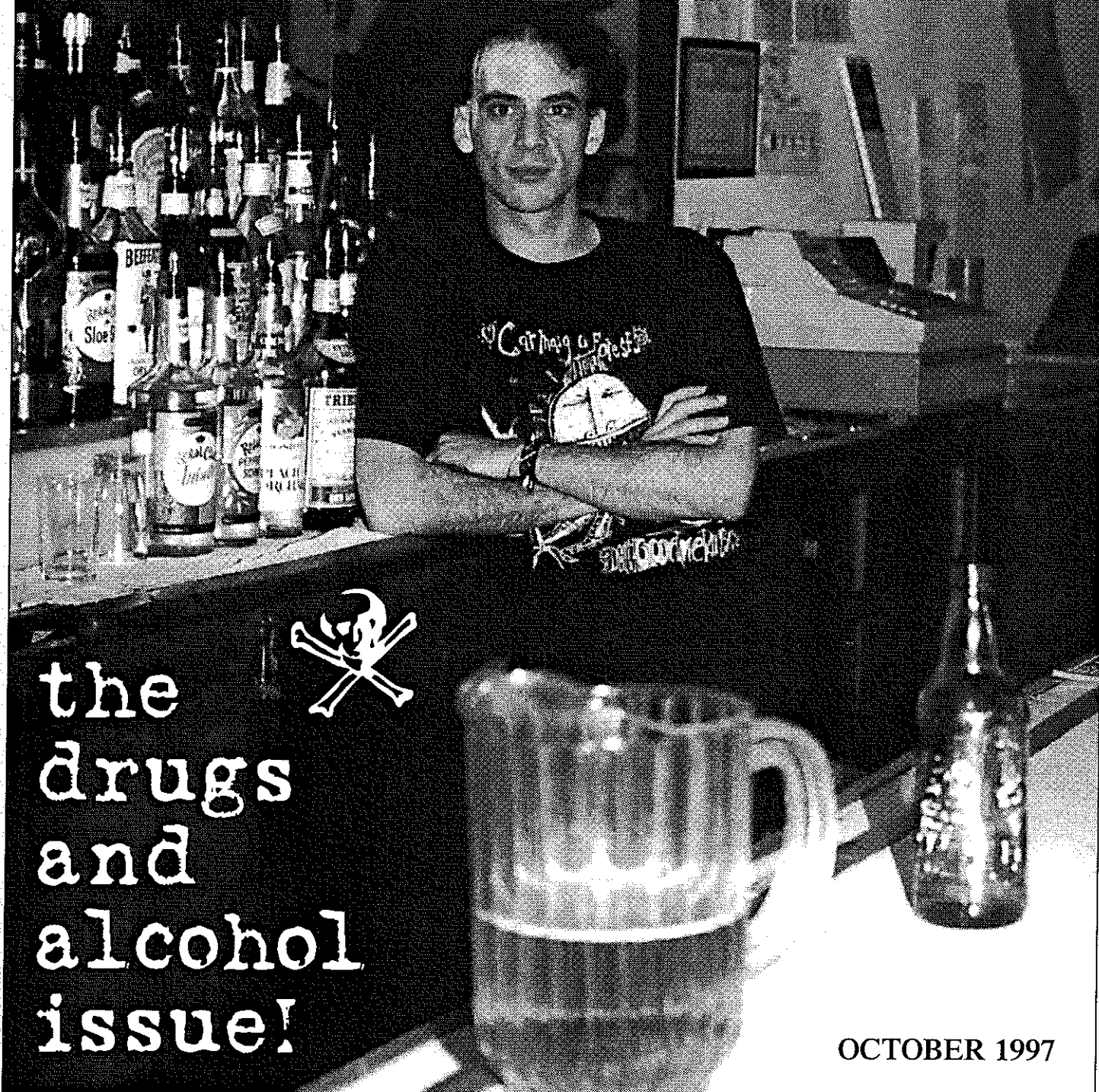


# anti matters

this is the one you've all been waiting for . . .



the  
drugs  
and  
alcohol  
issue!



OCTOBER 1997

# AntiMatters

150 West 95th Street  
Apartment 9d  
New York, NY 10025

## Credit to this Place

Jonathan Berger

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## Subscription Information

6 Months of AntiMatters  
12 measly dollars!  
No way can this miss!  
**DO IT!**

The guy who normally  
writes these introductions  
is presently AWOL, so I'll  
keep this brief.

Arnie Rogers

## Advertising Rates

0.25 page	6 Clams
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1.00 page	21 Clams

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Lyrics by Lach  
Musical Scheduling

Dear Auntie Matters:  
Jon Berger keeps asking me  
for a date. He's a pest. What  
should I do?

Pestered in Poughkeepsie

Dear Pestered:

You're telling ME?? Berger has been  
bugging me for a new column for MONTHS.  
This--coming from a man who changes email  
names as often as he changes his goatee wax.  
Tell him what I tell him--PAY me and  
MAYBE I'll give you the time of day. If that  
doesn't work, just call the police. New York  
City cops will know how to handle a guy like  
him.

Dear Auntie Matters:

I've noticed that Sidewalk has  
expanded the back room. Is that new floor  
safe?

Worried in Westchester

Dear Worried:

Of course it isn't. Why do you think Lach  
never sits there? But look honey, safety isn't  
everything. Making enough room to  
accommodate the screaming aging fans of  
hunky-although-has-been John Taylor is, and  
you know it. Why Auntie herself risked life and  
limb on that squeaky floor just to get a gander

## AUNTIE MATTERS

*OK, so you haven't missed her.  
Well she's back anyway!*

at the hunkfest going on that night. With  
any luck, Lach will snag Boy George for  
next CMJ, or better yet, George Michael.  
Wham me baby!

Dear Auntie:

I've noticed Lach is getting all these big name  
acts at Sidewalk lately. Does this mean our club  
will no longer be a down-to-earth nurturing support  
base for up-and-coming songwriters?

Concerned in Connecticut

Dear Concerned:

What a stupid question. A scene isn't a  
scene until it's SEEN dearie, and frankly,  
yours truly is sick to death of living this  
obscure bohemian rhapsody. With any luck,  
we'll all get a shot on Manhattan Cable and  
be famous all the way up to 14th Street. Tell  
the West Village to put THAT in their  
fucking folkie pipe and smoke it!!

Dear Auntie Matters:

*How do I get an art show in the back  
room? I don't have to sleep with Lach, do I?*

Virtuous Val

Dear Val:

If you're a woman, yes. If you're  
a man, yes. But this doesn't  
necessarily mean you have to have  
sex with him. Why Auntie herself  
snuggled up to our little booking  
bunny one night and next day found  
herself with a two-hour set on a  
Saturday night! And I don't even sing!  
Lach is an honorable man--he would  
never exchange sex for a favor, unless  
the favor is for HIM, if you get my  
drift. Rumor has it he's working his  
way through the whole Sony staff for  
a half-a-mil advance. You go guy!

*Write to your aunt. She loves to  
abuse you. The only questions she  
DOESN'T want to hear about are  
love, money, Sidewalk, career and  
fears. All other questions OK.  
AskAnti@aol.com.*

# Report From The Fort

Wed. Sept. 3- CMJ Night One:

A great kick-off night to a very cool four days. This was a roster of Antihoot All-stars beginning with the ever lovable Novellas. As usual they gave an intimate yet highly energetic performance prompting comparisons to The Talking Heads and the B-52's.

Dan Emery was up next accompanied by Steve Espinola. Emery has been playing with a larger band of late and it seemed he was trying to recreate that sound as a duo by using a noisy guitar sound and shout/singing his lyrics. It was a foot in both worlds without the richness of either. He also gave the spotlight to Espinola for two songs but the sudden switch in tone, though generous, was confusing and caused the set to become even more non-cohesive. I look forward to a real solo acoustic set of Emery's fine songs in the future.

Dina Dean & Chris Moore played the following 2 sets to a packed house. Both of these talented artists proved how a great song on just an acoustic guitar can be. It is amazing that artists of this raw, honest caliber can still regularly be seen at The Fort.

Rick Shapiro was the only non-musical act of the night. The comedian continued his weekly Wednesday spot with a mind-bending diatribe on everything from Starbucks to movie previews. As always the room was filled to capacity for this ultra-hot comic.

The Humans rocked the house. One of the more compelling moments was during the song "Melting City" with the boys plaintive cry of "Hold Me, hold me, like I hold you". Fantastic!

The last act of the night, Didjiworks, was a version of Meccabodega featuring 4 percussionists, bass & didjaredoo. This 3rd world band set up a beat that kept the crowd grooving into the early morning hours. A wonderful ending to a beautiful evening. (Robert Temple)

Thurs. Sept. 4- CMJ Night Two

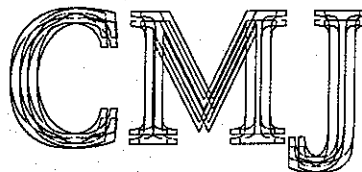
Steve Wynn (of Dream Syndicate) and Chris Barron (of Spin Doctors) both played wonderful, soulful and intimate sets leading up to Fort Founder Lach's performance with his full band. Rumor has it Lach has finished his new album and if this is the band he brings on the road then he will conquer all.

John Taylor (of Duran Duran) played next to a packed house of devoted fans. John started his set playing acoustic guitar and singing the song "Panhandler". As the set progressed John switched to the bass and played with a power trio singing old Duran standards such as "Rio" and "Planet Earth". The fans loved it and even though his voice was off the club was filled with good time energy. Check out his new solo CDs on B5 records, a big Roxy Music influence with spiritual lyrics.



Coyote Shivers played a short, solo electric set which included some new, lyrically raw songs. The man transmuted his emotional life through pure rock star stance and came out shining. We look forward to hearing what comes next!

The final act of this star-studded evening was John Easdale (of Dramarama). Playing acoustically to a small crowd of perhaps 25 people Easdale was amazing. Suffice to say I went out the next day and bought two Dramarama CD's. The day I hear he has released a new solo record I will be at the store buying it. (Robert Temple)



Fri. Sept. 5- CMJ Night 3

Rachel Sage kicked off the night. A charming, sexy performer with soulful, delicate lyrics, her sets at the Fort would probably work better with less equipment. I was distracted by the bands constant tinkering with the amps and boxes. I'd love to see her on the baby grand with stand-up bass and congas.

Amy Rigby, whose album "Diary of a Mod Housewife" topped many critics' top ten lists, charmed the crowd with her songs and down-home style. After reminding the audience that she first started playing out at The Antihoot she played a mix of new and old tunes. A crowd favorite was "Tonight I Give The Drummer Some".



It was great to have Heather Eatman back on the stage of The Fort. Having performed at the club numerous times, she had been away for a while. It seemed that a number of people in the crowd were new to Heather's work and they were quickly won over. True star quality with songs that tell stories, a classic and classy combination.

Brenda Kahn played with a new band set-up, stripped down and acoustic, yay! For years this artist has struggled between her solo and electric leanings. This set-up had the best of both worlds.

Patti Rothberg rounded-out this mini-Lilith Fair. Another artist who got her start at The Fort, Patti played a wonderful set. She has grown musically by leaps and bounds from her days at the Antihoot a mere two years ago. She included an Aimee Mann song, "Amateur" from Mann's latest release and the best album of that year, I'm With Stupid. A great ending to a beautiful evening. (Robert Temple)

Sat.Sept.6- CMJ Night 4

Roger Manning started the night with his usual set of self-sabotage. If this guy would just play his songs without the equipment hassles, meandering stage patter and faux-confrontational stage attitude he'd be brilliant. He's a great song-stylist and a unique guitarist but all that other stuff obscures his true abilities.

The other side of the coin was an amazing set by Hammel-On-Trial. This performer, who was influenced by Manning, has taken what Roger does best (fast strumming and wisecrack lyrics) and left the rest behind. Brilliant songs, authoritative stage presence - Hammel-On-Trial is one of the best Antifolk acts of the past ten years.

John S Hall (King Missile) read from his latest collection "Jesus Was Way Cool" A funny, sharp set. "The Difference Between Gay and Straight" had the crowd howling for more.

Matt Keating performed a charming though sedate set. A fine craftsman, he teeters the edge between stark realism and technique. I would like to see him fall over that edge and explore some realms beyond being polished.

The final act of the night and the festival was Twang! Bang! from Chicago. Picture the Blue Man Group meets The Violent Femmes. Check them out next time they come to town. Circus music for hipsters. (Robert Temple)



## The Fast Folk Cafe

41 North Moore Street  
(212) 274-1636

stevennn@delphi.com  
www.fastfolk.org

Open mike on Monday s and Tuesdays. Signup at 6.. Music begins at 6:30. Show at 7:30pm for \$10 contribution.

Thu 10/9 Chris & Meredith Thompson / The Wiggins Sisters  
Fri 10/10 Peter Gallway/Rod MacDonald  
Wed 10/15 Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music  
Open Mike \* \$5 \*  
Thu 10/16 Nina Mankin/Peter Spink Trio  
Fri 10/17 Joe Lobell/Brother Greg Muirhead/Ina May Wool  
Sat 10/18 Camp Hoboken  
Thu 10/23 Jesse Hultberg/Bob Malenky/Cosy Sheridan  
Fri 10/24 Cody Melville/Sharon Perez-Abreu/Laura Wetzler  
Sat 10/25 Bernice Lewis/Wendy Sayvetz with Carrie Barron  
Wed 10/29 New Voices Showcase \* \$5 \*  
Thu 10/30 George Wurzbach  
Fri 10/31 Beppe Gambetta

Sat 11/01 Richard Berman/Terry Kitchen

Thu 11/06 Too Human

Fri 11/07 Compass Rogues/Dan & Bonnie Milner

Sat 11/08 Kenny Kosek & John Sholle/Singing Conquerors

Thu 11/13 Joe Giaccio/Bill Parsons/Dan Pelletier

Fri 11/14 Margo Hennebach/Frank Tedesso

Sat 11/15 New York City Labor Chorus

Wed 11/19 Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music

Open Mike \* \$5 \*

Fri 11/21 Ken & The Cruel Sisters (Alison & Hilary Kelley)

Sat 11/22 Tony Bird plus Annie Wenz

Wed 11/26 New Voices Showcase \* \$5 \*

Fri 11/28 Bob Malone



## The dueling pianos of Jerome Rossen and Peter Dizozza (Tuesday, September 16th)

One of the real pleasures in seeing Jerome Rossen and Peter Dizozza play together is the fact that they probably shouldn't be playing together. Their songs, their ideas, even their performance styles are so wildly different that by all accounts it shouldn't work. Jerome's performance is pure professional showmanship while Peter's immensely entertaining performance relies on his obvious but bewildering passion over his convoluted and seemingly arcane references.

Dizozza is, to put it lightly, intriguing. You get the impression that his incredibly dense and intelligent songs are above even his head. Every once in while as he's singing he'll look very confused at whatever it was he just said. But then, in the middle of a Dizozza number just as you're about to give up on understanding what the hell is going on, he'll sing a phrase that hits you emotionally. This, of course, only bewilders you more.

Jerome's songs have a stronger emotional center in that the jokes are jokes; the sad parts are sad; and the sad parts that turn into jokes (and vice versa) do so exactly when Jerome wants them to. You always know where you stand in a Rossen tune while with Dizozza you always feel as if you came in halfway through the conversation. (I don't mean that as a bad thing by any means.)

The kink in the evening of dueling pianos was the presence of only a single piano. On one or two songs, they played this piano simultaneously, but on everything else it was piano and accordion, or just piano. One of the brilliant strokes of the evening was having Jerome play Dizozza's songs while Dizozza came into his own as a vocalist. Standing up there without a piano to hide behind, Peter's called forth an astounding array of hand gestures and facial expressions that I did not know he was capable of.

What magical tie binds these two bizarre performers together? What strange bond held the evening from splintering into a thousand pieces? Perhaps we'll never know. But perhaps it's obvious. In either case, it's not something you can easily forget. Or remember.... Or whatever. (Dave)

## COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU!

An unprecedented meeting of two New York City neighborhoods took place on September 20th, 1997 when the East Village met Forest Hills at the third Romantic Enlightenment Variety Show. This installment took place on the stage at the Forest Hills Gardens Community House, equipped with Klieg lights and an amazing soundsystem. Included among the cabaret voices of Joanna McEvoy and Ellen Auwarter, was the emphasis on original material from cutting edge folk/rockers of the East Village Music Scene. Beautiful songs by Scarecrow (last there to attend a wedding of two men), the magical Liz Brody, The great Novellas, the harmonious Gene & Mimi, the emotionally volatile Pinatoland (Doug's first performance since the accident of September 16th), Debbie MacDougall (in great voice), the multi-talented Little Oscar, Debra Wakefield (in jungle colors with dance debuts of Dan Scanlon and Richard Skeet), Jocelyn Ryder rousing the audience with "I'm not going to hell for you," the amazing Mike Rechner, the Brechtian Tom Warnick and ever entertaining sounds of Charles Herold, with watercolors by Faith Palmer-Persen. Kenny Alvarez ran sound. This Cinema VII presentation was organized by Peter Dizozza and Debra Wakefield. With the Fort at Sidewalk as the common ground for so many of the performers, the pervasive presence of AntiFolk was felt throughout! Look for this show's broadcast on <http://onlinetv.com>. (Peter Dizozza)

Bill Popp (of the esteemed New York combine, Bill Popp & The Tapes) performed the opening set at the recent Libra Birthday Bash at the Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe. Of the many beautiful pop songs that Popp sang was one (one of many) on the groups recent CD, *Insides*, entitled "Sidewalk Dance."

"Sidewalk Dance," offers itself to a particular East Village interpretation. Considering the band's long-standing association with the Fort (brought about by the Libra Birthday Bash's organizer, Anne Husick), it is hard to ignore the likelihood of that association being the point of derivation of the lyrics.

"We'll dance, 'cause we want to / dance 'cause we need to  
Can't tell us not to dance / so we do our sidewalk dance  
I'll sidewalk dance with you / Sidewalk Dance."

Bill Popp, composer of the majority of songs on the album, playing alone with nothing but piano accompaniment, left greater opportunity to understand the lyrics, consider their meaning, and appreciate their particularly AntiFolk connotations.

Naturally, the history of the movement is one of individuals being told what to do, and rebelling against it. This is not necessarily because they chose to, but because it was a creative necessity. They could not be told how to perform, so they chose to perform in their own way, at self-made clubs, on the street, or finally, in the Sidewalk Cafe.

Bill Popp speaks to the coda of the song, over the particularly catchy rhythm, and he offers another possible hint at deeper levels of explication of his material.

"Sister's got the best sneakers in town, and she's dancin' with the kingpin now!"

A valid concept of this spoken lyric, however, is support of Lach's decision to merge his own Fortified Records label with Shanachie, the major indie, perhaps with the best sneakers in town. And what member of the AntiFolk community could be considered kingpin more easily than Lach?

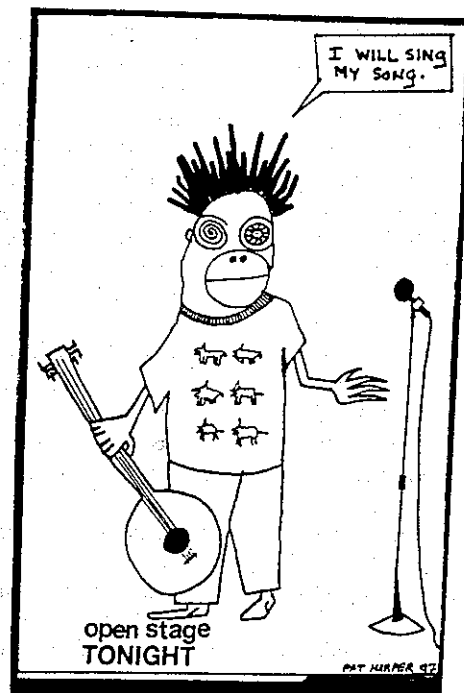
Mr. Popp is a deep songwriter, clearly. In his September 27th gig, he showed not only his solo groovy side, but offered, within his lyrics, potentially insightful views of modern AntiFolk history and interpretation.

Professor G Lesse II

What tha Fuck?! is a great fucking game, is what it is! I just saw it played at the AntiHoot for the first time the other day, and I loved it. You hear people stupider than you answer questions that any fool would know the answer to, and then you watch them go home with some ridiculous prize nobody would want in the first place! It's too cool, man!

I wanna play next time, but, hey MC! Don't make the prize be something so stupid and stinky; make it a drink ticket, or something else I want!  
Come on, man, what the fuck!?

Arnie Rogers





# THE HIDDEN FORT

Secret Origins of Antifolk  
A continuing series by Geoffrey Notkin

## Episode VI: A Six and a Nickel Bag

*Don't even bother trying to remember  
What when down the last three days  
Nightclubs, whispers, powder white haze  
Makin' love in the after hours*

(From "Hard Times" by Lach)

**I**T'S BEEN SIXTEEN YEARS SINCE I FIRST MET LACH ON A STREET CORNER IN BOSTON. SIXTEEN YEARS SINCE THAT first trip to the head shop that once stood in Kenmore Square. In the years that followed we worked in many bands including Proper Id, a Rockland-based group that lived together in an isolated house surrounded by trees and highways. We didn't have much money, but we made up for it with a sense of adventure and a diet of...well, you'll see. About halfway through our long relationship Lach decided to set a good example for the rest of us and continue on without the use of drugs and alcohol. I don't want our readers to think we ever did anything that was actually *illegal*, so I guess somebody must have just told me these stories, or as Hemingway said, "If the reader prefers...this may be regarded as fiction. But there is always the chance that such fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact."



### QUAALUDES

"Just wait 'til Vicki and Jolene get a load of Geoff." Lach smiled and nodded knowingly at Norman who had come all the way to Boston to pick us up in his car. We were going to Rockland to make a record. It was the first time I'd met Norman. I spent the next ten years playing bass guitar in bands with him.

"They'll be all over him."

Hunched in the back of Norman's battered VW bug I asked who Vicki and Jolene were.

"You'll see."

"No, come on. Who are they?"

"They live in the Stiff House with John and Jon. Jolene is sort of Jon's girlfriend. Vicki is...well, you'll see."

"They'll be all over you." They laughed again.

I had just turned twenty. I'd been in the States for a few months and I'd never seen anything like the Stiff House: a modern suburban house that looked ordinary and nice from the outside, like an ordinary and nice middle-class family home. But inside two guys lived with two girls; three of them were blonde and they were all high on different kinds of drugs. Records ran all along one wall in the living room, the whole wall—and good albums too, new stuff that I wanted to hear like Lords of the New Church and a Jam import that even I didn't have. Everyone had their own room but there seemed to be some kind of sexual ambiguity in the house; I wasn't sure who was with who, but both the girls—as Lach and Norman had predicted—seemed to want to be with me.

They left cocaine on a mirror in the kitchen, and big water pipes in the living room, with all different kinds of pot and hash on the coffee table. We drank a lot of vodka.

"We're all going out dancing later, okay?" Jolene asked, dressed in shiny black satin and rubbing her willowy thighs against me.

"Uh, yeah I guess so, if you like." I must have acted a bit uncomfortable because I thought Jolene slept with one of the guys there but nobody seemed to care. She was very beautiful in a wiry sort of way, very blonde and pale, almost albino, with big clear eyes. She sparkled. I wasn't used to American women yet, how forward they are sometimes.

She must have given me a tour of the house because we were suddenly in her bedroom. Vicki walked in with her pill box.

"Here Geoff have a Quaalude."

We didn't have Quaaludes in England, but I knew what they were. "No thanks, I don't really like downers."

"Oh come on. Then we're going dancing. You'll have much more fun if you have a Quaalude. They're real ones."

So I did, and then I wanted my drink which I'd probably left in the kitchen. Jolene said she would get it for me. I sat on the grey carpet and talked with Vicki. She was attentive and funny. She seemed very interested in me. Jolene came back with my drink and she had put even more vodka in it. I drank some more and started feeling very odd. I felt like I was on a raft, slowly going around and around a huge whirlpool. "You know, like in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*," I said out loud. The girls looked at me strangely.

"I think I'm going to fall," I said.

They laughed, pleasantly, not laughing at me like I was an idiot.

"But you're already on the floor."

"I think I'm falling."

Jolene and Vicki helped me lie down on the floor. The lights were on, they were bright and shining right in my eyes but I couldn't really see them.

"Are we going dancing?"

I heard gentle laughter, like wind chimes, far away on a summer day when you're napping in the garden. And I felt the girls' hands stroking my hair, slowly, and it felt like molasses being spread over me. I went further and further into the whirlpool until there was only water.

In the morning I woke up in someone's bed. The girls had put me in one of their rooms and gone dancing. I never took another Quaalude.



### THE KAMIKAZE

We recorded our first single, "Electric Boy," and released it on our own label—Proper Music. We used the disc as a calling card to book shows and get into clubs for free, as it received airplay on major New York radio stations (see "Cocaine").

Much of Rockland County is a dour strip mall. There is a sameness and a cheapness to the streets and buildings. There are quiet tree-lined lanes with handsome old wood houses, but there is also Route 59, with its row of Dairy Queens, pizza restaurants,

and 7-11s. The towns around us: Suffern, New City, and Spring Valley are full of nightclubs. The hordes of suburban kids that pack them every weekend pay up to see a dismal array of amateur cover bands. There is a Jethro Tull tribute band, two Doors tribute bands—and they sell out the clubs—Stones tribute bands, Who tribute bands, Journey tribute bands, and a nameless parade of generic groups that can't write and offer up a pastiche of The Cars, Heart, Pat Benatar, and Billy Idol. And these "bands," like The Slam and Four on the Floor do really well! The fans love them. And we can hardly get a gig. Even with a record spinning on WNEW.

In the midst of this intellectual wasteland, in one of those outdoor car park malls, is Maximus. With their "All you can drink" specials, wet t-shirt contests, "Ladies drink free" nights, and other promos this disco nightly packs in the most undesirable segment of Rockland's population. Maximus is constantly the butt of our jokes. On how many listless evenings did someone yell out from the kitchen, "Hey why don't we all go down to Maximus? It's heavy metal Thursday, with 50 cent Buds all night!"

And then one day there was a banner outside the club advertising New Wave Mondays. "Kamikazes: Three for a dollar!" it said in letters four feet high. As if Kamikazes had something to do with new wave.

This Monday thing was free to get in, and any kind of mixed drinks that were three for dollar sounded good to me, so we decided to go and make fun of their New Wave night. I admit we looked pretty slovenly. Lach and Norman both very thin, like scarecrows in their ill-fitting jeans. And my hand-painted psychedelic t-shirt clashed badly with my scuffed Beatle boots, but so what—we had a single on WNEW. There was a line outside of teenage tarts done up in vinyl and spandex, waiting between velvet ropes, as if Maximus was a real club. And the bouncers—rent-a-cop types: six foot something, bow ties, shoulders like dumptrucks, no necks. The kind of guys that bounce you around the car park for fun.

We heard music seeping out of the doors, and as we get closer, wonder of wonders, we hear a familiar grinding guitar pouring out onto the street. "Electric Boy" is spinning inside on the Maximus turntable. Printed playlists are in a rack outside the club, their "Hot Summer 500." We read down the list, and there we are, blasting in at number 159: "Electric Boy," by Proper Id! We are thrilled, leap about the car park doing air guitar windmills and swagger up to the club. As we start in, a bouncer grabs Lach and says, "You aren't going in like that."

Lach turns around and says, "Hey that's my band playing," pointing at the club's interior where a gaggle of young girls are dancing to our record.

"Yeah, sure it is pal."

Lach is laughing and mad at the same time. "No, it really is. That's 'Electric Boy,' those are my words. And this guy here," he points at Norman who is standing back, looking wary, "Wrote that guitar part. Listen..."

And he starts singing, "I never sleep. I'm electric."

But it's useless. The bouncer never doubts that we're making it all up and so we go home. Compton, our manger, arrives at the house later and we tell him the story. "Well, *this* I have to see," he says. I agree to go with him and change my clothes. This time we get in without any trouble.

And we have a fantastic time. They are playing great music: The New York Dolls, Ramones, Richard Hell, The Damned. And the Kamikazes really are three for a dollar. They're served in beautiful oversized shot glasses (of which I steal a full dozen) and the drinks are strong. Compton always enjoys flashing some money around, so when he sees a bartender loading up a tray of Kamikazes, he asks how much for the whole thing. He buys the

entire tray—all forty-eight glasses—and brings them back to the table. John wasn't much of a drinker so I ended up with more than half, but we went through all of them. I told Compton to take it easy because he had to drive me home. He laughed at me, and over the Dolls' "Personality Crisis" shouted, "Oh these little drinks are *nothing*," then downed another shot.

Within an hour, Compton's system had rejected the "little drinks" and I sat alone in the driver's seat of his white Pinto while he emptied the contents of his stomach over various parts of Route 303 and 9W. We'd stopped on the grass verge and it wasn't long before a police car pulled in behind us. Even though we weren't moving, I was still technically in charge of the car, and drunk, and without a driver's license.

The cops cruised right up beside me, shining the spotlight into my face and asking what was wrong. "Oh good evening, officer," I replied in my most polite English accent. "I'm terribly sorry that we had to stop here. I'm afraid my friend isn't feeling too well, and needed to get some air. I hope we're not causing an obstruction."

"Where you from...Brooklyn?" he yelled back, then together with his partner exploded in laughter.

"Oh no sir, actually I'm from England."

"Oh no shit!" More laughter. "The King's England," he cackled, in the most abysmal imitation of an English accent. "Well jolly good show and all that. Ha ha ha!"

"Oh yes, ha ha," I had a good old laugh with them—the best I could fake anyway—with the stifled sounds of Compton's retching stomach creeping up the hill towards us.

"Well, say hello to the Queen for us then. Ta ta."

"Oh yes, well thanks very much for stopping officer...uh...officers. Good night, I think we'll be fine now."

And off they went into the night, laughing and shouting "Ta ta, pip pip," unaware of the thirty-odd Kamikazes floating through me, and the stolen glasses all over the Pinto's floor.



## THE CASABLANCA GAME

Lach and I love classic movies. Lach once told me that he only rented movies that were made in black and white. In contrast, our old guitarist Norman, was a fan of '80s TV science fiction: *Buck Rogers* and *Battlestar Galactica*. He made sure he had pot for *Galactica*, carefully allocating small piles of weed for particular episodes, and packing them into his hand-carved wooden pipe. In the credits of *Galactica* there is a brief scene where the ship zooms up towards the camera. For a couple of seconds you can almost see into the bridge. Norman always took a hit from his pipe at this particular moment, clutching his lighter with one hand and making a hammering motion with it in the air he'd say "Yes!" and look over to make sure I was watching.

Lach sat upstairs in his room and got high watching Bogart movies. He made a game out of it and it was called The *Casablanca* Game. It began with counting. I once tried to count how many times Fay Wray screams in *King Kong* (and years later, how many people Schwarzenegger kills in *Total Recall*), so I suggested to Lach that next time he watched *Casablanca* he count how many cigarettes Bogart lights up, and how many whiskeys and bottles of champagne are downed by the various characters. It's difficult though, and you have to pay attention, so instead of counting he invented a game. Here are the rules: 1. Rent a copy of *Casablanca* 2. Procure one bottle of Jack Daniels, one bong or pipe, some pot, and one shot glass for each contestant 3. Run the movie 4. Each time an on-screen character lights a cigarette, each contestant takes a hit from the bong 5. Each time someone takes a drink on-screen every contestant does a shot of Jack Daniels 6. Anyone who lasts until the end of the film is considered a winner.



## SOUTHERN COMFORT

I once made the mistake of telling "Baby" Monroe—a singer Lach and Norman had met in Vegas—about the drinking game Quarters. He didn't drink much as he preferred angel dust, but he wanted to try Quarters. The drummer of the Puerto Rican band El Futuro got me into Southern Comfort—a spirit that he sipped carefully by the capful—and for that week it was my favorite drink.

When Monroe and I got back from the liquor store it was dark; other friends had arrived at the Id House and everyone agreed to play. Five or six of us sat on the floor around the circular table I'd found in someone's yard, and tried to bounce a quarter into one of the shot glasses I'd stolen from Maximus (See "The Kamikaze"). Each time you get the quarter in the glass, you get to order a fellow player of your choice to take a shot. I'd learned this game only a week before, but by some fluke I was supremely good at it, dropping my coin in the empty shot glass time after time. I got all my companions roaring drunk, then ordered myself to take shots until we'd emptied the bottle. We followed that with some beers and, feeling in a reckless mood, I proposed a night raid.

Over the pumps in the forecourt of our local gas station hung a tremendous banner that read: "Monroe Shocks and Brakes." I wanted to cut the banner down with wirecutters and use it as decoration for Monroe's room. He'd been in the U.S. Army, and I'd been a Royal Air Force cadet. So, ignoring our friends' warnings we put on our old gear: Monroe's camouflage fatigues, my R.A.F. jumpsuit, and combat boots.

"If this is going to be a real military operation," I shouted at everyone, "Then we have to do this properly." I found an old wine cork in the garbage, which I roasted over the kitchen stove. While blackening my face with it I told Monroe the joke about how he was a "natural born Commando" (from the war movie *Destination Tokyo*, I think) because his skin was so dark. He didn't find it that funny. I pulled a woolen Commando skullcap over my ragged hair and persuaded our friend Don to drive us down in his beaten-up red station wagon. Near the gas station he pulled off the road, turned off the lights, and left us in the high grass. He was nervous and said he didn't want to wait for us. Monroe and I were unconcerned. We waited in the grass until we could see no car lights, then ran across the road and past the local fire station where I noticed an off-duty fireman. I didn't think he'd seen us, but in a moment of prescience I whispered some quick instructions to Monroe about what we should say if we got caught.

We crept up to the deserted station, and hid behind the far pumps as a car drove by. Once its headlights receded I ran across the forecourt and put a milk crate under the banner. I jumped up, cut the first cable with a pair of wirecutters, then rushed back into the shadows when I saw more car lights approaching. This car came on quickly and pulled into the gas station right in front of us. Police lights flashed and Monroe and I dashed behind the station where two more police cars appeared, lights and sirens blazing. Cops jumped out of the cars, told us to freeze, handcuffed us and took us in separate cars back to the station where we were interrogated. From the beginning I put on my most ridiculous working-class English accent. "Me mate and me woz 'avin an argument about which woz better, yer English army or yer American army, an we got a bit carried away wif it all." The room behind my interrogator was full of officers watching a Civil War mini-series called *The Blue and the Grey*. "Oh yeah, you're watchin' that too," I commented, nodding at the screen as my hands were still cuffed. The mini-series had been playing silently in the background while we were playing Quarters.

"Oh I get it," the officer smiled. "You and your buddy were up there watching *The Blue and the Grey*, havin' a few drinks

and it got you all riled up about yer army days."

"Yeah, roit. That's it egzactly."

Incredibly, Monroe remembered what I'd whispered to him earlier and told a similar story. It seemed we might be released. I was told to stand up and had my cuffs taken off. I thought we were going to be okay. And then they searched my jumpsuit, finding wirecutters, a hacksaw and a bunch of other tools that looked just like the kind of thing you'd use for breaking and entering.

Before they even asked I blurted out, "Oh them's fer me brother's motorbike. 'Ee can't fix it, so 'ee asked me if I'd...you know... 'ave a look at it. I musta forgot ta take me tools outta me overalls." I smiled, and they smiled, and were perfectly happy with my lame explanation. Luckily they didn't want to see the motorcycle because we didn't have one.

In a brutish way the police seemed almost to take a liking to us, and after we told them where we lived and they said, "Oh, *that* place" we felt quite famous. Monroe and I even got a ride home in the squad car, which led to the best moment of the evening.

As Lach later related it to me, he, Mark, and Norman were enjoying a few joints in the front room, when the trees surrounding the house were illuminated by red and white lights. Norman got up to see what was happening and started shouting, "It's the police, we're being raided!" Instant panic followed: much rushing around, fanning of smoke, hiding of evidence, and flushing illegal substances down the toilet. When the door opened and we walked in, our roommates were all sitting there breathless but trying to look calm.

There was a moment of silence, and then Norman whispered to me, "Careful, the police are outside."

"We know. They just dropped us off."

We quickly told them what had happened and assured them that there would be no raid. Lach's expression turned from astonishment to mirth, and then finally to anger.

"Shit! You bastards!" He shouted. "Do you realize how much pot I just flushed down the toilet?"



## MARIJUANA

Rent on the band house and our few acres of scrub woodland ran \$800; cheap by New York City standards, but we were hard put to come up with the cash. Our landlords were not thrilled to have musicians as tenants and they were not happy when the rent came late. To meet our rent, we sublet parts of the house. My art studio—a lovely glassed-in sunroom with a flagstone floor—became home to our friend "Baby" Monroe, and he introduced us to Arthur, a frightening-looking man with crooked teeth who seemed much too thin. He moved into our dark and foul-smelling basement. A wrecking company took over the garage.

People came and went all day: our manager, our producer, their girlfriends, the band's girlfriends, kids from the local college and high school. They'd often want to get high, or stay over, or both. We owned a number of valuable guitars, and even though I'd appointed myself house security chief and nailed all the windows shut, our house could not be called safe. We were also painfully visible in the sedate Hasidic community, especially since Monroe and Arthur were the only black men in town. When Monroe and I were arrested one night (see "Southern Comfort"), and gave our address as 12 College Road, the officers looked at each other knowingly and said, "Oh, *that* place."

The police took an interest in the loud house with the musicians in it, so Mark K.—our other guitarist, stocky, broad-shouldered, and prone to incandescent flights of rage—and I made two rules: doors to stay locked at night, and no dealing drugs out of the house. Naively, I believed our "no dealing" rule was being



followed, and that the people who stopped by during the night were just being friendly. In reality, our basement became one of the main stop-and-cops in the area.

Mark lived on the ground floor. A light sleeper who suffered from severe migraines, he was the one most easily disturbed by late-night visitors, of which there were many.

One night, well past 2 a.m., a loud series of crashes and shouts woke me up. Cautiously, I tip-toed down the narrow curving staircase to the dark front room, which doubled as rehearsal studio and living room. At first all seemed normal. I could see the warm flicker of candles from under Mark's door, and so tapped on it lightly. "Mark," I whispered. "What's going on?" No answer. I turned on the main lights. The front door had come mostly off its hinges, its central frame knocked out, and shattered glass lay all over the floor. The door almost fell off when I opened it. I looked outside from the porch, but saw no one. Reasonably satisfied that I wasn't in any immediate danger, I went back to an uneasy sleep.

In the morning Mark seemed more somber than usual, hunched over his breakfast, and poking at it with a bandaged hand. He'd been awakened in the middle of the night, he told me, by a persistent hammering. He put on a bathrobe, opened the front door (for once it was actually locked), and teetering outside found the drunk and antagonistic singer of a local hardcore band. He tried to push Mark aside, muttering that he had to see the basement. Mark pushed him back out, and asked him to go away. Our visitor persisted, saying over and over that he needed to get to the basement. Mark's temper took over; he grabbed the singer by his spikey blond hair and repeatedly pounded his head against the door with such force that it woke me up, and caused the damage that I later discovered.

Then we had a house meeting. Anyone who came to our house looking for pot, Mark explained with his face red and big fists clenched, could expect the same treatment as the hardcore singer.

Meanwhile, Arthur had been hard at work with his new income. He'd laid down a carpet and bought some nice furniture. The basement was suddenly attractive; we might even start hanging downstairs, we thought. Two days later a freak storm came and the basement flooded. I slunk down the rickety stairs and perched and stared in wonder as Arthur's shattered furniture (and probably a good deal of pot) floated peacefully around in several feet of water. The water drained out after a couple of weeks, but I never saw Arthur again. It's possible that he went down with the ship.



## WINE

The main problem in the band house—apart from rent money—was the price of wine. I had no car, and the one liquor store within walking distance was not cheap. Come fall, my girlfriend and I decided to save money by making our own wine. I was reading Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*, and it so happened that my *Farmhouse Cookbook* had a recipe for dandelion wine. Lach watched without offering to help as Maureen and I scoured our yard and the yards of our neighbors for dandelions. We collected hundreds. Then we pulled off the thousands of yellow petals—as the stalk and stamen are toxic—and threw them into a pot of boiling water, sugar and

orange peel. Lach said more than once that the resulting mixture would probably kill Maureen and me, but that if we were still okay in a few weeks, he would be happy to try some.

As each batch cooled, we poured it into empty jars and bottles. The largest was a hefty two litre Gallo jug, made of thick green glass which Maureen and I left on the floor of my bedroom as we enjoyed an evening smoke after our long and busy day.

During the night I was awakened by an apocalyptic sound which, I felt certain, could only have been caused by the collapse of my own ceiling. I sat up in bed and found a cold and wet object under my hand. I knew something terrible had happened, and turned on the little bedside light. Maureen opened her eyes and I showed her the jagged piece of green glass that had landed on the pillow right next to her face.

"Where the hell did this come from?" I asked her.

"I don't know. What is it?"

"It's a really big piece of broken glass." She took it from me and lay there staring at it.

I climbed out of bed, and inspected the room. The ceiling had not fallen in. At first nothing seemed disturbed, but I was puzzled by a pile of very fine powder—what appeared to be powdered glass—on my floor. I turned on the overhead light, and looked around the room in wonder. The walls and ceiling were pocked and scored with dozens of pieces of glass shrapnel, some of them embedded half an inch or more into the wood and plaster.

After a while there came a soft tapping at my door. Lach's bedroom was opposite mine; he'd also been woken up by the racket.

"What happened?" he asked.

"Um...I think we've had an explosion." I pointed to the glass fragments lodged in the ceiling, and also in various prints and posters on my walls.

"How did that happen?" He looked concerned. "Oh shit." He lifted one foot off the ground, and pulled a sharp sliver of glass out of his sole. "There's broken glass on your floor."

"Well...I guess it was the wine that we were making."

"The wine exploded?"

"Yeah, I guess so. We left it there." I pointed at the pile of glass dust. "And now we can't find the bottle."

"Well, I think that's the bottle, or what's left of it in your ceiling," he waved his hand over his head. "The valve must have stuck."

I looked at Maureen. "There's no valve. It was just a big wine bottle with a screw-on cap."

Lach shook his head. "What do you think happens when stuff ferments?"

"The sugar turns to alcohol," I said proudly.

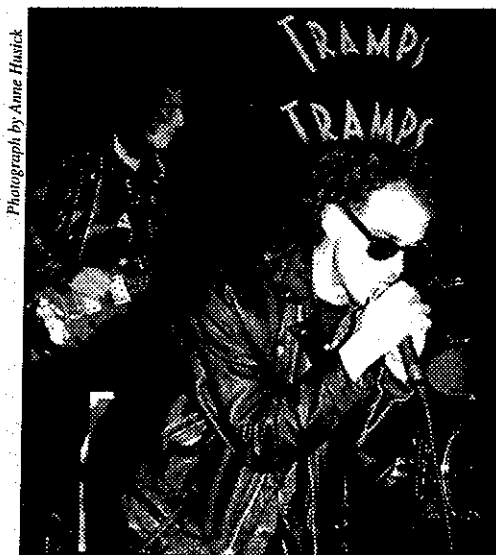
"And?"

I pretended to think for a minute, feeling stupid about giving the right answer. "Um... I guess it gives off gas."

"Yeah, it gives off gas, which is why the bottle is now all over your room. You're lucky you weren't sitting next to it, when it exploded. You would have been cut to ribbons."

"Yes!" I exclaimed. "And we were sitting right there all evening, weren't we?" I asked Maureen.

"And look at this!" I said, pointing at her hand. She was still holding the large chunk that had landed in the bed next to her. "Look what landed on our pillow!"



Lach and Norman at the infamous Tramps show

Photograph by Anne Hawick

He shook his head again, and started back to his room. "I told you that stuff was going to kill you," he muttered. And then when he got to his door he turned around. "Make sure you put those other bottles somewhere far away. Far away from you *and* me."

"Oh, yeah, good idea."

We put the surviving bottles into a cupboard with a solid wooden door, and went back to bed.



### COCAINE

We once had a manager who was a cocaine dealer, although we didn't realize it at the beginning. I got on very well with him, and as he had a car with an excellent stereo, we often went driving around Rockland at night.

He'd heard of a new club over in Mount Vernon, called the Left Bank, and decided that we should go over there on a business trip.

The Left Bank had once been a real bank. A magnificent three-story granite building, it had wide stone steps and an airy high-ceilinged interior. Our manager could be quite charming when he wanted, and after presenting a business card at the door, he asked if we might possibly meet with the club's agent. Yes it would be possible. We were ushered down into the basement to one of the most hi-tech set-ups I'd ever seen. A line of monitors were hooked up to video cameras positioned all over the club, together with a full soundboard and racks of recording equipment. Some senior member of the staff explained that they were experimenting with live recording; they could both record and view any of the shows from where we were standing.

Well, our manager got right down to business. His band was "just right" for this kind of sophisticated club, he said, and would anyone like to do a few lines? Everyone's eyes lit up at this suggestion, although they said it wasn't cool to do it down there. Out came some keys, and we marched up two flights of cut stone steps which took us high above the dance floor. The upper levels were completely deserted, a shadowy area of abandoned offices and cold corridors. Someone unlocked a bathroom and the whole gang tramped inside. "Now, I know there's gotta be a mirror in here somewhere," the man with the keys said.

"Well what about that one?" Somebody pointed at a huge mirror that ran most of the length of the bathroom. I laughed, but our manager jumped at the suggestion, "Oh yeah, good idea. Here let me get out my Swiss Army knife."

And so this mirror, which would not have looked out of place in the First Class Ladies' Powder Room on board the S.S. *Queen Mary*, was removed from the wall by many pairs of hands, and laid out across the row of antique sinks. After a few lines, the staff of the Left Bank were suddenly full of affection and admiration for our manager. They'd *love* to hear the band, they said, we could play there "anytime...maybe next weekend!"

Our manager was pleased with how this worked so he kept on doing it, first with clubs and then with radio stations. He met DJs and turned them on to a few lines. Then he invited himself to their shows with a copy of "Electric Boy" and plenty of cocaine.

At first nobody minded because, after all, we *were* getting air-play. But later, when we were being heard with some regularity on WNEW, PLJ, and other important stations, I had second thoughts. Friends would call up and say, "Geoff, we heard you on the radio today!" And I would wonder if we were on the air because our single was good, or because our manager was sitting in a control room somewhere cutting up lines with the DJ.



### BEER

Once, Proper Id got a show at Tramps. It was a big deal. Our first album, *Contender*, had just come out and we were getting some good press.

During the soundcheck, Tramps' manager told us that we could have a full case of Becks on the house. Lach and Norman were both the type to have a couple of beers and maybe a shot before the show. They didn't drink to excess, so I didn't worry when they offered to stay and watch the equipment. With three hours to kill Jon and I went to the movies. When we returned they had both disappeared. About half an hour before showtime, Lach burst in on his own, laughing.

"Where's Norman?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. We went to Big Bar for some whiskey and I lost him."

When Norman did stagger in he wanted the case of Becks in which there were now only five bottles.

"Where's the rest of the beer?" I asked.

Lach and Norman put their arms around each other, swaying and grinning. "We drank it."

"Oh great. This will be an interesting show."

It's almost time to play and our producer, Tom Goodkind, arrives. I see that he's brought several celebrity friends, including Blondie drummer Clem Burke which thrills me, as he's one of my all-time favorite musicians. The slick intro we've been rehearsing doesn't happen because Norman crashes into his amp and the pickup falls out of Lach's guitar. They find this very funny, and shamble around stage for a while before deciding they're ready to do a song.

The show begins disastrously. Lach delivers a surrealistic monologue about John F. Kennedy, and we mess up the beginnings and endings of several songs. But by mid-set, we're into our long reggae piece, "Id Dub," things are finally settling down, and I'm trying to remove the scowl from my face. "Id Dub" is largely carried by Norman's complex lead part, but some way through the song Norman removes his guitar, runs across the stage at full speed, jumps into the audience and disappears. We continue playing along without him, wondering what to do. A few minutes go by, and there is some motion far back in the audience. It's Norman pushing his way to the stage. He jumps up, puts on his guitar and, with the band still playing, goes up to the microphone and says, "Hah! Sorry about that I really had to take a piss." He sits down in the far corner of the stage, curled up between a big flight case and the drumkit. With his guitar in his lap and his right side to the bewildered audience, he finishes the rest of the set without looking up.

Mercifully there is no encore and we all run downstairs to hide. I am furious with Lach and Norman, and blow up in the dressing room. Tom leaves—in disgust I imagine—taking Clem Burke with him. "Do you realize," I shout at my dazed bandmates, and the assorted friends who have collected there. "That one of the musicians I respect *most* in the world was here to witness this debacle? I was embarrassed to be on stage with you idiots!"

The next day I watch the video and incomprehensibly it doesn't seem so bad. I phone Norman and he is mad at *me* because of my outburst in the dressing room. I call Tom to apologize and tell him how dreadful I feel that Clem Burke was subjected to such a circus. He says, "Oh Clem really liked the band. He just said, 'Man, the bassplayer really needs to lighten up.'"



### NITROUS OXIDE

We knew that in the supermarket there was a lot of nitrous oxide—laughing gas, it's what the dentist gives you. My friend Rob said doing nitrous is like having an air conditioner in your head. The nitrous in the supermarket was expensive because it lived inside cans of Ready Whip. When you make a cake and shake that Ready Whip, the thing that makes the whipped cream come out is nitrous oxide. I was skeptical, but it says so on the can.

The supermarket stayed open twenty-four hours. Sometimes somebody would want to get high but didn't have any pot, so they'd drive down to the supermarket at, say, one or two in the morning to get some nitrous. Those nitrous cans cost about \$3.49 each and didn't hold much gas. It wasn't worth it to pay for them so the guys would get a shopping cart and pick up some cereal and maybe some bread and about six cans of Ready Whip. They'd poodle around shaking a Ready Whip can and as they turned a corner they'd put the nozzle up against their lips—being careful to hold the thing upright, tilt the red cone to one side and *fssshwwooooom!* Fill up your lungs with cold sweet-smelling gas. Sometimes you got a little whipped cream in your mouth too, which could be pretty disgusting, but still worth it. And then the air conditioner when *wuh-wuh-wuh-woooooom* in your head for about thirty seconds and the supermarket got all glassy and flat and out of focus. And then suddenly you were back in the frozen produce aisle which was a good place to dump the gassed-out can and start shaking up another one.



### THE MARTINI

Lach doubled as bartender and M.C. at the Chameleon, a small and cozy club on East Sixth Street. The Chameleon's popular open mic predated Sidewalk's Antihoot by several years—the ancestor of Sidewalk's antifolk scene. A long bar ran the length of the narrow room, and above the miniature stage in back hung a large screen TV which Lach used for his movie theme nights. Every Monday he showed a *Thin Man* detective classic, and served up experimental Martinis to match William Powell and Myrna Loy's constant intake of cocktails.

Before all this began, Lach telephoned to ask me about Martinis. When we'd first met in Boston in 1980, he was impressed by the private bar in my dorm room. "Geoff was the first person of my age group I'd ever met that had a complete bar in his room," he often remarked. "And I mean *complete*. Other people had ice cream or beer or peanut butter in those dorm refrigerators, but his was full of lemons and limes and mixers. And bottles of liquor all over the place. I'd go over to his room, and right away he'd say, 'Lach how about a Harvey Wallbanger,' or 'Lach how about a Blue Lagoon?'"

I gave Lach what marginal advice I could about Martinis and so, every Tuesday, he called to give me a report. After several weeks he had "got it just right," and said I should stop by the club and try one.

The next week he screened *The Thin Man Goes Home*—my favorite *Thin Man* movie—so I got there early went right down after work in fact, so I could slide into the right frame of mind before the movie began. Lach was a bartender with charisma. He ran the bar and the live music and wanted everyone to know it, but he poured cocktails—especially mine—with a kind of wide-eyed excitement and delight that made drinking seem like a schoolboy treat. He made a big show of rattling the silver mixer, carefully picked olives for my glass, stepped back, folded his arms, grinned and waited. It was a good Martini (he later won a "Best of New York" award for it). "Do I know how to make a Martini or what?" he beamed.

"Indeed you do. Please give me another."

The movie started, but after several Martinis I got impatient. Lach saw me drumming my hands on the bar.

"I thought you wanted to see this movie," he whispered.

"I did, but now I'm bored."

"Okay, I've got something to show you."

He went to the back room and returned with his arms full of Hot Wheels cars and racing tracks. "Look! I got all these for five bucks from a bum on Saint Marks."

Customers were ordered to clear everything off the counter: glasses, plates, candles, coasters, and we assembled a race course from the ramshackle and mismatched pieces of track. It ran the whole length of the bar. At the starting line we piled books and audio components into a tower, chose our cars and began a loud and frantic series of bets and races, annoying customers who were watching *The Thin Man Goes Home*. Lach was the only bartender, and so all service stopped. "Best of five races!" became "Best of ten!" With each run we made the circuit more difficult, adding loops, fire jumps (over burning tabletop candle pots), and finally removed the last track loop, so each car rocketed off the end of the bar and skittered madly across the floor.

"We're going to show *Le Mans* and *Grand Prix* next week!" I roared. "Forget the *Thin Man* movies, we need racing movies."

But disturbed customers were now asking for drinks. Lach nodded and said, "Okay Geoff, this is to decide the championship..."

We poured brandy onto two of our surviving cars, and set fire to them as some new customers opened the door. They were met by a pair of flaming metal toys hurtling off the end of the track, one crashing into the wall and one flying out of the open door and into the street beyond.

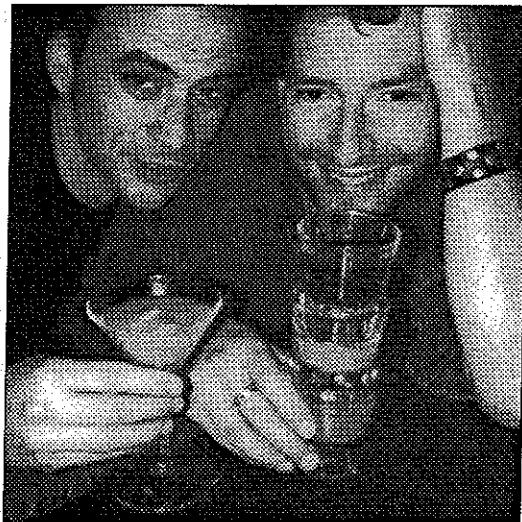
"Yes! The clear winner," Lach yelled out, throwing his arms up in the air. "The champion!"

The new arrivals gaped at the yards of yellow track covering the bar, and at a candle pot where one of my red Mustangs had landed, and where it now perched, blackened, smoldering, and smelling vile in a puddle of roasting wax and plastic.

"Don't worry, it's just a little free

entertainment," Lach beamed, swaying slightly, having consumed almost as many Martinis as I had. "How about a race? Racing comes free with your Martini."

The movie continued quietly in the background.



*Just like old times: Lach teaches Sidewalk's bartender how to make me a Stop Light*



### THE STOP LIGHT

Lach decided to create his own cocktail. No bartender could be a truly *great* bartender, he said, until he'd invented an original cocktail of his own. And so began a program of experimentation in which I was often a willing guinea pig.

Lach and I made a deal: I recorded punk and reggae compilation tapes for him, and in exchange I drank for free, and listened to my own music over Chameleon's sound system. I also tried out the new cocktails.

He went for color not content, and I tested some fairly horrible things that looked interesting, but were not the kind of thing you'd want to put in your stomach. The Spock's Brain was not bad—a frozen, smokey blue thing with cold vapor coming off

it—but it wasn't original *enough*. The solution turned out to be multiple glasses. Three shot glasses lined up on the bar, the first filled with Midori—the bright green melon liqueur, the second with vodka and orange juice, and the last with vodka and cranberry. Green, yellow, and red, it was named The Stop Light, and you had to drink them fast, as fast as traffic lights change color.

For some weeks I went to Chameleon and asked for Stop Lights. "Are you sure you're up to it?" Lach would ask. "There's a lot of alcohol in these. It's *three* drinks you know."

"Yes, yes, I know, now let's go."

I vaguely remember—after one night of drinking Stop Lights—loading my pockets with a bartender's corkscrew, empty glasses and various other things that I imagined would make good Chameleon souvenirs.

Floating down Ninth Street with my date, I stood at the corner of University watching the lights change, thinking about the shot glasses on the bar, counting the number of seconds it took for the lights to run a full pattern. And I thought of my old drummer, remembered him doing a similar thing (see "LSD"), shook myself out of my trance and hurried home with wet glasses clinking in my pockets.



#### LSD

Our drummer wanted to take acid. He was very straight and it might not have been a good idea. But he had his mind made up, so Lach told him all about LSD, how it affected the way you thought and felt; that it was important to remain calm and comfortable because you'd see things and feel things that you'd never seen or felt before. Jon listened only half-heartedly thinking, I guess, that it couldn't be all that different from getting high on pot or beer.

Jon put the tiny purple capsule under his tongue and waited.

"Nothing's happening."

"It'll take a while Jon," Lach said.

Norman handed him a joint. "Here Jon, have a hit off of this while you're waiting."

Norman collected sound effects records, and from them had cobbled together some kind of tape loop with the ambient sound of a starship on it—a faint background rumble that made you think of big engines firing many decks below. He ran a cable from this tape loop to all the guitar amps around the house, and turned down the lights so that wherever you went it felt like you were on a spaceship.

Much later somebody asked where Jon was. We looked all around the house—and with the darkness and the spaceship noises to confuse us that took a long time—but we couldn't find him. It was a warm summer night, so we got some folding chairs and sat out on the raised brick patio in front of our house, with rhododendron bushes everywhere and big elm trees overhead. Once in a while a car went by, but mostly it was very quiet. We were a little worried about Jon, but tried not to think about him too much.

The rhododendron bushes looked like elephant's ears and they kept waving madly in the wind. Then I noticed that there wasn't any wind. The leaves kept waving though, for a very long time, like trees in the forest when a big animal is coming through, and I felt pretty sure that something big would be coming out of the bushes soon and that it might get us.

"I think there's something moving in those bushes down there," Lach said. And I was really glad he'd seen it because of course I could have just been imagining it.

"I saw it too," I said. "I think it's an animal."

"Are there any dangerous animals in Rockland?"

Nobody knew for sure, but Mark went to get a big stick just in case.

One of the branches broke right off. We heard it snap, and so we *knew* there was something big down there. I wanted to get out of my chair and run inside, but I couldn't move. Another branch broke, and the rhododendrons closest to us parted and down below us, looking up from the dark flower beds we saw our drummer. He looked very pale, but desperately relieved to see us, like someone who's been rescued from certain death.

"Oh...I'm so glad I found you...*finally*," he said. We helped him up onto the brick patio, and he fell into a chair. "The world...it's changing out there," he said. "I've seen every color."

"Jon," Lach sat down next to him. "We were worried about you. Are you okay?"

"I've *seen* them change."

"Where were you?"

"Down there." He pointed to the corner beyond the trees where our street intersected with Route 59. "I watched them...watched the lights change. Green to yellow...and red and...and when they change...the whole world changes with them."

"And what else Jon, what else were you doing?"

"Watching the world change."

"All this time? It's been hours."

"But I came back because of my mother. I have to let her know I'm okay. I took acid but I'm okay. I have to tell her I'm okay. She's worried."

Mark looked at his watch and shook his head. "Jon, it's after three in the morning. If you call your mother now, you'll wake her up. Then she *will* be worried."

"No, I have to let her know I'm okay."

Lach kept Jon talking while Mark and I went inside, where we disconnected both the phones and locked them in Mark's room. When we got back, Jon had forgotten about his mother.

"My drums!" he stood up, his face all bright with excitement. "I have to see my drums."

In the rehearsal room Jon got down on his knees and stared at the shells of the drums he'd played on for years, as if he'd never seen them before. "Just look at the *surface* of these drums!" Slowly he moved his hands all over them, and put his ear against the wood, as if there might be something to hear inside.

And then he started taking them apart. He took every drum and stand, and every nut and bolt and turnkey and washer apart—hundreds and hundreds of pieces and lay them all out on the floor according to size, starting with the smallest.

We sat with him for the first hour to make sure he was okay, but he didn't seem to need any company, so we left him with his drums and went back to our pretend spaceship. ▲



Photograph by Anne Husick

The way we were, 1990: Lach, Norman, Jon and Geoff

# Literary Paranoia

by Seth A. Doolin

I think I've been reading too much Raymond Chandler lately.

I got the idea while I was nursing a martini in the tepid water of the tub, listening to the rain batter against the windowsill. The rain was breaking up the mugginess of August with the speed of a drug bust in the Lower East Side.

I started reading Chandler to break up the monotony of psychiatric journals and Buddhist texts last summer. Ever since I've been replacing the telling signs of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Involuntary Motor Tics of my fellow straphangers and coffee shops denizens with suspicious motives and indications of conspiratorial activity. Even the busboys look like they're too conscious of bussing tables to look like ordinary busboys.

Literary paranoia starts early. Freud taught me to look beyond the ordinary appearance of dream symbolism, to look past the facade of polite speech and look for the secondary gain of the speaker. Behind every greeting is a dagger, behind every response an urge to satisfy or gratify, be it sex, money, or power, all simply forms of perversion.

After Freud, Jung taught me that there was a wealth of history behind the symbol, and that the symbol was a symbol of something within the seer.

After Jung I broke with the rule bound psychoanalysts and joined the ranks of the anarchic surrealists, who never uttered the holy mantra of "Trust No One", yet it was clear within the margins of every besmirched page of clashing associations and iconoclastic totems. The surrealists taught me to distrust the symbol as merely symbol, one that could be supplanted with yet another. As a cigar could stand in for a penis, a fish or bicycle could do equally as well and mean just as little. It was the act of rebellion itself that was meaningful.

Trust no one.

Watch the eyes of everyone at the bar.

Look past the bottom of your glass of scotch and notice telltale signs of secret handshakes and clandestine greetings.

The tenuous hold of a glance.

A wink.

A nod.

Trust no one.

The watchwords of Burroughs, now dead.

Burroughs would have one looking into the depths of every cabinet, draining the toilet tank for evidence of the Nova Mob. Hamburger Mary was here. To say that Burroughs invented conspiracy theory is to say that Manson was somewhat unorthodox.

So after my literary meanderings I cool my eyeballs with mind candy. I pick up a book by Chandler because I've heard Jim Carroll and Lou Reed drone on about him.

After the first thirty or so pages I notice I become more aware of a rainslicked street.

I start to notice femme fatales at the end of the bar.

I start to grind out cigarettes under my shoe heel as I hesitate to answer a ringing phone.

I start to cultivate the atmosphere of emptiness in large rooms with breezes moving curtains as I check to make certain there are no shoes attached to the legs of henchmen behind them.



I start to brood wordlessly while nursing martinis in the tepid water of the tub while listening to the battering of August rain outside my window.

I start to see the streets in black and white and hats on everybody who walks by. The inside of my eyelids become colored by Edward Hopper and muted trumpets burn gently behind my ears.

I feel my head stinging from nonexistent run-ins with gun toting thugs and find myself calling in to my office and telling them I want off the case.

"What case?" the receptionist replies through her gum.

"Never mind, doll" I mumble. "I'm coming in to square with the Old Man."

"How much coffee had you had today, Seth?"

"Not enough to wipe away the smile on that mug."

I am making less and less sense and they usually hang up on me.

I have one more Chandler book to go before having read everything he wrote.

I found the book slid under my door one morning when the rain was lifting like the veil on an ugly bride.

Footsteps followed the book, but they moved the other way down the hall, and drifted off down the stairs.

By the time I could scoop my head up from my gin soaked pillow and open the door onto my toe all I could see was a head bobbing past the front hallway and out the double glass door.

Outside my window the head slid into a waiting car and pulled away down the wet streets, pulling my consciousness with it.

I picked up the package wrapped in brown paper and sank back onto the davenport. Shaky fingers unwrapped to reveal "Playback", Chandler's last work.

I heard he wrote it while drunk.

I got a clean glass from the dishrack and prepared myself to give myself the same handicap.

It's only fair to give the man a sporting chance.

I think I've been reading too much Raymond Chandler lately.



# Sunday Night Schmorgasborg

## {or is it "Schmorgasbord"??}

Hi, it's Steve Espinola, here. I run the sound mixer on Sunday nights at the Fort. Why? Because Sunday nights are the weirdest and best!

My friends have accused me of liking everything I hear. Not true At All! I'm actually a pretty critical guy; I just react strongly to the stuff I do like, and say nice things about it. There is obviously a tremendous amount of pure crap out there. And a fair chunk of it shows up at the Fort, as everywhere. I've been at Antihoots that were so bad that I actually put down my head and cried. And I've been at Antihoots and shows at the Fort that were so good that I cried, too.

I do believe that an unusually large percentage of the good music happening in this city is happening at the Fort. More than you could ever take in; more than the existing radio formats could ever find room for; more quirky, honest, unslick, and original than most record labels would be willing to take a chance on.

I don't think the overall quality here is accidental. I figure it's been working like this: In a city of several million people, there are certainly bound to be enough really talented, unique artists to fill a few Forts. The ones who are ready to find a community of like-minded songwriters are likely to find out about the communities that do exist. And Lach, having a strong personality, strong aesthetic, and the stomach to wade through a ton of shitty demo tapes to find the gems, has acted as a

lightning rod for the community of songwriters I find the most interesting. I don't agree with all his booking decisions. I certainly like lots of stuff he doesn't, and am unmoved by some of his apparent faves. But he does a better job of it than anyone else I've ever come across. I certainly like the diversity of the community he helps create, better than the one I would tend to create, or be able to create, myself.

Here's another little tangent. As I see it, one tragedy of this scene is this: It's precisely the process producing the high quality of this music that has doomed it, so far, to obscurity. A lot of less talented people are devoting their time to self-promoting their underdeveloped, bland product into successful careers. The songwriters here tend to work oppressive day jobs; they devote their limited free time to writing superior stuff, not promoting it. Or, their music matters so much to them that they can't bear to put it out there on a larger scale and see it fail. Or, if particularly lucky, they are still such control freaks that they botch commercial opportunities. We're a community of self-damaging perfectionists. I think we should figure out how to fix that, and win.

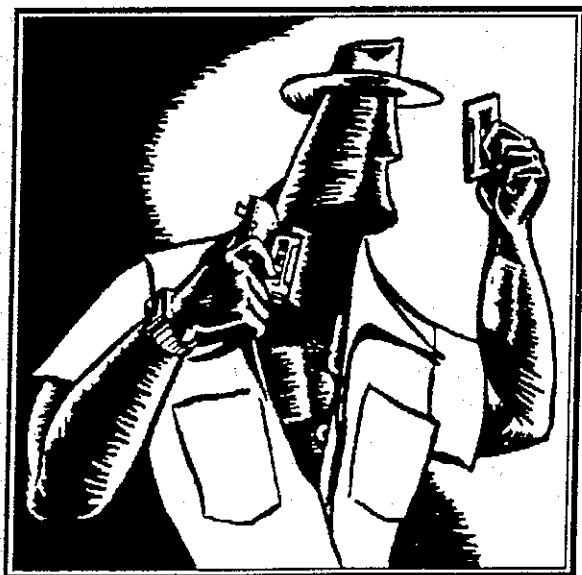
Enough of that. Here's another installment of my report on the best of the particularly strange stuff Lach books on the last night of your weekend.

Sunday 9/14/97

Once again, you shoulda been there. First, Eletfa, the world's most rocking Hungarian string band, played for over an hour to their typically packed house. This time they had a special guest: János Csík, probably the world's best Hungarian folk violinist. Audience members came up and performed that weird, twitching Hungarian dancing that involves slapping one's ankles a whole lot while singing beautiful melodies in apparent backwards gibberish. (Hey! Don't shoot me! I'm part Hungarian! I'm allowed to say that!)

Then came Scott Wilson's Foreign Legion. Scott played a bizarre, homemade 3-necked electric instrument, 1/3 Saz, 1/2 Bazouki, 1/3 Oud (three traditional middle eastern lutes). His percussionist (missed her name) rocked out in 7/4 time while Scott played old Arabic folk songs and strange Anti-Folkish originals. Then a fleshy, full-bodied, very sexy belly dancer named Cameo came out for the last 15 minutes of the set, and twisted, artfully, to the delight of the still-assembled, mostly Hungarian audience. Scott cried out "Now, everybody dance!" and plowed into Hava Nagila, at which point the front room was filled with drunken Hungarians circle dancing and singing with joyous abandon. I had to pinch myself and ask, "Is this really the Fort?!!!"

Jessica Kane followed, as she does every other Sunday night at 10:00. She looks completely different every time she plays. Last time she was a lipstick vamp in a gold wig, making up "Therapy Songs" to order. This time her hair was frizzy, and she wore glasses and reflective golden jungle pants. While Jerome Rossen played piano in a bewildering number of styles, Jessica improvised amazing songs which I will, sadly, never get to hear again. The highlight, for me, was this surreal boast,



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sung at a bewildered woman who had just walked in: "I could tie your shoelaces with my asshole/Cause that's the kinda bitch I am!"

A truly magical night.

Other performers you should check out:

Idrees --He's a one-man jazz-funk band. If he doesn't get a following quick, he's liable to leave town, and that would be everyone's loss. Using a bunch of delay and octave pedals, he improvises terrific, danceable riffs, then he solos over them 'til the cows come home, literally. Once he starts, I never want him to stop, so I've let him play pretty darn late if he's the last act. Apparently, he's had trouble getting gigs at other places because no one believes he's doing it all live. He's brilliant. See him. Bring a date, or something.

Tammy Faye Starlight -- The Sidewalk Cafe is regularly blessed with the presence of this country music legend, unfairly blacklisted from the history books. Why the ban from the hallowed halls of Nashville? Perhaps it is her tendency towards controversial subject matter and views: Menstruation (her song "Ride the Cotton Pony"); a strong anti-drug-but-pro-farm-bestiality stance ("We Love Animals"); and her classic tract on The issue, "God Has Lodged a Tenant in My Uterus". While she may be familiar to Fort regulars as one half of the Kuntry Kuzzins, I give the edge to her performances fronting the Angels of Mercy, featuring various Nashville pros, one who looks and sounds much like the stellar Billy Ficca on drums.

Stretch --I loved Stretch as a guy-with-guitar act, but Stretch as a band is even more wonderful. They're a power pop trio: Sort of Led Zeppelin riffs with honey-voiced melodies on

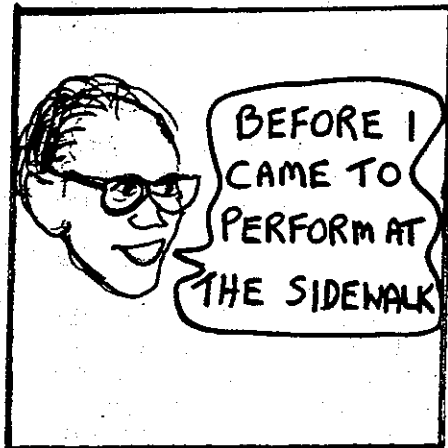
top. Nothing earthshakingly innovative in terms of their sound; but they do their sound so well, hung on such good, brave songs, that I was haunted for the whole next day, having been one of only a handful of people to see their act on a slow Sunday night. They deserve pop immortality for "The Pull", which goes something like "The thing which pulls you to me/Will push you away someday". The tune and lyrics are gorgeous and melancholic, until suddenly an apocalyptic bridge shows up with the singer howling about a coming plague of insects; then back in the hypnotic chorus. It shouldn't make sense, but, boy, it does. "Carol" is a standout, too: The singer threatens to sic his brother on a slimeball for making Carol cry. Yeah, that's rock 'n' roll!

Lee Chabowski --He's a true poet of morbidity. Not just anyone would think of describing a jump off a tall building as "your voyage to the bottom of the sky". He plays acoustic surf guitar and dishes out stories of bad-luck shrunken heads, junior high bullies getting their gruesome comeupance, ghost surfers and clown killers.

The songs are paced remarkably well. Each verse brings a new twist to his plots, and his lyric hooks often change meaning over the course of several verses. (Thanks to Dina Dean for pointing that out.) There's something humble and sweet about his delivery that makes the subject matter even more jarring, even funnier. Check him out. You'll laugh, you'll feel great, you'll maybe leave a little more or less scared about scary things.

So, come by the Fort on Sundays. Strange things happen. Little Oscar sings while playing drums with his back to the audience. Other things I can't even tell you without getting in trouble. See ya soon.

## STORIES FROM THE SIDEWALK © 1997 by Andrew McCann



## Acts of Necessity: The Mark Humble Interview by Penner MacBryant

A learned man whose name escapes me for the moment once stated that a person cannot hope to grow fully if he or she doesn't learn how to dance properly with life's ironies. Not simply deal, mind you but dance properly. If this is indeed the case, I can't think of a musical candidate more delightfully suited to the task of teaching us how to truly appreciate the existential two step as well as our wisest forebearers did than Mark Humble. This reporter had the opportunity to interview the man long considered to be among the Fort's wittiest singer/songwriters.

PM: You've been a fixture on the Anti Folk scene now for years. How and when exactly did your involvement with Anti Folk begin?

MH: I first moved down to St. Mark's Place in 1988, and I went to open mics at a place called The Chameleon. Lach was running them around the fall of that year. I was there for a couple of months, sort of checking the place out and I liked it. I wasn't hanging out there for a while and then I came back the following spring and I really started spending a lot of time there. I liked the place so much that I wanted to get more involved. So what I began to do was to bring down my own microphones and stuff because the sound system there was just awful. So I volunteered my services as a sound man. At that point, the way the Chameleon was set up was sort of like the Hotel Galvez' performance area. It was a narrow room with a stage at the end of it and a bar. Lach wasn't the MC. He was sort of the overseer of the night. He'd sign people up.

PM: Your songs seem quirkily sophisticated ironic even bleakly humorous lyrics set against well structured melodies that still leave room for poignancy. How does the process happen for you?

MH: I like to try to come up with a song that's got a good Lyric and a good tune. I think one thing about that is that sometimes I can be a little bit too hard on myself and I can hesitate to perform a song that's done. I always write the music first

PM: I was about to ask you

MH: For me I'd say it's almost always music first. Sometimes I've written words first or I've set music to words that someone else has written. But, for me, it's almost always music first. Writing the words is, first of all, just trying to figure out what the mood of the melody is and finding a lyric that matches that. Once you've got that, then it's a combination of being technical and the ability to be open to surprises. Stuff like that. But a lot of it is just being able to make sure you've got words that are 'singable' and little technical things like making sure the accents are on the right syllables and so forth. I like playing with rhymes and the language, so that itself makes it a lot of fun.

PM: Your song Necessity hit home a bit. My grandfather was a sailor.

MH: Really?

PM: Yeah. We didn't discuss shipwrecks much in my house (laughter).

MH: It didn't have that literal a meaning for me. I have found that people have found stuff in that song that touched them good or bad. I've heard other people give me personal reflections on that song and that's amazing to me if a song can do that. I mean, that's basically the function. There's definitely a dark sense of humor running through that song. The funny thing about writing it is that's a song that some parts of it just sort of poured out but then there are a couple of bits of tunes that I added to it. But it does have a sort of nightmarish quality and I think that that's played up by the bouncy feeling of the tune.

PM: Tell me something about More. I hear there's an interesting story behind that one. MH Yeah, I can tell you about that one now. I didn't write the tune to that one.

PM: Really?

MH: Paul Perry, who's a guy I used to play in a duo with a few years ago, wrote the music and at the time, we were working with management, who was sort of demanding that we write quote a hit single unquote and that's a fool's errand at best, you know (laughter). You try to write the best song you can and hope that it works out. But we'd sort of bought into [trying to be hit makers] and the lyric of that song was propelled by a kind of disgust with what was going on at the

time. The line We've got plenty where this came from was sort of directed at [our management]. Because we kept writing more songs and they kept saying, 'Nope, that's not it...Nope, that's not quite it either.' and so forth. So I just threw my hands up in the air and I was like, well, this is ridiculous. The tune is very machine gun like in its rhythm edit, dit dit, you know? And it seemed like it was perfect for a kind of patter song, a social commentary song. I just took it and ran with it lyrically. It's one of my favorites.

PM: So from a distasteful song writing experience was born one of your best songs.

MH: Yeah, though I love popular music. It's something I'd love to be able to do. It's just that there's a temptation that I have maybe temptation isn't the right word it's just the inclination I have to write songs that are a little denser, I guess. But then again, there's a song like Home Sweet Home, which is pretty simple. I try to run the gamut.

PM: What were your musical influences and what made you want to do the kind of song writing you do?

MH:: Probably the hugest influence is the Beatles. Believe it or not, I'm a real Beatles geek. But I think that the first musician that I ever saw performing that gave me the feeling that I could do this was Steve Forbert. I went to see him play at the Capital Theater. He was opening up for another act. I'd never really heard him before and he just blew me away. He just got up there with his guitar and sang and he was great. He was a fairly young guy and whereas a band like the Beatles or a lot of other rock acts seemed beyond your reach, the thing about him was, oh, he's just a regular guy up there doing a great job. That turned me on in a big way. Also, Joe Jackson and The Replacements. As said, I was a real pop rock fan. I also liked Chet Baker and I loved Billie Holiday, Thelonius Monk and [Charles] Mingus. They really are fantastic. Surprisingly enough, Frank Sinatra. I like his singing a lot. Wee 'Small Hours of the Morning is one of my favorite albums.

PM: I'd heard that. Why Sinatra and that album in particular?

MH: The thing about that record is, there's so much talk about the concept album being born in the midsixties with Sergeant Pepper and other rock albums that followed. But that record is a concept album, and it came out in the mid fifties. It's all about unrequited love and the like. They all relate to that.

PM: I have to confess I never thought of that, though my father used to play the album all the time when I was a kid.

MH: There's definitely a sense in rock and roll journalism that anything that was done there hadn't been done before. You know, sort of the same feeling you get when you're a teenager and you first discover sex, you just figure no one else did this before but you.

PM: (laughter) Interesting comparison. But your love of rock did wend its way into your selection of a cover tune for your sets.

MH: Oh, yeah. Surrender. from Cheap Trick's Live at the Budokan. There were a couple of different shows some people were hosting where they were inviting people to come up and do cover tunes. The original version of it that I was doing included samples from the Cheech & Chong routine, Dave's Not Here. That was the weird combination because in covers, I like to do something a little bit different with them. Put an original stamp on it, if you will.

PM: Back to your songs. You had me breaking up the other night over Good Machine.

MH: Oh, yeah. That's another real sarcastic song. I'm glad you thought it was funny 'cause its meant to be a joke.

PM: I'll be honest. Afterward, I wondered if this wasn't a songwriter's

take on what some of us believe the ideal sexual relationship should be in our modern age.

MH: Wow! No, I hadn't even thought about that, though I can see your interpretation. It has more to do with just becoming a robot for someone else's affections. I wasn't thinking in sexual terms. I was thinking more on issual terms.

PM: Humorously looking at how we subjugate our own wills and personhood instead of looking for someone who'll take us as we are.

MH: Exactly. And that song sort of takes it to its absurd height or depth.(laughter)

PM: Tell me about the compact disc of your material that's coming out. Is it your first, and how long did it take?

MH: It's called Guilty Pleasure Cabaret, which is taken from the Lyric of one of the songs on it and it's the first time I've ever put anything of mine out on compact disc. It should be fun to listen to. Admittedly, the recording process itself took a few years. A friend of mine who is a recording engineer co produced it with me. A couple of years ago he was working at this one recording studio and he was able to get me in this place. It was a real professional studio and he managed to get me in there at this really cheap rate. We were in there doing overnight shift and stuff. It was the first time I was able to get into a really great studio and be able to work on my music and it was a true pleasure. It was me and him and he was engineering as I said. We used drum machines with guitars and bass with a lot of vocal harmonies with some of the songs and then I took a Spartan, opposite approach with the others. Some of the songs on the disc are just as you would hear them down at the Fort. Just me and a guitar. The final contenders there are eleven tracks altogether are the ones. I think are the cream of the crop. It should all be released come this November.

PM: Are you considering putting a band together?

MH: It's something I've been thinking about. So far, when I've been working in the studio, I've done all the instrumental chores myself. As far as a live band goes, at this point, I'd like to do something simple, like with someone playing stand up bass, a percussionist whose got just a sort of simple drum set, and maybe someone else backing up my guitar,

with one or all of the members of it joining me on some harmonies. I think that would be a fun live combo. But I haven't actually put ads in the paper or anything like that yet. But that might be something you'll be seeing over the next six months or so.

PM: The "Out of Necessity" Tour

MH: (laughter) Yeah, right. Very funny.

PM: We try But seriously folks, what's all this talk about your having done a motion picture soundtrack this year?

MH: It's true The movie is called Young Teamsters I've known Andy Clarke, the director, for years now and he's a fan of the music. When he was writing the screenplay, he wrote a lot of the songs into it. He told me pointedly that when he shot this, he wanted to use my music. So when the time came to make the film, he pretty much funded the whole movie himself. So he gave me the money to go in a studio and I recorded a bunch of songs and he synched them up It was actually a real breeze for me It was kind of opposite from the way a lot of those are done, with the scoring done afterwards But because of that I've already been able to get some more work as a composer of film scores, if you will I've actually been working on a couple of documentaries since August, and even the music for a promo of a Christmas movie that's coming out on videotape.

PM: Is this the Hulk Hogan connection?

MH:(laughter) Yes indeed. They needed Christmas carols done in a rock and roll style, for the videotape promo of his Christmas movie so I went into the studio and banged those out not long ago.

PM: I can just see you sitting down in the heat of summertime in some studio with your guitar, playing Christmas carols.

MH: It was pretty close to that.

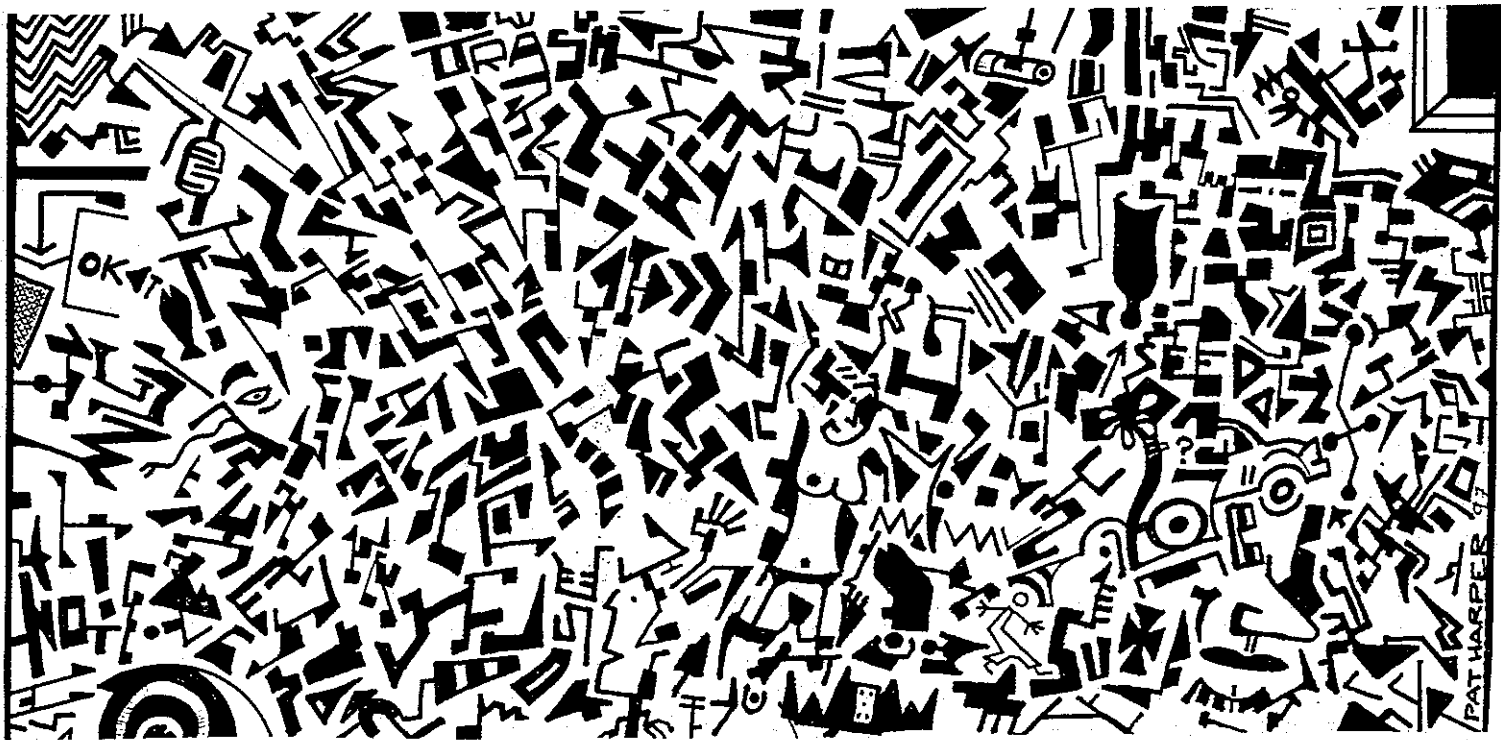
PM: Another delightful irony (laughter)

MH: The nice thing about those jobs is that's what helped to pay for the production of the record. It's been a while coming, but it's just about ready for release now and it's good to look forward to .

PM: As we who truly appreciate the music do. Thanks.

MH: My pleasure.

## Acts of Necessity



## Virgin Show

Just over a year and a half ago, after relocating to lower Manhattan from two hellish years spent in one of Boston's lovely suburbs call Somerville, I found my way through the still unfamiliar east side to what was later to become as familiar to me as my living room, the Fort. A new acquaintance was going to be performing here that night, and eager to make friends and familiarize myself with the local music scene, I headed in, pulled up a chair (for the first of about a million times), and observed. O.K, right off the bat, no stage. I liked that. The intimacy factor quadrupled immediately. The previous act was just finishing up one last song and it sounded pretty cool to me for a solo acoustic guitarist. I was never very revved up about solo acoustic guitarist for all of the usual reasons given when anyone is not rewed up about solo acoustic guitarists. No fun, fun, fun. But this guy was fun. In fact, for the song and a half I saw him, he kind of rocked, with a good slice of humor thrown in. This always counted huge for me. As it turned out, the first song and a half I ever saw performed in the sidewalk was, of course, Lach. Who else could it have been? It could have been about 200 other fun, rockin', weird, psychotic, talented, desperate, or otherwise fringe performers, but it was Lach. Fine. Now on to my new acquaintance who I came there to see in the first place. This person will remain nameless, not because he was either good or bad, he was good actually, but because he was much more of the conventional solo acoustic singer/songwriter type, like previously mentioned, and I never saw him perform at the Fort again. His songs were melodic, his voice was pure and pleasant, and his themes were very personal and touching. Through all this however, I could only keep thinking one thing. How can he do that?! How can he stand up there alone, just him and one guitar, ground level, two feet from everyone, and sing? I would be shitting my pants! After years of performing in a fairly popular upstate N.Y. band as a guitarist and songwriter, here I was, alone in NYC, no singer, no voice, a shitload of songs, and a gut ache just thinking about the possibility of ever having to stand up there and carry the weight of a performance alone. This did not bode well for me.

The next month in Manhattan, I found myself getting more and more desperate (always a great motivation for change) while searching for a vocalist willing and able to sing my songs. People who play original music always want to sing their original music. Of course they do! So did I. It was then that I was driven to my next desperate step. I must sing my own songs! No shit Lee. But how? I've heard my voice, I thought. It ain't gonna fly! Being compared to a Brady Bunch episode was not my idea of a good time. Next step: vocal coach. Now, a vocal coach might not seem very antihoot, but when you sing and it feels like steel wool is being raked across your vocal chords, something has to be done. After calling the dozen or so vocal coaches listed in the Voice, I settled on a woman who will also remain nameless. This is so people hearing me won't go 'God! Remind me not to use her as a vocal coach!' But for me, finding her was as much a bit of fate as Lach being the first performer I saw at Sidewalk. Not only did she eliminate my steel wool feelings, she convinced me that I must take one drastic and horrifying step. I must perform by myself at the open mikes! It's the equivalent

by Lee Chabowski.

of boot camp she said. You have to do it! Shit! What was the name of that new ulcer medicine? Since I considered her a near prophet at this point for saving my throat, I had no choice but to heed her advice. And I did. My first open mike was not at The Fort, but at another club hosted by my vocal coach. My first performance was truly a complete blur. My terror not only made it impossible to sing, it made it impossible to form an open D chord. I actually left the stage happy. It ain't gonna get any worse than that! So like a fool, back I went the next week for more hell. It was then, smack in the middle of about 30 of those singer/songwriter types that I talked about before, that I first saw this quiet red haired guy get up on stage and start playing this song about a secret agent fucked over by a system he wants no part of. What a cool song and a cool voice. 'Hey man, I liked your song' I said. 'Hey, I inked your song too' he replied. I thought, "hey, he's friendly. I must be out of Boston." His name was Chris Moore, and he went on to tell me about an open mike on Monday nights at The Sidewalk Cafe'. 'I know that place', I said. He thought my style would be much more appropriate there. He also went bullshit about a band called Guided By Voices, but that's another story.

The following Monday rolled around and I grabbed my Stratocaster and headed over for my first taste of the Sidewalk's antihoot open mike. Chris was there with about 400 other people. At least that's what it seemed like. 'Hey, the host is that guy Lach.' Of course at this point I wasn't clued into the fact that Lach is such a significant East Side fixture. His repertoire of jokes would not become the comfort of the tried and familiar, as he puts it, until much later. Like, say, the following week. This was of course the first time I would go through the random number sign up routine and it was rarely to be so sweet. I pulled number 2. My two songs worth of the spotlight were over quickly, and included Lach's "don't worry, it's just a room~1 of people judging you" joke. A little abuse is always a great thing for taking the edge off. Beside the fact that, for me, I had just played my 3rd little solo performance at the very place that had me quaking in my sneakers at the very thought of before, the night will always stick with me as my introduction to some of my favorite performers anywhere. The night was loaded with great songwriters. Dina Dean was there, singing with one of the most rich, haunting voices anywhere. Joe Bendik was there, playing furious, adrenaline OD'd acoustic punk. The humans were there, filling the room with a wall of sound that seemed impossible for two people. Steve Espinola pulled up a piano and banged out tunes that were humorous, touching, and witty all at once. No instrument was needed when flick Shapiro grabbed the mic and spewed acidic stream of consciousness comedy at the crowd. And it was the first time I would see Lach offer a show to a performer on the spot when Chris Moore played. And rightfully so. And this was just the first night! Later antihoots introduced me to dozens of other great songwriters and performers including Curtis Eller, Mia Doi Todd, Tom Warnick, Peter Dizozza, and Matt Sherwin. And I said I didn't like solo singer/songwriter types!

For the next couple of months, I attended the antihoot

*CONTINUED ON BACK COVER...*



## Babyland

yr face shows gravity's weight  
as y reel off a line or two  
The barstools in here  
hold flesh rushed with beer  
Each person joking in  
seperate aisles of pain  
Making conversation like minor  
sitcom dialogue  
Like photo captions for the  
yearbook graveyard  
Y'all are horses stalled  
and confused and brainfat  
Mistaking death for revolution  
and partying for life  
I feel like yr each  
A movie projected on yrselves  
Pieces of film flapping  
about like ousted fish  
Y stand in the middle  
of yr life crying  
And yr tears are ashes  
and no-one is laughing  
for the right jokes  
But everyone is laughing  
everyone is laughing

Everyone is laughing as the nation crumples  
amongst  
it's hypocritical, ineffectual youth

## I Ain't Doin Drugs (Over You)

Maybe tomorrow I'll paint my jagged face,  
get back in the race chase my tail  
and wail  
Maybe tomorrow I'll blind my eyes, anesthize,  
run and hide and cry  
Maybe tomorrow I'll fan the flame, see the  
man, kill the pain and scream  
But not now...Not tonight  
Iwon't lose myself over you tonight

I ain't doing drugs over you

Maybe tomorrow I'll be dancing on the bar,  
swinging from a star, far from  
my heart  
filled with the sadness of being a man, my  
skull in my hand, far from dry land  
Maybe tomorrow will never arrive, I'll  
survive, lose this disguise and thrive  
But for now... For tonight  
I won't lose myself over you tonight  
I ain't doing drugs over you

# LACH



## Smoking Again

Last time I saw you, you said how  
great things are  
You got back into yourself and started  
learning guitar  
You're taking yoga and you turned  
vegan  
And it's so nice to see you've started  
smoking again

You say all things improved when you and I  
split  
You made a long list of what else you were  
going to quit  
You went forth to conquer all your addictions  
Oh man, it's good to see you've started  
smoking again

From your brave smile smoke curls like a  
snake  
As you tell me our time together was just a  
mistake  
But all my faults feel like redemption  
As I watch you light one up again

Am I sick to feel so jolly and so smug  
Checking you giving that Camel a tug  
Yeah, tell me how happy you are with your  
new boyfriend  
Congratulations baby, I see you're smoking  
again

## Junior

Junior's in the city and her heart is all a treble  
She's been scouting out all the wrong places to be  
This one last chance to get it all together  
was blown before she even got an answering machine

Now her rent is late and her period is later  
And Percodan and aspirin might as well be the same damn thing  
All those Velvet songs of glory just told her half the story  
Loneliness and boredom are the flipside of those dreams

God, there must be people somewhere far from the clock's cruel stare  
She senses they're presence in music, art and song  
They have voices full of wings and faith thick as bone  
And all their answers feel like she's coming home

Junior's in the city and her brain is a rebel  
Feeding her old lines from a dog-eared script  
She's taken this chance to get it all together  
But it's so hard when she's so ripped

Hey, Junior, there's an answer that no pop song can deliver  
I'm sorry but it has to do with time and soul and God  
Let no-one tell you different but Mrs.Einstein and Mother Mary  
Both thought their kids were a little odd

God, there must be people somewhere  
far from the clock's cruel stare  
She senses they're presence in music, art and song  
They have voices full of wings and faith thick as bone  
And all their answers feel like she's coming home  
Well, come home, Junior, welcome home

All Songs C) 1997 Lach

Brownies Friday De Gruel P.J.  
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The Sidewalk Cafe (94 Ave.A) is proud to present the following schedule for your entertainment. All shows are free and begin at 8 p.m. For updates please call the club at 212-473-7373.

Mon. Oct.6- The Antihoot With Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues. Oct.7 - 8-Kathy Leonardo, 8:30-Peter Fielding, 9-Tricia Scotti, 9:30-Peter Frook, 10- Matt Keating

Wed.Oct.8- 8-Michelle Lewis, 8:30- Sara Carlson, 9-Byron Estep, 10-Rick Shapiro, 11-Zero Skills

Thurs.Oct.9- 8-Rachel Sage, 9-Mary Ann Farley, 10- Episonic (Alt.Irish music with sitar), 11-Mia Johnson (Antifolk from Philly), 11:30-Art Pingrey

Fri. Oct.10- 8- Special Guest, 9-Tom Shaner, 10- The Humans , 11- Lach, 12- Tom Clark

Sat.Oct.11- 8-Betsy Johnson, 9-The Jim Allen Band, 10-Delta Garage (with Ross Owens), 11- Chris Barron (of The Spin Doctors), 12- Blues To Venus

Sun.Oct.12 - Five Great Acts!!: 8-Steve Tannen, 8:30- Todd Griffen, 9-Nancy

Falkow, 9:30-Liz Brody, 10-Olivia Cornell

Mon.Oct.13-The Antihoot With Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Oct.14- Six Great Acts!!: 8- Lee Feldman, 8:30- Jennifer Stevenson, 9-50-Feet Tall, 9:30- Dos Hombres, 10 - The Rosenbergs, 11- Stretch

Wed.Oct.15- 8-Edie Carey, 8:30-Bernadette, 9-Peter Spink, 9:30- The Bicycles, 10- Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Oct.16- Ruth Gerson, 9-Trina Hamlin, 10-Lach Solo Acoustic, 11- Special Guest

### COMING ATTRACTIONS IN ANTIMATTERS

Road Trip Issue

Interview with Roger Manning

Going off to Philly

Charlie Starkweather's tour

Reviews

Views of scenes in the outer boroughs.

More (maybe)!

#### (Chabowski Continued...)

faithfully, becoming very familiar with the one o'clock wonder round and being pressed upon to purchase copies of Jonathan Berger's AntiMatters. 'When will Lach offer me a show?' I wondered. The answer would be never. But he did approach me at one point to say he liked my songs, but didn't think the electric guitar approach was going over so well. He had a point. Another two months passed before I showed up at the antihoot as Lee Chabowski' solo acoustic guitarist. Go figure! And this went on for a couple of weeks, but still no gig offer. Then I took the final drastic step for getting a gig. I asked.

Well now it's a year and a half later, and it's good to be playing shows and still checking out the antihoot. Along with the new faces that show up regularly, the old familiars still appear. And you might even get to witness the occasional downstairs poolroom brawl now and again. So if you're desperate for that next bend in the road, or you just want to expose yourself to wealth of diverse talent, check out the antihoot. It works!

### The Fast Folk Cafe

41 North Moore Street  
(212) 274-1636

stevennn@delphi.com

www.fastfolk.org

Open mike on Monday s and Tuesdays. Signup at 6. Music begins at 6:30.Show at 7:30pm for \$10 contribution.

Thu 10/9 Chris & Meredith Thompson / The Wiggins Sisters

Fri 10/10 Peter Gallway/Rod MacDonald

Wed 10/15 Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music

Open Mike \* \$5 \*

Thu 10/16 Nina Mankin/Peter Spink Trio

Fri 10/17 Joe Lobell/Brother Greg Muirhead/Ina May Wool

Sat 10/18 Camp Hoboken

Thu 10/23 Jesse Hultberg/Bob Malenky/Cosy Sheridan

Fri 10/24 Cody Melville/Sharon Perez-Abreu/Laura Wetzler

Sat 10/25 Bernice Lewis/Wendy Sayvetz with Carrie Barron

Wed 10/29 New Voices Showcase \* \$5 \*

Thu 10/30 George Wurzbach

Fri 10/31 Beppe Gambetta

Sat 11/01 Richard Berman/Terry Kitchen

Thu 11/06 Too Human

Fri 11/07 Compass Rogues/Dan & Bonnie Milner

Sat 11/08 Kenny Kosek & John Sholle/Singing Conquerors

Thu 11/13 Joe Giacoio/Bill Parsons/Dan Pelletier

Fri 11/14 Margo Hennebach/Frank Tedesso

Sat 11/15 New York City Labor Chorus

Wed 11/19 Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music

Open Mike \* \$5 \*

Fri 11/21 Ken & The Cruel Sisters (Alison & Hilary Kelley)

Sat 11/22 Tony Bird plus Annie Wenz

Wed 11/26 New Voices Showcase \* \$5 \*

Fri 11/28 Bob Malone