

December 1996

Antimatters



WHAT THE FUCK IS ANTIFOLK

Bob Strain/Peter Dizozza

Contributors

Jonathan Berger
S Biederman
Paula Carino
Dina Dean
Charles Herold
Mary Ann Farley
Lach

Geoff Notkin
Gustav Plympton
Jocelyn Ryder
Tricia Scotti
Jonathan Segol
Bob Strain
Henry van Okopo

Los Editores de Bueno Más

Juan Berguesa
Senor Scarycrow
Tomás Nishioka
Gustavo de la Plympton

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WELCOME TO THE FORT!

Welcome to the Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe, home of AntiFolk music for generations past and generations to come (assuming you have the lifespan of a gnat). There's music seven nights a week, and it's a twenty four hour club, so have a seat, relax, and enjoy the show.

The Sidewalk Cafe has been the home of the Fort since January 1994, when Lach, started up the club again after a several year break. The Fort has always been the center of AntiFolk activity.

AntiFolk is form of music that's ill-defined, but still potent. Like early punk, it is best recognized by what it's not.

AntiFolk is not polka.
AntiFolk is not exclusionary.
AntiFolk is not electric (always)

Send contributions,
donations, criticisms,
hatemail, loveletters,
friendly suggestions,
subscriptions and, of
course, your soul to:

AntiMatters
150 W. 95th Street
Apartment 9d
New York, NY 10025

jonberger@aol.com
uncle folk@aol.com

Next Issue:

Rampant themelessness!
West Village Invasion!
Interview with Mike Rimbaud!
Clubs to play!
Ask Auntie Matters!
Dan Killian feature!
Poetry!
Your contributions!

And more MORE MORE!

Charles Herold -->

AntiFolk is not linear, lateral, or ludicrous.
AntiFolk is not serious (usually).
AntiFolk is.

The Fort was born in the mid-80s, and so was AntiFolk. There's a story or two about it, but Lach, forefather of this here scene, prefers not to tell it too often. Maybe other old-timers are willing to open up on the subject.

The data really isn't so important as the spirit. And the spirit, of course, is a far second to the music.

So, basically, what the hell are you doing reading this? Put it down and listen to the songs.

Come back between acts.

THE ANTI-FOLK QUESTIONNAIRE

Are you anti-folk? Take this simple quiz to find out.

1) THE BEST WAY TO GET AN AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION IS TO

- a) sing sincere, compelling songs
- b) shout "fuck" really loud
- c) vomit

2) JAMES TAYLOR SHOULD BE

- a) lionized
- b) shot
- c) who?

3) THE MAIN REASON TO BECOME A SONGWRITER IS TO

- a) change the world
- b) get laid
- c) both

4) FINISH THIS LYRIC: BABE, YOU'RE LEAVING ME, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S THE END

- a) but even though you've hurt me, I'd take you back again
- b) I'm gonna sleep with your sister now, and your best friend
- c) I'm gonna cook you into soup, and then my heart will mend

WHICH WOULD YOU SAVE?

- a) Your lover, because you need someone to inspire you
- b) Your mother, because she would give you the money for a new guitar
- c) Your guitar, so you could write a song about the tragic loss of your lover and your mom.

6) THERE IS NO QUESTION 6

7) IF A MOVIE WERE MADE ABOUT MY LIFE, I WOULD BE PLAYED BY

- a) Robert DeNiro
- b) Steve Buscemi
- c) John Ritter

8) THE WORD THAT I WOULD MISS THE MOST AS A LYRIC COMPONENT IS

- a) justice
- b) fucking
- c) Satan

9) THE STATEMENT THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR REACTION TO QUESTION 6 IS

- a) that was pointless
- b) that was cool
- c) quit fucking with my head, man

10) THE SONG THAT CHANGED MY LIFE WAS

- a) Blowing in the Wind
- b) She's Going Bald
- c) Row, Row, Row your boat

SCORING

For each question, give yourself 1 point for answering A, 2 points for answering B, and 3 points for answering C. The one exception is question 7, in which the scoring is reversed. John Ritter is worth one point, but it was the best punchline.

10-15 points

You listen to Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell, care about human suffering, and your VISA card gives money to the environment. You are not anti-folk.

16-25

You're pretty cool, wanna come to a party? You might be anti-folk.

26-30

Seek professional help. You're a little scary for anti-folk.

If you didn't bother adding up your score, you're anti-folk.

Report From the Fort from the eyes, ears, nose and throat of the Sidewalk Cafe

• Wednesday, 11/20 - Estelle went on at nine. Estelle McKee's a former Queen of AntiFolk, recent vintage (Summer, 1996). During her reign, she was out of town a lot, and has in the last couple of months been playing a bit more. She's gotten a lot better, and, since adding drummer Eric to her band of one, she's been much harder. Her playing's become more exuberant, more excited, and the percussive power only adds to the mix. The two of them were a dangerous force of two. They didn't seem to have brought any friends with them, but everyone wanted to know the group by the end of their half hour set. They disappeared out the rear door, and were not seen again.

Dina Dean had a tough act to follow. Going on at nine thirty, Dina didn't seem as nervous as she usually does at the AntiHoot. She's new to the scene, and this was her first full gig. She'd played a lot of Mondays lately, going off on her country-folk kick, and even done some on-stage performing with Dan Emery, but this was her first solo show.

The place filled with Dina fans. It was packed by the time she began. Dina has fully ingratiated herself on the scene, and lots of antifolk semiregulars made it to the show, because she's just so darned friendly (and cute. Don't forget cute. It was a beautiful evening, all in all) Dina brought a crowd that listened in hushed attention, and Estelle brought no one. Each maintained rapt attention. Rapt. Dina Regine ended up the evening soulful, her messy hair flowing all about. (Gustav Plympton)

• 11/22 2:45 a.m. - Last night of "Them Keener Boys". I had them in every Friday for a very funny and successful four-week run. The Humans followed with a great set including a new song "Simplicity." Matt Sherwood played next doing impassioned renditions of his pop-confession masterpieces.

Lastly, two sets by Porkchop. This five-piece band mixes Hoagy Carmichael songs with their own compositions. A truly fun group whose membership includes 2 Beavis & Butthead directors.

One of the disappointing things at The Fort is that not enough of the Anti-scenesters come out to nights which feature people they don't already know. By only seeing things that you already know about you limit your experience and grow stagnant. Both Them Keener Boys and Porkchop did great sets and packed the house but the audience consisted mostly of their own crew. The antifolks came for The Humans and Matt but left when acts they were unfamiliar with came on.

Sometimes I want to make coming to shows a prerequisite to getting a gig at the club just to force people to hear new stuff. By coming out to shows at The Fort you see what goes over well and what doesn't and you can apply that knowledge to your own performances at the club.

Oh well. I guess some people just want to write the same old stuff and play it week after week at the Antihoot so they can walk around complaining that they never get a gig anywhere. Hmmm, guess I'm a bit cranky this evening. Time (3:15 a.m.) for this tired soundman to get some sleep. (lach)

• 11/24 2:12 a.m. - I woke from my nap with a cold that just got worse and worse as I worked The Fort. What a total fucking drag. However, I did want to briefly comment on the night before I die.

The Novellas did a wonderful performance. The songs are great and Peter's animated style mixes so well with Laura's deadpan approach. A joy to watch.

Bicycle were another example of innocence and joy. Innocent in the sense of being childlike, inventive, casual and rocking. Tom Nishioka premiered on bass and I added some D.J. scratches and samples from the soundboard. The audience loved "Female

Urologist", "The Cow Rap", "L.A." and Judas Priests' "You Got Another Think Coming".

Fur Dixon's set suffered a bit from her band not showing up. It was just her and a bass player which is tough to put over on a Sat. night after two rockin groups. However, by the end of her set she made it work and the crowd was charmed. Fur is an act I wish could play The Antihoot more often as I think the Monday crew would love her stuff.

The night ended with another great set by Torn and Frayed. If you dig T.Rex and The Stones then you'd like this band. I think there one of the best working the East Village rock clubs and it's cool when they play unplugged at The Fort.

I'm going to get into bed for 48 hours and hope to be well enough to run the Antihoot on Monday. Stay Tuned. (l)

• Monday, 11/25 - It was a very different AntiHoot. Lach didn't show up, because he was sick, so Lenny Molotov was the host for the small crowd. No one was sure why so few people came, since the last AntiHoot was so crowded. Lenny did a first come, first serve sign-up, which had very few people set to sign up. A bunch of regulars were there, like Gene (sans Mimi), Marnie, Dan Emery, Dina Dean, Jocelyn Ryder, Jonathan Segol, Eric Davis, and George Moore.

The audience was sedate and attentive. Lenny opened the show and introduced Megan Spooner, who used to sing with Jen's Revenge. George Moore, the electric guitarist who sings the abrasive "Tunisia," was in the house, and didn't aggravate anyone. He seemed almost nice. Clearly, this was a strange, special night. When George Moore went up himself, he played a killer version of "When You Love Someone Who Don't Love You," and then got the audience involved in "Tunisia." Unlike usual, everyone was with him for the ride.

Lenny was a quieter presence than Lach, and his AntiHoot seemed pretty different. The crowd was small enough so that there was no issue of crowd management, and Lenny's mellow ways could be appreciated. People listened carefully, and it was all very homey, very cool. (Jonathan Berger)

• 11/26 1:38 pm - Well, for the first time in nearly three years I didn't host the Antihoot because of illness. I've had a high fever for three days and am hoping to see a doctor today.

It was weird. Around 6p.m. I could feel my body start to get ready for the Hoot. There was this feeling like I had to be somewhere. My mind was an anxious dog scratching at the door. I'm sure Lenny did a good job but I missed being there.

I wonder what my life would have been like over the last few years if I hadn't run The Fort. I wonder where other people would be if The Fort hadn't been around. Well, before I turn into Jimmy Stewart running down main street in "It's A Wonderful life" I think I'll sign off for now. (l)

• Saturday, 11/30 - Jack Peddler is fucking insane. His song-cycle of the down & out, distraught and decadent is powerful, but seems to impact on only a few people, most of whom know the artist presently known as Jack. An exuberant bunch paid great attention to his set, screaming out song titles, and repeating favorite lines. Among Jack's fans are Lauren Agnelli, Coyote Shivers, and Dave Rave, all of whom have played with Jack in the past.

Samsara followed up, opening by saying, "I have the bubonic plague tonight," then going on to infect us all with her mature dirge-like material. Songs included "Bliss" and "Cornflake," along with some new material.

The place was filled with teenagers -- friends of Samsara, I guess. They all loved her set. It's interesting to see what the kids are listening to these days.

Golden Carillo came on with their usual dramatic presentation. Annie Golden (the distaff half of the duo), has acting experience, having been in Hair and Cheers, as Cliff Claven's girlfriend. She puts on a very intense show, based on a very strange stage persona. Frank Carillo, guitar player, singer and conwriter of most of the material, is also pretty dramatic. He sounds sort of like a Springsteen knockoff, which is by no means a bad thing.

The meat of the evening followed. A typically blistering set by Joe Bendik and the Heathens exploded on the the generally softer audience that came to see Golden Carillo. I thought that everyone was going to leave, but they didn't. They stayed all through the incredible melodies coming through the blare of the Heathens sound. Then, when Joe Bendik finished, the Heathens became the Doers, MR. Scarecrow's band, though they were billed as *Mr. Scarecrow and friends*. "We're gonna do a few songs," Scarecrow said, "And then we're gonna have a mini-antihoot."

In the audience were the Humans, Jen's Revenge, Lach, Lenny Molotov, and Mike Rechner, as well as lots of people watching. They got a real treat as each of these different antifolk artists came up and let the Little Oscar, Mr. Scarecrow and Craig Gordon -- the AntiSection -- back them up. The band had never worked with the Humans Lach or Mike Rechner, but each group sounded like they'd been working with the Antisection for months. The Antisection really can work with anyone. The show didn't end until after two, and I went home exhausted, but it was worth it. (S Biederman)



Bob Strain

• 12/4 1 am - Steve Espinola saved my life tonight. After a long day of booking acts I was drained and dragged. Dealing with some of these twisted no-talents can make me question why the hell I'm involved in this scene at all. Well, that question got answered solidly by taking in Espinola's sweet, poignant poetic set. First, he set me right with "Right Out In The Street", a song that embraces all of life's woes as if they were giggling child-gods. I was further

brought to light by his electric tennis racket solo and finally fully healed by "The Subway Song" and "The Moonlight Song".

The rest of the night filled out well. Scott Fralick had his debut at The Fort. Scott has been playing the Antihoots regularly and it was good to see him do a full set. His brooding punkabilly edge reminds me of Mike Rimbaud and it was cool when out of nowhere Mike showed up. I introduced the two of them, who knows, maybe a new genre was born. How many does it take to be considered a genre? Anyway, the girl I was sitting with liked Fralick's songs but thought he needed a fashion makeover. She thought Scott should trade his jock look in for a long, leather maxicoat. Ah, showbiz.

James Vidos played a cool set. Folkabilly meets Kurt Weil.

Rita Jackson's band failed to show so I did an impromptu set using Vidos's electric guitar. I was joined by Bob Hoffner on pedal steel and Joe Bidewell on piano and harp. We played some T.Rex, Kiss Loves You, Drinking Beers With Mom and Help, Lost Cat. It was cool playing electric and the crowd seemed to dig it. Rita finally got up and did a few songs solo and her crowd was very pleased that she did.

Raving Noah finished up the night with a strong rocking set to a small, appreciative crowd. Another great night at The Fort. (1)

• 12/5 Little Oscar's Birthday Bash - Little Oscar was on stage all night long. That's not the way to spend a birthday. 40 that day, Little Oscar had many of his many bands booked, so he'd have the chance to play all night long. With the exception of Lach's blazing set (filled with songs unfamiliar to everyone there), Little Oscar and Craig Gordon were on stage all night long, with Mr. Scarecrow and Little Oscar's wife Debbie MacDougall up for about half the groups. Charles Herold opened the evening at 7.45 to a small and appreciative crowd. Karen Davis and Redneck were next, and afterwards, Little Oscar and the AntiSection played. Set-ups were easy since the backing band was always pretty much the same. After Little Oscar, Lach played, and then Key Wilde with Mr. Clarke and 66% of the Antisection. Mr. Scarecrow and the Dewars came on next, and were great. Mr. Scarecrow's the best guitarist in Antifolk, I've heard, and his songs were electrifyingly electric. They were noiseests to rival Joe Bendik and the Heathens, who were supposed to go on last, but ended up not playing at all. (Henry Van Okopo)

• 12/7 1:31 a.m. - J.B. will probably report on tonight. The big news was Robyn Hitchcock coming in for an unannounced set at 11 p.m. with Deni Bonet on violin. And it's probably better that J.B. does the report as Robyn's songs have never really moved me. He's a nice guy and obviously talented but he just doesn't do it for me. A bunch of fluffy, semi-surrealistic, meandering songs. The highlight was Deni's violin playing. I came away not knowing what any of the songs were really about and with no melodies trapped in my brain. I ain't dissing the guy, he just ain't my cup of tea. . . I like my coffee black.

The other guest celeb was the appearance of Tom Goodkind of The Washington Squares as a guest with The Kuntry Kuzzins. The Kuzzins are Tammy (of Jay & Tammy, the comedy team) and Lauren (of Agnelli & Rave) performing as parodies of Christian Country. Tom joined in on banjo and vocals under the name Bud Folk. It was cool to see Tom in action and his bass vocals were spot on. (1)

12/7- The Fort was brimming, but no more so than on a typical Saturday night. Leroy Lange was onstage doing his good-timey country thang, making Garth Brooks look like a dour Bulgarian by comparison.

"What's this I hear about Robyn Hitchcock doing a surprise gig?" I whispered to Jonathan Bergermeister, scenester extraordinaire, and keeper of many of the Fort's secrets.

"It's all true!" he said. I was elated, for my love of Robyn Hitchcock exceeds even my love of chewing gum, or Saltines, and I had just passed up an expensive and crowded R.H. show at Maxwell's the night before because I knew he was in town to shoot a concert film (directed by Jonathan Demme!) and I was convinced

REPORT FROM FORT... (Continued)

that my transcendent passion for the man's music would lead me to a gig in a free, comfortable venue. And my hunch had been dead on!

At 11:30, Robyn stood awkwardly in front of the mic, a harmonica strapped precariously around his neck, and deadpanned, "My name is Arthur and I'm from England." He went into "Devil's Radio," (bad whistling included) and followed it up with "Heliotrope," "Alright Yeah," "Sinister But She Was Happy," and "De Chirico Street."

It was disconcerting (no pun intended) to see members of the audience--Saturday night regulars perhaps, or folks who came only to hear their friends' bands--walking out in the beginning of the performance, clearly not knowing who this kooky Brit was. It has probably been years since Robyn has played a venue where he wasn't the headliner, much less at a place where people would be more interested in watching the game in the next room than to hear his set, but Robyn performed like a humble and slightly nervous anti-hooter. By the time he got around to the eerily beautiful "Filthy Bird," with its intentionally "out" harmonies, the audience was in the palm of his hand. For the next 40 minutes, he filled the room with his light and heat and glass and fish.

Robyn's set consisted mostly of songs from his latest album, *MOSS*

ELIXIR, which is a brilliant return to form after the past couple of uninspired releases. He also indulged us with a few oldies ("Madonna of the Wasps", "Egyptian Cream") and regaled the audience with his patented brand of bizarre between-song banter, which was as entertaining and spontaneously poetic as the songs themselves. He was assisted by a stripped-down version of his touring band: the amazing Deni Bonet on violin, and bowl-haircutted waif Tim Keegan (of the band Homer) on guitar.

He ended with a stunning "Beautiful Queen," Deni's octave-split violin providing the hook for the live version of this song, improving an already cool-ass number. Then we all scurried out into the night, having been part of a nice little footnote in the Fort's history.

And we didn't even have to put a dollar in the tip jar. (paula carino)

• 12/7 - Robyn Hitchcock came to town. It's been hard for me to listen to the man the last few years, ever since I got turned onto his first band, the Soft Boys. Anyone who likes Hitchcock but doesn't know the Soft Boys should shut their mouth by shoving it up their ass. That, or buy *Can of Bees*. Still, it was amazing to see this incredibly strange songwriter talk and rant up close. I could see the sweat of his brow, or, rather, his lack thereof. He had roadies.

Who brings roadies to a club the size of your bathroom? (jb)

• 12/10 3am - MuchMusic, the MTV of Canada, showed up at the Antihoot to film for a special they are doing on Antifolk. They had already interviewed Beck and Hayden both of whom talked about NYC Antifolk. I got The Humans, Joe Bendik, Dina Dean, Charles Herold and Kamau on camera being interviewed. The Humans and Beck in the same segment. . cool. Otherwise, it was a pretty tame hoot. Not as packed as usual. Business in the nabe has been slow in general. I guess people are saving up for the holidays and are also not used to the coming Winter weather yet. I booked a new guy who played at 1 a.m. named Jeff Boyd. He played a folk song called "Sucker M.C.". (l)

• 12/11 - Julia Douglass is perfect. Boiled in Lead is perfect. In between a few other acts played. Julia Douglas plays alone, with a voice that's so soft and sweet and then so insane with repressed fury. She has a demo tape and no deal. I can't understand it. Boiled in Lead look like a bunch of fat hippies, and they are, but they play celtic klezmer, as well as the sporadic Springsteen number. They do traditional songs with the rockiest fiddle in all the multiverse. There ain't, as they say, none better. (SB)

Promo Tips

Advice from On-High
by Gustav Plympton (Jr.)

Want a free way to get your album in the ears of a hundred thousand possible fans? Here's a thought:

Moped around Queens in the dead of Fall, I stopped in the Astoria Branch of the Public Library to see what I could see. The Library's a wonderful thing. They have a multitude of items in print, video, and music, all yours for the taking, all for free! While scanning the CDs, I caught sight of Lach's debut album, *Contender*, available for a one-week loan.

Having already cornered the Northeast market of copies of the album, I decided not to take borrow it, but it did get me thinking... "Man, Lach has arrived!"

Somehow, seeing the album in the library made the Gold Castle album smack of authority, authenticity, and big-time-itude. I've picked other AntiFolkies and related sorts out of the library system: Brenda Kahn's *Epiphany in Brooklyn* could be

found at the Brooklyn Central Branch. The Washington Squares' Fair and Square maintain residence at the Performing Arts Branch of the NYPL, and I've seen some veiled references to King Missile recordings being available at Donnell.

Now, me, I like getting items out of the library. I tape them, and I give an artist a two-month trial to capture my attention. If I like what the library offered me, I go and purchase more items by the same artist. Many people get to explore musics they'd never otherwise try through the library. The promotional value of the library, I've realized, is phenomenal.

Libraries accept donations. If you give your CD or cassette to a library, there's a good chance they'll put it into circulation, and let any old fool have a chance to hear your work of art.

You can give your recording to the branch of your choice, in hopes that they'll allow a cross-section of America's New Yorkers to hear it, and, perhaps, to love it.

The Brooklyn Library's Central Branch takes donations, and, according their music department head, will put them into

circulation. The only exceptions are items that seem to be home-made, so only professional-looking demos need apply. Contact: Velma Meyers, (718) 780-7748 NYPL's Ottendorfer Branch, conveniently located in the heart of the East Village (2nd Avenue and St. Marks Place), happily accepts CDs, but not cassettes. Contact anyone at (212) 674-0947

There are two main branches in Manhattan that lend music. They are Donnell (Located on 53rd between 5th and 6th Avenues), and Performing Arts (In Lincoln Center, 65th and Broadway). They have a vast number of musical items, and could very well be interested in stocking yours.

Contact the Recordings Department at Performing Arts: (212) 870-1629.

At Donnell, try Joan Byrd, the director of the Media Center: (212) 621-0609.

The Queens system is great for music, but I have no information on it. Call the Central branch at: (718) 990-0700 to get information for yourself, and, please, share with the group.

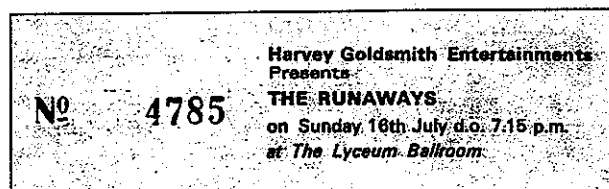
THE HIDDEN FORT

Secret Origins of Anti-Folk
A continuing series by Geoffrey Notkin

Episode III: *How I Had my Revenge on Sex Pistol Steve Jones*

*You can have a briefcase, and a suit and tie
You can have a monogrammed green beret
You can be, be all that you can be
Be all that you can be
Army, school or work . . . or exile!*

(From "Army, School or Work" by Lach/England)



WHO REMEMBERS THE RUNAWAYS? In 1978, they were a lot more to us than just "the band that launched Joan Jett's solo career," because in 1978 we first saw The Poster. The Poster was advertised in one of those American heavy metal rock rags like *Creem*, that—even though punk was in full swing in London—were still doing huge features on permafrost bands like Styx, Journey and Kansas. Bands with lots of hair. The Poster was a dress rehearsal shot of The Runaways on stage, and consisted mostly of a startling close-up of lead guitarist Lita Ford's teenage ass, in some tiny skimpy stretch pants. The rest of the band were off at the other end of the stage, also dressed in skimpy and provocative gear, but very much in the *background*. "Destined to become a collector's item" read the ad copy next to the one inch square black and white image. And I'm sure it was. It became such a collector's item, in fact, that we (my then bass player Graham Smith and I) couldn't even get a copy of it. This was likely due to the fact that, as ignorant London punks, we didn't have access to anything so sophisticated as credit cards or International Money Orders, and don't you just know that the ad read: "Payment in U.S. funds only."

Now I know a lot of you are already whining inside your heads about how "this sort of thing degrades serious female rock musicians and portrays them as sex objects," and all that hooey, and I agree with you. After all, I lived with one for six years (a serious female rock musician that is—not a sex object—although, come to think of it . . .), and so I have more of a perspective on it than your average hormone-addled male. But the sad fact is that many female musicians, some of them supremely talented; some of them supremely useless, have no qualms whatsoever about using their bodies to sell records. Pick up any Lita Ford album. She's still doing it nearly twenty years later! And the incredible thing is, she looks even better now than she did in 1978! So what if we were more interested in The Runaways' bodies than in their music? We were seventeen. At that age everyone is more interested in sex than musical integrity. And if you say any different either there was something wrong with you when you were a teenager, or you're a liar.

The Runaways were cool. They played pop metal and dressed up like super sexy punk chicks. The music was so-so; they were fabulously beautiful, provocative and sexy (also dangerously close to the legal age). So we wanted The Poster, and we couldn't get it. But then, careening drunkenly towards Victoria train station late one school night, down some shady not-too-frequented London alleyway that a more sensible person would have avoided, I came across the most marvelous and desirable artifact: a Runaways poster. And not a bit of cheesecake either, but a *real* tour poster: "THE RUNAWAYS at The Lyceum Ballroom, 16th July, 1978." Hot summer nights! I had that poster—which could not have been up on the wall for more than ten minutes, covered as it was front and back in gooey, smelly, disgusting wallpaper paste—off of that wall, along with about two hundred other posters that were glued to its backside in an encyclopedic geological strata of rock entertainment, in about twenty seconds. The damn thing was so stiff from the accumulated mass of paste and paper that I couldn't even fold it. It came back on the train with me like that, unrolled and covered in glue, across platforms, and down narrow corridors; past other passengers and bags and dogs, luggage trolleys and ticket inspectors, until I, and everyone and everything around me was also covered in disgusting, cheap wallpaper paste. But my hair was orange and spikey, and I had big Dr. Martin's boots on my feet, it was England, and nobody said anything to me (although they all gave each other exasperated silent looks as if to say "Sееее what that ghastly punk rock is doing to our country"), and if they had said anything I would have laughed or barked or cursed back at them because I didn't *care* what the world thought. The Runaways were coming to London, and I had the poster!

Showtime! We are so excited. Graham and I put on our best tightest black, black stretch jeans (yes, boys wear tight stretchy things to get attention too, I know) and rushed to The Lyceum—grand old ballroom that it was—on The Strand, and waited anxiously, jammed full of nervous energy and Jellybeans.* But where is everyone? Surprisingly, the theatre is relatively quiet. Not empty, but not packed either. The Runaways are doing their only London show, here, *tonight*, and it's not packed. Graham is dressed like Glen Matlock, but looks like Paul McCartney; very black mop-top hair. He is mean, caustic and sarcastic, but he's my bassplayer. He's a great bassplayer. Also, he will go to any show with me (even The Runaways, and he hates heavy metal). We drink our Jellybeans. Graham is wearing a velvet jacket and white dress shirt with "Pop Star" painted across it in huge red letters. Graham has painted it himself. He is propped against the bar, looking very cool. He is not impressed by anything or anyone, except maybe Glen Matlock or Paul McCartney. It's possible that members of the Sex Pistols other than Glen Matlock would impress him slightly, but I doubt it.

* *Jellybean*: A drink allegedly invented by, and consumed constantly by, Billy Idol and Tony James of Generation X. One shot each of Bacardi, Vodka, Pernod and black currant concentrate. Top up with lemonade and serve in a pint glass. Vaguely lavender in color, and quite fizzy. I know it sounds disgusting now but, believe me, it did the trick then. We always had to tell bartenders how to make them, and the bartenders usually thought we were mental.

We are up on the second level balcony bar. Nice view of the stage and dance floor. Plenty of stairways and exits in case there is any trouble, which there often is. I try to look cool, but I don't think I look nearly as cool as Graham. I light up a cigarette with my Zippo, hoping to improve my pose, but Graham automatically gives me an "Oh you're so pathetic when you smoke" look, and I feel worse. Then Graham's eyes open up very wide for a moment, and his mouth is open too. He cranes his neck forward, then snaps it right back. He turns around, and leans in close, so that his back is pointed at whatever it is that's just blown his cool. All the color seems to have drained out of his face.

"Look! Look who's over there. I can't bloody believe it."

"OVER WHERE?" I yell out real loud, and rotate my head around a lot, like one of those plastic noddy dogs that used to stare annoyingly out of cars' rear windows in the seventies.

"Don't make it so bloody obvious, you wanker!" Graham hisses. "Over there, behind me. No! Don't let them see you looking. It's only Cook and Jones from The Pistols!"

I pick up my drink and, casual as anything, *jam* my face right over Graham's shoulder and stare out across the floor. And there they are: the two most notorious bad boys of punk. Steve Jones, who can make three notes sound like the culmination of all guitar playing, ever (see intro to "Pretty Vacant" if you honestly don't know what I'm talking about); and Paul Cook who's backwards left-hand-leading shuffle drum rolls percolate and stagger raucously all over *Never Mind the Bollocks*.

Cook and Jones.

Cook and Jones are standing about thirty feet from us, at another bar on the other side of the balcony. They are leaning back casually, *just like we are*, and looking out across the dance floor (in a supremely aloof and unconcerned manner), *just like we are*. Only they're having pints of bitter like real men, and we're having pints of girly, purple candy drinks.

"Well, what do you think?" Graham asks.

"I don't know. Should we go over and say hello to them?"

"I don't know, what do you think?"

"Should we? Do you think we *dare* go over and say hello?"

This goes on for some time. Nobody else has approached Cook and Jones, even though they don't look too dangerous. We probably could go and talk to them. They are most of the way through their pints by now. They might leave at any moment. At first Graham is keen, then he backs out. He seems genuinely frightened. Eventually I convince him that it's our only chance *ever* to meet them. We put our purple drinks down, and walk over. Paul sees us coming. He does not look overly hostile. Jones is oblivious to us. I walk right up to them. Graham is hanging back a little, waiting to see if they are going to vomit on me, or throw their drinks in my face, or hurl my carcass over the balustrade onto the dance floor far below.

"Aren't you Cook and Jones?" I ask. How imaginative, how original. Paul Cook nods, and I think he even smiles slightly. Jones makes some kind of grunting snarling animal sound from deep inside his very large and very frightening torso, which could mean "Yes" or could mean "Sod off ya toe rags."

"We're big fans." I continue with my sparking dialog. "We think you're really great. Do you think we could . . . uh . . . have your autographs?"

"Aaaah! Whaddya wont that fer? Sod odd ya toe rags," Jones snaps.

"Oh come on, Steve . . . why not?"

Jones isn't moving. I have already ceased to exist to him. There will be no autograph. Then I examine Paul. Will he be more sympathetic? He does have the best haircut in the Sex Pistols: bleached very white, with a long shaggy spike. He's not exactly

handsome, but under the chaotic hair, and behind the battered leather jacket and mohair jumper, is a kind face. Suddenly I have a revelation. It's something I've suspected for a while, and I see now that it's true: Paul Cook is a nice guy; he's a fairly normal guy. He *is* smiling at me, and Jones' guttural responses have embarrassed him. He shuffles from one foot to the other. I suddenly have this flash — this kind of vision — of Paul Cook as a sort of gentle, unfortunate Buster Keaton character, getting wrapped up in this apocalyptic punk carnival, being dragged along further and further into the maelstrom of fan and media obsession and authoritarian hatred, and grinning and going along with it, doing his best and playing the drums really well, but never actually *being* a nasty sarcastic punk monster. And I'm the only one who's realized it! He shrugs his shoulders, as if to say: *I'm only Paul, the drummer. I'm the nice guy. If Jones doesn't want to give you lads an autograph, what can I do about it?* But then he goes for it, he breaks the unwritten rule, and speaks to me . . . right to me . . . in a not unfriendly manner: "Oh alright then," he goes. "Give us yer pen."

But I don't have a pen. I don't have any paper either. We have to go borrow a pen from a waitress, and then scrounge up a bit of scrappy paper from somewhere. We end up using the inside of a cigarette carton. I give it to Paul. He writes his name first. There's a nice little flourish in his signature. Jones has his back to us, lower lip sticking out, eyes fixed on the empty stage. Paul prods Jones in the back. "Come on, give 'em your autograph." Jones sighs and turns around, and laboriously scrawls on the paper scrap like it's the biggest most inconvenient thing he's ever had to do. He stuffs it back in my hand with a look of utter disdain and contempt.

"Oh . . . uh . . . thanks Steve."

"Yeah, yeah, now bugger off will ya?"

"Thanks Paul," I say, and Paul knows I mean it. I make both of them shake hands with me, and then I do sod off. Then The Runaways come on, and they're okay, but we've already had our excitement for the evening. And then, after that, somehow I wasn't even really into The Runaways anymore, but I always remembered what an ass Steve Jones was.

1985. The Sex Pistols are history, and so is Proper Id — the five piece psychedelic punk band that Lach and Norman England founded in 1980, and I joined a year later. Lach has moved into a large ground floor apartment on Rivington Street, in a part of New York that we called Junkie Town. The entire front of his apartment has a massive steel shutter that rolls down over it, to keep the junkies and muggers out. It is a terrible block: "One of the worst in New York," I hear from more than one person. Lach tells me that the other night somebody fired a gun at the shutter.

A few months have gone by since the infamous debut appearance/farewell appearance of Spock's Brain at The Speakeasy (see "The Truth About Spock's Brain," *Anti Matters*, November 1996), and Lach, Norman and I are playing together occasionally, as a sort of experimental music ritual. We are doing some Proper Id songs, and some new Lach material. Lach is playing a beaten-up acoustic with a zebra strap. Norman has burned his red Flying V, so I lend him an Ibanez electric that's been knocking around with me since 1980. I'm still playing the black Rickenbacker bass that I bought when I first joined the Id.

Lach has started promoting (very quietly, because he doesn't have any kind of a license — not even a driver's license) live music at his "club," which he calls The Fort. It's obvious why he calls it this — to anyone who's actually been mad enough to go down there and see the place — but Lach prefers to tell people it's a reference to Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* — an obscure black and white Japanese samurai film that George Lucas describes as the inspiration for *Star Wars*. All in all, a suitably

clever and clouded set of references.

Now let's get one thing straight here and now: the original Fort was *Lach's apartment*, not a club. He ran an illegal music venue right out of his front room. He didn't have any furniture, and so there was nothing to get wrecked, except his kitchen and toilet, and they were already a disaster. As if by magic, the place had come equipped with a small wooden stage, and Lach used it for a bed during the day. He pulled a tapestry around it whenever it was that he finally went to sleep. The first time I went over there — right after he'd signed the lease, and it was too late for me to try and convince him to move to a less deadly neighborhood — he pointed at this bed/stage arrangement, covered at that moment by a ratty foam core mattress, and said: "Well, I always did want to live on stage." That room is where anti folk was born.

Solo acts appeared almost immediately, wanting to play. And bands came down too, with their gear, to do concerts in his house — on a regular basis! Lach even had a light rig: two of those \$2.29 tin spots that you can find in junk shops down on Canal Street, and a couple of cracked and creased colored gels that used to be pasted over the windows of his college dorm room. Half the kitchen was taken up by a 30 gallon garbage pail full of ice cubes, cans of Bud and bottles of Heineken. Beers retailed for \$2. I estimated that, including the beer, Lach's entire outlay for starting his new club had been well under fifty bucks.

Bands played, and people came to see them; sometimes lots of people. Sometimes they even paid to get in. When we played, we used a minimalist sound system, which consisted of Lach's old keyboard amp and any other clapped-out electronic junk that we could cart in. We used a new band name for each show, but I really can't remember any of them. They were all, no doubt, obscure characters or ships from *Star Trek* and *Battlestar Galactica*.

It's Saturday night, and the place is pretty damn full. It's real dark because Lach only has the two cheesy spots. There are a few people I know from Proper Id days: a couple of girls that used to hang around with us, and a fellow who used to roadie. Some up-and-comers from the NYC hardcore scene are shuffling around like big Linuses, towing their skateboards behind them. There are a few very cool-looking downtown punks, and some dodgy characters who could well be bums that wandered in off the street.

Norman and I are standing in the kitchen, near the beer barrel. I'm annoyed that Lach is charging for beer. I am still thinking of this function as some kind of party, not a capitalist venture. Norman takes a beer without paying for it, so I do too. A kid watching the pail tries to get money out of us, and I tell him we're playing, not paying. Then Lach calls us up on stage. It's a rickety affair, and we have to be careful where we stand. Norman counts us in, and we pound through a few Id songs. We're into "Effect a Change" when there's a fracas at the door — some pushing and shoving, then the crowd parts and two toughs walk in. One of them is big, and wearing a very out-of-place orange sweatshirt, with the hood up. The other is holding a trashed skateboard in his arms. They sit down in the corner, and start dumping drug paraphernalia onto the floor. I know the skateboard guy — his name is Steve, and he used to front a hardcore band that opened up for the Id several times. He's now a permanent fixture on the downtown drug scene. I don't know his companion, and they're not paying us any attention, so I get back into the playing. But somehow, the atmosphere in the room has changed unmistakably. The song ends, and Lach leans back and whispers in my ear: "You see who's over there?"

"Yeah, it's Steve."

"And who's he with?"

"Don't know."

"Steve Jones."

Lach tells Norman who, much like Graham Smith, is not easily impressed. He almost gets away with not showing surprise, but I watch closely, and see it wash over his face for an instant.

Lach doesn't miss a beat. "Alright . . . this is for our friend Steve." Both Steves look up, and we crack into "Army, School or Work." Lach belts it out as hard as he can: *Now they gave you ambition/Then sent you your grades/Giving you permission to march in their parade/So now they give you a choice/Cos they know you're such a jerk/ Yeah they know . . .* and every time he gets to the "such a jerk" part, he's pointing right at our friend Steve, who loves this song, and who's grinning like a donkey. He's gotten some kind of a smoke together, and passes it to Jones. They are both watching us intently. We put every bit of gusto we can into the song. After all, we are playing to a Sex Pistol. I expect him to get bored and nod off, or take off, but both Steves stay for

our whole set. Jones is grooving his shoulders and smiling. He's really into it. We pretend it's just another show, but we're playing punk/folk, in Lach's apartment, and Sex Pistol Steve Jones is there, and there's no pretending that we're not pretty full of ourselves. Lach is hitting his acoustic with his fist in between chords; Norman spins in front of his amp, the collar of his leather jacket turned up around his neck and studded with metal tabs from cigarette lighters.

We get a blast of applause and shrieks and heckles at the end of the set. We haven't rehearsed any more material, so we jam through an old dub piece that we used to do

with the full band. It doesn't work too well without a drummer, but it's good enough for an encore. And we resist the temptation to completely blow ourselves out of the water by doing "Pretty Vacant," although I'm sure the idea went through Lach's head and Norman's head, and I *know* it went through mine.

After we're done, Lach hops off the stage, goes over to Jones, and takes him back into the kitchen. They have never met before. Norman packs up his guitar very quickly, and joins them. I'm sitting on my own, wiping down my Rickenbacker with a polishing cloth. Some friends come up and we chat for a few minutes. They comment on the show, and then exclaim: "Did you know Sex Pistol Steve Jones is here?!!" etc. After a while, Norman comes back out to find me. He is beaming.

"I've just been having a beer with Steve Jones. He's cool!"

"Oh yeah?"

"Aren't you going to come say hello?"

"No, I'm really not interested."

Then Lach comes out to find me.

"Geoff, man, Jonesy is in my club! Cool, huh? You gotta come hang with him." Lach is thrilled.

"Nah. I'm not interested."

"Oh come on man. He really wants to meet you! He said you're a great bassplayer. Steve Jones said you were cool." Lach cackles with laughter at this. "I can't imagine *why*, but he wants to hang with you."

"Nah. I said I don't feel like it." I pause. I don't want to be petty, but I can't help myself. I'm relishing the moment, now that our roles have been reversed by an odd twist, and Jones wants to talk to *me*. "You could give him a message for me, though."

"Okay," says Lach. "What's the message?"

"Tell him I said 'Sod off ya toe rag.'"



LEARNING GUITAR

By JOCELYN RYDER

December 1996

Like half of the Greater Metropolitan New York population, I have been sick and in bed for a couple of weeks. My bedrest ritual includes filling nearly every surface around my bed with the tools to get well: tissues, antibiotics, a water glass the size of a vase, books and my journals. One day, feeling particularly optimistic that I might soon feel better, I pulled Ukulele out from under the bed. After three days of sliding her into the light of day, I decided to keep her there. I was now able to reach for Ukulele without even having to swing my legs over the side of the bed.

I have been playing around with G-chords, plus my current favorite chord, E-minor. Been trying to work on B-7th, too, but the callouses on my index, middle and ring fingers are just coming back, so the pinky may have to wait. Don't even talk to me about bar chords. My D still buzzes like crazy. I am trying to remember to press really hard. My hand strength is coming back. I have been able to play every day, early in the day. Guitar practice had been a chore I saved for the end of the day. No wonder it was hard to get my fingers to cooperate. I would spend a lot of practice time staring at my left hand, worrying that when it came time to change from the G to the C, I'd never be able to do it. And that negative voice was almost always right.

Then I remembered how Obi-Wan Kenobi taught Luke Skywalker to use a lightsaber. The master put a sight depriving helmet on Luke's head and told the student to use his instincts. When challenged to defend himself without looking, Luke became much more effective. When I don't watch my left hand, that troublesome D-chord often sound much truer. And if I stop to check my finger placement after the fact, they are usually right where they are supposed to be.

Sometimes I don't even try to make chords; I just listen to the sounds Ukulele makes when I slide my fingers up and down the strings or when I knock on the body. To me, this is the real playing, the time when

anything goes. I wander through the house and hear the difference between the acoustics in the living room (bright) and the kitchen (thud). These are the best moments because I blindfold my worry. I hope to make the blindfold obsolete some day. Pretty simple bottom line, actually: I want to stop judging myself.

Finally, since this is, effectively, the holiday issue, I'd like to share my holiday wish list:

- A pick-up for Ukulele
- Write a great song every month
- Drama-free family Christmas
- Restored physical health
- Be at the Fort the next time Robyn Hitchcock plays
- Create the ultimate anti-folk wardrobe
- Record a demo
- Play pool and collaborate with some of my favorite fort regulars
- Find a new job
- Play lots of gigs
- Buy every anti-folk cd there is



Bob Strain

Conversation with Lach:

A continuing dialogue hosted by Mary Ann Farley

Last month, AntiMatters interviewed the Fort's various soundmen, including Lach, who also serves as the club's booking agent, lighting technician and MC. Antifolk's very articulate founder had a lot to say about life here at Sidewalk, which is why we're running Part II of the interview this month. Here's more of what he had to say:

MAF: What do you like about the scene itself?

Lach: Being exposed to so many great performers like everyone on the Antihoot C.D. and so many more. I'm surrounded by such art and growth and talent. In 10 years, I'd like people to look back and see what a scene this really was. They may not be able to see it so clearly now with their faces right up to it.

When I look in the corner and see Dina Dean and Billy Kelly talking to each other, I think of how people used to say, "Yeah, I remember seeing Phil Ochs and Bob Dylan just talking to each other." Given a ton of promotional money, Dina or Billy could easily be in the position of someone like Jewel. I'm in a cool scene, and that balances out whatever might be bad.

MAF: Tell me about your life as a songwriter these days. Your album, Contender, was released six years ago. I'm curious why you haven't recorded anything since then, especially with the amount of songs you write.

Lach: Oh, I've written hundreds of songs in that time. But I don't really believe in linear time. It's like thinking the earth is flat. Also, I've just never found joy in recording. My joy has always been writing the song. The moment the song is finished, when the music and lyrics have come together--that's the fantastic feeling. You want to run out into the hallway and grab someone and say--"You've got to hear this!"

I also love performing in front of an audience. That's also joyous. But for me, recording has not been a fun experience. I hate the pressure of the time constraints--time is money and the clock is running. I've never liked the pressure or sterility of that, nor of cold-starting a relationship with an engineer. Also, when you're in the studio with friends, the emotional conflicts of those friendships can invade the music. And with my way of working, I don't always have things worked out ahead of time. I like to try different things and that's hard with the clock running. I think of going into the studio like a dental appointment, or detention in the principal's office.

MAF: But you are recording now, right?

Lach: Yeah. I want to tour, and I realize to do that correctly, you need a record. I've been working on this problem for the last five months--talking it over with a lot of people to overcome certain things. To say I don't have a record just because I don't like to record is no longer a good enough reason. So I went into the studio this week! And it was actually a good experience. I recorded 10 songs and it was just me and the engineer--she was real good. I finished it on Friday, and I actually enjoyed listening to it over the weekend. My goal is to have new record out and be touring this spring.

MAF: Will you put it out on your own label, Fortified?

Lach: I would love it to be on major label. So many indie bands want to be on an alternative or independent label so that they can have freedom. But I want to be on a major fucking label. I want a lot of money up front. I don't care--I'll call the record "Sony" and put "Lach" somewhere down in the corner. If I don't get a deal, I'll put it out on an independent and say that's what I was going to do all along [laughs].

The Anti-Hoot record was on Shanachie. It's a good label, and I'd like to do another project with them. I would even consider my

own record being a Shanachie release, but when it came down to the crunch to promote the Anti-Hoot album, they didn't have the big bucks needed. If they had sent three of us out on an anti-hoot tour, it would have changed music. Anti-folk would have had its own bin in stores. The tour would have been written up in every equivalent of the New York Press in every city. They would have had to cover it.

The upshot is that I'll make this record, then shop it around. If nobody puts out a good deal, I can put it out on Fortified. I would like to put out so many people from the scene, but I need to put out a Lach record first.

MAF: Will the record be an acoustic album?

Lach: I'm either going to put together a professional, superstar studio band, or people from the scene. It won't be just me on guitar. I'll get some input from my manager. Some of the songs on the demo include "Ungrateful", "Sometimes The Songs" and "The Jester."

MAF: "The Jester" is a beautiful song, very emotional, but it's quite different from "Kiss Loves You"!

Lach: [laughs] I've always written such varied kinds of songs. A lot of songwriters only write in one style, like Paleface, and that's what record labels look for. I always look at every song differently. "Kiss Loves You" and "The Jester" are two completely different types of songs. I tell people my songwriting is like the Beatles White Album, only I'm writing the John and Paul songs. Labels have asked me in the past--"Well, which kind of songs will you do? Are you a funny songwriter or a sad songwriter?" The palette of emotions is very varied. How can I limit myself to someone else's preconception of a "successful" record? Maybe I'll call the album "Pigeon-hole This Motherfucker!"

MAF: Has your songwriting changed over the years?

Lach: I don't think it's changed very much. I certainly don't write as many songs as I used to. I used to write five songs a week, even three a night. Since I've recorded so little, I have to delete some memory to type in some new stuff [laughs].

MAF: Tell me about your job as soundman.

Lach: In doing sound, I have a lot of jobs. I'm the host, the manager, as well as soundman. One of the things I like is wrapping up cords at the end of the night. It's a cool, meditative thing. Something that has helped me with sound was working on the Anti-Hoot record. When we [Lach and Tom Nishioka] went into mixing, it was amazing the difference a little treble or bass would make.

If you relate it to the color blue, there's a thousand variations on that color and all different combinations. All of a sudden you can decide which is better. You train your mind to be more discriminating. You say--"Hey, that's a cool color blue, and what a difference that makes to my attitude." The same goes for reverb or panning. It's so great when people come up after a show and feel that it was the best they've ever sounded.

Oddly, I also like when something goes wrong with the soundboard, because I get to troubleshoot it. I'll say to myself--"Wow! It's really cool that I know how to do this!" It's all fun stuff. I like it a lot. It's also cool to be just the soundman at night, not booking agent. That's why I book just on Wednesdays. I don't have to think about anything else then when I'm doing sound.

We recently had a big disaster with the sound equipment. A pipe burst in the apartment upstairs and caused a lot of damage. People don't realize the wear and tear on the equipment. Whenever someone knocks over a stand, we then have a dented mike. We go through a lot of mike stands. It's really expensive--that's one of my struggles at the scene. It's hard to make money with a free entry and one drink minimum.

Mike Rechner and the Etymology of ROCK THE FUCK OUT

People also don't realize the amount of our expenses and how hard the city makes it to run the club. Sometimes you see the club and it's packed and you think we must be making so much money, but we're barely breaking even! Luckily, the owners enjoy having the club, but no one's becoming a millionaire. Now we even have to close the outside tables by midnight because of noise violations. The club makes a lot of it's money outside in warmer months. Every two weeks we think we're doing pretty good, then something else happens.

MAF: How do you feel about the other sound guys?

Lach: I think that working behind the scenes has helped them all become stronger performers. Performing has become demystified for them. They get to see the actual trickery involved. They also get to see acts that get a crowd's attention, like Trina Hamlin, and the acts that lose the crowd in 15 seconds. They've definitely learned things sitting at the board. They're less inhibited by their relationship with the audience.

MAF: Has this applied to you as well?

Lach: I've never been inhibited by that relationship! I feel more comfortable on stage than off. The only time I like being in a crowd is when I'm in front looking at it! I've only seen about 12 rock shows in my life because I can't stand being in the audience. If I go to see Led Zeppelin, I get performer's disease—I get jealous that they're on stage and I'm not. But I've been playing piano since I was five. I was quite comfortable from an early age because in my house, my parents would make the child prodigy perform for everybody [laughs]. I've never had a problem with it.

There are two kinds of people in the world: those that rock the fuck out and those that don't.

The people who frequent the Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe tend to want to rock the fuck out, and, in a sense, this is entirely due to the work of Mike Rechner.

Rechner, AntiFolk musician and frequent Fort player, wrote a song perhaps entitled "John Wayne & John Ford" ("I never really named it," Rechner has admitted) all about the fictional adventurers of these most unliving of he-men, when they encounter evidence of the diabolical world they'd helped create. At the end of the first chorus, is uttered, just once, the immortal phrase: "So rock the fuck out."

Like everything that Rechner sings, the phrase is delivered in a deadpan monotone, and he gives it no more credence than the rest of the song -- perhaps less.

"I've heard other people say it, read it in books," Rechner says, "I'm sure that some metal band somewhere said it first."

The AntiFolk world, however, not going to quite so many metal shows, takes it much less lightly. The words have become a rallying cry. At virtually any AntiHoot, you can hear the audience scream out the "Rock the fuck out" for performers they most enjoyed.

It's emotive. It expresses so much of what someone feels. It says something that clapping, that screaming incoherently, that tapping toes and bobbing heads cannot. Unwittingly, Mike Rechner has tapped into the zeitgeist, to coin a new, entirely antifolk phrase.

Like most such moments, the creation of the memorable line was something of a collaborative effort.

"I was working at the Guggenheim and a friend of mine, Jim Wallerstein, said he was going out, and it was like, are you going to drop a demo, or what? He said, 'I'm just gonna rock out.'"

The words struck him immediately. "It wasn't a business thing, it was a fun-thing. Forget parties, forget booking shows, just go and listen to the band, because basically, that's the best part anyway. That was the first time I heard that expression. And it stuck in the back of my mind, 'cause it's catchy."

"When I was writing 'John Wayne, John Ford,' I used it just as a funny break. It's sort of an amalgam, when a bunch of things happen at once."

Of course, "John Wayne & John Ford" is a song that's already out of circulation, dated. The chorus begins, "John Wayne & John Ford at the '96 Republican Primary," and has barely been played since the Dole victory. This is not the only song of Rechner's which has immediate appeal that threatens to be lose relevance by the middle of next week. His incredible "Wrecked Car" ends with a list of all the possible culprits, all lifted from the bathroom wall of popular culture.

"In 'Wrecked Car,' I fix it whenever I want to. Some lines'll go, and some will always stay like 'Art Garfunkel.'"

"It's really just a list, and which you can update."

The premise of "John Wayne & John Ford" is difficult to alter in post-election America.

"I initially thought I would play it every time until the election. I tried to switch the lyrics and the verses, to 'John Wayne John Ford try to walk in the Republican Party'... I don't think I followed through it."

Still, the phrase will not die.

"People really seem to get into it," Mrs. Rechner adds. "Our friends all love to say it."

Rechner's recently put out an album, the nine song Wrecked Car. It is perhaps no irony that the cassette-only release rocks the fuck out. It is like nothing anyone has heard from Rechner before. While Rechner's live performances and previous tapes are simple drone guitar-vocal efforts, this project is larger in all ways. More songs, more instruments, more sound, more music. It seems surprising that an artist who revels in the minimalism that Mike does would come up with such a full, fleshy, powerful album.

"We just wanted to have fun," Rechner explains.

Recruiting an army of artists (including Fort regular Matt Sherwood), Rechner has created a latter-day wall of sound to back his songs of politics, art and name-dropping.

Rechner's minimal playing and monotone voice leave his live performances sometimes difficult to bear. Not so with the recording of Wrecked Car, which creatively uses all pop instruments under God's view to create a full, potent SOUND that leaves you wondering why the hell Rechner's hidden these arrangements for so long. The songs sound excellent.

So rock the fuck out.

The Hardest Working Band in AntiFolk

jonathan berger

There is only a little debate as to what's the best backing band in AntiFolk.

While Joe Bendik's Heathens are tight and loud, and just about perfect, the jamming choogle of Lenny Molotov's Illuminoids is a pretty heady contender, too. And then there's the country stylings of Little Oscar's combo, or the vital sound of Mr. Scarecrow & the Doers. And how could we forget Redneck, Karen Davis' backing group...

They all sound so good, it's hard to choose: Which is the best band in AntiFolk?

Mr. Scarecrow, the Illuminoids electric guitarist, and songwriter for Mr. Scarecrow & the Doers, offered one opinion: "Mine."

Craig Gordon, Mr. Scarecrow's bass player and co-leader of Strange Rain, commented, "Mine."

Meanwhile, Little Oscar, drummer for Strange Rain, the Heathens, the Illuminoids, Redneck, Mr. Scarecrow, and his own group, had a different thought, "Mine. The Antisection." All the bands mentioned have a lot in common. They all have different songwriter/leaders, but a common core of players. With an occasional change in bassist, all of these groups builds on the core of three players: Mr. Scarecrow on guitar, Craig Gordon on bass, and Little Oscar on drums. These three are the hardest working band in AntiFolk, known collectively and sporadically as The Antisection.

INTERVIEW - Recorded November 14.

MISTER SCARECROW: We should have practice down here.

CRAIG GORDON: A little rehearsal.

JONATHAN BERGER: I hear that Little Oscar's in control. When you're in a band, when you practice...

LITTLE OSCAR: Yeah, pretty much, basically. People call up, book gigs, and say 'Can you play?'

JB: What's the difference between the bands?

LO: Style and energy. We play the same for everybody --

MS: I don't think that's true.

CG: The more we play for more people, we're starting to sound like a band.

MS: We just rip off different sixties acts. For Jen, we play this Traffic and Jefferson Airplane stuff.

CG: She hates it, but we like it.

JB: You play with Jen's Revenge.

LO: We are Jen's Revenge.

JB: How much time does this take up for you people?

CG: All of it.

MS: All of it.

LO: All of it. We're looking at like a 14 day stretch with rehearsals or gigs, at least one if not two, every night.

CG: We often have two different rehearsals a night -- different people.

LO: Gig Friday, gig Saturday, rehearsal Sunday...

MS: We're practicing this klezmer thing...

LO: That's why we all have jobs. It seems like every songwriter, sooner or later, wants a band.

CG: Joe was doing all this solo stuff, and he asked if I wanted to play bass with him, and he asked if I thought Little Oscar would want to play and I told Scarecrow, and he said, 'I want to play too!' That wasn't Little Oscar's doing, but I think everything else was.

JB: Do you have a favorite band among all the groups you play together on?

LO: They all rule, that's why we play with them.

CG: You're just asking for trouble.

LO: Lach. Lach is our favorite.

CG: Right. Lach solo.

MS: Definitely.

JB: Working with each songwriter must be different.

LO: Not that much, we stay in the same spot all week and they come and go.

CG: I find the most difficult is Joe (Bendik, as the Heathens) because he knows what he wants and he knows how to tell us and his music -- his song structure is not always conventional. You have to really pay attention, you have to know what he's thinking about. His harmonies aren't always straight-forward, the chord changes aren't always the same each time around...

LO: All the bands really groove though.

MS: Yeah.

JB: It sounds so simple with the Heathens. You really sound the tightest with Joe Bendik.

MS: It's hard.

CG: It sounds easy, but it's not.

MS: I'd say different people inspire us to do different things, rather than demand. Like, with Joe, I can wear bunny ears.

CG: Because the music demands it.

CG: Different music allows us to do different things. With some it wouldn't be appropriate. Jen inspired us to get psychedelic in some places, when she didn't expect it. And we don't always know what we're gonna do, and some songwriters then give us feedback.

CG: We're kind of lucky, because I have a studio in my basement, so we get to practice there a lot. It's convenient for us to rehearse there.

LO: We're starting to develop our own sound.

JB: Does it help to be in so many bands?

LO: I'm getting to be a better player. Doesn't effect the writing.

MS: Doesn't help my relationship with my girlfriend much.

JB: There's one song you play for all the groups. What is that?

MS: 'Zach Morris'? (an instrumental)

CG: It's the oldest one of the Antisection's. That and 'Life's Sweet Lies.'

JB: Lenny says that what Scarecrow's done is very important for the songs.

MS: I've added signature riffs which he might feel put them over the top. I definitely have fun playing with Lenny because there's room to lead. Joe has very particular compositions. Very specific ideas.

CG: A very clear idea, I think with Jen it's pretty free. We're pretty free with Karen; she lets us do what we want.

JB: Talk about some of the other bands you're all in.

CG: Liz Brody's White Shirt of Mother.

MS: Mike Rechner.

JB: You're playing with Mike Rechner?

LO: We're talking about it.

CG: We haven't done anything with Mike yet.

LO: Maybe in January.

JB: How is Liz Brody to work with?

MS: Very basic. Very motivated.

CG: She's got really positive energy. That's a plus... she keeps you going after a long day... of rehearsals.

MS: It's kind of poppy.

JB: What's the focus of your sound?

LO: Straight ahead. I dunno, I just try and groove with however we're playing with. These guys just ride along.

JB: Does your sound change? Like, with, say, Lenny Molotov?

CG: That's more groove oriented.

MS: He's got the most sixties sound.

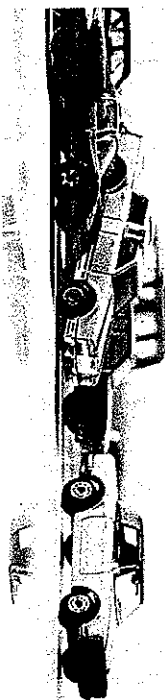
CG: And it's got that beat poetry edge going.

CG: Betsy (of Strange Rain)'s vocals are very spiritual. Total

LO: There you go.



Bob Strain



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"If you go to San Francisco..."

by Tricia Scotti

Coffee -- that's all I was thinking about. Getting my fix -- I knew there was a coffee sip on the corner of the street I just moved onto so I made my way there.

Sacred Grounds Cafe -- wasn't this the place where Lach used to run the open mic? Scarecrow, too? I had stopped in a year before when I was visiting San Francisco and they told me the open mic had ended -- neighbors bitching about the noise. But MUSIC MANAGER NEEDED was the sign on the window --

Hm...

I had moved to San Francisco a few weeks before to write a song. I hadn't written anything for six months. It had stopped me going to the Fort -- where I felt strong songwriter connection -- since I told myself I could only go if I had new songs to play. Six months later: Did I know the way to San Francisco?

So there I was at Sacred Grounds. This is Sacred Grounds? No P.A., small room, where do you stand when you play? I went up to the counter, asked for a latté and casually asked the guy at the counter, "Are you looking for someone to book music here?"

"We start to do open mic again," he said in a heavy middle Eastern accent.

I said, "Well, I'm the perfect person to do it." (Ha!)

"You have done this before?" he asked.

"Yeh, in New York." (Lie!) "Also, my friend Lach used to host this open mic."

Suddenly, I got his attention.

"Lach? You know Lach? Lach my best friend! I cry when he leave!"

He cry when he leave. I just might have a chance here.

"I must talk to my brother Asis and I call you. We looking to book music on Fridays and have open mic on Thursdays."

Alrighty, then --

I hadn't even remotely thought about hosting an open mic before and suddenly it became my obsessive goal to get this job. But that would mean I would have to get up and talk in front of a group of people, be entertaining on a consistent basis, be organized -- terror set in. How could I ever do this as well as the emperor of anti-folk? I wanted it to be great -- fun -- a weekly event that musicians would want to come to --

Shit. They'll never hire me, they'll see right through me: "Oh yeh, I did this in New York." RIGHT!

So I called Lach with a million questions. How do I deal with these guys? How much should I ask for? BLAH BLAH BLAH -- he straightened me out, said don't worry, you'll get the job and, "by the way, can you send me some of their chocolate chip cookies?" I'm thinking, "let me see if I get the job, Buddy," but Lach was right. Moosa gave me the job -- and Lach got the cookies.

Now the thing was to get people to come. Now, the thing was to get people to come. I'd only been in San Fran for two weeks: why would anyone come to my open mic: who the hell was I? So, I made up some flyers, handed 'em out, and then, on the night of the first open mic, got there an hour early.

And waited, thinking no one's gonna show up, it'll be like my 10th birthday party all over again. But I was wrong.

Slowly, they came.

One by one. Some in pairs.

They brought guitars.

Genius that I am, I guessed they were all here for the open mic.

By the start time there were about 15 people there ready to play. But then I realized, Oh, God, I have to get up and talk, with no mic, no guitar. I'd never done this before -- should I do a lottery or whoever shows up first? So, I just started reading names out of a hat (Pita bread basket, really)

I was nervous. Really nervous. Someone told me a few months later "the first night of the open mic I didn't think you were gonna

make it. You started shaking and sweating when you introduced people and I thought, 'Oh, no!'"

Yeh, it was pretty much a geek's worst nightmare that first night, but as the weeks went on, it got easier. Word spread, and I made some friends and 20 or people started coming here regularly. It started becoming really fun.

It's a different scene out there. Some characters that have been around San Francisco would come and play music protesting Vietnam -- peace, love, granola, the whole 60's hippie thing, which would be pretty annoying except they really were hippies from the 60's, which made it kind of cool. There was a really great songwriter, an English guy, with a beautiful voice who wrote some really sweet songs, but who also had a funny fuck-you way about him. Also, this girl Reannie, a satirical songwriter whose standout number was a song about her obsessive love for Johnny Depp.

It was cool: I was writing like crazy -- though I had started even before the open mic. I'd hoped to create a musicscene that, like, the Fort, was supportive and fun, and I guess I succeeded.

But something was missing here. Some kind of edge -- or desperation? Or what? Energy. Everything and everyone was so laid back. People instantly recognized me as a New Yorker, doing impressions of me sounding like someone in 'My Cousin Vinnie.' Very flattering.

Yeh, really laid back. At one open mic in particular the host would always show up an hour late and no one seemed to care.

I started to miss New York. I had moved to San Francisco needing a change -- and I got it. The first week there I wrote three songs. I started going to more open mics and doing shows and playing every week. at the Hotel Utah and Paradise Lounge, among others. Something freed up in me, with my writing and performing. Maybe because I was in a new place without a lot of familiar faces so I stopped censoring myself so much as a writer and singer and just played and had fun.

But I was thinking about playing these new songs in New York. I started not digging the political correctness of it all. When people would play a ten minute cover song with their eyes closed and everyone would hoot and holler like it was the greatest thing they ever heard. To me, it just seems like audiences don't really let you get away with stuff in New York -- and I missed that indifferent 'fuck you, we don't care, just show us, we're waiting' attitude.

I know music should be about expressing yourself and not good or bad, right and wrong and everyone has their own thing, and I had to let go of being judgmental as the host of the open mic. But, how do you grow and get better as a writer and performer if everyone tells you you're great all the time, when no one is really great all the time. I missed honest feedback and so, that's one of the reasons I came back to New York.

A few weeks before I leave, I tell Moosa, the manager of Sacred Grounds I'm going back to NY.

"Why? Why you wanna go back there? We need you for open mic here!"

"It's time to leave," I say.

"Well, we have big cake for you last night. Special party."

Well, there was no party, but that's OK. I wasn't there for cake, anyway.

Sometimes, I miss it there -- the beauty of the place, the weather, the friends I made, my scooter (not my weird roommate!)

So here I am, at my first Fort gig since I'm back. My friends are here, I'm ready to play. But there are a lot of people I don't know in the audience, sitting there, with their 'fuck you, we don't care, just show us' attitude.

Yeh, it's good to be back.

THE FORTIFIED SERIAL - EPISODE # 16

In the wooded glade, Ur the mighty thought he heard something.

Without a word, Ur took up his spear and prepared for an attack, waiting for the rustling in the bush to die down, and the enemy to make his appearance.

Finally, it did: a shiny bald man in t-shirt and jeans pushed through, full of kinetic energy and friendly menace.

Instead of attacking on sight, though, Ur smiled. "Hamell on Trial. What brings you to this desolate jungle?"

"Looking for you!" the manic six-string slinger said, then called over his shoulder, "Hey! I found them! Well, one..."

Ur heard in the distance, an army of feet fast approaching. When Craig Gordon, Scarecrow and Little Oscar arrived at Hamell's call, they saw their old friend looking back at them. He looked, however, much different than he had ever before.

Hair flowing wildly out of control, a beard that only a hermit with major flea support could develop and a loincloth made out of some shiny yellowish material made up his entire fashion statement. Well, there was the still-brandished spear but that was clearly just for show. They hoped.

"Andy!" Scarecrow said, "You're alive! We found you."

"Yeh," Andy Ure said suspiciously.

"When we heard that James Taylor had dropped you all out of his private plane, we never dreamed we'd ever be able to find you, though we had to try."

"I guess it worked," Ure said to Craig.

"Darned tootin' it worked!" Little Oscar said, "We swore we'd do it, even though it took us years!"

"Days, actually."

"Whatever."

"Uh-huh," Ure the Mighty said, "Well, how's tricks? What's AntiFolk up to?"

"Oh," said Scarecrow, "Well, turns out that some Master Villain was working to destroy the Super Duper AntiHoot."

"James Taylor," Hamell added with a grimace.

"He lost all of Lach's sponsors, got rid of you guys, heckled the show, and put silly stickers on people's backs," Craig extolled, "It was awful!"

"Why?"

"Something about Lach not letting him play."

"So what happened?"

"Oh, when Sweet Baby James owned up to it, Lach smacked him with a mic stand."

"Killed 'im," Oscar said.

"He's doing 10 to 20 months."

"That little?" Ur said.

"If people knew that Taylor could be knocked off so cheap, it would have happened a long time ago."

"He's at Ryker's," Craig said.

"Big scene there. Every visitor's day, they do an antihoot."

"Interesting," Andy mused, "Well, thanks for stopping by. I hope to see you next time you're in these aboriginal wilds. Bye!"

"But Andy," Hamell said, "We came to rescue you."

"We're a search party, to bring you back."

"Actually," Scarecrow added, "You could have done it yourself. We're only in Jamaica Bay."

"Really?" Ur the Mighty let a filthy smile escape his lips "Well, I guess that makes it all the more embarrassing."

"What do you mean?" Hamell asked.

"Say," Scarecrow said, "Where's the rest of Muckafurgason?"

"Funny story, that..."

"Cannibalism in Long Island," Lach said behind plexiglass, "Who'd have thunk it?"

"Actually," Hamell said, "Rockaway's in Queens, though it really should be in Brooklyn --"

"All of which, technically, is in Long Island."

"But --"

"Never mind," Lach said, "The point is, Andy's the only survivor of the Muckafurgason's expedition."

"Not if you really believe that you are what you eat."

"Save it for the stage," Lach said, just as there was a rap on the glass separating the two AntiFolkies, "Looks like our time's up. Eight minutes or two songs."

"Right," Hamell rushed, "The point is, Andy, having seen too many Keener Boys episodes, thought his only option was to eat his bandmates. So he's understandably resistant to come back into civilized society."

"Hey, tell him it's cool in here. Coolest prison in New York City. Three meals a day, cheap housing, and I'm finally finishing college."

"Good to see you, Lach," Hamell said, getting up.

"Give my regards to the Sidewalk Cafe," Lach said, "What's left of it."

James Taylor's evil scheme had left little of the club extant.

Hamell walked away.

"You can stay for the AntiHoot!" Lach called after him, "Starting after lockdown (should I have yelled that out?)"

"Maybe next week."

"Sponsored by Smokie's Cigarettes. You smoke 'em, we don't smoke you!"

"See you, Lach," Hamell said, and left the building.

MY FIRST NEW YORK GIG

Jonathan Segol

It was Roger's suggestion, that this was a good place to play. We'd met only a few weeks ago, after a friend urged me to see one of his shows. That summer, at the New Music Seminar, I did.

After a beautiful set, I walked up to this guy and said, "Roger Manning. That was great. That was excellent."

He thanked me politely and invited me to see his band, American Music Club, the next night. It wasn't Roger, it was actually Marc Eitzel. He didn't seem to mind being called Roger.

The real Roger went on after that, played nice and loud, loud and nice, rattling off lyrics that -- well, I could hardly make out a few lines in each song, but loved the songs to pieces just the same. He ended his set by tossing a stack of *The Shadow* in front of him, and advising that everyone read it.

That week, the week I moved into the East Village, the week the cops shut down Tompkins Square, was good week to have an anarchist newspaper thrown at you, and a better week to meet Roger Manning.

Three days after the show, I saw him on the street, and walked up to him.

"Hey, you're Roger Manning, right?" I asked, taking no chances this time.

"Yeah."

"I was at that show Friday night. Where do you find that newspaper you threw at us?"

"Let's look."

We spent the next few hours walking aimlessly, chattering, complaining about the cops. We were both unusually friendly and open that day. It was the summer of -- no, certainly not love. The park was closed, the East Village under occupation. Some people make friends in the laundromat while complaining about dryers. Roger and I bonded, bad mouthing cops everywhere and talking about all other aspects of the neighborhood: squats, music, gardens, damn cops. Later that month, the night I met Lach and Coyote Shivers (Lach's gig at the Pyramid), cops would try to move Roger and me off the sidewalk in front of the Pyramid. "Don't even acknowledge those assholes," Roger would whisper, as we shuffled one inch from their nudgy fingers. Summer of love? Fall of cops.

Eventually we came to a tiny bookstore on 7th Street called A-Central. Not only did it have *The Shadow* and other anarchist rags, but Roger also said that it was a good place to play a show.

That week I set up a date to play at A-Central.

(First? What about Joe's Bar or Pat's Bar, or whatever they call that empty little bar in Chelsea?)

That night at A-Central several friends had come over. It was less a bookstore than a zine store and a pamphlet store. A woman whose name I don't remember ran the place. She had her baby along and had also cooked some vegan food for the occasion. There were about twenty small wooden chairs (more than enough) pointed toward a wall and a space. That was the stage.

(And what about three shows at Sun Mountain Cafe, eagerly booked despite two or three open mikes that had musicians stepping outside to smoke, take walks, anything to avoid listening to each other?)

The hour-long set went like any other hour-long set until he walked in. I didn't recognize him. No one seemed to recognize him either. In his dark hat and sunglasses, he walked nervously around the place, tried out nearly every vacant seat, and kept walking around.

My friends K.L. and Scott giggled behind his back and speculated loudly as to what he might have been smoking,

until he turned around and said in a menacing voice, "I don't like you."

K.L. and Scott vacated the premises, and did not return that night. He continued walking around, glowering at each person. Everyone else shuddered at the possibility that he might not like them.

His first acknowledgment of the scheduled event was when he kept pointing to me and pointed to my friend Stephanie as if to suggest that I should be serenading her. It took a couple of songs to figure this out, since these clues were all non-verbal and fidgety. His verbal guidance soon followed.

"Hey singer man! Sing some love songs!"

"I'm an angry young man. I don't do love songs."

He walked over to me and handed me a twenty dollar bill.

"Twenty dollars. Two love songs," he said.

"You got it," I said, and launched into the two love songs I knew, with no compunctions about being an easily bought angry young man. I finished them and began to return to the rest of my set.

"The next song is --"

"More love songs!"

"Hey, twenty dollars, two love songs. We're even, right?"

He walked up, handed me another ten dollar bill, and said,

"Another love song."

"Where's all this money coming from?" I asked.

He shrugged, waved his hand, and said, "I'm a drug dealer."

Everyone else sat, patient and a bit scared, as I got through another -- well, I didn't know any more love songs. I just knew Elvis Costello songs that could be mistaken for love songs if one doesn't catch half the lyrics. I played Elvis and slurred the words that needed to be slurred.

"More love songs! More love songs!"

I'd made it up to forty dollars, erased the bill-paying anxieties of that week, when I asked why he wanted to hear all these love songs.

Standing in front of me with his back to the audience, he growled, "Lost my wife this morning. Cops shot her."

I told him to just have a seat. The remaining love songs were on the house. He sat silently for the remaining fifteen minutes and stared at his ring. Then midnight struck and the bookstore had to close. This man gave me a big hug. We never saw each other again.

(If there's one you've got no business leaving out, it's ABC No Rio; small, warm {despite lack of heating}, full of crazy people who soon became your friends, even a fight before your set, leaving the place with no emcee. That's not a gig? And ABC No Rio was first, A-Central was second. Let it be said that this title is factually incorrect.)

The A-Central bookstore lasted a few more months before going out of business, and I spent that year booking myself in better known, less warm places. Admittedly, the A-Central show was my sixth or seventh gig since moving into New York. But A-Central and ABC No Rio were my only GIGS that season.

To earn the capital letters, it can't just be a gig. It's an event. People make friends, communities are built, good stories are generated, and not just from the stage. Perhaps this is a small-scale version of the big-break fantasy, one to distract from the lack of other big breaks. My own big breaks however, my own GIGS, have given me friends, given me a home, and given me an occasional hug from a drug dealer.

SAMSARA - The Future of AntiFolk

Gustav Plympton

She's slim, she's slight, and she's pretty as all get-out. She smiles when she takes the stage, and you can just imagine the beautiful sounds that will soon escape this lovely young songbird's lips.

What comes out, though, is nothing of the kind. Electrified distortion reverberates off the walls and into your cranium. Her voice, cold, sharp, vengeful, lets out words that could swear belonged in a woman twice her age.

This is not the sweet baby sister you thought was about to strum the first song she ever wrote, this is Samsara, prodigy sensation playing exclusively at the Fort at the Sidewalk Café. She's just a child. She's just a talent. She's youthful, beautiful, and, as a student at one of the city's most prestigious high schools, it's hardly true that "Music's the only talent I have." She packs the Fort whenever she plays. And whether it's with friends, people interested in her songs or people curious about her the novelty of her youth, the people stay, and listen, and applaud. One dirty old man recently got to speak to her.

How old are you?

I'm sixteen. I started writing at 14.

When Kurt Cobain died, it made me upset, inspired me to start writing. I started playing out at fifteen.

How'd you come to play at the Fort?

I played Kenny's Castaways and at Judson's Church.

Also, at school student shows, where all the skinheads wanted to kill me. I was playing at a my dad's friend's party, and he suggested I come out to this open mic. He was a folk artist, and played here a couple of times.

Do your parents always come to your gigs?

(Nodding) They're worried that they're a lot of scumbags in the music industry. My dad played guitar, so he's into it. I basically just play here, 'cause I've got a publicity manager, and she wants me to wait until I showcase. She's Karen, of 1% Productions.

Why are your parents so concerned about you being out?

I think it's more like school and stuff, the don't want my grades to suffer. They really want me to graduate first, but I'm impatient -- I can't wait!

Hopefully, I'll get signed. If not, I'll have to go to college. Rrr...

You're looking to get signed?

I definitely wouldn't want a developing deal. If it's a big label, or big deal, I don't mind, so long as I can eat and tour. I'm not looking to be a megalomaniac.

Planning to break out musically after high school?

I'll have more time to devote. Right now, I'm really confined. I play once a month, and if it's for an audience of ten... (laughs)

You mentioned showcasing?

She wants me to go to Texas to play South by Southwest, or Tramps. It'd be better to start out at a convention, where there're A&R people there.

If you don't get the deal, what else?

I haven't really thought about it. I guess I'll do something in music. I've been playing piano for ten years -- My parents

stuck me in a rut. I started as a classical pianist. -- and I guess I was at a level to compete. I won the Junior Van Clydeburn. It's pretty prestigious.

I'm still doing that, but I've sort of turned my attention away from it. I think people have been scared away from the piano by Tori Amos.

What's it like, being so young, surrounded by 'Scumbags in the music industry?'

I thought at first it would be a major disadvantage, but people like Lach don't condescend at all. And you can just sit back and listen. It's a lot easier to make mistakes.

I tend not to be as cynical as my parents. I guess they're older, so they must know more. And they're trying to protect me. I can't tell you how many times I've heard 'Don't sign anything until you read it.'

There always seems to be some sort of combat between music and industry. What do you think about that?

It's always a central issue. I don't think about it so much. (laughs) It seems like if you want to get to the top, you have to be go-getting, and... it's all sort of hypocritical.

I've been lucky so far. I've worked with really nice people.

Has there been any change in your writing, your performing, since you started?

I guess I'm more honest in my writing. I guess I used to be more abstract. I guess I didn't think people would really understand my music. It's more rocking, and so much less pop.

Do you ever play with other people?

(sighing) I've been through so many different bands, but usually it's been a battle of wills.

When I recorded my demo, Bruce, my producer, hired some studio people. It was much easier. But I guess being in a band has taught me to bite my tongue and not be such a bitch.



What is AntiFolk?

compiled by Henry van Okopo

Generations have gone by, trying desperately to come up with the answers to the important questions: "Does God exist?" "Why are we here?" "What is AntiFolk?" "Who was that guy and what was his license number?" Of course, the answers to most of these have been found in recent weeks, but the definition of AntiFolk has thus far eluded us. Some of the best minds of our generation have worked to confront this enigma wrapped in a crustacean. Here are their thoughts, and many others, as well.



Lach - "Aaarghh!"

Gustav Plympton - "...What seems to be forgotten is the fact that the whole thing was borne of rejection. The original artists that would be known as antifolk pioneers were losers, who couldn't find a club to let them play. The fact is, though, the alternative to traditional folk music ...was really created from shame, rejection, and embarrassment...It's embarrassing, really."



Heather Eatman -
"It's something you
put in your car to
keep it from singing
Peter, Paul and Mary
songs in the
wintertime."

Mike Rimbaud - "People trying to write new songs that aren't too steeped in cliché and can be performed with guitars. Not afraid to fall on their face, to be stupid or cruel."

aGNELLI & rAVE - "Hard-edged, honest, clear music—an ice storm in the desert. . ."



Jocelyn Ryder - "I keep asking myself that and I keep trying to define it.... I tell people about my involvement in 'AntiFolk in the East Village scene. And people often say, 'Antifolk?' and they look at me like a German Shepherd whose just heard a really weird noise, which is how Lynda

Barry describes people's reactions to her description of the Badlands... so I tell people about that quote, that one of the advertised quotes on AntiFolk is 'Hank Williams meets the Sex Pistols,' but since I'm a woman, I've decided to tell people, 'AntiFolk is a cross between Patsy Cline and the Sex Pistols.'"

Charles Herold - "The thing that explodes when it collides with folk."



Ross Owens - "The way I see it, AntiFolk can be called the salon d' reject of the folk world. Now these were, I believe, impressionist painters — the first — and they didn't fit into

the art scene in Paris. They couldn't get into any of the galleries so they put on their own show and they called it the salon d' rejects. And that's how I see AntiFolk; it's people who didn't fit into the tradition."



Dina Dean - "I don't know."

Bob Strain



Jack Peddler - "AntiFolk is a license to print money."



Joe Bendik - "It's a place where I can jump off of a chair, and they still listen to my lyrics."



Mary Ann Farley - "AntiFolk is not so much a genre of music but a state of mind. AntiFolk is unsentimental, honest, anguished, joyous and true. AntiFolk is a group of songwriters and artists who truly support each other and wish each other the very best."

AntiFolk crowns kings and queens. AntiFolk makes people feel like they are home, yet challenges them to be the very best they can be. AntiFolk means living for today, Period."

Jonathan Segol - "When you're hanging out in a tranquil coffeehouse run by someone at least as nebbishy as yourself and he tells the musicians to keep it quiet and melodic because we're trying to keep a certain kind of ambiance here — an ambiance devoid of anything resembling a pop hook or any musical dynamic (move from mezzo piano to piano), thus insuring that you fee like throwing everything that would make a nice design on the wall (or the emcee's face) but you don't because despite your musical tastes you're just as wimpy as the folkies so you channel what would have been your response, you channel that into a musical sound. I guess that's antifolk."



Jonathan Berger - "Uh... Antifolk is the Fort. The Fort is Lach. Can I go now?"

Anonymous - "Antifolk is a clever marketing gimmick created by people who couldn't make it in folk."



Heather Woodbury - "Antifolk is to folk what performance art is to theater in the sense that performance art is more theater to theater and antifolk is more folk to folk."



Gene Morris - "AntiFolk is like a metaphor."

Dave Schurtman - "1) Back guitars with overdrive boxes. 2) Anti-folk is when you stub your toe on the ass of a very brainy dark spirited pit-bull, and after drooling on you, sings you a song about the value of Red in the game of Twister."

Dan Schurtman - "Your mom sittin on a stick a butta. I No, just kidding. Antifolk is a relative term for everyone, my meaning of ANTIFOLK mite bedifferent then a littler corporate's antifoLK. He mite think it means against folk music. It's not about saing no. it's about fussion, a fusion ofpunk and angst and hatred of yourself and others arond you. ButDoing it tastefully, mixing folk music and Punk music in any way. AntifoLK is a sene which dosent limit you be sene guidelines. Antfolk is freedom: and yes ladies I'm single and 21."

Mark Humble - "Anti Folk' is a meaningless label."

Bob Strain

THE FORT AT SIDEWALK CAFE PRESENTS...

fun!

The following is a schedule of entertainment at The Fort. All shows are free (3\$ drink minimum). Due to AntiMatters' demanding deadline, this is just a partial calendar. For more complete listings please call.

Mon. Dec.16 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30. Show begins roughly at 8.
Tues. Dec.17 - 8 - The Secret Admirers, 8:30 - Kevin Kadish, 9 - The Engine Brothers, 10 - Dean Kostlich, 11 - Olivia Cornell
Wed. Dec.18 - 8 - Pamela-Sue.Mann, 8:30 - Mark Humble, 9 - Ruth Gerson, 10 - The Fixin's, 11 - Jughead
Thur. Dec.19: 8 - Karen Ramos, 8:30 - Samsara, 9 - Debby Schwartz, 10 - The Trouble Dolls, 11 - George Gilmore
Fri. Dec.20 - The Fort's Annual Christmas Party!: 8 - Bianca Bob's Christmess Show, 9 - Cecil's Bait and Tackle Jesus Fest, 10 - The Menthol Kings Smoking Yule, 11 - Fur Dixon, 12 - Eddy Dixon
Sat. Dec.21 - Antifolkadelic Night with: 8 - Mr. Scarecrow, 9 - Bill Popp and The Tapes, 10 - Starchile, 10:30 - Cycomotogoat, 11:30 - G'nu Fuzz
Sun. Dec.22 - 8 - M.E.Johnson, 8:30 - Dan Killian, 9 - Juliette Hamlin, 10 - Betty Alvarez, Dan Emery's Mystery Guests
Mon. Dec.23 - The Kwanukahmass Antihoot with Lach. Sign - up at 7:30. Holiday songs get priority!!
Tues. 24 and Wed. 25 - No Shows. Merry Christmas!
Thurs. Dec.26 - 8 - John Sonntag C.D. Release Party, 9 - Puckett, 9:30 - Christopher Dillon, 10 - Heather Eatman, 11 - Ann Lien
Fri. Dec.27 - 8:30 - Acoustic Bankhead, 9 - Gene and Mimi, 10 - The Humans, 11 - Jack Peddler, 11:30 - Acoustic Pop Summit with Paul Collins (The Beat), Richard X Heyman, Phil Angotti (The Idea), Kurt and Rick from The Gripweeds
Sat. 28 - 8:30 - Rythm Glide, 9 - Revolution Suns featuring Kamau, 10 - Homer Erotic, 11 - The Johnson Boys
Sun. 29 - 8 - Gentleman Jim Noone, 9 - Mark Humble, 10 - Stretch, 11 - Dan Emery's Mystery Guests
Mon. Dec.30 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign -up at 7:30.
Tues. Dec.31 - **NEW YEAR'S SPECTACULAR WITH BICYCLE, FLOATER AND MORE!**
Plus free champagne toast at midnight, drink giveaways, door prizes and our usual NoCover!
Wed. Jan.1 - Antihangover party with Lach, Ross Owens, Fur Dixon, Julianne Richards, Mark Geary and more!
Thurs. Jan.2 - 8 - Bianca Bob, 9 - Michael Eck, 9:30 - Snafu, Special Guest
Fri. Jan.3 - 9 - Earl Pickens and the Trail of Tears (Billy Kelly), 10 - Superhuman,
Sat. Jan.4 - 9 - The Humans, 10 - Jeremy Wallace,
Sun. Jan.5 - 8 - Brickface, 9 - artFarm, 10 - Isoe, 11 - Dan Emery's Mystery Guests
Mon. Jan.6 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign -up at 7:30
Tues. Jan.7 - 8 - PinataLand, 8:30 - Curtis Eller, 9 - Jenny Bruce, 9:30 - Gary Negbaur, 10 - Oren,
Wed. Jan.8 - 8 - Jill Diamond, 9 - Youngblood, 9:30 - Gary Meister,
Thurs. Jan.9 - 9 - Mick Hargreaves, 10 - The Silver - Tounge Devils,
Fri. Jan.10 - 9 - Lenny Molotov and the Illuminoids
Sat. Jan.11 - 9:30 - Mike Rechner, 10 - Joe Bendik and the Heathens, 10:30 - The Bitter Poet
Sun. Jan.12 - *Strange Folk Sunday* with: 8 - Ish, 8:30 - Leah Coloff, 9 - Al Lee Wyler, 9:30 - Andrew McCann, 10 - Missing Chunk
Mon. Jan.13 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign -up at 7:30
Tues. Jan.14 - 8 - Clay, 8:30 - Mike Young, 9 - M.E. Johnson, 10 - Nancy Falkow
Wed. Jan.15 - 8 - Bari Koral, 9 - Pal Shazar
Thurs. Jan.16 - 8 - David Clement, 8:30 - The Hush, 9 - Betsy Thomson, 10 - Dean Kostlich

Find the Sidewalk Cafe, Bar, Grill and Esperanto shoppe at 94 Avenue A, 24-hours a day. Ask for Babs.