

LOOKOUT!

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LAWRENCE LIVERMORE SOLVES ALL THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS IN 10 EASY STEPS

Yes, I'll admit it. I'm tired of hearing people say, "But Lawrence, you're always so negative. Aren't you for anything besides louder and faster punk rock and the complete abolition of all authority?"

And so to counter these carping critics and commentators, I have of my own free will devised this eminently practical program which, if faithfully followed, will ensure that we will all live happily ever after, or at least die laughing.

1) Disband the military and do away with the defense budget. Give half the money back to the taxpayers and use the other half for intelligent things like feeding people. Face it, who's going to invade us? Canada? With every other American owning a gun or two, who could possibly occupy this huge country? And I have a proposal that should satisfy even the most rabid of the better-dead-than-red crowd: we store all our leftover H-bombs in or near every major city. Then if the the Russkies ever threaten to take us over, we'll just blow ourselves up, thus accomplishing the same thing as the current defense program at no further cost to us.

2) Feed everyone now. And make sure they have a decent place to live, and medical care, and access to education. This means every-one. Not just people in certain countries, or of certain colors or cultures, but everyone who lives on planet earth (and any visitors from elsewhere, for that matter). All right, I can already hear the myriad mutterings of the greed heads posing as pragmatists demanding, "Who's going to pay for all this?" Answer: if we'd stop wasting the bulk of our resources on the current planetary demolition derby, I bet there'd be plenty to go around. God forbid any of you should have to give up your beach condo or country club membership.

3) Restrict governments, if they must exist at all, to clearly useful functions like road maintenance and mail delivery. The minute a government shows signs of trying to tell people what to wear, eat, smoke, drink, or think, do away with it. Give people some credit. After all, they've managed to survive several thousand years of government. Surely they can do at least as well without it.

4) Tax religions and use the money for deprogramming victims of these sinister cults.

5) Plant trees everywhere that there's enough dirt and start tearing up concrete where there isn't.

6) (thanks to Jello Biafra for this one) All businessmen should be required to wear clown suits to denote their true station in life.

7) All politicians should be made to dress in clothing completely fashioned from the flags of their respective countries. They should then be transported to a distant island, or, as soon as technology permits, to a distant planet, and left there to settle their differences.

8) Free musical instruments for everybody.

9) As a matter of fact, free everything for everybody.

10) Demand the impossible. If you only get a fraction of it, you'll still be a lot better off than you are now.

A COMPARISON SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO THE RELIGION RACKET

The obvious advice to those in search of a religion to call their own is to forget it; there's enough ignorance in the world without your joining an organization which thrives on fostering more of the same. But for those who feel compelled by societal pressures such as the expectations of family, friends, or bosses to declare your allegiance to one of the bizarre variety of morality cults which attempt to supplant common sense with hierarchical imperatives, the LOOKOUT presents this convenient guide to some of the world's major religions.

Given the presumption that anyone intelligent enough to be reading this is too sophisticated to take seriously the doctrinal underpinnings of these quasi-spiritual enterprises, the LOOKOUT has made a special effort to uncover those churches which offer the best entertainment value and are least persistent in attempting to extort large amounts of money from the gullible, I mean the faithful (it is not by coincidence that members of a congregation are frequently referred to as a flock). You'll also notice that we've left out such permutations as the Hare Krishnas and the Moonies, which will be dealt with in an upcoming LOOKOUT guide to neo-nazi political groups.

CHRISTIANITY This being the loudest, most aggressive, and most heavily armed of the world's religions, and the one which we in the West are most commonly afflicted with, it is only fitting that we deal with it first and in greatest detail.

Christianity centers around the worship of an itinerant hippie troublemaker who was tortured and killed for making fun of the established religion of his day (see JUDAISM). Its theology would appear to even the casual observer to be profoundly schizophrenic, from its three-persons-in-one deity (sort of like 3-in-1 oil, a devout nun once explained to me) to its insistence that its god, who embodies all love, demonstrates that love for us, his children, by devising for us a rigorous series of tests, the penalty for failing any of which is to be cast for all eternity into a flame-filled torture chamber. To make things even more interesting, he has also created an immensely clever fellow known as the devil, whose sole purpose in existing is to lure us into making the wrong choices in the rat-maze of life.

Despite the single-minded urgings of its namesake to follow a life of nonviolence and love even for one's enemies, Christianity has never displayed a great deal of mercy toward those it perceives as inimical to its Weltanschauung. One need not go back as far as the Crusades, the Inquisition, or the Salem witch-burnings for evidence of this; prominent modern Christians like Jerry Falwell and Phyllis Schlafly regularly express the view that the atomic bomb is a divine gift meant to preserve a Christian America, and that God's will can best be served by acquiring more of them.

The Christian religions offer many different sorts of entertainment, from passive hymns and prayers to faith healings and spastic convulsions known as "speaking in tongues" to internecine warfare a la Northern Ireland. If you're primarily seeking a light Sunday morning diversion, avoid most white Protestant sects except for those popularly known as "holy rollers" (the best of these, however, are black, and can sometimes barely be distinguished from a good uptown rhythm and blues revue).

The Catholics used to have quite a good show going, what with esoteric-sounding chanting in a language nobody understood, multi-colored robes, candles, bells ringing, much of which was lifted directly from prehistoric human sacrifice rites (the Catholics show the true measure of their devotion to their god by eating his flesh and drinking his blood--or so they claim; to most disinterested observers the body and blood look suspiciously like a wafer of bread and cup of red wine). Unfortunately, in a misguided attempt to become more au courant, the Catholics translated their prayers into English (revealing them to be the same innocuous gibberish mumbled by their Protestant brethren) and got rid of a lot of the mumbo-jumbo. Your best bet now would be to attend a south of the border style Catholic church, where voodoo and macumba have been liberally intermingled with the traditional liturgy.

JUDAISM This religion was, so to speak, the compost out of which Christianity sprung. Having been around several thousand years longer, it has managed to acquire a reputation for moderation and tolerance, a reputation it is now in danger of losing because of the activities of its most visible temporal manifestation, the state of Israel.

The Judaism of old amassed a vast and often contradictory tangle of restrictions and ritualized behavior, but the majority of modern Jews have long outgrown much of this folderol and replaced it with well-meaning generalities about being a good person and not marrying non-Jews. But many otherwise liberal and humanistic Jews are suddenly transformed into jingoistic know-nothings when the subject of their beloved Israel comes up.

A bit of history: Israel, or Palestine, ceased to exist as an independent state back in the early days of Christianity. But its resurrection was deeply ingrained in Jewish theology and/or the ancestral memory, and when the good Christians of America and England were faced with the problem of what to do with the Jews Hitler had failed to exterminate (don't even bother to ask why they didn't just invite them to come live in their countries), an obvious solution presented itself: why not give the Jews that worthless patch of desert that God had supposedly designated as the Jewish Promised Land?

There was one small difficulty; the land in question was already populated by Arab peoples who not only didn't share the view of Palestine being Jewish by divine right, but who dismissed the whole business as barbarous nonsense. This problem was dealt with in traditional Christian fashion: money, guns, and bombs were dispatched to a group of thugs and terrorists (one of whom, Menachem Begin, later became prime minister of Israel) who began blowing up or otherwise assassinating any Arabs unwise enough to persist in hanging around the Holy Land. When enough Arabs were disposed of, the state of Israel declared itself in business, and with the aid of military might supplied by the United States has since roughly doubled its size by conquering land held by neighboring countries.

Essentially a puppet of the United States, which provides the bulk of its wherewithal, Israel now confronts the problem of a domestic Arab population that is growing so fast that it will soon be able to vote the Jewish theocracy out of existence. Enter a solution, a "final" solution, as it were, in the person of American emigre and now member of the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) Meir Kahane, a vicious Jewish nazi who routinely refers to Arabs as "dogs" and has embarked on a campaign to deport them all and make Israel a racially pure state. Sound familiar? It should; less than half a century has passed since a semi-literate Austrian corporal by the name of Shiklgruber used similar rhetoric to justify popping six million Jews into the ovens.

To be fair, Kahane's views are representative of only a small, but unfortunately growing minority of Israelis, and many Jews are deeply ashamed of the racist state that represents itself as being the fountainhead of modern Judaism (Israel also has very close ties to the world's leading nazi state, South Africa). But to criticize Israel invites being branded as an anti-Semite if one is a Gentile, or a self-hating coward, if one happens to be a Jew.

Perhaps most ironic of all, the right-wing American Christians who are bank-rolling the Jewish experiment in fascism are as anti-Semitic as they come; it is their fervent belief and hope that the Middle East will be the site of the nuclear conflagration prophesied in the Christian bible as the battle of Armageddon, wherein the Russians, the Chinese, the Jews, and presumably all other pesky minorities will be destroyed, leaving a sanitized earth inhabited only by devout white Christians.

ISLAM Though you wouldn't know it from the picture presented in the media, there is more to Islam than car bombers and kidnapers. But essentially, Islam is a Middle Eastern knock-off of Christianity, with the same sort of patriarchal god (known as Allah), the same vindictive system of sin and punishment, the same special messenger from beyond the sky (in this case Mohammed) to lead us out of darkness.

The main difference between the followers of Islam and their Christian counterparts is that the Muslims tend to be a good deal more serious about their religion. Some people attribute this to racial or ethnic factors, but a more likely explanation is that Islam is a good deal younger than Christianity (by nearly 700 years), and institutions, like people, tend to be most fanatical in their salad days.

At any rate, if you want to be a good Muslim, you'll have to flop down in the dirt five times a day and pray to Mecca (and you'd better be facing the right direction--some Muslims carry compasses for this purpose) and endure periodic fasting and other self-abnegating rituals. Certain sects, as in Christianity, are more demented than others; only some varieties of Shiites, for example, are required to hop up and down screaming, "Death to the Great Satan" (that's us) until they fall over from hyperventilation. Those unfortunate enough to live in Iran under the direction of the Ayatollah Khomeini (the Islamic equivalent to America's Jerry Falwell) must also do without such daily niceties as music, sex, alcohol, laughter, and a host of other sources of corruption which space does not permit printing here.

Ugly women might be particularly attracted to Islam because all women are required to wrap themselves in black bedsheets from head to toe and are routinely married off without the prospective husband ever seeing what he is getting until the deed is done (on the minus side, women are considered to be barely human, and can be disposed of with less ado than most domestic animals.

All in all, if you're looking for a fanatical, masochistic religion, you'd probably be better off sticking with one of the more rabid Christian sects. Christians share the Muslims' morbid fascination with death and suffering (both religions promise instant entry into paradise upon death in the service of the lord), but Christians are usually content with letting someone else do the dying for them. Not so with Islam; in fact, if it weren't for Islamic strictures against birth control and abortion (another eccentricity shared with the more barbaric Christian cults), there might not be any of them left.

HINDUISM The most distinctive characteristic of this colorful Indian cult is its plethora of deities, many of whom are noteworthy for unusual numbers and shapes of arms, legs, heads, and other extremities. The advantages of such an arrangement should be obvious to the inveterate sinners among us; one could go around offending gods left and right for years before word got around to all of them. Another good thing about Hinduism is that it doesn't have a hell like Occidental religions; no matter what you do, the worst that is likely to happen to you is that you'll come back in another life as a frog or something.

On the negative side, it must take forever to say all the prayers required by the various deities, some of whom are positively frightening to even contemplate, let alone look at. Also, it seems that it's not as easy to escape your karma by paying off some preacher as it is in Christianity. Another sticking point for the more sophisticated might be the Hindu insistence on worshipping cows. One of the most hilarious religious episodes in recent memory occurred when some Indian Muslims went around town randomly butchering cows in retaliation for a Hindu prank that involved setting a pig loose in a Muslim prayer meeting (the pig represents the devil to the Muslims). Several hundred died in the ensuing merriment.

BUDDHISM This one doesn't seem too bad, even if it does tend to be the religion of choice for many California sprout heads. Buddhism is one religion that not only preaches peace, but generally follows its own teachings. At least I'm not aware of any Buddhist Crusades, Inquisitions, or Jihads.

Buddhism could be a little depressing for those easily discouraged. After all, its main tenet starts out: "All existence is suffering." But it goes on to say that it doesn't matter anyway, because you can transcend all that, so long as you don't desire to transcend it. Buddhism is full of little riddles like that, as is life, I suppose.

One of the most entertaining Buddhist sects is called Zen, which gives you such engrossing questions as, "Does a dog have a Buddha nature?" to think about while you sit cross-legged staring at a wall for several hours and a bald-headed guy comes walking around behind you and whacks you across the shoulders with a ruler if you're not sitting up straight or look like you're not paying attention (what's that, you say it sounds like Catholic school?). Afterwards they give you a bowl of brown rice and seaweed (no dirty hot dog, Dylan fans; Buddhists are mostly vegetarians). Sound like your cup of tea (oh yeah, they drink buckets of that, too)?

TAOISM This is my kind of religion, and the only one that gets the Lawrence Livermore seal of approval. Why? It has no gods, no rules, no priests (although there are some posers who should be completely ignored), and the only requirement is that you do whatever you want as long as you enjoy yourself. It's free, too.

LETTERS TO THE LOOKOUT

Greeting:

Your August LOOKOUT contained two articles so bad that I wonder why I take the time and trouble of a response. If you hadn't particularly invited a response to your pathetic ramblings about algebra, I never would have bothered.

But while I'm at it, I want to mention your unfortunate day at the seashore. Here, at least, you are in good company: just about everyone seems to share your attitude. However, your presentation is so bad that I can scarcely imagine the most tourist-hating reader being able to sustain sympathy for your troubles.

I want to criticize both your premises and your arguments. As for your premise that tourists are a befoulment wherever they go, I simply disagree. I know it is pretty unusual, but the fact is, I actually like people--even tourists, believe it or not. I have always liked people. I have travelled extensively, both in this country and around the world, and I find that I enjoy meeting and talking to all sorts of people from every background. That junkie from Montreal, that meek little Japanese man behind the camera, even the old lady from Kankakee--these are all people with real lives of their own and I find them all interesting. This is all beside the point, of course. If you don't want to see any of these people, that is your affair. I just want to say that I have always found this xenophobia which you exhibit to be very surprising and unsettling. I think the world needs more tourists, not fewer. The more people realize that the other inhabitants of this earth are people as well as themselves the better off we will all be. I could never understand how soldiers could go into a country and kill people: "They're just a bunch of geeks--blast them off the face of the earth." I remember one time when Mark Twain remarked how he burned down a neighboring house that sheltered a widow and orphans because it was blocking his view. I venture to suppose that there are plenty of Americans who would hate you and your whole lifestyle if they knew you because it is foreign to them and they don't understand it.

But then the arguments you advance to deal with this situation are truly off the wall. To begin with, what makes you think you were any different from all the other tourists that day in Mendocino? I don't care if you come from Caspar or Tokyo: if you are not a resident of the town of Mendocino, you are a tourist. You could have sat in peace and quiet at Glass Beach and saved yourself some driving, but you were attracted to the justly famous attractions of Mendocino so you lined up with the rest of the tourists to take your air at your favorite spot.

Where you see "squalid little brats stuffing ice cream into their faces," I see charming and beautiful children. Maybe I was the one holding my daughter's balloon while you were "turning up the punk rock on (your) car stereo several notches beyond its usual ear-splitting volume in hopes that it would terrorize some of the catatonic pedestrians into removing themselves more quickly from (your) path." Take a look at yourself, man! I sure hope your experience at Mendocino is enough to keep you from going back there.

As to the movie--well, I have never seen a movie going on in Mendocino--certainly such a scene is going to overload the capacity of the town to some extent. So what do you expect? Life is going on all the time and it isn't happening solely for your convenience. You are always welcome to hold out in the fastness of your cabin on your own property. You can put up a sign: "Peddlars, Agents, Missionaries, Jehovah's Witnesses, and All Other Persons (for that matter) Please Keep Out."

I had better not tell you that I am even ready to talk politely to Jehovah's Witnesses and Moonies--I might lose all credibility. But I don't feel obliged to apply my own beliefs to the rest of the world. I have talked with many sincere people who doing (sic) what they feel they have to do.

As for your suggestions about lynch mobs, spray-painting graffiti on tourists' cars, removing highway directional signs, and lounging about in doorways unkempt and disorderly--well, just let me repeat my invitation for you to stay home.

So now I'm all primed up with disgust as I turn to your next article: Why Is There Algebra? Can you really be serious? I would say that you are just confessing your own ignorance, only you have already done so explicitly: you affirm that you really know nothing about algebra! So what do you think you are doing writing about what you know nothing (sic)? Rather than rail at your frivolous ramblings, I will just answer your question. Since you know nothing about it, I suppose you really don't know what good it is. Maybe you really even want to know. Your request for a response suggests that you really want to know what it is all about.

Algebra is to numbers as grammatical syntax is to words. Some people are satisfied with monosyllabic grunts: Food! Sex! Kill! Other people find they have occasion to express more complex thoughts, and rely upon the conventions of grammatical syntax to express their ideas. Likewise, if you have any mathematical thought or process, algebra is a systematic language which enables one to express clearly any relationships, no matter how complex. For simple problems you can get along without algebra. Watts equals volts times amps ($W=VA$). But as your requirements for mathematical usage become more complex, algebra is a time saver. It makes hard problems easy. Ever find that you have the numbers but are not exactly sure whether you multiply them or divide them? Or which number do you divide into which? Algebra elucidates relationships in a flash. Really, it is a remarkable tool. To answer another question, I actually use some computations of algebra several times a month--and I am not involved in any occupation specifically requiring any usage of mathematics at all. Maybe it's a construction project, perhaps it's a financial calculation.

If you had said, "Who needs differential calculus, anyway?" I might agree with you. I have actually used the theoretical aspects of calculus once or twice, but it is not really useful to me on any regular basis.

I like to use tools. If I have a bunch of letters to mail at the post office, I will always use the wet sponge to affix the stamps. Certainly you can lick every stamp one at a time, but I prefer to use the sponge.

Faithfully,
John R. Stahl
Laytonville

Dear John:

It's too bad such economy and efficiency doesn't carry over into your writing style.

Going back to the beginning of your diatribe, I must marvel once more at how people who profess to love the logic supposedly implicit in the mathematical process seem incapable of employing any semblance of logic in their own reasoning. Liking, or even loving people has nothing to do with unquestioning approval of their actions, as any parent can tell you. If an invading army of CAMP terrorists or Russian communists set up headquarters in your front yard, would you welcome the opportunity to interact with them? They're just people, after all. To use a less extreme example, that "junkie from Montreal" may be a colorful and amusing character--till he breaks into your house and rips you off to feed his habit. The old lady from Kankakee may be as sweet as your grandmother, but when she blocks up traffic for miles behind her gas-hog Winnebago, she's also being an ignorant, inconsiderate slob. And that Silicon Valley yuppie may be a perfectly inoffensive fellow, but when his tastes (or lack thereof) combine with a large disposable income to turn a perfectly good town into an overpriced tourist trap, I'm offended.

So what's wrong with tourists, anyway, you ask? Plenty. Like you, I have travelled a lot, and hope to do more of it in the future. I agree that travel broadens both collective and individual understanding. Tourism, on the other hand, is the antithesis of travel: it seeks to insulate the visitor from the vagaries and vicissitudes inherent in journeying to strange lands, and instead provide him or her with a pre-packaged, sanitized, and thoroughly predictable divertissement. I reiterate: I love and enjoy meeting a wide variety of people, something I find increasingly difficult to do in a Mendocino being overrun by moneyed clones and drones.

As per your algebraic ruminations: perhaps in your estimation I live a shallow and/or simplistic life, but I can honestly say that I have never felt compelled to deal with any mathematical problem so complex that it could not be easily disposed of with a little mental effort, or in extreme cases, by resorting to pencil and paper or pocket calculator. And if you will recall my original article, I never said that mathematical fetishists like yourself should be enjoined from plying your dirty little vice in private, or even with other consenting adults, merely that you should refrain from ramming it down the throats of innocent and impressionable children on the yet unproven premise that it is somehow useful or good for them.

And lastly, I refer you to your own bemused comment on Mark Twain's writing: "And some people never noticed that it was satire."

P.S. Lest some people think that Lawrence Livermore is never wrong, or would never admit it if he were, I must ~~reveal~~ that in laying out this issue of the LOOKOUT, I ran into a mathematical snafu concerning square inches per page than not only befuddled me, but forced me to spend about 10 hours retyping the whole issue. So I'm with you on the use of tools, John. Why don't you mail me a new pocket calculator?

LL

Dear Lawrence:

Thank you for sending the latest issue of the LOOKOUT. Feel free to use whatever posters you want, giving credit as you're inclined. (Ed. Note: the writer sent a book of excellent anarchist agit-prop, samples of which will be showing up in future LOOKOUTS, and perhaps about town, too.)

Particularly liked the letter from the Jerry Rubin School of Reconstituted Radicals (Yippie Section) graduate: "I've stopped thinking, so why can't you?" What an asshole! (Ed. Note: I presume the writer is referring to last month's letter from "Big Al" of Laytonville.) Your response was right on... And the next letter writer was untroubled by the fact that "the atom bomb is a direct result of the development of mathematics." Just not enough Einsteins. Thought your critique of math in the first place pretty good. John did an extended piece on the idea of number that should be in the next issue of FIFTH ESTATE.

Both issues of the LOOKOUT (that I've seen) are intelligent and interesting. I do think, though, that you were soft on school. It's precisely history that holds little interest for an "alarming" (according to J.J. Kilpatrick)(Ed. Note: a right-wing crackpot columnist, not the bread baker)--but aren't they that much closer to appreciating the importance of the dao, as you rightly pointed out? As for language, business recently reported that what it wants most from schools is graduates with good language skills and discipline. An intoxication with history, a facile articulateness, basics for the system to reproduce.

Of course students aren't "paid for the work they do"--but isn't that what's supposed to make them glad to finally get a chance to work, where they are at least paid for the loss of their time?

The real horror of school--and its importance to the reproduction of repression--is that it accustoms the child to letting his or her time be disposed of by others. Again, necessary for indispensable work discipline.

In closing, thanks for sharing with us a lively, interesting project.

Best wishes
Dan Todd
Eugene OR

SAN FRANCISCO BEAT

Not rich or masochistic enough to drive a car in San Francisco? Or maybe you think you're being a good citizen by taking public transit and thus minimizing your negative impact on the already grievously befouled Bay Area environment. Well, if Dianne Feinstein, California's somewhat less charming answer to Margaret Thatcher, has her way, you can really minimize your impact on the environment, because walking will be a more realistic means of transportation than the city bus and streetcar system that America's first bionic mayor has done her best to destroy.

The San Francisco Municipal Railway, commonly known as the Muni, or Muniserable, as Herb Caen puts it, was once one of the most efficient and reliable mass transit systems in America, a country not known for its solicitude toward those unwise, improvident, or unpatriotic enough to not own their own automobiles. Even as late as 1979, though service had deteriorated

considerably, you could still ride anywhere in The City for 25¢. One of Feinstein's first acts following the corporate coup d'etat that installed her in office was to double the Muni fare and sharply reduce service. She later tacked on another dime, and now wants to jack the tariff up to 75¢. With fares having tripled in only six years, you'd think service had been greatly upgraded. Well, you'd be wrong; it's worse than ever.

Not that it matters a hell of a lot to Fineswine or to Rudy Nothenberg, a prissy Teuton who is one of her most servile lackeys, and whose job it has been to preside over the dismantling of the Muni; they tool around in taxpayer-supported limousines. In fact, it's said that the last time Her Swininess set foot on a Muni bus, she was appalled to learn that it lacked such basic amenities as a wet bar or color TV, and commented, "It's no wonder that nobody but Mexicans and Negroes and derelicts want to ride those old things, anyway. I don't know why we don't just get rid of them and make some more room on the streets so decent people can drive their cars."

My solution to the Muni problem? Chain Feinstein to the back of the 22 Fillmore and tow her back and forth across town until she agrees to not only restore Muni's former levels of service, but drastically improve them. And how to pay for it? A good start would be to collect the millions of bucks owed by her downtown highrise buddies for the express purpose of providing the mass transit required by their employees. Some of these bills are years overdue. Let a \$10 parking ticket go that long and see if the City is that patient with you.

Then I'd slap an enormous tax on those self-centered honkies who insist on choking the SF streets with their infernal combustion devices. Thirdly, I'd junk the Muni's fleet of unreliable and malodorous diesels, replacing them with electric trolleys, street cars, and cable cars, a significant part of the power for which could be produced by wind and solar sources within The City itself.

Result: a quiet, relatively pollution-free mass transit system with fares that should be no more than a dime or a quarter. Or better yet, absolutely free. And to atone for her sins against public transit, Feinstein should be required to drive a Muni bus for a year or so in the interim. Let her try and explain to people why they have to pay another fare because their transfer has expired in the hour or so they've been waiting for one of her rolling sardine cans to meander along.

THE SOLUTION TO GENTRIFICATION: OUTLAW ART

Gentrification is the process whereby skyrocketing rents, cultural sterilization, and inexorable cuteness combine to drive the rightful occupants of a neighborhood out to make room for an amorphous mass of insufferably bland middle class drones, who, when they aren't busily quaffing insouciant little zinfandels or nibbling chocolate chip truffles, commute downtown to preside over the computerized grinding into oblivion of what is left of humanity.

It's not a pretty picture, yet most people have come to accept as inevitable this unhappy debasement of our once-great cities. But perhaps in the nick of time, an intensive LOOKOUT investigation has uncovered the root cause of the gentrification phenomenon, and it now remains only for an aroused citizenry to take up cudgel and sword and stop the monster in its tracks.

As is generally the case in opposing evil, one must attack it at its source, and while gentrification is most often blamed on such popular villains as real estate speculators, the dread and ubiquitous yuppies, or that all-purpose object of derision, Mayor Fineswine herself, the LOOKOUT has discovered that all of the above-mentioned urban blights only enter into the picture after a beachhead, as it were, has been established. The shock troops of the petit bourgeoisie, it is the LOOKOUT's sad duty to report, are the artists.

Now artists are traditionally well thought of, as long as they don't presume to move in next door or marry one's daughter, but the evidence is becoming increasingly clear that these boho types and their avant-garde camp-followers are responsible for the spiritual decimation of some of San Francisco's finest slums.

The most obvious, and tragic case in point is the south of Market district (and be warned, I'm liable to strangle the next east coast yupster type who tries to refer to it as SoMa), once a gloriously nondescript wasteland where punks, perverts, warehousemen, rats, and the occasional family of the minority persuasion happily intermingled.

Now what do we see? Limousines and Volvos disgorging their cargoes of suburban detritus into the galleries, cafes, discos, and ludicrously overpriced restaurants. Can Mrs. Fields' sleazy cookie emporiums be far behind?

How did this unravelling of the social fabric begin? Five or ten years ago, most normal people wouldn't think of setting foot south of Market after dark (how do I know? I practically lived there). Then came the artists. No, I'm not talking about that ever-dwindling minority of individuals who actually paint recognizable pictures or spend years carving things of beauty from solid rock. What we're contending with here are the splashers, daubers, and splatterers of paint, the collectors and labellers of scrap metal, the amplifiers, echoers, and distorters of unrecognizable sound effects...

Yes, I realize I'm irrevocably branding myself in the minds of many as a hopeless philistine who knows nothing about modern art (and what little I do know is too much). The world is so replete with objects of beauty fashioned by human hands that I have no need for some pinhead with a fine arts degree (a

piece of paper commonly given to college students who, after four years of study, have been unable to acquire any useful skill) to explain to me why some unsightly piece of debris is, despite my ignorance, vital for my cultural edification.

But I digress, as is my wont and prerogative; we were talking of these erstwhile artists who, understandably, are not welcome in most established neighborhoods, and therefore must move into quarters so far gone that the residents are unlikely to notice yet another variety of social deviant creeping into their midst. So far, not so bad, since many artists are barely distinguishable from the rest of

the oddballs and misfits that make this town such a delightful place. But then come the art-trepeneurs like Mark Renne, opening trendy joints like the Billboard cafe that most real artists can't even afford to walk in the door of. As if real artists, who, believe it or not, must work incredibly hard at their calling, had time to hang around sipping \$2 cappuccinos and combing their goatees.

Suddenly the neighborhood is "upscale", crawling with newspaper columnists and slumming society editors. Those "artists" who have successfully minored in real estate cash in big marketing their "authentic" lofts and studios to stockbroker types who hope to use them to impress gullible coeds, and the duller-witted art types, who can no longer afford to live there move on like the proverbial army of locusts to devour another perfectly good slum.

How to end this vicious cycle?

Simple: ban all new art. No one can seriously argue that the world is in danger of suffering an art shortage in the foreseeable future. Think. Have you seen any museums or galleries with vast empty spaces crying out for new paintings or sculptures? And how much turnover is there in the art biz? I mean, you don't see them junking the Mona Lisa or the Venus de Milo just because they've got a little mileage on them. Barring a major war or similar catastrophe, I'd say we have enough art to last another couple hundred years, easy. So who needs artists? Let's send them all to Oakland.

MUSIC CAN MAKE YOU STUPID

The big music news last month for many people was no doubt being accorded the opportunity to pony up 20 bucks to be crammed into the Oakland Coliseum Stadium with the rest of the consumer cattle to ogle corporate America's latest superstar, 1985's successor to 1984's Prince and 1983's Michael Jackson.

"The Boss", as his slavish devotees inexplicably call him (the boss of what, I have long wondered, other than a multi-million dollar pop music conglomerate? I suppose the name is reflective of the authority-craving nature of the yuppies and blue-collar types who make up the bulk of Springsteen's adoring legions), has ascended to the top of the cultural heap not so much by dint of his talent (which even I will admit is hardly inconsiderable), but more because of the almost unbelievable dearth of imagination and creativity in the current big-time rock and roll scene.

While no one but the misanthropic or the tone deaf would argue that Springsteen hasn't penned some noteworthy lyrics and some reasonably fetching melodies, try to imagine where he would have fit in if he had been trying to make a name for himself in the days when the likes of Dylan, the Beatles, the Stones, the Doors, the Airplane were roaming the stages of the world. He would no doubt have been relegated, and rightly so, to the ranks of second-rate folksinger, a la David Blue or Arlo Guthrie.

But while Springsteen is no perpetrator of the 60s tradition, his subject matter and musical style are almost equally irrelevant to the 80s. In fact, both his ethos and aesthetic seem firmly rooted in that most barren of cultural epochs known as the 1970s.

All right, so he's apparently a real nice guy, if not a particularly deep thinker, but beneath his angst-ridden wails and thundering musical bombast, what is he really saying? Not much, as far as I can see, though I must admit to not

having carefully studied all of his lyrics. The overriding impression I have garnered from what Springsteen I have listened to is that he has a distinct talent for making things sound a lot more important than they are. His sad songs make you want to cry in your beer and his upbeat songs might impel you to boogie all night long, but underneath it all, I detect a self-abnegating resignation that says none of it matters anyhow, because tomorrow morning you'll be back at the factory or office compounding the disaster known as modern society.

During last year's election campaign, when der Reaganfuehrer had the incredible temerity to try and link his own twisted values to those supposedly exemplified by "The Boss", Springsteen had an outstanding opportunity to scathingly repudiate the aging fascist and in the process give a much-needed education to his many fans who no doubt voted to reelect the Prez. Instead, Springsteen essentially shrugged his shoulders and mumbled something to the effect that he wasn't necessarily for Reagan. With the platform accorded Springsteen by the mass media, imagine how much more of an effect he could have had if he'd had the courage to say something along the lines of what SF Chronicle columnist Jon Carroll recently pronounced, to wit: "(Reagan is) a thorough-going hypocrite seeking to promulgate a racist, pseudo-Christian philosophy." Or is that not the sort of thing one says when one is trying to sell lots of records?

But don't get me wrong; I don't have that much against old Bruce. It's just that with a little courage and imagination, he could be so much more than this year's pop superstar. On the plus side, he's got a lot more to say than Michael Jackson and Prince combined. On the other hand, I'd rather dance to those other guys' music any day.

So what else is new in the world of music? Well, here in Mendocino County, we've got a new radio station, KLLK, emanating from the burgeoning metropolis of Willits (as one local lady put it: "Willits sure is growing up. Who would ever have thought that one day we'd have not only a McDonald's, but a Taco Bell, too?").

Surprise, or for that matter, miraculi miraculorum, it's not half-bad. No punk rock of course; corporate America, even the small-town variety, is in no hurry to promulgate an art form which continually asks the musical question: what do we need this whole rotten system for anyway?

But aside from this obvious shortcoming, KLLK plays a mixture of music as diverse and entertaining as any mainstream station I'm aware of on either the AM or FM band. It's not unlike Garberville's KERG without the insufferably smarmy would-be hipster DJs and the maddening excursions into cerebral/psychotic jazz and similarly quirky musical tangents that often render that station unlistenable for any but the terminally drugged or the deliberately twisted. On the minus side, KLLK lacks KERG's public service programming including the always interesting daily CAMP reports.

My favorite KLLK DJ is one Loretta, who has a show on Sunday afternoons. Some of the other DJs, it must be said, lapse a little too heavily into music of the MTV/schlock of the 80s genre. The true acid test for KLLK will come when they receive their copy of the LOOKOUTS' just-completed cassette. If you hear the sounds of Mendocino County's most exciting and progressive band ripping across the AM airwaves, you'll know we've got a real radio station in our midst.

A potentially far more exciting development on the radio front is the effort of a couple people on the coast to obtain an FCC license for a brand new FM station on which, they promise, people will be free to say or play anything they want. One of the spearheaders of this project is the inestimable Marco McClean, who writes the marvelous Radio Free Earth column for the Mendocino COMMENTARY. If even a portion of his wit and wisdom is transferrable to the airwaves, Mendocino radiophiles will be in for a real treat.

But first... the mighty FCC, which has total control over what does or doesn't get broadcast in this country, must decide whether the public interest will best be served by the type of station Mr. McClean has promised to give us, or by yet another corporate pap purveyor of the KWHINE, KOZZZT, or KMFB ilk (I won't even bother mentioning Ukiah's robot redneck station).

If you believe that government bureaucracies actually listen to what citizens have to say (and miracles can happen), you can help by sending a letter of support to Marco explaining why this county needs a radio station that reflects the needs and values of the people who live here. Since a copy of the letter will then be forwarded to the FCC, it would probably be best to write in reasonably coherent English (though if you are fluent in bureaucratese, that might be even more effective) and to eschew your normal profanity. It is also necessary to make formal reference to the Application of Marco Angelo McClean and Timothy David Givon to broadcast on Channel 249 (97.7 MHz) out of Caspar CA (gee, a church, a bar, and now its own radio station--what more could little Caspar want?). Anyway, write now, or you may be stuck with yet another pre-programmed muzak channel, or worse, one of those 24-hour a day jerks for Jesus operations that seem to be popping up like bad mushrooms all over the place.

THE "NEW" PSYCHEDELIA: THE REAL THING OR JUST ANOTHER SUMMER RERUN?

by Tim Yohannan

"The times they are a changin'"... or are they? In San Fran these days there's a fledgling neo-60s psych/punk scene getting 'off the ground', as there has been in L.A., San Diego, NY, Boston and elsewhere for a while now. The bands involved look and sound '65-'67, turning out punk, psych, and folk rock of varying sorts. They've got the look down to a tee, as well as the attitude and music. And judging from my reviews of such bands' records (as well as all the 60s reissues we've seen lately, one could easily assume that I'm quite sympathetic to this direction...

Wrong! While I'm very much partial to the 60s punk sound, I'm not at all thrilled by the lyrical content. Many people labor under the misconception that the "scene" then was much livelier and more productive than today's punk scene, which as of late has been lame in many ways. Having gone through the 60s (once was enough, thank you), my perceptions of that reality are quite different. For one, the people then were quite fragmented, just as they are today. The majority of those who were involved with the punk music scene ('63-'67) were just concerned with "making it" (be it with their bands or with "chicks"). They were quite sexist and apolitical. Those in the psych scene ('66-'69) were more aware in terms of consciousness (LSD) but again didn't want to be brought down" by politics--they withdrew from reality, with the obvious mentally disastrous results. Granted, there was some crossover between the political activists and the counterculturalists by '68 (MC5, John Lennon, etc.) but that was not the majority of scenesters. The most politically aware musicians and followers evolved out of the jazz and folk music scenes into folk rock, but that had largely dissipated by '68, and again, that was a minority within the scene. I'd say most 60s types from the music scene were self-centered, egotistical, sexist neanderthals... and the lyrics of that era bear me out. Today's punk lyrics display 1000 times more social consciousness than 60's punk and its current imitators.

Fashion is another aspect that turns me off. While it's apparent that today's hardcore scene is also plagued by posing and uniforms, I again assert that it's nothing compared to the conformity and the posing down of the 60s and even more so of the neo-60s types. Everyone's trying to be so "coool" in their idea of what the 60s image was: "shades", the "right" equipment, the Jagger dancing, etc., etc... Insecure aloofness is the driving force.

But I guess the most disturbing points for me are (1) that neo-anything is a regression, be it into metal or 60s punk or whatever. While I think it's cool to investigate and understand musical history, to borrow or synthesize musical aspects from the past into something new (dialectical musicianism?), the fleeing to a safer, more romanticized era is scary, be it to the 60s (as in 'Paisley Power') or to the 20s (as Ronald Reagan does). For all its lameness, today's hardcore punk scene is at least grounded in reality, making it a genuine contemporary organic folk music. The extent of musical experimentation and fragmentation, and of debate, discussion, and dissension within the HC scene is probably unparalleled in any pop music scene today or ever. Some find that "too negative", and seek to escape to 60s psych/punk's "more positive" outlook, but I think that's a cop out. There are plenty of "positive" HC bands around, but they aren't escaping reality in order to maintain. I think the "neos" are. If HC expresses a dire look at the world or human interrelating, it's because the world's situation is dire. If the lyrics and attitudes are to become more positive, it'll be because things in the world are changing for the better, and bands will reflect that. I find it artificial and escapist to mimic looks, attitudes, and music of an era gone by that was indeed just as dire, but where most people were much more ignorant or naive.

The second point I find disturbing is that the neo-60s scene, both in its music and fashion, is highly co-optable. They were easily co-opted by corporate America in the 60s because both the clothes and music were colorful enough and pop enough to be palatable to the masses, except for the really "negative" characters like the Velvet Underground or the Mothers of Invention, etc. (who were shunned by most of the 60s counterculturalists). Again, despite its obvious drawbacks, HC is too raw musically, too anarchistic socially, and too disgusting fashionably to warrant corporate attention in a big way. Plus, there is a built-in mistrust within the HC/punk scene of those who get "too big", a lesson well-learned from the sellouts of the 60s. This has enabled modern punk to set in deep roots. We're now 8-10 years down the road, and the incredible amount of independent bands, zines, labels, promoters, distributors, etc., testify to the strength of punk in resisting co-optation. That certainly wasn't the case in the 60s (most existing bands had signed to major labels by '68), where CBS could advertise (in so-called 'underground' magazines) that "the man can't bust our music." "Our" music? Or CBS's?

I reiterate that I love that sound so well brought back to life by the likes of the Nomads, etc., but I don't welcome the scene and its mentality. Of course, I have generalized a lot here (it's still hard to find a song that drips venom like Dylan's "Masters of War"), but before people get all caught up in the 60s "great escape", I hope they'll take the time to get past romanticizing that era and check out the past realities as they were. The 60s were a necessary break with the past, important at the time, but to back is for the byrds!

(Ed. Note: I had planned to write on the same subject, prompted by several locals returning from the Grateful Dead's High Sierra acid love-in raving that the 60s were back better than ever--as if they had ever left in the minds of most people hereabouts--but I thought Tim covered most of the same points I had intended to make, perhaps better than I could have, in this column reprinted from MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL #29. I'd also like to take this opportunity to put in yet another plug for MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL, in my opinion the most significant political-cultural magazine published in the English language today. You can subscribe at the rate of \$9/6 issues from POB 288, Berkeley CA 94701)

REVIEWS

SHOT IN THE DARK at the Garberville Grange, September 7. This was the most fun I've had at a musical event around here in a long time. SHOT IN THE DARK are a young band, ranging in age from 14 to early 20s, but they know how to play their instruments (almost too well, it seems at times, but they don't get hung up showing off their musical virtuosity like so many older bands do). They do a little too much in the way of guitar solos for my taste (more than two or three notes is too much for me), but they also had some straight-ahead thrash numbers that got the crowd up and writhing. One humorous sidelight was a couple of heavy metal types' sincere but basically inept attempts at thrashing (while playing air guitar riffs?).

Most of the crowd at this show was quite young (the bulk of Garberville's more "mature" types were at some misbegotten jazz festival at the Garberville Theater that must have been a real bummer; most of the folks coming out of there looked like they'd just spent a long afternoon at the dentist's office) and that probably made things a lot more fun. The only drawback was that it didn't last long enough. There was another band after SHOT IN THE DARK, but it was one of those nondescript radio bands we seem to have so many of around here, and most of the punksters, thrashers, skaters, and other fun types adjourned to the parking lot for the balance of the evening. Too bad the LOOKOUTS weren't there, but we hope to do a show with SHOT IN THE DARK as soon as possible, maybe two shows, one in Laytonville and the other in Garberville. Anyway, if you get a chance to see SHOT IN THE DARK, don't pass it up; I highly recommend them.

DOA, CONFLICT (UK), CHRIST ON PARADE, ENTROPY, THE EDGE, THE WITNESSES, at the Farm, San Francisco, sometime in July or August.

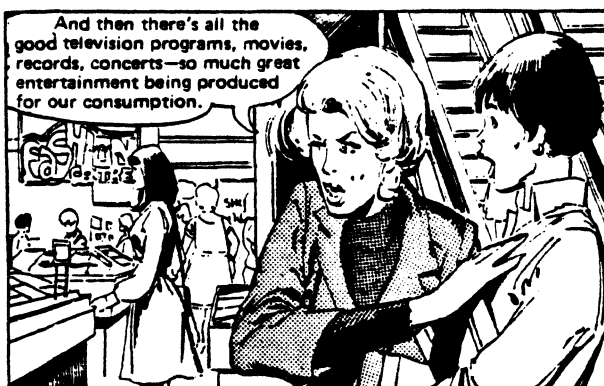
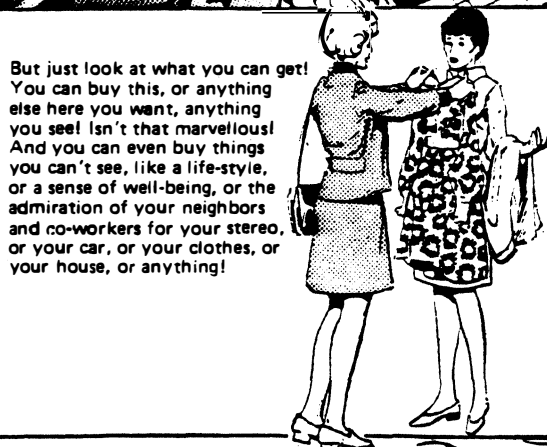
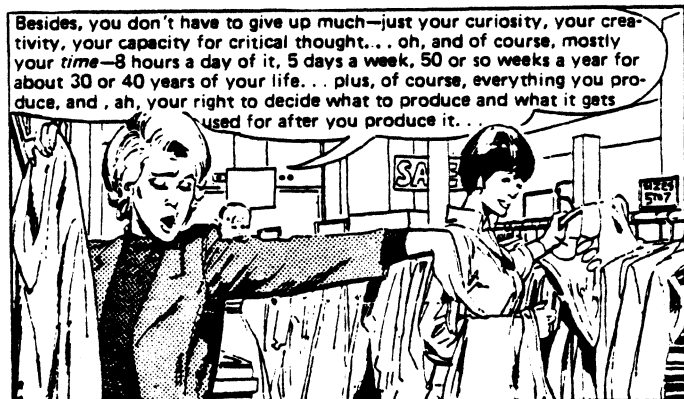
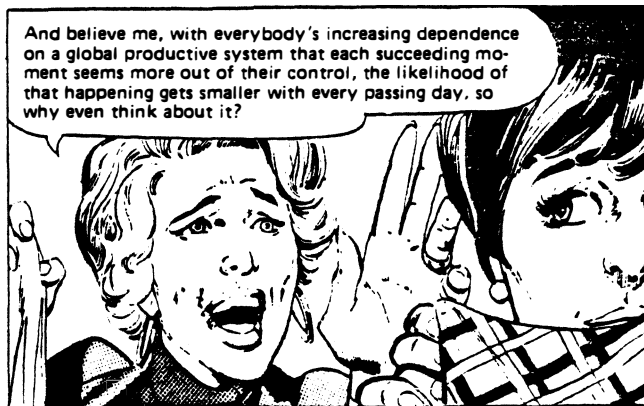
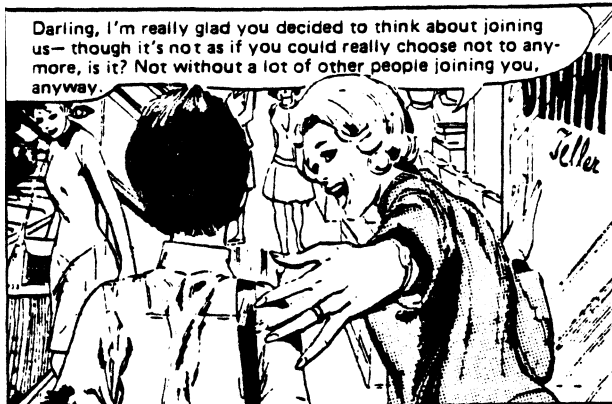
I'm only bothering to write about this one to prove that even punk rock can be boring. In fact, I haven't been this bored since I fell asleep at my last Grateful Dead concert. The big draw here was CONFLICT, although the once-great DOA still have a substantial number of fans. I must admit that I found the whole event so tedious that I didn't even stick around for DOA, but my nearly always reliable assistant reviewer (and former LOOKOUTS bassist) Richard assured me that I didn't miss much other than some predictable rockstar wanking about, something I had already seen quite enough of by the time I left.

Upon first catching sight of CONFLICT, Richard revealed that he had finally figured out what GBH stood for (GBH, for you non-punk fans, is a generic British spiky-haired group with rockstar pretensions): "It stands for Great Big Haircuts," he told me as we watched the 12-inch spiked hairdos with attached guitars pose their way through an only slightly updated set of '77 style punk. CHRIST ON PARADE played pretty much in the same vein, although they varied the routine with more guitar solos (yuck!) and by one of their members having his foot-long mohawk protrude from the side rather than the top of his head. Too bad, with such a great name, I was hoping for more...

The other bands were mostly OK, but did little or nothing to stick in the mind. The crowd was big, but not real exciting, unless being in close proximity to enough black leather to upholster half a dozen S&M bars does something for you. Hell, the Bruce Springsteen extravaganza was probably more fun than this event. Oh, by the way, if you read this in time, the Dead Kennedys are playing this Saturday, October 5, in downtown Novato (Novato is the last right turn before San Rafael) and again on the 18th somewhere in San Francisco (they're leaving on tour soon, so this might be your last chance for a while), and is MDC ever going to play again?

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Lawrence D. Livermore,
Editor + Publisher

... AS WE JOIN MIDGE AND CINDY, CINDY HAS RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO CONSIDER JOINING THE WORKFORCE; READ ON ...



Why not get together with some friends soon and say NO! Say no to the draft, or work, or religion, or authority figures, or school; say no to television, patriotism, political ideologies, any of the thousand and one ways in which this society keeps you from realizing your own needs and desires. You'll find the more you do it, the more you'll like it!

**JUST SAY "FUCK OFF."
YOU'LL GET
A LOT OF SATISFACTION.**