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Issue #3

ANTI MATTERS

IN THIS ISSUE:

Fort Music Schedule

Lotsa Interviews

More Demo Tips!

Live Reviews

Dec. 1995



So,

It was snowing on that desperate morning when I sat down to write this little section of the magazine. There was much I had to say and very little time to say it. I wanted to impart upon you the spirit of the holidays, fill you with the joy of the season. But then I realized that the joy had left me, I was barren, bereft of all that is held dear at this time of year. --This is our Joyous Season issue. I don't think that there is really anything in here that talks about Christmas, or addresses the birth of the Lord, Our Savior, Jesus Christ (Amen), or any of the other religious holidays that come around the end of the year, so this is the only place that we have to tell you all about it. We here @ Antimatters hope you have a great yule and that you enjoy this issue and the special warmth that we tried to put into it. There's plenty of good stuff in here, more than we've had in the past, thanks, for the most part, to the addition of Scarecrow and Poppy to the "staff." (Tom and I breathe a sigh of relief--in unison, major 5ths.) I'm getting to be stupid again. This is the time when I realize that I have nothing to say and haven't said anything to this point, so I quit.

Enjoy,

-JT

Who Did This:

Editors:

Tom Nishioka
Poppy
JT Lewis
Scarecrow

Contributors:

The Humans
Jonathan Berger

Art Guys:

Dan Emery
Key Wilde

← NEXT
ISSUE!

Write to or for Antimatters, we take anything and print it, gladly:

Antimatters
208 Ave. B #5
NYC 10009

Contact Us @ 212.726.8628

Mark Johnson live review

by Tom Nishioka

if you missed it, you missed it. mark johnson did three thursdays in november, and this guy whose songs have been performed by the roches and the smithereens did three great shows. i've seen mark start his show with a noisy audience and just play guitar, approach the mic, and stop. then play guitar, walk into the crowd a bit, look around, and stop. the crowd starts wondering what's up and before you know it, mark has them. he's a totally comfortable performer who you might jump around, raise his guitar up heavy metal solo style, or do a little vaudville flare with his hand next to his cheek. you might wonder if such antics are a little weird, until you watch him closer and see that he's just totally into the songs, and you're the one that's weird. honest emotion, wow, what a refreshing change from choreography and mtv rock god imitative posturing. and i haven't even gotten to the songs. they're great. sometimes one chord, sometimes bealtesque harmonic turns. usually as a songwriter listening to someone else, you think, 'oh, i would have done that differently.' not with mark. listen and learn, people.

for his last show, mark was joined by maggie roche on bass and betty alvarez on percussion. dave rave just got back from a tour with agnelli and rave, and came up to help sing a song he co-wrote with marc, the elvis ode "sinner of the century." a little help from his friends, and mark's energy was pure, inspiring rock and roll. so many people you see at clubs these days make you think about beauty quotient, marketing strategy, and posturing. if you missed mark, you missed music. hope he'll be back soon.

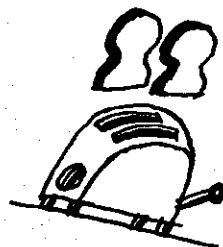


What Is Anti-Folk?

It's a natural question. But then, what is folk music? Bob Dylan? James Taylor? Cobain unplugged (for good)?

I think of Anti-Folk as an historical term, referring to a ragtag team of mid-'80's folk-punk pioneers who rejected the staid and elitist West Village folk scene. Once separated, these original Anti-Folkers gathered in a meeting place called The Fort in the East Village to forge the new cutting edge of acoustic music. The Fort became a mobile playhouse for the Anti's, switching locations every year or so as its founder Lach sought out better and better venues for the new rising tide. Some familiar names that arose from Anti-Folk are Roger Manning, Brenda Kahn, Paleface, Mike Rimbaud, and Beck, among many others.

Today, Anti-Folk enjoys the latest incarnation of The Fort at The Sidewalk Cafe at 6th Street and Avenue A in the East Village. Live free music reigns every night of the week at The Fort, and the Monday night Anti-Hootenanny is the highlight for many. The new Anti-Folkies continue the tradition of the old, practicing experimental song-writing and fighting mediocrity at every turn.



SAY ANYTHING

INTERVIEW WITH KIM FOX

by
Scarecrow

Kim Fox is really getting to me. Two of her songs have been wrestling for control of my consciousness, *They Don't Mean Much* and *Sinister City*. The lyrics and melodies of these two very different songs having been weaving and bouncing around inside my skull for the past week. Her voice evolves from a breathy baby doll laugh into a sultry woman in the space of a phrase. When I tell her that her music is sensual she seems surprised, but when reminded of the dark, hush layers of sound in *Sinister City*, or the innocent sexuality of *You Touch Me In Unusual Ways*, she agrees.

I met with Kim after her show at the Fort on Sunday, November 26, the same night that a few hundred Latvians were throwing a big, loud bash, and we sat in the restaurant with Lenny Molotov, who helped prod us along with *Who Are Your Influences?* (Beastie Boys, Breeders, Laura Nyro), *What Do You Think of the Riot Grrrls?* (I think they're great, but it's not my act because I'm not angry right now), and various other helpful questions. Somehow I felt that I hadn't gotten it, I hadn't really dug into the heart and soul of Kim Fox. And the Latvians were just too loud. We re-scheduled for another time at a quiet coffee house and had an enlightening and extensive talk. I realized later that the tape recorder had been off for a large part of this second interview. A coherent interview was evading me.

Still, I wanted to set down in print as much as could be recalled from tape and from memory about this fascinating performer. Here's what I gathered.

AM: As a songwriter myself, I'm always thinking, "What's common to most people?"

KF: There's a lot of things. We all work at a job. Your job is not your life. People have other goals - going to college, a family. A lot of people go to church. We all get together and write songs on Monday night. Everyone has something more that gets them through.

AM: You mean spirituality is a common characteristic?

KF: I think so.

AM: What advice do you have for singer/songwriters, musicians?

KF: Explore your own voice, more than anything. Instead of writing "hits," or things that you hear other people doing.

AM: You mean instrumental voice as well as a vocal voice.

KF: Yes, your whole musical style. Make it something definitively your own. Don't ever get discouraged by anything that goes

on in the business, because it's such a fly-by-night kind of thing. What's fashionable today is out tomorrow.

AM: Paleface says he was the Playgirl pin-up of the month at Polygram, then the month ended.

KF: Just remember to do it because you love to do it, and never compromise. The innovative artists never compromised. They just write the best songs, instead of saying "This isn't accessible."

AM: What's your songwriting process? What comes first, lyrics or music?

KF: Usually the music comes first. Then the music will suggest a melody, which then will suggest some lyrics, then I build the song around that.

AM: You write on piano?

KF: Mostly, but I've been trying to do more on guitar.

AM: How did you choose your stage persona?

KF: It just follows from the songwriting. I used to do mostly dark, depressing songs, so that was my stage persona. Now I'm a lot more UP. The band Suddenly Tammy was a big inspiration that I could do an act that was a woman on piano.

AM: Many of your songs have a bit of a circus feel. How do you describe your music?

KF: I call it "pop show-folk," or "quirky female singer/songwriter."

AM: I like "pop show-folk" better. In *Sinister City*, you describe a rude, arrogant neighbor and you have the line "You're so overtired, but this baby won't go to bed." "This baby" is...

KF: The city.

AM: New York?

KF: It started out as New York, and then I was living in Bloomington [Indiana], and it became that city. Now it's New York again.

AM: And now you're moving to Bloomington?

KF: I'm living there now, and coming back here to do shows.

AM: It must be a very different scene there.

KF: The music in Bloomington is really amazing. There are just tons of great songwriters, musicians, and bands, there. And it's so laid back, compared to New York, that you can really listen to and concentrate on music. I was born and raised in New York. So like someone from a small town dreams of living in a big city, I always dreamed of living on a farm.

AM: Is that where you got your development deal?

KF: No, that was New York.

AM: How does that work again?

KF: Basically - and I realize that I'm very, very lucky with this - basically I was given a one-year development deal, which means that my publisher made it possible for me to not work on anything but developing my music for a whole year. They helped me

get instruments, recording, access to a huge music collection, and music industry contacts. He's awesome!!!

AM: And a record deal?

KF: Well, I can't say anything about that at this point.

AM: That's amazing. I guess then, the obvious question is...

KF: What do I owe them?

AM: Yes, what do you owe them?

KF: Everything I produce for the next three years.

AM: Wow!

KF: I wouldn't have done it if I didn't trust them totally. My publisher (BMG) will say "Play me everything you've written, even the stuff you think is terrible." And it's not because he wants to own all my songs, it's because I'll play something terrible for him and he'll say, "That's your best song." And I'll play it for other people, and they'll say the same thing. I never have any idea.

AM: In *They Don't Mean Much*, you say "You can say anything, and I won't hate you." Are you worried that this song might encourage people to stay with abusive or stupid partners?

KF: Well, I could see how it could be read that way, but I think if you listen closely, it's really about knowing someone so well and being close enough that they can talk shit and you know it's shit, and you can call them on it and it won't hurt the relationship, and I mean friends as well as romantic relationships. Some people like to hear themselves talk, and if you know them well, that's o.k., because people shouldn't have to censor themselves in a relationship, it's all about just saying what's on your mind.

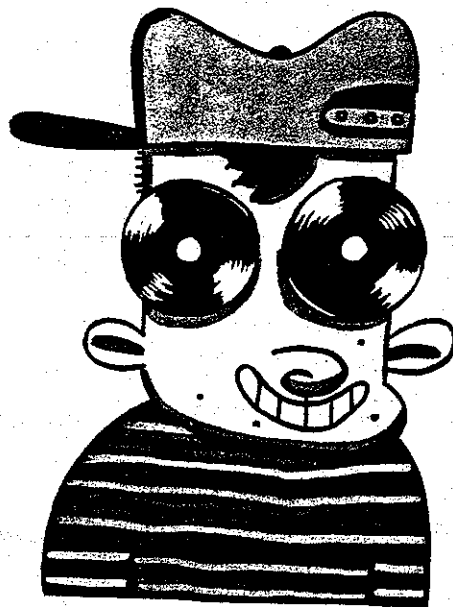
The tape ended here, and I lost a mountain of details about Kim's love life, musical history, and tax law (though I suspect the I.R.S. is behind the missing tape). You can get all the information first hand at Kim's next show at the Fort on January 10th at 9:00 pm.

VITAMINE PACKED SERIAL #8

"You can't be serious," Lach said, eyes all agog.
"Nope, I'm sorry. Can't."
"Eddie," Lach pleaded, "Your sponsorship is very important to me. I'd consider it a personal favor --"
"Sorry, Lach, but the business has suffered lately, and I lay the blame squarely on you."
"What're you telling me?"
"Since my corporation's been behind the Fort, more and more people in the Village are going out, getting themselves guitars. And here's the kicker, Lach: They're real."
"So we're inspiring new artists. That's great, isn't it?"
"You're cutting directly into the air guitar market! I'm sorry; it's a dog eat boy world out there, and I've got to keep Eddie's Air Guitars running."
"Doesn't it ever bother you that you're selling... air?"
"Bothers me that I'm not selling air."
"Come on," Lach cried, "Metal'll make a comeback. There'll be more incompetent white boys in here than ever!"
"Good luck," Eddie said turning to tune a new machine, "Watch the door on your way out."
Lach didn't, and it hit him on the bottom.
He was rubbing his butt as he stepped over a street-corner troubadour on the way to Avenue C. He had a sneaky suspicion what he'd find.
"Without sponsorship," Lach pondered, "How will the Fort survive?"
There were other sponsors, of course, but Eddie's was big. Lots of dough, lots of support, lots of free air guitars to decorate the walls. Lach would need to find someone to take up the slack, and the natural first step was:
"Nick's Paling Salon. How may we help you?"
Some receptionist, looking like the wrong one in Shakespeare's Sister, sat behind a desk. Lach wondered if Michael Jackson did his business this far into Loisaida.
"Hi," Lach said, turning away from the black lights and other skin-sucking mechanisms on the wall, "Is Nick in?"
"Nick's dead."
"Oh, well. Sorry to hear that. Who's in charge? I'm Lach, from over at the Fort."
"Lach? You're not a creditor?" The white white girl looked up from her black black nails. "Well, Nick might be able to see you. Hold on."
She picked up the phone, and Lach sat down, again amazed at his incredible power to get a rise even out of the dead.
As he waited, Lach thought about the other sponsors. These were the only two regulars, but Lach had been able to swing support from the Jackson/Presley consortium on occasion. But that was given rarely, and only for projected successes, and even then, Michael insisted that a Beatles or Elvis tune be performed during every set.
Lach didn't know if he could handle playing "Free As A Bird" four times a night.
"Nick will see you now."
Lach sighed, and went back to beard the vampire.
"Yeah, sure," Nick said, "I'd behind you a hundred and eight percent."
"That's great, Nickie. And considering the problems you think you could show a little extra financial support?"
"Love to, Lach-ko, but see, it's winter, which is Nature's own little paling salon. Money's tight around here, and we're trying to diversify --"
"I got you," Lach stood up, "Thanks anyway..."
Lach left in a tizzy. He'd have to talk to the Jackson/Presleys, he supposed with a sigh.
"What's got you down, friend?" Someone said at Lach's feet. Lach looked down, and recognized the troubadour he'd narrowly missed before.
Lach smiled in relief.

(To Be Continued...)

In this space, there should be pictures of the Superhoot. So, too bad. Better luck next time.



DEMO TIPS

by tom nishioka

so you're a solo singer/songwriter and you want to record a demo. let's talk basic production--no technical aspects, no gear, just how to approach the musical arrangements and the emotions. just like writing songs, even if you just sit down and do it without defining a process, there is a way you work best. thinking about it and planning will help you come out of recording with your money's worth.

probably the most basic decision that singer songwriters have to make in recording is whether to sing and play together live, or record the vocals and instruments at different times. Doing both together will likely be cheaper and perhaps be truer to what you actually do. record yourself on a boombox singing and playing together and listen back to the results over the course of a week or two. if you're cringing at flubbed instrumental parts and missed vocal notes and poor time, plan to track separately. you can focus in on parts when you do them alone and really nail them. if you like your boombox recordings, ask yourself one more question: how much flexibility do i want to manipulate the sounds during the mix? especially with a mic'd acoustic guitar and vocals, it's very difficult to get separation of tracks in recording. the vocal mic picks up the sound of the guitar, and vice versa. whatever changes you want to make to one happens to the other.

one great first step is to pick out references. just considering the tone colors of recording, there are a million ways for you to go once you're in the studio. if you don't think about it beforehand, some engineer can give you a mix that sounds 'good', but the replacements records sound 'good' and nirvana unplugged sounds 'good' and liz phair sounds 'good' but they're all very different goods. i expect there might be some resistance to categorizing your music as x meets x meets x--you might want to be a totally new breed--but having sonic references doesn't mean you can't do your own thing; they just mean you'll have a ball park of what you like. choose things you like the sounds on, as well as things you like the emotions and spaces of...does you like an intimate or big space...etc. try to meet with the engineer before you schedule a recording date and play her/him your references, see if it's something they have ideas about how to achieve. bring your references to every session, tracking and mixing--listen to them to orient yourself and to direct the engineer. try to get your references on cd--your engineer can do a lot better job of making the frequency and spatial picture of your mix sound like your reference with a cd than with a hissy, fuzzy, tape. (unless, of course, you want your demo to be hissy and fuzzy.)@

cont.

let's say your guitar is not the martin or taylor you wish it would be and sounds a little small or thin--you can eq and compress it in mixing to be huge and powerful, but your voice might then sound like the mic was halfway down your throat. again, with references and a strong sense of direction, you won't need the flexibility and can just walk in, get the sound, play for a great performance, and walk out.

Tracking separately offers focus and flexibility, but does pose some problems. first thing is that it might not feel natural. if you practice always playing and singing together, it will feel

experiment with faster and slower before you go into the studio, and then just have the engineer give you a count off at the right tempo. better to know it when you record it than record it feeling more mellow than usual and come back to mix only to find your favorite song now feels like a dirge.

so, know what you want the recording to sound like, know if you want to track together or separately, have the arrangement written down, and at least know what tempo you want to start at, even if you don't want to play to a click.

Lastly, set a number of hours that you would like to do the project within, and then set another number--the number of hours you can go up to before you absolutely can't afford it. let the engineer know this beforehand--that way you can keep anxiety and frustration under control. i guarantee that if you suddenly realize you're out of money and have to rush to finish, you won't like the results. don't forget to plan for an extra sequencing and mastering step after you have mixed down individual tracks.....what's mastering and sequencing anyway, you ask? find out in the next issue of antimatters, technical tips on the friendly tip.

weird to just play alone. more importantly, you probably know when to play the chorus and the verses only by what you're singing. 75% of the separate tracking recordings i have done with people have run into arrangement problems--we finally get a solid guitar part and start laying down the vocals, only to find that the guitar did not repeat the verse figure enough times and the favorite line of lyrics gets cut out by an early chorus. absolutely, positively, write down the arrangements--how many times for each verse, chorus, and bridge progression. get used to playing songs referring to your charts before going to the studio. a lot of recordings are affected by the time--whether the tempo of the song is consistent, whether notes hit when they're supposed to or whether it sounds like it was taking too much time to move your fingers. the more groove your songs have, the more important it is for them to have good time. then again, some recordings that flaunt regular time are great. i would tend to say that you should be able to play your songs with a metronome keeping a regular click before you record. this gets more important the more overdubbing you are going to do. you'll just have more options for punching and adding if you play to a click while recording your basic tracks. however, if you've never tried playing to a click, don't try it for the first time in the studio. it's hard, and it will confuse and frustrate you, and waste money while you try to get it right. there are a lot of good arguments for never recording to a click, so choose your own path here. one absolute bit of advice however, is to practice with a click for a week and write down what tempo you think the songs sound best at.

12/13: Reminiscences, Recollections, & Long Titles

Jonathan Berger - NYC.

Dave Foster Solo:

When I first saw Bubble, I didn't really.

At an antihoot in Summer '94, Dave "From Ubbie," as Lach introduced him, came up to the non-stage at the Fort, and played a couple of numbers, alone.

I don't remember the songs. I don't remember if I liked them (Though, since I recall his performance at all, I they had to impress me in some way). I do remember a small, small man, black half-beard in place, belting powerfully whatever it is he had to sing.

And when he was done he said, "Come see my band here next week."

What was the name? Was it Bubble? Made more sense than Hubble, and, on the far wall, I noticed a circular sticker, blue and green, like a bubble. It said Bubble.

Somehow, the fact that the singer-songwriter had a band with a cool name added a certain weight to his performance. Maybe it was me.

"I'll try and catch them," I said to me.

And I did.

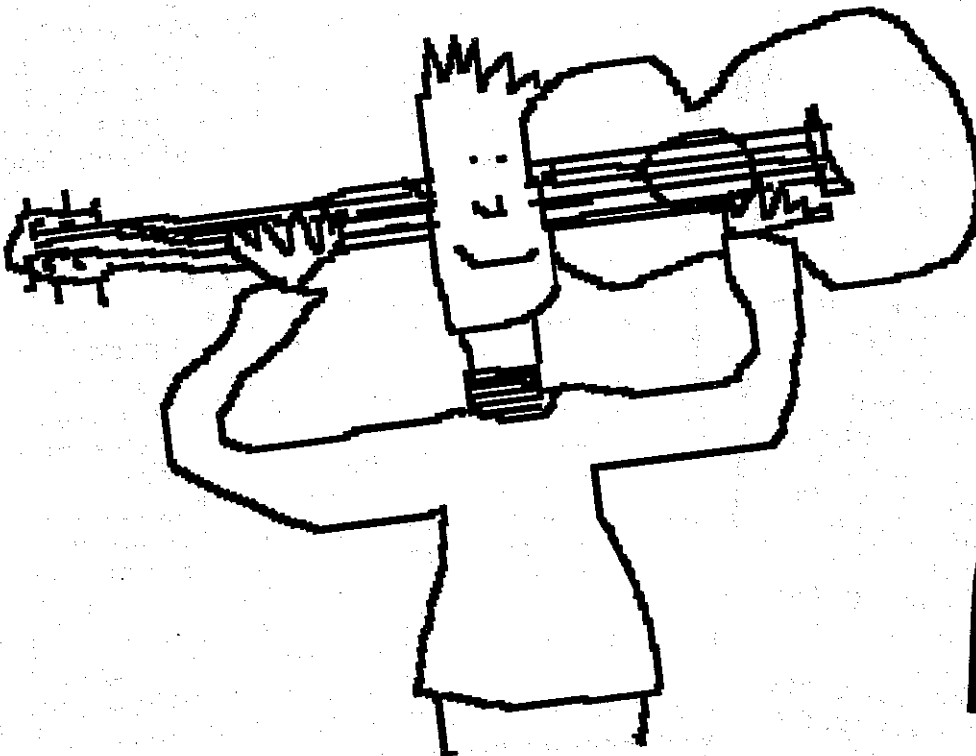
Bubble, the early trio, was physically striking. The short, scruffy, soulful singer/six-stringer, the tall cool bassist -- and you have to realize it was a bass, no guitar in sight -- and a maniac drummer whose plastic sound effects scared me. The drummer's kit grew with every show, a further striking factor.

The big ole bass left me with a swinging impression of the band: but the general sound was more of hard pop, a trio that made a whole lot of tuneful noise, this.

Things changed. The bass disappeared, as did the original drummer, and an additional guitars been added to the mix. It's all different now, but really, it's the same old song, only more so.

Bubble seem on the precipice of something: a really good performance, Rock and Roll stardom, a nice sandwich, I dunno. There's something in the crackled air at their performances, at the increasing size of crowds, in the write-ups they receive. I've enjoyed ubble a great deal, and am amazed I can still wrangle a free show form them, see them at the Fort, or Sin-E or anything like that.

And, of course, it's a special treat to see that tiny guy play solo. It really takes me back.



"To support his writing habit, Mr. Sandlin has taken on many jobs, including elk-skinner and pizza parlor manager, dishwasher, and cook in a Chinese restaurant."
From Social

**** LIVE REVIEW ****
BLACK TEACUP YORKIE
(BTY)

by
Dan & Dave

The night was cold, the Beatles got back together, and Rancid was playing up on St. Mark's. But who gives a shit, 'cause the lucky ones were at the Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe for the "Strange Folk Sunday" performance of Black Teacup Yorkie.

BTY opened their set with parts I and II of their trilogy - two classic folk songs strangely distorted and changed into anti-folk songs. Later, the Mother Folkers (John & Mike) joined BTY. The addition of the bass and conga completed the perfect composition.

The full band then continued to belt out their catchy, powerful, original material. Songs such as *Sextet*, the twisted sea chanty, make you just want to say "Arr, matey, swab the deck." The set was well composed of great songs interwoven with witty jokes and even a surprising outburst of the Peanut's Song - *Linus and Lucy*. Soon it was time for *Dead Puppies* and *Sidewalk Polka*, both of which are adored by the Army at the Fort. *Dead Puppies* is an old song about putting your dead dog in the stew. *Sidewalk Polka* is self-explanatory - an upbeat 3/4 tune featuring a brief history and observation of the very popular Monday night Anti-hootenanny, including an interesting rendition of "O Homos tis Tavernas" (a Greek folk song) as a segue. Let's get up and do the Sidewalk Polka, hey!

Next, lead singer Kelly and singer/guitarist Bob Steel toned down for two beautiful arrangements, *Let It Go* and *Are You Mine?*, showcasing Kelly's elegant but powerful vocal style.

"Everytime I laugh, well, I don't really laugh that much," is a line from BTY's closing song, *Director of the Universe*, a sarcastic meditation on life and spirituality that features slick vocal harmonies by Bob and Kelly.

It wasn't long before BTY was up for two encores. The first saw Bob playing the baby grand piano for a stunning ballad. The night ended with *Northwind*, a song-story of Kelly's run-in with an Old Native American.

BTY put on a stellar performance, and those who were not there should consider themselves unlucky and not nearly as enriched as the people who saw the show!

BTY IS:

Kelly Collins - Vocal & Percussion
Bob Steel - Guitar & Vocal
John Leanza - Drum
Mike DiBrizzi - Bass & Backup Vocal

~~~~~ INTERVIEW ~~~~~

**HAMELL ON TRIAL**  
by  
Scarecrow

"If I ain't sweating, then it ain't no fun. I'm like the Beastie Boys, except I'm only one." -- *Gonna Be A Meeting*

Imagine the above lyrics spitting out rapid-fire from a manic, bald Kabuki dancer minus the duds, backed by thunderous machine-gun guitar pulses for 45 minutes, broken occasionally by frenetic joke and story-telling chatter that evokes Roger Manning and Lenny Bruce, all done with a DIY, in-your-face, no bullshit attitude. Imagine all that, and you still haven't seen the sixteen other sides of Ed Hamell, whose album *Big As Life* (Mercury) is due out February 27. Anti-Matters met with Hamell after his Nov. 25th gig opening for NRBQ at the Bottom Line. In the small backstage dressing room, the beats of the Q were more than just a little audible, but Hamell didn't even seem to notice as he discoursed for an hour and a half about how he developed as a performer.

AM: You played in The Works for 10 years and toured 251 days a year with a full band and stage show. Why did you make the switch to acoustic?

H: Sometimes if you play in a band, the songs aren't that good, because you figure, well, the piano player will take a solo there. I was hanging around at a party one night and people were playing Beatles songs & Dylan songs and I thought "My songs stink. They're awful. I've got to learn how to stand by myself." And the economics of playing in a band were just too much. And the personalities were just berserk.

AM: You were living in Albany then. How did you hear about Anti-Folk?

H: I was a huge Replacements fan and I would go to record stores to look for anything new. One day the clerk said, "Have you ever heard this guy?" and it was the SST record [Roger Manning]. Have you ever heard that record?

AM: No, I've seen him live and on the Anti-Folk video.

H: He's so good that I'm embarrassed to be around him. I'm not that sold on melody. I'm a big rap fan, so if somebody says, "There's no melody," I say "So fucking what? You don't need it."

AM: I'm surprised more people aren't doing it. It seems to be a trend.

H: Right. And spoken word. The other night a young black woman won on Showtime At The Apollo doing spoken word. I think it's indicative of a necessity to communicate. Maybe people are thinking "I don't think I can listen to another Soul Asylum song. I need to be spoken to." Anyway, after hearing Roger

Manning, somebody told me that if I like him, I should go see Brenda Kahn. She opened for somebody like Fishbone, and she floored the place. I don't know if she knew how intense and great she was. So, then I knew, whatever this Anti-Folk thing is, it's cool. It's exciting.

AM: Yeah, it's a cool scene.

H: It was. And it still is. Unquestionably, the Monday night thing is great. It has a feeling of home.

AM: Is that how you met Lach?

H: Yes. The first couple of times I met him, I wanted to fucking strangle him. It can be hard to get by him initially, but then you realize, this is really a good, warm person. Now I like him a lot, and I think he's very, very talented, and a great songwriter.

AM: What was the acoustic scene like in Albany at the time [late '80's]?

H: New England has a whole school of...

AM: The old folk.

H: Yeah, the traditional folk, and the new AAA format, which I don't like, but I'm a firm believer that sometimes it's good to internalize, in other words, sometimes it's good to say "If I'm not getting this across to the audience, rather than thinking 'Everybody's wrong,' there just might be the possibility that I'm doing something wrong." If I don't like something and it's scaring me, it might be good to put my nose in it and see what the hell it is. Then maybe I'll learn something. The more you do that, the more you realize, "Holy Shit, I don't know a fucking thing." I know a million guys who started out as musicians, and now they don't play anymore, they hang on the barstool, they're all drunks, they don't even listen to music and I think, "It used to do so much for us. We used to get together and just listen to music and not talk and hate jock guys"... it was a great bonding thing, and now it isn't anymore because it's so frustrating, it's a fickle mistress, you know what I mean?

AM: So you stuck your nose into traditional folk?

H: Yes, you know I do open-mics like a madman, and I met this guy who was really into John Gorka and Christine Lavin and all those folk Nazis. I had never heard of them, you know, my favorite artists were Ice-T and The Beastie Boys, people who had gotten rid of that cumbersome melody line, so this guy mentioned all these new names and I was thinking "Are these Christian artists?" But they weren't, and I started getting together with him. I had never thought to edit my songs, and this guy did like 30 or 40 drafts! I'd bring him a song and he'd say, "This part is loose," and I'd think "Why, that dirty son of a bitch," but after I'd go home and cooled off, I realized he was right, and I learned a ton of shit.

AM: How did you decide to move to Austin?

H: I was doing a regular Wednesday night

keep going

gig in Albany and I was starting to build a good draw, but I realized there was only so far I could go there. Anyway, my wife and I took a vacation and drove across the U.S. and I was checking out all the rock-n-roll historical things like visiting Sun Studios in Mississippi, Stovell's plantation, New Orleans, Austin, California, L.A., Seattle, Hendrix's grave. My wife, well obviously, she really is a very patient woman [laughs].

Then my label at the time [Blue Wave] sent me to this NAIRD (Nat'l Association of Independent Record Distributors) convention, which was basically a bunch of indies schmoozing with distributors to get a heavier-duty profile for their product. So the mayor showed up and addressed us as a group, and I'd never been addressed by a public official in my life, except for getting busted or something. He said, "Welcome to Austin. I hope you will think about moving here, because if you're a musician in Austin, you're a first-class citizen."

AM: So then you knew you wanted to be there?

H: Yeah, there's a great Richard Pryor sketch where he's flying over Africa and he's looking down and he sees black doctors and black taxi drivers and black lawyers and black bums and all black people and his buddy says "What do you see down there, Rich?" And he says "All those people," and his friend says "Do you see any niggers down there?" and he says "No I don't," and that was the day that he stopped using the word nigger, which he used to use all the time in his show.

AM: So Austin was your Africa.

H: Here's the thing. If you live anywhere that isn't a music city, the minute you hit 30, your peer group, your parents, your family, everyone you come in contact with, says, "When are you gonna give this idiotic dream up?"

AM: [laughs] This is exactly the same thing that I get.

H: It's because in the United States you have to get a job and be miserable for the rest of your life. Actually, I think it just validates that they're miserable for the rest of their lives. And when I tell my musician friends about the mayor addressing us, they laugh. But it irritates me that we even have to laugh, that fucking pisses me off. It isn't like that down there. It's great.

AM: So that's where your current act developed.

H: Right. I went down there with my wife, 1700 miles away, we sold everything that we had, my electric guitars, we had six plastic trash bags of things. I had no career, no contacts...

[Hamell gets up to offer us some fruit and Rolos from the complementary food basket, of which he is very proud.]

AM: Did you or your wife have a job?

H: No, she was doing her graduate work down there, and I got several temp jobs and ended up delivering pizzas. Again, I had no contacts, no money, no encouragement from my parents. All I had was this wacky dream that I could be - this [gestures to himself] After four weeks there, my mother-in-law, who is Christian - and I'm no big fan of that but we get along great - she sent me a card and I opened it up and it said, "I believe in you." When I tell this story to my musician friends they say, "No, what she should have said was, 'You bald fuck, get my daughter home now or I'm gonna chop your fucking balls off.'" It's an amazing story.

AM: So then what?

H: I was playing the open-mics and I wanted a regular gig at a real cool place called The Electric Lounge that had spoken word and grunge bands and art and such. After three months in Austin I got a gig there and there were five people in the audience, my wife and four people who were there to see the grunge band after me. These four people were talking through my whole set and I started screaming at them to shut the fuck up or get the fuck out. So they left, and I was there playing to my wife, and later she says "Let's go, let's get out of Texas." But the owner of the place comes running out after the show and says "Ed, that will never happen to you again. I know you're probably thinking of leaving Austin." And he brought me back in, and he bought my wife a drink, and he booked me five gigs opening for good bands with followings that would probably dig me. And eventually I got a Friday night gig for a year and by the end of that I was drawing 300 every Friday and my financial situation obviously was changing.

AM: So many people are musicians there, who was your audience?

H: Well, Austin is also called the new Silicon Hills. It's computers, and it's huge. It's where Apple and all those people moved to. The audiences were great, and so were the musicians. You could be 60, 70 years old, and play your idiosyncratic music there and here's the key, you could maintain your dignity. Then I played South by Southwest, and you know, I was doing these weird songs about people robbing KFC's with forks, and I decided to record a good demo. I ended up setting up in the living room and recording 60 minutes live-to-dat, made 500 copies, sold all 500, and one of those sales was to Jeff Kohl from Doolittle Records, who loved the tape and he was looking for an artist. So next year I had a new record, I did South by Southwest and Rolling Stone reviewed the show. Interscope had flown out to see me, Roughhouse had flown out to see me, RCA had flown out to see me, but it was Peter Lubin at Mercury

who was looking to upgrade their alternative profile because they had a lot of hair bands, you know Def Leppard, Kiss, Bon Jovi. So he said he wanted to sign me and I played on the table.

AM: On the table?

H: They brought me into this big boardroom and it was like in the movies, a huge oval table with 20 guys in suits sitting around and I played...

AM: You actually got up on the table?

H: Yes. And you know, I did my schtick and it went over well. At some point, they had actually forgotten to unplug the phone and it rang. I stopped mid-song and said "If that's David Geffen for me, tell him I'm busy." So I'd say it went over well. They turned out to be very much regular guys.

AM: Then they signed you?

H: Yes, but first Peter requested another show a week later.

AM: That must have felt great after all the hard work.

H: When I left that night, my wife was in bed, and she said, "Are you nervous?" I said, "Yeah, I guess it's caught me off guard." She told me "For years you worked in a crack bar and you brought near felons into my house and paraded them in front of me and told me they were good guys. You're going to come home tonight and you're going to tell me this is a good guy." I said "Yeah, you're probably right." So I went and I played and he came back to my dressing room and we shot the breeze for about a half hour and then he says, "You want to do this?" and I said, "Absolutely." So we shook hands and I said, "One more thing, you seem like a really good guy," and he said, "Well, thank you." I said "When I left the house tonight, my wife told me that I was going to come home and tell her that you're a nice guy, and now I'm going to. And if you fuck around with my wife, I'll kill you." And that was it.

NRBQ has finished their set in the background. A roadie knocks on the door and says, "Ten minutes, Mr. Trial." Hamell wishes us well and says to give him a call whenever we like. He picks up his little '37 Gibson with the L.R. Baggs pickup and starts getting ready for another hour of rock-n-fucking-roll.

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Hamell On Trial plays at the Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe, 6th St. & Ave A, every Thursday in January at 9:00 pm.



# the Fort at Sidewalk

## music music music music schedule

All shows start at 8:00. Anti-Hoot sign-up at 7:30.

Generally, 1st act listed is at 8:00, second listed is 9:00, etc.

Call the Fort on the day of a show for more information (212/473-7373).

### DECIEMBRE

- 19 TUES - Valerie Vigoda Band, Terry McCarthy, Uncle Carl, Jazz Sessions with Jason Goodrow
- 20 WED - Steve Carter sings Phil Ochs, Lenny Molotov, Matt Sherwood, Paula Carino
- 21 THUR - Carol Lipnik, Basia, Lake, Special night of jazz with Arnie Lawrence, Herman Foster & friends
- 22 FRI - Menthol Kings, Ruth Gerson, Gregg Swann, Tom Clark, Delta Garage
- 23 SAT - Heather Eatmon, Jim Allen, Silent Bear, Paul Clements, Jazz Sessions with Jason Goodrow
- 24 SUN - It's So Tragic, I'm Unbelieving, You Guessed It, No Show Tonight
- 25 MON - X-MAS Anti-Hoot, bring X-mas songs. Come as the dysfunctional family member of your choice!
- 26 TUES - Paul Clements, Joe Virga, Deb Pasternak, Olivia Cornell, Betty Alvarez
- 27 WED - Alice Texas, Rob Ryan, Jim Noone, Abba Rage, Jim White
- 28 THUR - Rachel Spark, Karen Davis, Melissa Lou, Charles Herold, Mike Errico
- 29 FRI - Bianca Bob, Michael Eck, Major Matt Mason, TBA
- 30 SAT - Julianne Richards, Dots Will Echo, Mr. Scarecrow's H.T.O., Red Velvet Room, The Garritys (Jazz)
- 31 SUN - New Years Eve Party w/Lach & the Sextet Offensive at 10pm + Kingstone at midnight +free champagne toast

### JANUARY

- 01 MON - Hangover Anti-Hoot. Come take your sobriety pledge at the Anti-Hoot!
- 02 TUES - B.T.Y., The Humans, Sweetfeed, Open jazz jam sessions with the Goodrow All-stars
- 03 WED - Tamara, Sky Cappelletti, Key Wilde, Jen's Revenge
- 04 THUR - Jason Lally, Carla Hall, Hamell On Trial, Jazz Guests
- 05 FRI - Father Paul Murphy, Honey, Matt Sherwood, Muckafurgason
- 06 SAT - Mike Rocklin, Ruth Gerson, Kenny Young (& The Eggplants?), The Crayfords (JAZZ)
- 07 SUN - Michael Parrish, Jane Miller, Karen Davis, Open Jazz Sessions with the Charettes
- 08 MON - Ohgodnotanother Anti-Hoot with Lach! Sign-up at 7:30
- 09 TUES - Elizabeth Jean, Broken Sky, Adam Vane, Betsy Thompson and Craig, Open Jazz Jam w/ the Charettes
- 10 WED - The Flashgirls (w/songs by Neil Gaiman of Sandman!), Kim Fox, Ricky Byrd, Bob Hillman
- 11 THUR - Bianca Bob, Hamell On Trial, Betty Alvarez, TBA
- 12 FRI - ANTIFOLKADELIC NIGHT: Mr. Wilson, Agnelli & Rave, The Rooks, Lake, All God's Children
- 13 SAT - Jen's Revenge, The Novellas, Olivia Cornell, Amy Allison & The Maudlins, Zane Campbell
- 14 SUN - Strange Folk Sunday: Peter Dizozza, Leo, Little Oscar, Those Guys, Open Jazz w/Charettes
- 15 MON - YESOHHYESOHHYESOHHYES Anti-Hoot with Lach! Sing-up at 7:30
- 16 TUES - Gary Negbaur, Seth Davis, Charles Herold, Steve Espinola, Jass Session with the Goodrow All-Stars
- 17 WED - David Baker, Mark Humble, 1000 Pities, Mr. Scarecrow Solo Acoustic My God He's Good
- 18 THUR - Eric Wood, Hamell On Trial, The VanDangos C.D. Release Party

*The above schedule is subject to change at a moment's notice. The Fort at Sidewalk does not take any responsibility for lost or stolen items and I think it would be really nice if we could all just live together in peace and not have to anger the gods with our profane little mumblings about plastic turtle factories and chewed up jello issuing from the mouths of the hounds of hell but not to change the subject however it was mentioned a while back and I think it's clear by now that things are subject to change.*

TEAR ME OFF AND STICK ME ON YOUR WALL!

Fun. Friendly. Free.

what, what could be in the next  
issue ???

\* HOWARD STERN RANT  
\* SUPERHOOT PICS

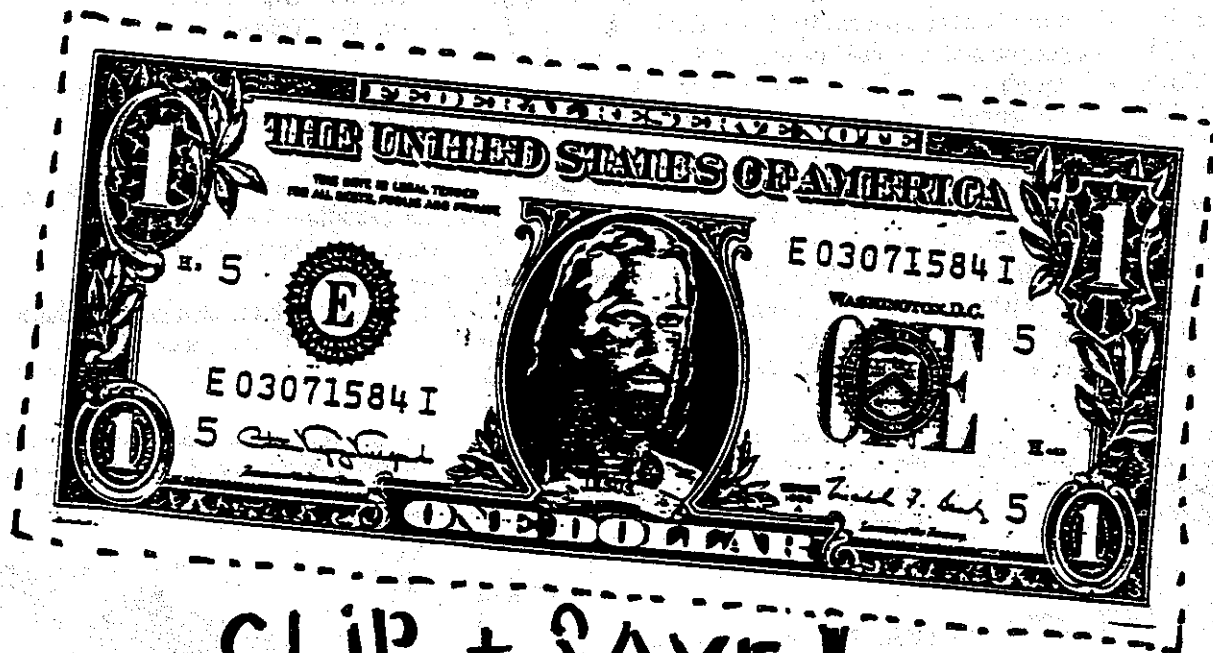
\* JUST ASK JOHN

\* INTERVIEW WITH WINNERS OF  
AUSTIN, TX "ANTI FOLK  
CONTEST"

\* MAJOR MATT MASON REVIEW

\* GUITAR DESIGN FROM CHRIS MUCKA

\* AND A LOT MORE!



CLIP + SAVE!