

# LOOKOUT!

January 1986

Number 13

## MACHO AMERICA

### Sex, Death, and the Cult of Power: A Sick Society Gets Down to Its Roots

I've always been a little unsure about my masculinity. Not because I doubted that I was a "real man", for whatever that's worth, but because the masculine image presented to me by the media and my peers was something I wanted no part of.

I spent a substantial part of my life wondering if something was wrong with me because I didn't particularly want to bomb villages and machine gun peasants, or beat up people smaller than me, or shove women around and force them to wait on me. I didn't even want to beat hell out of my buddies at racquetball or touch football and then go drink lots of beer with them, slap each other on the back, talk loud, and say rude things to the waitresses.

You must be getting the picture: I'm a hopeless misfit in American society. For a while during the 60s and 70s I had reason to hope that things were changing, that a man would begin to be judged by his capacity for compassion and caring and his courage in standing up for what was right rather than his mass destruction quotient. So far, however, the 1980s have provided nothing more than a headlong plunge into the past.

#### THE NEW MALE PARADIGM

I'm not just talking about the obvious examples; the widely disseminated RAMBO-COMMANDO myths appeal mostly to children and those with severely subnormal IQs (what do you mean, how dare I talk that way about Our President?). These days one desensitized geek at a computer terminal can wreak more havoc than a whole battalion of would-be Stallones and Schwarzeneggers with trigger fingers at the ready.

I'm a little uneasy when I see young people strutting around in militaristic garb, and a little more so when I see gangs of skinheads doing their best to emulate the roving packs of brownshirts that helped bring about the downfall of



LONNAN LOBOTOMY

God bless us, every one

Weimar Germany and usher in the Nazi era. But what really scares me are the blank-faced men (and women) filing like dutiful robots into the high-rise mausoleums of the corporate culture.

#### BUSINESS ON PARADE: CLARK KENT AS HE-MAN

Even back in the bad old 1950s I always remembered businessmen as the object of derision and ridicule. There was something vaguely effete about their suit-and-tie costumes, and popular mythology had it that they couldn't even satisfy their wives, who were forever having affairs with the milkman or the grocery boy.

Somehow the modern media have achieved the not inconsiderable miracle of transforming the popular image of the businessman into something verging on glamorous or exciting. Not to mention manly: you get the impression that if Conan the Barbarian were around today he'd be commuting to the office, wielding a briefcase and cellular phone instead of a club.

Despite the genteel dress and insipid manner of the idealized businessperson, the emphasis is on cutthroat competition, unburdened by principle or concern for the ultimate consequences. There's much talk of "deals" and "numbers," but hardly a word about what happens to the individual human beings whose lives cannot be reduced to statistics and market demographics.

#### THE HUMAN BEING LAWNMOWER: CHOP CHOP CHOP

The final results of the "hard-nosed" executive decisions emanating from our sleek, gleaming high-tech temples of commerce are usually so far removed in distance and/or time that we take little notice of them. Occasionally a disaster of the magnitude of Union Carbide's poisoning of an entire town in India might give us pause, but mostly we shrug our shoulders and echo Rocky's articulate refrain, "Uh, a man's gotta do what he's gotta do." I mean it's a dog-eat-dog world, a jungle out there, right?

In reality, of course, the jungle was never a fraction as brutal as daily life in the civilized world. Yes, killing and violence occur in the primeval state, but only as part of the normal functioning of the food chain. You don't see lions puffing up their chests and ordering their underlings to step up the production of antelope corpses so that all the other creatures will be sure to know who's top cat. Nor do you see them going on status-seeking safaris to places like New York, where they might go trophy-hunting for pale-faced stockbrokers (the idea does have a certain charm, don't you think?).

#### TERMS OF ENSLAVEMENT: THE DEATH OF FEELING

The essence of macho is its denial of human nature. Love and compassion are among our species' few redeeming qualities, but to the kind of man required to keep the wheels of industry grinding or the columns of armor marching, they are fatal weaknesses.

The patriarchal state (or church, or corporation, or family) will not long survive when its motives are subject to examination by sentient, feeling beings.

So the deadening of emotion becomes a primary task of all would-be oppressors. America may lead the world in the production of weapons of terror, but perhaps an even greater horror is the way it anesthetizes people so that they are willing to accept unspeakable brutality as a normal and inconsequential part of everyday life. How many televised murders, how many J.R. Ewings ruining someone's life for personal pleasure, how many hammered-in messages that money and the power it buys are more important than anything, before a young man or woman abandons all hope and says, "Why should I care? Nobody else does."

#### THE FEMALE SIDE OF THE EQUATION

It might seem strange to drag women into a discussion of macho, but only the most ardent (and simplistic) feminist could argue that it's totally a male problem. If the relationship between the sexes is out of kilter, just as in doing the tango or doing battle, it takes two. Traditionally women have nurtured the cult of macho, if only by going along with it. The "chickie" who paints her face, douses herself with perfume, and sticks her rear end out in hopes of snaring the booty of some unprincipled warrior is a culpable participant in whatever crimes he commits. Claims that war would become obsolete if women ran things are ridiculous; as Sophocles pointed out many centuries ago, women have always had the power to stop war, and except in mythology, they have never used it.

There's a new kind of macha woman, too, this one an unfortunate residue of the generally admirable and successful women's liberation movement. Somehow it failed to occur to some of the less deep among the feminist thinkers that equality with men was in many cases a step backwards. Thus we have the unsightly spectacle of increasing numbers of women shrouding themselves in hideous versions of the already preposterous business suit, marching into the board rooms, and proving that they can be as greedy, insensitive, acquisitive, and uncaring as any man.

#### ANDROGYNY IS NOT A FASHION STATEMENT

I've made some sweeping generalizations about our society's ingrained sexism, and some pretty dour ones at that. That doesn't mean I think the problem is universal, or unsolvable. Despite massive cultural programming, people can learn for themselves, and grow and change. I know I have, and so have the people I call my friends. Despite the retrograde tendencies now evident, there is much more freedom from sexual stereotyping today than when I was a boy. I work with a lot of young people, and while some of them might occasionally repeat some idiotic sexist remark they picked up at school (or home), they are amazingly quick to understand why I or others might find it offensive.

Men who treat women in a chauvinistic, patronizing, or dominating way hate and/or fear women, regardless of their protestations. The same is true of women who submit to or encourage such treatment. Men and women have a lot to give each other besides sex and babies. They don't have to wear each other's clothes, but they should at least try to see the world through each other's eyes. True strength comes only with awareness of one's weaknesses; true caring comes only with the ability to share one's doubts and fears.

## LETTERS TO THE LOOKOUT

Listen up, LOOKOUT!

When are you liberal, left-wing, bleeding-heart clowns going to wake up and see the light? I am referring to your recent editorial regarding Hero Dan White (LOOKOUT #11) which was passed on to us thru the wait-a-minute vine by our patriotic associates in the Bay Area. Where do you naive jerks get off knocking a dead man? Where do you get off insulting policemen and Vietnam veterans? Was your cowardice just too much to handle - the guilt over having not served your country just too intense - the self-hatred and low self-esteem finally overpowering? Was the humiliation (sic) you've suffered all these years just so great that you had to stab Dan White in the back one last time?

Or were you just so disappointed that Mr. White never apologized or showed remorse for the justifiable homicides of the two faggots in San Fransisco (sic)? We here in Little Saigon doubt very much that Dan's unfortunate suicide had anything to do with the Milky-Moscone affair. It more probably was the result of PTSD and all the media attention given to the ten year anniversary of the Fall of South Vietnam (due to butterspined politicians in D.C. preventing America's warriors from completing the job in Indochina), but we won't go into that now...

When are you deuche-bags (Ed. Note: Is this the German spelling for douche-bags?) going to realize that mainstream America is never going to accept homosexuals? When are you going to admit that anal/oral sex between males is sick, perverted, and unsanitary - not to mention disgusting! When are you going to take the blame for the AIDS epidemic that is rapidly spreading and may well spell doom for the human race?

Death to Commies  
Jonathan Cain  
Redondo Beach CA

Dear Jonathan:

Have you thought about seeking professional help? My father always told me California was the land of fruits and nuts. Apparently you want everyone to be sure which side of the food chain you're on.

LL

Hi,

I really enjoyed the mixture of politics and humor in the LOOKOUT. You even had me laughing on the dreary subway this morning (I'm writing to you from my workhole. I try to do as much reading, writing, and copymaking on the job as possible). I was reading the "investigation" of the CAMP fiasco (LOOKOUT #11). Also enjoyed reading about the Navy port and the hypocrisy of Feinstein/Graham. The same shit is happening in New York City. Some group tried to get a referendum so people could vote on whether we should have a navy with nukes floating around the city. Though they had more than enough signatures to call a referendum, the courts decided that it was "illegal" to allow us the freedom to vote on the matter. What I hate about these major peace groups is that they accept shit so passively - they even called the complete failure "a victory." Huh?

Anyway, thanks for the LOOKOUT. I'll be sending you WORTHLESS #13 soon.

See ya

Joe Britz  
Brooklyn NY

Ed. Note: Joe publishes an excellent zine called WORTHLESS ("Costs nothing, worth less") which he might be willing to send you for the price of a self-addressed stamped envelope. Address: Joe Britz, 67-11 Fort Hamilton Pkwy, Brooklyn NY 11219

Dear Mr. Livermore:

I have just read the excerpt from your publication in Alexander Cockburn's column in THE NATION, and liked it so much that I would like to be placed on your mailing list (subscription price?).

I share your feelings about the macho mentality, which is so prevalent throughout the culture (a component of the character structure of most men, and a value, if not a character trait, for most women).

While Cockburn quotes your remarks approvingly, he himself, I think, is guilty of this same mentality. His columns are lively, and I always look forward to reading them. But how many readers would he have if he didn't pontificate, vilify, and condemn? This judgmentalness, which is so prevalent in the dogmatic left, is just another expression of the macho (i.e., belligerent, aggressive, tough) mentality that takes a more military form when held by people of the right. How many people, left, right, or center, are willing to express themselves tentatively, showing their doubts, questionings, and uncertainties? Not very many. And not many publications would care to print such uncertainties - because there wouldn't be many readers for such a kind of writing. We are all caught up in this dogmatizing, whether we want to be or not.

Well, in any case, please send me your publication. I would like to see more of what you have to say.

Sincerely,

Harry Zitzler  
Chicago

Dear Sir:

Alexander Cockburn, in an article in THE NATION, advised interested parties to get in touch with you. If the article on Dan White is a sample of the LOOKOUT, then I want very much to subscribe, if you will just give the details. Mr. Cockburn also mentioned another California publication (Ed. Note: the ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER) in the same article. I find it amazing that so much "good stuff" should be emanating from that awful state to the south of us! But please let me know the secret password, so that I can subscribe.

Dorothy Hardin  
McMinnville OR

Dear Lawrence:

Congratulations on your excellent zine! Me and some friends down here look forward to your provocative comments on politics and muzac. Keep making sure plenty of copies get to SF, especially to BOUND TOGETHER BOOKS.

What I want to know is, are there any places to play up there? I am in a band called TEST SUBJ-X and we would like to play in different cities and towns in California in the spring. We would like to play up north, and would appreciate any info regarding the possibility of setting up a gig with folks up there.

Oh, about that Novato show (LOOKOUT #11) - I agree, and told Paul Rat as much. The injury of the girl you described sounded like the plight of my friend Miriam from Davis. Or maybe it was one of the many other people injured that night. We ended up at the hospital that night - Mir had severely bruised ribs. I hope people boycott any other shows held at the Novato Theater.

There is a campaign down here to fuck up Jerry Falwell by calling his toll-free number all the time thereby clogging the lines so the sheep that call up to donate can't get through (800-446-5000). Also, several people with AIDS and ARC have been chained to the door of the old federal building for a couple months now. Some of them started a hunger strike on Thanksgiving Day.

Finally, I'm going to court in Oakland on Dec. 18, one of the two (out of 680 arrestees) folks with felony charges from last spring's Berkeley Anti-apartheid camp-out.

Good luck,  
Michael McPhelon  
San Francisco

Dear Michael:

Yes, there are lots of places to play here in Mendocino County. Do you know lots of Top 40 hits and do you look totally vapid, like you just stepped out of an MTV commercial? No problem.

LL

## ON THE FAST TRACK TO NOWHERE: A Yuppie Diary

Dear Diary: It's Monday morning and already things are off to a bad start. When I came out to get in my car, there was a bunch of Mexicans leaning and sitting on it, drinking beer and listening to one of those ghetto blasters. At eight o'clock in the morning! Meanwhile people like me have to go to work and pay taxes so the government can hand out green stamps or food cards or whatever it is they give those illegals.

So anyway, I asked them as politely as I could (because I was really steaming!) to move, and when they did, I saw that the keychain one of them was wearing had scratched the paint on the right rear fender. Can you believe it! I've haven't even had the car two months, and it'll probably cost me more to get it repainted than I've made in payments so far.

But that's not all! When I pointed out the scratch and tried to explain how much it would cost to repair the damage, they just laughed and pretended not to understand English. I bet they know English perfectly well. And if they don't, what are they doing here, anyway? By now I was so mad I could have punched a couple of them right in the face, but I realized I was going to be late for work if this went on any longer.

So I jumped in the car, but before I left, I yelled some Spanish swear words that I learned from Alfonso, the paper boy. They really got mad! Then, as I drove away (squealing my tires, which I almost never do), they threw something and broke my rear window. I stopped, but they had all run away. Naturally I called the police, but the sergeant pretty much said, "Well, what do you want us to do about it?"

Of course I was late for work, and sure enough, Mr. Stearns was standing there in the hall as I came in. He didn't say a word, just stared at me with those beady eyes of his (I swear he reminds me of Ralph Madison's pet iguana).

Anyway, here I am in my office (cubicle would be a more accurate word for it), and the first thing I did was call up the car dealer and find out how much the damage was going to set me back. As usual, they put me on hold, and while I'm waiting, in comes old man Stearns and dumps this enormous pile of papers on my desk. "Take care of these," he grunts, and then just stands there staring at me. He's always doing that. I don't know, he seems masculine enough, but sometimes I suspect him of being homosexual.

Just then the auto parts guy came back on the line, and though I tried to make it sound like a business call, it didn't fool old man Stearns. He stood there, nodding that evil misshapen head of his until I was off the phone, and then sort of harrumphed, "I thought we'd agreed there were to be no more personal calls on company time." Then he slithered away before I could explain what had happened.

Well, that's the way Monday mornings are supposed to go, isn't it? I settled down to take care of the paperwork Stearns had left, hoping there'd be something interesting in there. But all it was was a pile of earnings reports that needed to be transferred into the computer. My job title is account executive, but all I am is a glorified file clerk. I can't wait till Friday.

That reminds me, this is the week I promised myself I'd ask Julie out. I see her all the time because her desk is right next to the coffee machine, but she's kind of hard to get to know. She seems nice enough, but she's always saying or doing unpredictable things. She even calls old man Stearns "Mr. Sternums" right to his face, and then giggles and tries to pretend it was an accident. She giggles a lot. Sometimes I can't tell whether she's smiling or laughing at me. I wonder if she's on drugs.

Anyway, Julie wears a lot of new wave fashions and goes to unusual parties and nightclubs in the south of Market district. I hear some of the people down there are pretty strange, but I wouldn't mind checking it out. Anything for a change. I swear, if I spend another weekend at home watching "Wall Street Week", I'll kill myself.

So tomorrow's the day I'm finally going to get up enough nerve to ask her for a date. I hope she doesn't have a boyfriend. She's always hanging around with Michael, another so-called account executive, but I know he's homosexual because he wears three earrings and changes his hair color as often as I change my clothes. I wonder what girls see in weirdos like that.

The rest of the day went by pretty fast, considering that I was bored out of my mind. When I picked up my car (\$8.50 a day to park that thing! It's almost enough to make me start riding the Muni, but how would that look for me to show up on the bus with a bunch of cleaning ladies and word processors?), seeing the broken window reminded me of this morning and I got upset all over again.

When I got home it was almost dark, but not too dark to see that some idiot had spray painted graffiti across the front of my building. I can't believe this! When I bought this condo, the agent told me the neighborhood was "almost totally gentrified." Well, if this is gentrified, I'd hate to see it when it was a slum.

There was nothing on the news except another stupid plane crash, and I couldn't think of anything else to do, so I went to bed early. Why does everything always happen to me?

To be continued...

## San Francisco Beat

Regular LOOKOUT readers may have deduced that I've been spending a lot of time in the City the last couple of months. Some of the more confirmed hill-dwellers among my friends in Mendocino have volunteered the opinion that I'm crazy (an opinion I'm not unused to hearing) to waste my time in the dirty, ugly, dangerous city, but frankly, I've always felt equally at home in the city or the mountains. If it were up to me, I'd shift the entire rural and urban populations back and forth a couple of times a year so that everyone could experience the best (and worst) of both worlds.

It's been one of the coldest Decembers I've ever seen in SF, which was a drag for me, but nearly as much as it must have been for the many people living on the streets. In some downtown neighborhoods, you have to be careful not to trip over the people sleeping on the sidewalks. I know it's not Calcutta or Mexico City, but isn't this supposed to be the richest country in the world?

I don't want to sound like a broken record, but I am literally sick of seeing people who could be my parents or brothers or sisters eating out of garbage cans and stumbling around the streets like shell-shocked concentration camp survivors. I don't know of another country in the industrialized world that treats its own people with such callous indifference.

Though America seems to have lost its collective bearings (not to mention its marbles), I note thankfully that there are still people who have not forgotten what it means to be human. The best Christmas I have spent in several years began at the Haight Ashbury Soup Kitchen, where some of society's outcasts and walking wounded showed me infinitely more holiday spirit than the frenzied hordes of downtown shoppers hurling themselves into the annual orgy of mindless consumption.

The obscene displays of wealth seen and glorified in many quarters can not disguise the fact that underneath it all San Francisco is a city in deep trouble. The bulk of the economy has come to revolve around parasitic and essentially non-productive businesses like stock brokerages, insurance, and real estate, all the sorts of enterprises that could quickly cease to exist in the increasingly likely event of another 1929-style crash. Tourism is the other big moneymaker, but the artists, bohemians, and ethnic communities now being driven from the city are taking with them much of what was special about good old Frisco. There's still the scenery, and the weather, but even that seems to be deteriorating these days.

What lies in store for the City, aside from becoming a Hong Kong-style linchpin in America's Pacific Rim strategy? If the U.S. government and its local lackey

Mayor Dianne Fineswine have their way, we can expect to see Frisco town turned into a full fledged military base, sort of a West Coast Pearl Harbor.

The U.S. Navy has put the City on notice that large tracts of land adjacent to current naval facilities will be needed (and forcibly taken, if necessary) for planned expansion. The homeporting of Fineswine's nuclear battleship Missouri is apparently only the first step in a total militarization of San Francisco Bay.

Since at last report I have not heard of any enemy ships prowling off our coast, I can only think of two reasons that the government would be determined to re-arm the Bay Area to a degree not seen since World War II (or even then, if you consider that we're now to be a major staging area for nuclear war). The first one is obvious: that Reagan, Weinberger, and company are not just idly shooting their mouths off, but are actively preparing for war. With whom and over what? Does it really matter?

The other possibility (probability, in my opinion) is that the government, cognizant that its precarious political and economic position can not be maintained indefinitely by Uncle Ronnie's media sleight of hand, wants to have a strong military presence in those areas which in the past have shown the greatest resistance to central authority. Mayor Ed Koch, one of the very few politicians who matches our own dear Fineswine in chutzpah, chicanery, and sheer unprincipled chicanery, has helped set in motion an almost identical militarization of New York Harbor.

(I just had a horrible thought. Picture a Democratic ticket for 1988 composed of Ed Koch and Dianne Feinstein. Given the wonderful choices our system of "free" elections has presented us with the last few times around, it's not a totally outlandish possibility).

## Hopefully the Final Word On SF Nightlife...

Just when I thought I was done fulminating on the subject, along comes the BAY GUARDIAN (also known as the YUPPIE SHOPPER'S GAZETTE) with a paean to San Francisco's allegedly fabulous "night club scene".

Unless the author, one Myriam Weisang, is in the pay of a consortium of South of Market disco operators or is recently arrived from Twin Forks, Idaho, I can only conclude that she is, as they say in the vernacular, out to lunch. What passes for a night life in San Francisco has been in steady decline throughout the 1980s, a fact that can hardly be disguised by the current influx of trendily dressed office workers with big bucks to spend on anything presented to them under the heading of entertainment.

Norman Salant, soi disant "avant-garde saxophonist" (read: random noisemaker), is quoted as saying SF today reminds him of the roaring 20s (I never realized he was that old), then goes on to betray his cultural perspective by lamenting that the City is "always three years behind New York." Anyone who thinks NYC has anything to offer us in the way of innovation besides skyscrapers, noise, and wholesale environmental disaster would obviously be better off living there.

Anyone who thinks NYC has something to offer us in the way of innovation other than skyscrapers, noise, and wholesale environmental disaster would obviously be better off living there. New York was of course in the cultural vanguard during the first part of this century, but the focus has long since shifted to California. Ideas originate here; New York and Europe merely package and market them.

But I digress. The night club phenomenon, East or West Coast version, represents nothing more than an orgy consumerism and the glorification of vulgar displays of wealth. Such tasteless excesses occur throughout history, usually heralding the imminent collapse of another ancien regime. You want to see some real night life, wait till the pagan hordes reclaim the streets of San Francisco. You won't be able to Mastercharge your way out of that one.

And to prove that intelligent life is not extinct in SF, even among the BAY GUARDIAN's "readership", this letter reprinted from the GUARDIAN further elucidates the true condition of the SF social whirl.

Thanks to Myriam Weisang for a fine article on night clubs in SF. Myriam is obviously really excited about night life in SF, and I'm pretty worked up about it, too.

I would like to elaborate on Myriam's article with respect to alternative music dance clubs in SF and our underground scene. I think there are three things that make our underground scene so wonderful.

**THE PEOPLE** We are all pretty boys and girls who, like the gentrified neighborhoods we live in, all look alike. Note especially our expensive haircuts. You can bet that, no matter how unbelievable the hair style is this week, it will be totally different next week. After all, hair is the meaning of life. Clothes, too. All pretty boys and chic girls have lots and lots of ultrafashionable clothes. We buy them in boutiques. We only wear them at night, though. Daytimes we sleep till afternoon with whoever looked good to us the night before. In the afternoons we hang out on Haight Street and shop and get invitations to the latest invitation only parties. We never miss a party or trend. We are creative. Of course, anyone who is not creative is shunned at the clubs by the doormen. Doormen know character and substance when they see it.

**THE MUSIC** Club DJs are very consistent. They play all our MTV favorites and lots of funk numbers with lyrics about lust and

sex. Not that weird punk or new wave stuff. It is so nice to know exactly what music you will hear in any club and to be able to hear the same music in all the clubs. It hasn't always been that way. Not since since disco in the mid 1970s. New wave got club DJs all messed up. They started playing too many unusual songs and obscure records. Fortunately, those kinds of records are largely unavailable now in SF, so DJs can stick to the promos they get from the major record companies.

**THE PLACES** The cool clubs always draw a big crowd after midnight. It is really thrilling to see so many people leaning against walls and hanging on bar rails like beef in a meat locker. The best clubs also have art exhibits now, so when the dance floor gets too crowded, you still have something to do if you haven't yet heard about another party or found someone to pick up. Mr. Rennie and his Nine club are especially great. He should call it Ten. It's so exclusive and expensive. Just like New York and London. And art! I probably wouldn't get to see art if it wasn't for Mr. Rennie. Galleries are only open daytimes when I have to sleep or hang out on Haight Street.

I hope you print my letter. I have written it in various colors of crayon because I am an artist.

Ann Other  
San Francisco

hungry child in Africa and had enough left over to start an agricultural program to ensure such a famine would never happen again. Never mind, I suppose charity balls are more fun).

The underground music scene was fairly grim, too. More and more punk bands went foraging in the past for their inspiration, recycling such detritus as 60s psychedelia and 70s heavy metal. Some great political bands like the DICKS and MDC broke up or remained inactive.

But for my own band, the LOOKOUTS, 1985 was a great year. We played our first shows, admittedly not all well-received, and recorded a 26-song cassette that went on sale near year's end. The first reviews were better than we dared hope for: MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL said, "Excellent!...Get it." and my favorite description thus far came from the Oklahoma fanzine THIRD RAIL: "...bizarre idiosyncratic thrash...sort of like BOB DYLAN meets MDC."

I don't want to sound like I'm blowing my own horn (though I am), but I want to make the point that new bands will keep springing up to keep alive the spirit of rock and roll and rebellion. And if I have anything to do with it, the LOOKOUTS will be one of them.

Like the I CHING says, after every ending, a new beginning. And like DANNY AND THE JUNIORS say, rock and roll is here to stay.

## Reviews

## MUSIC CAN MAKE YOU STUPID

Well, every other critic's spouting off about the best and worse of 1985, so I might as well get in on the act. As to what was best, that won't take long; 1985 was easily the worst year for rock and roll since the miserable pre-punk days of the mid-70s. The corporations had a ball, and BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN and MADONNA raked in about twenty million bucks apiece and got married (unfortunately not to each other), but any thinking person tuning in to commercial radio for more than a few minutes risked severe brain damage.

About the only noteworthy thing to come out of the mass media music scene was ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID. Their powerful, politically aware record and video contrasted starkly with the insipid and essentially meaningless "We Are the World". Naturally they didn't get a fraction as much airplay.

About LIVE-AID: yes, it was a musical farce perpetrated by a pathetic collection of has-beens and never-weres, but it did raise a lot of money for a good cause (a lot of money is a relative term; with the amount squandered on a couple dozen MX missiles, we could have fed every

DIE KREUZEN, WEASEL CONTINGENT, POLKACIDE, THE DICKS, DOA at the Farm, December 6

I should admit right away that I attended this show more out of duty than desire (the fact that I was getting in free also helped). I expected the evening to be on the mediocre side; as it turned out, putrid would be a better description.

Let's see, where to start...? I can't blame promoter Paul Rat this time, except maybe for his choice in bands. How about DOA? They seem to have a knack as of late for attracting black leather jacketed suburban cretins who probably spent most of of the day (when they weren't spiking their hair or writing graffiti on their clothes) practicing looking sullen. And those were the nice ones...

No, I'm probably probably getting carried away. I'll admit that I was in a bad mood before and during the show. But the crowd did leave a lot to be desired. There were lots of fights, most for no apparent reason, other than someone thinking that's what you're supposed to do at punk rock concerts. Ordinarily I give away as many as a hundred copies of the LOOKOUT at a show this size. At this one I got rid of

maybe 20, the reason being that that was about all the people I saw who looked as if they knew how to read.

So, enough griping. I'm sure I'll get at least one letter protesting that I'm crazy and that it was the show of the year. Well, maybe I am, but it wasn't

I came early to make sure and see the first band, DIE KREUZEN, because several people told me how great they are. I was misinformed. DIE KREUZEN used to be a great thrash band out of Milwaukee. Now they're a limp heavy metal band from hell.

They've all grown their hair real long (in itself no crime, but a telling danger sign) and changed their musical style to that of a garage VAN HALEN. The singer distinguished himself by delivering every one of his vocals in that patented heavy metal squeal that resembles nothing so much as a piglet with its testicles caught in a blender. They should go over real big with the shopping mall crowd, but I had to leave the room after a few numbers.

Next up was WEASEL CONTINGENT, a new group with members from art noise/punk jazz band PLASTIC MEDIUM and punk art/noise jazz outfit FLIPPER (also known as the most obnoxious bunch of musicians to come out of San Francisco since the GRATEFUL DEAD).

With influences like that, I was prepared for the worst, but I was pleasantly surprised. WEASEL CONTINGENT's songs were relatively structured and melodic, lead singer Carlos has a powerful stage presence, and all the musicians are more than competent. Some of the Mohawks and skins in the crowd were yelling "Faster!" which is almost always good advice, and most of the songs could have been shorter (see previous advice), but otherwise, WEASEL CONTINGENT provided a pleasant respite from the evening's other "entertainment."

I had assumed that POLKACIDE was some sort of a novelty act. In reality they're just a pretty straight polka band who dress up in punk costumes and engage in some onstage shenanigans. Okay if you like polka, I guess, but I grew up with a lot of Polish people, and saw my fill of polka bands at the neighbors' weddings.

This was the last SF appearance for the DICKS, who are now no more. They will be missed, but not on the basis of this performance, which had its moments, but never totally got off the ground.

Sometimes singer Gary's idiosyncrasies are endearing; other times they are frustrating. I always wished the DICKS would thrash it up more; they certainly had the power and drive for it. But the DICKS were always stubborn about doing things their way, and this last show was no exception. Just when they were starting to get the crowd going, they'd slow down the pace or change the subject. Still the best band of the night, but to be honest, that's what I'd been expecting.

Finally, the stars and/or villains of the piece: DOA. When DOA played the Farm last summer, I left before they came on, so this time I told myself I was going to stay for at least part of their set, no matter how painful it was.

And it was pretty painful. All right, the music itself's not that bad, just some generic hardcore with heavy metal tinges. But the arena-rock presentation, the carefully mannered gestures and seemingly contrived expressions stood in unhappy contrast to my memories of the DOA of 1980 or 81, when they were one of the most powerful political (and fun) bands in the world.

Giving DOA their due, most of their lyrics still have a political bent, but they don't come across as being from the heart. I'm reminded of the late period JEFFERSON AIRPLANE, when the band was publicly mouthing revolutionary slogans but privately living the lives of drug-soaked rock stars. I don't mean to imply that DOA are wallowing in decadence in their off-stage lives; for all I know, they may sleep on the floor and eat brown rice every day. It's just that the words they sing have a hollow ring to them. I believe it's called going through the motions.

I was determined to stick it out until they played something from their classic "Hardcore 81" LP so I could compare their current sound with their old one, but after five songs they still hadn't, and I couldn't take anymore.

It was raining outside. The quiet night air was a pleasant change.

MORALLY BANKRUPT, RAW POWER at the V.I.S., December 10

This sounded too good to be true: four good bands for only four dollars on a Tuesday night. I figured that even if one or two bands didn't show up (all too typical for punk shows), it would still be an okay gig.

Well, one band (S.N.F.U.) didn't show up, and it was an okay show. Barely. I had just seen RHYTHM PIGS a couple weeks before, so I came late and got there in time for SF's own MORALLY BANKRUPT, just back from touring somewhere.

I was really looking forward to seeing these guys. I'd heard a couple of their songs on the radio, "CI-AIDS", and "What's Wrong With My Skateboard", and thought, "All right! A politically aware band with a sense of humor." Something there's been a definite shortage of around here lately.



But onstage MORALLY BANKRUPT suffered from a kind of artistic schizophrenia. Many bands are guilty of taking themselves too seriously, but MORALLY BANKRUPT's problem might be that they don't take themselves seriously enough. They have some intelligent, well-written songs, but their stage act seems to consist of getting drunk and acting stupid.

So they're not a straightedge band, so what (for my non-punk readers, straightedge is that faction of punk that believes in not smoking, drinking, taking drugs, etc.)? No big deal, I don't care if people drink or whatever as long as they can still function. Based on what I've heard of their record, no way was MORALLY BANKRUPT functioning anywhere near the level they're capable of. If I wanted to see a lot of noisy nihilism, I'd go see the FUCK-UPS.

RAW POWER has to be one of the fastest bands in the history of the world. They're also the best heavy metal band that I ever almost liked.

That's right, heavy metal. They could be opening for any standard arena metal act (and blowing them off the stage). But if you can overlook the cliches, like the inverted pentagrams, the foppish Brit-rock costumes, and the guitarists' painful grimacing, this band can be fairly enjoyable. They've certainly got a lesson or three to teach most other groups (including most punk groups) about playing with all-out force and drive.

Their efforts were mostly lost on the small and lethargic V.I.S. crowd (what is it about this place? Oh, never mind, I know, it's that they don't let people under 21 in). Still, all in all, a better diversion than you're usually likely to encounter on a Tuesday night.

ROCK AGAINST AIDS - ROCK FOR LIFE at the Farm, December 15

by Michael Donnelly

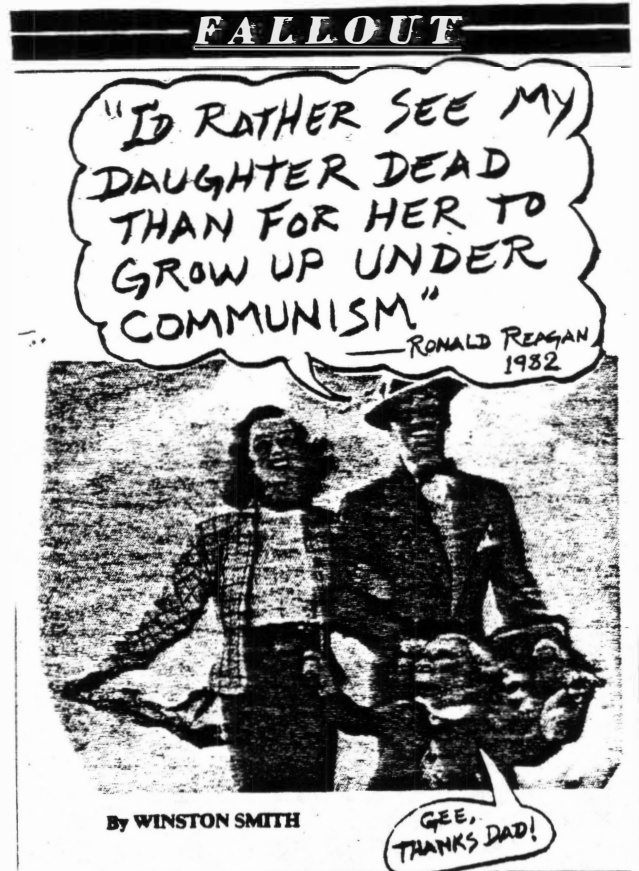
This program was put together by punks, anarchists, and musicians from local bands who thought it was time to break the thundering silence on the AIDS issue.

This epidemic has been raging through this country for four years, killing 8000 people, and has left thousands of others sick, unemployed, poor, disowned by family and "friends", unable to afford medical care, kicked out of apartments, etc., etc. It is the USA's version of Latin America's "disappeared ones", a disease instead of a death squad, its victims disappearing without a trace or a protest.

It is revolting but hardly shocking that government, corporations, and the general public have found it convenient to largely ignore the issue due to self-centeredness and the unpopularity of the groups who were first to be hit by the epidemic. But the motives behind the side-stepping from the punk and anarchist communities are puzzling and disturbing. Could these "progressives" be consciously joining the silence, hysteria, and ignorance of the media and the right-wing "Christian" extremists? Or was it because AIDS had been identified as a "gay disease", a concept which was never true?

The program was meant to be a combination protest against this apathy, a statement of solidarity from punks to people with AIDS, and a consciousness-raising educational forum. We thought it was important that people learn the facts instead of media distortions, especially how changing their sexual or needle-drug habits can greatly reduce their chances of being exposed to the AIDS virus.

The show started at 2 p.m., and people trickling in still shaking off their hangovers were confronted by the bizarre and fun CARRION COMMANDOES. There were then performance pieces by TITO and LUNA, and poetry by TIM MADISON. BRAIN RUST played a solid set of arty noise, but STICK AGAINST STONE got the crowd, now at a decent size, dancing to their Afro-Caribbean sounds.



From: MENDOCINO GRAPEVINE  
PO Box D Ukiah CA 95482

DAN TURNER, from the People With AIDS Alliance, gave a powerful speech (with John from STICK AGAINST STONE playing bass) which was at turns poignant, humorous, and ultimately optimistic, as he explained how in his case diet, health, and yoga have apparently arrested the usually fatal disease.

Many other people spoke, most notably Joe Sculley, formerly of FLYING LIZARDS, who has AIDS-Related Condition (ARC) and who has also given up on giving up. MJB's reunion was hot and warmly appreciated by the crowd, which swelled in anticipation of SOCIAL UNREST's set. SOCIAL UNREST played for nearly an hour, exploding with energy. They played most of the songs from their new album, SU 2000, and at one point threw dozens of rubbers to the crowd to drive home the concept of safe sex.

Immediately after SU's set, during which the crowd was wild and chaotic, a pagan circle was cast which completely grounded the energy. Forty to fifty punks, including many of the musicians joined the circle and concentrated on peace and healing.

CRASH N BURN ended the program with an energetic but largely uninspired set as many people, some of whom had been rocking against AIDS for eight hours, disappeared into the night.

People had fun, made a statement, learned something, and contributed a barrel of food and \$270 to the AIDS groups who had information booths in the anteroom. It proved that some people do care and are willing to take stands on issues even if they are controversial and unpopular.

What's so attractive about 40 acres of metal grape stakes, unless of course you've got a yuppie impaled on the end of each?

Bruce Anderson

## A NOTE FROM YOUR EDITOR

In the past couple of months, the LOOKOUT has received quite a bit of favorable publicity, including a highly complimentary mention by Alexander Cockburn in THE NATION. I'm quite thrilled and honored by all this, but it has created a bit of a problem for me.

Specifically, I've been swamped by mail from people wanting to subscribe. Until now I've sent the LOOKOUT free to anyone who requested it, but I just can't afford to do it anymore, as I've already been operating at the limits of my budget for some time now.

So I'm going to have to start asking for money for subscriptions. I'd like \$10 a year (\$18 for overseas) but I'm willing to make allowances for hardship cases; being a hardship case myself, I know what it's like. The LOOKOUT will continue to be distributed free in Mendocino County and San Francisco, at least for as long as I can afford it.

Thanks,  
Lawrence

### CORRECTIONS:

LOOKOUT #12 failed to give proper credit for some graphics. The Universal Pricing Code and Civilization's Epitaph graphics on the cover and page 2, respectively, were from FIFTH ESTATE, Box 02548, Detroit MI 48202. The Reagan comic strip on page 2 was from CANBERRA CRIMES, G.P.O. Box 1814, A.C.T. 2601, Australia. The Doug Bosco supporter on page 10 came from the marvelous ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER, POB 459, Boonville CA 95415.

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