 hours of your life in this atmosphere, no big deal.

Anyway, as the work-a-day automatons would be proud to hear, I forced myself to complete my assigned task. It wasn't a very difficult chore as I was going to meet someone who would shed some light into the stifling surroundings. So Ann and I talked for an hour, acted silly, ate, laughed a lot, and my gloomy thoughts quickly disappeared. Does love move mountains, or what? Oh jeez, do we gotta hear this nonsense now? Nah, I'll move along to my further adventures.

Next on the agenda was to bike along the San Francisco Bay for some tourist-like gawking. This can be another depressing activity when caught between the money-hungry businessmen and eager tourists. What's the point of waiting on lines (*that's in lines in California, Joe -- Ed.*) and spending lots of cash when you can "do as the natives do," so to speak?

I finally decided that enough was enough, and rolled on home. It's a fun place with neat roommates. Me, David, Larry, and soon-to-return Dave make up an energetic, close-knit, happy bunch. And we've made it through one whole month already! So I joked around with my rummies, er, roomies, ate a couple of delicious homemade burritos, and read a couple chapters of the latest Kurt Vonnegut book, *Galapagos*. By the way, what an amazing novel! The message is clear: Think Sensibly! The seemingly simple narrator of the story, living one million years in the future, asks if the relatively large brains of humans living in 1986 might not be "nearly fatal defects in the evolution of the human race" because of their ignorant, greedy, and heartless tendencies. Good question!

My long day ended with a play, a first for me. Titled *Rap Master Ronnie*, it was a

continually hilarious goof on the double R as well as on the system in general. Unfortunately, unless I miss my guess, the 16-20 dollar admission will ironically limit the audience to the liberal yuppie crowd that the play lampoons (I got in for free, natch).

Now, as I'm "sittin' here restin' my bones," (yeah; Otis!) I'm thinking about a typical day of mine a few months ago. Then, trapped in the old 9 to 5, eat, sleep, and stumble forward routine, a 24 hour period was unmemorable. I was an uncommunicative (except trite elevator talk), emotionally stagnant (perpetually depressed), and hopeless automaton. So, even though I may some day have to return to the "work force" I've learned a valuable lesson: Time ain't money, it's precious!

Reviews

The Collapse of the Empire and Other Erotic Fantasies, The Peace Mob -- Greg Fain and Mike White, cassette, available at Rough Trade, or write 1035 Revere Ave, San Francisco CA 94124

"True poetry is dead," intoned Jim Morrison in *Horse Latitudes*, his own better than average stab at the genre. And in the 20 years since, little has happened to contradict that pronouncement; poetry, one of humanity's primal art forms, has largely deteriorated into a profitless refuge for the neurotic and untalented.

It's easy to forget that the first poets were wild men and women in the finest sense of the word, combining rhyme and rhythm, the intellectual and the visceral, in a way that mirrors the essence of what it is to be human. Poetry and music were once nearly inseparable, and neither one amounts to much without a beat, yet that is exactly what has long been lacking in the drawing room version of poetry foisted off on us by generations of moth-eaten academics. For years the best advice one could give a would be poet was to join a rock and roll band.

That's still not a bad plan, but for the first time in my memory, I've come across a poet who, with nothing more than his words and the way he pronounces them, makes the majority of rock and roll bands sound like anemic doodlers. His name is Greg Fain; I first encountered him reading solo at a benefit to stop the Green River murders (*LOOKOUT* #18), and now, accompanied by guitarist Mike White, he's put together a cassette release that could do more to revive the art of poetry than laying all of the nation's English professors end to end and bulldozing them into a pit.

Greg says his piece with a passion and intensity that often resembles rap music, but his words are light-years beyond the self-indulgent ego-strutting that too often characterizes that art form (with notable exceptions; *The Message*, by Grandmaster Flash, is a reasonable approximation of what Greg might sound like set to a dance floor mix).

And Greg's words (I keep wanting to call them lyrics) certainly don't lack for messages, but they're not the preachy, didactic sort that give most "political" art



such a bad name. They feature highly topical themes, but drawn through an intensely personal perspective; a couple of my favorites are *Money Junkie* and *Acid Rain*.

The musical accompaniment is interesting; an only semi-rhythmic processed electric guitar, it's a direct counterpoint to Greg's slam-bang vocal delivery. It works most of the time, though occasionally the Eno-esque effects get a little ethereal for my tastes (please allow a non-poet a little alliterative indulgence). I'm looking forward to one day hearing Greg backed by a full rock and roll band.

But just as it is, this tape stands as more than a minor masterpiece. If you love the English language and were afraid that we were running out of people who know how to use it, let Greg Fain show you that your fears are groundless.

Bay Mud, Various Artists, Cassette, available for \$3 from David Hayes, POB 14292, San Francisco CA 94114

This 90 minute compilation of Bay Area bands has it all: quality recording, smooth sequencing, diverse music, good lyrics (with partial booklet), 23 (!) bands, including, Clown Alley, Rabid Lassie, Rhythm Pigs, Lookouts, Short Dogs Grow, Half Blind, and Legion of Doom, to name only a few. Only three measly bucks -- what a deal!

-Joe Britz



The Boys from MDC, who used to sling about Millions of Dead Cops, seem to have had a change of heart to go with their new hairstyles, judging from these pictures snapped on their recent tour.

Limited Potential, Various Artists, Cassette, available for \$3 from Mike Safreed, POB 32011, Dayton OH 45432

A compilation of eight bands from different parts of the USA: Poetic Justice Group of Individuals, Nasal Waste, Hates, Dead Silence, Your Form of Government, Roadkill, and Lookouts (again? they must really be pushing the product). Sound quality varies; at times it gets a bit generic, but the overall energy is pretty strong.

Second opinion: -Joe Britz

One song, *Bears Aren't Cool*, by Your Form of Government, almost by itself makes this tape worthwhile ("Bears aren't cool, when they bite your leg; bears aren't cool, when they eat your kids"). Also included is a savage bit of poetry on the brainwashing of kids by Crito T, from somewhere in Wisconsin. If you send away for this tape, ask about Mike's fanzine, too, also called *Limited Potential*. At \$1.50 postpaid, it's a little expensive compared to the *LOOKOUT*, but it's got more pages and all sorts of snazzy graphics and snotty opinions. Check it out.

-L



photos by Natalie

Hello, I Must Be Going...

I have a hard time explaining to people where I live or what exactly it is I'm in such a big hurry to do, or why I don't have time to do all the things I want or need to. I have a hard time, in fact, explaining it to myself.

Nobody can be in two places at once, right? How about this: can two thoughts exist simultaneously in the same brain? And if so, does one inevitably have to win out over the other?

I guess what's got me going around in circles (up and down, actually, if you look at a map) is my yo-yo-like bouncing back and forth between San Francisco and Mendocino and their respective states of mind. I know many of you will find it hard to muster much sympathy for someone who is "forced" to divide his time between two of the most beautiful places on earth, but I'm not looking for sympathy; I'm just trying to understand.

Some might interpret my inability and/or refusal to choose one way of life and stick to it as proof that I still haven't grown up; reasonable people eventually accept that the fact that the majority of their dreams are not likely to ever come true, so they settle for one or two approximations and discard the rest as emotional tax write-offs. But I've never been noted for being reasonable; I want a life that goes off the charts.

Another problematic issue for me: how do you choose between work and play? Should there be a difference? For most people, unfortunately, work is something unpleasant and tedious that you do in order to survive, making the need for a time of recreation and play obvious. But in a more intelligently ordered world, work would represent the creative channeling of one's physical and mental powers into activities that benefit both oneself and society at large. If that's what your job were really like, they'd have to pay you to take a day off.

No problem for me there; since the major labors of my life, my band and this magazine, more often than not end up costing me money, I probably would be better off financially if I just lay around doing nothing. And being of a naturally lazy temperament, it's a wonder that I don't do just that.

But I can't. Oh, I "waste" plenty of time that I could be using to better advantage, but I'm always doing something, even if it's only re-reading old magazines for the 12th time or churning my brain in search of a cover story for the next LOOKOUT. What I don't seem to ever do is just "have fun." Oh sure, there's the deep inner satisfaction when another issue of the LOOKOUT is off the press and in the mail, and the tingling, on-the-edge exhilaration of performing live music, and the rush of pleased excitement when I see or hear my efforts praised, but the pure, mindless dissipation of care? Not for me: I've always got something on my mind. So you tell me: does this indicate a psychological disorder on my part, or does it merely prove that I'm here on Important Business?

But how does all this tie into my feelings of geo-cultural schizophrenia? It's not a case where I work in one place and play in another, or as Oscar Wilde puts it, "When in town, one amuses oneself; when in the country one amuses other people." But there is a clear distinction: in Mendocino my work is mostly physical and my pleasures cerebral; in the City, the opposite is true.

Well, not exactly; that's where more confusion sets in. Putting the LOOKOUT together is on of my greatest pleasures, but it is definitely work. Cutting firewood or digging in the garden is work, too, but the only time I get pleasure out of those chores is when they're done. And even then, it's a perverse sort of pleasure, akin to that experienced by the man who has just stopped hitting his head against the wall.

But someone with a distaste for physical labor is not likely to prosper in the country unless he is wealthy enough to pay someone else to do his work for him. That leaves me out; should I then resign myself to life in a modern urban apartment equipped with techno-cruise control?

And forget about the soul-stirring desolation of my harsh and beautiful mountains? How could I? I remember so clearly, though not at all in words, the first time I saw the land that

would later become my home, under the washed-out moonlight of late winter. Sporadic patches of dirty but still iridescent snow clung to the highest peak. At its top brooded a fire service lookout tower (yes, that's where the LOOKOUT got its name); its boarded-up windows appeared as inscrutably squinting eyes that saw all and acknowledged nothing.

No, I can't choose; I need both ways of life, need the scorching summer sun and the clammy grey summer fog, the pregnant stillness and the random chaos, the solitude and the press of humanity. I'd bet a lot of people feel the same way, and too few of them have the opportunity I do.

But this "opportunity" doesn't come without its price tag. From downtown San Francisco to the door of my mountain home is nearly 5 hours by car, and I hate to drive. The only public transit available is offered by the continuing criminal enterprise known as Greyhound Bus Lines. That adds another two hours to the trip and doubles the cost: \$22 for a cattle-car ride at the mercy of (usually) surly drivers, and including a mandatory lunch stop at the Ukiah Burger King (well, you have to stop there; so far, they haven't started forcing you to eat the stuff).

The real solution, though I fear it may be too much to accomplish all by myself, is to bring the country to the city, and vice versa. Take a crowbar to some of those pointless streets and sidewalks and replace them with trees and vegetable gardens. Spray paint graffiti on the redwoods (just kidding, eco-freaks). Turn automobiles into planters and install subways to the North Coast. Turn the Pacific Stock Exchange into a honkytonk for Willits good ol' boys, and put the yuppies to work shovelling manure on the marijuana fields (they're the ones that end up smoking most of the stuff, anyway).

Yes, there are lots of improvements I could make, but all this meandering back and forth between realities has got me worn out. Somebody wake me up when things start making sense again.

THAT'S 23 BANDS FROM ALLOVER THE S.F. BAY AREA ON A 90 MINUTE TAPE FOR A SCANT 3 BUCKS!

the friendly rodent presents

VICTIMS FAMILY
TENTALL MEN
STIKKY
SHORT DOGS GROW
RHYTHM PIGS
RABID LASSIE
NEUROSI\$
MR. T EXPERIENCE
LOOK OUT\$
LEGION OF DOOM
KWIKWAY
KOEL FAMILY
ITALIAN WHORENUWS
INFERNAL FORCES
HALFBLIND
FORETHOUGHT
DOT 3
CRIMP SHRINE
CRASH-N-BURN
COMPLETE DISORDER
CLOWN ALLEY
BOSS HOSS
ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

\$3 P.P.

BAYMUD

P.O. BOX 14292
S.F. CA. 94114 U.S.A.

CHECKS PAYABLE TO DAVID HAYES

HOME TAPING IS KILLING THE MUSIC BUSINESS.

*Patriotism is a form of cancer
Don't let it eat your life away*

Vicious Circle

*To be natural is such a difficult pose
to keep up.*

Oscar Wilde