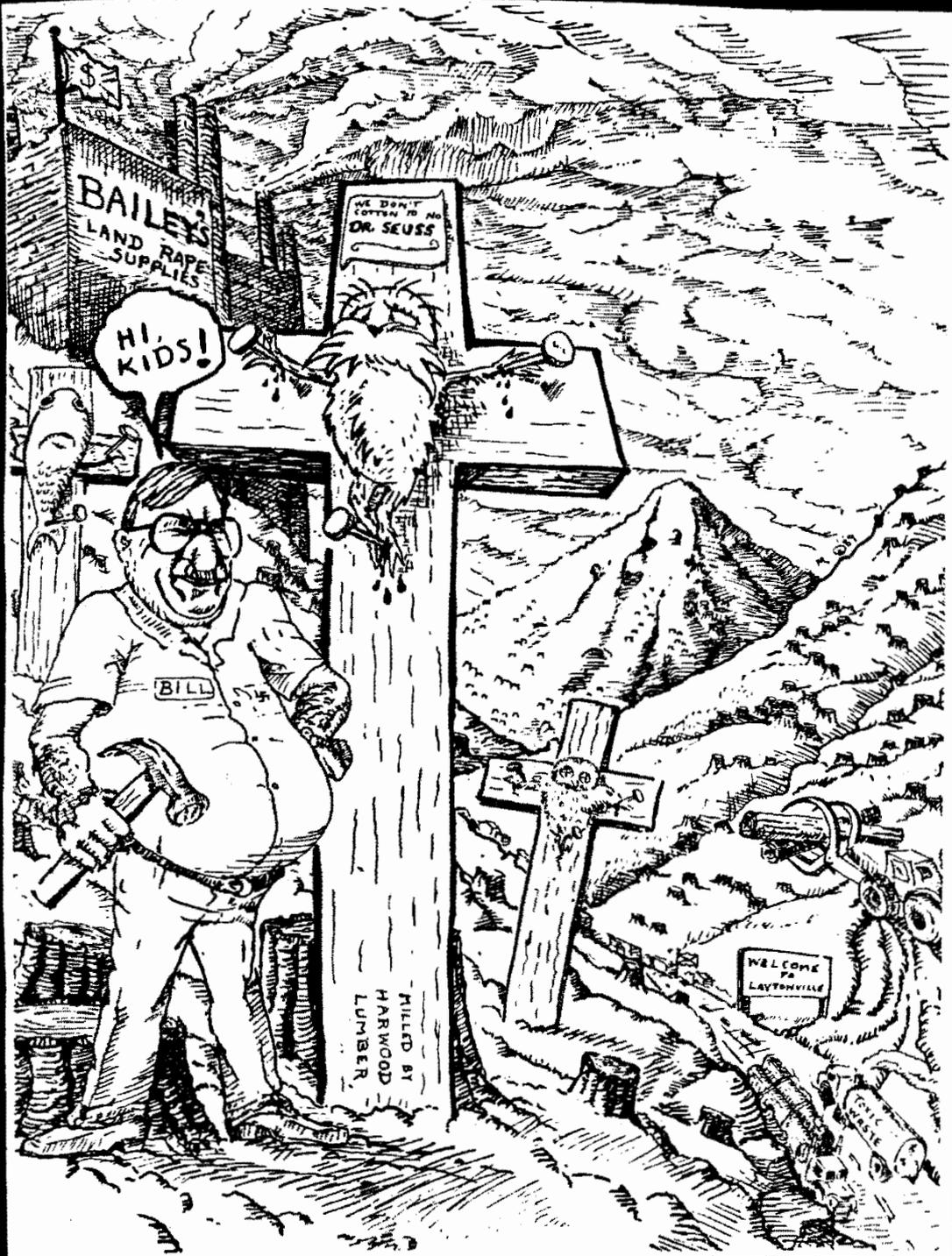


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LOOKOUT!



Number 34

Winter 1990

The Once-ler Of Laytonville

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Vs.
The Lorax

Motor City Breakdown

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Totally Crucial
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Vietnam Was So Much Fun, Let's Do It All Over Again...

Remember Vietnam? Probably not. If you're a student, you might have heard about it in history class, which almost guarantees that you don't have any idea what it was about. If you're old enough to have been around when it was happening, even if you were one of the unfortunates who got dragged off to fight in it, the Vietnam War that you think you remember has very little to do with what really went on.

We're not suffering from a collective case of Alzheimer's disease; it's just that the government and the media have rewritten the story so many times that no one could be expected to sort out the truth from the morass of lies characterizing that sorry misadventure.

You see bumper stickers that read: "To All Vietnam Vets: Thanks." Thanks for what? Thanks for blindly following orders and killing hundreds of thousands of innocent Asians and forever blackening the name of the United States of America? Gee, I'll know who to call if I want any more favors done.

I sympathize with the young men who wound up in the killing machine out of fear of prison or ignorance of what they were doing. People at that time were accustomed to doing what the government told them and calling it patriotism.

But we learned our lesson, didn't we? 55,000 of our young men, and God knows how many Southeast Asians, all dead for the sake of a lie. Weep and moan all you want at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but don't hand me that line about "They died for their country." Grow up, people, they died for *nothing*.

And that's putting the best possible face on it, because if you really want to get down to facts, what they died for was worse than nothing. You might have thought all those people's lives were snuffed out, stolen from them, simply because some ignorant politicians in Washington couldn't figure out that the war was pointless and stupid. But while it was stupid, it wasn't completely pointless. There were men working behind the scenes, pulling the strings of presidents and congressmen to keep that war going because it was essential for their own purposes.

One of those men is president of the United States today, and if he gets his way, he'll eventually have us in a war, or series of wars that will have us reminiscing nostalgically, "Ah, Vietnam, now that was a good old-fashioned war where you knew who was who and what you were fighting for." George Bush, long-time agent and former head of our country's secret police, will be happy to lead, excuse me, send us into battle in South America the minute he thinks he can get away with it.

The cause this time? Drugs, allegedly; communism doesn't seem to play as well these days, especially when the world's head red is clearly more intelligent and humane than our own top dog. But before we charge off to smite the demonic cartels of Colombia, it might be wise to remember the last drug war we got ourselves into.

Vietnam was a dope war, a struggle for turf between rival gangs of traffickers. At stake was the incredibly lucrative Golden Triangle, source of the world's best heroin. Tons of the stuff were imported into the United States, mostly through France, by a partnership consisting of the CIA and the Mafia.

The enormous profits, laundered through CIA playgrounds like pre-Castro Cuba and Mafia resorts like Las Vegas, financed CIA and Mafia terrorism at home and abroad. When the Viet Cong seized control of the Golden Triangle, the CIA, its livelihood threatened, used American troops in an attempt to regain its drug monopoly.

Despite ten years of war, the opium fields remained in the hands of the communists. Things settled down, the CIA made deals with Vietnam's new rulers, and after several years, Southeast Asian heroin was once again available in every American city.

The junkies were satisfied, but the CIA and Mafia were not. Paying a fair price to the Indochinese farmers and the commie middlemen took an intolerably large chunk of their profits. The public being unlikely to support any crusade to recapture the dope-producing region of Indochina, CIA drug lords found themselves casting about for new sources of income.

They found it in South American cocaine. Coke had been readily available in this country, in fact was legal until 1914, but it remained a specialty item until it caught on with the hippie and rock music scene in the 1970s. With the aid of various hit men, thugs, and mercenaries ejected from Cuba after the revolution, the CIA got into the cocaine trade in a big way.

By the beginning of the 1980s, cocaine prices had tripled and the drug had become popular across a wide variety of social strata. The billions, possibly trillions of dollars it generated sustained the

economies of several Latin American countries, and financed much new development in US cities like Miami, New York, and Los Angeles. It also helped the CIA to pursue its regime of terrorism and intervention around the globe.

But trouble lay ahead for the cocaine kingpins of Langley, Virginia. Inspired by the American free enterprise system, thousands of entrepreneurs realized that there was room for them in the marketplace. Anyone with the money for a plane ticket to Bogota and the *chutzpah* to bluff his or her way past customs inspectors was on the way to creating a private fortune. Many failed, of course, but enough succeeded that cocaine became, if you'll pardon the expression, a drug on the market. Prices plummeted in the 1980s as rapidly as they had climbed in the 1970s.

The introduction of crack helped some. It multiplied the amount of money that could be extracted from a single gram of cocaine, introduced the drug to a huge new sector of society, and because it is more addictive than ordinary cocaine, ensured a steady supply of customers.

The problem that had not been solved, though, was that of the independent operator. CIA drug merchants, largely white and/or Cuban, were unable to make serious inroads in the black ghettos where so much of the cocaine trade now took place. What's more, the organizations and gangs who did control the traffic were becoming so rich and powerful that they were beginning to pose a serious challenge to authority.

What was happening in US cities was happening a thousand times over in countries like Colombia and Peru. Held by Yankee gunboat diplomacy to near-colonial status for so long, South Americans were able to use cocaine to get back some of the resources that the gringos had been systematically looting. Local governments were not unsympathetic, for without cocaine, they lacked even the rudiments of an economic base.

The traffickers continued to grow more powerful, often eclipsing the nominal government. Farmers and laborers knew where their bread was buttered, and gave their loyalty to the monied drug class who provided them with the only means of earning a decent living.

The United States has been making noise about the South American drug economy for years, but it seldom went beyond the realm of talk. As long as the bulk of the trade was controlled by Americans, with only a pittance trickling down to the growers and low-level dealers, US politicians were inclined to leave well enough alone.

Now, with the money accumulated by independent traffickers beginning to undermine government authority in both North and South America, the Bush administration has felt the need to reassert its control over the cocaine trade. The price the American people are being asked to pay for this goal includes the substantial erosion of their constitutional rights and the very real possibility that they will be asked to find another unwinnable war in the jungles of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

Bush and Co. are so frantic on this issue because they know that the economic system currently sustaining them is dependent on a government-controlled illegal narcotics trade. Either legalization or the diffusion of drug trafficking into a wide variety of independent channels will put them out of business. Will the American people fall for this gimmick again? Perhaps for a while, but once the flag-draped coffins start rolling in from South America, George Bush's drug war is likely to become a very hard sell indeed.

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The Once-ler of Laytonville

The national media have come and gone, Bill Bailey and family have had their mugs plastered across the pages of *People* magazine, and Laytonville has been elevated from a local to an international laughingstock.

"The town that tried to ban Dr. Seuss" is an image we'll be stuck with for a long time, thanks to Bill and his lovely wife Judith, not to mention the cowardly members of the school board who knuckled under to the Baileys' bully-boy tactics.

Commentators like myself who specialize in satire and sarcasm have a field day when the likes of Bailey trundle such patent lunacy into the political arena, but it's not really that funny when you stop to think about it.

While the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries are broadening the freedom of expression, quite the opposite is happening here at home. Our local book-burners might seem ludicrous — in fact they are by any objective standards — but what they are about is the same ugly business of censorship that is always a hallmark of totalitarian societies.

It's invariably done under the pretense of "protecting" people against dangerous ideas. Through the centuries we now know as the Dark Ages, the church kept whole populations in ignorance of anything beyond their spiritual and temporal obligations. It wasn't until the ecclesiastical monopoly on knowledge was broken that we were able to enter the Renaissance that led to the formation of modern societies.

Since that time the prevailing trend has been toward more freedom of thought and expression, and the United States of America, with its Constitution and Bill Of Rights, led the way for much of the world. The suppression of ideas came to be regarded as far more dangerous than the ideas themselves.

That has changed in recent years. Schools, libraries, publishers, and artists are coming under attack from political and religious extremists attempting to prohibit the dissemination of ideas other than their own. A few weeks ago, the State of California knuckled under to Christian fundamentalists and agreed to present aspects of the pseudo-science of "creationism" in state schools. Excellent books like *Catcher In The Rye* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* have been yanked from classrooms and libraries across the country. Thanks to threats from Tipper Gore's PMRC, stores and record companies are afraid to handle anything but the blandest, most inconsequential forms of rock music.

Bill and Judith Bailey deny that their campaign against *The Lorax* constitutes censorship, that in fact they are merely attempting to shield our second graders from having to deal with complex moral issues until they are a bit more mature. This sounds ingenuous enough, but let's face it: the issues raised by *The Lorax* are not at all complex. They are easily understandable to a second grader, and that is precisely why Bill Bailey won't be satisfied until the last Lorax is drawn, quartered, and nailed to the last redwood stump on the Northern California Coastal Desert.

What, after all, was it that set Mr. Bill off on this tilt at the windmills of free expression? His son Sam read *The Lorax* and recognized his dad in it. The portrait of the greedy and megalomaniacal Once-ler bears an uncanny resemblance to Bill Bailey. You'd almost think Dr. Seuss had been lurking around here doing research.

Bailey, unfortunately, is an unregenerate Once-ler; *The Lorax's* villain at least learns a lesson from the destruction he has caused and urges the reader to plant new *Truffula* trees and make a world where the Lorax will be able to return. Once-ler Bailey, on the other hand, takes the 1984ish approach of trying to wipe out all memories of Loraxes, *Truffula* trees, or a time when the land was given over to anything other than producing endlessly escalating supplies of Thneeds.

Because Bailey owns about half the Laytonville school board, there is still a good chance that he will get his way and that *The*



Lorax will be banished. Tragic as this would be, it's symptomatic of a larger and very disturbing trend.

Where once the purpose of education was, at least in the ideal sense, to teach young people how to think, it is now being reduced to a sort of job training. This is not job training in the conventional sense; students regularly graduate without a complete or even adequate sense of the skills required by employers.

Instead it attempts to eradicate the tendency to question or doubt. It seeks to produce a generation of workers who will unhesitatingly follow orders and who will abdicate responsibility for the state of the world to those they have taught are their betters.

We can see the results of this type of education. Many loggers and mill workers show a blind, almost familial loyalty to multinational corporations who use and discard them like so many spare parts. They believe the assurances of their bosses that there will always be enough trees for them to cut, if only the hippies and environmentalists would get out of their way. They are unwilling or unable to make the connection between silted-over streams, the disappearance of the salmon and steelhead, declining water tables and recurring droughts that have followed in the wake of 150 years of clearcutting.

These people are not stupid. They are merely showing the effects of an educational system that has directly or indirectly lied to them for most of their lives. At the risk of sounding unduly charitable, I would suggest that Bill Bailey himself is a victim of that system. And while we should extend our sympathy to him, we can not allow him in his ignorance to tamper with the educational future of our children.

The Laytonville schools have in many ways bucked the national trend by steadily improving during the past few years. There is a camaraderie among teachers and students that most big-city administrators can only dream of. Part of the credit for this has to go to Superintendent Brian Buckley, but it is also due to the influence of

the many new parents and students who have moved to this area in the past decade.

This is not to suggest that the newcomers are necessarily superior to the old-timers in intellect or ability; merely that they have brought a variety of ideas and ways of thinking into an environment that had been quite homogenous. All great advances in civilization can be traced to the cross-pollination of cultures and philosophies, and we should welcome new ideas into our own community, not try to stifle them.

In *The Lorax*, Dr. Seuss makes a very good case against greed and reckless environmental practices. If Bill Bailey thinks the doctor is in error, let him present us, and the children, with a better case. Show us the book, Mr. Bailey, that will put a good face on what your friends in the logging industry are doing to our land. Instead of bullying and braggadocio, show us through intelligent argument the truth and justice of your cause.

Outside of your place of business, Mr. Bailey, you fly a large American flag, but I maintain that every time you interfere with the free dissemination of ideas, you disgrace that flag. There is much wrong with the American system and the American way of life, but one thing we can be undeniably proud of is the right to read and say and think whatever we choose. When you try to deny that right to our children, you strike at the very heart of what is best about this country.

The Death (Or Was It Murder?) Of Detroit My Home Town Isn't There Anymore

DETROIT --- We can only imagine what it must have been like. We have stories and sketches, and in the far north, little enclaves of wilderness where we can still close our eyes and imagine the soft splash of paddle against water, the almost imperceptible sound of birch bark canoes gliding through one of the thousands of rivers and streams that crisscrossed this rich and fertile land called Michigan.

So thick were the forests that the native peoples often found it easier to journey by water. So numerous were the trees that it must have been unimaginable that the puny efforts of man could ever make a dent in them.

But the forests are gone, nearly all of them. Of the vast stands of hardwood that covered the south, almost nothing remains; in the north, the remaining softwoods are rapidly disappearing into the maw of industry. In their place we have farms, some prospering and others struggling, we have great cities and sprawling suburbs, we

have acid rain, soot-colored air, rivers brown with sludge and laced with chemicals.

Much of that damage was done before our time, by men who, while they may have motivated by greed, were also motivated by a desire to secure a home and a future for their children. It is easy to condemn the consequences of their actions, but I would prefer to give them the benefit of the doubt, to assume they did the best they could, that they could not have understood the full implications of the course they were setting for society.

When I was a child, Detroit did not seem like such a terrible place. It was a bit dirty, yes, and function had long taken precedence over form, leaving us with miles of box-like tract homes and hideous smoke-belching factories, smelters, and refineries that made some sections of the city resemble the fetid outback of one of Dante's hells.

But the noise and pollution, the thick smell of sulphur and carbon that blanketed the city on humid summer nights, the rivers of molten slag that colored the eastern sky with a vivid orange light almost bright enough to read by, all this added up to prosperity, and Detroiters for the most part considered themselves a lucky people.

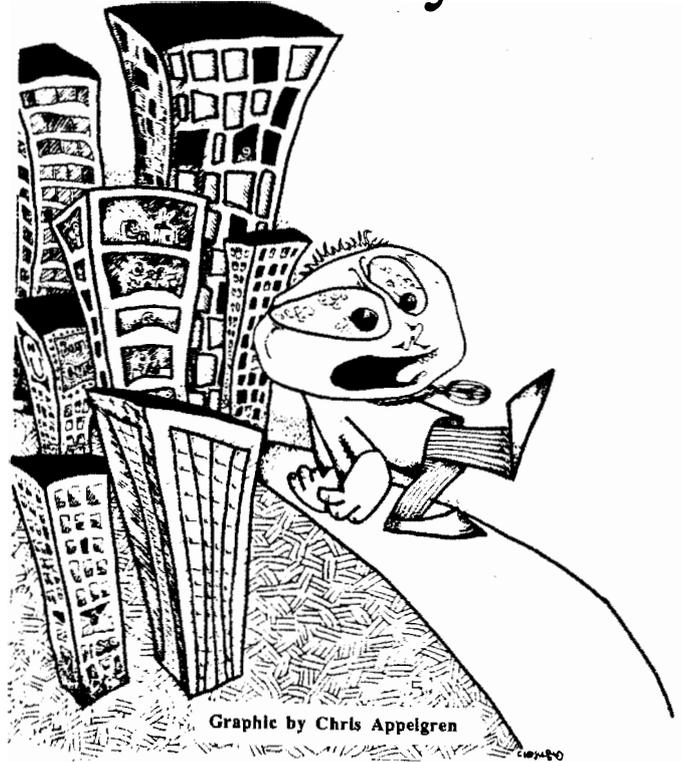
Except during periodic slowdowns in the auto industry, there was usually work for everyone, and at good wages. Poor southerners, both black and white, flocked there to man the assembly lines for Mr. Ford and Mr. Chrysler. A man who in the hills of West Virginia might have barely been able to feed his family could move to Detroit and soon be buying his own home and driving a brand new Chevrolet.

I'd also like to say how proud I am that the overwhelming majority of our community stood up to the Baileys (and let's not forget the Harwoods, whom we would have expected to know better). I wish the issue were dead and buried and that we could now go on with the business of building a happy and sane future, but I'm afraid that's not yet the case.

In fact, just as this issue was going to press there was news of a new assault on academic freedom. A coalition representing corporate timber and chemical-based agribusiness persuaded the Board of Supervisors to block the showing in county schools of a film that illustrates how salmon and steelhead fisheries have been almost wiped out by logging and agricultural practices.

Again the business interests are not trying to argue ideas, only to prevent their discussion. They have not offered an alternative film demonstrating how the fisheries have benefitted from tons of silt and pesticides dumped into north coast rivers. They have not offered an alternative explanation of where the salmon and steelhead have gone. They simply want to keep people ignorant until their dirty work is done. Then, perhaps, with the forests gone, and the streams dead, and the great north coast reduced to a toxic desert, they may bring themselves to admit, "Well, perhaps you environmentalists did have a point after all."

We can't afford to wait that long for the truth. Neither can our children.



Graphic by Chris Appelgren

With prosperity came amenities that softened the impact industry was having on the land. Outstanding art and historical museums, excellent libraries and schools, beautiful parks, broad boulevards, a first class symphony orchestra, all contributed to the feeling that our city was as fine a place to live as any in America. And while a New Yorker or Chicagoan might sneer at my naiveté, to a young boy like myself, Detroit was an urban wonderland, filled with all the excitement and promise, and perhaps just a hint of danger, that one could expect from a mighty city.

When I was ten years old I took my first trip downtown on my own, to take advantage of free piano lessons offered by Grinnell's music store. It seems almost unthinkable today for a child of that age to wander alone in the middle of a major city, but in 1957 my parents saw no reason to worry, and indeed, I never had the slightest

bit of trouble.

I was no stranger to downtown anyway; my family had been going there as long as I could remember, to shop, to attend free concerts on Belle Isle, to go through the museums or simply watch the boats go by on the river. And of course at Christmas time, when the city truly came into its glory, we would make numerous trips to see the decorations and sample the Santa Clauses in the various department stores.

As I grew older I saw less of Detroit. I went to college in another city, and eventually moved to California. So did my brothers and sister, and though my parents stayed behind, they began spending their winters in San Francisco, so I had little reason to visit my former home town anymore. I knew from friends and the news media that the Motor City had fallen on hard times, but it didn't begin to sink in until my mom told me about the day my dad drove down to the Eastern Market, parked practically in front of the place, and had the battery stolen out of his car while he was inside for no more than a few minutes. Yes, in broad daylight.

I know it's too much to expect some junkie or thief to worry about my dad, a man in his 70s who's worked hard all his life and probably never consciously done harm to anyone, and I realize that in the world of modern crime, the theft of a car battery is a relatively petty affair. But the image of a white-haired man left stranded on the streets he used to brag that he knew like the back of his hand haunted me, and it made me wonder what had become of the Detroit I had known as a boy. Now, in my first visit in almost ten years, I have found the unhappy answer.

It's gone. What was once, as we proudly learned in elementary school, America's fourth largest city, is hardly even there anymore. The great stores and office buildings, the bustling crowds and excitement of downtown, all gone. It would only be a slight exaggeration to say that you could roll a bowling ball down Woodward Avenue at high noon. The businesses that remain are the sort you would expect to see on the back streets of a down-on-its-luck border town. Two or three blocks from the center of the city rats scamper through vacant lots covered with weeds and broken glass. By day the streets are nearly deserted; by night they are a wasteland.

Twenty miles to the north or west or east, beyond the city limits, you will find huge shopping malls, parking lots packed solid with cars, crowds of people with plenty of money to spend. New houses and businesses sprout overnight, just as they do on the outer fringes of Los Angeles or San Francisco. But in Detroit itself there is little hope.

The city has lost almost half its population in less than twenty years. There are over 15,000 vacant buildings, and though the city tears them down at the rate of 2,000 to 3,000 a year, the number continues to grow. In a country where homelessness is becoming endemic, Detroit has literally thousands of homes that can't be given away. Magnificent structures that would be called mansions and sold for millions of dollars in San Francisco sit empty, their windows broken out and their interiors gutted by bored children or junkies playing with matches.

My dad took me on a sad and meandering tour of the back streets, pointing out the spots where he had once lived or worked or played. He's a reserved man, not easily given to displays of emotion, but I could hear the hurt in his voice as he pointed out one ruin after another, describing in his dispassionate manner the Detroit he had once known. He showed me the corner where he used to wait for the streetcar that he rode to work — the streetcars are gone now, and what's left of the bus system might as well be — before we turned down the quiet residential street where he and my mother and I had lived for the first two years of my life. Mercifully, our block had weathered the years fairly well; there were only two abandoned houses. Our building was gone, but in its place was an elementary school and a playground.

The surrounding neighborhood was not in such good shape. On some blocks less than half the houses were occupied; still more shocking were the vast stretches of open land, empty except for weeds and the occasional tree. A first time visitor would never realize that thousands of solid brick and frame homes once stood here.

Where have all the people gone? Those who could afford it have

moved to the suburbs, or to other states where there is a better chance of finding work. The automobile industry has not recovered, and probably never will, from the energy crisis of the 1970s and the subsequent shift in consumer loyalty to more fuel-efficient Japanese cars.

But that alone would not explain why half a city's population would flee; many other cities have weathered similar economic upheavals. New businesses could have been created; with a little belt tightening, Detroit should have been able to make the transition to a post-industrial economy.

Simply put, the city is unlivable. Unless you are wealthy enough to live in one of the few privileged enclaves, to surround yourself with alarm systems and private guards, the threat to your life and limb is probably equal to if not greater than that faced by the inhabitants of Beirut or San Salvador.

Detroiters swap amazing crime tales the way Californians talk about the latest real estate prices. There's the woman who drove her father to the entrance of Henry Ford Hospital, went to fetch a wheelchair for him, and returned to find both car and old man stolen. A man called 911 to report that an armed gang was kicking in his front door, to be asked by a bored-sounding dispatcher, "Are you sure they're not friends of yours?" By the time police arrived his wife had been raped and murdered and he had been left paralyzed. At least a couple girls are raped every week in or on their way to school. Drive-by shootings? They hardly merit a line or two in the daily murder recap; the latest thing here is the "pedal-by," where young kids on bicycles gun down their rivals.

Well-fed suburban whites, some of them at least, point to the rising tide of chaos in the inner city as evidence of their racial or political theories. It's the blacks, they say, ever since they took over the city's been going downhill. They are right in at least one regard: crime in Detroit is largely committed by blacks. But it wouldn't be right to mention that without noting that almost everything that happens in Detroit is done by blacks. It is an overwhelmingly black city.

It is also a desperately poor city. How much that has to do with the crime rate is anybody's guess. Rape, torture, random shootings: these can hardly be blamed directly on economic need. Clearly the social fabric in Detroit is dangerously close to unraveling completely. What if anything does this have to do with the race of the people who live there?

Probably little or nothing. Detroit is an ugly window into a not-too-distant future. Its ruined buildings, its hopeless lives are the end product of the growth-at-any-price mentality that has driven the American economy for the past three centuries. Its shell-shocked inhabitants are the castoffs and leftovers of an industry that has extracted the wealth from the land and moved on to greener pastures. They are the human equivalent of the shattered remnants of strip-mined West Virginia mountains, of the vast piles of radioactive uranium tailings leaching death and deformity into New Mexico's soil and water for the next 10,000 generations.

The color of their skin is relevant only insofar as it makes it even easier for prosperous whites to overlook the devastation that lies in the wake of their journey toward the American dream. Even many well-intentioned liberals fail to grasp that what is at work here in Detroit, and dozens of other American cities like it, is a system of apartheid in some ways more pernicious than that practiced in South Africa.

No laws prevent blacks from moving where they choose, and of course they have the right to choose their own government. But like the townships of South Africa, Detroit lacks the economic base to support itself. Nearly all the wealth is owned or controlled by whites from outside the city. The mayor and most of the city council are black, but they function almost entirely as employees of suburban industrialists.

Five-term mayor Coleman Young provides an especially vivid example. While his political appeal consists largely of his ability to communicate in the argot of the street and to tar anyone who opposes him with the brush of racism, Young has devoted most of his career to looting Detroit's meager financial resources and delivering the lion's share of them to a handful of white multimillionaires.

Most of the fraud is committed in the name of urban renewal or "redevelopment." Vast chunks of federal tax dollars are kicked back to depressed cities like Detroit, where they are disposed of under the direction of politicians like Coleman Young.

With his flair for public relations, Young has managed to portray his white developer cronies as public-spirited benefactors, investing money and energy to restore Detroit to its former greatness. In reality they are milking the dying city like a cash cow, siphoning off millions of dollars that could be used to rehabilitate housing, streets, and schools.

Instead the money goes to things like the enormous trash incinerator whose construction decimated a neighborhood and which dumps tons of carcinogens and toxics into the already murky atmosphere. Half a billion dollars, enough for Detroit to purchase its own Stealth bomber, were consumed by this monstrosity which the state is already threatening to close down for environmental reasons. Undeterred, Mayor Young is pushing ahead with plans for a companion hazardous waste processing plant. Bear in mind that we are talking about an area no more than a couple miles from downtown; an equivalent bit of urban planning would locate the New York City Dump in Central Park.

Nearby one of the city's last healthy working class neighborhoods was demolished to make room for a new Chrysler plant while thousands of acres of empty city-owned land sat nearby. Another auto plant built with \$170 million of city funds ostensibly saved 3500 jobs (approximately \$48,000 per job), but it's worth remembering that auto workers are among the lucky ones who can afford to move to the suburbs, and most of them sooner or later will.

What we have here is thinly veiled Reaganomics; the wealth is funneled to corporations and investors with the idea that some of it will trickle down to the levels where it is so badly needed. It is of

course wildly inefficient, but it also affords maximum opportunities for graft and corruption.

I wish that I could be more optimistic about Detroit's future. I wish the people could see how they are being sold out by their elected representatives and how their mayor, himself a bagman for monied white interests, is using the bugaboo of racism to maintain his power.

But because racism is not merely a bugaboo, because it is so pervasive and entrenched on both sides of the color line, I do not see a great deal of hope. What is happening in Detroit is a regional problem, but as long as the poverty and crime can be walled off behind artificial city boundaries, suburban whites can blithely go about their business pretending that the cancer devouring the center of this once-great metropolis has nothing to do with them.

Sooner or later the rage and despair that envelops Detroit will no longer be containable. The spectre of all-out race war is no longer as far-fetched as it might have once seemed. And that is the real tragedy, because the true issue here is not racial at all, but economic. Race has become a useful device to divide the haves from the have-nots, and in the process it made it nearly impossible for people to find common ground, to stand together and ask, "What have they done to our land? What have they done to our humanity?"

It's not unthinkable that Michigan could one day be restored to the magnificent and pristine state in which the white man found it. It is, however, wildly improbable, as long as huge segments of the population find it necessary to occupy themselves constantly with the bare essentials of survival. Detroit is a tragic monument to the failures of unbridled industrialism. It desperately needs leaders able to see that the way out of the wreckage does not lie in trying to reconstruct the immediate past. Instead it is cursed with a generation of vultures content to grow fat picking at its carcass.

Pablo Picasso And The Uglification Of Modern Art

Nobody ever called Pablo Picasso asshole

...Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers

Smarmy pop-rocker Jonathan Richman never distinguished himself much except in the eyes of the critics, but his memorable rhyme of "Picasso" and "asshole" deserves credit for at least establishing a linkage between the two concepts.

There are people who will tell you in all seriousness that Picasso is the most important painter of the twentieth century, a judgment that reveals more about the 20th century than about the quality of his work. Picasso's principal significance is that he, with the possible exception of Andy Warhol, best embodies the sorry state of modern art.

Picasso showed considerable talent in his early years, but once he latched on to the cubist gimmick that would net him fame and fortune, he squandered himself on the mass production of schlock. Sort of like the Elvis Presley of his day...

Elvis himself would have been just another loose-lipped swivel-hipped country blues singer without the aid of his personal P.T. Barnum, better known as Col. Tom Parker. Picasso did the King one better by being his own Col. Parker.

Still, Picasso's knack for self-promotion could not by itself explain how he came to be taken so seriously in the art world. Salvador Dali, a more skillful painter and equally adept at manipulating the media, ended up as essentially a joke, except perhaps in the acid-dilated eyes of impressionable university students.

The difference was that Picasso was anointed, canonized and enshrined by the hierarchy of critics, dealers, and curators who wield a near dictatorial power over what the public perceives as "art." As befuddled by the underlying principles of art as it is by the underlying principles of theology, the public grants these arbiters of

taste the same all-pervading control over matters of culture that the medieval church exerted over religious life.

Stroll through the corridors of the embarrassingly bad San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Take a close look at the abstractions, geometric shapes, hastily daubed color studies, and mixed-media montages presented to us as the best art money can buy.

Most of this stuff is just plain ugly. Ask yourself if you would allow it to be hung on your living room wall. Then check out an exhibition, or even just reprints of some 19th century impressionists. Doesn't it make you wonder what there was about the arrival of the 20th century that suddenly made artists forget how to paint?

Yes, it was a stressful time, world wars, modern technology and all that, yet people didn't forget how to create music or literature or drama. But painting and sculpture hit the skids by the 1920s and have been degenerating ever since.

Or did they? There are still good artists, surely even some great ones. Most of them are unknown. Some survive by doing commercial illustration work or cute little landscapes for the tourist market. Others paint only in their spare time, and outside of friends and family have no audience at all for their work.

Very little of the great art of the 20th century is likely to find its way into galleries or museums within the lifetimes of the artists. For one thing, a massive houseclearing will be necessary before there is room for it. And try to imagine the outrage of taxpayers and wealthy patrons when truckloads of Rauschenbergs and Diebenkorns and Pollocks and Johns and Warhols on which hundreds of millions of dollars were spent have to be hauled out the back doors of America's publicly funded museums and deposited in the trash heap where they belonged all along.

Predicting tastes and trends in such a nebulous field is a tricky business, but I have little doubt that this is what ultimately will

come to pass. By the middle of the next century, nearly every painter currently being lionized by the art establishment will have become a joke; highbrow comedians in the year 2050 will probably need only to mention names like Pollock or Warhol to elicit uproarious peals of laughter at the expense of the 20th century booboisie.

How did we get to this point? Artistic styles and techniques have always been prone to excess, and an artist unwilling to experiment is hardly worthy of the name. No doubt tons of schlock and self-indulgent foofaraw were produced in previous centuries, too, but with time most of it has been sorted out and we are left with a good sampling of the best.

If such a process is still at work in our own time, it is painfully slow. The reason, I think, is that a fundamental change has occurred in the way the arts sustain themselves.

Until the industrial revolution, supporting the arts was both the duty and pleasure of a tiny ruling class. If a painter or composer or writer wanted to move beyond the realm of hobbyist, it was almost mandatory that he acquire the patronage of the local lord or king. Art existed at the grass roots, but it had no means of propagating or preserving itself. A peasant or petit-bourgeois composer, for example, could hardly dream of putting together an orchestra to perform his work; even canvas and oils were beyond the means of the vast majority.

The increased wealth of the lower and middle classes in the wake of the industrial revolution created an artistic as well as a political realignment. In a very real sense, the masses were now able to be patrons of the arts.

Nowhere was this more evident than in music. Orchestral music went into a precipitous decline as talented young people found themselves attracted to more upbeat and popular styles like ragtime and jazz. Artists and writers too found new outlets for their work, as magazines and cheap paperback books flourished. Through the first two or three decades of the new century, painting also moved ahead on a variety of fronts, reaching its peak in the German Expressionist movement.

But that was pretty much it; it's been downhill ever since. The first signs of trouble came with the arrival of Dada, a well-intentioned idea that opened the floodgates to a century of bad art underscored by an even worse philosophy.

"It was impossible to follow the Dadaists," one artist told me. "Once they were finished, there was nowhere to go but down."

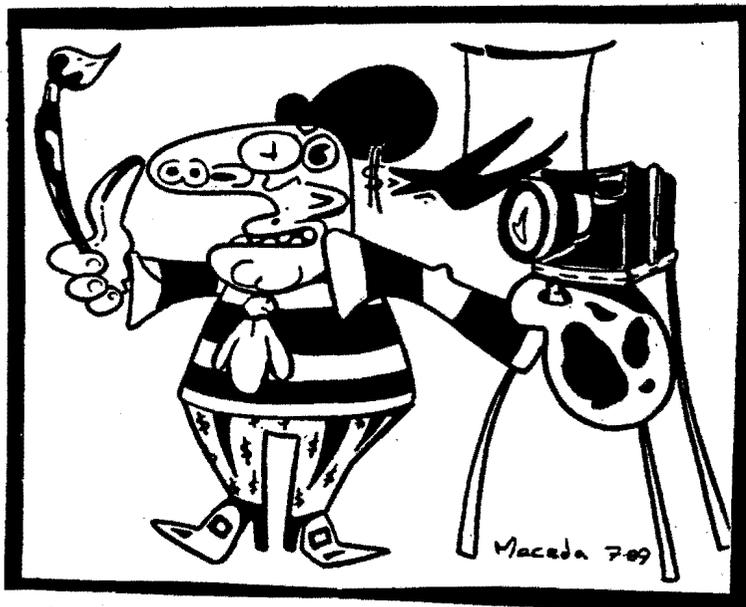
Dada, which had its heyday at the time of the First World War, has often been compared to punk rock, in that its purpose was to disrupt, ridicule, and ultimately destroy the established structures of art, theoretically leaving a blank slate on which new creative forms could emerge. Just as the punks protested against the bloated, pompous and self-congratulatory smugness of 1970s rock music, the Dadaists were outraged at the cloying beauty, the overwrought romanticism, and the social obliviousness of late 19th century art.

As was also the case with punk, the most potent weapons in the Dadaist assault on established art were shock and humor. But in any war, humor is among the first casualties, and shock quickly becomes an everyday fact of life. The Dada movement was short-lived, but its legacy was a deep-seated mistrust of the conventionally beautiful that burdens artists to this day.

One could argue of course that modern art is so determinedly ugly because it reflects the times in which we live. But that ignores the fact that some of history's most beautiful art comes from times when society was beset by horrors like slavery, perpetual warfare, and religious and social oppression.

I think instead that the tendency of artists to shy away from beauty is that beauty deviates from the official format. Just as an 18th or 19th century songwriter would not try to get himself a gig at the local palace by composing ditties about cutting the king's head off, a modern artist must be careful not to incur the wrath of the establishment critics for being too "sentimental" or "decorative."

In lieu of what has traditionally been considered beautiful, modern art demands a high degree of abstraction and novelty. If the results are incomprehensible to the general public, all the better for the scholars and salesmen who make a living explaining it. It's



analogous to the church keeping its sacred texts in Latin for centuries after the language fell into disuse; it didn't need a bunch of peasants figuring things out for themselves and asking disconcerting questions.

When art is reduced to pretentious gimmickry, another purpose is also served: it is stripped of any social relevance. If a work is neither understood nor understandable by the vast majority of people, we can not expect it to have any great effect on them. A painter might give his efforts grandiose titles like "Alienation in the Modern Age" or "The Horrors of War," but if the average person sees only some childish splotches and squiggles on an otherwise inarticulate canvas, nothing has been accomplished except to give social commentary a bad name.

The failure of modern art is further underscored by the massive disinterest shown in it by ordinary people. Art has developed into a two-tier society, the "fine" arts, which cater to approximately 2% of the population and receive 98% of the public funding, and the "popular" arts, which receive almost no subsidies at all and survive for the simple reason that people like them.

Popularity is the kiss of death in the art critic's world; allowing the worth of a work to be determined by how much people liked it would of course put him (almost always a him) out of a job. This is why rock and roll has never been taken seriously as an art form even though it is clearly the most important music of the twentieth century, and why jazz was not regarded with any respect until virtually all sponaneity, creativity, and *joie de vivre* had been bred out of it and replaced with a bloodless cerebralism that precisely parallels the perverse pointlessness of modern abstract painting.

None of this should matter except for two very vital concerns. The first is the vast amount of public and private money that goes into supporting enterprises that, while masquerading under the name of art, are fundamentally inimical to the pursuit of beauty and truth that underlie all true art.

Even that can be overlooked, however; a real artist can ply his or her trade without government subsidies or the approval of the art establishment provided that the public sees the value of what is being created. But the greatest crime being committed by the system now holding sway is that it maintains the illusion that art can only be created and enjoyed by a privileged and educated few, and that the vast majority of us should be content to watch television, hum along with beer commercials, and leave the serious business of art to our betters.

Fortunately technology is opening up new channels of communication that are not so easily monopolized, and underground art of all varieties is flourishing. An enterprising young person with a knack for drawing or writing can, with the aid of a xerox machine, perhaps a personal computer, and the US Post Office, be reaching thousands of people around the world before the highfaluting critics

are even aware of his or her existence. Cheap and easily available equipment makes the same true for music, in fact for most art forms.

Now that ordinary people have the tools within their grasp, all that remains is to destroy the illusion that there is something less valuable about art which lacks the imprimatur of the would-be authorities. People need to become confident in the powers of their own judgment. Anyone with a functioning central nervous system can look at a painting or hear a piece of music and decide whether it is beautiful or ugly, uplifting or degrading. There are no experts when it comes to art, only those who have found it in themselves to create art and those who are still afraid to try.

Berlin: One Wall Down America: Still Lots More To Go

In Lookout #27 (August 1987) I reported on a visit to the two Berlins and railed against the Wall that divided them. I concluded that the Wall would be with us for a long time, that the best we could hope for was its gradual erosion. I was wrong, and I'm glad of it.

For anyone who's lived in or visited Berlin during the last twenty-eight years, the Wall was an inescapable monument to human brutality and stupidity. Its dismantling is not only a victory for freedom, but a demonstration of that which is best about the human species, the ability to learn from and rise above past mistakes.

I thought of my friends in Berlin and wished like anything that I could be there with them. Some of them don't even remember a time when there wasn't a Wall.

I do. I was only 13 the summer it was built, but I was outraged with the unreasoning passion that only a 13 year-old can muster. Who did those people think they were? Why didn't our government send in the troops and teach those Russians a lesson? If I had been a few years older, I might have marched down to the recruiting office and volunteered to lead the charge myself.

When I finally had an opportunity to visit the Wall, I was much older and, hopefully, a little wiser. I no longer saw the East-West conflict in black and white terms, though it wasn't easy to come up with any justification for what the East Germans and their Soviet cohorts had done.

A few East Berliners still bought the argument that the Wall was necessary to protect their fledgling socialist society from the corruption of the West, but most of them saw it as a relic of the arteriosclerotic bureaucracy represented by our Communist Party boss Erich Honecker.

"Nothing will change until Honecker is gone," I heard again and again, and the assumption was that Honecker would not leave until he was carried out in a coffin.

But East Germans finally decided they could not wait that long, and took to the streets. It had been over 35 years since East Germany had seen mass demonstrations, and those were brutally crushed by the East German and Soviet armies. This time the results were far happier.

Honecker was sent packing and replaced by Egon Krenz. Krenz was at first derided as another hard-liner, but within weeks he was looking more like the German Gorbachev. What he was saying might have seemed like mere rhetoric, but people were allowed to continue meeting and protesting, and there even began to be serious talk of elections like those that had happened earlier this year in the Soviet Union.

Still the pace of change must have seemed glacial for many East Germans, especially the young. Through Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, thousands of them came pouring into the West, and short of turning the entire country into a giant concentration camp, there was nothing the East German government could do about it.

Seen in that light, the opening of the Wall represents only a victory for common sense, but common sense has never been a salient feature of East-West geopolitics. I would prefer to think that the East German authorities, like their Soviet counterparts, have finally realized that freedom and socialism are not incompatible. On the contrary, I suspect that the well-documented failures of Soviet-style communism stem not so much from inherent flaws in Marxist economics (though such flaws surely exist) as from the paranoid unwillingness of East bloc leaders to trust and listen to their own people.

The unseemly haste of American right wingers to claim credit for the changes sweeping Eastern Europe ignores the fact that the protest movements are not exactly demanding a shift to American-style capitalism. Europeans on both sides of the Iron Curtain are horrified at many aspects of life in this corner of the free world.

"Is it true that if a sick person doesn't have money, he won't be admitted to the hospital, even if it means he will die?" I was asked by more than one East German.

"Why do you force the black people in America to live in such terrible slums?" others wanted to know.

"How is it possible that in such a rich country you have grandfathers and grandmothers eating from garbage cans?" was another pointed question.

The Wall was a stupid and brutal mistake, one of many made by the East German government. But the fact that the government has now moved, however belatedly, to correct its error is a hopeful sign. It indicates, as do events in Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, that communism is capable of reforming itself.

Whether those reforms will go far enough remains to be seen, but in the meantime we might be better off asking whether our capitalist system is equally capable of restructuring itself. The walls which divide the United States are not as obvious as the Berlin Wall, but they are no less oppressive, and because many of us do not even acknowledge their existence, they are much more difficult to tear down.

No concrete barriers or barbed wire or guard towers separate Bedford-Stuyvesant from Manhattan, or Watts from Beverly Hills, but they might as well. A young person born into America's vast underclass can see the wall blocking his or her path to a decent education or a worthwhile job even if it's invisible to those who have erected it. The 37 million Americans who can't afford basic health care don't need bricks and mortar to remind them of their second-class citizenship.

Just as the East Germans were able, through television, to see but not touch the prosperity and freedom on the other side of the Wall, less fortunate Americans have opulence and excess pushed in their faces every day, knowing full well that it will always remain tantalizingly beyond their grasp. Whether Americans will ultimately take to the streets in numbers sufficient to force meaningful change is another matter; it's harder to rally people against the invisible walls that divide them than against a blatant symbol of oppression.

We can rejoice with our German brothers and sisters in their hour of victory, but let's not forget that the cause of freedom still has a long way to go in this country as well. The bureaucrats and petty tyrants haunting the halls of power in our own nation's capital are not that different from the brain-dead Stalinists who ran Eastern Europe into the ground for several decades.

The fact that the Soviet Union has produced a Gorbachev while our much-vaunted system can generate no more than a Bush and a Quayle does not bode well for us. At a time when the balance of power is shifting all over the world and most of the underpinnings of American foreign policy have been rendered obsolete, we are saddled with a leadership still mired in the rhetoric and tunnel vision of the 1950s.

The current government's profound lack of imagination will probably lead to the United States' having a greatly diminished role in world politics, which, after half a century of throwing our weight around at will, will come as a relief to most of the globe's inhabitants. It will probably also lead to a reduced standard of living for us, just as Britain entered a steep decline after it was stripped of its empire.

The trend now, and it is a sensible one, is toward unity, not rugged individualism, toward cooperation, not competition. A united Europe, particularly when it incorporates the East bloc countries, will dwarf the United States. While we continue to squander our inheritance playing war games against an enemy that no longer exists, Europeans on both sides of the fast-fading Iron Curtain will be sharing resources, technology, and markets. We can go with them or go it alone, but if we fail to take this opportunity to gracefully end the Cold War and start working for a peaceful future, the tide of history will clearly be going against us.

El Salvador: The Light At The End Of The Tunnel Was An FMLN Train

It's a little-known fact that the combined armies of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong were soundly defeated by United States and South Vietnamese forces during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

But while they may have lost the battle, the Tet Offensive was the turning point in the war. For years the American people had been told that the situation was stabilizing, that the communists were on the run, that peace was just around the corner. In the wake of Tet, it became painfully obvious that the government had been lying.

Public support for the war rapidly withered away from that point on.

Because the United States has never committed combat troops to El Salvador, the public is much less aware of the war there. Most people have a vague awareness that there's some trouble going on, and those who follow the news know that the US has been spending something like half a billion dollars every year to help the government of El Salvador defend itself against the Marxist FMLN guerrillas.

Some are bothered by the fact that the US is supporting a government controlled by a neo-fascist party best known for murdering thousands of its opponents by means of anonymous "death squads" made up of off-duty soldiers and police. The US, on the other hand, argues that while the El Salvador government clearly has some deficiencies, it is trying to reform itself, and besides, it is the best we can hope for.

At any rate, State Department spokesmen have been announcing the past couple of years that the war was nearly over and the guerrillas almost completely crushed. It thus proved a bit embarrassing for them when the moribund FMLN launched a nationwide attack and even took over large parts of San Salvador, the country's capital. It was the Tet Offensive revisited.

"A last desperate attempt," said US spokesmen. "This only proves the FMLN knows it has failed," claimed the El Salvadoran government.

Brave rhetoric or not, it took the El Salvadoran military, equipped with the latest rockets, bombers, and heavy artillery from the United States, over a week to dislodge the rebels from their positions. In the process over a thousand civilians were killed, nearly all by government bombing and strafing of heavily populated areas.

Through all this carnage the United States continued to express its support. The US ambassador and CIA station chief bragged that the guerrillas would be out of there any day now. Even dovish Senators like Dodd and Kennedy condemned the FMLN.

That changed drastically when it was discovered that government death squads had been active again, this time murdering six Catholic priests who had spoken out against the war. Senators Dodd and Kennedy were horrified, demanding that aid to El Salvador be cut off, wanting to know how the United States could be involved with such vicious criminals. Even the State Department acknowledged that some excesses might have been committed.

Yet as obscene as the massacre of the antiwar priests was, it could have not been any more obscene than the hypocrisy of the senators and congressmen who were suddenly shocked to find that the El Salvadoran military was doing exactly what they had been paying them to do for the past ten years.

Are the lives of six priests really worth that much more than the thousands of peasants killed in daily carpet bombings of the countryside? Most victims of the death squads wore no clerical collar, but they were equally undeserving of their fate. Because the United States deems it necessary to crush a left wing rebellion, it has been willing to make alliances with right wing fanatics, pay for wholesale and systematic murder, and turn a tiny, impoverished Central American country into a police state.

Am I alone in thinking that this is a strange way of promoting the cause of democracy? And am I the only one who was sickened to hear George Bush compare our butchery and brutality in Central America to the struggle for freedom in Eastern Europe?

Though it should hardly need to be noted here, the Europeans have one huge advantage over the Central Americans. Their big next-door neighbor is helping them. Not killing them.

Random Rantings...

Older readers may remember P.J. O'Rourke, who rose to prominence as the often extraordinarily funny editor of the National Lampoon. Nowadays he mostly writes, for large sums of money, in establishment organs like Rolling Stone and Esquire..

In recent years I've noticed a change creeping into O'Rourke's humor. His once manic blend of satire, farce, sarcasm, and outrage has acquired an unmistakable mean streak, the sort we've come to associate with the massively unfunny Bob Hope. What O'Rourke attempts to pass off as breezy cynicism reads more like the increasingly bitter self-hate of a writer who put himself up for sale one too many times.

One example of O'Rourke's wit put to the service of the highest bidder: an impassioned defense of the Audi Motor Company, attempting to demolish with breathless sarcasm those fuzzy-minded liberals who think the government has a responsibility to protect consumers from shoddily manufactured goods. In his article, for

which he of course received not a cent from the Audi Company and in fact only wrote because of his lifelong sympathy for underdog corporations that are constantly getting pushed around by citizen bullies, O'Rourke casually remarks at least several times how any moron knows that Audi is one of the finest cars made. Anyone who has ever owned one of the mediocre BMW wannabes can certainly disabuse him of that notion, though a check in the mail would probably do just as well.

Churning out bad ad copy disguised as a magazine feature is small potatoes, though, compared to the puff piece O'Rourke produced for the Bush administration in Rolling Stone, a reprehensible corporate music journal that younger readers will have a hard time believing was once (mistakenly) associated with the counterculture.

The story recounts O'Rourke's adventures at the Bush inauguration festivities, which as any TV viewer could have observed, were an orgy of smug self-congratulation for the rich, well-connected, and shameless. O'Rourke admits as much in his piece; in fact he revels in the fact that he is one of them. He portrays the Bush gang of CIA assassins, drugs and guns runners, and neozaxis as somehow hip because head thug Lee Atwater hired some mostly over-the-hill Negro musicians for one inaugural bash, not bothering to point out that black folks sang and danced for their masters in slave times, too. He waxes rhapsodic over the obscene sight of corpulent Republicans weighed down by their jewelry and their jowls attempting to "boogie down" while bellowing about how they had bought the election and now they were going to cash in for the next eight years.

The worst thing about O'Rourke's slackery is the way it attempts to mold public opinion while pretending to report it. We are assured that across the country there is a quiet contentment with our new leaders, that "everyone" is amazed to see what a statesmanlike leader George Bush has suddenly evolved into, that we have all taken sweet old Barbara and her stupid dogs into our hearts.

O'Rourke might be forgiven such egregiosities on the grounds that he never talks to anyone outside his tiny inner circle of power and drug abusers, but anyone of his intelligence could hardly be unaware that Bush is about as popular as Herbert Hoover (he was trounced by Mikhail Gorbachev in a Gallup poll of rabidly right wing Orange County, California), is in office by default, thanks to the other party neglecting to run a candidate, and that well over half the American people are so disillusioned with the electoral process that they have given up completely on it. But then how much money can you make these days telling the truth? Not enough to keep yourself in good standing with your local coke dealer, that's for sure. Bye, P.J.

Late update: P.J. has continued to sink like a stone in the slough of intellectual despond. In an article in a recent Rolling Stone, O'Rourke goes so far as to announce that he's forswearing his own drug habits to show his wholehearted support for drug czar Big Bill "Behead 'Em" Bennett, whom P.J. finds to be "a nice guy." In the article O'Rourke also accompanies District of Columbia police on a raid where he is horrified to learn that crack houses have dirty carpets, refers to the Nicaraguan contras with the Reagan-Kirkpatrick doublethink term of "democratic resistance" (Democratic?? Who in

the hell ever voted for these guys except CIA bagmen?), and urges all right-thinking Americans to get behind the drug war today lest the sanctity of our suburban lawns be invaded by hulking Negroes with bad grammar.

Obviously my earlier analysis underestimated the situation. No one could have paid O'Rourke to be that stupid. Clear case of drug-induced brain damage here.

Not far behind O'Rourke in the high-stakes toady department: Sonoma County author Paul Erdman, who a decade ago made a few million bucks predicting the imminent collapse of the economy and very possibly society as well.

Now Erdman has recanted his doom and gloom prognostications in favor of rosy-glow optimism. Reaganomics has worked admirably, he assures us, even if it wasn't always in good taste. Inflation has been conquered, recession has been avoided, and we can all look forward to many years of raking in the loot.

"We" of course refers to five or ten percent of the population, the very wealthy who have prospered from trickle-down theories of income redistribution, and has little to do with the overwhelming majority of Americans whose real income has steadily declined for almost twenty years. The hundreds of millions of third worlders who live under slavellike conditions and/or starve to death apparently don't count at all.

Erdman's awareness of the plight of the ordinary citizen came through loud and clear on a radio interview, when he was asked how high the minimum wage needed to be for someone to be able to survive on it. The noted economist, who as it turned out did not even know what the minimum wage currently was, hemmed and hawed a bit before allowing, "Frankly, I find that a very boring subject." Not half as boring, I'm sure, as some lady trying to raise a couple of kids on \$3.35 an hour. With aristocrats like these, it's easy to understand why the guillotine caught on in such a big way in post-revolutionary France.

O'Rourke and Erdman are of course mere pikers in the pathological-liar-for-hire department compared to Paul "Good Morning America, It's Time For News" Harvey, who has been polluting the airwaves with his folksy brand of hatemongering since my grandfather's day.

Harvey will lend his patented sincerity to any product or cause capable of meeting his fee, but shows a decided preference for true loony-tunes material like the Institute to Build More Nuclear Power Plants or Amalgamated Agrichem & Carcinogenics Inc. Despite his rabidly right wing politics and his open contempt for anyone who is not white and Republican, he has an audience that cuts across age, class, and party lines, and which, I must admit, sometimes includes me.

Why? Well, he does have a style and pizzazz that more liberal commentators would do well to emulate — politically correct doesn't have to equal boring — and there is a certain morbid fascination in seeing what new depths of preposterousness he'll plumb. The other night I was listening to his evening show, "The Rest Of The Story," which features an anecdote consisting of even more sheer hokum than his "news"cast, winding up with a surprise punch line.

This particular one was about a health spa in the Rocky Mountains where a regimen of diet and exercise was imposed on its overweight clients. After a lengthy description of the luxurious facilities and surroundings, Harvey added, "And all this, room and board included, costs only \$450 a month." The punch line of course was that this was a fat farm for dogs.

Ha ha. Pretty cute, huh? End of broadcast. Yeah, I suppose it would kind of spoil the mood to make any kind of comment about dogs going to diet centers while people eat out of garbage cans, but somehow it couldn't escape my notice that the \$450 a month it costs for Fido to get whipped into shape is close to what Joe Blow who works for the federal minimum wage of \$3.35 an hour is supposed to get by on (after taxes, of course, and why someone making \$3.35 an hour should have to pay any taxes is another thing that is quite thoroughly beyond me).

Speaking of taxes, I'll bet you're all excited about President Bush trying to get the capital gains tax slashed? Boy, once all those wealthy capitalists are able to unload their stocks and real estate without having to fork over so much of their hard-earned profit to greedy old Uncle Sam, the economy is going to take off like a rocket. There'll be new jobs galore, and I imagine famous philanthropists like Donald Trump will share their good fortune by greatly increasing their already substantial contributions to charity.

Of course nothing worthwhile comes without sacrifice, and so it may be necessary for some of us less wordly people who don't traffic in capital gains and in fact may not even be exactly clear what they are to maybe pay a little bit more in taxes ourselves. But since our share of the tax burden is so measly anyway, it shouldn't bother us too much to have our sales tax and our gasoline tax and our Social Security tax increased. Sure, we might have to cut back a little on our buying, but whoever said happiness came from material things? And if our getting by on a little less can put more money in the hands of those sharp bankers and investors who know how to put it to good use, won't we all be better off in the long run?

Yes, I know what you're saying, if they cut my taxes instead of Donald Trump's, then maybe I could buy some new clothes or maybe some furniture or some books for my kids, and wouldn't that create more jobs than Frank Lorenzo taking over Eastern Airlines and firing half the employees? All I can tell you is that you just don't understand high finance, and you should just leave such complicated things to our leaders who know best. After all, isn't the economy booming? Aren't more Americans working than ever before? Let's just be happy with what we've got, and thank President Bush for looking out for the best interests of all of us.

Stroh's Gobbled Up By Neo-Fascist Chemical Company

The Sad Demise Of One Of America's Last Decent Beers

The city of Detroit doesn't have much going for it anymore; even its sports teams are lousy, except for the Pistons, and they play out in the suburbs.

But one thing Detroiters used to be able to hold their heads high about was Stroh's Beer.

It wasn't exactly top-of-the-line suds, and I doubt many German, Canadian, or even Mexican brewmasters would have been much impressed by it, but for American beer it wasn't bad.

America is of course renowned for producing some of the worst beer on earth, if the foul-tasting carcinogenic chemistry lab outtakes generated by the likes of Anheuser-Busch and Miller could be dignified with the name "beer."

I don't know what the chemical contents of Stroh's were; American brewers have managed through the judicious application of political influence (read: big bucks) to be spared having to reveal just what rank substances go into their intoxicants. But Stroh's did have something almost all other American beers lack: taste.

It wasn't the greatest taste in the world; but it had its own unique character. The advertisers claimed it was the special "fire-brewing" process; locals supposed it had more to do with the distinctive essence of Detroit River water, a view I myself subscribe to, since Vernor's Ginger Ale and even Detroit-brewed Coca-Cola seemed to possess the same quirky bite.

Once I moved to California and got caught up in our snobbish penchant for imported beers (or maybe it's just our snobbish penchant for not wanting to poison ourselves; did you know that every major American beermaker would be in prison if he or she tried to practice their chemical craft in Germany? Really; it's against the law to put chemicals in beer there.), I more or less forgot about Stroh's until I paid a visit back east and found my old friends still drinking the stuff.

I had to admit it was pretty decent brew, and even lugged a couple sixpacks back to Frisco with me, since at the time Stroh's barely made it west of Chicago. For a while I'd ask anybody coming out for a visit to bring me some more Stroh's.

Then I heard what seemed at the time to be great news. Stroh's had bought out the country's third biggest brewer and was going national. I'd be able to get my old home town beer even in Laytonville.

Unfortunately I was about to learn an unpleasant lesson about the 80s world of corporate takeovers and mergers. Instead of extending Stroh's quality across the land, the strategy was to turn Stroh's into the same lousy beer that all the other companies were pushing.

What I thought was the last straw came when, while nursing a particularly bland and tasteless Stroh's, I idly read the list of breweries on the can and noticed that Detroit was not among them. Relatives back east confirmed the bitter truth; the new improved Stroh's had closed down its century-old Detroit brewing facility.

No more Detroit River water? Well, it wasn't really Stroh's then, was it?

But just when things couldn't have gotten any bleaker for Stroh's-lovers, they did. The axe fell, in fact, while I was visiting my parents in Detroit, just a couple days after my dad and I had stopped in at the Stroh's headquarters downtown for free beer (yes, that's my kind of beer company).

What had once been America's best brewer had just been bought up by its worst. Stroh's was now the property of Adolph Coors, the neo-nazi manufacturer of the most rancid excuse for beer ever to stink up a barroom.

The taste of Coor's alone should be sufficient grounds for everybody involved in its manufacture to be shot down like dogs, but Coor's esthetic crimes pale into insignificance alongside its political and moral ones.

The Coor's family has for years funneled a large share of its profits into some of the most idiotic right-wing, racist, and ecologically destructive causes a warped American hyperpatriot could come up with.

Money for contra guns and drugs? Ask Mr. Coors. Want to sue the government for permission to strip mine a wildlife refuge? Talk to the Pacific Legal Foundation, an anti-environment task force that is practically a subsidiary of Coor's beer. Wonder who buys positions of influence for psychopaths like James Watt? Follow the plutonium-laced course of Rocky Mountain spring water right up to little old Golden, Colorado.

The trouble with most American beers is that the chemicals they contain appear to permanently impair the mental facilities of the people who drink them. This is particularly true of Budweiser and Coor's, for example, both of which have been proven to induce stupidity in laboratory rats.

So while normally I'd have faith in the ability of American consumers to realize that they're being poisoned, I'm afraid that vast numbers of drinkers who take their instructions from TV commercials may have already suffered irrevocable damage to both their reason and taste.

But if you haven't yet fallen victim to this insidious plot, if you haven't succumbed to the syrupy imprecations of Phil Collins or Stevie Winwood to drown your faculties in the swill of Michelob (Budweiser by any other name) and the friendly gang down at the Silver Bullet still look like a bunch of redneck zombies who should have silver stakes driven through their hearts, there may be hope for you.

Boycott all American beers, especially Stroh's/Coor's and Budweiser. If you can't afford imports, brew your own, but as long as our government allows beermakers to pawn off beer-flavored chemicals on us in lieu of the real thing, you'd be nuts to let that crap past your lips.

And if you've already been downing American schlock-beers for ten or twenty years? Well, really, I doubt you would have been able to read this far. In fact you're probably plopped in front of the TV right now watching *Wide World Of Golf* and fantasizing about the blond bimbo who was peddling tires on the last commercial.



I missed the quake by only a few hours, and I was back in the Bay Area two days after it happened. Ruins were few and far between in the East Bay — besides the collapsed Cypress structure and the caved-in section of the Bay Bridge that I never get to see, I didn't notice much more than a few collapsed chimneys in Berkeley.

Oh, but you should see San Francisco, everyone said, it's much worse over there.

I didn't make it into the city until about a week after the quake. I drove downtown by way of the Marina and aside from a couple collapsed garages, didn't notice anything more drastic than the torn up streets where they were fixing the gas mains. There were streets that were blocked off, so I imagined that's where all the real ruins were.

Mordam Records, in the south of Market area, was my destination, and there I found that one corner of building had been roped off by the city as unsafe, and there were big cracks in the cement floor, some of them several inches wide. The brick building across the street had lost part of its facing and was tilting at an unsettling angle, as were most of the buildings in the neighborhood. To be fair, many of them appear to have been that way since the '06 quake.

All in all, though, I concluded that the "historic" earthquake had failed to live up to its media notices. I mentioned this to Tommy Strange in the office at Mordam. "Yeah," he nodded. "Of course I lost my house."

Luckily Tommy is such an easy going guy that he was able to overlook what might have been a new low for my legendary foot-in-mouth-itis. Anyway, he's since found a bigger and better house in the same neighborhood, lacking only a backyard, so all's well...

One benefit of the disaster was the torpedoing of the China Bay baseball stadium, which was the tip of an iceberg of schemes, scams, and frauds in that grand old Frisco tradition possibly best represented by the complete disintegration of City Hall during the 1906 quake due to its having been constructed mostly of sand. Seems these guys were friends with the mayor and...

The "downtown" stadium had nothing to do with baseball; it was a Trojan Horse being used by city politicians and development interests get approval for the massive "city within a city" known as Mission Bay.

Mission Bay is being presented to the public by City Hall and

the corporate media as a *fait accompli*, even though plans for it still haven't been completed, let alone approved. Nonetheless, the taxpayers are being asked, or rather told, to finance the transportation and utilities infrastructure that will make Mission Bay not only possible, but inevitable.

The bulk of the public transit improvements to be paid for out of the new half cent sales tax, for example, will be for the benefit of Mission Bay, even though it's possible the project will never be built. In the arguments for the China Basin stadium, proponents regularly cited how well the stadium would be served by public transit "since we're building all these new lines to Mission Bay anyway."

The Seventh and Townsend stadium that was trounced by the voters two years ago involved a direct quid-pro-quo with Southern Pacific, owner of the Mission Bay land. The city got the land for the stadium; SP got permission to build its new city. The China Basin deal, while a little murkier in the specifics, assumed as a foregone conclusion that Mission Bay would be built. The intention was obviously to get the city to spring for all the transit, road, and utility improvements, and then say to the voters, "Well, we've already built that whole infrastructure; it'd be a shame not to use it."

And why shouldn't Mission Bay be built? Doesn't the city need to grow, to produce new housing and jobs? What about all the homeless? How are they ever supposed to find a place to live if the city won't let any new houses be built?

Yeah, you'll hear plenty of talk like that, and about 99% of it comes from developers and speculators or their hired hands in the media. They don't have to live anywhere near the mess they're making of San Francisco.

The city right now has no room to grow. It is choking on its own excess, driving ordinary people from their homes to make room for parasitic legions of overprivileged yuppie drones. More offices and luxury condos will only compound the problem. San Francisco today produces very little of real value; attracting several thousand more insurance agents, marketing specialists, and high-powered consultants will only create a further drain on our resources and accelerate the departure of those old-fashioned individuals who know how to make, build, or fix things that people can actually use.

There could be room for some growth in the city, quite a bit of it in fact, if it were approached in an intelligent manner. Right now at least a third, possibly as much as half of San Francisco is given over

to the automobile. Replace half the streets with community gardens and the other half with small, economical houses. Yes, of course leave some room for the streetcar and cable car tracks, and while we're at it, why not open up some of the rivers that flow under many of the streets of San Francisco?

It will probably take a greater disaster than the earthquake of '89 to produce the kind of changes that the city needs, and that's too bad. With respect to the environment and the quality of life enjoyed by its ordinary citizens, San Francisco has been near disaster for some time, and the earthquake merely served to make that more obvious.

The fact that voters were wise to the stadium hype, does, however, increase hopes that Mission Bay itself will now never be built, which in turn increases the chances that the city will be allowed to grow in a healthy and organic way rather than continue to be turned into an asphalt rat's nest indistinguishable from the faceless corporate headquarters that nearly every American city has now become.

Chances are still slim, though, with much of the half cent "transit" tax being targeted toward building and improving highways when San Francisco needs more cars about as much as it needs another earthquake. It was heartening to see how, following the quake, many people were finally calling for a complete restructuring of the Bay Area's transportation system.

Let's not just go back to business as usual when the Bay Bridge re-opens, they said; let's take this opportunity to start phasing out the private auto and start bringing the bulk of our commuters in on buses and trains and ferries. It would appear to make eminent good sense, and the cleaner air and reduced noise levels would be a godsend to San Francisco, but at least for now the city still looks committed to subsidizing the automobile and oil industries at the cost of everyone else's quality of life.

In the meantime, I guess we can just strap on our gas masks and wait for the oil to run out or the real "big one" to arrive. People always have been slow learners, generally refusing to grasp a lesson until the only alternative is total annihilation.

Moving right along...

On the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Chico's Channel 12 weatherman Anthony Watt followed up a newsreel shot of the mushroom cloud billowing over the city with "Well, it was hot in the valley today, but not that hot..." sending the rest of the news team into minor hysterics. SP-DA | www.eastbaypunkda.com

AROUND THE EMERALD TRIANGLE

!!!SATANIC ALERT!!!

The Evil One Comes To Ukiah (And Blends Right Into The Population)

Always knew there was something funny about Ukiah, didn't you? Theories have ranged from chemicals in the drinking water to too much inbreeding to the close proximity of the old State Hospital at Talmage. Another suggestion was that an experiment being conducted by space aliens had gotten out of hand.

But thanks to a candidate in the recent Ukiah School Board elections whose name I've forgotten (I hope it's safe to assume she wasn't elected), we now know the truth behind the sullen evil powers lurking everywhere in that wretched little city that appears to have sprung full-blown from Louisiana-Pacific's toxic leach lines.

It's SATAN. Yes, the horned and cloven-footed one has been exceedingly active in the Ukiah Valley of late, possibly because of the uncanny resemblance it bears to his usual place of residence. So successful has his latest campaign been that he now numbers 150 Ukiah High School students among his disciples, or so we are told.

This alarming news could have panicked the entire population, especially considering Satanists' well-known (as featured on both Geraldo and Oprah, so don't tell me it's not true) penchant for human sacrifices and orgies of rape and violence against innocent little children and household pets, all conducted to the beat of horribly loud heavy metal music.

Fortunately, Ukiah police chief Fred Keplinger announced that he had the situation firmly in hand, and that in fact the school board candidate was overstating the problem. The 150 Satan worshippers, he declared, were not all enrolled at Ukiah High School; many of them were normal, everyday members of the community. They could be anyone, he suggested, your next door neighbor, the cop on the beat, your county supervisor.

When asked how he could ensure the safety of the citizenry, Keplinger just smiled and urged the public to be calm. "I've heard a sprig of garlic worn around the neck can be helpful," he told reporters, "or is that for vampires?"

Before departing the chief stated that he was preparing to make an in-depth study of contraband Ozzie Osbourne records in search of clues. When asked the significance of the inverted pentagram necklace he was wearing, he smiled cryptically and quickly left the room.

And He's Got Himself A Job At The Radio Station Too...

In Lookout #33's Media Guide, I reported that KUKI's bargain-basement newscasters hadn't yet learned how to pronounce the names of many local towns. That information may have been inaccurate; further listenings indicate that they have a similar difficulty with much of the English language.

But KUKI, and its uniquely talented noontime newscaster Freddie Michaels have found a partial solution to the problem by discontinuing the local news. Oh, they still call it the local news, but other than a couple of car crashes, they almost never cover anything in Mendocino County (except of course the latest doings of the Potter Valley girls junior varsity lacrosse team). Instead they furnish us with a bizarre melange of unrelated items apparently gleaned from the All-Albania wire service and only partially translated.

It's kind of like getting served stew in an army mess hall; you're never quite sure what they'll be feeding you. One day earlier this month we were treated to a solid ten minutes of the latest developments from Baja California and San Diego County. Another day almost all of the "local" news seemed to be happening in Georgia and Florida. Is it possible that KUKI shops around and only buys its news on sale, like the wire services say, hey, we're having a clearance sale on Southeastern United States items this week?

KUKI did manage to get in a brief but thorough garbling of the Lorax controversy up in Laytonville, after, of course, the story had already been given full play on the San Francisco stations and the national networks.

"Laytonville parents won a temporary victory when the school board voted to substitute other reading material for the controversial Dr. Seuss book," KUKI told us, when in fact the school board had done precisely the opposite. Simple misinformation we can forgive - we almost expect it from our local media - but far worse was the implication that Laytonville parents were a howling mob of ignoramus book banners, when in fact at least 80% of the parents at the school board meeting were there to protest Bill Bailey's pro-stupidity campaign.

Citizens Finally Doing Something About Garbage; Supes Still Fiddling

With county landfills rapidly overflowing and the earth's resources continuing to disappear into an ever-increasing mountain of junk, local government continues to drag its feet on even one of the mildest possible solutions to the problem: recycling.

The main reason we haven't already had mandatory recycling for years is that waste is profitable for some, at least in the short run. You will also hear some people claim that the government has no right to tell them what to do with their garbage, but this knee-jerk (with the emphasis on *jerk*) logic somehow overlooks the fact that the resources being plundered to create that garbage belong by right to all of us.

In the absence of governmental responsibility on the issue, individual citizens have begun to take it on themselves. I'm proud to report that Laytonville now has its own recycling center, located behind Gary's Village Cafe, just north of town. I believe the hours are 9-4 on Wednesdays through Saturdays.

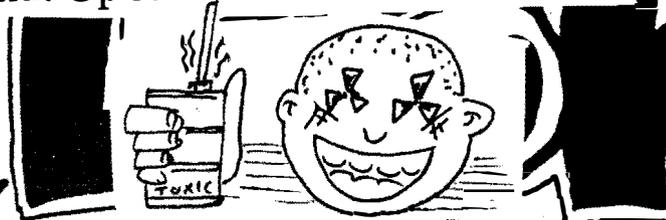
Community efforts like this are necessary and laudable, but a more longterm solution may come from a ballot initiative now being circulated which would require recycling throughout the county. Another obvious thing individuals can do on their own: don't buy so much junk in the first place.

Look Out, Here Come The Golf Geeks

Hopland, already infested with the lowest common denominator of tourists, looks to be sinking to new depths with the Fetzer Corporation's plans to convert 310 acres of agricultural land into a golf course.

The esthetic impact of pot-bellied middle aged men in plaid polyester pants driving those stupid little cars around what could have been a perfectly nice field is distressing enough, but my real objection to golf courses is that they are enormous wasters of both water and land. Especially water; the amount needed to keep all that grass green through a dry California summer could produce enough food to feed several cities.

L-P To Mendocino, Sonoma: Shut Up And Drink Your Chemicals



Nobody knows how long Louisiana-Pacific has been dumping toxic waste into Hensley Creek near Ukiah, but they were first caught at it in 1981 and have been at it ever since. The creek flows directly into the Russian River, source of drinking water for upwards of 300,000 people in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties.

You would think that putting compounds like arsenic and chromium into people's drinking water would attract the attention of the authorities. And yes, it's true; the North Coast Water Quality Control Board did look into Louisiana-Pacific's activities, and eventually ordered them to stop it.

That was nine years ago. Every few months afterward, the Water Quality Control Board would remind Louisiana-Pacific to knock it off, and L-P would ignore them.

Finally this year, the Board decided to get tough. They announced that beginning in January, L-P would be fined \$5000 for each day the pollution continued. L-P ignored them again.

You'd think the Board would be pretty pœved by now, right? So what did they do? Why, they gave L-P another three months to stop polluting before the fine would be imposed. Then another month, and another.

Finally, it was August, and L-P was now up to something like \$300,000 in fines. And finally the Board said this time they were serious, and this time L-P really was going to have to pay up. L-P still ignored them.

So what did they do? Seize L-P's assets? Shut down the plant? Arrest Harry Merlo?

Not exactly. Afraid that they might have hurt L-P's feelings, the Board voted to reduce the fine to \$10,000, chump change in L-P's world, and give them another three months.

When those three months had passed and L-P was still poisoning the Russian River, you'd imagine that the Water Board would be so mad that they'd threaten to hold their breath until they turned blue or some equally drastic action, but no such thing happened; they just gave L-P another month.

Lo and behold, on November 1, L-P finally announced that a drain and treatment system was in place that would stop the pollution. And what did Frank Reichmuth, the Water Board's engineer have to say? *"They [L-P] did a remarkable job for the short time they had. Now we just have to wait and see how well it performs."*

Eight years of dumping carcinogens into the drinking water is a short time? And that's only the time since L-P was first caught at it. Why do I somehow suspect that the prime interest of the North Coast Water Quality Control Board is the preservation of the quality of Louisiana-Pacific's profits?

Let's contrast L-P's treatment with what would happen to you or me if, say, we were supplying crack cocaine to the county's elementary school children. Suppose we were caught at it in 1981. Do you think we could successfully go before the judge and say, listen, your honor, I'd like to stop giving this terrible stuff to those innocent children, but it's going to take me a while to find some other way of making a living, and besides, my crack business has created a lot of jobs and it would really hurt the local economy if you made me stop it right now. So how about letting me slide for a few years?

An argument like that would of course get you nothing but a quick trip to the state pen, possibly for the rest of your natural life, but when a corporate slimeball like Harry Merlo spends eight years filling your drinking water with chemicals that will give you and your children cancer, what does he get? Good citizen awards and loads of lucrative tax breaks, and more money than almost any of us will ever see in our lifetimes.

Next time you see Marilyn Butcher and her fellow swine who continue to run this county for the benefit of Mr. Merlo and others like him, you might ask her how she sleeps at night, but she'll probably just belch in your face and tell you, "Very well, thank you."

Our Trees? They Went Thataway...

At any rate, L-P managed to take our minds off their crimes against the Russian River (they must have some real whizzes in the public relations division) with their latest zinger: a plan to shift milling operations to Mexico, where they can get away with paying workers a fraction of the already piddling wages they pay locally, and be free to dump all the toxic wastes they want (the Mexican state of Baja California is under the control of a pro-business party that makes Republicans look almost legit).

Thus continues the conversion of the North Coast into a full-fledged third world economy, something this space has been predicting for years. With the military on its way to eliminating marijuana as a viable cash crop, and the lumber mills steadily closing down as our logs and the jobs they represent disappear overseas, employment opportunities diminish and multinationals like L-P, G-P, and Maxxam can expect an abundance of bodies willing to hack down the remaining forests for peasant wages. By the turn of the century the trees will be gone and local residents will be reduced to cooking and cleaning for wealthy urban tourists who flock to our seaside resorts. If you've ever visited a Mexican town like Puerto Vallarta or Acapulco, you get the picture. "See the colorful hippies who once inhabited this area. Purchase their quaint and primitive handicrafts, and perhaps with a little encouragement and a small tip, they may burst into a native folk song or dance for your entertainment."

The only positive side to L-P's escalating war on the people and resources of the North Coast is that at long last people are beginning to talk seriously about taking the necessary steps to get them the hell out of here. Proposals are being circulated to use the county's power of eminent domain to seize L-P's land holdings and then operate them in a more responsible manner. This will never happen while the current Board of Supervisors remains in power, since two of its members, Marilyn Butcher and Nelson Redding, are bought and paid for by L-P, but with Eddie, DeVall, and Henry showing at least a few signs of independence, there may still be some hope.

While waiting for our government to take action, though (hope you're not holding your breath), any intelligent citizen should see that there's only one responsible course of action: all out war on Louisiana-Pacific. No piece of L-P equipment or property should be safe anywhere in the north state.

Laytonville Computer Disservices

Our economy hereabouts being in the state it is, I'm inclined to support local businesses and encourage others to do the same. Hell, I even used to shop at Bill Bailey's before he went completely over the edge.

So when Randy Hust opened a computer laser printing and fax service upstairs from Boomer's, I was pleased. In my work I need both services a lot, and till now I'd been taking my computer printing stuff to either Ukiah or San Francisco. I figured it would be a lot more more convenient to do it right here in Laytonville, and at the same time help out a useful, non-polluting enterprise, the kind of thing we need more of around here.

I expected Randy's place would be charging a bit more than I was used to paying in the city; people get that way when they have monopolies (speaking of which, has anyone ever figured out why gasoline costs 15¢ a gallon more here than it does over the hill in Willits?) But I'm still reeling from the day I mistakenly wandered in there to print out and fax a last minute story into the Anderson Valley Advertiser. Three pages: \$13.50. Federal Express would have been cheaper than that. \$2.50 to laser print one page; in the city a typical price is 35¢. And we're talking about a town where rents and wages are not even half what they are in the city. Basically we're talking about plain old-fashioned greed.

One of these days I'll be getting my own laser printer and fax machine, and if I could stomach the thought of spending several hours a day in downtown Laytonville, I'd open my own shop and put his ass out of business. And before you say, well that's the reason he charges so much, because he is willing to put up with downtown Laytonville, I should point out that he wasn't even there when I came in; he had an employee doing the dirty work.

MONEY: THE SCAM WHAT AM

Most of my fellow students in Econ 101 were not there because of an overpowering desire to familiarize themselves with the workings of free market dynamics and the dialectic of supply and demand.

They had enrolled in the class either because it was required or because all the other classes were filled. The first day of school they sat there wearing the glum looks of a gang of convicts waiting for the bus to Sing Sing.

When the instructor came bouncing into the room, there was an audible sigh of resignation. But the guy got our attention immediately. He was smiling, and moving around with the kind of energy that indicated he was actually glad to be there. Some of us had managed to pass through 12 or more years of education without encountering such a spectacle.

"I'm a Marxist," he announced. "A dual Marxist, actually. I draw on the theories of both Karl and Groucho."

We breathed a little easier. We didn't know too much about this Karl Marx guy, except that he had something to do with the Russians, but we were all familiar with Groucho.

"You people are all terrified of having to learn economics," he went on. "Don't be. You'll probably all get A's."

With that improbable promise, he had us in the palm of his hand.

"I can explain everything you need to know about economics before this hour is finished. If there were any justice in the world, I'd do that, hand you your A's, and tell you to go out and have fun for the rest of the semester.

"Unfortunately, the people who run the college won't let me do that. They insist that we all meet here three times a week for the next four months while I dole out bits of knowledge to you on the installment plan. If we don't go along with them, I don't get paid and you don't graduate into your prestigious positions in the wonderful world of business and government. This in itself should provide you with a valuable lesson in the kind of economics that really matters, namely who gets to do what to whom.

"So the best I can offer you is to try and be as entertaining as possible, which is good for you because you won't be bored, and good for me, because it will help me pursue my long-term ambition to quit teaching and become a stand-up comedian. So we have approximately 45 minutes of class left today; let's see if we can get this economics stuff out of the way and move on to some more interesting stuff."

And he was off, chalk dust flying, words ricocheting around the room faster than we could even think of writing them down ("Don't be a tier," he advised "if you don't remember it, it probably wasn't that important.") It was as if knowledge were being conveyed to us by osmosis.

When I walked out of that classroom, I remembered few of the specific things he'd said, but I felt for the first time that I had a grasp on what economics was and how it worked. In the following weeks he managed to work nearly every aspect of economics into his developing standup routine. It was one of the best-attended classes I'd ever been in, almost everyone got an A, and naturally the teacher got fired at the end of the year.

I lost track of him after that, and don't know if he ever realized his dream of becoming a comedian. But in honor of his memory, and because I can't get fired for it, I thought I'd carry on his work by giving you a brief explanation of what economics is, how it works, and why the authorities will do everything they can to keep you from understanding it. (Sorry, I can't promise to be as funny as he was.)

Economics is really nothing more than the system we use to divide up the wealth. What is wealth? It's anything that is useful, either in the sense of sustaining life, or making it more comfortable. Where does it come from? That's a vital question,

Capitalism and communism both suppose that wealth is produced by human effort, differing only on which sector of society makes the greatest contribution and should in turn receive the greatest reward. But this is only partly true. The most

important component of our planetary wealth is provided by the planet itself, in the form of air, water, soil, seeds, forests, minerals, all the raw materials upon which industrial and post-industrial society is founded.

Given the absence of banks, stock exchanges, real estate offices, armies, and governments during primeval times, we can assume that at some point in human history there was a reasonably equitable distribution of the earth's resources. An individual took as much as he or she could eat or carry. How, in the intervening millennia, did we arrive at a point where one man "owns" hundreds of thousands, even millions of acres of food-producing land while another starves in the street for want of a bowl of rice?

It's very simple, you say. The first man had enough money to buy more land than he could ever use; the second man did not have enough money for a bowl of rice. So the real problem here is money, or the lack of it.

Not quite. Money originated as a convenience; when you go shopping it's simpler to carry around coins or pieces of paper than herds of livestock or wagons full of produce and precious metals. But we have become so used to money that we now think of it as having value itself, when in fact it always was and always will be only a symbol of wealth. Real wealth remains the same: that which we can eat or wear or use. As long as people will take our money in exchange for those things, money has value.

Because money in itself has no real value, it is quite possible for it to suddenly become worthless, as citizens of many countries can sadly attest. Such a thing has not happened here in the United States since the days immediately following the Revolutionary War, though, so it's difficult for most Americans to understand how that could happen.

It's really quite simple. Take food, for example. Here is something that has real value, unless, of course, you're not hungry and you have no way of storing it so that it won't spoil. In that case, food, no matter how vital it is for sustaining life, is of no use to you, and therefore has no value.

Oh, but what if the family next door has no food? Then your food is of great value to them, and you could conceivably get them to give you anything or do anything for you in exchange for that food.

It occurs to you that this is a good deal. Pretty soon you've got everything that family owns, and they're practically your slaves. Then you get the idea that if you plant more food, you'll be able to get everyone else in the village to give you all their possessions and labor as well.

Of course that would only work if you're the only one who has food. So you start a sort of government, and the first law you pass is that only the government is allowed to grow food. If you're able to enforce that law, soon everyone is working for you, growing food for you, which you in turn use to pay them. Now substitute "money" for "food" and you're on your way to getting a good grasp of how most economic systems work.

Obviously there are some moral difficulties with such a setup, but technically it would seem to be a thing of beauty. What could go wrong? Well, let's say you're the head honcho of this village, have total control of the food (money) supply, and everyone in town works for you. Things might run smoothly if you leave well enough alone, but as we know, that runs counter to human nature.

Sooner or later, you're liable to take a look over the hill into the next town and see all these people who aren't working for you, who don't even care about you, and who might even be living better than you. You decide it's time to broaden your

... AND THE ... OF ... MOSTLY BECAUSE ITS JUST ...

horizons, so you call all your people together and tell them that you (meaning they) are going to march over the hill and take over that town and then they (meaning you) are going to be twice as rich as they are now.

You might be able to persuade them simply by saying that those terrible people in the next town said bad things about their mothers, or spit on their flag, or face the wrong direction when they pray, but often that isn't enough to convince people to risk their lives. Suppose your people tell you thanks, but no thanks, we'll just stay here and work in the same old cornfields from dawn to dusk and get our bowl of corn at the end of day and be thankful we've got that much.

You find this frustrating, so you say listen, go invade that town and I'll raise your pay to two bowls of corn every day. That convinces a bunch of them to join up. Only now the ones who've joined your army have twice as much corn as everyone else, and while they're waiting for the war to start, they go around trading their extra corn for new clothes or brass doorknobs or an extra set of stirrups for their donkeys. Some of the people take a second job producing things to trade for the extra corn. The economy is booming.

Then comes the fateful day that the war begins. Your army marches over the hill and most of them are immediately killed by the enemy, who have rocks and clubs twice as big as yours. What's worse, the enemy is so irritated by this that they threaten to come marching over and annihilate your village.

You realize you're in trouble, so you call everyone together and tell them that they've got to work twice as hard as before in order to gather bigger rocks and build bigger clubs. They're not too excited about this, so you raise their pay to three bowls of corn a day. The economy booms some more. But not enough, so you raise the pay to four bowls of corn, then five. Pretty soon you've used up all the corn you had stored for a rainy day, and you have to go to your rich brother and borrow some of his corn.

But despite all this, you notice that the people in your village don't seem to be working as hard as they should. Some of them don't even bother coming to work at all, and when you go to them and ask what the problem is, do they need another pay raise, they just groan and tell you, "We've got corn coming out our ears. We make it into popcorn, tortillas, fritters, and meal. We stew it, bake it, fry it, and scrub the bathtub with it. We can't even trade it for anything anymore, because everybody in town has more corn than they know what to do with. So go away and don't bother us, and besides, Mr. Enemy over in the next town told us that we can work for him and he'll pay us in pizza and beer, so see you later."

So here we have an economic crisis remarkably similar to the ones modern countries get themselves into all the time. We also have a good example of a basic economic phenomenon: *inflation*.

Inflation is what happens when there is more money available than can be productively used. It's also a device by which governments or corporations can induce people to work for less than their labor is worth. Most Americans get a raise every year or two, so it seems like they're getting ahead. It might appear a little strange to them that no matter how many pay raises they get, they still can't afford everything they need, but they figure that just means they need to work harder.

But while the number on their pay check is going up, the value of the money it represents is going down. This is because of another essential economic principle: *supply and demand*. Strange as it may seem, the supply of money is bigger than the demand for it, so the value of it goes down.

This is where the story might be a little difficult for people to follow. There's more money around than we need? Where is it then? The supply certainly isn't greater than my demand.

But the trap they've fallen into is the one we talked about way back at the beginning. They've forgotten that the money itself has no real value; it's only a symbol of real value. What the government has been doing in order to buy all the weapons and social programs it wants and to be able to keep giving people

pay raises, is creating more dollars than there are goods and services to buy with them.

The government can create money in two ways. One is pretty obvious: it can just call up the guys over at the printing plant and say, hey, run us off a few billion in big bills, would you please? But the trouble with that method is that it's *too* obvious. Too many fresh \$100 bills come rolling into town at one time, and people are going to start taking them for granted, start raising prices, asking for higher pay.

The sneakier way, the one the government uses when it wants to come up with really big sums of new money, is borrowing. Now when you or I borrow money, we become poorer, but it's quite a different matter when the government borrows money. Say for instance, President Bush calls up the Bank of America and tells them he needs a hundred billion dollars to pay for a new shipment of H-bombs and nerve gas.

The bank, happy to oblige, doesn't send a few trucks full of money over to the White House. It just marks in its computer that the government now has \$100 billion in its account. Presto: \$100 billion created out of thin air. Oh, you say, but not really, because the government has to pay it back. But you'd be wrong. You or I would have to pay it back, but the government doesn't. Why? Well, just imagine you're a bank and the government owes you a hundred billion bucks. What are you going to do about it? Foreclose?

More likely you'd do just what the banks do. Next year President Bush calls up the Bank of America and says, well, we're a little short this year because the price of H-bombs and nerve gas went up, and you know, Star Wars and all that, so how about letting us slide on that hundred billion? In fact, how about slipping us another hundred billion to get us over the hump? And the next year and the next year, same story. It's been like that ever since before World War II.

Every so often the President will get on TV and tell the American people, hey, we're in big trouble, we owe all this money, so we're going to have to cut back on your Social Security and close down a bunch of schools and I guess we'll have to raise your taxes, you understand, don't you, it's just that darn old deficit. And the people go along, more or less, not that they have much choice; besides, they don't want the Russkies to get bigger rocks and clubs than we have.

But you know the really funny thing about all this money the government owes? Guess who it owes most of it to? No, not to all the little old ladies who bought US Savings bonds. Not even to those dastardly Japanese who've been using worthless US dollars to buy up practically everything of value in this country. Guess again! The United States government owes most of its money to itself!

Oh, they keep it less than obvious; on paper it appears that the government owes money to all these banks and other financial institutions. What we tend to forget is that banks are essentially part of the government. It's like McDonalds, with all the different banks having individual franchises, only they crank out dollars instead of hamburgers.

American dollars may look and feel the same as they always have, just as McDonald's hamburgers bear a passing resemblance to food, but the nutritional content is rapidly approaching nil. That's the main reason that Asians and Europeans have been able to buy up so much of the United States. It's not that the Japanese and the Germans have suddenly gotten rich while we here in America are having to work harder and harder just to survive.

What's really going on here is the law of supply and demand again. Because the United States keeps producing more dollars, they become worth less and less on the international market. To a guy over in Europe, dollars are nothing special the way they are to us. They're just a product, like corn chips or cheese puffs. The only time he cares about dollars is when he wants to buy something in the United States, a car factory or a virgin redwood forest, for example.

Mr. and Mrs. people. else that business built up in their



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So he comes to the money store, aka the foreign exchange market, to buy some US dollars. Right now dollars are cheap; therefore so are the things we have to sell. By the same token the price of Japanese cars or stereos keeps going up for us, because to them our dollars are funny money, just a step or two up from Mexican pesos.

At the moment the United States government owes about three trillion dollars, which is an essentially meaningless number, since no person or government in the history of the world has ever had anywhere near that much money. And it's even more meaningless since, as I noted, the government owes most of that money to itself.

The only thing that three trillion dollar figure is useful for is to help us understand just how out of sync our monetary system is with reality. It indicates that there are about three trillion more dollars floating around than there is real wealth to back them up.

How could that be? Remember, the three trillion bucks is money we've already spent. So how could we turn loose that much cash and have nothing to show for it?

It's easy; it's just as if you took your whole paycheck and squandered it on drugs and booze and gambling, and then borrowed against your paychecks for the next twenty years and did the same. You'd be massively in debt and have nothing to show for it. The only difference between you and the government is that you have to pay it back. Regardless of whether it's you or the government who owes it.

The United States has gone from being the richest country in history to the verge of bankruptcy in an amazingly short time. What happened? We fell into the trap that has ruined nearly every empire in the past: massive militarization.

Even proponents of the Cold War and nuclear overkill acknowledge that such programs are staggeringly expensive. But, they argue, constructing bombs and planes and battleships and maintaining standing armies around the world creates jobs and therefore is good for the economy.

They're forgetting, however, that while the military creates dollars, it doesn't create wealth. Yes, the workers at the bomb factory get paychecks, but what they have built has no value and will produce no further wealth (unless it is used, of course, but I don't think that's the sort of economy most of us are seeking).

Contrast that with an enterprise that builds houses. Not only does the house serve a useful purpose, but it becomes a functioning

part of the economy. Even the much-criticized social programs are far healthier for the economy than military spending. A poor person who gets a Social Security or welfare check is going to spend just about every penny of it on the fundamentals of daily life, all of which produce economic opportunities for others.

Much of the money spent on the military, on the other hand, winds up in Swiss bank accounts, stock speculation, and high living. Some of it does trickle down to working people, but it's a highly inefficient way of distributing wealth, and just plain bad economics.

You want further proof: take a look at the two most successful economies in the world today, Japan and West Germany. Both countries provide for the social welfare of their citizens on a scale that should make Americans ashamed of themselves, and yet they are not heavily in debt, their currency is respected everywhere, and a young Japanese or West German has every reason to look forward to a prosperous future.

Where do these countries differ most markedly from the United States? Neither of them has a large standing army, and most important, neither of them has nuclear weapons. Yes, there are other important differences, such as the racial and class divisions which affect the United States far more than they do Japan or Germany, but they are far less important than the way we have chosen to squander our resources over the past forty years.

The Soviet Union is now realizing that it can not afford to maintain a military-based economy, and if the United States does not soon learn the same lesson, we will soon be consigned to the backwaters of history. A rapidly uniting Europe will soon make us look like small potatoes, and Asia is not far behind.

Poverty itself is nothing to be ashamed of; trying to cover it up with bluster and pretense is. Contrary to superficial appearances, the United States is becoming a poor country because we have wasted our wealth so badly. The solution is not to engage in more of the same, but to learn to live within our means, and to invest our labor and our wealth in productive rather than destructive enterprises.

Next Issue: The Stock Market, Corporate Mergers, and Other Popular Consumer Frauds of the 80s

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Send a 25¢ stamp for our fall catalog
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Souvenir Shopping

It was the thirty-first day of what should have been a thirty-day vacation. One crumbling ruin after another, diesel fumes hanging malevolently in the air, a raucous din of car horns, unmuffled motor scooters, and a half million or so people shouting to be heard above it all.

We threaded our way through the alleys and around chaotically parked cars, going nowhere in particular, determined to see all there was to see in three days or less. We were barely speaking at this point, except to argue over directions or to complain about the other's pace or purpose. She wanted to shop for souvenirs; I was already mortified enough that she insisted on carrying a tourist-style camera and snapping everything in sight.

I knew enough Italian to blend in with the locals, and that was the way I preferred to travel. One of my most cherished memories of a previous trip to Rome was when an American couple stopped me, and in fractured Berlitz phrases asked directions to the Spanish Steps. I was able to tell them, without a word of English, and without ever letting on that I was practically their neighbor back in California. I liked to imagine that they were as thrilled to have an encounter with a real Italian as I was to pass for one.

But no one was likely to mistake us for Italians today. In addition to her camera, she was weighed down with two or three bags of knickknacks of a distinctly tourist sort, and a guidebook which she conspicuously consulted at nearly every corner. Oh yes, and a lengthy list of friends, acquaintances, and relatives who we still needed to buy presents for.

I had been to Europe five or six times without buying a present for anyone, so we were at distinctly cross purposes. The amount of luggage we were trundling around had already doubled, at least, and we still had half a dozen countries to go. I toyed with the notion of stuffing a couple changes of clothes into a backpack and taking off on my own, the way I was used to traveling.

But I couldn't leave her, not in a strange country where she didn't know a word of the language and even less of the culture and customs. Oh, she'd survive all right; given a week, she'd probably be ensconced in the country villa of some ersatz nobleman, a month, and she'd be the toast of at least some strata of Roman society.

No, I wasn't sticking with her because she was depending on me as a translator, guide, and history instructor; I knew I could be replaced. I guess I was unable to give up the three years we had already invested into what we thought, or at least hoped, would be a permanent future.

When I met her, I was amazed that I could attract someone so beautiful. Even though at the time I was juggling half a dozen girlfriends, I never thought of myself as especially desirable. If, like everyone, I occasionally fantasized about the ideal lover, my powers of imagination had never been equal to the reality that she presented.

Oh, she had her faults, of course; not only was she no intellectual, but she tended to get defensive in the presence of anyone who knew more than she did. Since I'd had about eight more years of school than her, that was a problem that came up often. Not that she was dumb by any means, even if you might have thought so if you judged her only by her limited vocabulary or her child-like attention span. But she was in fact astoundingly bright, if mostly in a nonverbal way, and I soon found her teaching me as much as I was teaching her.

She could have been a model or an actress, but she'd gotten strung out on drugs and was working as a waitress, trying to put her life back together when I first found her. I'd been having my own drug problems, but at the time they were at least somewhat under control. We got high on coke the first night we were together, but after that we hardly touched the stuff for a long time.

We were happy lying in the sun at the beach, or riding up the coast in my little sports car, checking out bands in the city, or slow dancing in the living room to tunes from my teenage years. I quickly gave up all my other lovers, not so much because I wanted to, but because it was easier than putting up with her fits of jealousy. I was a jealous person myself, but once she'd decided that I was the one for her, she never gave me any cause for it.

Still, it must have been a year before I gave in and conceded that we were more or less married. I tried everything to keep some distance between us, but nothing I did would discourage her from spending every possible minute with me. I even moved a couple hundred miles away. She followed me.

Well, I reasoned, if I had to have a wife, I couldn't ask for a much better one. In addition to being incredibly beautiful and a passionate lover, she was constantly solicitous of my needs. She was a brilliant cook, she loved sewing, gardening, building, cleaning, all the tasks that I had a built-in resistance to. For the first time since I had left my parents, I had a house that felt like a home.

There were some aspects I didn't appreciate. Being pampered and fed so well, I developed a bit of a pot belly, and I missed the element of recklessness and danger that came from prowling the late night city streets alone, open for all possibilities. Though we didn't have kids, a menagerie of cats and dogs served a similar function, and I sometimes saw myself as a harried suburban dad, a sort of Dagwood Bumstead being handed a list to take to the supermarket and being treated as a lovable, if largely incompetent boob.

It was somewhere in the second year when the subject of Europe came up. To go there was a lifelong ambition of hers; she was in awe of me for having been there so many times, and set about extracting a promise from me to take her there some day. To her credit, she earned most of the money herself, and eventually I couldn't put it off any longer, so we set aside two months for our grand adventure.

I was hesitant about the trip for two reasons: one, because I was used to traveling alone, and the other, because we were no longer getting along as well as we once had. She was finding a lot more things to complain about than she used to. While it seemed that she had spent the first couple of years domesticating me, she now fretted that I was an old stick-in-the-mud, that all I cared about was sitting in front of the fire with my stupid newspaper, that I no longer showed an interest in hugging or kissing or making love with her at every opportunity.

And it was true; not only had I grown conservative and complacent, but there were times when I found her increasingly aggressive shows of affection irritating or even unpleasant. If I were younger or it were still the 1970s, I would have dumped her and gone in search of new thrills. But I had done that so many times before; something made me want to stick it out this time, to try for once in my life to do the responsible thing, to be, if possible, like my parents, who as far as I could tell, had never even considered giving up on each other.

Maybe the change of scenery would revive some of the old feelings. Lately we'd both been drifting back into cocaine, but with our separate groups of friends, and though it was obvious what was happening, we didn't talk about it much, except to accuse each other of not sharing our drugs. I didn't like her friends much anyway, and mine didn't like her. It couldn't hurt to get off on our own.

The first couple weeks were hell, spent in Paris with people she knew. I felt like a useless appendage, and spent half the time in bed with persistent migraines. But then we took off by ourselves around Spain and Portugal, and it was really nice. Portugal especially, because it was as new to me as it was to her, and being on a more or less equal footing as innocents abroad led us to cling to one another with a passion we hadn't known for quite a while.

We should have never left Lisbon. Watching the city fade away from the train windows was as painful a leavetaking as I'd ever had, despite having spent no more than three days there. The remaining hours of daylight were pleasant enough; I remembering chatting with a businessman in Portuguese, which I'd managed to pick up a fair smattering of in a wondrously short time. Spain passed by in the night, and we spent the next day in some godforsaken French border town because somehow we'd missed the train. We spent most of the next night in the train station at Toulouse, freezing even in our winter clothes, and when the Rome express finally showed up, the conductor took advantage of our added state by charging us more than double the normal fare for a sleeping car. When I tried to argue with him, he simply pointed to the door and told me to either pay or get off his train.

That was a foreshadowing of things to come. On previous trips to Italy, I'd stayed in apensione, typically spending no more than five or six bucks a night. This time we found ourselves in an expensive hotel with the ambiance of a poorly appointed Howard Johnson's. On the way up to our room we got stuck in the elevator for about a half hour. The next day we got charged nearly ten dollars for a couple slices of pizza. It was clear that we were getting the full tourist treatment, and I didn't like it at all. Naturally I blamed her.

Even eating was a constant crisis. She was a vegetarian, no easy thing to be in Italy, and even harder to explain to an Italian waiter who's not the slightest bit interested in our bizarre dietary practices. It seemed we spent half our time studying restaurant menus, and I didn't help things any by refusing to use a phrase book or dictionary for fear of looking more like a tourist than I already did.

I was equally opposed to maps; I insisted on finding my own way through the central Roman maze that befuddles even many Italians. Sometimes my blind-leading-the-blind approach worked out well, guiding us into picturesque neighborhoods that few tourists would ever see. Other times we'd stumble into the back of the bus yard or a panoramic overlook of the sewage plant.

That last day in Rome, a morning of stubborn silences interrupted by some fitful bickering finally gave way to a sort of truce. Finding somewhere to eat lunch was even more of an ordeal than usual, and by the time we settled on a place, most of the restaurants were already closing up for the afternoon. We ate outdoors, on a not very heavily traveled square somewhere on Trastevere. It was warm for March, almost like summer, with the air hanging thick beneath a lowering gray sky.

Some hippies sat around a nondescript fountain, a couple others lethargically tossed a frisbee, and a small pack of children ran back and forth engaged in some game which had no readily apparent point. For the first time in a couple days, we began to talk as lovers and friends, acknowledging that things had not been going so well between us, hoping that perhaps they would now change for the better.

It must have been nearly four o'clock before we set off again. This time I vowed to make the best of it, even attempting to enjoy another round of souvenir shopping. We crossed the river on one ancient bridge or another, and wandered into a neighborhood I'd never seen before. There was something distinctly un-Roman about it; the colors, both of the buildings and the objects in the shop windows, were more garish than I was accustomed to. It almost reminded me of a Mexican border town, if you could imagine one built from solid stone and over two thousand years old.

We found a store offering a more tasteful than usual array of tourist gimcrackery. There were no customers inside, nor any potential ones besides ourselves on the street, and the lady behind the counter appeared especially pleased to see us. Her friendliness seemed to go beyond a normal case of good salesmanship; she chattered at us in a mixture of Italian, French, and English about everything but what we might wish to buy. Her prices were reasonable, too, and she even reduced them without being asked.

She was convinced that we were a happy young couple on our honeymoon. While she carefully wrapped our packages, she told us how she hoped we would always remember our time in Rome,

and that maybe someday when we were old, and our bambini had bambini of their own, we would come back again and remember the happy times we had had there.

So enthusiastic was she about our supposed happiness that I began to believe it myself. I thanked her in my best Italian for her kind wishes, and then as we started to go, she stopped us and said, "Wait. I know you buy these things to give to other people for presents, so now I give you a present for yourselves." With that she plucked an ashtray from the shelf, wrapped it in tissue, and stuffed it in our bag. It was decorated with one of those pictures of the Colosseum that adorns nearly every piece of tourist merchandise in the Eternal City, and couldn't have been worth more than a buck or two, but it was the nicest gesture anyone had made toward us during our stay there.

We walked away in what we thought was the direction of our hotel. The main roads were beginning to be crowded with commuters getting off work, so we stuck to the back streets. The clouds overhead had continued to thicken, and even though it was still a couple hours until sunset, the lights had begun to come on in many windows, giving the late afternoon a mysterious glow that seemed to perfectly match our mood. We stopped to peer inside a strange art gallery, and into a courtyard that looked as it hadn't changed since the time of the Caesars. We even held hands briefly, despite being encumbered with an awkward load of packages.

But then the moist thickness that had filled the air all day began to condense into actual rain drops. Just a few at first, just enough to give notice that our day was coming to an end and that it was time to go inside now. Still we lingered, thinking that a bit of rain made things all the more romantic. But then she began to remark that her hair was getting soggy, not to mention our packages, and that perhaps we should get a move on.

I agreed, and we started walking faster, but it soon became obvious that we had no idea of where we were or where we were going. With my usual reluctance to ask directions or admit my helplessness, I blundered ahead, becoming angry when she complained that it was hard to keep up with me. When, after a long walk on a series of semi-circular streets, we ended up at the same intersection where we'd been a half hour earlier, it was her turn to get exasperated with me.

By now it was raining harder. We stood at the corner of a quiet alley where it emptied into a busy traffic circle. She demanded that I go into one of the shops and ask directions to our hotel. I insisted that I could find the way by myself. She said that if I could find the way by myself, we wouldn't be walking around in circles in the rain, and now her hairdo and clothes were getting ruined thanks to my stubbornness. I said I didn't care about her stupid hairdo and clothes and that I was sick of being treated like I was some kind of idiot. By now she was crying, and maybe I was too. It was hard to tell with all that rain dripping across our faces.

She told me that if I didn't ask someone for directions, she was going to get a cab and go back by herself. I reminded her that she didn't have any money, and couldn't even pronounce the name of our hotel well enough for the driver to understand. I regretted my words before I was finished saying them. The look on her face was partly that of a wounded animal and partly one of pure hate.

I started to apologize, but before I could say more than a word or two, the bag I was holding broke, and the ashtray we'd been given fell to the pavement and broke in two. It was an awful sight; it seemed to fall in slow motion, and I'd almost been able to reach out and catch it, but it slipped just past my fingertips. We stood staring at it for a while, then resumed our argument, each trying to blame the other for the broken ashtray. But our hearts were no longer in the fight, and with a few more tears, we hailed a cab and returned to the hotel.

We stuck together through Venice, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and England, then flew back to California separately. We lived together for another nine months after that, but one of

us was always finding reasons to be somewhere other than home. Our friends were happy with the presents we'd brought them, and she glued the ashtray back together so that the crack didn't show too badly. Along with the little chip missing from one side, it made the ashtray look almost like a genuine antique instead of a mass-produced souvenir.

The next winter she wanted to go to South America. I said we couldn't afford it, and after much unpleasantness, she flew off on her own. I dropped her at the bus station and knew she wouldn't be coming back. The last thing I saw of her was her rear end as it disappeared out the door of the car. As I drove away I tried to get a last look at her waiting to cross the street, but a big truck came along and blocked my view.

It wasn't as though I never saw her again, of course. She came back a few months later to get her stuff, and over the last five years, I've run into her around town maybe three or four times. She's always sweet, just like she was when I met her, and seems very happy. I suppose somebody somewhere is able to make her cry, but not me.

Today I looked at the ashtray, still sitting on the windowsill where it's been since that last year we spent together. When I turned it over, I discovered that the address of the strange shop where we'd been given it was painted on the back. If I ever get back to Rome, maybe I'll go see if the same lady is still working there. I wonder what I'll tell her.



MORE AROUND THE EMERALD TRIANGLE



Voters Nix Sales Tax Boost

Mendocino County voters may make some dumb choices, especially when it comes to electing county supervisors, but at least they have the sense to not hand a blank check to the screwballs and crooks who run things around here.

A county that can't keep its roads in decent repair, cuts financial corners by abusing and defrauding welfare recipients, considers libraries to be disposable luxuries and funds schools at a bare-bones minimum, yet always has enough money to build more jails and send more troops into the anti-marijuana crusade, had the gall to ask voters to raise the sales tax by half a percent to "balance the county budget."

The measure lost 2-1, as well it should have. Many county programs do need more money, but the Board of Supervisors' past actions leave little doubt about where any increased revenues would go: straight into more jails and more militaristic boondoggles. Also, though hardly anyone bothered to point this out, the sales tax is one of the most unfair methods of taxation, and lands squarely on the backs of the already overtaxed lower and middle classes. In the unlikely event that we ever had a county government who could be entrusted with our money, a county income tax would be a much fairer means of raising it.

Not that it should ever be necessary; if we simply compelled Louisiana-Pacific and Georgia-Pacific to pay for the damage they're doing to the county, the rest of us could skip our own taxes for the rest of the century. Instead, our property taxes go to maintain the roads and provide the infrastructure that enables out-of-state corporations to efficiently loot our resources.

Our cowardly and corrupt Board of Supervisors won't even force the logging giants to pay for the damage they do to county roads with their ecologically unsound and previously forbidden practice of winter logging. No, you and I get to pay for that, and for the privilege of seeing the last of our forests disappear into the hulls of cargo ships bound for Japan and the backs of semi-trucks headed for L.A. yuppieland.

On The Air: KZYZ In Philo'

My first reaction to the appearance of KZYZ (90.7 FM) was not a positive one. Not only did it wipe Arcata's KHSU (90.5) off my radio dial, but it seemed to be cutting into my reception of KMUD, all the way over at 91.1.

Evidently I was just being paranoid, though, since KMUD is still coming in somewhere around the perilous fringes of audibility, just as it always was. Besides, KZYZ has turned out to have a number of listenable programs despite its regrettable decision to provide the audio valium of National Public Radio ("National Government Radio," as Bruce Anderson and other astute observers have pointed out) with a nothold in our county.

One notable plus: Marco McClean of R*A*D*I*O F*R*E*E E*A*R*T*H fame (see the Mendocino Commentary) has finally been able to put his broadcasting theories into practice, and just as you'd expect from reading his column, the results are an unpredictable mishmash of the inspired and the incomprehensible. There are other good programs featuring country and Latino music (has no one yet

thought of combining these two excellent genres, and no, I don't mean Freddy Fender?), and even some late night shows that occasionally move slightly to the left of big city college rock.

With its main listener and financial base in the affluent land of Coastlib, KZYZ naturally features an excess of jazz and classical dweebery, but that apparently comes with the territory in all enclaves of aging baby boomers. What's lacking, at least as far as I can tell from my admittedly occasional listening, is news coverage with any kind of substance or bite.

NPR news is merely commercial network stuff fluffed out to the insomnia threshold. KZYZ would much better serve its listeners by hooking up with the Pacifica news service, which while still boring, is at least somewhat radical. Still more of a contribution would be some locally produced news and political features consisting of more than Chamber of Commerce puff pieces.

Warts and all, KZYZ is a welcome addition to the local media; some day maybe the Federal Communications Commission will relax its stranglehold over the airwaves enough to allow the dozens of publicly owned and operated radio stations we should rightfully have.

KZYZ might not be so welcome, though, in Sonoma County, where in many areas it has completely blotted out the signal of Berkeley's KALX (also at 90.7), one of the country's best college radio stations. The other day, I even got interference from KZYZ all the way down in San Rafael. Look, I love Mendocino as much as anyone, but let's not practice cultural imperialism.

No Compromise In Defense Of The Mother Earth...

That was some story about Earth First!er Judy Bari in the Anderson Valley Advertiser. A former cheerleader!?! Judy, along with her sometime partner Darryl Cherney, has done more in the past couple years to save the planet than the combined efforts of the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and all the rest of the "responsible" environmental organizations.

If it weren't for groups like Earth First!, in fact, the ecolibs would probably never go beyond writing an annual check and hanging a glossy nature calendar on their old-growth redwood walls. So-called "extremists" like EF! tilt the political center of gravity in a more sensible direction. At present we've got "moderate" environmentalists ready to negotiate with corporate timber over how much of our remaining forests they should be allowed to loot, when in fact a truly moderate position would be to stop all north coast logging until the forest recovers, seize all corporate timberlands, but to offer Harry Merlo and his fellow nature rapists clemency, i.e., rather than the firing squad or life in prison, to allow them to atone for their crimes with a few years on tree planting and stream restoration projects

KZYZ

WIF



LETTERS TO THE LOOKOUT

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LAYTONVILLE CA 95454

My God, Lawrence!
You weave a wicked web! Your zine is totally confusing. I don't know what's fact and what's fiction — just like Time and Newsweek. Send me #34 whenever you get around to it.
Jesse Harrington
Ashland OR

Dear Lookout / Lawrence / etc..
One of the most interesting new stories (to me, anyhow) recently has been the new non-communist government in Poland. While it's hardly the "let's-disband-the-secret-police" style progress that countries like Poland need, it's thoroughly amazing nonetheless. While the communist party still controls the important military and police forces, the economic control of the Polish nation is passing into the hands of Solidarity. And since Poland's influence in the world and especially among Eastern European nations is mainly economic (both by production of goods and by example), this amounts to a major power shift. One can only hope Poland escapes, if only partially, from its totalitarian past.

Of course the Western press, and especially the American government has been congratulating itself ever since a Solidarity parliament was even rumored. A few relevant details might put that into perspective. First of all, the US has had less than nothing to do with the impending (hopefully) "democratization" of Poland. While the Reagan right likes to bleat about how "peace through strength" has caused the Iron Curtain to fall and the "enslaved" atheist masses rush to embrace the West, the recent changes in the Polish and Russian governments were caused by purely internal factors — the natural decline of totalitarian governments and protests by the people. If anything, the confrontational "roll back communism" of the Reagan years should have made the communist bloc more paranoid than it normally is. If the "Reagan doctrine" were more forcefully applied, I doubt that any communist nation would have thought about liberalization. I'm not an apologist for totalitarian communism, by the way. Neither am I a capitalist. Much has also been made of the fact that Poland soon will have the first non-communist government in 40 years. This is actually quite remarkable, but the US has no need or right to brag about democracy. The US hasn't had a non-capitalist government in roughly 200-300 years, nor has any non-capitalist been elected to any major office in the history of the US Constitution. And even if some alert reader can dig up some socialist senator or what not from the 20s, that still pales to invisibility compared to Poland's giving up major economic control to Solidarity.

In fact, the United States is quickly losing its title of "protector of democracy" to the East, what with the Reagan/Bush attempt to topple and all non-US-aligned governments around the globe. While Poland is finally allowing multi-party voting, the US is retreating to a philosophy of "it's not democracy unless they vote for the United States."

Actually, the current right wing swing of the US is frightening enough to make Russia or Poland look bearable. If the current trend of liberalism continues in the East while the "war on drugs" aka "war on civil rights" continues in the US, the classic patriot jibe of "If you don't like it here, move to Russia" might become worth considering.

Well, that's enough. I was going to write about your "brain damaged art noise" comments in Flipside #60 but don't have room. But I'll tape some good art noise if you ask...

I've got my first exposure, I

Before I wrap this up, I'd like to take one last slap at the whole Social Darwinism/ Ayn Rand/ Jennifer Johnson thing by adopting a patented Ayn Rand philosophical tactic: taking a philosophy to a ridiculous extreme and then writing a slanted, propagandistic metaphor around it...

Let's say you're walking down the street and see some person who's fallen down an open manhole. You watch him struggle to climb up to the surface and it soon becomes obvious that he doesn't have the strength to even stay where he is, let alone climb upwards. Most people would walk over and attempt to help, even though the person in the sewer hadn't done anything for them beforehand. The very nature of humanity is helping those who are in need, even those who haven't directly helped us. Gosh, I feel just like Ayn Rand now. Where can I get published?

Well, that's it. Thanks for the time...
Peace and donuts
Mike Loney
New York

Hi Lawrence,
First thing, thanks a lot for the new Lookout zine (#33). I think it has some pretty good writing & topics (I really like the article on "flag burning"), but there's one thing in the zine that I hated, the article on the Operation Ivy breakup. That's so fucking sad. Op Ivy breaking up is like me getting my penis cut off, really painful and desperate wanting them back together.

Another thing, I don't know if up there they (people) talk about it, down here they do. I'm talking about the new Plaid Retina LP. Everyday I walk around the area (San Fernando) & I hear a lot of criticism about them having 500 songs in 20 minutes and that they sound like fucking chipmunks. I think that sucks because they are a great band.

Well, that's all.
Love,
Richard Ramos
San Fernando CA

P.S. Please print this letter because I never had anything of mine printed before.

Dear L&L
I surmised you had died - when I got the black-bordered Lookout, I was sure of it - but no.

The interesting contents almost made up for the long wait. I don't know how long it's been, but from reading your letters column about the report from Guatemala and Nicaragua, I must have missed an issue #32. Do you have one around there?

Writing by pen as my cheap Smith-Corona typewriter made in Singapore and sold by Monkey Ward is a sorry piece of junk. Serves me right for buying it. Took it down to Ward's and told them to stick it.

Doc Dennis
Campbell CA

We almost always have back issues sitting around, so anyone interested should feel free to write for them. Don't forget to send money, though, unless, like Doc Dennis, you're a loyal paid-up subscriber.
LL

Dear Lawrence!
Boy, the new issue of the Lookout was a welcome sight! Despite a few problems (well, two — the cheap black ink stains any available surface and you actually print my letters. Ouch!) This ish was a real blast to read.

The drug article was on target, but it gets worse. Just before I graduated high school they subjected the whole school to an anti-

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drug speaker who not only regurgitated the "one-beer-one-take-then-it's-shooting-up-speedballs-in-welfare-hotels" party line, but presented this sob story about an LSD "addict" who makes an audio tape of his suicide, including a long explanation of his addiction and how he didn't know he was headed to doom. Makes the days of *Reefer Madness* seem deep by comparison, eh? Oh — latest figures from the "Partnership For A Drug-Free America" state that 10% of cocaine users become addicted. Ignoring the obvious reasons not to do coke (such as the ugly nature of the suppliers), how does this compare to alcohol or nicotine?

Wouldn't an obvious solution to the "menace" of flag burning be to make fireproof flags? Politicians can be so dumb.

One aspect of the Supreme Court abortion decision that you forgot is the 20 week or older fetus test for "viability outside the womb." Which means that if some woman waits too long before seeking an abortion (as often happens when the circumstances are trying) she may be saddled with a six-month premature child and all the medical bills and pain that entails. And if life begins at conception, are miscarriages going to be considered accidental homicides? Maybe we can all flee to Canada or something...

I don't have the time or the paper (and you don't have the patience) for me to respond in detail to all the things in this issue, so I'll speed up a tad.

— The local (for me) paper just finished an article on Satanism in which they claim the peace symbol is a satanic inverted broken cross. Kinda brings a tear to your eye, doesn't it?

— "The Conservative Viewpoint" thing was a tad too subtle for me. Ho ho.

— Hope you liked the clipping (about *Old Skull, the punk band made up of three 10 year-olds from Madison WI ...LL*). Is punk rock dying or what? At least the surface of it is, since major labels are now treating punk and related genres as a source for novelty records. Ugh.

— OP IV broke up? Shit!

— Here's three bucks for the newly remixed *Neurosis 7"*. Who says we record collectors never listen to our vinyl? If you don't listen to the damn things, why collect 'em in the first place?

— That's it. Really.

Peace, love, etc.
Mike Loney
Stephenville TX

P.S. Since when is Boston all bad? Sure, Slapshot sucks on ice, but what about Mission of Burma? The Volcano Suns? Every cloud has a...

Punk has always been treated as a novelty by the music biz. Remember Chipmunk Punk? The Sex Pistols? As for Mission of Burma or Volcano Suns... never heard 'em. And of course Boston's not all bad. Lots of history and beautiful old buildings. Too bad about the people, though. LL

Dear LL!

You are still putting out the good stuff and I am always pleased to be noticed by someone I admire. I even like the way the Lookout is put together, or does it simply congeal, like hash? Whatever, it comes out of the oven just about right.

Keep parboiling the goofballs,

Herb Caen
San Francisco

Dear Lawrence,

Enjoyed getting zine #33, and getting a dose of reality! It seems every day there are new distractions

— triathlons, nintendo, VCRs, MTV, roller blades, compact disc, Batman, romance novels, scaled-down ninja motorcycles, tofutti, pasta, modern art museums, mountain bikes, neon shorts & sunglasses —

Where will it end? Sure each thing may have some use, but it's all so disconnected from anything else. There are more and more catalogs with "fine living" merchandise, classic stuff from the past, marked up for the money maker of today. We are frantically consuming. Is it to fill the rift inside us? I notice much of the so-called "new age" items are incredibly priced.

Spirituality for a price - spirituality for the spiritless? Here's a catalog I received in the mail today (hope I'm not loading you down w/it) as an example. (Including a \$5.00 "yes-no" rune stone to help one make those important decisions. It operates in the same manner as a coin when flipped, but in case some spiritual types find that a bit overwhelming to comprehend, it comes with instruction sheet. Other vital items, in the two to three hundred dollar range, include a 14K gold rune pendant, crystal runes, and a limited edition etching of "the shaman's mask" which promises to aid one in carrying the prayers of the sacred pipe from Grandmother Earth to Grandfather Sky. ...LL.) Sure, some of the stone was quarried by native North Americans, but most of the

artists sound pretty Anglo to me. One even lives in Los Angeles, the spiritual sinkhole of the West!

Anyhow, enough of that. We wanted to get a reprint of a semi-recent zine which had as its focus education: much of the articles dealt with home schooling. Not sure what number it was (#30 ...Ed.), but it was relatively recent. I'm very interested in education, and how it's largely doing a rotten job, both in teaching something and in doing it in a human, experiential way. Just finished reading *The Night Is Dark And I Am Far From Home* by Jonathan Kozol (he wrote *Death At An Early Age*). Very good, angry book. He holds that the purpose of public education (incl. college) is largely to indoctrinate kids into being good citizens who don't step out of the lockstep... I agree; unfortunately, it's largely true. I still hold that there is a way out, but not sure how... Also, another good point he makes is that of concrete deeds being the only true reflection of one's beliefs. As he states: "If you believe nothing, say so. If you believe something, turn belief into concrete deed." As he says, many of the liberal academics who make money studying and writing about the inequality of wealth distribution or whatever, actually in their personal lives do nothing which would alleviate the very problem they are studying. What a farce! It's as if to say, "Oh you're concerned about poverty, that's admirable of you, and noble. Why don't you become a sociologist and teach in a college about it? You'll make a lot of money." We become experts on everything, but experience nothing.

Anyhow, this letter could go on forever, so I'll stop. Enclosed is two dollars; hope that'll cover the price of the zine and postage, etc. (Actually, one dollar is fine ...Ed.) Thanks a lot for all your work.

Eric Duncan
Santa Rosa

P.S. Don't want to whine, but what about the chances of changing your format back to what it started as? Folded 8 1/2" by 11" format? It feels so much like a newspaper now and not so much like a newsletter. Also, what about focusing on a single issue in each zine (in addition to your other sections, that is)? Examples: solar energy, lies about history we've been told, alienation of suburban youth, TV as indoctrination, history of math and science and its use as a tool for oppression, etc. etc.

Dear Eric,

Chances of going back to the xerox format are slim for several reasons. For one thing, it costs about twice as much. For another thing, I'd have to spend about two full days on the xerox machine, even if the thing ran perfectly, which it never does, to turn out the current press run of 5000. Thirdly, newsprint is easier to recycle and less destructive to the environment to produce.

As for continuing with special theme issues: sounds like a good idea, as do several of your suggestions. Unfortunately it also sounds like work. In fact for a minute there I thought you were my college professor assigning term paper topics. You wouldn't want to do that, would you? LL



music can make you STUPID

Stopped in at the MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL radio show on Halloween night and was pleasantly surprised to find not only the long-missing-in-action TIM YOHANNAN back on the job (though I think only for that one night, but also to see that he'd been joined, for the first time in years, by one of the original MRR crew, JELLO BIAFRA.

But that's not all. As usual Biafra was full of wisecracks and hilarious stories, and regaled us with an account of his harrowing trip down to the city from the wilds of Ukiah ("Lots of Freddy Kruger outfits, and I have you ever noticed the uncanny resemblance between Freddy and George Bush...?")

He also talked about a soon-to-be-released movie, *Terminal City Ricochet*, in which he not only acts, but contributes a good deal of the soundtrack. Several of the tunes sound uncannily like the DEAD KENNEDYS of old, with Jello in full vocal form, backed up by none other than Vancouver's DOA, who many people, this writer included, thought were DOA long ago, or at least petered out into an insubstantial rock act.

But not true, at least not on these songs. It was like instant time travel to the glory days of early 80s hardcore. The movie sounded good, too, at least the way Biafra told it. It might be out sometime in the next few months, or at least the soundtrack will.

Other big news? No doubt the debut of DOWNFALL, featuring MATT, LINT, and DAVE of the late and still lamented OPERATION IVY. This is no rehash of OP IV, though; in the material they've developed so far there's barely a hint of the skacore associated with the Opsters.

You won't even hear Lint's unmistakable chinka-chink guitar sound, because the bald-headed scenester has given up that instrument in favor of a new role as lead singer. Instead, Downfall features two guitarists, JASON, formerly of BREAKAWAY (now defunct, if rumors are to be believed, and why not; what else are rumors good for?) and PAT MELLO (aka SKIN) who first rose to prominence as Operation Ivy's roadie, meditation instructor, and chief disciplinarian.



Sergie Sam I Am Gets Fresh With Aaron MTX

Photo by Murray Bowles



Reacting to the hype and expectations, many negative and sarcastic East Bay scenesters (as if there were any other kind) predicted a giant flop for Downfall. You almost got the impression some of them were hoping for it, but such was not to be the case. Downfall's first show at the Berkeley Square, rather than one of the best first shows I've ever seen for any band. It couldn't have hurt of course, to have a crowd that was solidly on their side, and to have some powerful talent to work with. What's the music like? There's a definite East Coast influence, especially in the guitar sound, but most of all it's East Bay, a fact that Lint didn't forget to remind us of. In fact, I believe "East Bay" were a couple of the first words he uttered on stage, as he introduced the first song, "Badlands," which is about... what else? An instant hit, by the way. Another song which stuck in the mind was "No Reason," about one-time FANG singer SAMMY, who apparently is guilty of murdering his girlfriend, which even if SID did it, is not my idea of a very punk thing to do.

Anyway, it was looking like all thumbs up for Downfall — UNTIL — drummer Dave Mello announced that he was leaving the band. Will Downfall survive? It won't be easy, as the interplay between Dave and Matt is as vital to the Downfall sound as it was to Operation Ivy. By the time you read this, Downfall as presently constituted will have played its third and last show at the JAMES WASHBURN bash at the palatial Pinole digs of *Absolutely Zippo* mega-mogul ROBERT EGGPLANT. Those of you who live someplace other than the East Bay — may I ask you why? — will be able to check out a cut by Downfall on the new *Maximum Rockroll* compilation with the long dumb name that I won't repeat here. Also on that comp you can hear Chicago's SCREECHING WEASEL — America's last great hope for hardcore — and the best CRINGER song yet.

Cringer are now a San Francisco band, by the way, which is good news even though they moved to the wrong side of the bay, but perhaps this was part of their strategy, so that they'd be able to put "The best band in San Francisco" on all their press releases," and thus impress people in faraway places who don't realize that there are only about three other bands in San Francisco who aren't either still mired in the 70s or desperately trying to find their way back there. Cringer would still be a good band in the East Bay, but they'd find the competition hell of tougher



Late November will see the reunion tour of the BUZZCOCKS. Let's hope their performance for the over-the-hill crowd at San Francisco's I-BEAM (\$16!?) isn't their only local appearance. Most of these punk rock reunions that have been happening lately take place at yuppie dives like the I-Beam or DNA. Look, maybe the people there all wear black, but take it from me, it's not the MABUHAY, and it's kind of sad to see veterans of the '77 scene reduced to leather-clad monkeys resuscitating past glories for a pack of voyeurs who wouldn't have been caught dead anywhere near Broadway in the days when punk was in full flower.

It's really the same thing, on a much smaller scale, of course, as the mega media events perpetrated by veteran troupers like the WHO and the ROLLING STONES. But before we go any further, let's draw some distinctions. Contrary to what you heard *ad nauseam* this summer, the Who did *not* appear in Oakland accompanied by a thirty-seven piece orchestra and proceed to lull 60,000 people into a lethargic trance that made the worst drug-induced excesses of the 60s look upbeat by comparison.

No, the Who were nowhere near the Oakland stadium on that overhyped night because the Who do not exist and have not existed since KEITH MOON pounded out that final short circuit on his cardiac synapses. What you saw on stage in Oakland that night was the *fake Who*, and they have about as much in common with the real Who as those fake pay phones the government is putting up in place of the old-fashioned pay phones that actually used to work sometimes. If you missed out on the chance to spend twenty-five or fifty bucks to witness the fake Who lip-sync a fake concert, take heart. You can duplicate the experience by spending the same money on Valium (Thorazine might work better if you can find it), hooking up headphones, and listening *in toto* (that's Latin; I'm not talking about the band) to *Tommy* topped off with PETER TOWNSHEND's solo album of love songs to donkey guru MEHER BABA.

The ROLLING STONES concert by all accounts was a more tasteful affair (no, the *Lookout* does not get comped to BILL GRAHAM events, so I have to take other people's word for it). I would have liked to hear Ick the Sick and his Rolling Ugliers belt out a couple of the old tunes, especially ones like "Play With Fire" or "Ruby Tuesday," which I'd never heard them do in concert.

But no way am I paying thirty-three dollars for a rock and roll show, and the newspaper pictures of the people who were waiting in line to buy tickets made me even less interested. Bunch of lawyers in three-piece suits, geeks who shouldn't even be let out of their high-rise zoos, let alone allowed to infest a rock concert by what was once semi-seriously called "The World's Greatest Rock and Roll Band." My mood was further disturbed by seeing live footage of a Stones concert used as backing for a Budweiser commercial.

Look, I know that when a band starts doing TV commercials it's over the hill, and I can accept that the heroes of my youth are now mostly in a state of decline and need to be putting a little something away for their twilight years. But *Budweiser*? Show some sympathy and some taste, Mickey baby. Even if you're from England where it's not illegal to make and sell good beer, you've lived in New York long enough to know that Budweiser is the lowest of the low. Or maybe you didn't; I'm sure you never drink the stuff. But as most Americans realize, unless they themselves drink too much of it, Budweiser contains a chemical that causes stupidity, and another one that makes you want to chop down trees and dig up coal all day long for lousy pay while you hum "This Bud's For You" over and over until your co-worker hits you over the head with a shovel or you finish the day and go down to the bar and pass out in a pool of spilled beer and wake up at six in the morning with a brain-wrenching hangover and do it all over again. Yeah, you make America work all right...

Anyway, so much for the Rolling Stones; the next thing we have to worry about is the likes of PAUL McCARTNEY and RINGO STARR rolling into town. Personally, I could easier endure an evening with SAMMY DAVIS, JR.

So let's get back to important news. As you'll probably read in AARON COMETBUS' column elsewhere in these pages, ROBERT EGGPLANT looks to have finally hit paydirt with the



Photo by Murray Bowles

newest incarnation of BLATZ. The way I figure it, they've got one old guy and two young guys, just like the LOOKOUTS, and a lead singer named JESSE, just like OPERATION IVY. How can they miss?

Drummer JOEY PERALES has a newly-pierced nipple by the way, which he'll display to anyone who asks; for that matter he seems to have a tendency for displaying any and all body parts even without being asked. He also has a new girlfriend who may or may not be 12 years old — it's hard to get a straight story out of those far East Bay types — but that's not the whole item. Robert Eggplant has taken up with her best friend, and the two girls together make up a pair that singer JESSE LUSCIOUS refers to as "the punk rock Bobbsey twins."

Jesse is also editor/publisher of a new zine entitled BERKELEY SUCKS, which is the most exciting publication to burst upon the scene since the dawn of *Absolutely Zippo*. *Zippo*, by the way, is going full-size with issue #12, and may soon be making the transition to newspaper in preparation for an all-out circulation battle with *Maximum Rockroll*. While denying that there is bad blood between him and the MRR crew (it's rumored that MARTIN SPROUSE, head of the MRR publishing division, has been forced into hiding following his vicious attacks on *Zippo*), Eggplant nonetheless maintains that readers around the world are growing angry and frustrated with MRR's continued failure to adequately cover the East Bay, where, as is well known, every interesting and worthwhile punk rock event in the past couple years has taken place.

Other hot flashes from the zine world: Devon Morf's WAJLEMAC is getting set to hit the streets again, and BORIS WORDBURGER continues his probably futile struggle to counteract the all-pervasive influence of *Absolutely Zippo*. *Wordburger*, while graphically way pro, suffers from a crossbay

Graphic by Chris Appelcore



schizophrenia, with Boris trying to keep one foot in the incoherent art noise of San Francisco and the other in the totally crucial East Bay, with sometimes leaves him with a third foot planted firmly in mouth. But Boris is a rad dude and usually has a pleasant hair color too, so you should support him in his efforts to overcome his unfortunate addiction to industrial crapola.

JOHN YATES will have a new issue of PUNCH LINE out by the time you read this, and John has also been busy doing his amazing graphic work for all sorts of projects in addition to his day-to-day duties at ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES. And speaking of amazing graphic talents, the Lookout's own CHRIS APPELCORE (also ed-in-chief of So. Humboldt's PUDDLE) has achieved true fanzine immortality by being chosen to do the cover of Absolutely Zippo #12.

Almost forgot, but a pleasant surprise at the B-Square Downfall show were SAM I AM, who get my vote for most improved band of the year. I wasn't all that enthusiastic about them based on their first couple shows, but they've taken some big steps away from the E-Z rock influence that I thought they showed too much of back then and have turned into a very powerful rock-punk blend that by itself was worth a trip to the Square (a place I normally go about once every two years). A lot of credit for the change has to go to new guitarist JAMES, of the legendary SOCIAL UNREST. For some reason, though, the crowd wasn't as receptive as I would have expected; I mean, geez guys, you can like both Downfall and Sam I Am and still be cool.

Some late-breaking news: Sam I Am will be doing an album for a new East Coast label called RED ARCHIVE, which should be out in February or so. There's also the possibility of a 7" on the LOOKOUT label at about the same time. Stay tuned.

I did witness an interesting interchange front of the BerkeleySquare between Sam I Am singer JASON BEEBOUBT and GREEN DAY drummer JOHN ("call me AL) SOBRANTE (the two gentlemen used to be in ISOCRACY together). They were arguing about whose band had gotten a better reception the last time

they shared a bill, and Al got in the last word with: "Listen, when we were through playing people were peeling themselves off the walls and jumping up and down and screaming. After you guys played, it was like a goddam golf tournament."

Oh yeah, 7 SECONDS played too, but I don't know if anyone stayed to see them; when I left at about 12:30, hoping to get back to Laytonville before daybreak, everyone was out on the front sidewalk and 7 Seconds were already one or two songs into their set. Earlier though, manager GEORGE GLEESON made a point of telling me that the item in Lookout #33 about KEVIN SECONDS and an unnamed East Bay girl was not true, which puts me in a bit of a bind, since a certain East Bay girl yelled at me for printing it because it was true. What am I supposed to think? Like many great journalists of past and present, I follow the principle of never letting the facts get in the way of a good story, but I probably should have followed my first inclinations and left that particular one to Absolutely Zippo, the magazine that knows no fear.

Oops, not more 7 SECONDS news... Haven't yet been able to get back to George "Rumor Control" Gleeson on this one, but word has it that someone representing himself as being in charge of 7 Seconds "merchandising" was being very unpleasant to a nice young man selling SAM I AM T-shirts at the B-Square that night. The problem? Sam I Am shirts were going for \$5, 7 Seconds shirts for \$15. What is it with Sam I Am, anyway? Don't they realize that if they sell their shirts too cheap, it might make the warm, caring, and

wonderful 7 Seconds look like they were just money-grubbing opportunists off to make a quick buck off of gullible suburban youth? Hey, we're all in this together, aren't we, let's share the positive energy and good vibes, and that'll be \$14.98 plus tax, thank you, and remember to support the scene.

Anyway, back to reality as we know it in the East Bay: NEUROSIS, the dark, brooding, guitar hellhounds of lower Emeryville are headed into the studio in early December to record their second LP, as yet untitled. The band's first record, Pain Of Mind, came out on ALCHEMY, the mostly speedmetal label of the mysterious and reclusive VICTOR H, but Alchemy has now become a subsidiary of ROUGH TRADE, and the big brains upstairs apparently decided to drop Neurosis, seeing how they were practically the only good band on the label and consistency is, as you know, important (The new LP will be on Lookout). Rough Trade, which believe it or not, at one time was considered a semi-cool label, also dumped the MR. T EXPERIENCE, which leaves the East Bay's rockin' punksters label-shopping, something which should never happen to such a great band with three excellent records under its belt. MTX should have a couple of 7"s out early in the new decade, possibly including one on Lookout.

Lookout will also be releasing the first GREEN DAY LP in a couple months. The Green Day 7", 1000 Hours, was well received almost everywhere, though one midwestern fanzine did opine something along the lines of: "Yuck! I can't believe Lookout put out this pop crap." But then the same fanzine slagged the completely awesome KAMALA AND THE KARNIVORES, too, so what do they know? Probably closet SLAPSHOT fans.

Speaking of Boston's favorite bozos, Slapshot are apparently still smarting (to use the word loosely) from being laughed off stage in their first show at Gilman. They've been grunting and whining to interviewers from coast to coast about how the geeks, dorks, and pinheads at Gilman didn't take them seriously (gee guys, I don't know, do people on the East Coast take it seriously when a man with the body of a pro wrestler and the IQ of a billiard ball jumps around

DORKS

YOUR AD IN THE LATEST FLIPSIDE WAS PRETTY FUNNY. ALL WE HAVE TO SAY IS WHEN YOU GUYS HAVE ONE DECENT, CREDIBLE RELEASE UNDER YOUR EMACIATED, VEGETARIAN-FAG NATURAL FIBER COTTON BELTS, THEN YOU CAN CALL US NAMES. LOVE,

SLAPSHOT

with the veins popping out of his forehead and waving a broken hockey stick while screaming and bellowing like a gorilla that's just been cornholed by HARLEY FLANAGAN? They do? Boy, you guys are in worse trouble than I thought).

But apparently the boys in Slapshot do have some sense of humor, as witness the good-natured letter they sent us here at Lookout headquarters. We do suspect, though, that they had someone else write it for them, since, as you'll notice, there isn't a single misspelling. Besides, as WALTER GLASER noted: "That's girl's handwriting." And Walter knows about girls, better believe it. Now if they only knew about him.

Ooops! Late word has it — stop the presses — WALTER HAS A GIRLFRIEND!!! On top of that he's given up his chores as tape reviewer and DJ for MRR. Punk rock as we've known it is crumbling. The universe is a fleeting and frightening place, and even the few islands of stability continue to crumble beneath a sea of constant change.

Whew! I don't know if I can go on after that news. Let me just wrap this up quickly. There are rumors that the VAGRANTS might be breaking up, GINA ARNOLD is still doing her comedy act for

the East Bay Express ("Oh, why do you bad people like the WHO and not like the REPLACEMENTS," she petulantly stomped her foot. Because, Gina, the Replacements are the Who. Fake rock, fake punk, it all smells the same. Dead and rotten.), and by the time you read this San Francisco people will be flocking back over the reopened Bay Bridge in search of the only scene that matters. Oh well, if any place can handle an invading army of San Franciscans, I guess the East Bay can. Most of them will never make it out of Emeryville anyway.

Ed. Note: With the following article, the Lookout is pleased to welcome Aaron Cometbus to its distinguished staff. Aaron first broke into the highly competitive fanzine world at the age of 13 (or maybe it was 12, the story keeps changing depending on how much coffee he's had) when he founded the now legendary one-of-a-kind zine whose name he still bears and probably will for the rest of his life, since his real name is fairly pedestrian. Aaron is equally well known for his role in the recently deceased East Bay band Crimpshrine, and perhaps less so for his brief stint as drummer for another Bay Area band, Sweet Baby. He's also been a long time scene reporter for Maximum Rocknroll, but has found his talents somewhat constricted by that magazine's insistence that he stick to writing about band news and leave out subjects he considers more important, like coffee and toast. The Lookout promised that he would be free to digress at length on those subjects, so from his Bohemian hideaway on the colorful Benicia waterfront, he grudgingly consented to tear himself away from the elaborate preparations he's currently making to resume publication of Cometus magazine, scheduled to appear sometime in the 1990s. So without further ado, here he is, and let's hope he wrote an article that's at least as long as this introduction:

(kind of a) **S C E N E**
REPORT (drink lots of coffee
 before reading)

by Aaron Crimpshrine Cometbus

Well, Lawrence called me at 8:30 and asked me to get a column to him as soon as possible. I rushed out to the new café in town, JAVA POINT, and I was able to down four cups of coffee before they closed the doors at 9:00. Now I've made my way down the block to Benicia's mainstay café, THE BRONZE SEAL, and am going to try to bang out a column before I have to piss the inspiration out.

The Seal doesn't have free refills, and I think these chairs may soon be gathering dust as the crowd moves up the street. Still, there's nowhere else to go after 9:00 except maybe SAFEWAY, but their magazine rack gets boring after a while. You can only look at NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK pinups so many times, you know? Benicia is not known for its night life. Fuck, I am Benicia's night life! I haven't been able to get to sleep earlier than 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. lately, and that doesn't make it too easy to get a job, something I may have to face up to soon. I've lowered myself to generic cigarettes and a steady diet of pancakes from just-add-water pancake mix, and now I can't even support that lifestyle. My god, my coffee money is being threatened!! Panic ensues!!

A quick check of the newspaper yields no ads reading: "Wanted: Eccentric individual for creative low-stress job with flexible hours and good pay under the table." Oh well, I still have more possessions to sell off. All this, and now I'm supposed to write a scene report!! I mean, who really gives a fuck about a scene report? How does a scene report affect my life?

Instead, I will interview my friend Oaf, who has just pulled up a chair. Oaf, why are you here wearing a sleeveless shirt when you are coming down with pneumonia? "Because I had to get out of the house," says Oaf, probably aptly named. Oaf, how does a scene report affect your life? "How else would I know that bands have broken up?" he asks. Oaf, if a band broke up and you never found out, would it matter? "Well, I guess there are no bands around now that would affect my life if they broke up. Wanna give me a tattoo?" Never go to Oaf when you need some inspiration, let me tell you.

I'm now back at the HOUSE-O-TOAST (my very humble place of residence) with a cup of leftover Seal coffee to avoid caffeine burnout, and I'll tell you bands affect my life: two of them rehearse here and chip in on the rent, making it cheaper for me. They are MONSULA and THE SKIN FLUTES. Monsula are pretty damn great, they give me hope that another generation of exciting bands is on

the way. They have all the right ingredients for a great band except that they haven't really pushed themselves enough for other people to find that out. The Skin Flutes have the right ingredients for a great band, but it hasn't quite come together. I used to hate them, but now I think they're pretty good, but they still don't blow me away. Mike, their guitarist, also has a new band called FUEL that do seem to be blowing a lot of people away. I think you'll be hearing a lot more about them in the coming months.

Over at GILMAN STREET PROJECT in Berkeley, there are two other new bands rehearsing during the week, FILTH and BLATZ. Filth is fronted by Jake, who is known for heckling and insulting just about every band around, as well as singing for CRIMPISHRINE once in a while. Lenny used to play for ISOCRACY and it's about time he got a new band going, and also on guitar is some new kid named "Jim from Canada." Dave (of the maybe broken up VAGRANTS) plays drums and John from ECONOCHRIST is filling in on bass. BLATZ isn't completely new — they did one show as a two-piece early this year, but now are working on a full lineup and new sound. Eggplant (the editor of ABSOLUTELY ZIPPO) plays guitar, Marshall (the Gilman sound dude) plays bass, and Joey plays these really cool looking clear drums. They didn't have a singer until they finally tried out Jesse, some kid from Philly who is always hanging around Gilman. He always looked so aimless there, it's good they found something for him to do. Well, that's the scene in my home and my home-away-from-home, let's see what else I can dredge up on new bands...



East Bay Eric and Robert Eggplant
 Selling Out The Scene

Photo by Murray Bowles

Well, me and some friends were in Orinda the other week just wandering around and we heard some music coming from a house. We took it as an invitation, walked up the driveway and around to the side of the house with the open upstairs window, and started yelling to get their attention. They peeped their heads out and what do you know — it was a punk band! I don't remember the name of the band, but it was some of the guys from Lafayette's THINK TWICE. Maybe I would have remembered the band's name if they had let us come inside, BUT NO!! They said something about it being "too crowded..."

Going further into Contra Costa, there are two new spinoff bands from the late, great BLASTING AGENTS, and also a cool new band named THUMPER — four geeky looking guys singing poppy songs about girls, which is a sure sign of a great band.. One more thing for Contra Costa: a loose gathering of freaks working on a band called T. ZATANI, named after the boxotic Tura Satana of Russ Meyer fame.

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I'm really not too familiar with happenings in San Francisco nowadays, but I do know of a new band called SQUELCH, a three-piece with bassist Richard Engel who is a veteran of many great Arcata bands and also a pretty swell guy ... I hear that SWOLLEN BOSS TOAD have broken up and I figure that whatever project vocalist/guitarist Tommy Strange does next should be pretty great. Same with whatever old EYEBALL singer Dave Duran does next. I quit SWEET BABY, and I hope whatever I do next will be exciting, too. It's weird, I think this is just a time of waiting — the calm after the storm or maybe before the next one. Things in general are kind of slow right now and everyone is just waiting. I do think, however, that there will be something worth waiting for.



Former Isocrabhoys Jason And Martin
Rock Out With Sam I Am

Photo by Murray Bowles

Then there are SAM I AM and DOWNFALL, two bands made up mostly of former members of of the last generation of local bands. I think both are pretty decent, but they just don't excite me — not enough energy or something. I think it's really necessary to drag in some new people and new energy to keep things interesting. GREEN DAY are a good example of that, with ISOCRACY drummer Al teaming up with two guys who'd been playing together in a tiny hick town for years. They're not wildly original, but they don't need to be because they have great songs, great attitudes, and put a lot of work into the band. They also are a fucking lot of fun.

ECONOCHRIST, transplants to the Bay Area from Arkansas, are also not the most original, but are exciting because of their new energy and enthusiasm. SAM I AM, to their credit, are also working hard booking shows and trying to get their name out. DOWNFALL probably are too, but they are already starting out with a big advantage. One band I almost forgot to mention is the somewhat new CRUMMY MUSICIANS, who work hard and have good attitudes, but I can't tell what they sound like cuz they have a different lineup every time I see them.

So that's about all I can think of right now, but I know there's a lot more happening. Boredom stimulates growth, so they say, and if that's true, I think we have a lot of growing to do. I'm looking forward to next spring and summer to see if this all comes together. In the meantime, I'd better start looking for a job... I'll need cigarettes and coffee to really enjoy all these new bands properly.

...Aaron

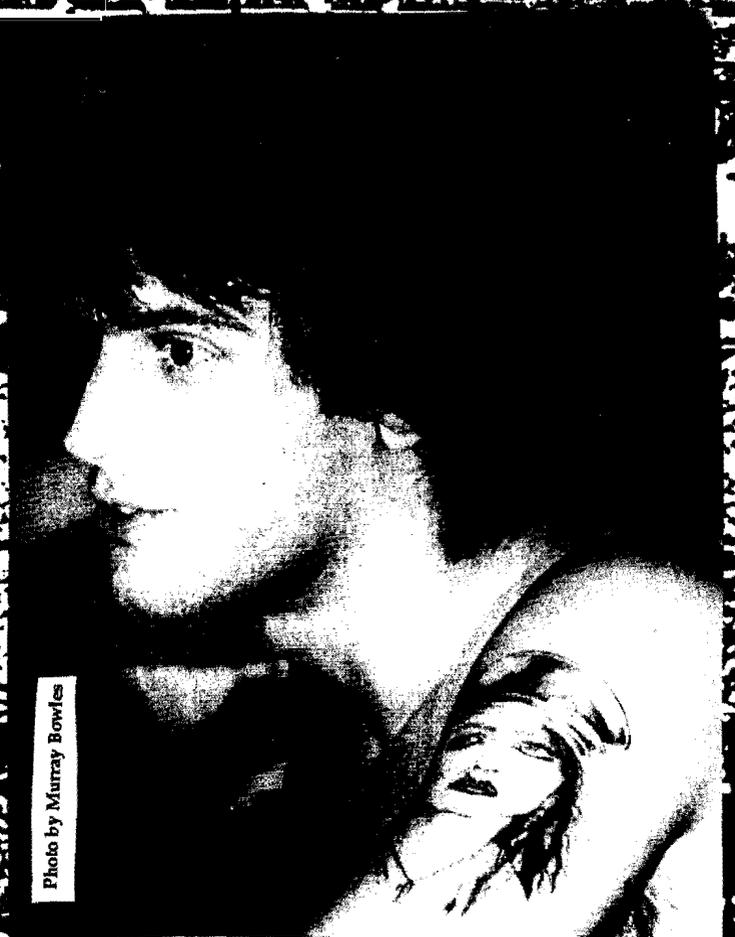


Photo by Murray Bowles

Ben Weasel Mellencamp, America's
Last Great Hope For Hardcore



Orlando And Siberia at Gillman

Photo by Murray Bowles



OK, looks like not enough record companies learned their lesson from the reviews in Lookout #32; they keep sending their vinyl to us to be ridiculed, demolished, destroyed, and otherwise eviscerated. Actually, we liked one or two things this time; if you read far enough you'll find something positive. Our panel this issue consists of Lawrence (L), Chris Appelcore (C), and Asa Heath (A).

SLOPPY SECONDS Destroyed LP

Toxic Shock

C: In their press packet it says that *Maximum Rockroll* thought they were really awesome, so that shows... it might be good not to like them. L: What, are you going on an anti-MRR campaign now? C: No, but I don't agree with all their reviews. As you should know. Um, this is generic. A: Yeah, real stereotypical. L: Let's try to limit our use of the G-word. Or we could spell it with a J. C: I don't know, we listened to the first side, I say we turn it off? Well, actually we skipped like half of it. L: Should we break it? C: We could. It's kind of hard to break records, though. A: It's sort of pointless. C: Yeah, it'd be too much effort. Let's just turn it off. A: Yeah, let's turn it off. We could sell it to someone.

VARIOUS ARTISTS *What Are You Pointing At?* 10" comp LP

Very Small/ David Hayes/ PO Box 8223/ Emeryville CA 94662
 L: The trouble with these compilations is that you have to listen to all the songs. C: Yeah, that's kind of a bummer. Well, let's get to it. *What Are You Pointing At?* on Very Small, Very, Very Small Records. L: Does it really say Very, Very Small...? C: It says Very, Very, Very, Very Very Small Records... L: That David Hayes... C: #2 L: ...very clever with the graphics. C: Yes, he is. Oh, it's got a pleasant little booklet. L: You recognize that fellow on the Screeching Weasel page? C: Oh yeah, that's you, isn't it? L: Actually it's John Wayne Gacy, the largest mass murderer in American history. C: Oh, that's always pleasant. A: How many people did he kill? L: Well, they found 34 bodies in his basement. A: How nice. I bet it smelled lovely. C: Here we go, Econochrist. A: Isn't he dead now? C: Well, it's pleasant. A: Seems like it would be good if you saw them live. C: I did. They were good. It's got... repeating lyrics. A: Repeating lyrics doesn't seem to be that bad a thing. The Ramones have repeating lyrics. C: So does that mean Econochrist is up there with the Ramones? A: Uh, I dunno... They're not quite as popular, so I guess they're a little bit better in some respects. C: Let's try their second cut. A: Did you hear Dee Dee quit? C: OK, it's good, I love it. Next is, uh, Screeching Weasel. L: Well, we know they're gonna be good. But that doesn't sound like Screeching Weasel. C: No, this is the end of Econochrist. Here's the "I Wanna Be A Homosexual" song. A: If they want to

be homosexuals, what's stopping them? I just don't get the point. L: You'd have to ask Ben. He's the author of all these profound thoughts. C: It's got a very Latin sound. Soothing. A: Lots of real nice drums and bingy bongy belly things. Picks up nice. Sort of robust. L: Are you talking about wine or punk rock? C: Yeah, it's got a beautiful delicate bouquet. A: Sort of mesmerizing. L: They take a lot of acid out in Chicago. C: Oh, here we go, here we go, here's the punk rock segment. Listen to the drums speed up. And that pseudo-country drum beat. Reminiscent of Crimpshrine. L: Ben will come all the way to Miranda and kill you for that. C: They didn't sound like this live. I like this better. L: Now this song's gonna be good no matter what it sounds like because it's about Kamala. C: They're definitely the only East Bay band from Chicago. L: I think that sums up Screeching Weasel. That's about as high of praise as they're gonna get anywhere. So let's move on to the next bunch of posers. C: OK, this is Vapor Lock. They have nice graphics. A: Let's see. Looks like Mongoloids. C: I don't like it. L: "Die Robot Die?" How come Vapor Lock has three songs? C: Cuz they're really short? L: Wanna grow on to another one? C: Here we go. L: Doesn't sound any different. C: Here, I flipped it on to a really cool solo. A: Nice guitar. C: Heck, it's guitar-oriented. A: Is that just his (John Wayne Gacy) claim to fame, like I wanna grow up and be a mass murderer? He looks like he should be on Leave It To Beaver. L: He used to dress up as a clown and go entertain at children's parties. A: Really? Did he kill the children? L: No, he killed young men. A: Oh, was he a gay clown? L: Well, he denies it. He still claims he was framed. A: Oh, like, "I had no idea those 34 people were in my basement. L: That's exactly what he said. C: Let's see if Side Two is any better, starting out with Schizoid. L: There's our hero. C: Yeah, John Revolva. They must be good. Hard driving music. L: These guys are supposed to be like the Isocracy of Nevada. Which is probably the last thing Nevada needs. C: Yeah. They don't sound like Isocracy. L: No, they almost can play their instruments. C: They can play real fast too. A: I like the graphics. C: Well, they're not as generic as Isocracy. L: This song sounds like "Rodeo." C: Yeah, really fast "Rodeo." With too much distortion. God, the singer can sing fast. A: Look at that cloud of flies, it looks like my house. C: They always come in, I have so many flies, it's so sick. A: You know what I do? Get an aerosol can and a lighter and squirt them. L: Are we still on Schizoid? C: I don't know, this album seems to be dominated by guitar antics. Screeching Weasel definitely stands out. OK, I think this is Dissent. Kinda like, what the heck does it sound like? Like No Means No, but more real. Not real clean, but kinda messy and rad. I sorta like it. A: I do. C: I wish we could turn it up louder. Here's the Negative Trend cover. L: Yeah, I just have one question about that: why? C: Yeah, if somebody already does a song well, why do it again? Especially a punk rock song. It's not a bad version though. L: No, almost just like the original. C: Whadda ya say we go to Bazooka Joe? Real clean, tight. L: Sounds like it's in a hurry. C: Definitely telling you what's going on and how to make it better. Which is pleasant. You always wanna know how to live. A: Yeah, I love when people tell me what to do. L: The record is not what you thought it would be. C: No, not quite. I like the cover though.



THE HICKOIDS *Waltz Acrossdress Texas* LP

Toxic Shock

C: Country punk. It's good, but I can see how some of the more country songs could be kind of boring. A: Kind of rustic. I really like the graphics. Have you seen these? Hamburger Helper sitting on a toilet? C: Quality music. As much as quality can go. A: Looks like sorta Kalamazoo on it actually. C: I don't know what that is, but the music's all right. L: That must be an inner Michigan reference. What does Kalamazoo art look like?

EAR DAMAGE *The Hangover Of Loneliness* LP

Punk Etc./ Mottestraat 12/ 1870 Wolvertem/ Belgium

C: It's a heavy duty record, too. This puppy is thick. L: It's from Belgium. C: Oh, they make thick records over there. A: They make 'em like we used to. C: Hmm, a gong. A: Chinese Chong Fu movie. C: Not what I expected. A: Not what I expected either. C: No wait, I think this is like the lead-in to the hardcore part, you can hear it. Well, it didn't speed up, really. I don't know if my ear is getting too damaged by this. The drummer isn't very good. He's better than me, but... Oh, here we go, my ear's getting damaged now. Ow, it hurts too. It has a lyric sheet, but I haven't heard any lyrics yet. L: Is he like singing in Belgian? C: English. It's hard to tell, but... it's good. I'd buy it. L: Really? How much would you give me for it? C: Maybe I wouldn't buy the second song. I wouldn't buy that guitar solo. Sometimes they're a little overly metal. A: I sorta like records cuz you don't have to rewind them.

SCREED *Point Of Confusion* LP

Canned Music/ 262 W 22 St #X/ New York NY 10011

L: I've already listened to this one. C: What do you think of it? L: It's hell of college radio except it's got lots of swear words. C: Sounds like a mix between U2 and the Doors. A: Not that part that was just on, that was like funky, almost like Red Hot Chili Peppers style. C: Now it sounds like heavy metal. A: I guess they're just real confused. C: Confused and confusing. Pleasant accordion. Sounds like Fred Flintstone. A: Now it's kind of Crampish. C: Well goshdam it, this guy's too hard to... L: Pigeonhole. C: Yeah, that too. The only way to yell at this guy is to say that by stretching himself out too much he's not anything at all. L: He needs a better haircut. A: He needs some hair, actually.

SWINGING ERUDITES *Unchained Parodies* LP

1 Dimensional

C: The one I really like is the Paul McCartney mess, massacre... Funny. A: I like this, it's so funny. C: Poignant satire. Definitely is. It strikes the heart, it just tags the base of your spine in kind of an unpleasant way, it makes you want to go... A: I like it! C: Yeah, I do too, it's awesome. You can leave it here for a while after we're done. A: They're copying but they're still original. C: Yeah, like an underground Weird Al Yankovic.

THE C*NTS *A Decade Of Fun* LP

Pravda/ 3728 North Clark St/ Chicago IL 60613

A: C*-N-T-S. How are you supposed to pronounce that? C: Is this like a memorabilia album? L: Who are these guys? I've never heard of them. C: I've never heard of them either, so... they must be good. I mean bad. A: Swanky guitar. C: Yeah, real jingly. Clean. A: I like it. C: Good old garage rock/roll, dude. Oh, they have organs too. A: Sort of like that song "Last night I took a walk in the dark..." L: Yeah, but it's not the 60s anymore. C: It definitely is really reminiscent of the 60s. L: They wish. C: You don't think it sounds 60s. L: You think it's a parody? C: No, I think they're real serious about it. L: That's the problem. C: Yeah, you're right, it might be a problem. But it sounds good. A: It sounds good. It's not punk. But it's something. C: It's punk, listen to these lyrics... "We will molest your wife and children. Yeah this is punk. L: No it's not, it's like a bunch of tweety organs. A: Sort of Herman's Hermits meet the Kingmen. L: Chicago surf music. Sewer surfing. A: Hey, I surfed in sewers before, but it was on a skateboard.

THE CREAMERS *Love, Honor & Obey* LP

Sympathy/ 4901 Virginia Ave/ Long Beach CA 90805

C: We've heard them before. A: The Creamers? Is that anything like Moo-Moo? (note to foreigners: a southern Humboldt band) C: Their album has too many bald people on the cover. A: This guy looks like a guy from Rocky Horror. C: They shred. But not in a good way. A: They don't seem like they'd be too good to see live. L: That's when they're best, when they're live. A: Have you seen them? L: Sure, everybody loves them. They're the great hope of L.A. C: Really? L.A.'s hopeless then. L: Get outa here. You don't like this band? C: No. I didn't like their other album either. L: They don't have another album, it's a 7". C: Well, I didn't like their 7". L: You don't even know what you're talking about. C: Yes I do. We gave it a bad review. L: We did not. C: Yeah we did. It didn't shred or kill balls. It sounded like... MDC. L: Al Flipside is going to come up here and beat you up. C: He likes these people. L: Everybody likes them. C: Why?

KINGS OF WYOMING LP

Com 3 Records/ 439 Bedford Ave/ Brooklyn NY 11211

L: I don't know where this one came from. I've never seen it before. C: I'm piking. A: Sort of like really bad Cure. C: Middle-aged copies of REM. It's hard to last through one song of this. Listen to this one: acoustic delight! A: Really bad acoustic delight. C: It sounds like a little kids record. L: It looks like a little kid drew this nice crayon cartoon on the cover. C: That's Picasso. L: I knew he should have stayed dead. C: It doesn't rock. Put it away. L: Did you know that Martin Sprouse said the reviews were "silly" last time we did them this way? C: Well, he's silly. A: Who's Martin Sprouse?

STRIPMINERS *Divorce Yourself* LP

Com 3 Records

A: How can you divorce yourself? L: Asa, you're too literal. A: OK, I won't be literal. Punk rock's not literal. L: It might help if they tuned their guitars. C: No, it wouldn't help. Sounds like the vocals are through a megaphone. This one sounds dirgy. The music's real bass-oriented. A: It sounded kind of flowing, the first song, but... L: That was just to trick you into listening to the rest. It's too bad we're all straight edge, cuz this sounds like good music to listen to on drugs. C: Well, I don't like this song as much as the first one. L: I wouldn't like this song if I had a headache. And if I listen to it long enough, I might get one. C: This record is in eight-land, on the radio scale. L: It should be ate, you mean. A: I'd say C+. C: It should be eaten. Get your grammar straight. Music to take aspirin by. A: They're not that bad. C: It's a compliment. A: Oh, I thought you meant like it gave you a headache. L: When Chris really parties down, aspirin is his drug of choice.

POOPSHOVEL *Opus Lengthemus* LP

Com 3 Records

C: OK, here we go. "Young People In Love Are Hardly Ever Hungry." No lyrics. We can't tell if they're fascist or not. A: Nice shoes. I like the shoes. I had those shoes once. They were good. Poopshovel. Music to walk your dog with. L: Com 3 records seem to feature prominent bass lines. Maybe they all have the same bassist. A: Sort of like... C: Jazzy. An imitation of Victim's

Family. A: No, what's that song, the Bumblebee...? C: "The Flight Of The Bumblebee?" A: Yeah, that's sorta it. C: Sounds like Aerosmith. Interesting use of horns. L: I don't think that's a horn. C: Yes it is. It's a trumpet. L: It's a cat being tortured. C: I say we turn that off and say... Poopmoshra. A: I think we should listen to it next time we walk your dog, Chris. C: Yeah, but my dog doesn't take walks. A: Exactly.

KLAUS FLOURIDE *Because I Say So* LP

Alternative Tentacles/ PO Box 11458/ San Francisco CA 94101

C: OK, here's the album from the former Dead Kennedy. A: Flouride? Where'd they get their names? C: Dictionary. L: No, there's like this company in New York you send away to, I think it's like \$20, and they give you a total punk name. Actually, I think you get three to choose from. A: Oh, really? C: It's really cool, yeah. L: I don't know if they're still in business. This was way back in the beginning of the 80s. Hey, say something about this record before the tape runs out. C: Well, this name of this song is "Bus Through The Barrier." L: Oh, not that one. I heard it on the radio. It goes on forever. It's the hit. C: From what I've heard of all the solo stuff from the different Dead Kennedys members, if they got back together now they'd be the world's new wave supergroup. This is like the opposite of reggae, but in a slowed-down disco vein. A: Yeah, I agree. C: It's tiring, but it's pleasant. A: Wait, it picks up though. C: It doesn't pick up, your mind kind of gets used to it. A: Kind of tech sounding, but not really. C: Oh, it's definitely tech. A: Sort of sounds like a tape being eaten. It's better than what my tapes sound like when they're eaten. I've never eaten a tape myself, though. C: It's possibly edible. A: I heard about that guy who ate a plane, so I'm sure you could eat a tape. L: Could you speed it up a little? C: OK, let's try it at 45. A: I like this! It sounds like... reggae! C: Actually it's like really bad polka music. A: Sort of Russian. Like someone playing with the tone on their accordion. C: Now I kind of want it to end. Cmon. Oh, it's slowing down. A: There's that tape-eating part again. C: This song is acoustic, kind of cowboyish. A: We have two kinds of music, country, and western. C: He doesn't sing very well. Klaus, keep your mouth shut please. A: Brush your teeth. C: Oh, a song of silence. Is this one of those subliminal messages? I will stop smoking. I will stop smoking. A: I do worship George Bush. C: It is subliminal messages. This is scary. I'd better turn this off before... before... A: I can't turn it off... C: Before that PMRC chick comes. What's her name? Tabatha Cook or something? A: What's PMRC? C: Pissed Mothers Rallying for Censorship.

EXODUS *Fabulous Disasters* LP

Combat

C: Oh no, a picture of Exodus. L: Now this ought to be good, I've been looking forward to this for months, ever since I got this record. A: I should sell this to some of the stoner dudes in my school. L: Hey, more social comment. A: Yeah, more bands pretending like they have a brain. C: It's got back-masking. L: This sounds like Jello Biafra. A: Depressing, Flouridish... Sounds sort of subliminal to me. Are you guys feeling anything new? C: Kill Larry. Good guitar. Exodus comes through with another rocker. They kind of sound like DRI when they're at 45. Cajun hell? L: They seem to have trouble getting going. Sounds like somebody keeps turning a starter trying to get the engine to turn over. C: I think we've heard enough of this. They've gone out to the final peak of metakdom. L: I haven't even heard a guitar solo yet, what are you talking about? C: I'll find one for you. L: Oh yeah? There are no guitar solos. C: There's one. And a very good one at that. L: Sounds like two or three guitar solos all at once. C: Sounds like about 19. L: I don't know why you guys are capping on this record anyway. C: Because I don't like it. L: I think you guys are being narrow-minded. C: I'm being narrow-minded. I don't like Exodus. L: Have you heard them before? C: Yes, my friend made me listen to a lot of them. A: They're sort of cannibalistic, that's the word for it. But they're not bad.

SQUANDERED MESSAGE *Life* LP

Destiny/ Oranienstr. 198/ 1000 Berlin 36/ West Germany

A: I think it's a new trend to put faces on the middle of a record so you when you put it on the turntable the spindle looks like a giant nose. C: A lot like Exodus. A: Sort of satanic. Oh, the cover even opens up. Good bass player. Who likes to jump in then air a lot. This looks like RKL. L: Are you reviewing the record or the cover? C: I don't know. L: Well, you guys are going to have to say it all because... C: Why, you can't say anything about it? L: Because Flo was in this band and he always says real nice things to me. C: This is probably one of the strongest albums I've heard this year so far. A: It's got lots of hope and I think it will go far. C: I think these guys' best move would be to move to the US. L: Like what part of the US? C: New York? Maybe Boston? L: Yeah, I think maybe they could play with Slapshot. C: I think they'd play really well with Slapshot. Slapshot being one of our favorite bands. A: And hi Flo, how are you doing? C: Have we heard enough?

GANG GREEN *181BAU* LP

Roadracer

C: Here we go, here's a real Boston band. That sold their soul to rock and roll. A: That's really interesting, because I heard lots of disgusting things about Gang Green on the bus this morning. L: The band or the disease. A: Not the band. Oh, they're skaters. Gang Green can't skate. L: This rocks. A lot better than Slapshot. C: It's real metallish. But pleasant. L: It's not even metallish. C: Yeah it is. IT IS! A: We don't have any opinions, Chris. L: He's really dominant, isn't he? C: No I'm not! I'M NOT DOMINANT! Stop saying I am! Or I'll hurt you both! L: He's undergone a real transformation since the moon went into Scorpio. C: STOP IT! I'M NOT! STOP YELLING AT ME! L: If there's any hope for Boston, Gang Green is probably it. C: But

their earlier stuff was stronger, though. A: Snazzy Budweiser cover. L: Yeah, but Budweiser's the most evil beer in the western world. Did you know Budweiser has this chemical in it that makes people stupid. C: Really? That explains a lot. A: You know what? My dad has been drinking Budweiser for years and years and years. L: Well, some people it takes longer to act on than others, but you should warn your friends and family about that. C: Gang Green hell of rips. If you're into that kind of stuff. But we're not, except for those two guys... L: Well, we almost kind of are... If we weren't straight edge, we would drink lots of good beer, not Budweiser... C: Yeah, that's their main problem. A: A 79 1/2, C+ or B-

WRECKING CREW *Balance of Terror LP*

Hawker/ 225 Lafayette St #709/ New York NY 10012

L: Uh-oh, this is from Boston too. A: Could you imagine singers with Bostonian accents? L: What do you mean, like loud and stupid? A: Bostonian is so fucked up. Loud and really grammar-fucked. L: Very, uh, interesting vocals here. C: They have a spiritual adviser. L: Sounds like they need one. A: "Love sucks," is that what they're saying? I can't hear the words. C: "Out of touch," maybe? A: I think I've seen them in *Thrasher* before. Have you heard Leeway? L: Not really. They're bigtime New York metalcore. A: What about Underdog? L: Not really either. They're big favorites of Lint. A: Of what? L: Lint. A: Who's Lint? L: Lint from Operation Ivy. A: Yeah, hi, my name's Lint, and my nickname's, uh, Belly Buuton. C: These guys are really hep on Slapshot. They like Slapshot. L: They like Slapshot? C: Well, they thank them. L: They could be thanking them for making Wrecking Crew look good. A: Maybe they're hockey players. C: They have a spiritual adviser, though. L: Yeah, so did Operation Ivy. C: Yeah, but theirs wasn't Japanese. A: You know who else has a spiritual adviser? The Cult. The Cult are like Zen. L: Whatever the singer has stuck in his throat, he should take out. C: They have surprisingly good lyrics considering the bands that they thank. Like they have a song "Guts and Glory," "I don't wanna hear your war stories..." It surprises me, with them thanking Slapshot. A: Are Slapshot's lyrics like pudly? C: They're like... L: "Shut up and listen or I'll beat you up with a hockey stick..." A: Oh, is that it? C: That's about the gist of them.

NO FOR AN ANSWER *A Thought Crusade LP*

Hawker

L: California's answer to New York straight edge hardcore. C: They're called "the ultimate hardcore band..." L: By their record label? C: Oh, OK. L: I actually know an intelligent person who likes this record. C: Well, maybe it's your good. L: Did you study the lyrics? C: Not yet. But if this is hardcore, then I'm into new age. L: I think the singer has a stomach ache. C: Are you sure that person that liked them is really intelligent? L: Walter Glaser! They don't come much smarter than that. C: He likes this? You think there's anything we can do for him? L: He got a girlfriend. C: Does she like this? L: I doubt it. Can you imagine any girl liking this? C: That's a pretty sexist thing to say. L: No, that shows that girls are smarter. C: Oh. That's pretty sexist too. But probably more true. A: Listen to this, is this straightedge lyrics or what: "A young man drinks, a young man dies, a young man's vision blurs, a young man dies, without a reason, without a reason" L: Well, that pretty much sums up the human condition. C: A man drinks! A man dies! A man turns on No For An Answer and survives! If I was a worried parent, I'd get my kids No For An Answer. They could sit home and not drink and not take drugs and listen to music that would hurt their ears.

BILLY ATWELL *Ferret In A China Shop LP*

Bobok, Ltd./ PO Box 43787/ Tucson AZ 85733

C: Ferret in a china shop? L: I don't like the concept. C: Ferrets in china shops? L: I don't like the concept of Billy Atwell. C: Bad concept, buddy, what about the music, isn't that what's important? A: All right, it sucks, tum it off. L: Cheesy Elvis Costello knockoffs. C: Oh, he's from the Inbred. A: He's from Alderpoint? L: No, different Inbred. It doesn't sound like the Inbred so far. C: No. There's a member of... who? ...that lives out in Alderpoint... L: John Entwistle? C: No, from that band... Flipper. L: Sort of like King Crimson. C: This is sad. L: You mean sad like pathetic or like melancholy. C: I mean sad like I wanna cry. L: Well go right ahead, let it out. C: Boo hoo. I don't know about this, it's definitely a departure from his previous musical efforts and a pretty goshdam unpositive one at that. Oh, heavy-duty laughter here. A: It's not even heavy-duty laughter, it's like kung fu theater dubbed laughter. L: If this were muzak, what kind of environment would you play it in? C: A little pink room. With padded sides. No windows. A: I think it should be the theme song for Sunday morning cartoons. L: A toy shop for emotionally disturbed children. C: I'll have to get Billy Atwater killed. L: Atwell. C: Atwater, Atwell... If his last name was Atwater, that would explain a lot. A: Who's Atwater? C: Lee Atwater. A: Is he a pud? L: President Bush's helper. A: Oh, maybe it's his son.

COMMON AILMENTS OF MATURITY *Smoldering Lunchbox LP*

PO Box 51/ Boston MA 02141

L: Common Ailments Of Maturity? Sounds like we're off to a bad start already. A: Too long of a name. L: Arrghhh!!! C: I like this. L: Another megaphone. C: It wouldn't be nice to listen to it a lot. Someone from the college radio scene getting really harsh. L: This one's from Boston too. Do you detect a Slapshot influence? C: Oh, definitely. A: Sort of drummy, sort of scummy, and bummy and gummy. Like Gummi Bears, that was the raddest cartoon. L: Your attention span is flagging. How many hundred more records do we have? I don't see any major reason why this record should exist. C: It could be pleasant. It could be. It's definitely drug-induced. A: It's definitely skull-piercing. It hurts.

LARD *The Power Of Lard 12" EP*

Alternative Tentacles

C: Oh, we're gonna get our ears hurt now. A: What's this worm thing on the cover? I like that. C: It's a sand worm. A: Looks *Dune*-influenced. C: Here is Jello Biafra's latest hitmaker. A: Is this the one he did with DRI? L: Actually it was DOA. A: Whatever, same thing. C: I don't think Jello and DRI have made the connection yet. This is his techno-dirge-rap debut. A: You could break dance to it, but nobody break dances anymore, so I guess it's pointless. L: Not even at South Fork High School? C: Actually, yeah, Sky used to break dance. This is almost as good as German marching music. A: I always thought break dancing was lame. L: Piquant social commentary, but I don't know how often I could listen to it. C: Someone told me he really liked it. This kid from England. L: Oh, well that sort of explains it. C: Yeah, maybe it does. His other favorite band is No Means No. This is good. Sounds like a redone version of an old Dead Kennedys song. L: Played under water. C: Without any real instruments. There's only three songs, I think this is the last one. A: I don't mind it actually. C: Let's try it at 45. A: I like this. C: Sounds better at 45. L: It does, but even at 45, are you ready for like 20 minutes of this? C: No. A: Alvin Biafra. C: It grows on you, but after a while it gets to be too much. I could recommend this to somebody. If I was really mad at them.

8TH ROUTE ARMY *Chernobyl Cookbook LP*

1 Dimensional/ POB 923/ North Hampton MA 01080

A: This looks like a cookbook. L: Strangely enough, that's the title. C: I like it! L: Still, I think we should play it at the right speed. A: I liked it better on 45. L: On the plus side, this is on the same label as the *Swinging Erudites*. A: Yeah, I love them. C: That doesn't mean anything. Everybody can make bad choices. Eyeball was on the Lookout label. L: Are you implying something about Eyeball? C: I wasn't saying anything about Eyeball. L: Do you think Eyeball deserved to be on a better label? C: No, I wasn't saying... I don't, uh, like Eyeball that much... personally... It's rockabillyish. Their hair proves it. L: Eyeball? C: No, 8th Route Army, dummy. Can't you pay attention? A little frantic, kind of. L: Two bad signs already. C: I've heard this before. L: You probably heard it because they sent at least two copies to every fanzine and radio station in the world. This one's a cover of a Top 40 song from about 1965. It's about how after he works hard every day he's gonna go home and buy his baby lots of things with the money he earned. C: Ear-turning. Belly-wrenching. But clean and clear like a mountain stream at the same time, you know what I'm saying? L: It's true that there's not enough yodeling in punk rock today. A: Like MSG and beef jerky. C: That's what it sounds like? A: Yeah, I guess it does.

ALIEN SEX FIEND *Another Planet LP*

Caroline

C: Alien Sex Fiend. This beautiful breast picture on the cover. If you don't like the album you can hang it up on your wall. A: Lots of disco influence. C: It's death rock disco. L: Not our kind of disco. A: "Sample My Sausage"? "Bun-Ho"? C: It hurts my ears. Sounds better at 45. Bad copy of Nina Hagen. L: Are we still on 45? C: No. Sounds like it though. I'd rather listen to Cringer. L: Yeah, Cringer has a new album out that we don't have here. C: Why not? L: I guess we're not on the A list for promo copies, gee, I wonder why. C: Well, why don't we do an absentee review? L: It's great. Anything Cringer does is great. C: I would like to hear it. I think they should send it to *Puddle* magazine. L: Oh yeah, but what about Alien Sex Fiend? C: Oh... That was something... we didn't like...

SDT *Sonic Disruption Theory LP*

555 Broderick #5/ San Francisco CA 94117

L: This is not at all what I expected. C: I like it a lot more than I thought I would. L: I thought they were gonna be like noise-rock. C: Me too. I listened to this once before and didn't like it as much as I do now. I guess I was pretty close-minded then and now I'm real rad and open-minded. L: A common ailment of maturity. C: They should play in Garberville. A: You know who's really good, is Feodbag, have you heard of them? L: Yeah, but we're on SDT now. A: They're good, we already expressed how we liked them. L: What's most amazing of all is that they're from San Francisco. C: The musical wasteland. I think they should move to the East Bay if they wanna get anywhere. L: It's funny, the only San Francisco band that Gary Indiana didn't write about. I don't know, this tune's a little too much stop-and-starty. It might make me go into, what do you call those things...? C: Convulsions? L: Yeah. C: Well, SDT rocks the house. L: Good, Cammie will still speak to me, too. C: And maybe she'll write me a letter.

MASS TANGO LP

Ohio Records, 154 E 7 St/ New York NY 10009

L: Do we have to listen to this one? This band is FEATURED ON THE 1988 CMJ MUSIC MARATHON CD! VOLUME 12!!! C: Oh wow. Sounds like they deserve to be too. I hope they make a good life for themselves with their poignant heart-rendering tunes that really suck too. L: That's funny, Ohio Records is in New York City. C: It shows this record can't be good. Which it isn't. A really sickening meld of guitars and synthesizers that forms something that's kind of... L: They've got a girl singer... C: ...80s gibberish. L: Let's listen to "Dreaming of Jane," since I have a friend named Jane. Is this it? C: This is it. L: Sounds like having nightmares of Jane. C: Having nightmares of Mass Tangos. What kind of name is a Mass Tango? L: I think it means we should all be dancing. Instead of sitting around listening to boring college rock radio. A: Could you dance to that?

THE BLAGGERS *On Yer Toez LP*

OH! Records/ 3 Machen St/ Grangetown/ Cardiff CFI 7NT/ UK
 C: This was produced by Christian Lunch. L: Is Christian Lunch a person? A: I had Christian lunch once. L&C: You already said that! C: I'm having déjà-vu right now. These guys are really good. L: This is almost a reason that England shouldn't be sunk into the sea. C: Almost. L: If they didn't have those funny accents, they could almost move here. C: Reminds me a lot of Sham 69. L: This is excellent, a lot of melody, you could almost sing along with it, go whoa-whoa, jump up and down... C: Yeah, good attitude, good music. I think we should hear "Skateboard Bop." L: That's not it, is it, what's he saying? "Fuck your mom and fuck your dad..." C: "Cuz we're hardcore and we are rad..." I like these lyrics. We love the Blaggers. L: I don't even care if these guys are from England, this is the winner of the whole bunch so far. A: I like them cuz they have a song about skating and I like skating. L: Skating is lame, but I'll forgive them that.

RAINING VIOLETS *Ocean Of Dreams LP*

Certain Records/ 51 W 8 St/ New York NY 10024

C: This sounds like a definite Cure imitation. Omigod, it's worse. Pat Benatar. A: Yeah, that's exactly what I was thinking. L: Bad drugs. A: Pat Benatar. C: Bonnie Raitt. A: Pat Benatar, or what's her name, Joan Jett. C: Joan Jett on psychedelics. A: No, Joan Jett not on psychedelics. Trying to be mainstream. If you were mainstream, would you be a salmon? C: No, probably a mackerel. A: No, don't you understand? You'd swim against the tide... C: I'd be a mackerel. A: I'd be a flounder. L: You are floundering. A: No, I'd be a piranha. Or a puff fish. L: In a sea of inadequate metaphors. A: Nice cover. C: Do we have to keep listening to this? L: Until you say something intelligent about it, you must keep listening. C: It sucks. L: C'mon, can we be more specific? C: It sucks bad. A: I like this song, actually. L: Good, take it off then. C: Do you really like that song? A: That stuff in the background, the strings. I can't say much for the foreground. L: It makes me want to go shopping at Safeway. C: It makes me want to blow up Safeway.

STOREMAGE *Jon Dave Tomson LP*

Notlin g to Loos / Da vesteters tr. 40 / Hannover 9 1 / West Germany

L: Bob Dylan. C: John Cougar Mellencamp. L: Have you got it on the right speed. C: Yep, I swear. L: This is on "Nothing to Loose" Records. Another German special. A: Looks like Sid's playing drums. A: It's somewhat pleasant. C: No, it's good, I think. L: Well, I heard some of this before and I liked it, but I don't like this song. A: It sort of makes me want to have a Cheech and Chong film festival. L: Now that's something that's been missing from Garberville for a long time. A: I just watched a Cheech and Chong movie not too long ago. L: Did you know Cheech and Chong went anti-drug? C: When? A: No they aren't. L: They're going around making anti-drug messages. C: Not together. A: No, cuz I just saw Chong in *High Times*. L: And he was hell of wasted? C: Yeah, Tommy Chong was, they had a big old spread of him smoking a bud joint and holding all these buds. L: All right, next song, and stop digressing. Do you think people who are trying to find out about records are going to want to listen to you correct me about Cheech and Chong? A: Sure, why not? C: It's really poppy. Kind of makes me want to go pick poppies too. A: Just as long as you don't smoke them. C: I like this, I'd buy this record. L: No you wouldn't. C: You're right, I'd borrow it from you and listen to it.

THE CROWD *Big Fish Stories LP*

Flipside/ PO Box 363/ Whittier CA 90608

L: Now this gets a good review, I don't care what you guys say. C: I like what I've heard of this band before. L: You've heard this song on the radio at least twice, cuz I played it. A: I like it, actually I really do like it. C: They're versatile. They look a little old. L: They are a little old. They're like 30 or something. C: Oh dude, they're up there. What's your secret? L: About what? C: About staying young and trim and fit and all that? L: But I'm not. C: But you look it, so you should give them your secret. A: I've heard this song before. C: Me too. It sounds like that one song by Barry Manilow. You know, like the "Copacabana." A: You know what this reminds me of? The Talking Heads. L: That's kind of an insult. Talking Heads should... C: Die. L: ...be sent back to yuppie hell where they belong. But as for the Crowd... C: They're good from what we've heard. L: A good record, plus they're on Flipside, which is another good reason to buy it.

FOOLISH AMERICAN QUARTET *Silly Dreams 7" EP*

(Don't ask me why bands don't put their address on their records)

A: I've seen them live. There was this redneck kid on my bus this morning and he was talking about how his sister is such a whore that when you yell into her it echoes. L: Huh? A: You know what I don't understand is why rednecks like rap. C: I thought these guys were hardcore punk. They sound a lot like Soul Asylum to me. L: Problem #1. A: I like it. I like Soul Asylum. I think I like Soul Asylum cuz it's good to skate to. C: Not as good as Cryptic Slaughter. I hurt myself skating and listening to Cryptic Slaughter more times than anything in the whole world, it was like ARRGH!, OK, I'll do it, this music will make me not die, and I didn't die. Anyway, about this, it's quality, it's well done, but it doesn't stick to my ribs. A: It's good. It sticks to mine. It'll actually grow there, like the rib God took from... C: It'll grow like a mold... like a cancer... sliming in and twisting your cells into thoughtless monsters... A: Shut up, you morphodite. C: That's what this music does and you just can't see it. L: Sounds like it's got a cellophane gloss over everything. C: I hate cellophane, let's turn it off. A: I like it, give it a 90. C: Out of 1000.

SHAMROCK SHAKES *House of Jap 7" EP*

Final Jeopardy/ 324 Stanton Ave #3/ Ames IA 50010

C: This is the baddest band to hit the airwaves since... A: Shamrock Shakes? I had one in McDonald's once. This is good to skate to. C: This is killer, this is awesome. This is the best band, one of the best bands we've heard today. "Lucifer don't live there anymore..." L: Anti-satanic, even... A: Yeah, their whoa-whoas are good, I really like their whoa-whoas. C: Yeah! These guys are rockin'! Striking poignant lyrics. In a soulful tuneful manner. L: Sort of a more wholesome and sweet-tempered Screeching Weasel from Iowa. C: Yeah. Whatever you say. A: The last real hope for Iowa. Iowa sucks. I had it on my geography test. C: Iowa is a bad place. Idaho, on the other hand, is good. Idaho is where potatoes come from. These guys should be Shamrock Potatoes. L: Sample lyric: "She likes everything on Dischord/ She says Ian is a hunk/ She used to be a prom queen/ Before she was a punk." C: That's "Hardcore Love?" They've got awesome lyrics. This is good, we don't need to listen to anymore. A: They're just the raddest. I give them A- or B+. C: No way! I give them... L: Ill say A+. C: ...97,000,000 out of 10 is what



LOOKOUT RECORD REVIEW DEPARTMENT
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their score is. L: They should move to California. C: They should. L: And we could trade about 12 of our California bands to Iowa for them.

SONS OF ISHMAEL *Sing Generic Crap 7" EP*

1979 Yonge St #5/ Toronto ON M4S 1Z6/ Canada

L: They're from Meaford, Ontario, which is like the Laytonville of Canada. A: The name sort of reminds me of Menudo. C: Here we go, sing generic crap. A live album? Sort of like Sewer Trout... A: Sort of like sauerkraut with a side of coke slaw. C: That was a fast song. Thanks to those whirlwind guitars. A: I like whirlwind guitars. C: This sounds kind of like Sükký. "Jimmy Swaggart Stuck His Pee-Pee In My Poo-Poo?" They have a cover of "Louie Louie." They must be good. L: That's the worst sign possible. A: Is this the Jimmy Swaggart song? C: Yeah, but it's not a joke, it's like not funny. A: Serious. Goshdam. C: They have a Victim's Family flyer on the label. It must be good. A: OK, we give 'em a C just for that. C: I give them a, a B+. Definite B+. A: The first side isn't that good. C: I like the cover. It looks like the Bay City Rockers. Another great band. L: Rollers? C: Rollers, Rockers. Whatever.

WHOPPERS TASTE GOOD 7" EP

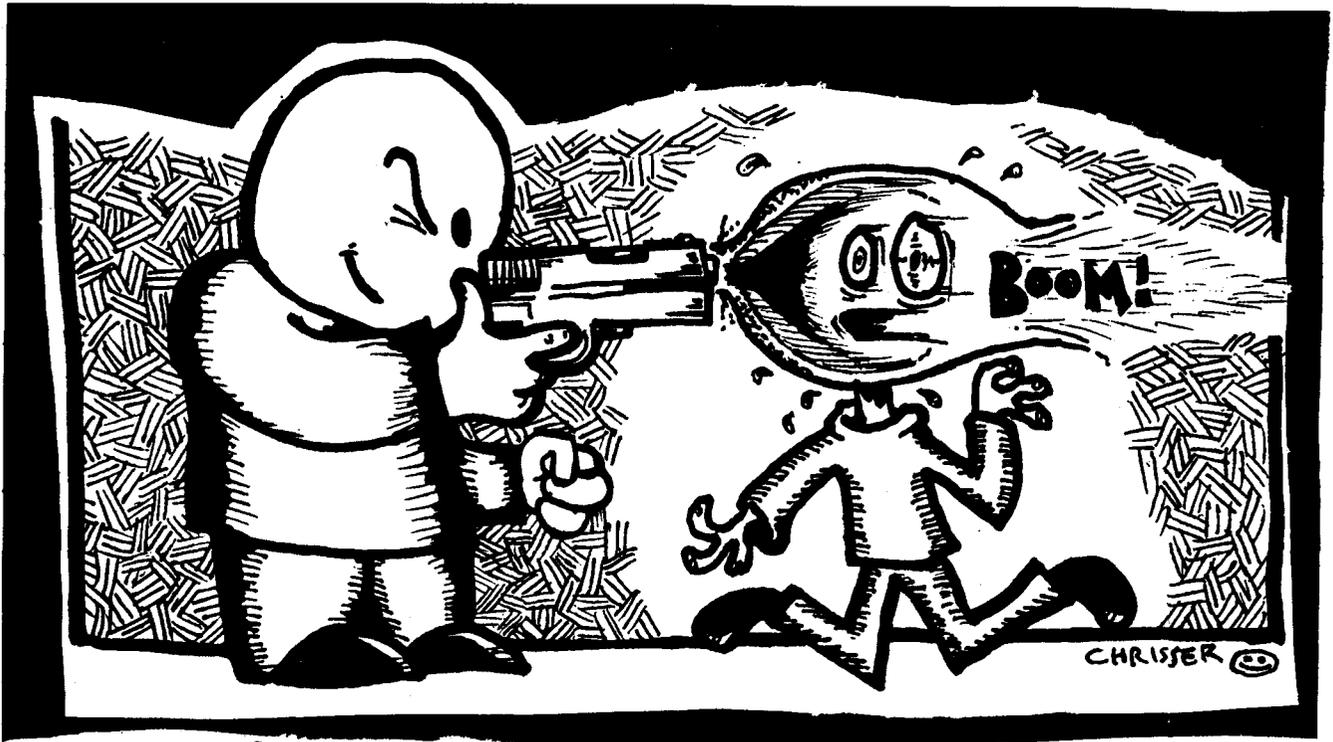
7435 Hazelcrest #B/ Hazelwood MO 63042

L: When does the song start? This is supposed to be great funnypunk, but I'm not laughing. Maybe it's because I think Whoppers taste about as good as Budweiser. Try it at the right speed. C: Unfunny funnycore? Sounds like Motorhead. I don't like it. Not pleasant. Not pleasant one bit. They shouldn't have a name that good. L: It's not that good of a name. C: I like the name. A: I don't like Whoppers, actually. L: No, nobody likes Whoppers. A: I think they taste like mothballs. L: Burger King rapes the rain forest. A: Burger King's not bad. C: Burger King is bad. A: No it's not, it tastes good. L: Burger King is fascist. A: So they're fucking assholes but they have good food. L: They put Coor's beer in their hamburgers.

SINK *God Loves You 7" EP*

Vinyl Solution/ 39 Hereford Rd/ London W2/ England

C: Ooh, they sent a sticker for me. L: For you? A: For us. L: Sounds almost American. C: Where are they from? L: London, I guess. A: What time is it? C: That clock is slow. It's after six. L: I guess that has to wrap it up. But what about Sink? C: Sink is sunk, Sink sank, but in a good way. A: It schlunk, schmunk, punk, did a slam dunk. L: We gotta go, we better do this one again next issue. Sounds good, actually.



The

LOOKOUT! RECORDS

Update

Some major changes are happening at Lookout Records, well, one major change, anyway. My partner and co-founder David Hayes is leaving the company at the end of the year.

Lookout will continue to do what it's been doing all along, and hopefully to do a good job of it. David's leaving is a big loss; his graphic and organizational talents had a lot to do with whatever success we've had so far.

Needless to say, I'm not thrilled by this development, and I'm not sure I even fully understand it. Much of what David is doing with his new label, Very Small Records, is stuff that Lookout could or would have done anyway. But if he feels it necessary to do things entirely on his own, then I respect that decision and wish him all the best.

No one could really take David's place at Lookout, but a couple people have already stepped in to help out, especially in the graphics end of things. Most notable among them is Chris Appelgren, who's also playing a major role in producing this magazine now. I've also had help from John Yates, Aaron Cometbus and Robert Egplant, and offers of help from several other people.

The first post-David releases will be albums from Neurosis and Green Day, out sometime in February, and there will probably also be a couple of 7"s at that time, though I don't want to name bands yet as we're still talking about it.

As for David, he's already put out a Corrupted Morals 7", two 10" compilations (one of which includes the previously unreleased Lookouts classic "Big Green Monsters"), and a Soup 7". I also understand he's planning a 7" compilation featuring Filth, Fuel, Thumper, and Monsula which should be sensational.

If you want to contact David about his projects, you can write to him at PO Box 8223/ Emeryville CA 94662. The Lookout address remains the same, probably into infinity.

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(MORE OR LESS)

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PUNK!

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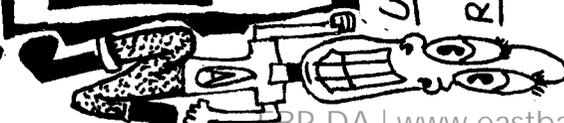


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