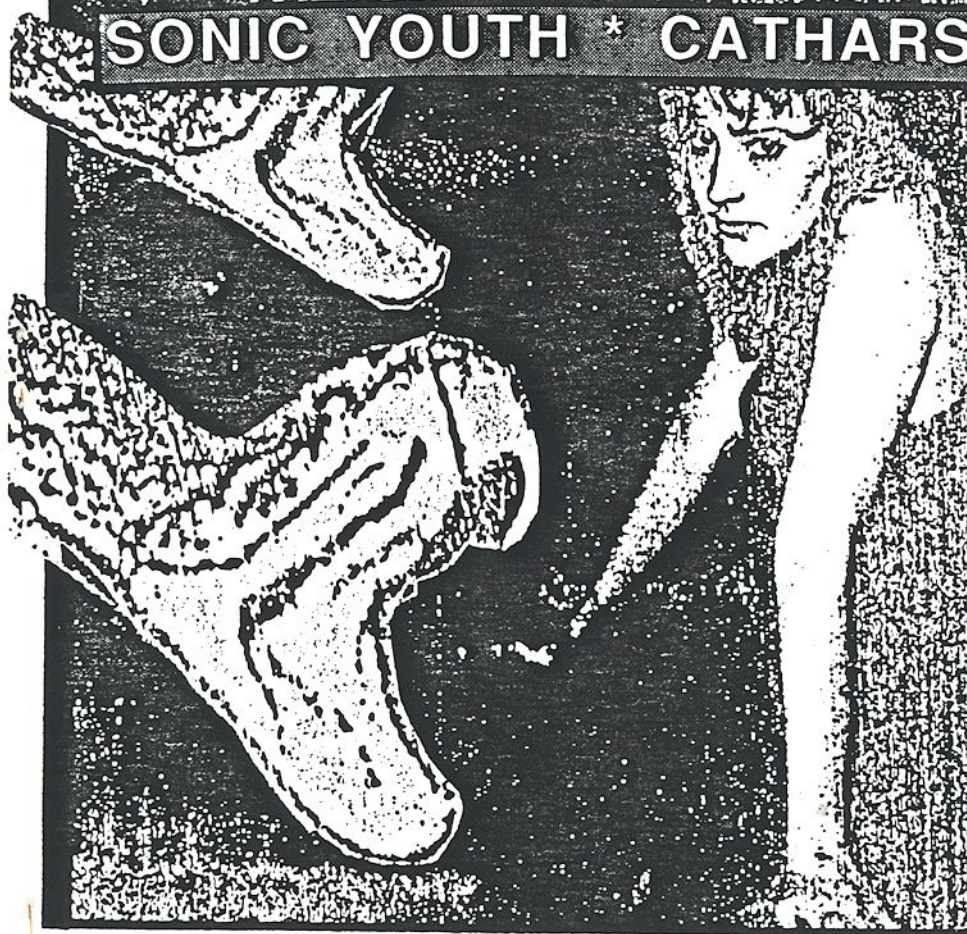


WINTER 1988

chrome 1

ON FIRE

SONIC YOUTH * CATHARSIS



SPIRAL JETTY/ LYDIA LUNCH/ HIPSHY/ BILL CULLEN'S
PERSONAL HELL/ JOHN QUINN'S BRAIN/ DIVINE HORSES

N.B. MUSIC / FINE ART / 'HUMOR'
SENSITIVE LOVE POETRY / MORE !!!

chrome

O N F I R E

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CHROME ON FIRE is published four times a year for as cheaply as possible, with of course a mind towards the most sublime content we can manage. Some stuff in here is probably true, and the rest is opinions, so fuck you if you don't agree. Write a letter -- day-glo crayolas and ostrich feathers dipped in menstrual blood welcome, but no #2 pencil on that stationery with the dots in the middle of each line. Art and manuscripts and tapes and party invitations acceptable, but if we aren't interested, it'll probably get ignored. Write to: COF, 39 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. Subscriptions are available for the foolhardy; \$5 gets you a year's worth, plus the sublime giveaway cassette compilation CHROME ON FIRE #1 featuring some of the best shit around here including music by DESTROY ALL BANDS, CATHARSIS, and THE FALSE VIRGINS, and words by JOHN RICHEY, KEVIN HAYES and more... just the cassette will set you back \$4. Cash or M.O.s, please (what, you think we got enough bucks for a checking account??!!). Zines in trade fine. If you've read this far you must not have much of a life, really, or else like me you simply MUST have something to read on the crapper... try some real literature next time.

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12. CATHARSIS: *NJ deathrock or just a bunch of friendly unpretentious guys, only one of whom has ever stuck a needle in his arm? Find out in this glamorous and exclusive Q&A session.*

9. TERRORS OF SLEEP: *prose/poetry by the thoroughly untroubled Kevin Hayes...*

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26. MY BRAIN: *talented young artist John T. Quinn III regales us with MORE tales of his personal idiosyncracies and mental problems.*

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COVER

The ever-hot Tracey Jayne of The False Virgins plus twin brothers Philo & Vance, of the Freeze-Dried Reptiles.

TJ PROOFED, & GAVIN AND DAVE ADDED TECHNICAL EXPERTISE. KATHY O ALSO HELPED. THEY ALL SWELL.

GOOD LORD, IT'S **ALIVE!**

OR, YES, THERE ARE THINGS TO DO OUTSIDE YR ROOM ...

LYDIA'S UGLY BEAUTY: HAND THIS CHICK A CROWN OF THORNS, PLEASE ...

SOUTH OF YOUR BORDER (New Theater, NYC, Jan 6, 1988) Yeah, well, it was pretty predictable when we first walked in, there's everybody's favorite art bimbo in a torn-up dress, suspended in some kinda torture doohickey, and she's already torturing us with that high-pitched Jewish-American punk princess whine, more or less what you'd expect from a Lunch performance ... the rest of the scene was more of the same. Emilio Cubeiro (the guy with mommy's credit card number in "Fingered") strides on with a really bogus Latin American accent (get it, nudge, nudge) and tells our heroine that she's stuck here in this nameless Latin American country where she was lured for a poetry reading and now Che Got No Rights, Baby, No Rights Down Here, and then he simulates fucking her and slicing her up a little and Lydia replays that rape scene that she's been doing forever and seems fated to do ten thousand times more and sure it chills and thrills but everything grows old through repetition even honesty and pain ... Yeah, but this show doesn't. What seems so easy to pass off at first goes through so many fucking permutations, both harrowing and intentionally humorous, that before you know it you've tossed aside your cynicism at her patented little anti-art act and you're reliving her molestations at the hands of her father with her, either as her or Dad depending where your head's at, you're cataloguing your own most private and inescapable fantasies & perversions as she exposes her own and then as Cubeiro lurches around in his black hood as serial killer/malevolent daddy/ nameless cog in a machine/macho terrorist it's not just him anymore it's you ... and me, too.

Cubeiro basically portrays all the men who have made L.L.'s life a living hell ... Dad, tricks (hell, wasn't that what we were, sitting there watching the famous Fish-white Flesh getting battered and spattered in the 3-D-one and only?), the authorities, etc. Lunch, meanwhile, is only Lunch. But goddam it proves enough. Her storytelling raps are rattle-snake hypnotic - particularly the one about getting fucked in a NYC club's john with a beer bottle shortly after arriving in the Big City as a young runaway - and her acting, though often mannered in an amateur kinda way, wins you over with its force and passion and yeah, dignity, because that's what this whole thing's really about, keeping your dignity and your personality intact even when the bastards are nailing you to the cross ... even when you're nailing your own bad self up there. *So It Kills Me, So What*, Lydia's been saying to us for a while now, making it both motto and mantra ... Lydia the victim, Lydia the victimizer, the self-proclaimed poet-whore. What she attempts to do is easily written off from the one-handed fans in the cheap seats, or by those who can't see their own diseases reflected in a cracked mirror, their own eyes peering out from under a blonde-bitch



wig ... but to anybody who dares to confront and wrestle with demons and angels, this woman's a better example than any twenty drunken asshole Irish poets or British pop stars with haircuts they had to pay more money to get than you had for food this week ... Porn queen? Sure she is. Lydia Lunch is queen of the New Pornography, the pornography that details fear and hate and isolation and repression and oppression and rubs your numb stupid face in it because other wise you'd just jerk off to Marilyn Chambers and The Lime Spiders and The Misfits and Eddie Murphy and every other spew that ultimately finds its way to your TV screen and VCR or your local bar and becomes another safe little experience to snort and suck and lay back for and not ever have to even think about at all ...

Music by Lydia and Thirlwell was more of that rinkydink gothic stuff which is half-effective and half fucking ridiculous. Sets start out real Downtown trashy and build up to a sorta Cecil B. DeMille in Hell motif. Karen Finley, semi-talented Downtown Filthead, contributes the voice of the psychiatrist, and damn, she doesn't get to curse or indulge in Post-Modern Theatre Antics 101 even once. Still, this was an experience far more powerful and visceral than any "rock and roll show" that immediately comes to my mind; if you willfully missed out on it, I think you don't know shit about shit, jack ...

A.O.D.: GEE!

A.O.D./RAGING SLAB (Court Tavern, New Brunswick, Jan 2, 1988)

Goddam, but that Keith Hartell is some bass player. And I like the way he slips his jeans back on after the last encore right there on stage, fear-

ful of being seen anywhere but there in those foo-foo tiger-print spandex tights. Good idea, Keith . . .

DR. BENWAY: PERHAPS UNDEAD, BUT STILL TRIUMPHANT

"WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD" AIDS BENEFIT (Beacon Theater, Nov. 19) Yeah, the stars were all over pumpin' Paul Simon (s

hand) at the hotsy-tot Madison Square benefit, while the trooly AVANT-GARDE assembled here to combat that most dreaded and sexy of diseases. Phillip Glass played a pretty piano piece, and you were almost ready to forgive him for being responsible for all those New Age slabs of sonic shit inhabiting valuable vinyl space in your favorite record store. Debbie Harry and Chris Stein debuted Tiger Balm, who are just as inept and ill-rehearsed as the on-stage Blondie ever was; hey, I'll admit to a certain chill when the former disco diva crooned her way through "In The Flesh," but mostly I squirmed, particularly during a thoroughly, um, *ill-considered* cover of "Institutionalized." I'd like to think they were kinda makin' fun of latter-day hardcore, I really, really would . . . but then they brought out Joey Ramone and damn I coulda sworn I was at home watching "Solid Gold." The long and the short of it is I hope both parties have invested heavily in IRAs.

Laurie Anderson, on the other hand, who this party once despised with an unreasoning passion, did two songs that convinced me that where Art-rock is concerned, sometimes it takes a degree of Falling Out of Favor for the small-brained (me, in this case) to be able to assess somebody without prejudice. The lady is funny, oblique, droll, all those things you wish you were. And the songs are a virus unto themselves.

Husker Du canceled due to illness (my, how appropriate), leaving us to only wonder what an acoustic set by the Minneapolis chapter of the Fat Boys could be like (And gee, aren't acoustic sets all the rage now since the Knitters? Divine Horsemen, Soul Asylum, etc. Still waiting for the Sonic Youth acoustic set.) This left as the highlight of the night, among all these Avant-stage-hogs, the twenty-five or so minute appearance by a living dead William Burroughs, who had to be walked out and sat down at the infamous card table, and led away again at the end. Rumor has it he's shooting that stuff again, out there in Kansas, but don't look at me, I certainly wouldn't know . . . Anyone who came to see Burroughs in the gray flesh before it evaporates completely probably made it just in the nick of time. There was the definite feeling in the air that one gets arriving half-an-hour or so early for a Viewing. But then he opened his mouth, and everything around was lame in comparison. The only one to address the issue of AIDS and drug abuse directly, he was also the only one with balls enough to admit to still being in favor of the latter. Looking at what it's done for him, it's hard to disagree. That Midwestern bray was as strong as ever, as he barked out assorted aphorisms, tossed out a blithe version of "Twilight's Last Gleaming," and closed with a rather moving meditation on the nature of the Universe from "The Western Lands," his latest novel. You could stand all the Debbie Harrys and Chris Steins and Bob Moulds in the world snout-to-butt and they still wouldn't reach as high as this highly eccentric old genius. One might note, too, that he probably got the biggest hand, although he plowed straight on through the nervous titters over his mule-stubborn defense of heroin and semi-tongue-in-cheek explanation of AIDS as a CIA plot.

As he stood in the rather smugly self-aware Avant-Garde chorus line at the close of the show, politely taking his bows, you couldn't help but think: when this guy's gone, there ain't gonna be another one.



CLIFF FROM MOBY DICK

THAR SHE BLOWS

MOBY DICK (Court Tavern, Dec 18, 1987)

Moby Dick took the stage for only the second time and rolled my head around like the ocean with their big-ass sound. Two drummers, one mean bass and guitar -- visually cool, and mighty powerful audio-wise.

Kara Thrasher and Ethan Stein set the primal war-like beat on the double kits with ex-Pleased Youth drummer Greg Walker hoppin' round like some 21st Century Mongoloid with his bass. Singer/guitarist Cliff Livingston's rearranged version of Dolphin Room fave "Admit It" never sounded better than it does with this rhythm section lurching behind him, and tunes like "A Break," "Bull Dog," and "Dead Cousin" make good of Cliff the local contender for Best White Rapper title.

The best thing about this group, honestly, is that they defy any kind of tired musical categorizations. About the only thing I can think of is early Bad Brains meet early Allman Brothers, and that's mighty tired itself.

Fuck it, just slip me some more Dick.
--KEANE

THAR THEY BLOW

THE REPLACEMENTS (Beacon Theater, Nov 21, 1987) I ran into Sonic Youth in the lobby after the

show, Replacement fans streaming past them in blissed-out ignorance, still swooning over how manful-yet-vulnerable that lead geek with the jumpsuit and the theatrically-brandished Cup Of Beer really is, and gosh, I wouldn't hurt him like those awful Midwestern girls obviously have if only I could croon sweet nothings into his Answering Machine . . . Anyway, I said hi to Lee Ranaldo. Believe me, it was the highlight of my evening.

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MAD DADDIES: great band, bad photo

GOIN' TO A GO-GO

MAD DADDIES/CHOSEN FEW (Court
Tavern, January 23, 1988) You can argue about the
Daddies on record sounding somewhat too slavishly Cramps-like,
but you can't argue with a Daddies' show. For one thing, nobody'll
hear you. And even if they could, they just wouldn't care. Cause
when Stinky Sono Buoni takes center stage, startin' to sweat almost
immediately, you don't care about nuthin' no more except maybe
yelling your lungs out and falling down in pools of stale beer and
being part of that massive throbbing knot of reptile-eyed women and
bottle-clenching guys up front paying homage to the worst excuse
for a family entertainer since Linda Lovelace retired to Long Island
and kidn ey failure and Elvis, oh great King Elvis, departed for that
land where every pharmacy is an all-night-affair-come-right-in-no-
prescription-needed-for-you, Mr. Presley! and every 14-year-old
gurl would just love to wrastle her friend in their little flowered
panties for you and no weasel-lipped writer-fella looking to make a
quick name for hisself will go and misinterpret the sweet innocence
of such a show and publish it in a book with *your* fucking name on
the cover to sell copies.

Um, where was I?



LIES * LIES * LIES * LIES

* LIES * LIES * LIES

SONIC YOUTH:



+LEE+

Master of Hip

New Age
Music For
Heroin Addicts, &
That's God's Own
Fuçkin' Truth, Man!

AH, YES, HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, IF there's one thing the world needs more of, it's stupidly fawning and/or ridiculously reactionary articles about those underground music phenoms of the '80s; those white noise geniuses who have spun their delicate safron 'n' methadone miasma across so many variously-shaped, coiffured and intellectually-gifted demographic subgroups within our pathetic little remnant of a rock kultur; who have provided the long-sought-after connecting thread between the acid-drenched, pastoral West Coast and the industrial deathcult that holds rein in the East.

What, he wondered, as his hard-won lunch hour at his lowly corporate gig swiftly diminished itself, was there to say about them, except: They Were A Bunch Of Guys (And A Girl), And He Loved Them. And Love, Well, Love Means Never Having To Say (*Have you had a blood test recently?*)

SONIC YOUTH: CRACKPOT THEORY # 1

Sonic Youth *are*, finally, when it was least expected, the new Beatles. This conclusion is *not* merely the result of a case of that eternal critical itch to categorize, compare, assess, regress, PLACE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, and all that other masturbatory, kinda nerdy stuff. It's God's own fucking truth, man, I've got it all figured out.

Look:

Lee = George because they're both dark, quiet and the best musicians in their respective bands; also the ones most likely to experiment with stranger forms of music than the one they play at their day job (Just listen to George's bitchin' sitar on "All Things Must Pass" and then put on Lee's "From Here To Infinity" love-letter to John Cage and Brion Gysin; you'll get the picture.)

Just for the sake of argument, we'll also acknowledge any significant differences between the two, all right? So, okay, Lee wears sportcoats a lot. George didn't (when he was that age).

Thurston = John since they're both blessed with such surfeits of well-documented public sarcasm towards anybody and anything, including friends, fans, religious institutions, housepets, and themselves. Both are singer/guitar players, and both were responsible for the lion's share of lyrics in their respective bands (the good ones, at least, in JL's case). Both have had loved ones participating in their Musical Projects. Major difference: Nobody's shot Thurston. Yet.

Kim = Paul because, well, you know, they're both the Cutest One, they both play bass, they both sing most of the "ballads." BIG DIFFERENCE: Balls...

A THEOREM POSTULATED

BY + LL COOL DAVE +

Steve=Ringo since they both got big honkers and tend to get ignored. But you know, Steve does play like, really good, man.

Eerie, is it not, how there seems to be stronger similarities between the two outfits than there are differences. Well, I think it's pretty eerie, anyway. And I know I listened to *Sister* as much this summer as your mom did to old Sarge Pepper to those twenty yrs ago, back when free love only led to trichinosis rather than a vile, wasting-away death. Personally, I feel that a line like "She's just a bitch/With a golden chain" speaks to my *condition and the world I live in* just as much as "I'd love to/Turn you on" did to an earlier, more innocent, mayhap less puerile generation.

So, Sonic Youth. Oracles of the '80s. Stickers! Tee-shirts! Bootleg albums! Critical backlash, even! Ain't it a wonderful madness?

Your intrepid reporter caught up with this all-so-important band a few months ago at Rutgers University, where the Velvet Underground is said to have played one of their first gigs, where Bruce Springsteen played coffeehouses, where they've had the Alarm play four times in the last three years...

This show was sponsored by CISPES, this little baby dinosaur of a student organization that's full of hiplets (baby hippies) and leftist pedagogues and which is just about the only student org at that school that's worth more than a cup of their own piss. Besides irritating CIA recruiters and scuffling up the hardwood in deans' offices (in the name of freedom, dammit!) they also do shows with mostly-local underground bands every other week, providing the only regular underage venue around New Brunswick. This was one of their biggies, held in the Cook Agricultural College Gymnasium instead of a lecture hall, with tickets sold in advance and everythin'...

The turnout wasn't that big. I hear the Alarm were playing again that

+MORE LIES!+



+KIM+

Avant Ice Goddess

night. But hey, I've seen the Youth four times so far, and this was in fact the best yet, despite the standard garbage can acoustics y'get in gyms and no stage to speak of, so you had to either bang your way to the front, hang from the rafters, or, if you were as clever as me, merely walk around to the side of the massive clump of boots, black leatherette and tee-shirts and halitosis throbbing like a ripped-out heart in front of the stage. Trad set closer "Expressway To Yr Skull" was transcendent, sending boll weevils of sonic anguish curling their way into your aural canal, rising *en masse* through the dusty gymnasium air like a waterfall in reverse motion. It was kinda like riding a Persian carpet through a version of Heaven replete with art direction by Peter Fonda while Dennis Hopper resplendent in an hand-

sewn lame Alladin's outfit keeps buzzing in yr ear "Persistence, man, Persistence of Vision, do you understand, Persistence of Fucking Vision, it's like..." It was like sliding down a mountain of white tofu into a black-light Haight pad complete with "runaway hippie chicks" and "reefer" and all that stuff that defines for us that Other Time and Place that a pathetic cult has sprung up around, yearning to recreate/recycle in Our Own Image.

This is not to imply the Youth are themselves lost in a useless Nostalgia trip; just that they fear not following the muse wherever it might take them. "Tom Violence" was sugar-coated nastiness, typically bleak and nasal, surging forward with definitively late '80s snarl and sneer. Thurston swung his guitars around in a surfeit of rock and roll emotion, nearly brushing the ceiling (about twenty feet up); Kim bopped up and down during her moments at the mike like she was some lonely long-distance runner; Steve bashed away and sweated alot and was pretty amusing to watch since it looked like he was going to pass out at any second, and Lee, well, Lee Renaldo, the Master of Hip in his oh-so-collegiate sportcoat (and rakishly sporting the now-faded ghost of a once no-doubt unfortunate complexion problem) became unto a rock god for the assembled seekers as yuppied-out Nu Wave babes stared from mere inches away at his blazing fretboard, quivering with no doubt sheer intellectual stimulation at being in such physical proximity to the creation of Art (Sorry, chicks, he's both husband and father).

The band finished up with a whole shitload of Ramones song meant to prove, I guess, that they're still really punks at heart, and not just Artfags out on a lark, like *some* (hey, not me, jack!) might accuse them of being. But T. Moore has nothing in common with Joey except the air's pretty thin up there for both of them and Lee just couldn't dumb his guitar-

playing down far enough to conjure up visions of that original Brooklyn ka-chunk we've all grown to love and be bored by. More's the credit.

It's worth mentioning that the Shock Mommies opened the show, and that they're cool and funny: the lead singer is this young, good-natured cherub who wears prom dresses over his beer belly with a charming naivete and chases the rest of the band around stage with a leaf blower while they're playing pretty damn catchy and silly tunes like "colonel sanders is dead." yeah, I know, I know, but they're Young and Enthusiastic, all right? Corny, yeah, but probably a lot more fun to watch than you are. And smarter, too. Also on the bill, unfortunately, was Blind Idiot God, one of those really shitty SST instrumental bands whose records you always see in the catalog and hope you'll never have to hear.

FURTHER

CRACKPOT THEORIES

Moving right along, lemme tell ya how Pussy Galore fits into all this (I know you were wondering). Y'see, like, they're the new Rolling Stones to Sonic Youth's Beatles. And Live Skull, they're like Hot Tuna to Pussy's Stones; and meanwhile we have the Butthole Surfers, who are the new Bonzo Dog Band to Black Snakes' 1910 Fruitgum Company, and Clint Ruin, who is the new Barry Sadler to Lydia Lunch's Melanie (I GOT A HOT THROBBING PAIR OF ROLLER SKATES DYING TO BE ABUSED BY YOUR BIG WET NASTY KEY YOU SCUMBAG JERK AND THEN WE'LL BLEED AND THROW UP AND GO DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS ALONE ALL ALONE)... stop me if you've heard this one before...

BONUS

INTERVIEW SECTION

Match the quote with the appropriate musical genius. All questions guaranteed asked in the Cook College Gym's Boy's Lockerroom amidst a sea of mentally deficient fanzine editor types.

KEY:

- A. Steve
- B. Thurston
- C. Kim
- D. Lee

+ LAST COUPLE LIES +



+ THURSTON +

A real smart-ass

ANSWERS:

1. "I plug in and Lee says 'Go.'"
2. "We don't apply theory like trained composers would; we do it more by ear and feel."
3. "Heavy Metal? It's all paint-by-numbers chops-fests now."
4. "We haven't changed; except to get tighter. The mainstream has come closer to what we're doing."
5. "..."
6. "How long until we go on?"
7. "What magazine did you say you're from?"
8. "Fourteen guitars, and two basses on tour. Another 10 at home. We've probably gone through about 30 or 40."
9. "Some guitars were so specifically altered that when they broke we couldn't play the song anymore."
10. "All my life, as early as I can remember."
11. "A Ciccone Youth album."
12. "Lots of people thought we were hardcore."
13. "We're much more conscious of tonalities and dynamics in ways rock musicians usually aren't."

14. "Three pairs of twos, for instance; two f#s, two Gs, two As. Or two Gs, two D flats, two G sharps." (1.b. 2.d. 3.b. 4.d. 5.a. 6.c. 7.a.b.c & d. 8.d. 9.b. 10.b. 11.d. 12.d. 13.d. 14.d.)

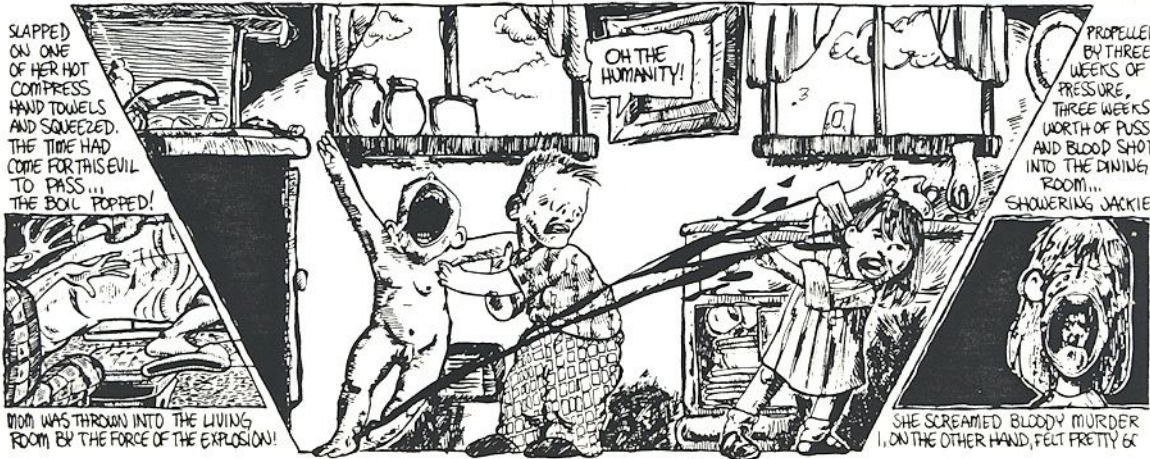
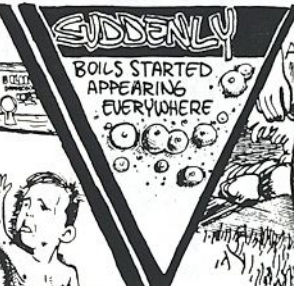
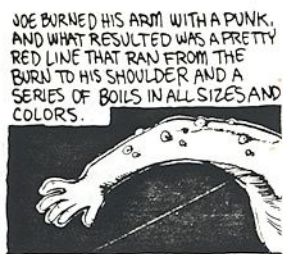
Anyway, I left the questions out because as any Enlightened One will tell you, it's more important to learn to ask the Right Questions than to know the "right answers," and I don't want to end up building a detour on your Karmic highway to Awareness by doing all your work for you...

EPILOGUE:

I WOKE UP DREAMING

I'm standing on a downtown train late at night, my strings jerked by the tension of the muscular train-movement vs my own inertia while the empty metal roar of the tunnels insinuates itself between the vertebrae of my spine, filling me with a nostalgia for an infinity I've never known except once as a child when I was playing football on an open field and happened to look up at the sky and was caught in a trap of tape-loop *deja-vu*, knowing I had lived this moment before and would again world without end. Then like a lightbulb turning itself on the sound of air displaced by train is no longer an invader but a part of me, and I can defy gravity at last... Thurston Moore is hanging on a strap next to me, hair in his eyes as always, gazing down at his wife Kim with the affectionate boredom you reserve for wives and best friends. An old bum, black and with a long beard, is making his way through the car, softly jingling a paper cup with some starter change and singing a spiritual in a smooth, strong voice. Kim looks up, flinty eyes dark with alien curiosity. She seems neither condescending, curious, amused nor moved; just uncomprehending. If she opened her mouth right now, I know deep in my heart she would start whispering the words "Met a stranger on a train... swear I didn't mean it... seems like a thousand years ago... swear I didn't mean it." But she doesn't, doesn't of course and the bum moves on; they're both just background music to the other that they'll never really hear, and I swear I lived this moment before, about a thousand years ago, and I think it'll go on forever...

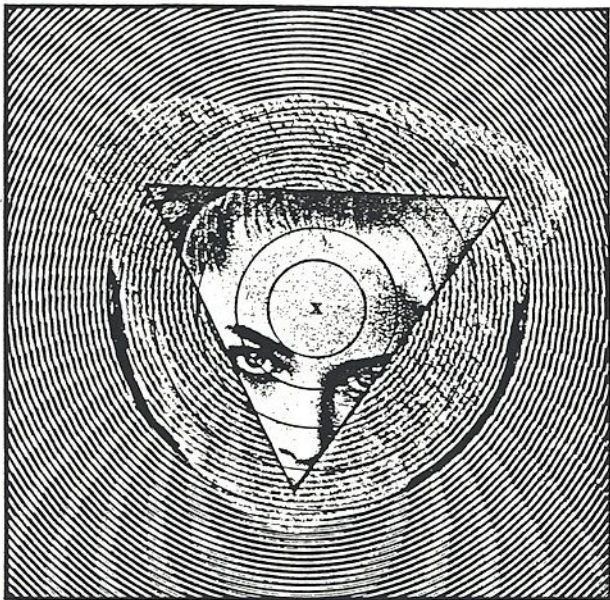




ONCE
UPON A
TIMETERRORS
OF SLEEP

I TRIED TO STAY ASLEEP ONE WHOLE YEAR BUT SINCE I WAS A PRISONER LOCKED UP TIGHT IN THE NARROW CELL OF HUMAN NATURE, IT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO ACHIEVE MY AMBITION ENTIRELY . . . the first six months I drank gallons of coffee every day jumped around the apartment so wired every night I never used my bed, not even just to enjoy

a semi-conscious rest for my aching back or bleary eyes, but for the last six months I had to make up for the initial success I'd known, for all that time I'd spent pushing my body and my brain far beyond their innate limitations, these two squealed to a sympathetic, tyrannical judge who sentenced me without a trial, without a warning, without a chance to prepare any statement in my defense, who sentenced me to hibernate a time equal to the time I'd denied my body and brain even a second of sleep . . . in response to the judge's order, I immediately passed out cold as if I'd chugged a million bottles of beer in less than a minute becoming the helpless victim of an embryo I'd struggled to abort, the embryo that had been kicking up at the bottom of my skull since January 1st insistently shouting that it must receive exit right now or else it'd have a tantrum, hold its breath till it turned bluer, yes I fell a passive witness into the realm of one obsessive dream which greeted my long-awaited, long-delayed delivery by separating itself from the tissue that had fought so tirelessly, so bravely & so valiantly, fought to keep it at least bottled up forever hoping also eventually to strangle the danger & kill it beyond the vaguest flicker of resurrect-



u g n

ion, now I had to watch the tissue surrender, forsake its battle with a snore as it gave birth to some alien tough guy armed with a knife, a cock, a cigarette, an Oscar Meyer weiner or a long slim nuclear bomb . . . the first three months these contradictory images played like a reel of film jammed in its opening 5 frames by the multiple splicing of a director unable to decide exactly which footage he'd like to show us, but by the time the 4th month began, it became apparent he'd finally made up his mind since all five weapons appeared lashed together & at last the alien tough guy was allowed to continue the action . . . as the film rolled fast across its big screen, my brain, editing changes were still

being made but the directory had grown tired of laboring over every detail before the story could unfold further, instead he flashed a couple of alternative versions, each version executing exactly the same plot, still he had to run them simultaneously so he could muse over both sets of images at once comparing and contrasting them as he firmly established his preference . . . the version featured in Movie City 1, the left side of my brain, calmly lyrically contemplated my death, the alien tough guy emerging from the shadows of my dark night room to plunge his 5 weapons thru my nostrils, ear drums, mouth, penis slit & asshole while I lay naked in my bed unnaturally expanding all these orifices one by one with same lingering gradual slash, this action taking 17 minutes & 34 seconds to complete, then the alien tough guy & all his weapons left the screen never to return . . . the film's next four hours showed the blood slowly leaking out each one of these massive wounds never leaking in unison -- the nostrils first, then the ear drums, then the mouth, then the penis slit & fin-

ally the asshole, all them politely taking or waiting to take their turns, some mysterious etiquette book teaching them its one key lesson, that body parts who've enjoyed an education which has emphasized the proper social decorum musn't indulge their wild impatience, should leak only in the order they've been slashed . . . as these 4 hours of film progressed in this measured stately magnificent fashion, the blood that the nostrils, the ear drums, the mouth, the penis slit and the asshole yielded became a red ocean, this red ocean one star of the film's last 6 hours, the other star my corpse carried by the ocean out of an open bedroom window, this corpse serenely floating across the world, the burden of its own uncomplaining faithful blood rippling in rythm with the flutter of my long

blond hair dancing before the steady gentle breeze as the sun rose from dawn to high noon, both my naked flesh & the ocean of blood glowed ever more luminous in response to its progressively brighter warmer beams till sun naked flesh blood ocean merged in a flash of radiance which concluded the film quite abruptly . . . the version featured in Movie City 2, the right side of my brain, ended much sooner than its companion piece sustaining me only 3 hours before I ended it by dying, this second, action-packed version moved to a beat faster than any punk rock drummer can play opening with the alien tough guy lurking in an alley so dark his face loomed a black hole, then a shot of me on my way home alone strolling idly whistling down a street so bright with lamps a silver glow tinged my face & hair, the very same street which quickly brought me to the alley's entrance belching out darkness to obliterate all the night-time brilliance that had accompanied me thru this film so far, preparation for the bleak moodiness to come as the alien tough guy sprang forth across my path his voice silent demanding no money no not even one thin dime to help him buy a cup of coffee assaulting me plunging his 5 weapons into my left shoulder because I instinctively dodged the blow its primary target my skull, still he'd opened up a hole big enough to handle all its company plus himself diving into it employing that hole as a means to invade me, mysteriously my wound didn't bleed at all then as if reluctant to expell the foreign army that had invaded my territory, instead this treacherous shoulder healed completely instantaneously . . . exhausted by the sudden posionous shot this bizarre ordeal had stabbed into me, I leaned against the brick wall of some building while the film jumped scenes abruptly eager to show the war that was now raging deep within me, the alien tough guy & his 5 weapons

**MY NAKED FLESH &
THE OCEAN OF BLOOD
GLOWED EVER MORE
LUMINOUS IN RE-
SPONSE TO ITS PRO-
GRESSIVELY BRIGHTER
WARMER BEAMS TILL
SUN NAKED FLESH
BLOOD OCEAN MERGED
IN A FLASH OF RADI-
ANCE WHICH CON-
CLUDED THE FILM
QUITE ABRUPTLY**

plunged their loyalty to one another becoming a dirty half-dozen determined to conquer me working from the inside-out, these 6 guerillas tore some tissue lose from the interior of my left shoulder, enough tissue so that they all could climb on board it, the raft they used to venture thru my whole bloodstream regularly driving off hostile tribes of antibodies, tribes that became ever more hostile with each time their enemies visited another vital organ, one by one slashing bruising scorching exploding smearing each with mustard layers thick enough to strangle it . . . miraculously I couldn't die until all of my organs had been killed, naturally the 6 guerillas plunged to the depths of my body first, their battle plan dictating that they enslave me from the bottom up so they killed the less glamorous organs to kick off their campaign butchering the bathroom attendants that control digestion, pissing & shitting, thus the movie was able to build towards its glorious climax, the lungs, the heart, the brain executed gasping out my last breath, my last emotion, my last thought as I slid down the brick wall of the same building I'd been leaning against when the scene shifted, now it shifted back to witness me sinking dead to the pavement as the alien tough guy & his 5 weapons drove free of the corpse so triumphantly so ferociously that my flesh erupted like a small volcano consuming itself shooting anonymous chunks with such rapid force in every direction that some even broke loose from the screen landing in the audience which scrambled to gather up all these precious souvenirs, then & only then their applause began quickly swelling up a 20-minute roar which shook the house long after its lights had gone up, a big job for the ushers to calm that wild crowd down, but finally they were able to move the still chattering people out thru the exits of this doom show . . . now, the first, longer version was continuing to be seen by exactly the same audience - even though it seemed like they'd already been evacuated out of one theater, somehow they'd been allowed to stay in the other, and they didn't react to its ritualized slaughter at all sitting quiet as if they'd indeed gone when the second version had ended with its spectacular bang, therefore it seemed clear to me that the enthusiastic movie fan reaction to that second version must have immediately, irrevocably prejudiced the director in its favor so much it surprised me when he insisted on showing both simultaneously over & over again the whole 6 months I'd been sentenced to hibernate, perhaps he didn't care about commercial appeal and he was fighting with the producers

who'd financed him forcing them to watch both millions of times while he argued his case or perhaps for some unknown reason this mysterious director just wanted to please me since I'd despised the second version but I'd loved the first . . . consequentially, once my hibernation had ended, once I'd yawned & stretched, rolled out of bed, showered & dressed, I walked across town on my way to buy a cup of coffee while I caught up with the news, walked happy because my devotion to the ritualized, luminous slaughter had convinced me I'd never need fear the terrors of sleep again, O I even whistled as I danced up George Street occasionally turning my face upward to converse with my brother the Sun, more than resigned to the bitter truth that my eventual death would inevitably ambush me, ecstatically certain that by remembering, by cherishing, by worshipping one sacred, climactic image, I could determine that my disastrous fate would be exalted since the Sun gave me his word promising so long as I rigorously kept faith, he'd save me ample space in the pit of his stomach, the paradise bed where corpse & red ocean could rest, my dead nerves trembling alive, my wounds healed by great detonations of joy up above wed to endless waves of radiance that would never bite, scratch, or stab, waves of radiance that would blast, explode, soothe, caress, kiss tenderly, fuck & suck me forever world without end . . . ■

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CATHARSIS

IT DOESN'T HURT AS
MUCH AS IT LOOKS
LIKE IT DOES

A CHAT WITH NJ'S ENTRY
IN THE INDUSTRIAL
DEATHCULT SWEEP-
STAKES -- BUT DON'T TELL
THEM THAT, THEY WON'T
KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
TALKING ABOUT...

CATHARSIS is the best band to come out of New Jersey in the last couple of years. Fuck Hoboken and its prissy popsters and would-be NYC'ers (okay, some of them are pretty good - but that's another article). Catharsis, spawned in the toxic chemical plants and white trash suburbs of Central Jersey, has been drawing painful, ragged breaths for two years now, and every exhalation has been greeted by their steadily-growing legion of fans like it was a cloud of black lotus smoke exhaled by some wizened old Chinese trickster with one glass eye. A bunch of guys who've always believed in taking their time about things, the band was just recently committed to vinyl for the first time on WRSU's Mental Floss album, which features "Hurt" -- an incredible little slab o'agony full of tortured guitars wielded with the grace and ferocity Jack the Ripper might have used on Donna Rice given half the chance, coupled with the vocal equivalent of a Bosch painting and lyrics that scan like the combined daydreams of Wayne Gacy, Dante, and Rimbaud. Um, yeah, they're pretty good, these guys...

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

Charles Applegate : Ludwig drum kit, band historian
Ken Tarbous: vocals, Les Paul, band "wit"
Mike Miksis: vocals, Musicmaster, band brooder
Jeffrey Woehr: vocals, Telecaster, band regular guy
Guy Who Speaks In All Italic Caps: ME

SETTING:

Charles' heatless, hot water-less carriage house located somewhere off Route 130, on a 20-degree night. Jeffrey was among the missing...

HOW WAS CATHARSIS BORN, ANYWAY?

Charles: I had an ad in the Aquarian and Mike and Ken answered it and came out here. I played them some demo tapes of Random Rebellion... my band before Catharsis. we used to play Patrix and the Roxy all the time -- the old Roxy, that is. My ad said "original self-taught drummer."

Mike: We were formed on August 23, 1985. That's very important.

KEN AND MIKE KNEW EACH OTHER ALREADY, DIDN'T THEY?

Ken: I was in a liquor store, right, and Miksis came in with a bottle in his hand and dropped it, practically on my foot...

Mike: That's how we met.

Ken: Well, we took it outside, you know, and this is the result of it.

Mike: We'd run into each other down on Avenue A...

Charles: Mike and Ken and Jeffrey all knew each other before they met me.

Ken: Mike and I played in a band in high school, previous to Catharsis.

HEY KEN, DID YOU GET BEAT UP A LOT IN HIGH SCHOOL?

Ken: No, not really. I think the last fight I had was in second grade when this guy who was the toughest guy in the class started picking on me, and well, I won the fight and NOBODY messed with me after that.

Mike: Up until now.

Ken: Up until Ivo, anyway.

IVO?

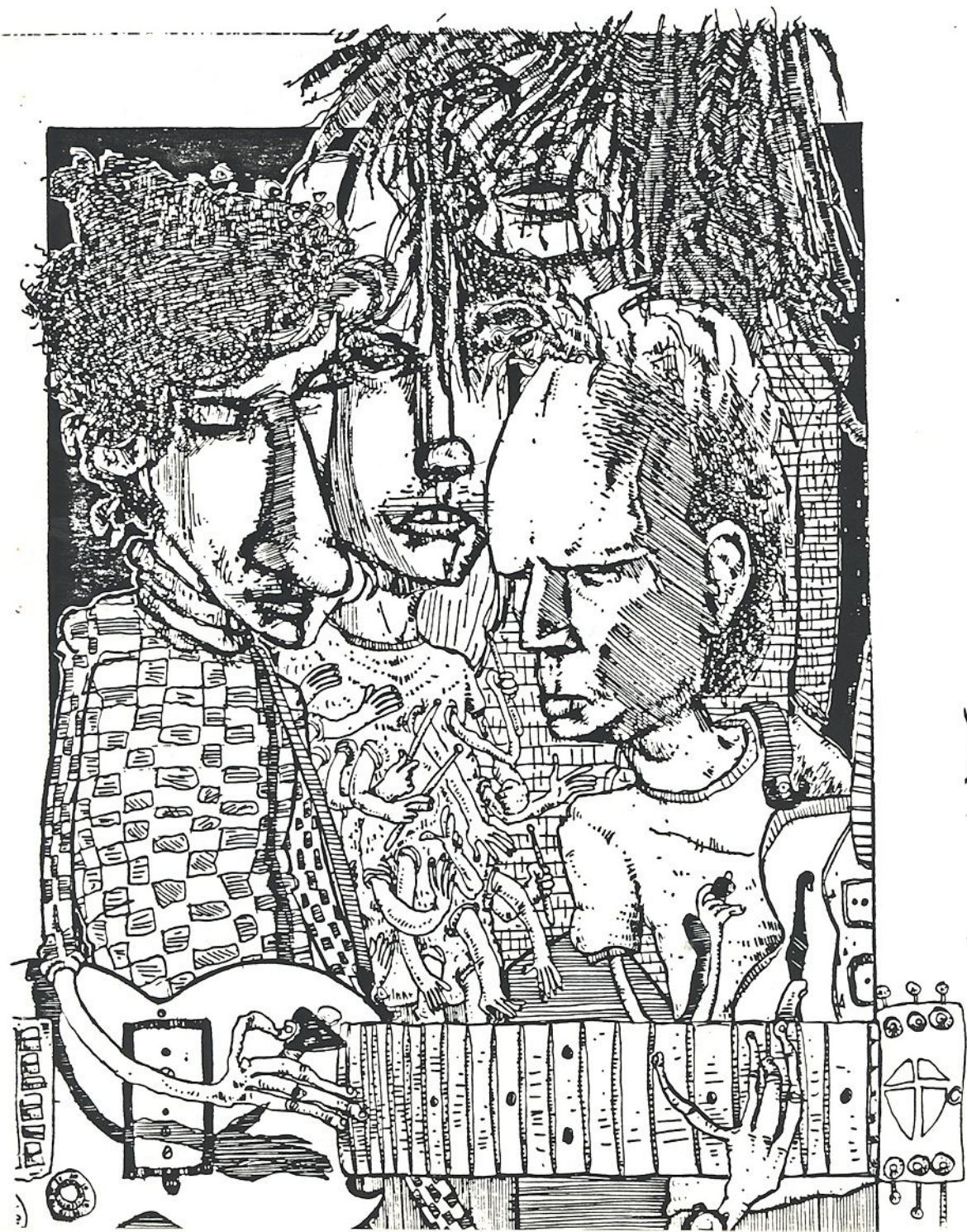
Ken: I don't want to talk about it. Like I was saying, I met Jeff at Skidmore College, and he asked to audition for the band.

STIRRING. WHAT KIND OF STUFF DID YOU GUYS LISTEN TO IN HIGH SCHOOL?

Charles: Pink Floyd, Alice Cooper...

Ken: Lothar and the Hand People.

Charles: Nah, King Crimson, ELP, all that early '70s, late '60s stuff. Anything that anybody said was interesting, I'd



try. My influences go from Captain Beefheart to Beethoven. One thing everybody has in common is Velvet Underground, Patti Smith, Lou Reed ...

KEN: I remember the first album I bought was a Cat Stevens album. Also "Born to Run." In high school I listened to the Grateful Dead a lot. Still do.

MIKE: Basically the New York bands: Heartbreakers, Television, New York Dolls, Patti ...

WHERE WAS THE HISTORIC FIRST CATHARSIS SHOW?

MIKE: Two weeks after we formed, on 131st Street. We cleared out two whole rooms full of people.

CHARLES: Ata frat party, wasn't it? Our first serious gig was probably at Deja Vu, opening up for Genocide ... that was a side of Bobby Ebz I'd never seen before. Wished I had a camera. You didn't go to that show, did you?

UM, NO.

CHARLES: He had all this studded jewelry and kept smacking himself until he was a mess. Boy ...

HOW COME YOU GUYS HAVE NO STAGE PRESENCE?

CHARLES: These guys are into that 1965 Byrds thing, just stand there and be cool.

KEN: Actually, you know, like we're there to play, and that's about it.

CHARLES: They have no charisma.

GUESS YOU 'SAY IT ALL WITH YR MUSIC.'

KEN: Well, we could go up there and do something besides play, but then it would be false, it wouldn't be true emotionally. I personally don't think of us as putting on a show for entertainment. We're *expressing* ourselves.

WHAT ARE YOU EXPRESSING?

CHARLES: Just himself. Look at him. Look at the way he's dressed. He's just ... Ken. (ed. note: Tarbous wardrobe too horrible to describe)

KEN: Basically, there's two things I write about, the exploration and definition of myself, and then also social consciousness and social awareness.

HOW ABOUT YOU, MIKE?

MIKE: I'll pass.

RUN INTO PROBLEMS WITH THREE WRITERS?

MIKE: No.

KEN: Yeah, sometimes Mike and Jeffrey don't want to do their songs.

WHAT'S THE CATHARSIS GAME PLAN FOR WORLD DOMINATION?

(Just now JEFFREY enters, looking very cold, but carrying warm beer. I've been warned about him.)

MIKE and KEN: Ask Jeffrey!!

JEFF: To buy another six-pack?

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN REALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR DEMOS.

KEN: I can confidentially say I've probably never been satisfied by anything in my life.

CHARLES: Our last set was lacking energy or emotion, the ones before that had the energy but a lot of technical

problems. We made one live tape at CBGB's that came out pretty good. ... the version of "Uptight" on WRSU is from there. ... the version of "Hurt" on the "Mental Floss" album is from the second time we recorded at Terry Hughes' studio.

HAS THE WRSU ALBUM HELPED?

KEN: Somebody called up my answering machine but he never called back ... we're supposed to get written up in some various publications ... The Bob, etc.

SICK OF 'HURT' YET?

MIKE: Yeah, it's been around a long time, it's one of our oldest songs ...

KEN: I like to play it.

JEFF: Me too.

KEN: I think it's when Mike's had some bad chili. It takes a good bowl of chili to get Mike to sing that song ... a coupla ribs.

WHAT INSPIRED THE LINES "I OPEN MY EYES, THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS"?

MIKE: A nervous breakdown ... that's as far as I want to go on that.

WAS IT WRITTEN DURING OR POST?

MIKE: Post. (silence ensues)

CHARLES: Sensitive subject ... we all knew he was crazy.

JEFF: I saw "Nuts" last night.

HOW WAS IT?

JEFF: It was okay. There were these people coming out, really upset by the language ... they're going, "Was that rated P or was that rated R?"

P?

JEFF: They didn't know their ratings.

KEN: We're gonna rate our first album "Pee".

WHAT ABOUT THIS DEATHROCK IMAGE YOU GOT GOING HERE?

MIKE: We're a sullen bunch.

KEN: I think at first it was subconscious; it was half-joking, but still serious. We didn't consciously do it, but the overtones were there. "Hurt" is about something that's real, not a fiction; I think all of our music is about things that are real to us, not some plastic thing that's gonna "sound good" if we write about it. If it comes out, and it seems like we're fucked up or there's something wrong with us or it's really negative, that's because that's what's really happening to us, not that it's really "cool" to write about it. We have songs that aren't necessarily about dismal morose things ... there's "Bag Lady," for instance.

CHARLES: I don't really listen to what the songs are about, I just work with the music. I don't know *what* the heck they're singing about.

HOW ABOUT THOSE COOL GUITARS?

KEN: 1956 Les Paul Junior.

JEFF: 1973 Telecaster Custom thinline.

MIKE: 1961 Fender Musicmaster bass.

NO, NO I WAS TALKING ABOUT THE SOUND.

JEFF: I go for a real, fat distorted sound, very un-Fender,



JEFF, KEN, MIKE & CHARLES:

TAKE 1 AWAY, IT'D BE SLUNK.

while his Gibson actually sounds more like a Fender.

KEN: We've been working on that sound for about six or seven years now.

HOW ABOUT THAT FUZZ-BASS?

MIKE: I like the way it sounds, I do it on everything.

KEN: It's the thing that won't go away, no matter how I try ... Hey, what about Jeff's influences, he missed those questions?

WELL, THEN?

JEFF: I was thinking about this. I was afraid you were going to ask that. Elvin Bishop, John Fogerty on guitar, and Neil Young, Robbie Kreiger, David Gilmour. And Bruce Springsteen as a guitar player. I like players that don't play a lot of notes.

KEN WAS SAYING EARLY THAT HE WRITES ALL THE GOOD SONGS.

JEFF: (refuses to get mad): He writes most of the songs, true. Mike writes about two a year, I wrote a couple when we first started... A lot of our stuff comes out of practicing.

CHARLES: The majority of our practices end up as jams.

JEFF: We make up good songs then we forget them.

KEN: We yell at each other alot. Somebody starts yelling at somebody else, somebody starts pushing somebody else, things get broken, people get thrown across the room.

IF ANYBODY LEFT, WOULD IT STILL BE CATHARSIS?

MIKE: It'd be Slunk.

KEN: Are you saying I'm leaving?

MIKE: Slunk is Catharsis minus Ken.

CHARLES: There once was a Jeff-less performance.

KEN: Let's compare the critical acclaim of the two shows.

JEFF: Ken had stayed up for 36 hours and was supposed to wake up and come to a show in Red Bank but he never woke up. And we thought he was dead because he was driving a motorcycle. But actually he was asleep. So we played a bunch of cover songs.

STUFF YOU'D PLAYED BEFORE?

KEN: Songs they were trying to do on stage and when I didn't show up they finally did them.

CHARLES: It wasn't very professional.

EVEN THOUGH YOU THOUGHT KEN MIGHT BE DEAD?

JEFF: Mike was very concerned.

KEN: I called up and told them to go on with the show. The Jeff-less one he just refused to show up but we played anyway.

JEFF: I had a date.

KEN: It was at Delta Phi at Columbia, where I'm a proud brother. The cops came, and finally the management shut us down.

WERE YOU STILL IN THE FRAT AFTER YOU PLAYED?

KEN: Yeah, I was kinda like a hero after that.

THE FRAT ART-GUY?

KEN: (UNINTELLIGABLE MUMBLE)

CHARLES: We played a rousing twenty-minute version of "Louie, Louie."

KEN: We never played that song!

HOW'S COLUMBIA?

KEN: A financial hardship. I work for NJ Transit selling tickets right now to pay for it, but next semester I will have a bachelor's degree after nine hard years of study ...

WHAT ARE THE REST OF YOUR DAYJOBS?

MIKE: I work in a chemical plant, subdividing hazardous chemicals.

KEN: They rub hazardous chemicals on his body and then wait to see what happens, to see if they're safe for normal humans.

DO YOU FIND OUT WHAT CHEMICALS YOU'RE HANDLING?

KEN: He tries to ...

MIKE: They keep us ignorant.

KEN: Sometimes he brings some home for us.

REAL NJ KIND OF JOB (silence, more silence) COME

ON, MIKE, OPEN UP ... TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAT.

MIKE: No.

JEFF: I work for my family business.

KEN: Give the phone number.

JEFF: I operate heavy equipment.

KEN: What kind, Jeff?

JEFF: I operate a front-end loader, a forklift.

KEN: And what kind of dumptruck do you drive?

JEFF: I can drive a Mack DM600 with a maxi-9 15-speed transmission.

KEN: All right!

AND WHAT ARE YOUR SALARY REQUIREMENTS?

JEFF: Well, normally I get \$18 an hour but on holidays I get triple time just like the Garden State Parkway tollworkers, which brings me up to \$45 dollars an hour.

CHARLES: I'm down to a janitor, which is about the lowest I've hit yet ... I've done construction work, been a chicken farmer, a truckdriver, a gravedigger ... I used to go through jobs like one a year.

(Ken starts laughing uncontrollably)

KINDA LIKE KEN GOES THROUGH SCHOOLS?

(Ken abruptly stops laughing)

SO WHEN'S THIS ALBUM GOING TO COME OUT?

MIKE: Well, we're going to Waterfront.

CHARLES: I'd like to record it live at CBGB's.

JEFF: I wanted to buy a four-track recorder and do it ourselves, but that got shot down.

KEN: See, we all have different plans for it.

HOW COME IT'S TAKEN YOU SO LONG TO DECIDE TO DO A RECORD?

KEN: Well, we didn't want to have something out just for the sake of having it out. It has to be something we're less than extremely dissatisfied with.

CHARLES: We didn't have the money.

WHAT OTHER NEW BRUNSWICK BANDS DO YOU LIKE?

JEFF: I really haven't seen that many.

KEN: There's a lot of good bands, but something that really bothers me is people jump from band to band, whoring around just to play on stage or be in a band ... to me that lacks any integrity at all.

CHARLES: Is that directed at me?

KEN: No. Another problem is that nobody has anything to say, in their lyrics. That really bothers me, especially in New Brunswick.

JEFF: I think the feeling's important, to me more so than the words, to create a meaning.

KEN: Well, that's saying something. I just don't like these three-chord bands with nothing to say.

CHARLES: I like Sleaze Factor a lot, even though they're not original, they do that George Clinton thing. I like the Trash Mavericks ... You got so many different kinds of bands, blues, thrash bands ...

KEN: Tiny Lights is fantastic.

CHARLES: Yeah! The Mad Daddies ...

JEFF: I saw a band called Gutbank I thought was great.

MIKE: There's a lot of good bands out there, but I also think that there's some extremely overrated ones that don't really merit the popularity that they have.

KEN: Name names!

MIKE: No.

KEN: Why not?

JEFF: I'd come beat him up.

ARE THE BANDS SUPPORTIVE OF EACH OTHER?

MIKE: Definitely.

CHARLES: It's not like anybody's making any real money off the scene except maybe the bars and I don't know if they even are.

JEFF: What about the Smithereens?

CHARLES: Well, they aren't really part of the New Brunswick music scene anymore, and I don't think they ever really were.

WELL THE SCENE CERTAINLY WASN'T MADE IN THEIR IMAGE.

KEN: What's the name of that band, the one that plays around all over the place? Spiral Jetty? are they the quintessential New Brunswick band? (GENERAL LAUGHTER) I have no idea who they are, but I hear their name all the time.

CHARLES: The Skulls!

THEY'VE BEEN SENT TO DIRT CLUB HELL ... DO YOU GUYS HAVE FAVORITE GO-GO BARS?

MIKE: I hate Go-Go bars.

KEN: I COULD A STORY ABOUT GO-GO BARS --

CHARLES: There used to be this great one on Livingston Avenue-

KEN: THAT WOULD BURN YOUR EARS OFF, JEFFREY--

CHARLES: Down by the Jersey Avenue train station.

KEN: A LITTLE PLACE CALLED ... LET ME TELL YOU, THIS GIRL CAME UP TO ME AND SAID, "KENNY"--

CHARLES: I used to go with the guys from a construction company I was working for. I felt silly, but I don't know, the girls used to enjoy it. I guess they just enjoyed the money.

KEN: My favorite Go-Go bar was the Melody before it became what it is now.

CHARLES: That was never a Go-Go bar! That was always a pick-em-up-meat joint.

KEN: I was there and saw some girl dancing on the bar.

IS THIS A DRUG-FREE BAND?

MIKE: Um, what do you consider drug-free?

ARE YOU PART OF NANCY REAGAN'S PROGRAM?

ALL: No.

MIKE: We don't like to talk about drugs.

JEFF: I like to talk about drugs... I didn't smoke pot until I was in college, so I did that, and I started going crazy doing that and drinking ...

KEN: He turned into an axe murderer.

JEFF: Then I pretty much stopped .

HOW ABOUT YOU, MIKE?

MIKE: I don't discuss drugs.

JEFF: I'll discuss Mike's drugs.

KEN: Jeffrey loves to discuss drugs. Just give him some.
AND YOU, KEN?

KEN: if you have a specific question about drugs I'll answer it.

DONE ACID?

KEN: No, I don't take acid. Used to, but I don't any more.
WELL, CONSIDERING YOU'VE WRITTEN THE CLASSIC "WHITE BOY TRIES TO SCORE SMACK AND BE COOL" SONG ...

KEN: Let me say this about needles. I use needles twice a day ... I'm an insulin-dependent diabetic.

BUT YOU NEVER MIX?

KEN: Yeah, I mix insulin twice a day.

CHARLES: With heroin.

JEFF: Yeah, a speedball.

KEN: It's not a drug, it's a hormone.

EVER USE YOUR WORKS TO IMPRESS ANY COLUMBIA GIRLS?

KEN: If you're referring to my genitals as my "works"...
THAT ISN'T A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE SONG? DON'T YOU WRITE FROM REALITY?

KEN: Well, I wouldn't personally characterize it in the way you say...

JEFF: I think that's most people's impression of "Uptight"?

CHARLES: In today's anti-drug climate, I don't think it's that cool to talk about this. I'll tell you one thing, this band doesn't get high before it goes on stage.

MIKE: Except for Jeffrey's drinking.

CHARLES: Well, he has to, or he won't go.

KEN: "Uptight" is about a personal conflict, a personal decision. Every person has a right to expand their mind. I think whether drugs are legal or not, everybody has a right to use drugs for their own enjoyment and enlightenment. What that song is about is my personal experience with drugs and that's as far as I'm going go on that.

OKAY, OKAY ... WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE RECORD OR MOVIE OR WHATEVER LAST YEAR?

CHARLES: I just got around to reading "Watership Down."

MIKE: Best album I bought this year was the Miracle Legion.

KEN: I liked "White Noise" by Don Delileo. The album that impressed me most was a John Coltrane live album...

WHAT ABOUT ALL THE COMPARISONS WITH NEW YORK BANDS?

JEFF: I read about that in Maximum Rock and Roll, that column about NJ bands that said such-and-such a band sounds like a Lower East Side scenemaker band.

MIKE: But what does the lower East Side sound like? I guess that dirgey stuff, drug lyrics, like the Heartbreakers, the Dolls...

I THINK IT'S MORE LIVE SKULL AND SONIC YOUTH NOW.

KEN: I personally like Darwin's theory of independent development. We don't listen to much of it. Jeffrey's never

"IF YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC QUESTION ABOUT DRUGS, I'LL ANSWER IT." Ken Tarbous

even heard of them.

CHARLES: Do you think we're psychedelic?

KEN: Let's get a definition of the term. Do you mean like psychological, or in a diminutive sense, or --
I THINK YOU'RE A GROOVE BAND, WHO LIKES TO WORK A PERMUTATION OF A RIFF. YOU'RE NO THREE-MINUTE BAND.

KEN: It's Jeff's serious interest in jazz.

JEFF: I hate jazz.

YOU GUYS THINK THE FOX NETWORK'S GONNA MAKE IT?

KEN: My money's on CNN ... I like the new "Star Trek," though.

JEFF: I like "Married With Children."

MIKE: I think the best series this year was "Trying Times."
YEAH! I TAPED SOME OF THEM.

MIKE: Wow, can I have copies? Did you get the Terri Garr one?

NAH, SORRY.

CHARLES: You're running out of questions, aren't you ... I saw an episode of "The New Monkees." It was terrible.

YOU GUYS EVER THINK OF AUDITIONING FOR THE PART? YOU COULD BE THE DEATHTRIP MONKEES.

KEN: Charles is too old.

CHARLES: I don't think television is ready for us.

DO YOU GET A LOT OF GIRLS THROUGH THIS BAND?

CHARLES: We're not a band that attracts girls ... Ken never combs his hair.

KEN: Jeff's engaged and Charles is married. And Mike's a loner.

CHARLES: Mike gets all the girls.

KEN: They try, but he knows better.

MIKE: See, I caught the clap once...

AT A SHOW?

MIKE: No comment.

YOUR REFRAIN FOR THE EVENING.

CHARLES: Mike had a great looking girlfriend last year, but he let her go.

MIKE: She was uptown, I was downtown.

CHARLES: Yeah, you guys didn't seem right together. Maybe you should have gone uptown. She was driving a Fiero, you were driving a Maverick.

MIKE: At least she understood manic depression.

HEY, IT WORKED ON GREEN ACRES. HOW'S YOUR MOTORCYCLE, KEN?

KEN: Well, since the accident I haven't driven it. It's uninsured, I can't afford to fix it.

I GUESS YOU'RE THE BAND'S REAL ROCK'N'ROLLER. STICKING NEEDLES IN YOUR ARM AND DRIVING MOTORCYCLES ...

CHARLES: Yeah, but it's only insulin and the bike's just Japanese.

i want to kill myself

By Bill Cullen



when you look at my face you see a serene, happy man . . .

A person just like the guy next door. Wrong.

I want to kill myself and this is my story, one of tragedy and terror.

I guess it all goes back to my first game show. It was called "Shit On Bill!" and the contestants had to empty their bowels upon my face as quickly as possible. If they completed their task in ten seconds or less I had to eat the smelly stuff. After a few months "Shit On Bill!" was cancelled and I had to take a job in a porno theater to support my first wife and our new-born baby. I was an exotic dancer going by the stage name of Mr. Sex and I had to perform, glasses and all, in front of screaming throngs of homos. The money was good, but I yearned for television. Through perserverance I wrangled a new quiz show, called "Piss On Bill!" This one featured contestants answering questions . . . when they got one right they yanked down their pants and let the urine fly. I remember this old lady, she must have been about 80 years old -- she had so much piss stored up in that ancient body that the session took over 15 minutes!

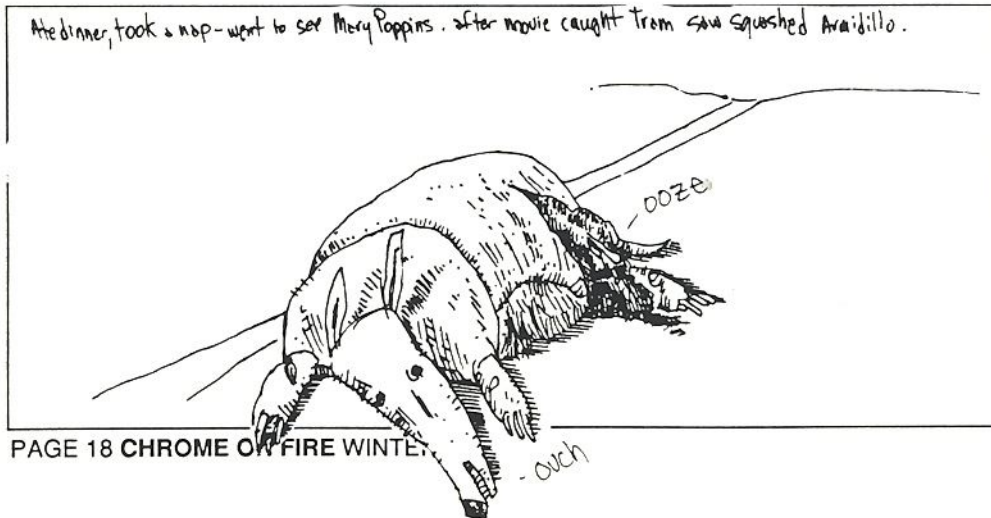
In 1965 my first respectable show was televised. It was

called "Hit Bill!" and it featured little kids beating on me whenever they felt like it. It was one of the first shows geared towards child psychology. I remember Art Linkletter calling me "a fucking asshole for letting kids beat the shit out of you on national TV." But I knew better. I knew that the show was meaningful. In 1967 after two strong years of "Hit Bill!" the network said they had bigger plans for me. Without questioning, I left my show and gave myself to the network. It turned out to be the worst mistake of my career.

The network executives forced me to host a show called "Freak Bill Out!!" It was the era of psychedelia and the show concerned itself with youth and their needs. What it boiled down to, though, was the hippie contestants dosing me with assorted mind-warping drugs, all under the banner of entertainment. It was sick; one night LSD, the next night PCP. I nearly died.

I broke my contract with the network and formed my own independent entertainment company which I named "Fuck Bill In The Eye!" After many dollars and tears poured into development I had a slate of magnificent shows ready for syndication. They all lasted less than a season. Betrayed by my fans. And that's where I am now, broke and destitute. My children are hungry; my wife wants to divorce me. The porno house called yesterday; they'd like to know if Mr. Sex wants to make a comeback . . .

After dinner, took a nap - went to see Merry Poppins. After movie caught Trem saw Squashed Avocado.



S

SERPENT



BY KELLY-JANE COTTER

There's a big spontaneous party at our house. I'm the only one who disapproves. Constance is over and she's talking a mile a minute. My room is the old one upstairs, that I no longer live in. Snakes are everywhere.

*Constance and I
are in the up-
stairs bathroom,*

where I can see a thick snake drooping down towards me. It wraps itself around my neck.

I'm screaming loud, gestalt sounds. I flick at the snake like it were a bug, trying to shoo it away. Constance's talking, talking, but not looking at me, while the snake twists slowly, like a weathervane. It tries to kiss me - - a smothering, hard french kiss.

It's only then that I realize one end of the snake is the head of a miniature deer and the other a normal snake's head; both ends are twisting, squeezing, kissing me.

Somehow I get loose and run downstairs. Everytime I let out a scream, I see a shard of a mirror reflecting me in long hair and a twisted bandana - - hair blowing frenzied, me pulling at it.

Constance comes running out of the bathroom holding a

thin white coathanger which gently blows around like a weathervane as it dangles from her finger. "Look, look, it's only a hanger," she tells me. I try to calm down. But the screams are everywhere -- louder, and all mine. (But my mouth isn't open) Daddy just looks at me and Mommy says, "Sometimes when we get excited, we may think we see things that aren't there."

I agree but point out that the snakes are definitely there and I point to them as they slither around. There goes one right under the living room couch. No one sees.

I'm back in my room upstairs. My brother is getting lectured about the party - - he says Mommy and Daddy said it was OK to throw one. He's giving them a hard time.

Daddy picks him up by one leg and a belt loop and throws him on the bed, where he catches him in a headlock.

Then he starts treating him like a baby, rocking him and patting his head and talking babytalk, but all with malice. Part of my brother's tongue is sticking out and his face is red. I tug at them, pleading, "Stop, stop, this is mean" and I'm crying.

I'm ignored.

I see the mirror-shard excerpts in slow motion and hear the screams echoing

RECORDS & TAPES

DIVINE HORSEMEN -- "Snakehandler" (SST) If the Horsemen were as big as John Cougar Mellencamp, it'd be morning in America at last. Elegant, spare, and passionate, this band manages to sound more Western than even Blood On The Saddle -- but does it without descending into the comic-book cowpunkisms that late great band was sometimes prone to. Chris D. and Julie Christensen create an incredible dramatic tension, mixing pained squawk with soaring alto; D. drives a hiccupping, belching Dodge Charger straight down the highway to no redemption while Christensen swoops and turns donuts around him in her sleek little foreign job. The lyrics are literate and effective -- the only clinker is "What is Read," where D. makes a bunch of bad puns around his favorite authors -- Jim Thompson, Harry Crews, etc. But still.

SPIRAL JETTY -- "Art's Sand Bar" (INCAS) Easily NJ's best unsigned band, maybe this second album will finally get these guys what they deserve. Most of the irritating Feelies/Talking Heads-isms of the first record have been subdued or synthesized, and the band's live power has finally been caught on vinyl. Adam Potkay's manly-yet-sensitive vocals distinctively growl above Dave Reynolds' bombastic, orchestral drumming, while Potkay's simple, well-thought out guitar lines meld perfectly with the melodic bass playing. Best of the lot is "Bad Thoughts" and "The Beat Goes On," (not the S&C song), the latter of which perhaps stands up with D. Boon's best stuff. Cerebral yet rockin'. (48 Henry St, Jersey City, NJ, 07306)

PUSSY GALORE -- "Right Now!" (CAROLINE) Live, this band is truly incredible -- pure anger, bile and self-obsession, undiluted by the distractions of compassion and subtlety; a band with absolutely no future at all but possessing a gloriously deafening Right Now. There aren't many bands playing out on a regular basis more worth seeing than P-Galore. But on record, they basically suck. "Pussy Gold 5000" may have been the band's recorded zenith; "Spinout" and "Pretty Fuck Look" were truly spectacular explosions of grunge guitar and bitter resentment... but this album is 50% good stuff and 50% garbage. Mostly it sounds like a couple of baboons locked in a room with a 4-track and several out-of-tune Sears & Roebuck electric guitars (Strangely enough).

DAVE ALVIN -- "Romeo's Escape" (ELEKTRA) In the Blasters Alvin was mostly relegated to the role of resident Guitar Hero, and his songs were reduced and speeded up until nothing was quite important as The Riff and The Beat. Not that there was anything wrong with that, but coming out from under his brother's shadow may just be the smartest thing this guy has ever done -- the rerecordings of Blasters tunes on this record smoulder with intensity. You ain't gonna be able to party to this stuff, but it will knock you on your ass. Alvin's rough, searching voice on the ballads -- especially "Every Night About This Time" and an alternate version of "Fourth Of July" -- creates a tension and a demand to be listened to that's mostly absent in the work of his peers Los Lobos, who often seem just too letter-perfect to really mean it. And despite the deliberate attempts to downplay his always tasty Strat-antics, "Romeo's Escape" and "New Tattoo" blaze just as much as any Blasters number ever did.

P.E.D. -- "Xerox For Yugoslavia" This 7-inch EP from artfags turned hardcore knuckleheads Post Ejaculation Depression stuffs just about as much music into its grooves as is possible -- the first lesson that should be learned by big-name, big-rip-off bands who like to package their meager output in the highest profit manner possible -- namely the goddam 12-inch single with two songs on it. The second lesson they can learn is how trashy, no-account guitar-playing should really sound (Guitarist/vocalist Sam Schiffman's obviously ready and able to teach 'em) and finally, they can turn to P.E.D. to find out how funny and self-deprecating semi-intellectual teenage angst is a lot more entertaining than self-obsessed vegetarianism and pseudo-political claptrap. Also available as we go to press is "Satan," a cassette compilation of new and old studio and live tracks, including "Manville Man," a long-time WRSU favorite, which sounds more like the Minutemen than Minor Threat... You should probably buy them both. (320 Montgomery Street, Highland Park, NJ 08404.)

BLACKSNAKES -- demo tape. Best new "noise" "metal" band out of NYC in a while; they're distinguished by an actual ability to, yes, Play Their Instruments. Does this turn them into lame, boring, farts? Nah, but it does give them the potential to be more than a one-record wonder. When they sink their fangs into a groove, you know it's not going to be derailed half way through, or trail off into bullshit. Lyrics are menacing and pissed-off without descending into self-parody (Except for the B.S. about killing cops) and their Bill Withers cover seems hilarious until about 20 seconds into it when you realize just how goddamn powerful (and hilarious) they've made the thing. (Box 1322, NYC, 10009.)

Noise Queen's Bad Dream



LYDIA LUNCH -- "Hysterie" (WIDOWSPEAK/CD) Now that she's been anointed by no less than the New York Times itself as a spokesperson and Artist for this oh-so-disaffected and smoky generation of ours, now that she's had a full color photograph in the TV Guide, now that she's been quoted in Newsweek, is there any doubt left in your pea-brain that 1987 was the Year of La Lunch? This hefty 2-record set only tells about half the story of an amazing and fruitful ten year sprint by one of the most original and thoughtful human beings ever to deign to work in the so-called Rock arena -- missing are big chunks like the slick, "hard-rockin'" 13.13 project and the groundbreaking, haunting, etc, etc, "Queen of Siam" album. Luckily, though, Lunch's own label, Widowspeak, is seeing to it that "Siam" is being reissued, along with a must-have cassette called "The Uncensored Lydia Lunch," a collection of readings that includes "Dirty Notes On Brown Paper," which mutated into the narrative for the Kern/Lunch epic Super 8 opus, "Right Side Of My Brain," one of the most harrowing, honest and glorious documentations of a personal and private madness you're ever likely to find. But you probably knew all that. Of "Hysterie," suffice it to say you can listen for yourself to the blueprints for about 3/4 worth of the innovations that other bands have gotten credit for over the past decade; if you can listen to the Teenage Jesus and The Jerks side and not laugh at the macho, half-witted pretensions of a band like Pussy Galore afterwards, then you yourself must be some kinda sexist asshole. The difference between a bunch of rich kids playing punk and somebody who means it should be self-evident (Letting your chick singer up front to imitate the original on one of your songs doesn't abrogate the sexism, either). Teenage Jesus invented this genre, and is still the best at it; the lyrics are tempered with a taste of self-hatred that leads to a level of introspection and revelation you just won't find in White Zombie or Pussy or hardly any of L.L.'s progeny. But even so, the real kick on this record comes as Lunch progresses into other areas, other veins; the only real connecting thread between all this material is that this woman knows how to go for the throat all the time, every time. And doesn't give a shit whether you like it or not.

SONIC YOUTH — "Sister" (SST) My take on "Sister": Mussolini (as portrayed by George C. Scott) seen circling the Italian Alps in jeep - customized heavily with Fascist overtones — radio crackles with opening Chinese-gong chords of "Cotton Crown" — Il Duce's stern jaw goes limp, is transmogrified into jelly-like smiles — soon he's spotted swinging from olive trees with all thoughts of trains running on time thoroughly and completely forgotten. The "fear of not following the muse wherever it will take you." Tune-oriented guitar chaos. The breath of Kim Gordon straight to your brain. (approx. construction time: 120 seconds) — Keane

HIP SHY — "Adventures In Reckless Philosophy" (Demo tape) Hipshy may wear their influences on their sleeve — The Replacements, Minutemen and Husker Du top the lists — but they do it with abandon and personality and besides, the band's less than a year old. This demo tape (packaged as well or better than any "pro" release) alternates off-beat jazz and '60s Brit-chord changes with high-energy rockers that brim over with immaculately-constructed riffs, thundering basslines, and, um, the occasionally too-strangled vocal. While the lyrics trail off a little too often into some private place that You'll Never Understand, the music never lets up; "Duck Down" and "Think I Made You Up Inside My Head" are guaranteed to make your blood carbonate. The spare and clean production highlights this post-punk power trio's live sound at its best. A bargain at any price. (205 Howard St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901)

MAD DADDIES — "Apes Go Wild" (NEW ROSE) The Daddies come out from behind their Cramps influences to prove they ain't no second-hand Roses. Slinky Sono Bouni, the masterbrain behind this throbbing, careening mess of Hot Lovin' and Coolin' Spunk, plunders mid to late period Elvis for an attitude that drips royal perspiration into these here grooves. "Shoe-maker" digs up and immortalizes Joseph Kallinger, a mass-murderer-type Also-Ran from Philadelphia, and "Take A Trip To The Other Side" burns with swamp-root/Morrison-like vocals and psychedelic guitar that'll take over that buncha Puke-colored Australian Arachnid Wussies any day. "Goin' To A Go Go" nods to the band's roots; out-cramping the Cramps; if it don't make you writhe like you ain't got a spine, then you must be dead from the waist down. Now how about an American release, dammit?

WOODEN SOLDIERS — "Hippies, Punks & Rubbermen" (ABSOLUTE A-GO-GO) One of NB's most popular bands finally on vinyl, and even if the result doesn't please each and every one of the social subsets mentioned in the title, the record is sure to please the first and last (maybe the second ... the Soldiers are rumored to have started as a skinhead band). "My First Garage" isn't the best choice for EP opener, with uncharacteristically silly lyrics, but things only get better from there. The flip side is, well, swell. It's pretty unhip in this post-modern age to experience joy without guilt; the Soldiers don't seem to care about that, though. "The Highway Talking" is one of the best tracks here, as well as of course "Commercial Avenue." One complaint: Paul Reider and Greg DiGesù's vocals come across as too thin, lacking a lot of the gravel and guts present at live shows. If you want to be happy, buy this record. If the songs don't do it, the complimentary mantras will.

-- Labben.

HENRY ROLLINS — "Big Ugly Mouth" Henry's raps are fascinating. They're hilarious. Often they're even, um, artful. Much less bullshit than you'd find in the work of some smug egotist like Karen Finley. This record really deserves to be listened to, a lot more so than the kind of bullshit we usually find ourselves buying. But hey, Hank, where the fuck do you get off recording this album on a fucking Walkman and then charging full list price for it?

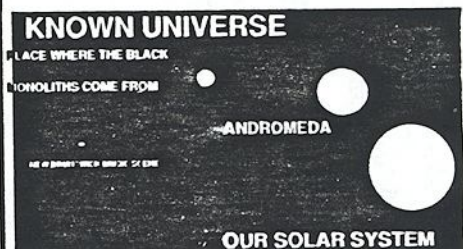
JOHN ZORN — "Spillane" (NONESUCH/ELEKTRA) Saw this guy two years ago in some muzak room at Princeton, playing Flash-Card Symphony with a bunch of unwitting preps. Was amused. Had no idea an album this cool was in the future. All the usual downtown suspects are present; John Lurie, Arto Lindsay, etc., and on the title piece you can practically see 'em thumbing through their Black Lizard reissues, but this amalgam of cheery movie themes, deadpan narration and dissonant honk is majestic in a minor way, indeed. Flip side is even more A-OK, particularly when Zorn puts talented but clichéd Blues Dude Albert Collins in the company of Robert Quine's background noise and some Stephen King-type lyrics.

OPAL — "Happy Nightmare, Baby" (SST) Kendra Smith and David Roback reach into psych-rock's much-too-charted-of-late waters and manage to pull out some jewels. Opal's previous fascination with the aforementioned jaundice is mightily electrified and given an extra swagger in its butt on "Happy Nightmare," evidenced by the T-Rex boogie-down groove of "Rocket Machine," or "Falling Star," where the early romanticism Kendra displayed in the Dream Syndicate rises to the surface in a real sexy way. Other numbers are somewhat less pithy (and punchy), but possess the kind of inscrutable charm that intoxicates like Lime Kool-Aid or one of them there dancers by Degas.

-- KEANE

SWANS — "Children of God" (PVC) Oh god. oh god. oh god. oh god. UUUHHHHH. Whew. Uh. Did you cum? God, you're beautiful. Got a cigarette? Got a razor blade? Why? Oh, no reason, particularly, I, um, just wanted to shave, yeah, don't you think I need a shave... listen, would you mind rolling over this way for a second?

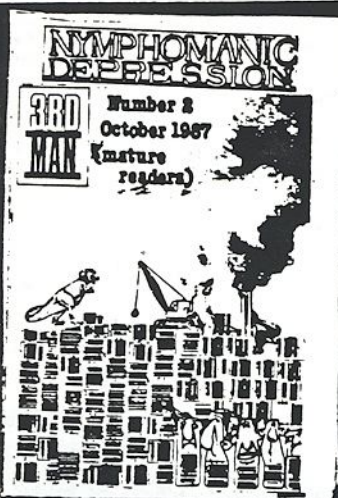
Local heroes?



"MENTAL FLOSS" — Various Artists (WRSU) This is an impressive compilation. We've seen scores of NJ bands collections, but "Mental Floss" puts all its emphasis on the New Brunswick music scene. Taken as such, there's every reason to believe it'll impress folks outside of "the most toxic region in the hole country" (well put). Many of the bands featured have good, or at least admirable vinyl out now, some of it reviewed in these pages. And if none of the work inspires slack-jawed astonishment, there's a good mix: light to heavy, folk to hardcore, ingenuity to insanity. Lousa bands, lousa good cuts, buy it and support yer local scene already... but as *intended* product, it falls a little short. For starters, it's dated — how many of these bands still exist (okay, maybe that's no issue, since every band regroups into two new ones, and mythology increases stature). The real problem isn't "Mental Floss" — it's New Brunswick. For all the vinyl hype (well, that's what it is), this is a Court Tavern album, meaning there's a weighted emphasis on one territory. This emphasis is actually okay since I too believe the Court Tavern is the best place in the area to see talent. Unfortunately it's virtually the only place, and it's up for sale, which throws into question how much of a New Brunswick scene outside of Scott Hall 135 there's gonna be in six months after Lynch's men scoop up the Court and pave it into more 50 cent parking spaces but I'm getting beyond my grasp again. Even if there is a Court Tavern down the line, what are the odds that a stranger in town — say a music writer from the New York area with a minimal degree of clout — will catch one of "Mental Floss"'s highlighted bands? Get the picture? In other words, my concern is that in the event that people outside of the local press decide to call this bluff, they're going to come up short. Yeah, I realize the odds of New Brunswick breaking out of its paralysis seem unlikely, what with the entropy of the club scene over the past five years, but you never know, and "Mental Floss" is the biggest boost New Brunswick has seen yet towards defining its "scene." It's invaluable to this end alone.

One complaint, though: however you feel about Frozen Concentrate, they've done as much for New Brunswick as any band. They've toured the states to an extent and they've put out records. Their singles match or better much of the "Mental Floss" material. But they don't play the Court, and they aren't on this record. They should be.

-- CROZIER



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45 GRAVE -- "Autopsy" (RESTLESS RECORDS) A posthumous release essential for all Grave-diggers. What you get is a lot of rare or previously unreleased material, along with the impossible-to-find single "Black Cross/Wax." If you liked their first -- and only other -- LP, "Sleep in Safety", you'll be just as happy with this. Standout cuts are the thrashing "The Plan" and the brutally slogging aforementioned "Wax." Only regrettable inclusion is the fourth (and damn near unbearable!) remix of their big hit "Party Time." I really miss this band and rumors about various reunion tours/gigs, but don't hold your breath. You can see outstanding Grave Guitarist Paul Cutler in a far less scary context with the current version of the Dream Syndicate, but it's just not as much fun.

-- KINGSNAKE

THE REIVERS -- "Saturday" (CAPITOL) First bigtime release for Zeigist, and it just figures that it'd be under a stupid name like "The Reivers." A highly listenable record, this is, but a little too straddling the line between hip and commercial for tastes around this rag. "Electra," which has been around forever, sounds great, and so does "Wait for Time," but all in all, this record does nothing wrong but, y'know, nothing really, really right. Guitars sound great at first but fall into repetition, and those much-touted three-part harmonies are all but buried in a slick teflon mix. I think John Cougar Mellencamp's latest album is better than this.

FEAR*POWER*GOD -- VARIOUS ARTISTS (CFY RECORDS) This nearly-all spoken word compilation was put out by Birth of Tragedy magazine, which I've never heard of. But after listening to this tape, you can bet I'm writing for *all* their back issues! Lydia Lunch does "The Human Animal," a particularly bleak little rap she was doing around here last spring; Henry Rollins does a version of a piece from "Big Ugly Mouth" about sharing a train ride with a young black family on their way to hell that starts out funny and ends up sad and disturbing -- can see why the other version's on his record though; the Court Tavern crowd that he recorded it in front of is actually paying attention, while his El Lay white boy-fans just wanna guffaw over those funny, funny niggers. Anyway, this tape also has some reasonable good Jello Biafra pieces (small doses ...) and a wacko tape of C. Manson in prison strummin' and croonin'. For the truly literate among you, there are also appearances by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg. Oh, and Anton (Hi, I'm Close Personal Friends With Satan) LeVay, the guy who says he's responsible for Jayne Mansfield's head taking that long lonesome roll down the highway. What can I say but this thing is just way cool? Write to CFY Records, Box 6271, Stanford, Ca. 94305.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN -- "Tunnel Of Love" (COLUMBIA) Well, he used to be cool, when I was a kid. I remember writing an article about how cool he was for my high school paper, illustrated by my own pencil drawing (on lined paper) of him in his souz-bag beard and long-hair stage. I also remember writing this scathing editorial criticizing the principal's office for choking off a planned battle of the bands with red tape, after the school board had voted we could have it. And finally, I remember the principal going through every classroom during homeroom scooping up copies of that edition that students hadn't gotten hold of yet. But of course, I was young, so very young, I'm older than that now ... hey, is Cat Stevens gonna come out with a new album, d'ya think?

SONIC YOUTH -- "Walls Have Ears" (BOOTLEG) Incredibly good double record live set with an incredibly high price tag. Two versions of "Death Valley '69" though, and I coulda done without the one where Lee tries to comp for the missing Lydia. Still, Troo-ly Awesome, I'd say.

WISEBLOOD -- "Dirtish" (RELATIVITY) I guess it'll do until the Birthday Party gets back together ... but seriously, Thirlwell/Foetus/Ruin has a way with a riff, and is pretty good at waving his dick around (see Kern films, live shows, etc) but I find this stuff wanting. Smacks too much of me-tooism and brainless obscenity that falls short of incantation and lands squarely in the lockerroom joke category. Cassette has about 87 "bonus remixes" and some extra tracks, making it a much better buy. And we won't even talk about that new 12-inch ...

TO DAMASCUS -- "Come To Your Senses" (RINGENT/RESTLESS) Hmm, just enough space to say that Sylvia Juncosa is one of the best fucking guitar-players I've ever heard and writes great songs with sometimes not-so-great lyrics but buy this album anyway I know you'll be glad you did. Bye.

CHROMEDIA

POPPING

THE GODHEAD

BY DAVID CROZIER

NOTES ON LESTER BANGS' PSYCHOTIC REACTIONS AND CARBURETOR DUNG.

Over and over, I emphasize in this brain dead generation you have to exaggerate to make a point, you have to go overboard to get that message out, YOU HAVE TO SCREAM YOUR FUCKING HEAD OFF OR NO ONE'S GOING TO PAY ANY ATTENTION TO YOU.

Some people call it gratuitous when you spill your guts all over the place to make a point. Excessive, no doubt. In Lester Bangs' case, those qualities made him a genius. And *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung* (edited by Griel Marcus, unquestionably as a labor of love) five years after his death, makes some sense of what Bangs was, be it supreme rock and roll writer or drug-abusing self-indulgent asshole.

Since the release of the book, there's been backlash from writers who reveal they couldn't stand anything Bangs wrote and thought he was full of shit. This is understandable; people who think writing should be tight and organized, like the way they feel their rock and roll should be tight and clean, can't be bothered with Bangs' mental doodles. Further, there's the problem of second/third/fourth generation writers who get the style down but fall flat in the insight and substance department. I have little use for Chuck Eddy's Bangisms the way I have little use for De Palma's Hitchcockisms. Or the way *Easy Rider* spawned useless trip movies, or Bob Dylan spawned useless Barry McGuires. That's obvious: pave a road and all kinds of questionables will be driving up it in a day or two.

But writers and readers who find Bangs intolerable are obligated to write a 10,000 word essay exemplifying their passion for rock and roll, because to ignore Lester Bangs is to brush off a generation defining brash and glorious excesses and pure irreverence and love for his subject matter, which was Iggy Pop, the MC5, the Velvet Underground, not Jackson Browne, Paul Simon, Bob Seger. Tastes in writers reflect tastes in music. If "Sister Ray" bores you stiff, so might Lester Bangs. Your loss.

Lester Bangs is Alfred Hitchcock. Some critics thought the latter's films were pure gratuity, and they were right. Only there was a purpose, a reason for the overload. For Hitchcock, and for his audi-

PERIODICALS

PURITAN

Hmm, well, y'see, supposedly this rag is to one-handed readers what the New Republic is to mewling liberals-turned-neo-cons; Mother Jones is to grannola-drooling chambray shirt-wearers; Rolling Stone is to once-hip running-dog lackeys of a Nutri-sweetened America; Guns & Ammo & Family Circle are to R. Gene Simmons.

And yes, it does have that certain unabashed honesty of agenda lacking in most porn rags; it's not put together by would-be Literary Lions who distance themselves from the grim reality of their careers by writing shitty copy and adapting a generally misogynist/misanthropic mentality towards all things sexual -- no, the nuts who put together this slick, oversized, perfect-bound magazine seem to truly be card-carrying pervers in their own right, and thereby approach the tasks at hand with great relish (and other lubricants).

Such NYC art-porn flakes as Marco Vassi and Anne Ventura contribute well-thought, well-researched (...) essays and fiction on such arcanities as Meta-sex and such un-sexy topics as sexual jealousy. Interviews are never with pathetic California Girl Porno-startles-of-the-month, but instead with the likes of Norman Mailer, Tennessee Williams, Kinky Friedman, Terry Southern, and Robert Silverberg, all of whom discuss sexual topics candidly and intelligently.

The photographers -- w/such *nom de silver nitrates* as Ed Seeman and Raffelli (the latter the Bertolucci of grunge'n' poke) -- get lavish, well-designed spreads that highlight work that, as unbelievable as this sounds, often attempts to go beyond mere professionalism into honest-to-gosh Aesthetic Territory (though the "money shot" always seems to turn up). Although some of it's definitely *no* turn-on, it's certainly, um, sociologically and culturally fascinating.

Of course, like most of the "underground media" catering to odd minorities (here those of us more fascinated by our thrall to the yoke of sexuality than's normal) Puritan is so solipsistic that it often ends up eating its own tail. Appropriate, no?



ence, it was mind-expanding. It wasn't something to gape at, it was something to make them think. As a reader in Bangs' world, you're going from point A to point B trying not to get lost, because that's what Bangs was doing: trying to make his point across endless possibilities, trying to link it all together, somehow. His tangents are confusing, as out-of-sync with his main subject matter as *North By Northwest*'s crop duster aiming to dust off Cary Grant. What was it doing there? What was the point? The point was reminding the audience there's a whole lot more to mystery and suspense than the clichés of murders on dark street corners. Hitchcock jolted us to keep us from ever getting complacent with the subject matter, as if that were possible. Lester Bangs required his audience to have an attention span (which in the age of television doesn't exist today but in his prime people were still reading, so he got it), some intelligence (ditto), and a degree of tolerance for a guy a little too crazy to know how to slow down.

Excess is the key element, that to make a point in these/those confused times you have to stretch it out across infinity. With Bangs the point was made over and over across a dumpster full of text in every way he could think of. If he could bash it out in 25 minutes (obviously the case in the bubblegum chapter of the *Rolling Stone History of Rock and Roll*), great, but more often than not it would be methamphetamine as the key assist through the hours of writing and rewriting, allowing Bangs to extend his work into the equivalent of a jazz suite, or "Sister Ray," whatever, taking an essential point -- his guitar line, or elemental theme -- and then taking it out to its full possibilities. I never got bored of "Sister Ray" myself, having worn my way through three copies and counting over the last seven years (Although if I see one more cover by a local band or even Lou Reed -- check out "Live in Italy" -- I may give up the faith altogether; you know what I said about paving the road), because if there's an infinite possibility to be found in just two chords, then who really needs more than two?

I'll grant you my sympathies lie with Bangs because he viewed rock and roll pretty much the way I do: sure it's product, sure it's mostly bullshit, but there's still more freedom of choice, more of an accessible alternative in this realm than in any other media "art forms." So why not celebrate it?

Like Bangs, I idolized the Velvet Underground and despised Lou Reed and considered life a sick joke when viewed through his eyes. So what else is new? What else is there? Well, there was high school, when I was the only one within shouting distance checking out the Velvets, which was a good argument for alienation in itself, never mind that everyone hated me anyway, and no one in my school cared about the punk revolution, it was just Hendrix and the Dead and let us not forget Pink Floyd all over the place (and make no mistake, I bought *The Wall* and had a blacklight too), so escaping was hard. and so on. and so forth. etc. No heroes, just zeroes.

But *Psychotic Reactions* is all about heroes, to me a joke that some asshole with a guitar would ever be my hero/idol. Yet I idolized Lou Reed and the Velvets because they were hopelessly, but passionately, fucked up by their society. You couldn't really say they seemed to enjoy much of anything and were alienated by almost everything, but in their world confusion was beautiful, which may sound corny until we recall some of the less-than-inspiring slogans of the late '60s (how will Sonic Youth's confusion-is-sex hold up twenty years from now? Well, it hasn't caught on yet). Bangs search-and-destroy mission with heroes is a drag at times because he

VIDEO ACTION

AL NIGRIN

Yeah, you may have noticed, we're big fans of death and destruction here; basically the coinage of the late 20th, after all. But yes, there's room for beauty, even in our philosophy, Horatio, and the film work of Albert Gabriel Nigrin is one of the places we turn for it.

Four of his films are now available on one video (write 5 Adelaide, Highland Park, NJ for information) and trust us, it beats out most "art film" we've seen. "Stripe Tease" from 1983 is exuberant, nervous, witty and a glorious valentine to the geometry of beauty. Or vice-versa. "Gravida" is a brooding deathtrip of a little film, saddled with an unfortunately obvious soundtrack; we suggest turning off the sound and putting the Swans on your record player... "Aurelia" combines beauty and melancholy in a elegantly drifting combination of static or gently rolling images. Need we say more? Write now!

SUBMIT TO ME NOW

(richard kern, box 1322, NYC, 1009) The sequel to the devastating "Submit To Me" tape is a bit of a letdown; Kern makes a valiant attempt to disturb us further, but misses out on most of the rhythms that made the first one so horribly inviting. Also "Goodbye 42nd Street" is pretty great, but it's no "Death Valley '69." I hope somebody gives this guy the money to make a real film someday. . . my fantasy would be to see his adaptations of either "A Feast of Snakes" or "Crash."

TV/ARM VIDEO MAGAZINE

(target video, 678 S. Van Ness Ave, San Francisco, Ca. 94110) Half great, half really predictable tripe. A hilarious Negative Video, the fascinating "Banned From Earth" and a choice early Kern share space with some crappy Vietnam rehash ("Death Ranch") and a couple real precious little projects. But very worth it at the cheap price of \$19.95, however.

clearly expects both too little and too much from them, but it's also one of the book's most valuable lessons: ultimately, it sucks having a hero more than it does being one.

Which takes us back to Bangs, who through following his heroes Ginsberg, Burroughs and John Coltrane (Bangs' imaginary "20 minute atonal ragas that soared to their stormiest heights" in the shower are a metaphor for much of his written work), made a definite path of his own, and unlike the equally irreverent and abrasive R. Meltzer, Bangs actually gave a shit about rock and roll, wrote with a mixture of passion and disdain for what is, brilliant art or not, essentially corporate product. Good for him; somebody certainly needed to.

Granted he didn't always work in elemental themes - quite the opposite -- and his twists and tangents occasionally came off like meter changes in an ELP manifesto. But his dream of tying together and making sense of everything from *Metal Machine Music* (it's humorous, if somewhat pathetic, to see Bangs dig so deeply into a work most likely meant as a joke and nothing else) to *Shampoo* to depersonalized sex to "the mindless compulsion to dance all night currently sweeping New York City" to "the deification of numbness and/or the stultifyingly bland," et. al. seemed within reach -- it makes sense to me, anyway -- and even if he didn't accomplish it or any of the many dozens of books he'd planned on writing, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung* comes pretty close. But while 350-plus pages will satisfy those who haven't yet experienced Bangs' prose, the rest of us will want a whole lot more.



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MORE JOHN QUINN: We love this guy's stuff. Don't care if you do.

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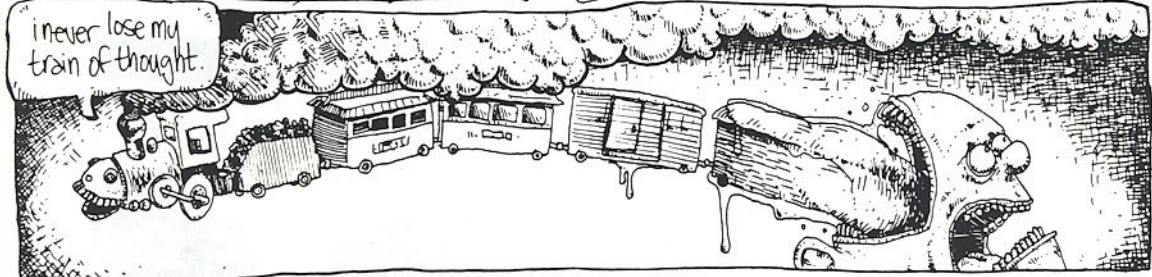
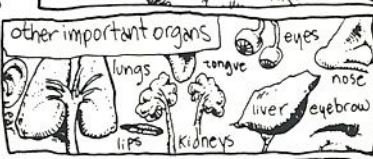


(CAN'T WAIT, CAN YOU?)



my brain

by john thom
as quinn II
© copyrig
1987



id (i'd) n. the division of the psyche associated with instinctual impulses and the satisfaction of primitive needs.



the end

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ON

F I R E

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