

# Back to School

# AntiMatters

Contact AntiMatters  
24-7 At:

AntiMatters@mailexcite.com

Visit AntiMatters

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[http://www.geocities.com/  
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This could have been the greatest issue of AntiMatters yet.

This issue could have set the stars aflame, let the oceans swarm the land, let the bananas grow unencumbered. This issue could have changed history.

Originally slotted for this issue was an interview with ME. Unfortunately, space constrictions must keep it shelved.

Fear not, though: there's always next issue.

Jonathan Berger

appetizer du jour  
Jonathan Berger

*Thanks to Lach for  
this month's theme...*

### Contributors

Jonathan Berger  
S Biederman  
Joie  
Prof. G Lesse II  
Jeff Lewis  
Penner MacBryant  
Gustav Plympton  
Arnie Rogers  
Johnny Sizzle  
VA Turner  
Tom Warrick

# AntiMatters

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

Every September, I go to my local college, and I look at the new meat (Don't look at me that way. You don't know how it is). And every September, I smell the fear on the new students. Excitement, too, but lots of fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of being unknown, fear of being discovered, fear of too much to even consider. They're afraid of it all. Every September. welcome Back.

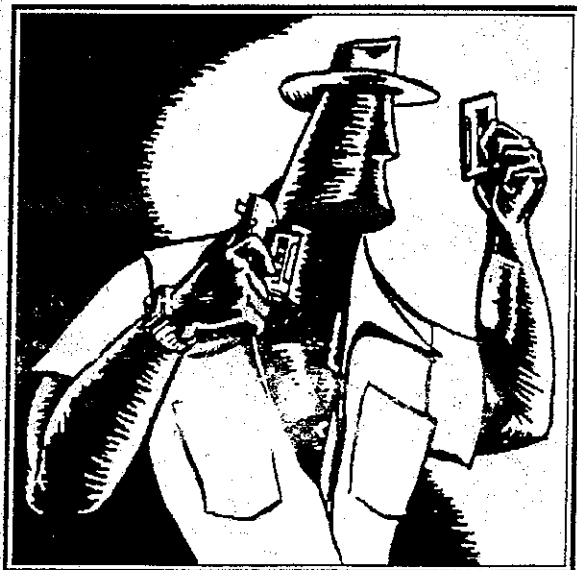
Gustav Plympton

### Subscription Information

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REPORT FROM THE FORT... REPORT FROM THE FORT... REPORT FROM THE FORT...

Sunday, August 2nd, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - **Pat Harper** played the best set of my life, and that's not just because he's holding a knife to my throat. It's also because he's one of the few AntiFolk sanctioned spoken artists. Who else comes to most of the AntiHoots, prepared to perform any of his myriad of characters. From his far-reaching conceptual coup, "Balloon Head," to his regular lampooning of his president, to an emphatic and painful tribute to the emphatic and painful proto-punk band, the Godz, Pat Harper makes you wonder, leaves you in doubt, and most of all, keeps you thinking. Which is why, knife or no, Pat Harper is a dangerous man to have around. (Jonathan Berger)

Tuesday, August 4th, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - **Jamie Stellini** played "Me and My Fat Ass." I can state from personal observation that her ass isn't fat at all. Her beats aren't phat, either, but that's OK. Stellini played solo piano on this Piano Night to a filled house of fans, family & friends, who all watched with admiration & appreciation. At least, I did, until she played a song like "Your Burning Flesh," about people who watched her with admiration and appreciation on the train. Evidently, she endorses hellbound descent for anyone who looks at her. I'll with-hold any future observations about her ass in the future, then, and stick to the songs. **Kenny Davidsen** played right before Stellini, but I only caught his last song, an annoying little ditty called "A Day in the Life." With its whiny hippie refrain of "I'd love to turn you on" and its inane middle section that swerves the song onto a different track and a totally inappropriate mood, I clapped enthusiastically when I was sure he was done with that song for good. If that's as good as this guy's songwriting gets, maybe he should just stick to covers. (G. Plympton)

Friday, August 14th, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - Not

Anne Husick invites YOU  
to the  
5th annual  
**LIBRA BIRTHDAY BASH**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29**  
at The FORT  
@ Sidewalk Cafe  
(94 Ave A @ 6th St)

performances by:  
7:30 - Bill Popp  
8:00 - Starchile  
8:30 - Joy Zuzulo  
9:00 - Mike Kilmer (of Illness)  
9:30 - SHAMELESS  
10:30 - Mr. BOLTGUN

admission is free - 2 for 1 drinks before 8pm  
bring all your friends - no matter what their sign  
**PARTY!!!**

all the usual suspects were there for the **Party**, celebrating the ultimate in AntiFolk labels, **Fortified**, teaming up with the ultimate in, I don't know, something equally important for distribution companies, **Big Daddy**. Now, according to the advance press on the deal, children all across America will be able to pop into their local Sam Goody and pick up a copy of Fortified's first release, Rick Shapiro's Unconditional Love. God help us, every one...

Seen on site to offer congratulations and heartfelt performances were **Mike Rechner**, **Joie**, **Joe Bendik**, **Mary Ann Farley**, **Marilee**, and many more. Lach, of course, opened & closed the event, with adrenelaine-soaked solo performances. The threat is, his second solo disc, Blang!, will be Fortified's 2nd national release. Good. (G. Plympton)

Saturday, August 15th, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> For the release of his brand-spanking new CD, **Billy Kelly** pulled out none of the stops. Instead of putting together an all star spectacular, rather than heavily promote the event, contrary to getting various people to sing his praises, Billy had friend and occasional collaborator **Curtis Eller** open for him, then perform a solo set. An hour of Kelly's minimal playing and soft voice was the same kind of sturdy, reliable performance as is available on the CD. Maybe it was the right strategy after all. (Gustav Plympton)

Saturday, August 22nd, 1998 <Eureka Joe's> - "Fire It Up" is a misleading song. When **Lee Chabowski** plays this ode to a moped, starting with lyrics about how it really burns rubber when you "fire it up."

Then, before he repeats the important chorus catch-phrase, he plays a simple acoustic riff that you know, in another's hands, could have been a blistering line. But it's not: Lee lets the riff's power remain in our imagination.

While he continues with the lyrics, the driver of the moped gets older, and finally, with his girlfriend, decides to sell the machine, as he struggles, for one last time, to "fire it up."

In a sense, the simplicity of the music, the barely-plucked chorus, suddenly becomes clear. The limitations placed on the riff are not because of any limitations of the of the player, but to suit the spirit of loss, of exhaustion, of the inability to spark that intrinsic magic necessary to fire it up. The song, in essence, is about the failure to enact the title. Which is all pretty clever, but doesn't stop me from wanting cooler guitarwork on the chorus.

The rest of Lee's show was good, too. (Prof. G Lesse II)

Saturday, August 22nd, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - **Japonize Elephants** played. They're a sort of mix of Klezmer, bluegrass and Frank Zappa. And they're from bloody Bloomington Indiana. I just want to know how they found each other!!! (Anne Husick)

Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - **Anna** cancelled cause she was really sick, but **Für Dixon** did a rockin' set (sort of an alterna version of Belinda Carlisle) to cover for her. **Lach** did a solo set which was light and fun, and **Coyote Shivers**, in from Los Angeles, set about offending everyone in the most wonderful way, with Lach

REPORT FROM THE FORT... REPORT FROM THE FORT... REPORT FROM THE FORT...

accompanying him on piano. It was a fun night, the kind you don't expect, but are really glad you had. (Anne Husick)

Tuesday, August 25th, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - After seeing over a dozen Gene & Mimi shows, I started listening to the lyrics. It's embarrassing to admit, but almost always, in listening to the most excellent proto-pop parents in AntiPolk, I concentrate on items other than the words. Originally, it was Mimi's incredible voice. Then it was the hooks. Then it was frightening falsetto that Gene pulls off, usually in harmonies. Now, though, I'm moving onto the lyrics. You know, beneath all the sunny pop songwriter, that group plays some damn depressing stuff. (S. Biederman)

Wednesday, August 26th, 1998 <Elbow Room> - **National Anthem**, led by Fort alumn **Dan Kilian**, stood far above on the elevated stage in Greenwich Village. The cavernous club swallowed whole the 20-30 people there to see the band; the Elbow Room could have accepted another hundred people. The band rocked out, loud and hard, though for too short. It seemed like the club keeps a tight schedule. The 8pm act started by eight twenty and was off by eight fifty. The Elbow Room is a great place to see an electric groovy band. There was room to dance, and comfy places to sit, and a full bar. Pity it cost FIVE DOLLARS to get in... (Arnie Rogers)



Sunday, August 30th, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - She's gorgeous, and very familiar. She looks like Dana Delany, but that's not how she's familiar. She looks a lot like this girl I had a crush on last year. She looks just like a girl I have a crush on this minute. Sitting with her back to the brick wall, smoking a filtered Camel, she is simply gorgeous.

Steve Espinola, forgoing his traditional supporting players, is onstage with the beautiful and talented Debby Schwartz, who will play her own set right afterwards. I'm wondering how I can talk to this beautiful woman, smoking with her friend, five tables away. Steve sings, "I wanna make dreams with you, I don't wanna be scared."

I wonder if I can try the old "you look familiar" line. I know I can't follow with "Maybe we met on my yacht." Nobody buys that one anymore.

"13-year-old pseudo-hip-hop kid, pimply, short and fat walks right up and gets her phone number..." Steve sings, "How the fuck did he do that?"

We all laugh. Her beautiful laugh, far off, ten chairs distant, seems musical, even as Steve hits more keys.

When Steve's set ends, and Debby's begins, the woman makes motions to her friend to leave. They listen through three songs of Debby's -- some of which are on her solo debut CD from Mercury, all are about unrequited love -- then head out.



I pinch myself, telling me that if I don't go up to talk to her now, I'll never have the chance again.

"But something in my gut kept holding on me," Steve sang earlier, "Sayin', 'Run away, Steven, get free free free...'"

The girl is gone, and I turn to Debby Schwartz who plays more songs about unrequited love.

Now she's one cute woman... (Jonathan Berger)

Monday, August 31st 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - Well, there was this girl and everyone was yelling for her to take her shirt/jacket off because she said all she had on under it was this purple bra and she said that was all she was going to wear on "stage" during her "set" but then she chickened out, so everyone started yelling "Take it off!" and so on. (inhale). So Lach said to her, "why don't you just take it off?" so she said "I'll take it off if you take your shirt off first" and before she had finished speaking, his shirt was off and he was doing Schwarzenegger poses there at the sound board but the girl chickened out anyway. (inhale) So the name of her second song was "Man of Steel", which seemed to complete the scene. Good stuff (Billy Kelly)

Monday, August 31st, 1998 <Fort @ Sidewalk Cafe> - **Jeff Lightning Lewis** played the AntiHoot tonight.

"He's not so great," Gustav Plympton said.

"Pardon?" I asked. I wasn't sitting with Gustav. Near him, but we hadn't spoken yet this evening.

"He's not so hot," Gustav reiterated, "Everyone's talking about how wonderful this Lightning Lewis is, how astounding a songwriter he is, what a great guy."

"Yeah," I said carefully, "He's pretty good."

"He's all right," Mr. Plympton agreed, "He's not too bad. He's not all that, though."

"Uh-huh," I said, turning again to listen to the performer.

"I mean, his songs are adequate, and his guitar-playing is all right. There's nothing wrong with him. But, there's nothing that makes him better than anyone else here."

"All right," I said, keeping my eyes to the stage, where Jeff was rapping up song number one.

"When he's older, and his songwriting will improve --"

"Look," I said, facing Gustav, "Are you on stage right now?"

"No," he said.

"Will you be getting on stage tonight?"

"I don't perform," he replied.

"So why don't you shut up and give the performer his due? I am sick of people talk-talk-talking, telling what's wrong with others, when they can't do a damned thing themselves. When have you written a song? When have you performed? What makes you qualified to criticize other people's stuff?"

Gustav sat quietly, and I got to listen to the rest of Jeff's set in peace. When he finished his slow-picking, mid-tempo, long 2nd song, we all clapped, and Gustav leaned into me.

"You do put out the zine on the scene, don't you?"

"Yes," I hissed.

"Full of criticism and commentary on what goes on in AntiFolk, right?"

"Uh-huh," I said, uneasily sure where this was going.

"When was the last time you picked up a guitar?"

I don't think I said another word for the rest of the night.

(Jonathan Berger)

## Don't Listen 2 Basketball Players:

# *Stay out of school!*

Ahhhh, September is here and soon we will hear the cheers of kids enjoying themselves as I do because I live across the street from a school yard full of the staccato shriek ramblings of little *wunderbars* at recess. 10 months straight! 100's of them tiny critters! Screaming out of glee!

Glee? I don't think so, bud! I think those shout and yells are made subconsciously out of relief and regret. This is how I see it... School is the Petri dish of those who would like to control (strangle) the offspring of the planet. It is thought that this can be done in a controlled, artificial and often frozen environment where few can actually learn (live). The experience of living (learning) are not allowed to flourish. This comes about because people have the assumption (you know about assumptions...) that an enriched (educated) life cannot be had in the natural human environment but can only be found in an institution which will mould, weaken, and oppress the children's every word and actions. It is convenient for parents or "parents" to put their children into an scenario which makes promises to "take care" of all their children's needs and that without school, your kids will be stupid, boring, and should lack social skills (will not get married). Now I know you might be reading this and at the same time you are thinking about that lyrics in that Suicidal Tendencies 80's thrash metal song, (shall we sing) "All I wanted was a Pepsi, but I got a Pepsi, I'm not crazy! **INSTITUTION!** You're the one who's crazy! **INSTITUTION!**"

Since you have been cut up so badly, trained to only think narrow ("normal"), I can only expect stupidity and boredom. The problem is people need to see the facts. That's right, I know what's up and I'll serve this at you:

### **Why school?**

To educate (do you hear the sound of canned laughter?? To install confidence (press laugh track button again)?

Hardly. I truly believe school exists only to create the perfect role-players. This is where those who lose in the stereotype (labeling) game

become ridiculed and punished for not conforming. The gals and guys have a huge wardrobe of pseudo identities: the jocks, the nerds, etc., all of which fulfills one objective goal: CONSUMERISM (N.B. to all songwriters).

School is designed to steal any shred of individual thought or sense of true individuality and replace it with a complete dependence (addiction) on the use of outside objects or ideas (products). If kids weren't thrown into that square dance of venom at an age where you and I can suck back info (visual, audio, symbolic) harder than a 42nd Street video whore, perhaps people can make individual decisions, instead of having only mainstream beliefs. Can you imagine a world where people weren't obsessed by ego and instead continued to maintain that 5-year-old wisdom which promotes life for the sake of life? **Yahoooooooooooo!!!!!!**

What's the solution? How about resource centers where anyone -- regardless of age -- can show up and learn about any subject that they please because when you are having fun that is when you learn the most? Regurgitating force-fed information like in school can only turn someone off to learning. Kinda feel like a horse at the track in Jersey, eh? Well, keep on dancing, baby, *bonne chance*, break a leg! Will resource centers ever happen? NO WAY! Uncle Sam wants everyone to be as vulnerable as possible to the barrage of advertisements which will lead to the complete erosion of one's self-esteem. Their reasoning is that it's better to manufacture a bunch of Dar Quayle-clones than to have the lives of millions of potential Einsteins. I'm really sad for those kids in the schoolyards across the street from me. A lot of them could've made their own decisions in the future. That's too bad. As I watch them from my apartment, I sometimes want to cry. It's a good thing that I'm a macho man because the whole city would be drowned under my tears. I hope your recess was good, kiddies, I bet ya learned a lot from it.

Intelligence can not be measured.

Life and learning are the same thing.

I am, that's right, you know it

**JohnNY Sizzle**

## No, THIS is Gene & Mimi!

Gene Morris, the tall, songwriter half of Gene and Mimi, strikes me as a guy who probably had it figured out a lot better than people give him credit for. Down to his looks, even. I can easily imagine him striking a deal with his Mom, telling her she should hatch a kid with looks that were too ordinary to be particularly interesting, but too interestingly warm to ignore. That way he could meet up with the only other person to match this description, Mimi Cohen. Having listened to Gene and Mimi's material from their debut CD, three years back, it's hard to imagine Gene as anything but a thoughtful, sensitive lyricist. Even when he's being funny (maybe the better word is witty), there's always some pathos, some touching observation woven carefully behind his words or his and Mimi's vocal deliveries, with the latter usually veering towards some fetching combination of sensuality and goofiness when she takes the lead. Sometimes it speaks of the way urban life subtly and disturbingly depersonalizes us and the way we relate to people ("Mr. Whatshisname") or speaks about feeling joyful, alive and vital within the humorous absurdity and bustle of an urban setting ("Something Important"). "Whistle In The Dark" is one of the best singles New York radio ever neglected. The subway seemed to influence Gene's writing in a big way on that last album -- an out-and-out motif or a subtle backdrop for his clever, inner musings. That is, when he wasn't writing insightful stuff about those of us outside the circles of stardom in the music business from a performer's viewpoint ("Hi, We're The Catalinas"). I liked what good studio production did for a Gene Morris song and it gives what I was previously exposed to all those nights ago in their live acoustic sets in the Fort some perspective. Gene's impressive skill as an acoustic guitarist was more than complimented by the work of Justin Herz. I had previously thought of Gene as a pretty good songwriting folkie who could rock on occasion, and came away from the debut realizing that Gene Morris is really an articulately powerful rocker who just scales back to acoustic when circumstances demand it. It left me hungry and anxious for the next album, which, aptly enough, is the focus of my conversation with Gene and Mimi. Their new album, *36<sup>th</sup> Street*, is out this seems an excellent time to catch up with the former Dynamic Duo.

PM: There's so little that I know about you guys. Let's begin at the beginning. Where are you from? Are you homegrown commodities?

M: Oh yeah. I'm from Manhattan, 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Gene's from Queens. We were educated in the New York City public school system.

PM: Some people might not necessarily point to that as a matter of pride, but I think it should be! (laughter)

M: It is! Great system! My kid's going into it! (laughter)

G: Mine was a pretty different background from hers. Mimi grew up listening to music. We didn't have music in my house.

PM: Seriously?

G: Pretty much yeah. I had two older sisters who listened to music, but they were a lot older than me. They got married when I was a kid. So I didn't really sit around and listen to music as a kid. My parents didn't have any phonographs or radios or anything like that in the house. In the car, we'd only listened to radio stations that broadcast the news. I didn't really get exposed to music much.

PM: Were your parents particularly adverse to popular music?

G: No, it just wasn't part of their lives, really. And I was a very contrary kid. I didn't want to listen to rock and roll, because that's what all the other kids were listening to. So I didn't listen to music.

PM: When did it all change?

G: I didn't get exposed to any of that until I was a teenager. I started listening to [popular] music when I was thirteen or fourteen...probably fourteen. And I suddenly decided that I liked music. I listened to a lot of Beatles and other rock, but also a lot of folk music, like Dylan and Guthrie. I started taking guitar lessons when I was fifteen. At that point, my family moved out to Long Island -- but I found them (laughter) I didn't know anybody there, so my mother was like "Well, why don't you take guitar lessons?" And I thought, "Well, alright." I couldn't have cared less about

guitar. I guess she figured that you could take your guitar and have a sing-along, which I didn't do. I did stay in my room and play all the time. I took guitar lessons from this guy who played banjo. He played a little guitar too, but he taught me all these fiddle tunes on this acoustic guitar that I rented. So I had a very interesting background. While other people were learning Hendrix leads and such, I was playing fiddle tunes and stuff like that. I was a very shy kid. I just played in my room. I didn't play around anybody else. So I played all the parts myself. I'd learn to play the bass notes with my thumb and pick the other stuff with my fingers. That's why I play the style I do. I sort of fill in a lot of parts.

PM: That's something I've noticed. The fullness of sound you get out of the instrument during the live gigs is something.

G: You can get a very full sound from acoustic guitar. I stayed in my room for hours and hours and hours a day just practicing, much to my parents' chagrin. I don't think that's what they had in mind when they suggested my playing guitar. But that's what it worked out to be.

M: I guess they didn't realize that to be able to run a sing-along, you have to have preparation (laughter).

G: They should've gotten me a player piano (laughter).

PM: How did the two of you get together?

M: Well, I was actually doing a club act at the time and I wanted to be in a rock band. So I was answering ads, and I answered Gene's ad in the *Village Voice*. And he did not accept me, but he asked me out on a date. That's how we met and got together. But we didn't actually start playing together until after we got married. We're still testing things out (laughter). He (Gene) was like 'I don't work with anybody I go out with'.

PM: It can be a potential source of friction in a relationship...

M: Well, it's not so much that we have friction, but because we live together and we're married, it's kind of tough for us to rehearse.

PM: That does raise the issue of how one balances the responsibilities of performer with that of spouse and parent. How's it been for both of you?

M: It can be very hard. I think we don't rehearse enough. That's what's really bad. Plus, [Gene] hasn't had any time to write at all. Even before we had [Sylvie], it was like, it was hard to get motivated sometimes, cause we'd just be like... 'oh, let's just hang out' or whatever. Let's do anything but work. It's hard to motivate yourself to work. And when we work, it's actually pretty good. We don't really bicker about this arrangement or that, or the harmonies and stuff. And actually over the years, working on harmonies, when we actually do work, it has gotten much easier.

PM: Who handles what in Gene and Mimi? How do you divide the creative chores?

M: Well, Gene writes all the songs, of course, so he teaches them to me. Half the time, he has a harmony worked out that he's written as part of the song. And then the other half of the time, it's very open and he'll say 'let's do the chorus' or just sing along and see what comes out. But most of the vocal arrangements I do. Occasionally I'll help him edit a song. Occasionally. Like one out of five songs. I'll help him cut this, change this word...rewrite the end. It's basically him, but I do have input. And over the years that has gotten easier, because we know each other so well.

PM: Gene, when did you start writing songs?

G: As soon as I started playing guitar. I'd always written. When I was a kid, I wrote poems, short stories and stuff like that. I've always been an avid reader. So I started writing typical teenage angst poetry just set to bad music (laughter)

M: It actually isn't that bad. I've seen some of the early things he's written and they showed talent. I mean they all made sense and the form was good. It showed that he was listening and learning from songs that were well written.

PM: It must be something to consider the almost 360 degree turn your life has taken from those days of your youth when you lived in the absence of music.

G: It's kind of weird. When I was a kid I always heard music in my head. I always heard melodies and stuff. But I thought everybody did. I didn't know.

PM: Something in your material suggests to me a reverence for the art and craft of good lyric writing. Is this true? How do songs come about for Gene Morris?

G: I don't know. Some phrase, some situation will come to me. Or a melody line. Every possible way is the way they come. I don't have a good answer for that one. Sorry. But to just comment on

what you said about reverence for lyric writing. I don't feel that way. I've had a big problem in the past with what I call lyric fetishists. There are a lot of people, especially in this folk world who fetishize a lyric. I remember there was an issue of *Fast Folk* magazine a number of years back in which they were calling [song lyrics] literature. And it was like, "No, they're songs." Not to say that they're worse than literature, but it's something *else*. I think "Bebop-a-Lula" is a great song. If you take it apart from the music, I don't know how much meaning it has. But then you sing that --

PM: It recalls the point of the old television routine Steve Allen used to do years ago---

G: Exactly. My lyrics *are* very important to me, and so's my music. But a lyric has to work within the confines of a song. I feel that a lot of people get too caught up in flowery language. Whatever I do, I try to do the best I can. But I just wanted to comment on that. I just write words that sound good to me. That's all.

PM: Is it fair to say that you are a particularly observant writer?

G: I don't know about that. A lot of times the way I'll write, I'll think about somebody. The song "We Never Talked Much" (on the new CD) for example, is about a friend who lost her mother. And so I thought -- I can't think *exactly* how another person thinks in a given situation but I will ask myself if I were in that situation, if I were that person, how would I feel. So I'm basically creating characters. If there are any astute observations about people in [the material], it's because I'm trying to write credibly about *other* people situations a lot. I'm not always [addressing other people's situations] but I tend not to do the confessional singer-songwriter thing. I don't think I have any particularly sharp observations about people or anything like that. But the one thing I've found is if you tell someone's story as straight-forward as possible, in as few words as possible, it'll come across.

PM: In what ways are your given musical tastes/identities similar?

M: Well, if you saw our record collection -- especially our old LP's -- there are so many duplicates. Although I knew a lot of show music, and Gene didn't know any, and I sort of turned him on to that. Prior to him, I never listened to any Merle Haggard or any country music at all. And I hated the Beach Boys! (laughter) [Gene] liked, *worked on me* on those two things! We opened each other up musically. One of my singing idols was Chaka Khan. He loved Chaka Khan when I met him, and that was very important to me. And we also both loved The Who. On our first date, Prince's *Sign Of The Times* album had just come out. All I wanted to do

was sit and listen to that record. But I was going on this date with him. We went to dinner really early, and we had a really good time, and Gene suggested we go to a movie. And I said, "Well, why don't you come over and we can listen to *Sign Of The Times*?"





(laughter) And then we'll pick a movie." And that's what we did. We both really liked Prince.

PM: Fell in love over Prince. Hey, your story parallels that of many other people of our generation!

M: Really? (with mock wonder) Prince as the motivator for love.

PM: What for you, Gene, is the difference between the first album and the second?

G: It's better. (laughter) We learned more about working in the studio. Each time we work in the studio, we learn something. And I got more comfortable in the studio this time. And we're able to communicate [our vision of the music] better. We tried to keep the instrumentation as simple as possible. The big difference in this one is we did our vocals and guitar and *then* we added things. On earlier recordings, we'd record the rhythm tracks and then put the vocals and the guitars on top of that. And that doesn't work for us. We'd lose the soul of the song.

PM: What were the distinct advantages and disadvantages to producing yourselves?

G: What was easier was I was able to communicate better what I wanted. What was harder was that to produce this thing ourselves, we had to make all the calls. Like "We need to do that again." Or "No, that's okay, Don't do it again." Don't ruin it. That's really tough. It's really nice to have an outside person to run that by. But we were confident enough with our experience that I felt pretty good about producing it.

PM: When did your involvement in the East Village folk scene—or more aptly, the Anti-Folk scene—begin?

M: Around seven years ago, at a place called The Chameleon, I heard about some open mike there and we just went down. And it was just very open.

PM: I've heard the name of that place invoked by a few people, like Mark Humble.

M: Lach was a bartender there, Mark Humble ran the sound. Bob



Tsocoriak, who's now a cartoonist and has actually done a few covers for *New Yorker* magazine, was the MC. He was really great. We walked in there really early one time, because we didn't know what it was, or what the rules were. So he was setting things up, and we asked him what the deal was, and he said 'Oh, it's a

community. We want everyone to come. It's open to whatever you want to do. Come, please come to my living room!' And it was *so amazing!* The audience would go crazy for everybody. They loved every single person that sang even if they were totally lousy. They were just so glad that somebody was doing something! (laughter) It was so incredible.

PM: How does this new album (in terms of production, song subjects, etc.) differ from the previous releases?

M: It's more direct. It's not what I would call a pop record. Musically, it's based on the *acoustic* guitar. We tried to make the vocals the major focus, not the beat or the arrangement. I kind of feel that [on *This Is Gene & Mimi*], the arrangements are the focus. What we really wanted to do was have our personalities, our *vocals*, come across and have it consistent through every single song. What we [felt happened] on the first album was that each song became its own little record, its own little world. It didn't relate to the next song. That was the criticism of it from most people. A friend of mine said you can't describe in one sentence, what the music is about, based on that CD. You really need to be able to, I think, just to be clear and concise.

PM: Some might say it's just good alt/rock music oriented towards percussion and electric guitar.

M: Well, I thought it was good. I liked it. But I do think that on the second CD (*36th Street*) the tunes are better and more consistent.

PM: Do any familiar faces from the Scene make any guest appearances on any of the tracks on this new album?

M: Well, Andy Mandel is playing percussion on all the songs. We had our friend Rich Grula (of Big Happy Crowd) play bass and then he listened to the tracks and if he felt like putting some other percussion on, he just did. One song ("Lately"), he sang harmony with me on. But on "Lose My Mind" we had a bunch of people come and sing on the chorus like Steve Espinola and Erika Belle. But essentially the album is pretty stripped down.

PM: You produced this album yourselves. What are the distinct advantages and disadvantages to such an enterprise for artists in your position?

M: We had a wonderful engineer, Al Houghton, who's the bass player of the band, Life In a Blender. He did it at his own studio, called Subway Studios. He didn't produce it, but he advised us. And that was it [as far as help]. It was just us, and we made all the mixing decisions...everything. It's not that we thought 'Oh, we're so learned now that we've done our other CD' but we didn't want to dilute our minds, cause we knew exactly what we wanted to hear. So we just went for it, and we are actually more happy with it, even though there are performances on the first one that I love.

PM: At this stage of your careers, are you comfortable recording studio animals? Do you consider yourselves performing musicians who occasionally record or recording musicians who walk the floorboards to test the waters prior to going into the studio?

M: We're more comfortable as performers that record. I wish it was more than occasionally though, because I love to record. I love to perform, I love to be in front of an audience. I'm much more comfortable in a studio than Gene. He really feels like he's under



the microscope. He doesn't enjoy it, although this experience with AI, because it was just the three of us, he was really relaxed. And I think he actually enjoyed some of the recording of [the record].

PM: Is guitar your primary instrument, Gene?

G: Actually radio is (laughter). No, guitar is really the only instrument I play. I can fool around with a lot of different instruments and get sounds on them, but it's guitar.

PM: It seems I had it all wrong initially. *This is Gene and Mimi*, to me, evidences the strong rock background the two of you have. Do you see yourselves more as rockers who play acoustic when necessary? How would you classify your music?

M: How I classify it now is folk/rock. We were conscious about our instrumentation in that we knew we wanted the lyrics [of our songs] to be to the front. We weren't going to be like a band and have the beat to the front -- do you know what I mean? And Gene really was clear about that, because he was writing the songs and he wanted the lyrics to go over. Which is hard anyway even in that format. Let's face it, we're unknowns and when you come out as an unknown and you're doing an unknown song, it's hard to get it [across to an audience] the first couple of times. It's hard for an audience to hear it, really. So I'm always really happy when somebody remembers a phrase or something.

PM: Any plans to back the new album with some tour dates?

G: We've been waiting for the CD to be done, because it's a whole lot easier to book stuff with the new CD. We'll see what happens. There are a lot of places we'd like to play and things we'd like to do. Again, we'll see.

### ON SONGWRITING:

PM: Gene Morris strikes me as someone with a reverence for the art and craft of lyric writing. Is this true?

Mimi: Gene's very meticulous. He edits a lot. You should really ask him about it. He'll discuss this word over that word. He'll sit there and go 'Look at this internal rhyme' like he creates these internal rhymes that are repeated in every verse and almost nobody would notice the first time. No one, not even Mark Humble! (laughter) Speaking of songwriting influences, Gene's got his idols there. Ray Davies is his number one songwriter influence.

PM: What would you yourselves like listeners to your CD to take away from it?

Gene: I've already done my stuff. That's a personal thing. If somebody listens to the music, maybe it says something to him. I have no desire to impose anything on them. It's like whatever it means to you, any song I write will never mean to somebody else what it means to me. Once a song's written and you play it, it's out there for everybody. You can bring to it whatever you want, take away from it whatever you want.



**JOIE/DBG**  
**SEPT 15**  
**TUES**  
**7:30**  
**SIDEWALK**  
**CAFE**  
**6ST. AND**  
**A**

# Everybody's Welcome to my Workin'-for-a- Living Week

I got fired recently from my dumb-ass temp job. Turns out that, in one my typically slick moves, I got caught at work over the weekend, and my bosses suddenly began to wonder about all the additional copies being registered on the Xerox. That, and all the scrap sheets reading AntiMatters, made people detect that I was doing things I wasn't supposed to. I got fired for AntiMatters.

Not a big deal, really. A couple days later, I got hired on elsewhere at a higher-paying dumb-ass temp job, and, despite the fact I was fired for Breaking and Entering, I got severance pay from a job I was leaving in a week's time anyway, so it's all good.

Still, I had to look for work, for the first time since the last time. I had to decide what I was looking for in a job. I'm a simple man, with simple needs: I need good money, a copy machine, laser printer, some desktop publishing programs, long distance phone access, web technology, and, of course, short hours.

Evidently, not every office has all these things. I'd been kind of lucky with the dumb-ass temp job I lost.

Talking to friends and musicians in the AntiFolk community, I discovered that others have jobs, too. Apparently, not too many East Village artists can live off of their art. Few of the artists in the history of AntiFolk have. Still, while waiting for their ship to come in, AntiFolk performers have a variety of jobs that cover costs while cultivating some sense of creativity.

*Lenny Molotov*, historically a paralegal, just left his job to work full-time in a variety of capacities at the Sidewalk Café. Not only does he run sound some evenings, but also he runs the counter some days. While I can only imagine this is a pay cut, Lenny has made an important choice to live a less restricted life.

Various people want to work in the industry for which they create. *Joe Bendik*, life-long songwriter and musical visionary, works for BMI, the music publishing company, involved in "a lot of research & petty office politics."

"My job is barely tolerable. The fact that I'm 'in' the music industry (I work for BMI) can make you believe that you really are sometimes." Still, it pays the bills, especially when he pulls in extra hours. Even so, there are difficulties. "When I do overtime I have to work with Rain Man. That's the worst part of it. He knows everything about every little minute pointless detail and he hates me. He hates the fact that I play music. He puts down my music every chance he gets. He hates the fact that I have any kind of ambition at all. Fuck him. Fuck work. Fuck..."

A couple of artists are lucky enough to be able to work in fields more directly related to their music. *Tom Nishioka*, featured on *Lach's Antihoot* as both engineer and contributing songwriter, runs his Williamsburg-based Kakumodani Studio, where he gets to be intrinsically involved in all levels of music making. "I wanted a room where I could crank an amp to eleven, have a full drum kit set up and mic'd, put a whole band for tracking, and also have dance parties and stage plays. I got it. I made it. My space is all hand built. It's a big old garage with 5 huge skylights, and I really feel like it's removed from the street and bustle. You can do your thing and get down without a thought of the outside world..."

*Dan Emery* used to run sound at the sidewalk, used to be king of antifolk, used to be writer of new songs for every antihoot. Now, when he's not gigging, he works exclusively as a guitar teacher. "I'm a salesman now. I promote my guitar lesson business. When somebody calls me up, I get them excited about guitar, and we book a lesson. When I do a lesson with them, I get them excited about different aspects of guitar playing. I get them excited to practice and learn whatever it is and when I'm not doing that, I'm getting people excited about the Mystery Band. I figure there are a lot of good guitar players in bands and guitar teachers, but only a few get people excited about things. As far as I'm concerned, that's my whole job."

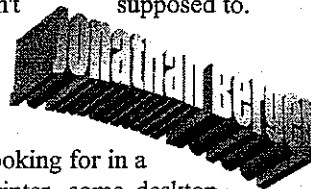
*Lach*, self-proclaimed frontman of the entire AntiFolk scene, has been able to earn his keep exclusively from his creation, though not the one in the way he'd most like. "In a joyous perspective an artist's life is his work," Lach says. "What I do, what I experience all goes into the songs and performance." While songwriting and touring the nation should undoubtedly support the lifestyle to which he's grown accustomed, Lach's main source of income is through booking, managing, and hosting shows

at the Sidewalk Café. After creating the Fort over ten years ago in his Rivington Street loft, Lach has created a machine that will feed him consistently, until that ever-desired major record deal comes through.

And on the way, he's increased the scope of his entrepreneurial vision by working his ass off on Fortified Records, the recording leg of the AntiFolk dynasty. "A lot of my day these days is spent working on the promotion and booking of Sidewalk Café and running my record label."

With the recent national syndication deal with Big Daddy, Lach seems poised on the edge of being able to make his living in an even more directly musical way than he has these last fifteen-odd years. Lach is enthusiastic about that possibility.

"There are so many acts on the scene that I would like to produce and/or release but we will just have to see how it all goes."





Quite simply, he embodies the best that New York's "ANTIFOLK" movement has to offer: stark, direct, often topical lyrics, forceful strumming, and some good-natured humor to keep things from getting too dark. Keeping folk music alive - and relevant - is a dirty job, but luckily there are people like KELLY who are doing it.

**DOWNTOWN (NYC)**

# KIRK KELLY

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# Blue

By V A Turner

*"Perhaps the key to understanding the blues is not to try to study the music itself, but the people who influenced the musicians."*

## Memphis ~ Rev. Al Green's Sunday Service

I get to Rev. Al Green's church early and meet his assistant who's also a LI native! Not only does she introduce me to members of the choir, but Rev. Al!!! Quite an honor! The mass starts with the choir's entrance. That's when I begin crying. Meticulously dressed in their finest whites, they sashay into the chapel in a sort of subdued Motown strut, and then, as they take their places on the risers, break out into the finest gospel/blues I have ever heard! The band rocks, we gave a "round of applause for God," and after several songs and some preaching, Rev. Al takes to the pulpit. Rev. Valentine dances, and fills in, "You tell it!" "Amen!" "Yessih!" with throaty conviction.

Over the three hour service, my eyes eventually dry, but communion sets them to filling up all over again. A wrenching Amazing Grace, and a circle of the entire congregation receiving communion crescendoes with the lead guitarist playing Jimi Hendrix, behind-his-back blues. Rev. Al revs into high-powered preaching, and the congregation clap and dance in euphoric unity. No rock star gone preacher excess, but some old fashioned choreographed rapture. The roots of this assemblage are obvious: when you have little, you have to find jubilation in little, and make it loom large. Similar services without Rev. Al to lead the way are probably

equally



exhilarating. If you were enslaved, and not just by the binds of slavery, but enslaved by poverty, salvation comes from shared celebration on Sunday... and then, as Bessie sang, shimmying all day Monday!

## Miss Ellen's

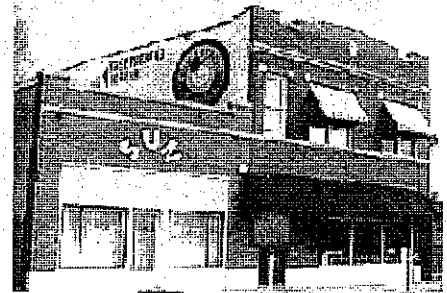
After that, lunch at Miss Ellen's. It's a small soul food restaurant, burnt orange walls meet a mustard yellow ceiling; the booths are worn, and there is a smattering of posters

hanging up on the walls haphazardly. Ideal ambiance for pink lemonade so sweet it flowed like molasses... and rich, bountiful cooking, for five dollars a plate! Here, amidst wooden shacks in the poorest part of town, is this oasis that humanizes people too easily cast aside in a category of "poor." Soul food rather catches more than a meal. When you live the blues, you find sustenance in everything: your music, culture, family, knowledge, religion, and meals too; the hunger is so insatiable you literally feed your soul. Here at Miss Ellen's, even in extreme poverty, there is laughter and gentility... and a persistent and steadfast grasp of the purest essence of community... common unity.

## Sun Studios

I would have liked to have gone to some of the juke joints (or is it jook joints?) but the clubs are all 21 and over. Settling for a tour of Sun Studios results in me meeting one Mark Bell, manager of the studio and cafe. "What do the folks at Miss Ellen's think about all the Elvis hype?" I ask, and in a diplomatic round and round, he offers nothing. "Look," I plunge in, eyes closed, "Let me just get it all out here. I was wondering if the black blues musicians feel out of sorts that it took a white man to give credibility to what they'd been doing all along." He replies, "OK, now we can really talk. I mistook you for one of those Elvis people when you first came up." It turns into a three-hour blues music history lesson for me. Elvis wasn't from Tupelo so much as the black part of town, and when he lived in Memphis he was in the projects. "I don't think I'm overstating it, but when it comes to race relations the best of what has happened in this country went on right in there." He points to Sun Studio.

A review of my morning at Rev. Al's results in his quoting Muddy Waters, "If you want to know about the blues, you got to go back to the church." He then explains that the river was the main blues route, flowing up and down from the delta to St. Louis to Chicago way. I realize that if you know anything about the blues, you'd know this. My ignorance,



however, is HUGE. We talk about the standard blues patterns and he laughs at that. "R.L. Burnside does the best blues show in town and some nights all he plays is one chord. He says, 'That was so right, no need to play any other.'" He explains the crossovers from country to blues, blues to country and talks about Chuck Berry's religious country upbringing, how if you listen to his music it's all country licks... case in point: Maybelline is actually Ida Red... and how Ike Turner once said, "If you want to talk about civil rights don't go talking about Rosa Parks. Everyone will listen to a black woman." He says, "You want a hero, let a black man stand up on that bus and say 'I ain't moving', 'cause he'd be a dead black hero...." And then he talked about his dear friend, "Carly Perkins," and Carl's stories about learning to play from a neighboring black man who kept telling him, "Bend those notes Carly, bend those notes...." And then, he recounted Carl Perkins' last days, leaving everyone around the table teary eyed.

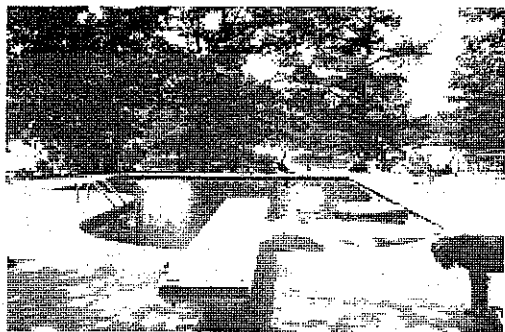
When we left my face was taut from laughing so long, but under the residual smile was some sorrow. Mr. Mark Bell's easy charm and lyrical stories had filtered right through my head, and into my heart, leaving it a little heavier. It was a rich day and an even richer night. Memphis gold.

## The Elvis Days Inn

This morning I sat in the Elvis room of the motel listening to a young boy talk to his father about "the man who died." "Elvis?" "Yes, that man that died." "Some say he's still alive. Some say the king will never die." "But Daddy?" "Yes?" "Is the dead man alive in that picture over there?" "Well son, he's alive in most of his pictures."

## Nesbit, Mississippi

Nesbit's most outrageous resident is none other than THE KILLER himself.... white trash heaven.....the home of Jerry Lee Lewis. Jerry Lee's house is now open for tours, the house he lives in and was sleeping in, as Darelene, our guide, whisperes: "We have to be quiet back here; that's Jerry's bedroom, he's asleep." A motley collection of dogs, many



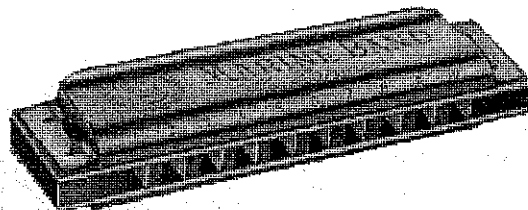
unkempt with manged fur and facial growths scattered at our every step, "Those are the family jewels," she said matter of factly. "That one is Diamond and that one is Ruby and that one, well I forget his name..." It was a surreal contrast to the harder, but more pleasant, reality of Memphis.

The tour included his garage, with ALL of his cars, even the old clunkers with stained seats and cigarette burns... Pool toys floated in THE piano pool ("Is that where he drowned her?" one of the girls whispered wide eyed. "I think so, shhhhhh, his bedroom is right there..."). We shuffled through the disheveled yard... Darlene pointed to some burnt up grass, "We tried to put sod there, but it can't grow under a tree." We nodded sympathetically. She kept apologizing... "See this is a WORKING home, not like Graceland...." Nothing proved it more than walking past the washer rocking in full spin cycle..."Jerry decorated the house himself," Darlene beamed, then pointed to the central piece of the dining room, a dish cabinet, made entirely out of match sticks, "An inmate built that in prison and left it to Jerry in his will."

## Clarksdale, Mississippi

The blues museum is situated in the library. I met two of the speakers who had just arrived for the blues festival. Different perspectives from these folks. One is writing his second book on Sonny Boy Williamson II, and I was rather amused by how he turned every conversation back around to Sonny Boy. You know like, "Nice day..." "HmMMM you saying it's Sonny?"

See  
Sonny  
Boy...  
His  
stories  
were  
really



interesting, but I got this feeling that he was far more consumed with collecting FACTS than gathering up a man's life with all its fractures and flaws and acknowledging that rarely are the FACTS of a man's life the whole of the man. More important are those fractures and flaws that fill up with "stories" that you can't dissect, that you don't WANT to dissect because it's like removing someone's heart and saying, "There! Now we REALLY know what he's about." It's what we'll never see that matters so much more than what we can.

Clarksdale used to be home to the Muddy Waters' cabin...four walls remained when the House of Blues, according to a local farmer, "showed up with a flat bed truck and hauled it away." I sit on the mound of soil and find a singular piece of wood still buried by a cement square and dig at it. I could never have taken a piece if the House of Blues hadn't "stolen" the whole thing first, but now I got my sliver of history. It moves me to think that these fields, this silent piece of wood possess the distant vibrations of Muddy's croonings while Alan Lomax recorded him.

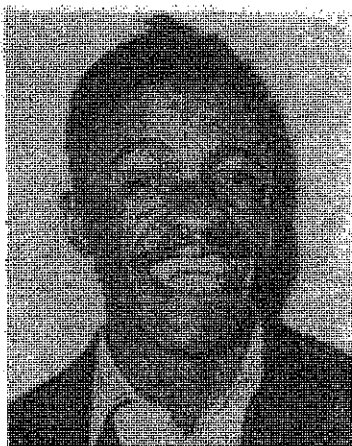
## Tutwiler

It was late in the day, dusky, a good lazy heat clung to everything, and the streets of Tutwiler were busy between the

young black men flirting with the women at the market, a single man sitting on a chair outside of an empty chicken stand with a huge banner proclaiming, "GRAND OPENING," and a police cruiser that tediously toured the same pattern of blocks over and over again. I couldn't get past the funeral parlor. Two Mississippi soil-covered hearses were parked against a square brick building. The front window was smeared with everyday living, and two restaurant chairs pushed up the limp off white curtains that draped sorrowfully over them. The sign was hand painted. In the parking lot where I stopped to take photos of the funeral parlor was a torn down sign for the Clarksdale Blues Festival. I looked around Tutwiler and realized the makings of those early blues is as alive now as it was then, and lives in every brick, every bit of dirt, every mournful sunset in that little town.

Around the corner is the W.C. Handy mural. The train station, long since gone, was where, the story goes, W.C. Handy heard a man singing "Goin' where the southern cross the dog," while playing slide guitar or what Handy later called, "The weirdest music I had ever heard." Word has it, W.C. picked up a rusty knife, put it to his guitar strings and the blues were born.

A lengthy car ride through neighboring fields leads to a slanted, tumbling old church. The wood is worn past the paint, and the inside floor is missing too many planks to venture very deeply. Kudzu grows up around the windows, and there is a smattering of graves on either side, one of which is Sonny Boy Williamson II. Blues harmonicas, coins, and a shot glass with amber liquor honor him. We soon discover that of all the blues musicians, his plot is the most refined. Sort of ironic, at first thought, that it didn't quite capture a life lived hard. All the facts on this tombstone (according to the Sonny Boy scholar) are inaccurate. When Sonny was young, he got in trouble with the law and in order to escape it, took his brother's identity. That accounts for so many variations in his birthdate. No clear explanation as to why Sonny's name is spelled "Aleck" the way it was said instead of "Alex" the way it was spelled or why his death date is wrong. Sure is a purty stone that immortalizes him all wrong...



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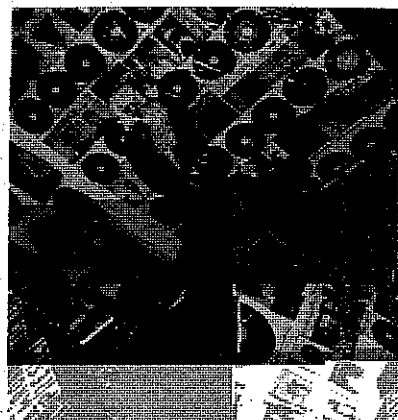
## Holly Springs, Mississippi ~ Graceland Too

Holly Springs is home to Graceland Too, created over the past 40 years by Paul MacCleoud's obsession. When we arrive Paul speaks rapidly through ill-fitting dentures that are oddly chipped, crooked, and that, because they keep slipping down, cause this white foam to gather in the corners of his mouth. His first story is how his wife of 23 years said, "It's either me or all this Elvis stuff."

"I said," he retells the story, "Hm, let me think. See you!" His son, Elvis Aaron Presley MacCleoud apparently agreed

with his father. Together they keep Graceland Too open 24 hours a day. Regardless of when you arrive, a tour will be given. Trying to decipher what Paul is saying is probably impossible, but his earnestness, enthusiasm, and kind-heartedness ("Nobody should have to die at 42... and no child should ever have to have cancer. I take donations now, to give to the children with cancer...") aren't obscured by his lack of clarity. His stream of consciousness is a series of directionless tributaries anyway. The highlight of the tour is when he asks the girls to get close to him and listen, and sing along to an Elvis song, complete with vibrating leg. It's funny, and the truth is, he can laugh at himself.

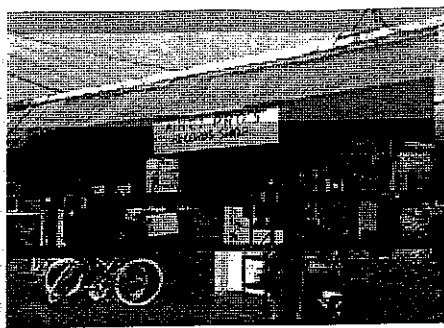
As we're leaving, Paul asks in a furtive voice, "Could you do me a really big favor? My son is in New York and I can't leave the house. Do you think you could buy me a gallon of milk?" He offers us the money, but we treat and throw in a few sandwiches. In thanks, he skips the 3-tour requirement and makes us life-time members of Graceland Too with all its rights and privileges... Don't ask. I haven't a clue.



## ~ Aikei Records

David Caldwell, a gentleman in his 70s, owns this shack of a shop tucked into a boarded-up building. The street is alive with clusters of folks... a woman in a skintight orange mini with matching fringed top, arm-holes cut out so you can see her breasts sagging down her belly every time she lifts her arms, which she does whenever a car playing music passed by... a man named The Colonel drinking from a near empty pint... Blake who flashes a gold tooth smile, asking me to let him wash the car for five bucks... Although not air conditioned, ("I'm 73 years old, don't believe in air conditioning....") and ramshackled, piled high with radio guts

and impassible paths, Mr. Caldwell's cluttered cavern of a



shop provides a respite from the outside carnival of souls. He moved to Holly Springs before there was a civil rights movement. An activist, he has seen the black voting rise

dramatically. His dream was to see "it" change in his lifetime. I ask him if his dream has been fulfilled. "It has," he says. "From 14 people to 75 percent. Our sheriff is black, our mayor is black. It has changed."

"Cigarettes?" a voice calls from behind the mounds of circuitry. Mr. Caldwell tosses the pack and a quarter is dropped into the can to cover two.

"Teach me about the blues," I ask. He beings to file nimbly through hundreds of brown wrapped 45s.... "I have a record player here somewhere, would play it for you, but I can't find it. If you don't like 'em, you mail em back and I'll be glad to give you your money." I assure him they will be well worth the two dollars.

"A lot of folks don't care much for a blues musician until hisself is dead, then they start talking all abouts how they heard him years ago and then get themselves all attached to it. The vultures, that's what I call them, the vultures who didn't care nothing while theys was alive, but want a part of hisself when theys dead." His words were dark and deep, and more than a few times he had to wipe away tears as he told me the story of: The blues musicians who die from one Helena festival to the next; the too thin, broken toothed white girl who kept coming into the shop to ask "Pop" for money, the bathroom key, a cigarette ("she comes from one of the finer families in town, but once her parents found out she was hanging with the blacks they wiped their hands of her, and what could I do but help her out..."),

His acquaintanceship with Elvis ("a skinny white boy who used to drive by here in a raggedy car, who ended up being what everyone told him he was instead of the real blues musicians who were exactly what they were...."),

Sonny Boy Williamson II ("he was a good musician, who put himself out in the front and got the white people to pay..."),

William Faulkner ("he wasn't a bad man, but he only wanted to write about us for the rich folks...")

"You have to feel the blues like blacks do in order to be able to play them," he says earnestly. And for a glimpse of a moment. I think I do.

Mark Bell and David Caldwell have both burrowed into a part of my psyche, maybe even my soul. So many different perspectives on the same eras, each ironically accurate. There must be some absolutes, but I've yet to figure out what they are, and so, as sure as the summer heat soaks into me, so too do these men's stories.

## Avalon, Quito, and Holly Ridge, Mississippi

Mississippi John Hurt is buried in Avalon (asking a local in Grenada where Avalon is, she answers, "I think that's the place where the road widens a little." She's right). We wind



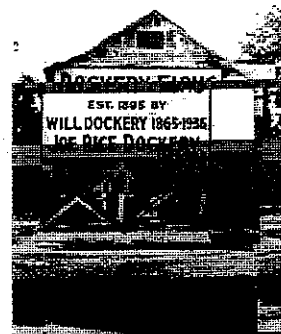
up a loose gravel road to a thickly rutted dirt road to an easy-to-miss path into the woods. There, haphazardly strewn along a narrow path, are a smattering of graves, many unidentifiable because the rain has long ago obliterated the names on the paper markers. All the way towards the end of the path is Hurt's grave. Aged logs form a rough rectangle off of his headstone, and there is a bullet, some coins, a faded necklace of Mardi Gras beads. Of all the graves, this was the most difficult to find and the most neglected, but also the most peaceful. From there we find Quito, just south of Ita Bena, and one of Robert Johnson's 3 possible graves. So much story behind this man, such a nondescript marker. Of course, it's one of three, and so the Robert Johnson mystery, "no one knows for sure," applies not just to whether he sold his soul at the crossroads to get the gift of playing blues guitar, but where he rests or unrests eternally.

Charley Patton's grave is probably the most representative of the lives of those early bluesmen. His headstone was donated by John Fogarty recently, even though Patton died in the late 30s. The carved, rutted cemetery is a mosaic of strewn artificial flowers and mounds of dirt clods with paper markers. It sits beside a cotton gin's truck garage. A lone dog, whose mange appears to have peeled the fur right off of him, watches like Cerberus at the darkened gates.

So many of these final "resting" places are like the lives they memorialize. They are troubled grounds, the antithesis of Elvis's grave or Faulkner's. Names are wrong, dates are wrong, the earth is shredded by the elements and neglect. The faces of the folks outside Mr. Caldwell's music store, the face of the toothless, gold draped, straw-hatted, gentleman I asked to help direct me to Robert Johnson's grave ("You looking for Bobby Johnson? He right up the road two miles. You know this is where the blues began..."), haunt me. There are ghosts everywhere I turn, many still living.

## Dockery Farms

The professor in the Clarksdale library/museum told me that beside Dockery farms is the foundation that was once the commissary. It's under a lot of ivy and there are a lot of loose bricks





in there. "Can I take one?"

"If you don't, nature will." Every time I touch one of those bricks, I visualize Henry Sloan teaching Charley Patton the blues, or Howlin Wolf and Son House joining in...

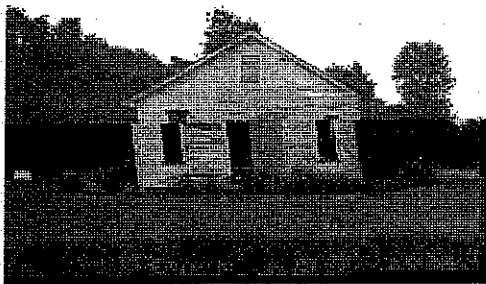
## Greenville and Vicksburg, Mississippi

A quick shot through Greenville, down Nelson, through the side streets where what look to be sharecropper cabins are set in suburban spaces, the eyes of a man sitting on wooden steps stare out at us and I am curious about the thoughts

meandering through the mind behind them. The entire city of Vicksburg are those eyes. It feels as if it is on the edge of glory and yet at the same time

despair.

Cedar Grove is a mansion bed and breakfast. It is elegant and grandiose and yet there is an underlying weariness. At dinner I am anxious and uncomfortable. This home was once a union hospital and old Grady war photos of battered and



bandaged brother killing brother haunt the room The Civil War presence in Vicksburg is like a bitter caulk oozing out of every single pore, and in essence it brings the blues back full circle. Upon entering Port Gibson a welcome sign proudly proclaims, "Port Gibson, too beautiful to burn." What does the north know of the Civil War? What do I know of the blues?

Ricky Stevens, born and raised in Sunflower, Mississippi told me, "Perhaps the key to understanding the blues is not to try to study the music itself, but the people who influenced the musicians. The people who everyday touched their lives and made them 'Buesmen'"

"Who are these people?" I ask, wanting to understand.

"The people I am talking about are the everyday people of the delta. Listen to the songs and you will hear that they are not about the heroes or the politicians or the 'Great Men' They are songs about the everyday people of the world. The blues is about, taking a feeling and making it heard, not only in the words but in the delivery of the music. I just know that the blues is not something to be taught, it must be felt and understood on a very personal level."

To that end, I know the blues, brought to my own crossroad on a Mississippi pilgrimage that oddly summarizes my own 41 year journey. Like most of life, the blues are beautiful and the blues are ugly, always at exactly the same time.

*A photo exhibit including pictures of VA Turner's Blue Journey will have an opening reception on Sunday September 20th at The Fort at Sidewalk.*

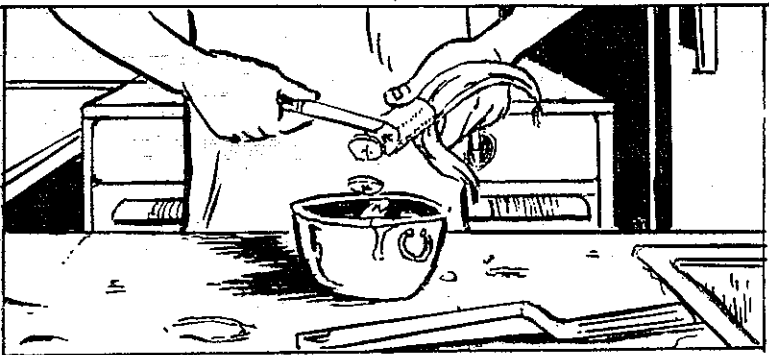
**MARILEE**  
**SEPT 15**  
**TUES**  
**8:00**  
**SIDEWALK**  
**CAFE**  
**6 ST.**  
**AND**  
**A**

I START THE DAY THE WAY I'VE STARTED MOST OF MY DAYS THIS YEAR: WITH THE JUST-ADD-WATER PANCAKE MIX RITUAL.



IT'S THE SECOND DAY OF SEPTEMBER, AND THE SECOND DAY MY FRIENDS WHO STILL GO TO S.U.N.Y. PURCHASE HAVE BEEN BACK IN SCHOOL. I SHOULD PROBABLY CALL ONE OR TWO OF THEM AND SAY WHAT'S UP.

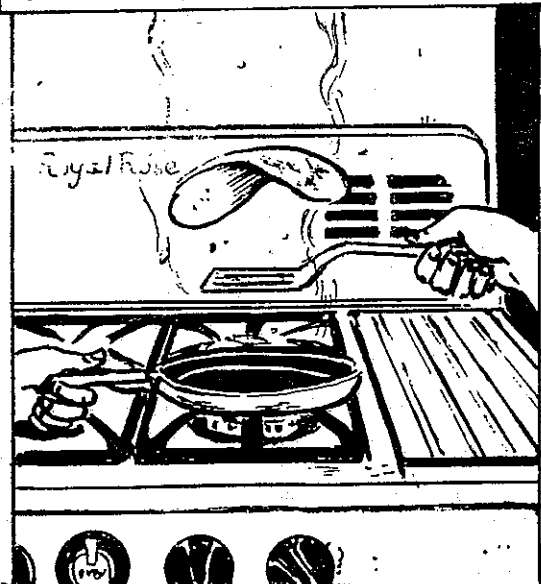
THIS'S BEEN MY FIRST YEAR OUT OF SCHOOL SINCE I WAS, LIKE, TWO YEARS OLD, AND IT'S DOZZED BY SORT OF LIKE PANCAKE MIX. I BET RIGHT NOW, WHILE I'M CHOPPING BANANA, ABBEY AND DARREN AND TOVAH AND JAMES ARE GETTING OUT OF CLASSES AND MEETING IN THE DINING HALL... A.K.A. DINING HOLE, A.K.A. DIE-IN-HELL...



AMAZING. JUST FLASHING A MEAL CARD THEY GET AS MUCH FOOD AS THEY WANT, ALL COOKED FOR THEM, DIFFERENT STUFF EVERYDAY, TO BE EATEN SURROUNDED BY FRIENDS, AND FREE ICE CREAM, AND ALL THE DISHES WASHED FOR THEM... TOTALLY PARADISICAL! I'M GLAD I HAD ENOUGH SENSE TO APPRECIATE IT BEFORE BEING DUMPED OUT INTO POST-GRAD "REAL LIFE"...

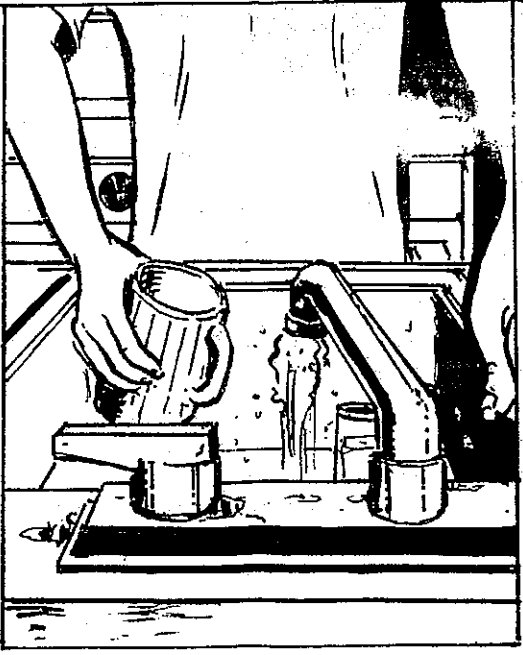


I WENT FROM JUNIOR-HIGH UPPERCLASSMAN TO HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN, THEN AGAIN FROM HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR TO COLLEGE FRESHMAN AND OF COURSE WHEN I WAS REALLY FEELING ON TOP OF THINGS AS A COLLEGE SENIOR, WITH MY THESIS AND MY ARTWORK AND FRIENDS AND GIRLFRIEND AND THE RADIO STATION AND MY JOB, HERE I AM AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL AGAIN.



SEE, THE PANCAKE IS LIFE! WHEN YOU'RE DOING GOOD THE SITUATION FLIPS.

EATING PANCAKE MIX AND TAP WATER BY DAY, ASKING BENNY'S BURETOS FOR SURPLUS FOOD AT NIGHT, WORKING TWO PART-TIME JOBS, DRAWING COMICS ALL ALONE WITH MY RECORDS AND PLAYING THE OPEN MIC AT THE SIDEWALK CAFE EVERY MONDAY... LIFE REALLY COULD BE A LOT WORSE. I'M PRETTY PSYCHED TO HAVE SURVIVED BASICALLY INDEPENDANTLY FOR A FULL YEAR!



I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO BE A FRESHMAN IN LIFE FOR A WHILE.



I'VE ALREADY LEARNED A LOT ABOUT MAKING PANCAKES, WHATEVER THAT'S WORTH.

Jeff Lewis '98

# WHAT I DID FOR MY SUMMER VACATION

I biked. All this summer, I biked all the boroughs, sweating all the time. Sometimes, I had adventures. Often, I had run-ins.

**Queens Village** - "About time," Anne said.

"Nice place you got here," I said, glancing around. And it was.

It was my first time visiting Anne Husick, leader of Shameless, in her homeland of the last 5 years. "What do you want to start with?"

"The scanner," she said.

"Cool," I answered. We were going to try to hook up some attachments to her computer. The scanner was first...

"Is it broken?" she finally asked me.

"I don't know. It seems strange." I shrugged. "Let's work on PhotoShop. Maybe I can show you some stuff there."

"Cool," Anne said.

Anne was a willing student, though, like all students, not quite so clever as the old master. The young whippersnappers are never as sharp as me. One of the benefits of showing people stuff.

"And with this, you can design your flyers. Want to try to set up a webpage?" I said. She did.

"Oh, thanks, Jon," she said, near the end, "This is so cool."

"It is simple as shit, isn't it?" I asked.

"Absolutely," she said, glancing at her simple, newly created page (<http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/2797/>), "This is excellent. Now I'm going to have to kick you out."

"I was just leaving anyway," I said.

"See you in a couple hours at the Fort."

I nodded, got on my bike, and rode. My good deed for the day, it appeared, was done.

**Williamsburg** - I braked near the train station, because I thought I saw someone I recognized. "Hey," I said to Mr. Scarecrow, "What are you doing here?"

"Going to practice with Lenny."

I nodded. Lenny Molotov lived maybe seven blocks from the train, in a loft with a huge rehearsal space, which was also Tom Nishioka's studio.

"Cool. Are you guys recording?"

"No. I'm recording, though. With my new band."

"Doing the softer set?"

"Yeah," he nodded, "We're running through the acoustic songs."

"How does it sound?"

"Pretty good," Scarecrow said, "Tom's gonna sing on background on some of it."

"Sounds great," I said.

"Keep this all under your hat, though"

"Who would I tell?"

**Coney Island** - Paula was an hour late. I put three

"You'd better have three good excuses for being this late," I said.

"You didn't check your messages?" she asked, "I spaced out and took the train to Manhattan."

"Pathetic," I said, walking the boardwalk.

"Were you waiting long?" she asked, getting in step with me.

"Not too."

We walked the boardwalk, walked Neptune Avenue, walked on the beach. We took some sun on the rocks, with the tiny waves safely yards away from us.

"You gonna drive me to the airport?"

"When?" I asked.

"Friday," she said. She was going with her band to San Francisco, where Regular Einstein was going to record the follow-up to Seven Deadly Songs.

"I work," I said, "Can't do it."

"Thanks a lot," she said, buying some purple cotton candy from a passing vendor. I got fudge. And chicken and candied marshmallows and a caramel apple. And some plums.

"How long will you be gone?" I asked.

Paula shrugged. She was recording with one of her idols, Scott Miller, who leads the Loud Family and used to be the leader of Game Theory. It was a big thing.

That day, we talked of many things. We talked of the future, and we talked of love. We talked of weight-loss as we ate our fried chicken, and we talked of winter as we walked the beach.

Later, as she was taking the train back home and I'd resaddled my bike to begin the trek to the Village, I thought about it. Paula would undoubtedly remember this summer for going to Frisco, recording with her idol, creating the album that was going to break Regular Einstein, making her a household name.

Me? I'd remember that summer for walking barefoot on the beach with some purple cotton candy between us.

**Lower East Side** - One of my old high school friends was in town. We met at Barnes & Noble and started walking the East Village, fishing for pickles.

"Hey, Jon," Ross said, accosting me, my friend, and my bike.

"Ross Owens!" I said, "This is Barry."

"We're looking for pickles," Barry said.

"Try Houston. There's a great jewish place right off of Allen."

"Thanks," I said. Of course Ross would know. He's lived in this part of town for years and years. "What are you up to?"

"I've got a gig at Maxwell's; I'm opening for Elliot Smith."

"No!" I said.

"Yeah," Ross nodded, "His booking agent is an old friend of mine, so when they were looking for an opening act, he thought of me."

"Cool!" Barry said.

"Let me know how it goes," I said, and almost said good luck. Then I decided to go for "Break a leg."

Ross scowled a little, and we went to find the pickles, exactly where Ross said they'd be.

We ended up at the Sidewalk ("You still go there?" Barry said.

"Shut up," I replied), meaning to see the Reachers. But we got too pissed to reach the Fort in the back room, and missed the show.

**Prospect Heights** - "Welcome," Dan Emery said, even though it wasn't his house.

"Am I late?" I asked, entering the home of Pinata-Land.

"No," Tom Warnick said, though it wasn't his house, "You're right on time."

Dave Wechsler, first song-writer for Pinata-Land and sole resident in the room, nodded to me as he washed dishes.

"What's to eat?" I asked.

Nothing was to eat, not for hours. It was a slow-starting barbecue. Hours later, sated and looking for anything that had so far missed my ravenous attack, the members of Pinata-Land, Mark Two, sat on a blanket on the moist grass, and played songs. Doug Stone, second song-writer for Pinata-Land, played guitar a bit before heading in to do dishes. Dave sang unamplified, and sounded sweeter than I'd ever heard him. Some of the songs were from their regular repitroire, some were old standards. Ancient standards. From before I was born. Or my dad. Or his dad. Real old.

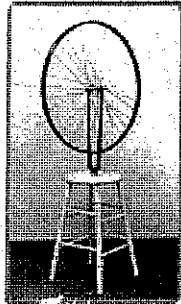
"Well," I said, wiping the wet off my pants, I gotta go.

"You biking home?" Anna, the gorgeous fiddlist asked.

"I'm biking home," I said.

"Be careful," she said.

I grinned and asked, "Why start now?"



# ANTIMATTERS CLASSIFIEDS

## Help Wanted

Evil genius apprentice: I need someone to help throw city into ruckus by NOT standing clear of the closing doors and NOT moving to the center of the train. Must also know how to remove webbing from computer console board. 555-OCTO

Drink detective: Need a good private eye to find waitress at ten 'til eight so I can get dat two-for-one Sidewalk Cafe booze special. Stacy Keach need not apply. 555-DRNK

Creeps: Busy tavern seeks loud, screaming drunks to pepper our musical performances with delightful banter. Apply in person@Kenny's Castaways

Jumble Assistant: Since I caught my head in the piano during Piano Night, I've had trouble with That Scrambled Word Game—not to mention Wordy Gurdy! 555-JMBL

Appliance Repairwoman: Must have own van & tools. Fridge exp. a huge plus. Pleasant work. Job sometimes requires heavy nudity. Call Gordon Jump at 555-MYTG

Hitman: Snuggles the Bear lives below me and his yammering about soft laundry is driving me stark raving mad. Cold blooded killer needed to rub out Snuggles and his cuddly, starch-free pels. 555-DWNY

Killer: It would make my ex-husband's birthday if someone could bring me the head of Jon Berger, preferably on a plate—or inside a knapsack! I'm tired of his claim he was the inspiration for Die Hard. Call D. Moore at 555-BRCE

Men's room sink stuntman. I need someone to carefully turn on the faucet on the left-side sink in the men's room at the Sidewalk. I'm tired of that surprisingly powerful spray of water making it look like I can't control myself. I'm an upstanding citizen; I sing songs about unions! 555-WETT

## For Sale

The Number "19"—Never used at Antihoot of June 1, 1998. Will gladly trade for two higher Antihoot numbers or a cookie. (A really big cookie—none of that Keebler stuff).

Books: autographed copy of Lach's autobiography, "What Number I'm Really On." Also available: "Conspiracy Theory—How the Fort Put Freddy's Air Guitars Out of Business and Then Helped His Brother" and "From the Blue Dress to the Bombing of Afghanistan: The King of Antifolk Scandals 1994-97."

## Cars & Pets

### '79 PUNK ROCKER

Automatic transmission, loaded, looks/runs good for the most part, dual air bags, garage kept, doesn't scream much anymore. Must sacrifice. Any good offer. 555-RTTN

### '85 METAL SINGER

Housebroken. Shots/worming done. Good w/kids. Parents on premissis. Big hair now not so big. 555-4DEE

## Personals

SWF guitar player seeks fellow artisté to yell, "Coco Rico, I am a Spanish rooster" during my shows. Must know appropriate times to yodel. Must also like poetry that keeps rhyming the word "nude." 555-JEWL.

Former funk troubadour needs that special someone to destroy the Army Ants that cover my body at all hours. Red, stinging Army Ants! My God! Somebody set me on fire! Call Rick James at 555-CRCK

Scurvy pirate seeks sensitive female piano balladeer to help soften my rough-and-tumble exterior. I like flower-pattern wallpaper, puppies, paintings featuring those kids with big doe-like eyes and SLITTING THE THROAT OF LAND LUBBERS! As you can see, I need some work. Please call! 555-AHAB.

## Personals

SWF looking for successful, sugar-daddy drummer to pamper. Must be very comfortable wearing Pampers. No Huggies or Luvs to be found here! Call me so you can cry like a baby, drummer boy! 555-PAMP.

## Announcements

Donate your unsuccessful songs!  
\*HELP CHILDREN'S EDUCATION\*  
Full IRS Tax Deduction  
Free towing same day pickup  
1-555-SONG

(M.C. Hammer—stop calling!)

### INJURED EGO?

Did you bruise your artistic soul with a bad showing at the Antihoot? WE CAN HELP. We've successfully sued countless open mic audiences across the country. (Sorry—NYU students are ineligible.)  
Call Celino & Barnes at 555-BADD.

### GET THE GIRL U WANT!

Free information booklet only \$29.95: "How to Have All the Girls Tear Their Clothes Off in Front of You Even After Introducing Yourself as a 'Singer-Songwriter'." Also comes with accompanying "rock" video starring Abe Vigoda. 1-888-SEXYFOLK

Why? 'Cause Stone Cold said so!

## Garage Sales

Foreclosure sale at 336 Ave B. Houseware items: Fork, knives, pink hearts, yellow moons and many green clovers. Also plenty of tiny green outfits and empty liquor bottles. Great deals on many formerly magically delicious items.

Giant military garage sale: giant tanks, giant jeeps, giant rocket launchers and giant guns. Don't come to this sale unless you are a manly, strapping-size soldier and not those tiny, shrunken plastic travesties they made of me and my men in the late '80s! Ten hut! Come to G.I. Joe's at 47 Ave D, Apt. 2

# The Schedule for the Sidewalk Cafe

## (94 Avenue A – on 6th Street)

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

Tues.Sept.8- 7:30- E.J. 8- Kathleen Manstream 8:30- Chris Decker 9-Kirk Kelly 10- The McCarthys 11- John Newell

Wed.Sept.9- 8-Billy Kelly, 8:30- Dots Will Echo, 9-Matt Sherwin, 10- Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Sept 10- Honky Tonk Country Thursday Night With: 8-Cyndy Hasty, 9-Rob Ryan, 10-Elena Skye & The Demolition String Band, 11- The Country Jam

Fri.Sept.11- 8-Randy Kaplan, 9-The Loving-Kind, 10- Amy Alison and The Maudlins, 11- Tom Clark & Phil Cohen

Sat.Sept.12- 7:30- **Benefit for the Boston/NY AIDS Ride** featuring performances by Janice O'Rourke and Matt Azzarto of The Geffkens, 9- Neal With An A, 11- Bill Popp and The Tapes

Sun.Sept.13-7:30- Pinata-Land, 8:30- Alan Bennett, 9-Alta, 9:30- Scott Forman, 10- Sonya Hunter, 10:30- Brian Bauers

Mon.Sept.14 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Sept.15- 7:30- Joie/DBG, 8- Marilee, 8:30-Lisa Itts, 9-Kirk Kelly, 9:30-Nancy Falkow, 10-Monet

Wed.Sept.16- 8-Jeff Lightning Lewis, 8:30- Bernadette, 9- Gilligan Stump, 10- Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Sept.17- Honky Tonk Country Thursday Night With: 8- Slink Moss, 9-Rob Ryan, 10- L'il Mo, 11- The Country Jam

Fri.Sept.18- **International Animal House**: 8-The Easy Leis (Hawaiian), 8:30-Steve De La Steve & Goatpants (Martian), 9-Les Sans Culottes (French), 10-Eletfa (Hungarian), 11-Trio Magges (Greek), 12- Larry Goggin (American Jazz)

Sat.Sept.19- 7-Lounge-O-Leers, 8-**CD Release Party for Gene & Mimi** with additional performances by Mark Humble, Dan Emery, Julia Douglas, Tamara, Peter Dizozza, Peter Chance, Lach, 10-The Adverteasers, 11- The Humans, 12- David Dragov

Sun.Sept.20- 7:30- The Cleveland Steamers, 8:30- Allan Kelly, 9-Tony Hightower, 9:30- Jenna, 10- Todd Griffen

Mon.Sept.21- The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Sept.22- 7:30- Springwell, 8:30- Steve Schiltz, 9-Kirk Kelly, 9:30- Jeff Lange, 10- Peter Frook, 10:30-Paul McMahon

Wed.Sept.23- 7:30- Little Oscar, 8-Mighty Vitamin, 8:30- Mike Young, 9-Eve Hars, 9:30-Alex Stephan (of Railroad Jerk), 10- Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Sept.24- Honky Tonk Country Thursday Night With: 7:30- Vida Loca, 8:30- Julie Grower, 9-Rob Ryan, 10- Joyce Anderson, 11-The Country Jam

Fri.Sept.25- 7-Jack Grace, 8-The Count, 9-Curtis Eller's American Circus, 10-

Blues To Venus, 11- Joe Bendik and The Heathens, 12- The Bitter Poet

Sat.Sept.26- 8-Princess, 9- Mia Johnson, 10- Homer Erotic, 11- TBA, 12- Gil Schwartz and The Lava Daredevils

Sun.Sept.27-7:30- Stellan Wahlstrom, 8- The Trance Senders, 9- The King Quartet (featuring John King), 10- Heidi Martin, 11- Tara Cruse

Mon.Sept.28- The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Sept.29- Libra Birthday Bash! 7:30- Bill Popp, 8-Joy Zuzulo, 9-Shameless, 10- Mr. Boltgun

Wed.Sept.30- 8-Luke Miller, 8:30- Kevin Kadish, 9- Sheena, 9:30- Andras Jones, 10- Rick Shapiro

Plus a week and half more shows before the next AntiMatters schedule!