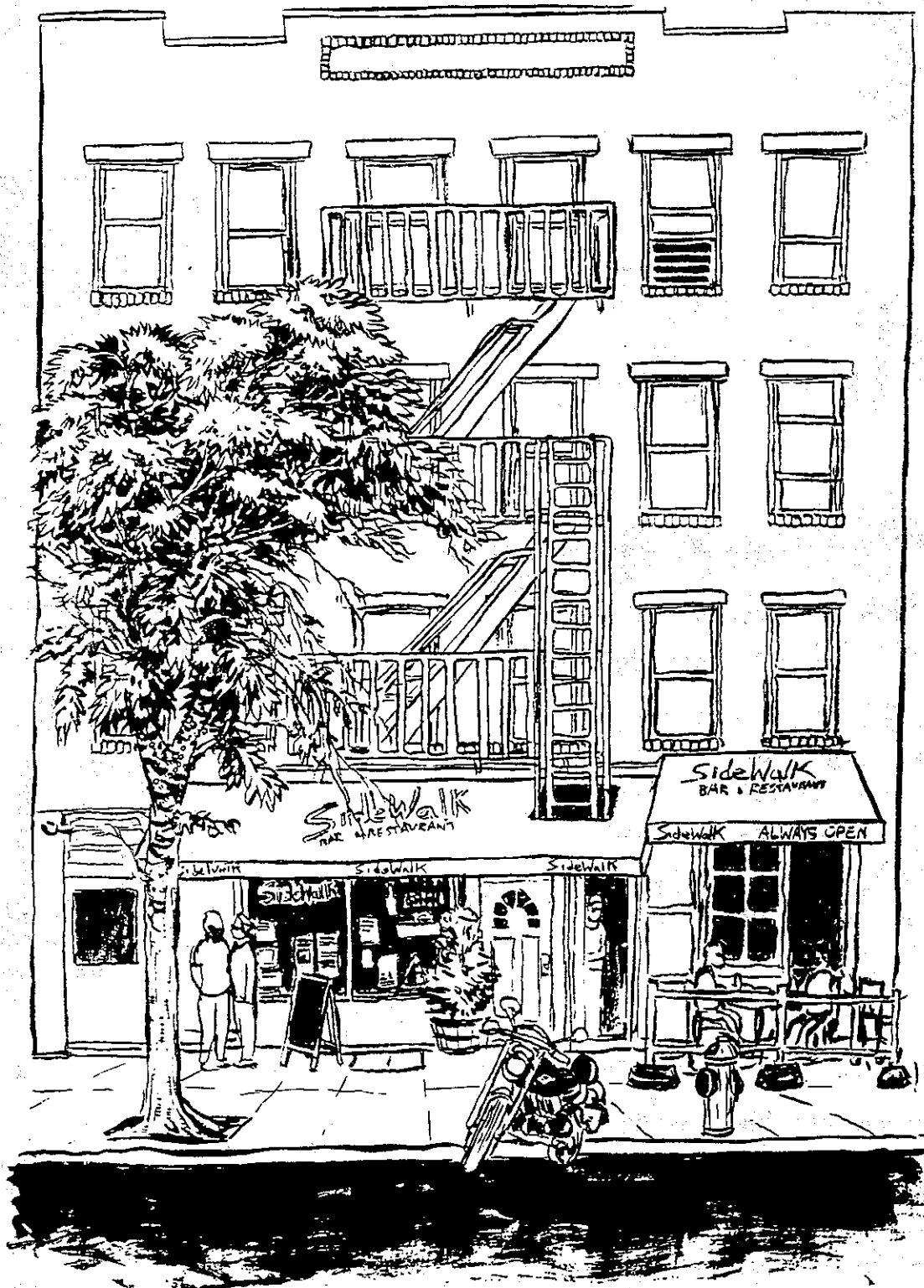


# AntiMatters



August, 1998

Vices

# AntiMatters

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

## Contributors

Jonathan Berger  
Stephanie Biederman  
Anne Kadet  
Billy Kelly  
Professor G Lesse II  
Penner MacBryant

Tom Nishioka  
Gustav Plympton  
Arnie Rogers  
Johnny Sizzle  
Dave Wechsler

Contact AntiMatters  
24-7 At:

AntiMatters@mailexcite.com

JBerger@bnkst.edu

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Jeff 'Lightning' Lewis

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Joie came up with the theme. Then he didn't write a damned thing for it. Thanks a lot, Joie!

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Jonathan Berger

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Gustav Plympton

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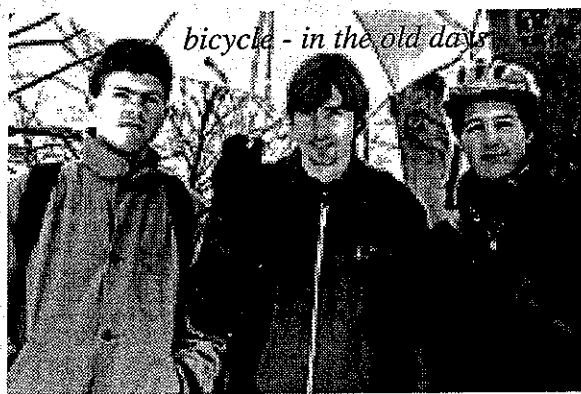
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# REPORT FROM THE FORT

7/7 - Tony Hightower - Coming down from Canada — maybe Toronto, maybe someplace equally useless — Tony Hightower played an incredible set to an empty room at the Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe. With just a guitar, a voice, and some killer hooks, he got the four or five people listening bopping in their seats. His songs were the kind of things you hear once and remember inane little details of for months to come. "I Loved Her First" is about the ugly duckling that only he could beauty in. "Jeannie Doesn't Talk to Boys Anymore" is about... well, we don't know who she's sleeping with, but it's probably not someone she's not talking to. "I Was Dead Then" is about the heavenly reward waiting on earth for those that live after Mr. Hightower. He has a propensity to la-la his way through songs, adding to the cool melodies he'd composed. It sort of dilutes the intensity, but it won't stop me from seeing him and joining in the next time he's in town. - S Biederman

7/10 - bicycle returned to New York. They'd just biked in from Seattle, and boy, were their legs tired.

The band was five people strong: two guitars, bass, drums, and a keyboard that was mostly the preprogrammed bits and samples that were so incredible on their new album, The Occupation of a Sand Dune. Kurt Liebert led the group, and their old drummer Forrest Kemper sat behind his kit, but he didn't seem to be doing much. The keyboards and programming seemed to take



care of most of the rhythm, leaving Kemper available for fills and backing vocals. Their old guitarist Brian Chenault came up and sang and played on a couple of numbers, including the old standard "Female Urologist."

"When we last played here," Liebert said, "was on New Year's Eve. It was awful. I was singing whatever came into my head, Brian was playing old heavy metal riffs, and Forrest was playing and singing Bob Dylan tunes. And our bassist at the time was just trying to play the actual songs."

This time, of course, they all played the actual songs. Leaning heavily on the material on their new CD, it was an incredible show. Loud, funky, hard... good.

Something about watching a live band rely so heavily on prerecorded tracks felt wrong. The sounds that came from the stage

were great, but they weren't all that different than what you could hear on the album. And while I love the album, I biked out to see bicycle to experience something different. Luckily, the vocals were different. Liebert is operatic like Steve Perry was operatic, but nowhere near as overbearing in his delivery. He can sing, though, when he wants to. Since so much of the new material is so hip-hop influenced, a lot of the lyrics were spoken, though.

Maybe it was something special going on, because it was the last stop of their cross-country tour. Maybe the show isn't normally so sampledelic. Either way, the show sounded great, and, even if it takes another year or two for the band to bike back here, I strongly encourage anyone to go. - Arnie Rogers

7/18 - Arlene Grocery - Watching Sean Altman play is a pleasure. He wears shiny clothes. The real pleasure, though, is listening. The man is filled with pop hooks, he sings beautifully high, and he's got a crackerjack band. The man is even nice to the audience, he tries to feed people, even at free clubs! Candy, condiments, vegetables, he passes them around, and makes sure that everybody in the club gets some. It's really sweet.

Kind of like the songs, which are pop candy. He does Badfinger covers, emulates Beatle-bows, and generally works to be a pop genius.



Sean Altman left his last band Rockapella, because he wanted to be a rock star. He won't be. He's too old, and his songs are too adorable. He's got mature pop written all over him. Which might be a problem for him. But so long as he keeps writing and playing the way he does, who cares? - Arnie Rogers

7/21 - Joie broke about as many strings as he ever does, but it worked better, because, instead of giving up, he got people to fix his strings for him, as he borrowed their guitars and kept on with his set. It seemed sort of appropriate that Joie, singing songs about desperate losers, would give up so readily in the middle of a gig. But it also seems appropriate, considering his scrappy singing style, for Joie to keep on going, and play to the end. Which is what he did. - Gustav Plympton

7/24 - There's something about a theme bill. Friday night, except for the 8 o'clock slot, all the bands were foodstuffs (well, I guess you can eat Gripweeds, right? What are they, anyway?). Is that cool or what?



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There wasn't much else that linked the groups. Curtis Eller's American Circus is a banjo-led trip through an old form of US Blues. The other players on bass and drums support Eller's dark surreal visions of the midwest more than amply. The cymbal-work alone of the drummer is worth the price of admission. Curtis Eller was always an incredibly potent player with just a banjo as support. With a full band, he's a force to be reckoned with.

Kenny Young and the Eggplants were funny and poppy, but not as funny as the Cucumbers and not as poppy as the Gripweeds. New Jersey's Cucumbers performed selections from their upcoming Home Office release, which is as yet unnamed. One of the names they threw around was "Are those the Cucumbers or are you just happy to see me?"

The Gripweeds returned to performing after eight months, playing old hits like "Strange Bird" and new ones like things I can't remember. The lead singer is an incredible drummer. With a minimal kit, he gave the anglophile group a great deal of it's push. Of course, the guitar work of the very cute Kristin Pinnell didn't hurt none either.

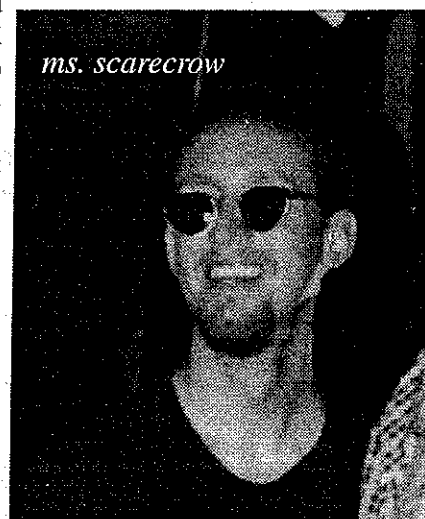
Chocolate Genius was next. Soulful, elegant, how could you go wrong? I did, by leaving early. I'll regret it until I eat again.  
- Arnie Rogers

7/25 - Billed as a Mini-AntiFolk Festival, this night was just filled with acts who are well-known to AntiFolk diehards. Going from Dina Dean to Steve Espinola to Mr. Scarecrow, on to Joe Bendik and his Heathens, finally ending with Bionic Finger, it was semi-celebrities all night long. Everyone played real good. Here's what was noteworthy: Steve Espinola's solidified a band that works very well behind him. Old friends Dan Emery and Raul Rothblatt do rhythm work on about half of Steve's material, focusing him and giving him the opportunity to remember his damned lyrics. About the lyrics: in the newer song, probably called "The Bad Date Song," it became clear that understanding of the entire song relied on one particular syllable, a syllable that, due to the artistic structure of the song, is incredibly easy to misunderstand or not hear at all. It's a dangerous precedent. Steve writes strange lyrics, and when comprehension hinges on something so ephemeral as one word, that word better be pretty clearly said. The word, of course, was "date."

Mr. Scarecrow followed up, playing with his new nameless band, Beau Mansfield on piano and old companion Little Oscar on drums. The drum kit was almost as big as the piano, and Oscar played hell out of them. Still, he couldn't keep up with Beau, who walloped his keys and sang real loud. It was hard to remember who's show it was. Scarecrow, the loudest thing on any stage when he's playing electric, wore an acoustic guitar for this show, and was overwhelmed by his sidemen. But it seemed that he meant to submerge himself that night. Joe Bendik came up to sing lead on one of

Scarecrow's songs ("My Sweet Mom") and then Scarecrow chose to cover Liz Brody's "Linger On," with Liz offering up backing vocals from the audience. The band seemed kind of uncontrolled, which is a shame, because they're all top-notch players, playing top-notch songs. It's just that none of it was shown to best effect. - Jonathan Berger

7/26 - Their audience loved Princess. They probably would have loved the three-person band if they'd mutilated phone books for a half hour. They weren't too discriminating. Some of Princess' stuff was pretty cool. They do a fairly lame version of Paleface's "Burn and Rob," which they're kind enough



# REPORT FROM THE FORT

to credit. And they ended with a love song to Canada. I mean a love song. What the singer would like to do to Canada, in a sexual way. It was hilarious. But not as hilarious as their audience thought it was.

Butch, one of those Philadelphia players, went on next, and had to play over Princess' audience, who were suddenly extremely fond of their own voices. Still, Butch maintained half the group's attention, and played some mighty good songs. While somewhat funny, Butch's main game is storytelling, as in the mystery in "Trenton in a Nutshell," or the tale of NY folksingers in "New York." He's not as geography minded as all that. He also writes songs about arachnids. And it's all good stuff. - Gustav Plympton

## REPORT FROM THE FORT

7/28 - Damion Wolfe looks a little like a devil and plays a little like a demon. He's alone on stage, but he takes off like an army, playing fast, playing furious, playing and playing and playing. It's good, up to a point. His solos keep on going, and while, for the most part, it sounds all right, it gets to be enough. And sometimes, too much. Too many times, Wolfe used false endings that weren't very false. He'd slow down in the middle, end the song, wait for a little clapping, then go back into what he was doing. It didn't work the first time he did it, and it didn't work the fourth. A false ending makes sense when the listener feels there's something missing, that the song shouldn't end yet. Wolfe would just return to his first verse when he restarted the song, proving he had nothing else to say. He was good, but he needs to get a few more tricks up his sleeve.

Someone with lots of tricks is Jeff Lightning Lewis, who sings, plays, draws, and has a guy juggling for him while he's on stage. There were gimmicky songs in the set, like the words to Evil Dead II set to music, and the gorgeously awful "Man with the Golden Arm," written and led by Jeff's brother Jack.

Where Mr. Lightning Lewis truly shined was when he went solo and played soft, simple, sensitive songs. There's a wonderful number about walking cross-town to jump off a pier, when a girl leaves him, and the adorable seemingly freeform "Sexual Conquests of Jeff Lightning Lewis, from Kindergarten to High School..." These songs work, partially, because Lewis knows his limits and sticks within them. His voice is not strong, so he mostly speaks the songs, but he

## Reviewing The Situation

### Country Thursdays w/Rob Ryan.

The hardest reality I've ever had to grapple with regarding the two great vices in my life is that they are responsible for as many constructive and worthwhile moments as they are for my saddest and most shameful. While other faults in my character have only led me down paths that involved undisciplined and genuinely bad behavior (all of which I have not only acknowledged but fully repented of in the most earnest of ways), the Tempting Twain, (like some of the most interesting women I've ever dated) have as often led me down avenues of wonder I might never have found out about had I held to the dangerously parochial view that only the most reprobate kids stayed out late, frequented the smoky rooms of downtown clubs and bars and played blues, jazz or country music. No doubt I wouldn't even be composing this tome to an unseen audience of who knows how many or few were it not for a lifelong unwillingness to get to bed at a respectable hour, (unlike the decent, hard-working joes of the world) and a well-nurtured love for the world of music, both sacred and secular—a thing of questionable virtue in the eyes of more than a few Pentecostals that I grew up (but still identify) with.

This brings me to Thursday, July 24th, when fortune (and a cheap taxicab ride) brought me yet again to the door of the Fort for another dose of healthy moral degradation. Country Thursdays, a new thing that seems to be catching on quickly, thanks to Lach's promotional savvy, some good old fashioned word of mouth among the folk and country contingent of New York musicians and the ambitiously genial doings of someone who is quickly being recognized as one of the most talented proponents of the scene here in the East Village. Rob Ryan plays host to the night (along with Fort stalwart Lenny Molotov, who works the actual technical equipment) getting a good three quarters of an hour himself to jam with his own impressive band of musicians, playing some classic Country and Western tunes and a few of his own for truly good measure. Ryan is tall, dark, slender and (embarrassing as it is to say this) Presleyesque in appearance, but unlike the (ugh!) King, Ryan writes and plays some pretty infectious country music himself when he gets going. His originals, like "Bone To Pick", "My Plain Jane" "Yes Man" or "Hear From You First" are standouts. I remember Rob from a few seasons ago, playing some of those cool tunes solo on acoustic guitar at some of the Monday Anti-Hoots, and it really is good to see him getting a regular spot of his own now and opening doors of exposure for other artists to come through. As said, there are no slow trains riding this track. Russ Farhang (fiddle) and Scott McKuen (upright bass) play with enough energy to make you think they were raised to believe they'd be our lone power source in the event of another blackout. On top of this, they're good. Add Jerome Rossen's kinetic skill on piano and squeezebox and you can't help but get into it. Stay to hear all of the acts on the bill, but remain (if you can) for the tastiest part of the evening, the Country Jam, in which people are invited to sit in and sing with the musicians of the evening. The ethereal after midnight atmosphere in the Big Black Room has seen guest appearances from Little Mo of the Monicats, Country singer/guitarist Maria and a heap of other talented finger pickers and singers. Lenny Molotov may even do a Hank Williams tune, as he did the night I was there. Sin is horrible, but vices can be artistically interesting to explore. Anyone in blues or country music can tell you that. - Penner MacBryant

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writes clear clever lyrics that make you interested in what he has to say. He stays within boundaries and does an exceedingly good job.

Citizen One, playing after Mr. Lightning Lewis, is one who knows the boundaries of experimentation. A free jazz player who has an incredible set of acoustic country folk songs, the man is incredible. The audience wasn't particularly involved

## A Major Vice - Television

*jonathan berger*

Major Matt Mason gave up his TV.

"It just sort of broke," he explained, taking a swig from his bottle of Rolling Rock. "And I didn't bother to replace it. I found I had a lot more time on my hands. I was reading more, and I was happier. It was strange."

The Major, a major player on the AntiFolk scene in 1994 and '95, was not writing his simple but beautiful songs with all his extra time.

"I usually write songs when I'm unhappy," he said. "there's not as much to say when everything's all right. So nothing was coming."

It didn't last.

"I was paying for cable for two months that I didn't have TV, and if I ever decided to get cable again, I'd have to pay a reinstallation charge, so I just got a new TV.

Now, I'm feeling like writing songs again."

## REPORT FROM THE FORT

in his performance, but he did a crack-up job. Little of his usual sonic treachery, with no reverb, no delay, no extra instruments, other than mouth harp and flute on his closer, Woody Guthrie's "I Ain't Got No Home." - Professor G Lesse II

7/27/98- Another great night at the Antihoot. Fine performances from Brian Thomas (of Albany), Elizabeth Anka Vajagic (of Montreal) and Tanya (of Philly). They come from everywhere to play the Monday night. Look out for local newcomers Alta, Jeff 'Lightning Lewis' and Grey Revell. Lach awarded a gig to Amiel, who was at the Antihoot for only his second time. Also top notch sets from sophomore performers: Marilee, Joie/DBG and Clay Mitchell. And of course we were knocked out by sets from the alumni: Tom Nishioka and Mike Rocklin. All in all a wonderful night of new and oldtimers on the ol' antifolk scene. You shoulda been there. - Ben Richmond

7/31/98 - Rob Ryan and his band play country music at the Sidewalk, Thursday nights at 9:00. For starters, they play the old Hank Williams like he was a new man alive today. Ryan plays acoustic rhythm guitar, sings, yodels, and writes his own new tunes. The guy's got a fire in him. He plays hard (a string-breaker) and he sings real and clear. Among his original numbers are "I get paid for wasting time" (if excuses were worth a nickel, and complaints worth a dime, I'd have me a small fortune...), and "Bone to Pick" (I got a bone ten feet long to pick with you). Check him out singing the old country ballads of Hank, or Jimmy Rogers' "Peach Picking Time in Georgia"—beautiful, I would say. All told, there's something creative happening in country music there in the city. - Dave Tanzer



# News Bytes

Fortified Records has signed a national distribution deal with Big Daddy Distributors. Now, your favorite AntiFolk artists will be available at record stores throughout America! Look for Rick Shapiro's comedy hit Unconditional Love to arrive in stores in early September followed by the long-awaited Lach CD Blang! Eventually, we might even see the return of Lach's AntiHoot!

Julianne Richards has a whole pack of new songs ready for her debut album on Geffen Records. After the excellent EP she released last year, any new product is eagerly anticipated.

Michal Towber has signed with Columbia and is the progress of recording

her debut album with them. Former Queen of AntiFolk and sound intern at the Fort is still underaged, but, as you listen to her songs, you get the sense that she was never quite innocent.

Look for self-released music from Billy Kelly and Jeff Lightning Lewis this month.

Gene & Mimi have completed their new album, and will be releasing it in September.

The Dan Emery Mystery Band have begun recording their sophomore full-length.

Home Office Records is releasing Raw Kinder's CD this month. The Cucumbers' release will soon follow.

Whew! A lot is happening on the scene! I thought the summer was supposed to be a slow time!



Michal Towber



## Drinkin' and Smokin' with FTA

"I don't smoke much," she explains, "Just when I drink."

Of course, most every time she's out, she drinks. Anne Kadet, one quarter of the new wavey Full Throttle Aristotle, sits with the band's primary songwriter, singer and guitar maestro, Tom Warnick. They're drinking beers in styrofoam cups as big as your head. As they hunker down over their form of tapped ambrosia, Anne starts eyeing the cigarettes all around the room.

"Anne," Tom warns, "No!"

"But I just want one..." she whines.

"What did you say last weekend?" he reminds.

"I said I was quitting," she sulks, looking back into her beer.

The week before, Anne lost her voice, feeling froggy and awful. She could find nothing to blame but the cigarettes she only sporadically smokes.

"Right. Now, if you want to go through that again, you're going straight to Marlboros."

"Tom..."

"That's it. It's menthols or nothing."

"But —"

"No. You were the one who was complaining. You were the one who quit. You want to start again, go buy yourself a pack and smoke them down!"

She nurses her huge beer, and fiddles with an empty pack that a neighbor failed to throw out. Tom doesn't smoke in her presence, but he wasn't sworn off nicotine. Neither of them were heavy smokers, but he doesn't choose to restrain that particular addictive pleasure. His voice, evidently, didn't give out. Or he doesn't care. Still, he shows a restraint that, with the alcohol, Anne lacks.

"Please...?" Anne says, "Just one?"

Tom sighs.

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# Your Vices

My vices: Making it a point to tune into "Frasier" at 9 p.m. every Tuesday night. (Is it a vice to watch sitcoms?) I also watch as many X-Files reruns as I can. (Is it a vice to be an X-Files geek?)

Let's see -- I also smoke as often as possible. I'm not an addict, but I always look for social situations that give me an excuse to light up. (There's no way I could live in that Nazi-state California.) I also eat whole-milk yogurt way too much, and I spend way too much money on gourmet food. (Recent purchase: Organic garlic/rosemary olives.)

I also like vintage cars, which is good, as my '85 Buick is fast becoming one. But if I had money, I'd blow it on a Impala convertible and upholster it with some kind of shag fabric. And this would lead to more vices, like faster driving and picking up guys who look like Brad Pitt alongside of the road and having my way with them. And then, my luck, I'd probably get pregnant, which would lead to vices like being on welfare yet spoiling my baby with gourmet baby food and cute vintage baby clothes. Then this would all probably lead to me becoming a prostitute to support my habit of delicious food, babies and cute men, which in turn lead to me becoming a madame once I pass my 40th birthday. And once I get caught and end up in prison...well, who knows what vices I would develop there.

But other than that, I don't have any vices, except writing long-winded emails like this one when I should be doing something constructive with my life. There--are you happy now?

Mary Ann Farley



I can't get enough of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Try as I might, I just can't.

(These days, they call it KFC, as if we could ever forget that the reason we ALL go there is to bear down on the fryers. We love the heavy grease, the breading, the fat, the stink.

We're in it for the FRY, man, and trying to avoid that is like trying to avoid our very hearts, getting less and less blood with every bite.)



It really is a sickness. Every time I think I've dug myself out of that particular hole, they shove me back in.

I go off and I buy a dozen pieces of chicken -- you know, since it's cheaper -- and then I find myself a dark corner where I can start swallowing the grease, sometimes even chewing a little.

It is so delicious -- at first. After about 2-3 thigh-leg combinations, though, the eleven herbs and spices begin to take their toll. I can only bear to gulp down a total of ten pieces of fried chicken before I feel ill.



And each and every time I go to Kentucky Fried Chicken, I swear it's the last. It's bad for me. Nobody will go with me. It's overpriced. It makes me sick. Every time, I make a solemn oath to never return.

I have never kept the oath more than two months.

Gustav Plympton

Pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, jealousy, covertousness, sloth...

He studies Sound Views, carries it regularly, clips selections out of every issue.

Over the last few years, he's seen a big change in the zine.

"It's Keating," he says, "I think."

Mark Keating has been writing about AntiFolk, about the poppier side of New York rock, for some time now. Keating's risen in the ranks over at that SV zine, with city wide publication and loads of reviews. Keating has done a lot for AntiFolk music, and he writes well, too.

He feels a little funny about Mark Keating's successes for the AntiFolk community. After all, isn't HE the scribe of the scene? Doesn't HE chronicle what goes on? Shouldn't he spread the word? He'd never admit it to anyone. He suffers his passing strange feelings silently.

His vice? Jealousy.

- Stephanie Biederman

I don't have much use for vise. A wrench usually does me fine. I can just get a hold on something, and twist it off. Sure, if I used a vise, I could probably manage bigger projects, but really, I'm satisfied with what I do. Bigger isn't always better, is it? Or am I just in denial?

- Arnie Rogers -

I'd write the whole issue, if I weren't so drunk, stupid and lazy.

- Anne Husick



I don't eat very well. Well, I eat well. I eat VERY well, but I don't eat very well.

Allow me to clarify:

I avoid meals a lot. In some kind of male anorexic-in-training movement, I figure if I eat less, I'll lose weight. It's strange, it's sick, and it's working. I eat a lot less than I used to: maybe one and a half meals a day. I don't eat healthy, but usually, I'm so fever-hungry, I don't even notice that I get no greens, or browns, or reds in my system.

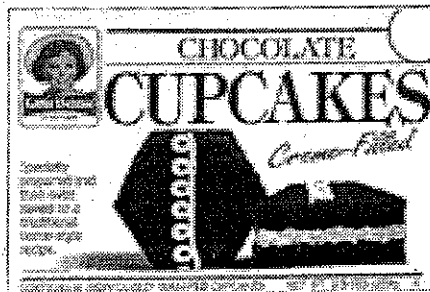
What I do get a lot of is crap. I eat pastry and candy a lot. More pastry and candy, because it feels substantive, not like... candy. Cake does me real good.

But cake's expensive. And another factor in my wasting away before my eyes is that I have no money to speak of, so expensive things have to go, and like I say, cake's expensive. Snack cakes, not so much.



I'm a big fan of Hostess goods. Twinkies, no matter how unnatural and long they'll last in my system, are mm-good. In fact, I wonder if I

enjoy them more because I know they'll be in stomach for generations to come. What could be more substantial a meal than one that's totally undigestible. I like other products from the Hostess line, too. Suzy Qs, chocolate cake with a white cream (what is that stuff really? It's not cream; it's not marshmallow, it's just... there!) Another simply delicious snack-meal are Chocodiles, the less-well received dark cousin of the Twinkie, encased in a chocolate coating. They disappear every few years, then reappear again, equally sinful. When they're in my store, selling for just a quarter, I stock up. Haven't seen them in a few years, but at that bargain price, my eyes are open!

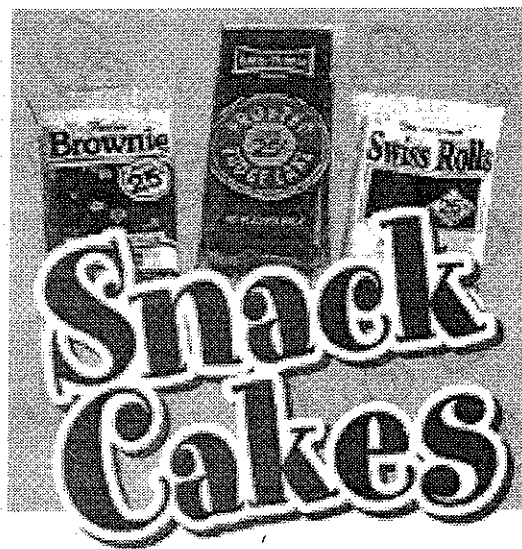


The quarter is also the unit of exchange for Little Debbie snack cakes, which are, figuratively speaking, my bread-and-butter in these bulimic

days. Rarely a day goes by when I don't purchase one of these most affordable meals. A quarter will get you a zebra cake, a candy-coated cream-filled golden cake that weighs in at slightly over three ounces. The caloric value of that will get me moving for a couple of hours, before delusions of sugarplums dance on

## MY VICE

Jonathan Berger



my head again.

There are times, though, when I need to get crazy fat, and I need a full meal of excess. I don't do this as often as I used to, but I still occasionally buy a pint of Ben & Jerry's full-fat ice cream, a quart of milk, and get my real cream content for the year. I didn't discover Ben & Jerry's until about five years ago, after I'd been to the Ben & Jerry's factory in Vermont and re-



corded numerous songs from their Folk Festival. Now, it's the ice cream, not the tricks that I like best about the company. Of course, it costs so much for a pint, so that treat is for only when I'm flush with cash.

I know people who's vices cost them a lot more. In terms of money, anxiety, or human life (I don't want to tell you about my old friend Hannibal's vices), I get off pretty easy, with this snack food addiction of mine. And really, isn't being filled with synthetics and chemicals a small price to pay for pure pleasure?

God, I hope so...



## Philosophy Corner with Dave Wechsler

*There will be plenty of time, for as I left the study Michael Robartes called the universe a great egg that turns inside-out perpetually without breaking its shell, and a thing like that always sets Owen off.*

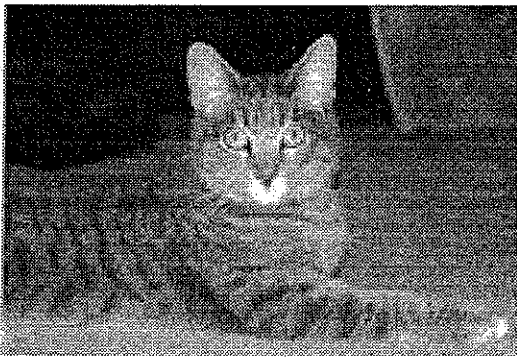
-From A Vision by William Butler Yeats

Although I had vowed never to write again for this newsletter, occurrences so singular have happened to me that it seems I must go mad lest I share them. In these more than trying times, it seems the irascible Jonathan Berger is the only one to whom I can turn (for he will publish anything) and so it is that this journal has come into your hands.

In order to understand what I am to relate, you must have a small history of myself. While I do not dare to put myself into the category of historian or muse (for who would dare to deem themselves worthy to join the ranks of the esteemed Cide Hamete Benengeli or the elusive and mysterious Michael Robartes?) I feel that a token explanation is in order. If there is any sense to be made of the next several months of explanation that you shall endure, it is to be found in the scant few paragraphs which follow

As a child of about 5 or 6 I was visiting my cousin once-removed (my mother's cousin) Joel. He was, perhaps still is, a violinist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or some orchestra of similar high repute. Later in life, he and his wife Judy would adopt a child who would cause them untold heartache and distress, but at this point in their lives, and in mine, they had only a cat. I have always been a lover of pets, and as a rambunctious rascal of 5 (or 6), this made me a force to be feared and reckoned with in the world of household domesticated animals. Already I had terrorized our dog Pepper on numerous occasions until he was stolen one sunny Saturday from our backyard. Looking back, I feel that perhaps he had summoned an unnatural strength from deep within himself and launched himself over the fence rather than face the prospect that I would, in the name of love and friendship of course, call upon him to play yet another game of Pony.

It was this degree of enthusiasm that I brought to my

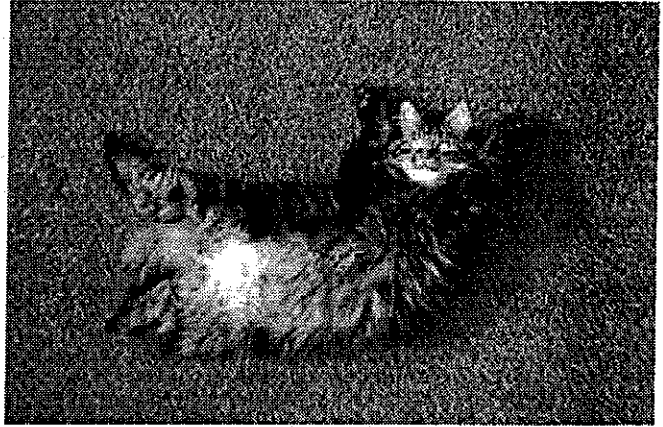


frolics with Joel and Judy's feline. Needless to say, the cat was distressed at the undue attention and my mis-

guided persistent attempts at play and hid under the bed. I reached under the bed to drag the cat, if need be, into the blissful world of playland, and was immediately treated to a most painful laceration. When I withdrew my hand, the blood was already welling from the claw marks running from my elbows to the bottoms of my fingers. I have been allergic to cats ever since.

My story continues in the month of February of this year. I had been golfing with my father down in Florida for a week.

(Unfortunately, as weather and El Niño would have it, most of our games were played in torrential downpour which resulted in my learning very quickly the joys of a newly pur-



chased sand wedge as I slogged through the course from puddle to puddle.) When I returned to the bleak end-of-winter New York City landscape and entered my apartment, I noticed that we had a visitor. Sans lease or monetary transaction, a scrawny tabby had made itself a resident of our apartment. I was no stranger to this tabby of ill-repute. It was the same cat who had made off with the steaks at our end-of-summer barbecue. It was the same cat who yowled outside our windows at all hours of the day and night. And it was the same cat who I had expressly forbid my roommates to let into the house.

It was too late, the cat had made itself at home. My roommates had taught the cat that yowling outside our windows would bring quick relief and its previously scattered caterwauls turned into a constant keening more disturbing than any noise heard in this world by any suffering creature. My attempts to explain to them that I was allergic to cats

were shook off as curmudgeonly behaviour on my part, but eventually I convinced them that we must give away our newfound pet. However, complications had developed.

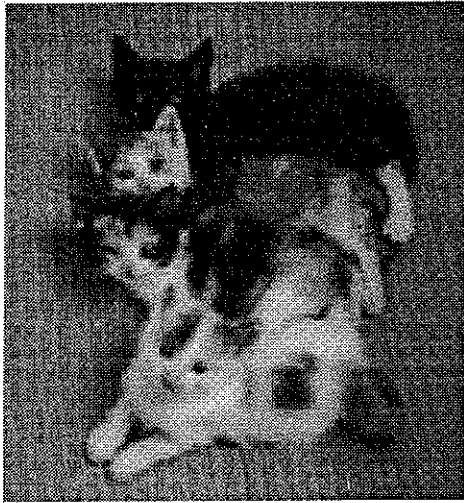
The complications I speak of were nothing less than the miracle of the renewal of life. For our trappy feline had gone and gotten herself pregnant with every bighead in the yard (Bigheads are what one of my roommates termed the tomcats that scamper about our neighborhood. They are called



## Philosophy Corner with Dave Wechsler

thusly in reference to their large heads). Heavy with child, Consuela, (for that is what she had come to be called) lazed around our house indolently, demanding food for her ever increasing stomach and refusing even to go outside.

Eventually, the big day came. It was the morning after my



birthday when Consuela gave birth to 5 kittens. I was alerted to the new development by one of my roommates over breakfast where he described the event with tenderness, awe and wonder. The cat popped last night, he said as he

poured himself a bowl of cereal.

And popped she had. When I burst into the back, there were 5 pint sized rodent looking things suckling to her now matronly bosom. And there they stayed for many weeks. Growing larger and larger, stronger and stronger, until they even figured out how to get out of the box we had put them in. It was time for signs to go up all over town. Free Kittens to a good home! they proclaimed. A friend from Massachusetts agreed to take Consuela up to his farm and I thought that soon we would be kitten free.



First, a note about my existence at this time. With Consuela's arrival, I was forced into spending less and less time in any place in our apartment except for my room. The birth actually helped things somewhat since Consuela was forced to be with her kittens in a box on the other side of our apartment and I felt a small sense of freedom. I could visit the kittens, but they could not visit me. This was to change.

With their first steps I knew we were poised for a plague of kittens that would sweep across our apartment the way Hitler swept across Europe. And I was not disappointed in my prediction. It was not long before 5 kittens were gamboling about the house, tripping over themselves in their efforts to be the first to try some new and alarming act of kittenhood. They were

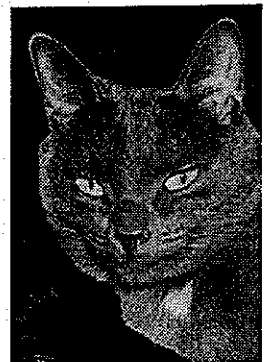
everywhere. I was frightened. The signs went up over town.

And then it was over, people came by and took the kittens. Consuela moved up to Massachusetts where I hope she is very happy and I felt a sense of relief sweep over me. Things were getting back to normal.

But it was not to be. A certain so-called friend had agreed to take two of the kittens. Since he was a friend, we fended off others requests for the two and held them for him until such a time that he was able to make his way to our Brooklyn abode and pick them up. We waited and waited and yet he didn't show up. In the meanwhile, I was called away to London to see my aunt perform in a harpsichord concert at St. John's Smith Square and when I returned, I was informed that he wouldn't be taking them. I was also informed that my roommates wanted to keep the two remaining kittens. This, of course, led to a bitter and heated argument where once again, somehow I was the mean one who didn't love kittens. And the whole idea of my being allergic to cats was called into question. He claimed he had never seen an allergic reaction from me in the whole time (now 5 months) that we had had cats in the house. It is true, he had never noticed an allergic reaction from me. That is for two reasons. One is that I was very careful in not touching the cats (or if I did, I washed my hands immediately following) and in keeping them out of my room. The other reason is that he's not a very perceptive person. As soon as I left the house and mingled with other folk, they would ask me, 'What's wrong with your eyes?', which were visibly reddened and slightly puffy despite my precautions.

But did I not promise you, the reader, singular occurrences when first I started this narrative? Here you have read much, yet nothing out of the ordinary. Sure, I've touched briefly on the miracle of life and the cruelty of men, but there has been nothing which suggested the presence of another world. Nothing that is so out of the boundaries of human experience that it would force me to write for this disreputable journal. Nothing which would make me reassess my place in the universe and call into question every last notion of religion and god which exist on our planet! Perhaps if we hence back to the times of the ancient Egyptians we may find some semblance of what I am about to relate; some distant foreign echo of a new and surprising theology. And all of it sparked by two tiny kittens. At this writing, they are still pint sized terrors that walk up and down the keyboard as I attempt to type their story. Perhaps they do not want it told.

But I am weary and must rest for the moment. I assure you that next month's installment will bring wonders without cease and pure Rabelasian insight. It began innocently enough, with an act of wonder that appeared (as miracles often do) slowly and with little fanfare as I began to notice the allergies that have plagued me for the last twenty-odd years disappear.



# INSPIRATION: A JUSTIFICATION

*Last month's theme here at AntiMatters was Inspiration, and a more inspiring bunch of contributions you never did see. Well, I never did see them. It was one of those themes, maybe, that was too big, too inspiring for your average AM contributor. At the time. Now, though, that AntiMatters has moved on, it seems some writers are ready for Inspiration. Of course, it does seem pretty appropriate for these contributions to come in now, when the Vices Issue is beginning to take form. It's a perfect lead in to one of the many vices under the sun, Laziness.*



## Anne Kadet:

For my live-in husband, the whole world is a source of inspiration, a sort of feedbag permanently attached to his eyes and ears which provides fodder for a truly prodigious output of songs.

For me, and perhaps others who do far less actual observing and far more obsessing about the self, finding inspiration for song writing is deservedly more difficult.

The music, which derives from the emotions and drives that color life without any prompting from discipline or focus, is easy. Sit down at the piano, bang out a few chords, and you are bound to come up with something. It is the generous nature of music to resonate and stir up feeling no matter how mundane the chord progression. And having been brought up in a world where music is always blaring-- from the radio, the TV, the elevator-- almost any combination of chords is bound to be familiar, and consequently, pleasing to the ear (or, in rare instances, jarringly unfamiliar, in which case you are an avant garde composer, and it doesn't matter whether anyone likes it or not.)

It is the lyrics, which have to actually be about something, that are frustrating. I hate writing lyrics. Usually, I end up singing about my dog, Hiegel, who watches me while I panic. I have come up with several variations on the following ditty:

"Hey, little Hiegel-Loo  
What are you doing-oo  
I like your funny tail  
Hiegel is in jail!"

When the dog is not looking, I revert to singing about myself, which is natural for the self-absorbed, and in the right hands, not a bad subject. But singing about oneself often leads one to believe that you must be sincere and express your deepest emotions. That I would rather die than do that on stage is not much of an exaggeration. I don't even think I could do that if I were alone in a soundproof room. I am certain that combining one's true feelings with music will result in some sort of breakdown for even the happiest of men.

You can always sing about the opposite sex, of course. You can shout a girl's name 100 times in a song and achieve good results, even if you and everyone in the audience never knew a person by that particular name. Oh Maureen! Maureen! Agh! Maureen! We have all felt that way about someone, and will automatically identify, making the person

on-stage a genius. But, being in a situation where I have a live-in husband who is also in my band, that is not an option. Shouting Theodore! twenty times in public over a lusty beat would probably result in the breakup of the band, if not a more fundamental institution in my life.

So I am in the hard spot of having to wait for real inspiration to swing down and touch my medulla. And I do mean wait. I have songs that have suffered for months under the weight of Hiegel lyrics before they became real songs with real words.

And here is where this essay becomes difficult, for if I knew a source of inspiration for writing lyrics, if I knew how to call it up from the toaster or wherever it hides while I suffer, I would have put that in the first paragraph. The truth is that for me, and I imagine for a lot of other musicians, there is never any inspiration for the words. There is only the hard work of sitting down and writing until you have something you can live with, something you can sing on stage without being embarrassed.



## *inspiration continued, by anne kadet*

The inspiration comes later, when you are alone in the apartment, the neighbors are out, the dog is asleep and you can finally sing those lyrics with real abandon, sing them to the wall and the couch and out the window until the body and instrument and words and music become one. That is when the music brings out the truth in what you wrote. It is the music that inspires the lyrics.

I never read the lyrics printed in liner notes. The verses, rendered in tiny, sterile letters, are always trite and lifeless and I end up disappointed with the songwriter. But when those same lyrics are set to music, the heart brings back the meaning that was lost in the cold reading.

Which brings up an interesting point. If it is the music that brings meaning to the words, it should follow that the lyrics could be hammered out, monkey on a typewriter style, and it wouldn't matter. I could sing about my dog on-stage, and if the music was good enough, it would sound like Shakespeare.

So why bother? Live-in husband, who is never ever stumped for wonderful lyrics, has, at times, become so exasperated by my whining over my lack of lyrical ability that he tells me to write any old thing and be done with it. In a way, he is right. My voice is lousy enough that no one can figure out what I'm singing anyway.

But the truth is, deliberately writing bad lyrics would be betraying the music. Music, being incorruptible, can carry the most vicious lies and sorriest excuses you can impose on it. But singing a song like that would make you feel like a crook. And I am not a crook. I am just uninspired.

### INSPIRATION by Gene Morris

Many people, and even some songwriters, are waiting for inspiration. The danger of doing so cannot possibly be overstated. Inspiration, the medical term for the body's intake of air, is essential to all daily functions. While inspiration is undoubtedly essential to songwriting, and many other activities as well, failure to breathe can quickly result in death. Do not wait for inspiration: seek medical help right away. If inspiration does come, but only with difficulty, you may be suffering from asthma or a bronchial infection and medical attention, once again, should prove helpful. Lack of inspiration - be aware of the warning signs: A bluish tinge to the face, inability to speak, an urgent flailing about of the limbs, and an increasing sense of panic. If you recognize any of these symptoms, either in yourself or another, contact a medical expert right away. Delay can be deadly.

Next month: an essay on the importance of expiration - the process by which air is expelled from the lungs. Don't hold your breath!

boo.



BILLY KELLY • cd release party  
saturday, august 15th • 7:00



## *An excerpt from the secret diaries of R.F. Dandyhead: 6/30/98*

It is that time of year again. The flowers are in bloom, the sun is hot, and I find that I long for the companionship of a female. I loathe dating, but I fear biological imperatives prevail and I must dive headfirst into the squalid world of bars and juke joints to find that special someone.

On the way home I buy a large compilation of erotica. Dating and meeting people should not be done with any subtlety whatsoever and I find that working myself into a frenzy before I even head to the bar gives my eyes a certain rabid pitbull look which no woman can mistake.

In my heightened, agitated state I make my way down the street to the bar. Small children scamper away as I approach and look furtively after me after I pass, knowing that I am up to no good. I kick the door of the bar open with a loud "YEEEEEEEEHAAWW" and burst into the bar yellin', "Come on ladies! Who wants some?" I hook my thumbs into my belt and stand there in the doorway, waiting for my eyes to become accustomed to the dark interior of the bar. When it does, I realize that I am the only one in the bar except for the bartender, who is standing there with a mop.

"We're not open yet R.F. It's only 11," he drawls at me, but I am far past understanding such mundanities. I saunter up to the bar, lay down a Lincoln, and say, "Abe says it's time to

drink." Ralph puts the mop down and walks behind the bar.

I would imagine he's seen me in something close to this state before, cause he does the right thing; he gives me some ginger ale in a shot glass and whips it down the bar into my waiting hand, and barks, "Get the hell out of here!"

I look at him and smile. I pick up the glass, take off my hat and set it on the bar. Then I down the shot in one gulp. I slam the glass down on the bar, bring my hat up to my head and say, "I'll be seein' you then when you're open," before turning my hat backwards so that the baseball brim conveniently blocks the sun from my neck and shoving it over my head. Then I back towards the door; smiling and bowing all the while like I'm in some goddamn japanese tea ceremony.

It takes a minute to readjust my eyes to the midday sun and I saunter back down the block towards my apartment, a provocative and beguiling book waiting for my return. My run-in with Ralph took too much out of me and I need to recharge before I head out into the world to find love.

Back at home I pick up my guitar and sling it over my knee. Then I spank it. When I am done it is midnight and it is time to go "on the prowl" again. I wonder if Ralph is still waiting for my return as anxiously as I've been waiting to return. We shall see....

## ON RECORDING WITH TOM NISHIOKA

BILLY KELLY

Tom Nishioka is the Godfather of Sound.

I recently finished recording and mixing my new CD, True Irish Ghost Stories, at Tom's Kakumodani Studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and wanted to share some of the experience with my fellow Fort-goers. I was initially going to write about the relaxed, welcoming feel of Tom's studio — about the laid-back, atmosphere and comfortable couch in his control room — about the way all nervousness and apprehension over my first recording session melted away as Tom adroitly; although with great care; set me up in his spacious sound room — but I won't. These are personal memories; to be shared by me and Tom alone. Go away. You have no place here.

I will however write a few words on Tom's expert, and often astounding, knowledge of sound. Like most singer/songwriters going into their first recording session, I had some vague idea of what I wanted my songs to sound like but no real way to put these ideas into words. "I want the guitar to sound more solid — I want my voice to sound more like a skeleton singing over a telephone — I want the harmonica sound more like a burning tree." Tom has an uncanny ability to turn these absurdities into actual sounds, burning tree harmonica and all. Many times during our months of recording together Tom was able to translate my loose sound-concepts into focused and interesting music — occasionally creating sounds that I myself had never heard in my own songs.

Aside from his invaluable ability to turn ideas into sounds, and perhaps more important to my own recording process, Tom was able to tell me why sounds; once captured on tape; did or didn't work for my songs. True, his talk of micron-decibel levels, nanomillisecons and digital-distortion-relay-oscillation did occasionally go over my head. But so what? When he told me my "harmony vocal was non-musically interacting with the reverberation of the lead guitar and vocal" he was right — my harmony vocal sucked. So, we did a few more takes until I got it right and stopped non-musically interacting with the reverberation of the lead guitar and vocal.

In the end Tom and I became co-producers of my CD. My rough ideas and his sharp technical knowledge combined to create a recording that is more than I had originally set out to create (and, I hope, more than anyone familiar with my music would expect to hear).

I would certainly advise anyone writing and performing on this scene to record with Tom. His studio and equipment are professional quality, his rates are extremely affordable and, most importantly, he enjoys working with singer/songwriters and their vague ideas.

For more information about True Irish Ghost Stories and Kakumodani Studio, visit my website at [www.billyghost.com](http://www.billyghost.com) (It should be up by August 15th). To contact Tom Nishioka: call 212-726-8638. Or 212-PAN-TOAT ("Like Pan Toast, but leave off the S, for Savings!")

See Jon Berger for back-issue copies of Tom Nishioka's 'Demo Tips'.

## DEMO TIPS

by Tom Nishioka

### Microphones and Acoustic Guitars

We see a lot of people at Sidewalk throwing a mic in front of an acoustic, or we set up in a studio with our guitars and get ready to record the next great american album. There's a lot going on there, and you can enhance or ruin your sound depending on what you do.

Acoustic guitar is a very subtle instrument, and the concepts involved in mic'ing it go a long way when used with other instruments.

First of all, distance is very important. Certain mic (dynamic mics)'s frequency response changes depending on how close you get to them. Moving backward or forward is like turning the bass up or down on your stereo. Obviously, volume is also affected by distance.



But there's something else that is going to be crucial to your mix — I'll call it airiness. The closer you get to an instrument, the less air you're going to have in the recording. What this "air" is, is reflected sound coming from around the room, as opposed to the direct sound that comes straight from the instrument without bouncing off of anything. Remember, very few people listen to music by putting their ear right up against the performer's guitar.

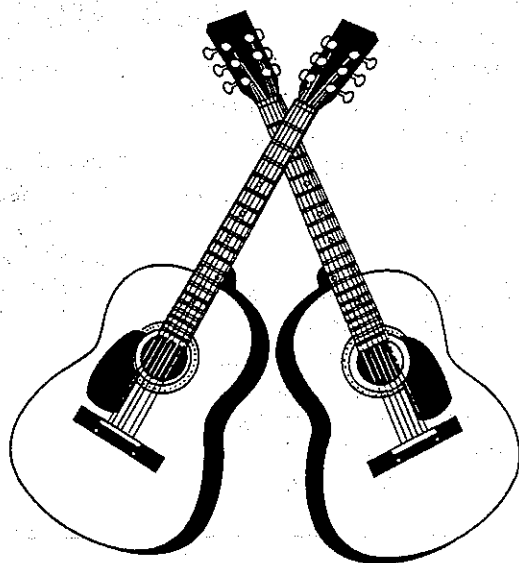
Another important element is mic placement. Acoustics sound very different depending on where your ear is. Try this: have someone play guitar in front of you and plug one ear with your finger. Close your eyes and focus on the sound. Move from your ear over the bridge to your ear over the soundhole, to the 12th fret, behind the tail of the guitar, at the nut, etc.

As an approximation, I'll say that the tail and bridge are richer in low mids, the sound hole is full, and the neck is brighter and more high-ended. Each one of these positions changes sound depending on how close you are, as mentioned above.

Aside from the kind of guitar you play and how you play it, the last element is the mic. As in last month's column, different mics accentuate different frequencies. The SM-58 used at the Sidewalk are a great general mic, but they are not the most bass heavy mics around. Knowing this, you can compensate by putting the mic in a bass heavy region on the guitar — the soundhole or bridge.

The lesson here is this you can be your own soundperson. Don't like your live sound? Move! Vocal being drowned out by guitar? Give the mic some space! In live situations, you often have to go with the close mic'd soundhole because it's the loudest part of the guitar (when you mic areas where it's not so loud, you have to turn the mic up, and that can cause feedback in a live situation). But it's not the only place to mic and not necessarily the best. Bridge, where the neck joins the body, the 12th fret, the nut, and angled at the tail are common engineers position for recording mic placement. Try 'em. See which mic and where works best for your guitar.

Distance, placement, and mic type are all going to drastically affect your guitar sound (and any other sound: vocals, drums, amps). Acoustic guitar is a great instrument to experiment with because it produces such a range of frequencies and distinctive tone with a number of different places to mic. One more thing — try mic'ing it in more than one place at the same time and summing or panning the mics. As discussed in the last few columns, when done without phase cancellation, this gives wide, fat, phat guitar tone that can move around the stereo field depending on which notes you play. OR, set up two mics, pan hard left and hard right, and move yourself around while you play to get stereo field movement. That's some hokey pokey.





# POETRY CORNER

## SOMETHING WRONG

Four months after us, I made the first date.

First, I couldn't find my lucky socks.  
Then, I broke my shoelace. Twice.  
I forgot the Third Rule of Getting Lucky.  
My card got stuck at the Fourth Street ATM.

The napkin with her address got soaked while I washed up.  
And I ran out of deoderant.  
My car wouldn't start.  
Only then did I get violently ill. Food poisoning, they said, but I know better.

You're a virus I can't shake.  
You're an drug I don't take.  
Our is an oath I won't break.

## ADDICTED TO LOVE

Look, when you left, I didn't know what to do, so I did what any red-blooded american male does when facing heartbreak of hitherto unknown proportion:

I got addicted to Tetris.

Now, you may laugh, but you're a girl; you can't possibly understand what that game means to us broad-shouldered, he-men who can never let our guard down.

Day after day of yearning, struggling to be potent and virile, can be quite a strain, see? Those little figures, floating on down, they can be a salve like you wouldn't believe.

No longer do I have to be Macho Jon, the Hairy Guy. With Tetris, I can be free of society's constraints, a man with excellent hand-eye coordination and a spatial sense like none other.

I have scored higher than 5,000 points, and on Level 9 to boot!

Sure, it's been lonely, without you around, but the evenings just fly by, between me, my computer, and the flies.

We barely miss you at all.

Oh! A long one!

I really don't want to list my vices. It's not something I do on a regular basis. It's not up there on my list of "to do's". I don't really want to break it down and discuss it either. What's the point? I mean, either I'll be pointing fingers or defending myself from pointed fingers. So instead of this, here's a little poem:

To talk about a vice  
isn't always nice  
With every vice  
there's always some price  
though it seems like paradise  
it might better to put it on ice  
but that means sacrifice  
when those old feelings entice  
Christ

When dealing with vices  
complete with devices  
there's usually some crises  
which usually suffices  
to supply a reason to defend  
can a vice be a friend  
or a means to an end

## Vice Grips and Tips

by Joe BENDIK

Check out Joe BENDIK

& The Heathens:

Friday 8/21

Midnight @ Arlene Grocery

Friday 8/28

11:00 @ Sidewalk

by  
Jonathan  
Berger

I'm gonna buy me  
one of them new  
Time Machines

and I'll visit your past  
over and over again  
inserting myself into the you  
you were  
before me.

Soon, you will have no memories that don't  
have a vein of me running through them.

This is my diabolical plan.

Modern Technology Being What It Is...

# Record Reviews

## bicycle - The Occupation of a Sand Dune

There are twenty cuts on this album. Twenty real cuts! No filler, no crap! Twenty whole songs, ten recorded at the Alden B. Dow Creativity Center and ten recorded in NYC. You know the story about bicycle, don't you? Allow me to elucidate.

bicycle, led by Kurt Liebert and whomever he can sucker into a trip, is a band that travels by bike. While that doesn't sound so amazing for local gigs ("Oh, so they bike from 14th Street all the way to the East Village. Like, *wow!*"), it's pretty impressive when you realize the band has done five cross-country trips in its career.

But that's their gimmick (and a good one). What's under scrutiny here is the music, which is, like I said, **twenty** songs! Included among them are "Pop Song" "69" and "Clean," which all use samples and rhythm tracks to great effect. You have to figure that a band that spends most of its time literally on the road has to find a lot of rhythm in their music, the pumping of the pedals, the turn of the wheels, over and over again... So there's a lot of electronic sounds on this album, an entirely new aspect in bicycle songwriting. There's funk and hip-hop, with songs like "Smokey" intoning "the sound of the groove is bigger than you." It is, Kurt, it is! While the band has a drummer, it sounds like most of the rhythm is programmed, which leaves a very danceable record. You have to bop when you listen to it. And it's memorable. The songs are with you days and weeks later. It makes me want to go out and bike across America (cut 5). Their gimmick is apparently an inspiration to them, coming up in various ways in "Bicycling Across America," "Running Away," "Smokey," "Pop Song," and "High Plains Drifter."

Of course, there's a softer side. Their old-time hit, performed for CNN, "Female Urologist," ("Like a male gynecologist") is on this album, as is the new-fangled sappy number "Girl at the Video Store."

Then there's the goofy "Oh Jesus, I'm Dying," featuring the adventures of Oprah, Uma, Dave and Godzilla all on a night out. It sounds like some kind ukulele-driven number, but it's not.

There's rock, there's there's metal, folk. This record eclectic, with great to en-

dance, there's is incredibly great vocals and playing. It's too big joy at once, so that the

17th song leaves no impression until you've heard the album a few dozen times. But it is most certainly worth hearing a few dozen times ~

Stephanie Biederman

## Das Phrogge - Lovers and Friends

Das Phrogge, led by AntiFolk personality Christopher Dillon, seems filled with potential which is not entirely realized. The excellent package of their CD is murky and indirect, like the group's name, like the group's songs. It's a jumbled mass of quality and confusion, on several levels.

The package features lyrics to songs (especially valuable in this case), but in non-linear order. There are pictures of the band, but no identification as to who's who. There's a foldout poster of the band in... the studio, maybe, but what are they doing? Who's who? It's all a little lost. Similar puzzling aspects in the music exist.

Das Phrogge presents Dillon's rockers very well. The band — especially guitarist Rob Norris — sounds great all through "Erica," "Getting High," and "Goodbye Curves," and Dillon's voice is powerful and soulful, in a white-boy kind of way. But they don't really lead to comprehension. All the great

noise the band makes, couples with Dillon's urges to emote and emote again through every song, lead to little grasp on the lyrics. It all sounds good, sure, but what's it about?

The mid-tempo numbers, "The Guide" and "Glad I Came" give a softer side of the band, giving a better chance to get at the words behind the music. The lyric sheet helps measurably, finding, "Goodbye Curves" to be an acerbic kiss-off to a girl who doesn't mean much to the singer anymore.

The lyric sheet enclosed shows how beautiful the confusing sentiments of "Glad I Came" are. "Us together is like bicycle riding; you won't forget to kiss like we did," Dillon sings, before going into a strange character reversal that really only becomes clear when you understand every single word.

So what have you got from Das Phrogge. Some great playing, some good songs, a mixed package, that leaves you wanting something clearer, something more. Which might have been what they aimed for all along. ~ Jonathan Berger <<http://members.aol.com/buddyblak/dasphrogge.html>>



**WRITE FOR ANTIMATTERS:** We've got albums and albums that need to be reviewed! Want to get in the game? You can share your opinions about music with dozens of people! Contribute to AntiMatters, and who knows what luck will befall you...

# Record Reviews

## Mike Rocklin - Anti-Folk Veteran

AntiFolk Veteran indeed. Mike Rocklin played at the very first AntiHoot, back when Lach hosted the event in his Rivington Street loft. Though Rocklin doesn't live in New York City (he's based in Albany now), he still plays downstate, still comes to the AntiHoots.

Not everything sounds like it's AntiFolk (whatever that means). Of the eighteen songs recorded solo acoustic this Spring, Rocklin covers a fair amount of ground. "Love Ain't Counterfeit" is a bluesy love song. "That's Where the money Is" is a yearning folkier about searching for the good life in the big city. In fact, more often than not, this guy sounds pretty traditional as a solo singer/player. And 18 songs is a long time to listen to one guy with a guitar. Luckily, there's a lot of good material on the cassette, with a lot of good lines. "Can't Stand the Heat" ends with "if you can't stand the heat, get out!" "Rum & Coke" plays with some strange rules of rhythm, adding more words in the verse than you thought could fit.

The final cut, "Headphones," is a novelty cut, that goes along the lines of "I like head... phones." It's a funny song, once. Maybe twice. Once you know the punchlines, I dunno. Probably better live to a room or strangers. Probably doesn't have the staying power of others songs on this release.

"Now people they say, I'm wasting my time, there's really no point in my singing," Rocklin says in before singing the title of "Tough Luck." Clearly, this veteran is in the battle for as long as it takes.



~ Gustav Plympton <Hyland Recordings, 21 Bradford St., Albany NY 12206, 518-434-1552, hyland@wizvax.net>

## Dan Emery Mystery Band - Love and Advertising

It's interesting how a recording — even of an artist you know fairly well — can illuminate new aspects of the art. The songs, the arrangements, the whole schmegeggi can be seen in an entirely new light thanks to the magic of recording.

So it's the little things I'm noticing most on the Dan Emery Mystery Band's debut release, Love and Advertising. As an Executive Producer (and probably, a fair percentage of AntiMatters readers are Executive Producers of this democratically produced album), I've been made very aware of the many stages of the album. Still, each one has offered new insights into the material, which says good stuff about both the songs themselves, and the approach the artists have taken in their recording process.

"It's Not Enough To Be In Love," still in a fairly acoustic form

(just guitar and piano accompaniment), means more than I ever thought, though the sentiment is encapsulated in the bridge, "Sages say that the answer must come from within. And if you're looking for it in my eyes, you better look again."

"Space Renegade," begins like a Pink Floyd song. Dan Emery's anguished vocals are the furthest thing in the world from the controlled fine beauty of Floyd, but the guitar, bass and short-wave radio all come together to make tasty kind of art rock

beautiful noise. Of course, the song, written with younger brother Jacob Emery, might have always been supposed to sound like Pink Floyd, and it's only become apparent now.

"Winning" is as powerful as a full-band onslaught as it was, back when he played it

alone on a battered acoustic guitar. It encapsulates what Dan's songs were originally about, crying out in noisy desperation, anguish in the voice, and humor in the lyrics.

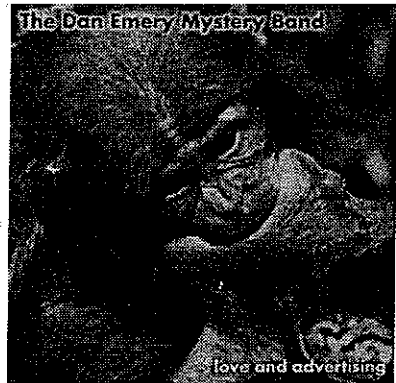
"The Girl in the Laundromat" has some excellent little piano tinkling by Steve Espinola, making the song move by really quickly.

Steve Espinola's part in the mix are perhaps most interesting when he plays the short-wave radio. Used to brilliant effect in "Space Renegade" for much of the mood, and "The Only One Who Loves You" for much of the volume, his knob-turning is wonderfully finessed, and adds an original element to much of the music.

Dan Emery has two songs that tackle the same title from different ends, but their styles are violently different. "I Just Want to Live," is placed right before "Don't Let Me Die Tonight," but they're as different as one and negative one. "I Just Want To Live" has Dan singing about doing something meaningful in his life, while "Don't Let Me Die Tonight" tells the story of a dangerous near-death experience in New York City.

The songs are good. The recordings are different enough from what you experience live to want to own them, and revisit them. It's definitely worth owning, though you probably do already.

~ S Biederman <Mekkatone Records, Box 20528, NYC 10009, sespinola@aol.com>



## Princess

Princess released a cassette with two songs. One of them is a take on Paleface's hit, Burn & Rob. I hope he gave permission: Paleface allegedly got pissed at old pal Beck for lifting the concept of "Burn & Rob" ("rock and roll made me want to burn and rob.") for his "MTV Makes Me Wanna Smoke Crack." I wish Princess luck, because Paleface is a pretty big guy -- and Princess seems like a fairly fey name... ~ Arnie Rogers

# Record Reviews

## Billy Kelly - True Irish Ghost Stories

Billy Kelly always played soft, sensitive, smart songs. He still does, but on this new EP, he's got a variety of instrumentation backing him up, to give that soft stuff enough punch and power to keep anyone's attention.

Coproduced by Kelly and Tom Nishioka, who, apparently can do no wrong, the album has a variety of guests, but is mostly performed by Mr. Kelly himself.

The release is six songs strong, and five of them are mighty strong. The beautiful playing on "The Sadness We Have Known" is sweet and sad, while still uplifting. It's pretty much a keening song: "With this round, my friends, we'll drown the sadness cried in tears and bid their traces from each face, forever disappear. While life is on the hills and children know not now our fear, with this round, my friends, we'll drown the sadness cried in tears." It's epic in its simplicity. It's a real folk song.

"The Rath" is moody and strong, a painting of a quest gone terribly awry. "It Rains on

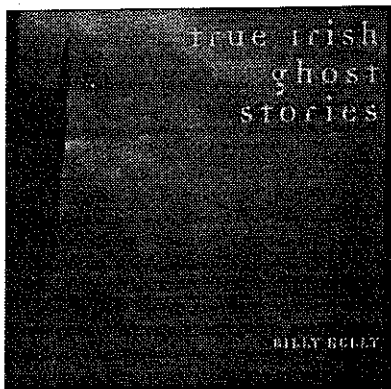
Them" is another simple tale, of a place so humid, it's never sunny. "It rains on them and down their roads, on their homes which will never dry again." Doesn't this Kelly guy have a happy thought in his head?

It's the traditional he must be coming from. Kelly, as you might have assessed, is a real-live, sensitive folk artist. Sincere in his delivery and Celtic in his origins, he's writing songs that sound and feel generations old.

"Saint John's Point" has a nice instrumental introduction with some neat mandolin playing, until two minutes in, when the keys and heavy drums made it evocative of another time, a dark time. "Saint John, I'm coming home 'round the way of Inver Bay and outside Dunkineely-O. Tonight I feel like I'm climbing up a wall, and I've even been in Donegal." You know, without understanding any of what's going on, that you're in a really bad place at a really bad time.

Billy Kelly's one moody motherfucker, that's for sure. The first line of the first song is "If I live long enough to see the day that I die..." The cover, the title, everything leads you to think this is one dark guy. More power to him. What a great album.~

Jonathan Berger <[www.billyghost.com](http://www.billyghost.com), email: [billyghost@earthlink.com](mailto:billyghost@earthlink.com)>



## Sloganeering in Love and Advertising

There are some subtle changes in the material in Dan Emery's new release, Love and Advertising.

- In "The Only One Who Loves You," the first song on the album, the lyrics, always fairly flexible in the past, have been rooted into a very commercial-oriented format. Not commercial, as in radio-song-airplay, but commercial as in radio-commercial-airplay. Each line of the song is a human subject involved in purchasing or using some product. The final verses, always curious in their reliance on Tower Records and bargain-bin music, now comes into greater focus as the final push of the sales approach. The chorus "I am the only one who loves you," with the chorusing voices, suggests that only this particular individual cares, this individual (or individuals) is the only potential source of satisfaction available.

- "Student Loan" recalls Dan Emery's desperation as a busker, working subway stations ("I'll have my guitar case open so you can throw in lots of dough"), seeking money to return to his loan agency: "But if you put in a twenty, I'll send it straight to Citibank."

- "Shake Your Booty on the Dance Floor" has been renamed "(One Good Reason To) Shake Your Booty." The new title suggests that there's a necessary matter of convincing. A new series of lyrics helps explain why it is of special import to shake: "Because tonight could be a night out of your life. Tonight could be your lucky night. Come on make up your mind, and have a good time tonight..." What advertisement is that from? Surely, it's not an original tagline.

- "Winning" has always been a form of "Advertisement for Himself," but in the context of the other songs, it seems even more potentially self-aggrandizing:

- "Her Favorite Bra" always climaxed at the line, "I wanna be a bra for you," but now, in the context of the album, appears to be a new sort of slogan, an advertisement for some new form of feminine support.

- The back cover is a supermarket, with each of the songs on its own individual shelf, available (particularly with the nuances of CD technology) for individual sampling.

The reason for these changes? This is obvious. For an album entitled Love and Advertising, a theme has been drawn out of the material, encouraging the most commercial aspects of salesmanship. A band that must promote itself so heavily has also come to realize the practical value of a sales pitch.

- Professor G Lesse II

# The Sidewalk Cafe (94 Ave.A)

*The phrase that rhymes! All shows are free with a one drink minimum. (<http://members.aol.com/folkbro>)*

Mon.Aug.3- The Antihoot with Lach at 7:30. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Aug.4- **Piano Night**- 7:30- The Count, 8-Kenny Davidsen, 8:30-Jamie Stellini, 9-Dvorah Silverstein  
9:30-Holly Cosner, 10- Andrew McCann, 10:30-Enid

Wed.Aug.5- 8-James Jewell, 9-Big Honey, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Aug.6- **Rob Ryan's Country Thursday**: 8-Tennessee Tuxedo, 9-Rob Ryan, 10-Cecil's Bait & Tackle,  
11- Country Jam

Fri.Aug.7- 8-Michael Eck, 8:30- Brian Thomas, 9-Hue, 10-Lach, 11-Jarrold Gorbelt, 12-Big Black Nun

Sat.Aug.8- 8-Jessica Kane, 8:30-Jesse White, 10-The Humans, 11-Tom Clark and Phil Cohen, 12- Parker

Sun.Aug.9- 7:30-Kevin Kadish, 8-Cleveland Steamers, 8:30-Rob Skane, 9-Alice Texas, 9:30-Hoon, 10-Kate  
Kind, 10:30-Stellan Wahlstrom

Mon.Aug.10- The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Aug.11- 7:30- Three Normal Humans, 8:30-Sean Lee, 9-Patty Murray, 10- Springwell, 11-Steve Singh

Wed.Aug.12- 7:30- The Reachers, 8:30-Andrea Hanson, 9-Randy Kaplan, 10- Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Aug.13- **Rob Ryan's Country Thursday**: 7:30- Gary Heidt, 8:30-Youngblood, 9-Rob Ryan, 10- Little Mo,  
11- The Country Jam

Fri.Aug.14- 8- **PARTY!** Fortified Records signs national deal with Big Daddy Distributors tonight! Featur-  
ing performances by: Lach, Joe Bendik, Mike Rechner, Rick Shapiro, Major Matt Mason U.S.A., Clay Mitchell,  
Johnny Seven, Larry Goggin, and Surprise Guests.

Sat.Aug.15- 7- **Billy Kelly Record Release Party**, 9-Hood, 10- Animal Head, 11- The Meanwhiles

Sun.Aug.16- 7:30-Meg Flather, 8-Julia Joseph, 8:30-Jeff Lightning Lewis, 9-Peter Froom, 9:30-Shana,  
10-Near, 10:30- Rebecca Jensen and The Fantastik Fourk

Mon.Aug.17- The Antihoot at 7:30. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Aug.18- 7:30-Lorijo Manley, 8:30-Bernadette, 9-Shameless, 10-Travis McGee, 10:30- Paul Matthews

Wed.Aug.19- 7:30-Michele Riganese, 8-Bowery Angels, 8:30-Clay Mitchell, 9-Meaghan Gannet,  
9:30-David Dragov, 10- Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Aug.20- **Rob Ryan's Country Thursday**: 8-Trio Magges (Greek Trad.), 9-Rob Ryan, 11-The Country Jam

Fri.Aug.21- 8-Monique St.Walker, 9-Thom MacFarlane, 10- Ford Falcon Blue, 11-Thomas Covenant

Sat.Aug.22- 8-Nick Patrick, 10-Gregg Swann, 11- Tom Clark and Phil Cohen, 12- Japonize Elephants

Sun.Aug.23- 5-7- **Art Opening for Young-Me**, 8-Rythms of Aqua, 9-Al Rose, 10-Anna

Mon.Aug.24- The Antihoot at 7:30. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Aug.25- 7:30-Double Naught Spy, 8:30-Liz Graham, 9-Gene & Mimi, 10- Lenny Molotov, 10:30-O.,  
11- K.O. Trudie

Wed.Aug.26- 7:30-Jarod Gibson, 8-Kevin Brady, 8:30-Verb, 9-Grey Revell, 9:30-Gentleman Jim Noone,  
10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Aug.27- **Rob Ryan's Country Thursday**: 8-Tomi Lusford, 9-Rob Ryan, 10-Little Mo, 11-The Country Jam

Fri.Aug.28- 7:30-Parker, 8- A Suncrush For Sweethearts, 10-Matthew Puckett, 11- Joe Bendik & The Heathens

Sat.Aug.29- 9-Rachel Sage, 10- Bionic Finger, 11-Yucca Flats, 12-The Sway Machinery

Sun.Aug.30- 7:30-Peter Dizozza and Liam Glynn, 8:30-Ariana, 9-Steve Espinola, 10-Debbie Schwartz

Mon.Aug.31- The Antihoot at 7:30. Sign-up at 7:30.