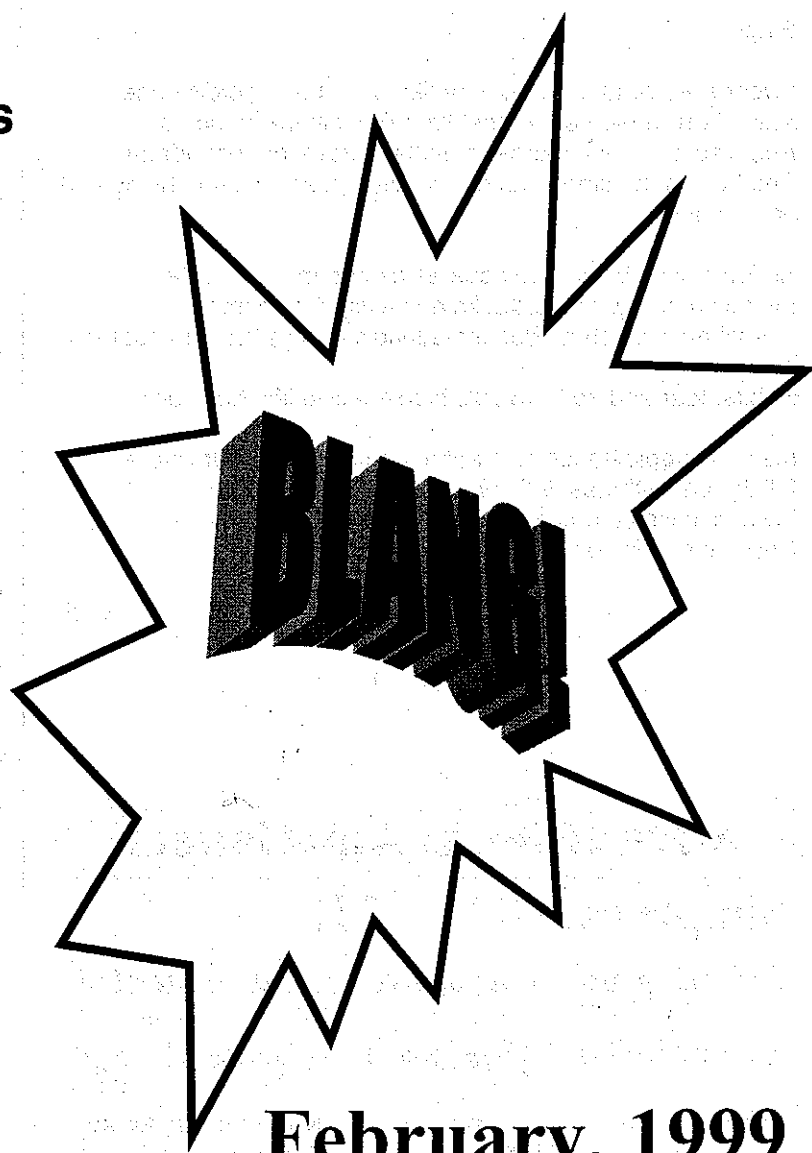


AntiMatters

In Celebration of

LACH's

new album,



February, 1999

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Blang

I wondered what the girls'd be like once the record's done
And when would be the next time I'd sit in living rooms
And was my age a badge, a battle, a ticket or conundrum
And how many times can a man disappear from the things that
he has done

Scripted lives on lighted squares assure me I am safe
My rollercoaster heartattacks are scary but on track
The wheel's catch air but something's always there to put them
back

Habits, fear and soft rewards hide the true life that I lack

Kiss my magic hands and wake me up from this daytime
Fill the car with gas, let's drive fast and out of here
My music was a bottle that I threw once out to sea
Now the day is coming for it's return to rescue me.

Lach.

Advertising in AntiMatters

Simple as 6 – 11 – 21!

For one quarter of a page you pay six dollars!

For one half of a page, just 11 smackers.

For a whole page of the promotion in the zine on the scene,
pay just 21 tiny infinitesimal US units of currency.

You Can't Lose!

Lach.

If Lach did not exist, it is quite likely that
he would have had to invent himself.

It is theorized that this is in fact what
happened, one early day, in an early New
York town, in an earlier decade. Was it the
sixties, the seventies or eighties? No one
knows. No one particularly cares. And
therein lies the issue.

Lach is a star in his own imagination, and,
years and years into his career, it is
perhaps the time for us all to catch up to
that imagination. Perhaps not. But Blang!
Lach's latest foray into superstaria, may
very possibly put him on the map, not just
as the guru, grandfather and grappling
hook of AntiFolk, but as *The Man Who
Made Blang!*

Could it be?

Is it possible?

Could 1999 be the Year of the Lach?

AntiMatters sounds off on this vital issue.

Jonathan Berger

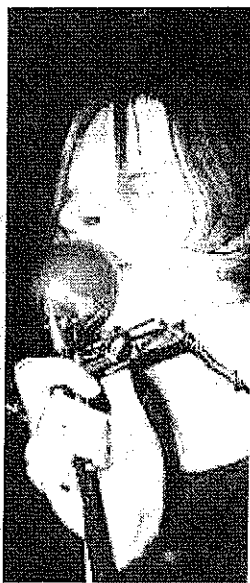
AntiMatters' own Little Lach
Jonathan Berger

Another Player in the Increasingly Dualistic
Game of Life. Electric Word Life, It Means
Gustav Plympton

January 10, 1999 -
Town Hall - The
anti-folk concert got
the grand treatment

Report to the Fort

at the prestigious Town Hall. And the amazing thing was that it actually felt like an anti-folk concert. A little imagination (like imagining that the Sidewalk Café has upper balcony seating and that you can fit 10 people on the Fort stage with room to spare) and it wasn't so different a vibe from most Anti-folk shows. It started off with Dean someone-or-another, from some band called Luna that I'm not familiar with but which the fellow to my right assured me was worthwhile listening to. I wasn't all that impressed but the self-same fellow in the know sitting next to me thought that Dean had acquitted himself well and honourably in his solo endeavor (Well, not quite solo, he had another guitarist with him). After they vacated the stage, there was a much longer break than what ya get at the Sidewalk (How unprofessional!) but eventually Beck and his band sauntered on. He drew mostly from his latest album, Mutations. In fact, I think he played the whole darn album. He also played a lot from One Foot in the Grave. Being a mostly acoustic show, he only did a couple songs from Odelay. And I suspect that the stuff I didn't recognize came from Mellow Gold, since I've never heard that album. In general though, his best performances came from his latest album. At his best, Beck has an easy familiarity with the audience which immediately shrinks a large concert hall to Sidewalk proportions. It's a rare talent that only a handful of performers have (Lyle Lovett springs to mind as the best example). Unfortunately, he keeps undermining this ability with half-assed break-dancing moves and big show pretensions. It seems the ability he wants to have is to take a small show and make it seem really big, which he doesn't need to do when he's playing Town Hall. While there are bands this works for (Ween jumps to mind as the best example of a band that always acts like they're playing for



ten football stadiums of people even when they're playing some mid-sized club like Tramps. And making it hysterically funny to boot.) it kind of derailed the show in my opinion. Unfortunately, these moments I didn't like were consistently the ones that drew the loudest applause so I guess I'm in the minority on that one. He did mention that this was his mellow show that wasn't particularly crowd-pleasing, but I wish he had stuck to guns in this regard. He kept breaking out these little "moves" which were pretty lame. Whether or not he thinks that they're lame as well seems to be in contention.

I couldn't tell if people were enjoying them ironically or not. (These are the travails we have to face in the age of post-

modern entertainment.) What really worked though, was his most recent material, which is clearly heart-felt and contains some of the best songs he's written. The only problem with this material was that the band had clearly just learned it and hadn't really had the time to make the songs their own. They were pretty much just playing what's already there on the album and were more

comfortable with the older material. So the show veered back and forth from songs where Beck seemed a little lost but the band rocked and songs where Beck seemed emotionally clear and centered but the band didn't provide much drive behind it. It got a little frustrating, but the fact that the concert was still one of the better big shows I've seen hints at future greatness for Beck.

Props department, (for those who keep track of that kind of thing): Beck did tell a little tale about his first open mic and getting into song-writing where he credited the guidance of "a gentleman named Lach" whose mention was met with small pockets of knowing applause and hooting through-out the audience. (Dave Wechsler)



February 1, 1999 - *Continental* - I woke up with parts I never knew I had, aching, throbbing, stiff.

My neck, a unit I'd not thought about in years, was especially rigid, leaving me feeling like a Cardassian from Star Trek.

With too little sleep and too much alcohol seeking escape from my bloodstream through my pulsing head, I moaned my way out of bed and muttered to whatever forsaken gods still listened, "Never again."

Likely no harder said than done.

The cause of my discomfort was the one-time performance of Geoff Notkin's Big Band Punk Band, a long-nascent concept in the mind of Lach compatriot, AntiMatters contributor, and February 1st birthday boy, Mr. Geoffrey Notkin.

"This is the best birthday party ever!" the brit-sounding Notkin exclaimed during the show, between some of the mightiest covers of punk anthems. I couldn't identify all of them, but there was Clash, Sex Pistols and Stranglers in the mix. A seven person band, featuring Notkin on lead vocals and leather cap, ran through late seventies early eighties material, immediately forcing me to dance, but in a punk way. My arms and head flailing spastically, my feet locked safely in place, I twisted and spazzed in an exceedingly limited area, except for when some smart guy would try to start a slam pit with me.



Before the performance, during Magges' opening set, I was ogling the gorgeous leather-and-lace back-up singers of the band to come. The alcohol was flowing, leaving me prepared to sweat it all out of my system on the floor, hoping said singers would notice me and plan to wipe me down. A puddle formed around me, leaving me more room to move my form in virtual solitude, with the exception of numerous photographers and video-makers. I think I paid off enough of them to keep silent of my part in the night. None of the material was original or new, but it surged with power, and, for the first time in years, I saw the value of a good covers show. The band, including Fort stalwart Anne 'Shameless' Husick on bass, and occasional support player Dave Stengal on percussion, along with Magges' Chuck Metaxas and Christ Gibson on guitar, was energy and enthusiasm, and the audience identified with the songs. It was a grand experience for all, and it made me see the purpose in trad clubs like the Continental in the first place. Still, I wouldn't want to go to often. I ache far too much.

"Never again," I continued my mantra all the way to the phone, ringing in frustratingly singular rhythm.

"Gus," the brit on the other end of the line said, "It's Geoff. That was some party. Thanks for dancing."

"Don't mention it. Ever. Again."

"Everyone seemed to like it. The whole band wants to do it again. Soon."

"No no no," I silently whimpered, "No." (Gustav Plympton)

February 4, 1999 - Den of Cin - As soon as Daniel Johnston started his encore number, I jetted out of there. Not that I didn't want to hear it, but I didn't know any of his songs from Adam Brodsky's, and the place was uncomfortably packed. I'd never been shut out of the entire top floor of the Sidewalk. Luckily, knowing the lay of the land, I went downstairs to the bathroom, commandeered the pool table, and listened to the hushed sounds of the psychotic performer above me.

But that was then. Now, I had to get out of the club, before the hordes of Johnston fans (they were all so quiet upstairs! Religiously so!) made a dash for the door. They wouldn't stay to see Fort regulars Jeff Lewis or John Kessel. Freaks.

Report to the Fort

Not that I could talk. I was rushing to hit the Den of Cin, where I was taking on my first hosting duties, a last minute replacement MC for Joe Bendik's second AntiFolk extravaganza.

When Pat Harper broke his foot at Joe's show at Arlene Grocery a week ago, I assumed he'd find some clever way to incorporate it into his performance art schtick. The magic of Harper is he constantly keeps you guessing, wondering if he's in character, wonder if he might actually believe anything he's saying. He makes you think about every word he's saying, which is an admirable, if not frightening quality. I just assumed that being a temporary cripple would work well with his fecund imagination, and he'd hop down the stairs of Two Boots and be as in charge as possible. Hopping, however, seemed out of the question, so Joe needed to enlist some second stringer to introduce the acts. When the second stringer bailed, he called me.

It was cold on the streets of the city, as I walked from Sixth Street to Third, from the Sidewalk to Two Boots, from the Fort to the Den of Cin. I don't think that was the only reason I was nervous. I'd never hosted. Pat had left me comprehensive notes, Joe had sent me complete instructions, but still... anxiety reigned.

I had no idea how to host an evening. I had just finished hearing about how Steve Espinola had tried to fill Lach's shoes at the AntiHoot, and how much he felt he had to learn. "I'm not Lach," he'd said.

"He's no Lach," I thought, "I'm no Lach!"

I walked into Two Boots, and, tumbled down the stairs to the Den. The first act of the evening, Gilligan Stump, was waiting. We chatted, being the only people (excluding Gilligan's mute sidekick, Tha Perfesser), and I decided to get some pizza.

As I waited for my Newman to arrive, I said to myself, "I can do this. I can do this. I CAN DO THIS."

I did. (Jonathan Berger)

Joie / Dead Blonde Girlfriend - ROCKSTAR JUNKYARD - Reviewed by Tony Hightower

Joie thinks everyone thinks he's a loser. A recovering addict, he's not a big fan of everything he does. He fucks up, about as often as you or I do, sometimes with really shitty consequences. But sometimes he gets lucky. He knows how lucky he is to still be upright, and when he strikes that nerve, you just know that he's making his pitch to die for your sins.

Recorded live at the Sidewalk Cafe in August '98, Rockstar Junkyard has the feel of someone who invited his friends over for a show in his living room, and picked up a scratchy guitar and just starts to wailing. It's a testament to the can't-look-away of personal tragedy, and you don't have to have gone to the abyss to understand it. If he resorts to clichés sometimes, it's because they resonate, they signify. And the melodies stick in your head long after you hear

them, and shit, what the hell else do you want from your punk rock?

But on a more basic level, this is soul music from the soul of a white kid from Long Island who almost went really bad - even non-addicts will wear their lips down humming "Rock-N-Roll Tragedy" and "I Wouldn't Blame You." "Make me sound important!" he screams, and it's more than a call for tape noise, it's a call for validation, it's the sound of a hoarse, scared survivor shouting from the valley of the shadow of death, praying for an echo. And at the end of "Drinking with God," his scream, primal and victorious as any desperate ex-loser who managed to convert his very last shot at redemption ever sounded, is one of triumph, even if only temporary.

On Tuesday, January 17 Kenny Davidson saddled up to the piano at a very crowded Sidewalk Cafe. Although not everyone in the room had come to see our faithful tunesmith, Kenny held onto nearly every member of the audience, delivering an incredibly solid and entertaining set. Most followers of Lach's Anti-Hoot already know Kenny to be a superb accompanist and musician, more often than not using his perfect pitch for the powers of good. However, after being exposed to an entire set you realize that Kenny's writing equals his impressive playing ability.

Unlike many musicians with Kenny's ear and training, a listener never gets the feeling that Kenny is taking the easy way out by simply composing tunes with structures and melodies that he knows will work. In some of his best songs like Raw Sounds and You're Never Breaking Me, Kenny makes the audience's experience interesting, but less than user friendly, verses before delivering big and rewarding choruses. It is this attempt to keep his music fresh that will prevent Kenny from ending up like the subject of "Raw Sounds" who peddles show tune type songs to cocktail audiences.

Kenny also appears to challenge himself vocally. Born with a strong and naturally sweet voice, Kenny does not always sound strong or sweet. At points in the set Kenny injects some strains and character into his voice, which makes a nice juxtaposition to the ordinarily brightly sung lyrics.

Like his hero Elton John, Kenny did not write his lyrics in the beginning. But unlike Elton, Kenny has learned to write and probably the biggest compliment I can give to Kenny is that I cannot tell the difference between lyrics he wrote and those he did not. This means a) that Kenny writes just as well as those that help him and b) when he uses other's words he doesn't slop down some music and try to stuff a poem into it.

The only area in which Kenny might be able to improve is dynamically. This is not to say that Kenny doesn't use



dynamics -- he does, and in a big way. Nevertheless, sometimes some of his big, beautiful choruses might play better if he saved all volume and enthusiasm until the last chorus and let the first couple build to that point. But hey, what do I know. I made \$11 in loose change at my last gig and Kenny rocked a full house. If you were lucky enough

On Kenny Davidson

to be there you know. If you weren't, don't miss the next one. --wayne gladstone

Kenny Davidson melodiously reminds listeners that the piano is a PERCUSSION INSTRUMENT!

Kenny Davidson plays a rocking piano. He's the amazing anti-hoot regular who can sit at the piano and recreate, note perfect, the great rock standards, particularly the Beatles. You must hear him cover A Day in the Life. He also accompanies Lach during those educational rounds of the game show, "What the Fuck?." At a recent anti-hoot, I've even seen him accompany Dvorah in her hit, "Family Values."

So he's flexible and adaptable, but if you want hard-core Kenny Davidson, attend one of his great solo sets. Here's my memory, faulty as it is, of the one on Sunday, January 17, at the Fort.

He opened with a raucous pop song, about lightning striking, followed by an appealing new song, The Good Old Days, written for the nostalgic old folks. His great "Raw Sound" was next. That's a piece with an incredibly hooky vamp in which a low piano pound alternates with a pulsing melodic stream of high notes, leading into a great long melodic line chorus in which he belts, "My life shall be the biggest voice!" He puts strain in his voice, while keeping the melodic notes intact! Furthermore, his apparent pounding of the lower and upper registers produces in an incredibly accurate note-perfect arrangement. This song is my favorite.

His song about the music industry expressed a passionate attitude about the performers' universal theme. Singing about the industry big shots, he adds "I don't need you!" against pounding triplets.

In his song about the opposite sex, he says, "You gotta be insane." When he concluded a verse with "The tenderness feels like a bris," members of the audience stood up and took note.

In his song "Everybody's trying to put me down," he followed a solid I VI ii V I progression for the chorus.

It was invigorating to hear him admit to the dark response any pianist has to the third-party pounding comment. During his banter about practicing piano in his apartment, he concluded, "Fuck the people downstairs."

While his right hand keeps pulsing, the left hand plays the melody in his booming boogie woogie song, "Can't you see? ... Sorry but you're never breaking me!"

His verbal content mostly observes what it's like being underappreciated by assholes, if I may presume to simplify. Thus is he rarely obscure, and his lyrics are always intelligible. I, as a surrealist, suggest that, although it may

On Henry David Lach

be dear to his heart, he should abandon, then reapproach this subject from a different direction.

Speaking with him recently I learned how important were the ingredients of wood, felt and metal contained in the console of a real piano. Electronic keyboards, no matter how digitally advanced, quickly reach limitation when he uses them to create his resonant style. His fantasy keyboard concurrently plays all eighty-eight keys, with dynamic capability ranging from a lit fuse to a dynamite explosion. Only a piano's enormous stringed harp can transmit his range, limited only, as all good anti-folk guitarists also know, by the snapping of strings.

With material that is lushly, harmonically innovative, he's advancing the piano into new realms of sound production, while separating the well crafted from the shoddy. When Kenny plays, only the best made pianos survive. — Peter Dizozza



Tony Hightower sounds off on Blang!

The story of punk is not Malcolm McClaren selling ripped t-shirts. It isn't GG Allin eating his own shit on stage and dying in his underaged girlfriend's lame minidress and not much else at a houseparty after a gig he'd blown off.

It ain't John Colvin walking off the construction site one day and buying a Mosrite guitar with his last paycheck and changing his last name to Ramone, or Joey Shithead Keithley getting up the nerve to run for political office by learning public speaking in front of tens of thousands of screaming spitting pogoing anarcho-leftists, or little Henry Garfield getting tired of getting beaten up by the kids at school & his family and running off with the Black Flag circus, becoming ROLLINS: Apple pitchman, standup comedian, and possibly the most self-published mal vivant of the late 20th century.

Or rather, punk (or rather, Punk) is, of course, all of those things. But at its root (this may be my opinion, but hey, you're reading it), punk is a bunch of kids who don't have enough to do to soak up their deep well of pent-up energy, and some destroy themselves in the electric frenzy, and some just blow off the extra steam by jumping up & down, and some build great monuments, just to do something.

Lach understands the concept of punk a lot more than you do. His just-fucking-do-it attitude has been with him for a lot longer than anyone who currently knows him has known him. Given a list of his accomplishments,

More on Blang! (View from Hightower)

you'd think he was about 364 years old, with a little portable soundboard on wheels built into his walker, his overdrive pedal really a booster for a hearing aid. Then you meet him, and he's like 12, all size-you-up and pop and snarl, eyes that see everything, his deep blue monk of a brain thinking just this much faster than yours.

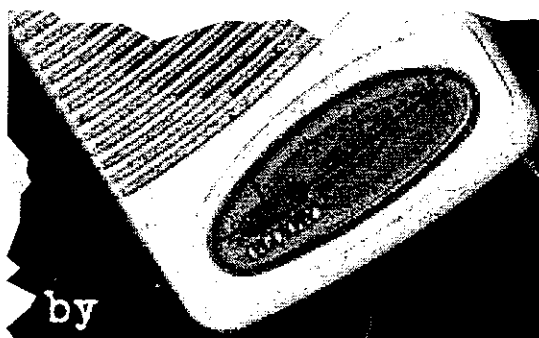
You see, once upon a time, kids, Lach wanted to be a rock & roll star, more than he wanted life itself. I don't know if he ever said that to anyone, but listening to Blang!, that little fact is writ overlarge all over this record like subway graffiti. This album is as much about Lach convincing himself that greatness and fame are two separate & equally achievable things as it is a great anti folk (and yes, punk) record.

Blang! should be required listening for any hot young turk piss & vinegar songwriter convinced that they're the next Ani deSpringsteen (or Beck Sabbath, or whoever) gonna bring the world to its knees in reverence and start the new millennium with a brand new saviour (like those things ever mattered). From his vantage point as gatekeeper of the castle at Songwriter's Ground Zero, he's seen more examples of how to Make the Great Proverbial It than maybe anyone alive, and these 14 songs are kind of an ambitious songwriter's apotheosis, a textbook on how passionate you have to be and what it'll take out of you if you want to get to Valhalla on the back of your new jack stylee.

Not that he doesn't think he can get there. Shit, Lach has not only been there himself, he's run more Next Big Things up the flagpole than you could hear in two Woodstocks. (Well, maybe one. But -- one!) He's intimate with what it takes to be great, regardless of how you define greatness yourself, and he knows how incredibly high the price you pay is if you want to be a Big Rock Star.

Sure, "Kiss Loves You" is the feel good song of the millennium, and "Drinking Beers With Mom" rocks hard enough that you can't wait for the end of the record to come just so you can hear it (what do you [>>] past? The songs are all good, at worst), but for my money, the point of the album, and the best and most fully realized song on it, is "Ungrateful." As a pep talk about being true to yourself, regardless of what riches lay off the road, it expresses a perfect sentiment. And when he sings "You met this girl, you like this girl, man, you really like this girl," it gives me shivers.

And if by some catastrophe (for that's what it would be) this record doesn't catapult Lach into some stratosphere someplace, this fable about remaining principled in the face of riches-and-fame-as-lure would hold some clue as to why. It would mean that the unwashed masses would be a little less enlightened. But on the other hand, Lach & those of us who hear him are vastly better people, just by hearing the message of this record and being exactly who we are, flaws and all.



by

Geoffrey Notkin

Photos by Jacqueline Ho and Geoffrey Notkin

playing the radio game

(OR, HOW WE MADE *BLANG!*)

1980 We were rarely bored during the Boston years, Lach and I. After all, we had thousands of young college students to use as fodder, and our own strange and anarchic three piece band—The Aliens—for entertainment. Like most teenage rockers we were full of enthusiasm (read: arrogance) over our band which we, very sensibly, considered to be the best band in Boston and therefore, most likely, the best band in all of Massachusetts. On those rare evenings when we weren't corrupting young female liberal arts students, or having parties broken up by the Boston Police Department we liked to sit in Lach's tiny corner apartment on Buswell Street, drinking beer, smoking, and playing The Radio Game.

The Radio Game involved turning off the lights, burning some candles and incense and—no doubt intoxicated by some mind-expanding substance—slowly rolling the radio dial from one end of the broadcast band to the other. Each time we found a station, we'd leave the dial there for the duration of the song then playing. In a city like Boston, with its many independent and college radio stations, there was always a good chance of discovering some new and interesting band. And the mood of the room changed with the arrival of each new station. We might hear a cut by Boston's own Robin Lane and The Chartbusters, or a jazz piece, a movement from a classical symphony, some punk rock, or some heavy metal.

Once, a fortunate turn of the dial took us to a place full of raunchy but melodic music, with a hypnotic and mysterious beat, complete with lyrics which mentioned Dr. Strange (and we were dedicated comics fans.)

"What the hell is this?" I asked Lach. "This is great."

"I don't know, but I wish I'd written it."

It was The Bongos' cover of Marc Bolan's "Mambo Sun," from their recently-released first album. From that day we were Bongos fans, and *Drums Along The Hudson* became part of the soundtrack of our time in Boston, along with Jim Carroll's *Catholic Boy*, and The Clash's *Sandinista!*

1987 After years of living in New York, and years playing with Lach in Proper Id and other bands I moved to Hoboken—The Bongos' home—which boasted a vigorous independent music scene that The Bongos had helped create. I was thrilled to meet Bongos guitarist James Maestro,

who still lives in town, and to become part of the Hoboken scene that revolved around Maxwell's and The Beat 'n' Path.

1997 Lach and I continued to work in New York and New Jersey, playing in Hoboken as well as Manhattan, and put in

a couple of years as one third of Lach and The Sextet Offensive where, for the first time, acoustic guitars became a large part of our sound. But, when Lach took us into Bisi Studios in Brooklyn we seemed unable to truly capture our unusual live sound.

The group disbanded and Lach—as he always does—continued to give me regular reports of his ever-expanding plans, ranging from solo tours to founding a record company (which he did.)

Lach phoned me one afternoon, early in 1997, at the publishing company where I was freelancing. Tired of looking for the right label deal, he had decided to go to a different studio and make a CD for his new label—Fortified. By chance he'd met Bongos frontman Richard Barone at the Sidewalk Café, and given him a rough tape. Richard

called a few days later to say that he was listening to the tape constantly and was interested in working on a studio project. It was likely that former Television drummer Billy Ficca would be part of it, and Lach already had a short list of potential bassplayers which included veteran New York scenester and Washington Squares founder, Tom Goodkind, who had also produced our first CD, *Contender*.

"Do you think this is really going to happen?" I asked Lach. "I mean this is such a fantastic line-up with Billy Ficca and Richard Barone."

But Lach was concerned that Tom was too busy to work on the project, and so he was also considering asking Bob Dylan's current bassplayer. These guys were pretty heavy hitters, and I was starting to feel maybe a little out of my league, but I knew I had to be a part of this record.

"Look, Lach," I said. "I really want to do this record. After all the years we've spent working together, we've never come up with the definitive recording, and this could be it. I would love to work with Barone. In fact, I would be *thrilled* to work with Barone! I want you to know that I'm very, very interested in doing this."

"But I thought you wouldn't want to do it. You said you were tired of playing out," he replied.



Soundboard with Richard's Blang! notes

"I'm tired of playing small East Village bars, yes, but I'm always ready to go back into the studio with you."

Days passed, and I started chewing my nails, horrified at the thought that Lach would be working with the leader of the Bongos and that I might not be a part of it. Eager to be involved, I exploited my position as band archivist by compiling demos and live cuts from our entire career together, and mailing them to Richard.

"Geoff grew up in London and has a real Clash/Jam bassplaying style," Lach had told Richard. He liked the sound of that a lot, and on one glorious day Richard telephoned me personally to invite me to on board.

Our early meetings took place at Sidewalk, and also in a cozy Chelsea bar close to the rehearsal studios that we would use for pre-production. It was exciting and a little scary to be playing in a secluded studio with a drummer as famous as Billy; and Richard—one of our heroes—sitting against the wall with a file folder full of notes, watching everything we did with intense concentration, writing down comments and making suggestions.

A few years earlier, during the *Contender* sessions, Lach and I had indulged our passion for *Star Wars* by re-enacting scenes from the movies in between takes. This greatly amused our producer, Tom, who would leave the tape running without telling us. One segment ("I hope the old man got that tractor beam out of commission, or this is gonna be a real short trip. Okay hit it!") even made it onto the disc, immediately before the raucous "Hard Times."

Not much changes, and so as we moved into the recording phase of *Blang!* Lach and I spent down time in the studio doing C3-PO and Han Solo routines. And then *Star Wars* action figures started to appear in the studio, and they weren't ours! It also happened that the re-released special edition of the *Star Wars* trilogy was in the cinemas at the time, and on numerous afternoons Richard would appear, beaming, after an early visit to the Ziegfeld to see *Empire Strikes Back* or *Return of the Jedi* one more time. We'd somehow managed to get involved with one of the few people in the world who was an even bigger *Star Wars* fan than we were. An assemblage of action figures, which included Yoda and the Emperor and those weird robots whose names I can never remember, populated the mixing console for the duration of the sessions, along with bubble gum cards and other paraphernalia which Richard would produce on a daily basis.

It was tough for me to keep my mouth shut. I had an

idea (or ten) for every song. I even had my own list of which songs should be on the album (and I did get my way with one of them—the beautiful "Gasoline Blue" a survivor from the old days, which became the only Proper Id-era song to make it onto *Blang!*). But I forced myself to be good, confident in the knowledge that Richard knew where he was taking us. I spent hours in the control room studying Richard's book which documented the Beatles' Abbey Road sessions. I'd never liked The Beatles, but I found the

book fascinating.

"Now I've seen everything," Lach would tell anyone who came to visit. "Look! Geoff is reading a book about The Beatles."

The Abbey Road book seemed to me particularly perfect material, because Richard was a multi-talented producer, with much of Beatles' producer George Martin originality in him. He would point out to me how certain sounds represented particular moods and events in the songs. The shimmering cymbals in the chorus of "If You Break It," for instance, change the feel of the song greatly and were intended to be "the dream of the girl," Richard explained. He brought an encyclopedic technical knowledge to the project, together with experience in traditional recording methods that are rarely used today (listen to the whirring Echoplex in the middle of "Teenage Alcoholic"). He also told me that many modern recordings sound similar because the engineers are all using the same digital reverb units. And so Richard labored carefully, for hours, placing microphones around



TOP Lach catches up on his reading in between takes
BOTTOM Lach and Geoff doing basic tracks for *Blang!*

the room, and running complicated multiple lines (my bass tracks are a mix of two signals: one direct line to the board, and one from a microphone in front of heavily-padded bass cabinet tucked away in a sound proof booth.)

In The Bongos' later days, Richard had sometimes used a waterphone on stage. An intriguing instrument, it looks like a steel water pipe surrounded by metal spines. The metallic bowl is partially filled with water and is played by dragging a cello bow across the spines. The eerie sound that results is used frequently as an effect on science fiction and horror movie soundtracks. Lach mentioned that he'd like to use a waterphone at the beginning of the *Sandman*-inspired "Dreamboat," so Richard appeared at the next rehearsal with his own waterphone—a veteran of many Bongos shows. He

unpacked it at one of the meetings in our Chelsea bar, and its appearance on the dinner table caused a lot of unwanted attention, as the bar staff clearly thought we were about to fire it up and smoke something illegal. It didn't help when I took the thing into the bathroom and filled it with water so we could try to play it.

Lach didn't have the desire to practice with the water-phone, but I did, and took it home that very night. I bought a new cello bow, and practiced with it often. One night my brother came home unexpectedly, while I was sitting in the dark quietly playing it. The soft shrieking, tinkling sound crept and wavered through our apartment, and my brother—a little anxious—carefully stalked up to me with a Mag-Lite in his hand, wondering if aliens, or worse, had occupied the apartment.

Lach, Billy and I recorded all the basic tracks over three weekend nights, in a well-known Manhattan studio, the owner of which treated us so badly that we all agreed we wouldn't give them any publicity by mentioning their name. But, in compensation, we were lucky enough to have an excellent engineer who was patient, and was also amused by our antics: Richard placing boom mics against blank walls to catch faint natural reverb; setting a vintage Fender amp at the bottom of a stairwell and turning it up to maximum; all of us rummaging through bags of trash after I had accidentally thrown away Lach's camera. Oh yes, and the *Star Wars* figures.

The last scheduled song was "Jester," and Lach created a mystical mood in the room, as he's done so well since Radio Game days. He turned off the overhead lights, and surrounded us with candles. Billy and I sat on stools—he with a pair of congas, and me with a borrowed Fender Precision which we had acquired specially for that song. It remains my favorite memory of the sessions: smoke faintly curling up to the ceiling, and the flickering candles gently illuminating the pages on my music stand. "Jester" took numerous attempts to get right. "I Love Them" was the only song which required even more takes. When we finally succeeded in recording the perfect "Jester" version, it was late into the night. We were ready to pack up but Lach wanted to try something else.

We'd spent a long time in rehearsals trying to figure out how to arrange "If You Break It," and it never worked. On impulse Lach suggested that we try it then—right at the very end of the sessions—and it worked perfectly. I think the second take was the keeper. And so *Blang!* became one song longer than planned.

Once the basic tracks were complete, I took off for three weeks on a long-planned expedition to Chile, leaving Lach and Richard to orchestrate the numerous horn and string parts, and to begin work on the vocals. I spent many hours hurtling along Chile's Pan American Highway, with "Coffee Black" and "The Boy Who Never Went Outside" for company, and so became the first person ever to play

Blang! in the southern hemisphere.

It had always been Lach's intention to have me create the artwork for *Blang!*, but my mother died suddenly in the spring of 1998, and I returned to England for several months. I advised Lach to find another artist, but in the end he delayed the record so we could design it together. One afternoon we covered the floor of my art studio with

scores of photos from our long history together, trying to decide which ones to use for the CD booklet. Whittling them down to a manageable number was a terribly difficult process. Design and layout of the booklet alone took more than fifty hours. And we also had to manufacture the action figure, create the backing card art (which we modeled on real action figure packaging), the disk art and so on. Finding a tiny acoustic guitar was one of the most difficult tasks, especially since we wanted it to be the same type of guitar that Lach plays. In the end I scanned a photo

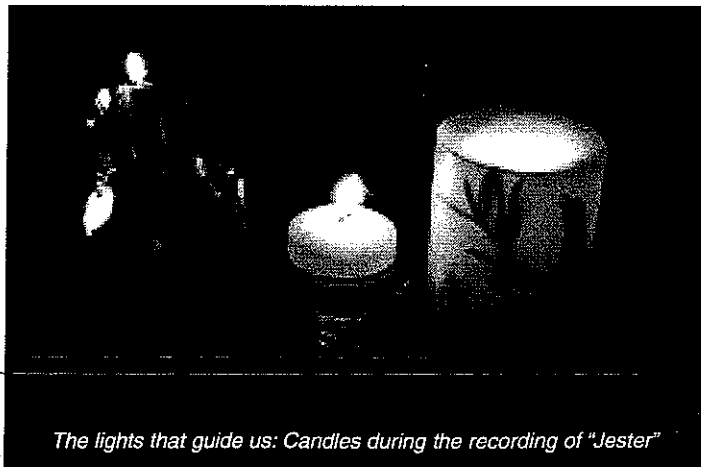
of a Taylor guitar from a catalog, backed it up with foam-core and pasted it inside the plastic bubble.

1999 *Blang!* finally emerges into record shops next week. It is *by far* the longest recording project I've ever been involved with. Two full years have passed since we first began work. *Blang!* is not my record, it's Lach's record, but I was a part of it from the beginning to the end. It's very different from the record I imagined at the outset. But it is still the record I wanted to make. It's something I'm proud of, and something that I'll always look back upon as documentation of an important part of my life and I can say, "Look, we made this ourselves."

Vin Scelsa is already been spinning a promo copy of "Blue Monk" (which just happens to be my favorite cut.) There will be a lot more radio play, and I hope that somewhere, in some smokey room, an irreverent teenager plays The Radio Game and, stopping the dial for a few minutes on one of our songs, finds inspiration within it, as we found inspiration within "Mambo Sun" all those years ago. ▲



Geoff and Richard in the control room (no doubt discussing Star Wars)



The lights that guide us: Candles during the recording of "Jester"

The Invisible Workings of

Lach's Antihoot.

On February 1st, I guest-hosted the Monday Night Antihootenany, as Lach was completing his Estonian Tour. Wow. I have a renewed appreciation for just what it is that Lach pulls off every single week, and I suspect that the rest of the regulars who were present do, too. I felt like I got thumbs up from people for doing a capable job, but it was certainly no *Lach* Antihoot.

The Lach Antihoot: Almost every single week, for years on end, Lach sits at the front of that smokey room for *six bloody hours*, and manages to keep things interesting and exciting. He makes the same jokes 'hoot after 'hoot; but, as I did my best to banter with the acts, I realized the extent to which Lach *doesn't* repeat himself in a given night. Even the things which grate on some people — Lach's rude interjections in the midst of others' songs, for example—turn out to be essential ingredients which keep things moving along. It turns out that Lach is sort of an unconventional house band, quickening the pace of the performances. It may appear that Lach is hogging attention at times; but I'm now aware of the extent to which he's actually a conduit, focusing our energy on the performers, keeping us interested in who they are and what they are doing, even getting us to sing along. I've also become aware how much energy it requires to emcee an event for 6 hours at a time. That's a serious gift to an audience, in and of itself.

And Oh, my lord! What Lach puts up with!! Thank God I had Joie sitting next to me as a moral support and chief advisor, or the thing would have been a true disaster. As it was, I was bombarded by newbies pissed off that, say, lottery number 16 had been waiting to play his priceless gem of American songwriting for three hours. Also, I was confronted constantly by the fact that many performers have no sense of time. Given the chance, they will go on for 15 to 20 minutes; and that's just the first song in the medley they didn't tell you about.

We had a pretty high turnout: by my count, 56 acts came by, ready to play. And, as the Antifolk Festival begins at the C-Note next Sunday and Monday, there were two additional nights worth of shows to be promoted. On Joie's good advice, we went into a One-Song Wonder round at 10:00pm which lasted two hours. Even then, I felt that things tended to drag a bit.

I lied a little. After the umpteenth jerk had come up asking about his number, I made an announcement laying

out the way lottery numbers are done. (Probably a mistake; better to leave the process a mystery.) I said, "If we have an act playing this week, we fit them in between the lottery numbers so you can hear them, and perhaps enjoy and learn from them. This isn't arbitrary. I'm not playing favorites. I'm not putting, say, number 23 before number 16."

In fact, that is exactly what I had done. Total lie. Number 23 was Leah Cordone. She had waited over three hours to sing at this point, and she had to leave. I looked at the schedule and we were in the midst of a long run of men. Men, men men. (Many more men than women play at this thing, though it has gotten significantly better in the past 3 years.) I'd liked her singing the week before. We could not afford to lose one of our female changes-of-pace at this point. So I ran to the bar and stopped her before she could walk out the front door. I put her in front of Ian Sclores, number 16, who was overly concerned about his number.

With Joie's consistently wise suggestions, I did this sort of thing time and again, sliding someone up a few numbers if it was going to help the overall pace of the show. Running the hoot becomes a sort of extended classical composition, with a mysterious unconscious rhythm to the various movements. It requires relaxation, energy and a consciousness of time; paradoxically, it also requires a letting go of time. "Time is an illusion", Lach will say. I'm starting to see how *real* that illusion is, and how adept at maintaining it Lach is.

I panicked a bit about how long people were waiting. Therefore, I skipped certain monotony-breakers like the "What the Fuck" game show. By the night's end, I realized that such things make the 'hoot take longer, but they make it feel much shorter.

The hoot itself was not the best antihoot ever, but it did have several good moments. Here's some of the good ones, and I'm leaving others out:

In addition to being my hero that night, Joie played and sang particularly well; I felt like he was channelling something strong, straight from the ground. Jeff Lightning Lewis sang a deranged, manic new arrangement of Clyde and Aleda, then snuck Grey Revell into his set while playing some



The Invisible Workings of

Lach's Antihoot.

very rockin' piano (surprise of the night for me). Sonya Hunter stopped by and sang "Going North", from her fantastic new CD. (It's called "Headlights and Other Constellations", and you MUST hear it.)

A woman named Viagra Falls showed up in pink feather boas and sang a long mystical song, accompanied by synth on a boombox cassette, which seemed to be about prostitution but may have had a Deeper Meaning. As a counterbalance, the Purple Organ appeared in a cow outfit and sang a song about eating pineapple so his seed would taste good. He sang the song in the back room. I thought he yanked out his shlong by the song's end, but I've been informed that he merely squeezed one of the teets of his suggestively-placed udder.

George Moore played, atypically, "You Must Suffer" and "Tunisia". Jocelyn Ryder made a rare appearance and sang a good new song. Billy Kelly sang one

of my very favorites, a song which cleverly rhymes "Texas", "Alexis" and "correct this", over three minutes, and still manages to be emotionally deep. I fear I distracted from his performance with my illegible "CLEVER RHYME SCHEME APPLAUSE" sign. I'm no Lach.

In the most rock 'n' roll moment of the night, John Kessel sang Daniel Johnston's "Museum of Love", then freaked out on a Freebird-laced version of one of his big Fort hits, while Kenny Davidsen played piano. John eventually terrified me, unplugging himself, running to the piano and almost standing on the damn thing. What he doesn't understand is that I've seen that piano collapse on it legs *three times*, almost maiming people. It's a flimsy thing. But tragedy was averted, so I'm thankful for the energy he brought to the night.

And the best performance all night -- the one which got the greatest applause -- was Mike Rechner's. He sang a song with fantastic, poetic lyrics, in that unmistakably weird, passionate Mike Rechner style. Wait a minute, the music was new, but weren't those words familiar?

He was singing Lach's "Kiss Loves You."

On Lach

This is a slippery slope you know.

To write a few words about Lach, the Thomas Edison of Anti-folk, our patron saint and -- more importantly -- the only booker in New York who currently returns my calls.

A few years ago, I made my first demo tape. It was a crudely recorded thing called "Just Another Lounge Act". High on the first acceptable recording of my voice I had ever heard (thanks to some reverb levels that would make the humans cringe), I fired my tape off to every club in Philly, some in Ithaca (Hell if I know why), and all the ones in New York that seemed cool. I eagerly awaited the barrage of phone calls. I got one.

"Hi, this is Lach from the Sidewalk Cafe in New York City. I dig yr tunes man."

"Thanks."

"Do you have a following?"

"I've never been to New York."

"Well we have what is called an anti-hoot every monday you could blah, blah, blah..."

If you've never had this conversation you've either never tried to play the Fort or you're Brenda Kahn. Anyway, it was some positive feedback.

When I made my first trip up here (with then fellow forest-babe Adam Brodsky), we didn't bring a map. We had to use Brenda Kahn lyrics find the Fort. I saw a big chunk of lower Manhattan and some of Bklyn in the process.

Meeting Lach on his turf for the first time can be daunting. I initially saw him slouch into the Sidewalk a few years ago. His slight frame listing under the weight of his leather jacket, he looked like the ghost of Buddy Holly auditioning for the Sex Pistols. He moved some tables, set

up a couple of mics and asked someone at a back table to turn off one of the Sidewalk's two upstairs TVs;

By Butch Ross "Could you turn off the TV, Please?" He paused one beat, then with sarcasm, "Yeah, the Box with the light emitting from it."

This is Lach's world and you're using valuable air. Unless, of course, you're Brenda Khan.

My first impression is not the same as the man I now know. He's capable of true gregariousness. Early visits to the Fort found me reluctant to address the mic between songs, so Lach plied me with questions like...

"Where you from?"

"What songs are you gonna play for us?"

...and so on. I believe he needs to keep the show moving so you -- the audience -- don't get bored. That's his aim, but the end result for me was that it certainly helped my set. Afterwards, Lach admonished me for just accepting my slot that night (24th) and not telling him I had driven up from Philadelphia. "Next time" he said, "I'll make sure you get on before 1AM."

As I've come up to play the Anti-hoot over the years, I've managed three or four times to inadvertently insult him. I guess I just don't talk fast enough onstage and by the time I've set up my punchline, he's already interjected a quip or a line and I find myself backpedaling. But since Lach was one of the first to notice my songwriting and has been very supportive of me in New York -- as I'm sure he is with many of you -- It's hardly any skin off my nose.

On a final note; I realize that this article is more about me than about him. I'd like to think if he were writing about me, he'd do the same.

(P.S. I'll be playing Lach's club on Feb. 11th at 9pm)

LACH

Lach is the forefather, the grandfather, the godfather of AntiFolk. He'll tell you himself on any an occasion. And say what you will about Lach, he's no liar. Based entirely on his will to create and a lack of outlets for the same, Lach gave birth to the first Fort on Rivington Street, virtually direct from his forehead.

He built it, and they came. Artists and musicians, audiences and managers, all flocked to the Fortress, quickly shortened to the monosyllabic mouthful. They came to play, the came to listen, and they came to talk about the house that Lach built.

The initial purpose, of course, was for them to talk about **LACH**. He wanted an effective venue to perform his music, as well as others'. Unfortunately, it seemed that others got to reap far greater rewards from the AntiFolk community that Lach founded. His work as an alternative organizers helped many a reputation, and while the Fort was successful in getting numerous artists noticed, in getting people signed, Lach never gained the following, or the recording opportunities, that his peers did. Perhaps he was too busy forging an empire to fracture a record deal.

And, with one notable exception, fracture is what everyone signed out of the Fort, the Chameleon, and Sophie's, did. Artists as excellent as Brenda Kahn, Roger Manning, John S. Hall, Paleface, Cindy Lee Berryhill, and Michelle Shocked all received national recognition for a few scant minutes, all were in the public eye and on national tour schedules for some short hours, but where are they now? In the dustbin of history.

"I had friends who had been signed to major labels," Lach writes, "Their lives were not any better and their souls sometimes seemed damaged by the deals. Their focus on why t hey played music became lost in the to succeed."

Perhaps it was a desire to avoid this particular pratfall that kept Lach far from the labels for most of the nineties. After his astonishing debut *Contender* hit 1990 like a quick uppercut, he had only small, localized cassette releases. Maybe Lach was just too busy making a scene to make a record. Maybe it was studio anxiety.

"The things I don't like recording is having to watch the clock and worry about money. The stress and pressure that causes interferes with the art. The main part of songwriting for me is the marriage of the lyrics with the music. I

enjoy writing the song and performing the song because it's more a fluid kind of thing. Once you're in the studio, it's a whole different dimension."

Luckily, Lach had become involved with good people, were he ever ready to record. Bass player Geoff

Notkin had worked on and off with Lach since the dawn of the 80s within various incarnations, including Proper Id, Spock's Brain, and the Sextet Offensive. With the discovery of Billy Ficca, formerly the drummer for Television, the Waitresses and Agnelli & Rave, a rhythm section was found that could manifest any vision that Lach would create.

BLANG!

Finding a sympathetic producer like Richard Barone didn't hurt either. Their meeting was one of those potentially fated encounters. "I had just recorded 10-12 sponges, just acoustic guitar, and when I left the studio I kept a couple tapes of the songs, and went over to the Sidewalk. Richard was there to see Heather Eatman perform. I had always admired the Bongos and Richard's work, and I decided to give Richard a copy. He called me like a week later and asked me what I was planning on doing with the tape and I said 'well, I guess I'll get a band together and make a recording.' He asked if he could produce it."

The pieces in place, the sky was the limit. All they needed was the songs. Luckily, Lach has those in abundance. Claiming to have written over a thousand songsa, Lach simply had to choose those he felt appropriate for the package.

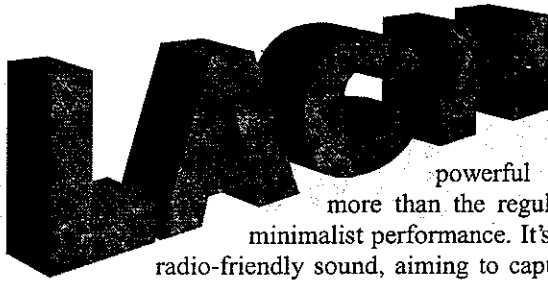
"It's sort of a widdling down process. I present Richard and the band with a bunch of songs, these were the ones that made the final cut and seemed to go together. In some strange way there's a commonality between them."

They are not all the newest songs, that's the advantage of having such a deep catalog: the ability to pick and choose. Some of the songs that made it onto *Blang!* are the crowd-pleasers, some are more obscure. While many pop up regularly in Lach's frequent downtown live performances, some, like "Drinking Beers with Mom (Everything's Alright)", are rare treats.

The album came out surprisingly easily for such an avid record-o-phobe. "I think what changed was working with Richard. It was just a lot of fun working with Richard. He brought Star Wars figures! He was able to translate what was in my head into what was on the tape. Richard is able to hear in his head what something's going to sound like before it's played. I'm more of an In the Moment kind of person. I have to hear the instrument playing, while Richard can hear it in his head. That's why we worked together so well. It was more fun than I thought it would be."

Lach held on to the completed record for over a year, slowly shopping it, not wanting to make the mistakes that various friends had over the years, finally allowing *Blang!* to be released by his own label, Fortified. "Negotiations with myself took a long time because I was asking myself more than I was willing to give."





Blang!'s powerful delivery is more than the regular AntiFolk minimalist performance. It's got a huge, radio-friendly sound, aiming to capture a larger audience for the diminutive rocker. Could it be that the premier of all things AntiFolk is seeking commercial acceptance?

"My hope was that when I was finished recording the record I would want to listen to it. I love listening to this record. That's different from most of my other recordings. My main hopes were sort of personal artistic hopes – that I would like it. I'm looking forward to recording again, actually."

This will give him the opportunity to tour. "I've always wanted to tour – and try to encourage the AF movement outside of New York." Most important though, would be the chance to continue doing what Lach loves. As he sings in "Ambition Burns":



"I perform because I'd go crazy if I didn't. Not for the things that shine or the ones that coo. If this is a game, I sure hope I don't win it. Because I have seen the things that winners have to do."

EXEGIS OF A BLUE MONK

By Professor G. Lesse II

Pity Lach's protagonist in *Blue Monk*.

"I've got a need to go out fighting," he declares first thing. Immediately, it sounds like an admirable scrapper we've encountered, a heroic figure. But, almost as soon, we discover the protagonist facing an alternative paradigm.

"But the blue monk he sits beaming in a garden of pearl and wine," the narrator regales, "he lives a life without needing, and everything just turns out fine. I want to be with the blue monk."

The blue monk, like most figures who give their lives over to traditional religious orders, has renounced worldly possessions. Moreover, the blue monk has taken pains to exorcise desire. In the second stanza, we are told of the cleric's life: "he don't need nothing, he just lives off the fragrance of words." In his attempts at purity, the blue monk appears to have succeeded.

The blue monk's affect is so powerful, he impacts on the behavior of the populace, beyond Lach's narrator. "There's a line outside his gate," the singer reports, "of people with desires for things

Jonathan Berger:

- a) Congratulates Lach on the production of an excellent album.
- b) Promotes his upcoming show.

JONATHAN BERGER at the Sidewalk Café – 94 Avenue A – Come on, don't go away – It'll be really good, I say – Guaranteed to be beautiful day – The rhymes I hope will make you sway – when you come to see me play!

JONATHAN BERGER. 8PM. FEBRUARY 9TH.
SIDEWALK CAFÉ. TUESDAY. SPOKEN WORD.
COME FOR THE WORDS, STAY FOR THE
WORDS...

that just won't wait." It is clear, however, that this behavior is not only discouraged by the friar in azure, but, in fact, deterred by his mere presence. "Once they finally meet him, all the world just disappears and the you only thing you'll be wanting is for him to keep you near." Clearly, this renunciation of worldly matters is infectious, and, for a time, the narrator of Lach's drama wishes to consume that infection. Each verse ends with the singer stating emphatically, "I want to be with the blue monk."

Finally, though, the narrator, who purports to idolize the non-materialistic ways of the purple priest, passes past the climactic moments of the song ("Give me heavens hot water, I want to wash the sings from me. I just want to start over in the blue monk's company"), and, in a moment of weakness, declares "I want to be the blue monk!" No longer satisfied to learn, to study before this wondrous sapphire scholar, the singer has allowed desire to creep back into his system, leaving a need to supplant the religious figure.

It is not simply a momentary lack of will. The student repeats his claim, "I want to be the blue monk!" again, all before beginning a battle cry, reminiscent of a football cheer. "Blue monk, blue monk!" the singer sings, veritably worshipping the non-longing nature of the brother, while still raging with the desire to replace him. The blue monk, were he dead, would surely spin in his premature grave.

Sadly, it appears the narrator fails to see the dichotomy within his desires, and in that, will be ignorant of his psychic downfall.

Pity Lach's protagonist in *Blue Monk*, but recognize the artistry behind the song. This is a thoughtful perception about spiritual awakening.

(Professor G Lesse II)

My First Antihoot

by michal the girl

I was really nervous. But not too nervous. I had been performing a lot back then. This was New York, though. What was a New York audience going to be like? Would they "boo" me off the stage like some lame act at the Apollo? Would they smile and nod, but not be paying attention? Or even worse, not respond at all and all I'd hear would be crickets like in a Bugs Bunny cartoon?

I called down to the Sidewalk and asked the guy on the phone when to arrive for the open mic night. He told me to be there at 7:30 for sign up. I said, "Wicked. Thanks." He said, "Excuse me, but are you from Canada?" I said, "Well, that's funny. I've just moved from there. You're good! What gave it away?" He said, "Oh, I know someone from there and they say 'wicked' all the time."

I arrived a bit late, not thinking it would actually start on time. There was a man playing when I walked in. He had on black-rimmed glasses and was singing about a blue monk. And then he put distortion on his acoustic. I thought to myself, "Wicked!". He got the audience singing along (something people in Halifax would only do for cheesy Celtic music) to his medley of "This Land is Your Land", a Violent Femmes song, and ..um.. something else I can't remember.

I went over to a stranger and asked him where I signed up. He said, "You have to wait until he's off the stage." I was like, "Oh, no! I have to sign up with that cool guy up there...and I'm totally late...oh, man, I feel really stupid. Maybe I should just watch this time." But my courage kicked in and when the man with the black-rimmed glasses was done playing I went up to his table. Of course, it had to be at the front of the room right by the stage. I said, "Hi, I just moved here a week ago and at my last show up in Canada this guy Eugene Ripper came up to me. He told me I should come down here to the open mic, so here I am." The man then introduced himself to me as Lach and said he'd put me on the list and that my number was 7-B.

I went back to my seat. A girl came down and sat next to me. She said her name was Briana. We chatted for a bit. We were both newly born solo artists, so we had some things in common. She asked me what my number was and I told her. She said that I was lucky - that was a really good one. I thought that Eugene Ripper guy must have some clout or something. She gave me a flyer to her upcoming show and then she left before my turn was up.

Lach started telling these jokes that the audience knew the answers to. Like the one about Eddie's Air Guitar Shop ("1983"), passing around the tip jar (if you don't have money for the tip jar... "Get a fuckin' job!") I liked that one. Then there was the time he held up a sign that said "Fuck Applause" when someone said "fuck" in their song. That was good too.

I was getting increasingly nervous. When it was a few people before my name, I started tuning my guitar. I was creating quite a racket back there. I was so shakey I was fumbling with my wires and knocking things all over the place. A real clutz. The waitress was looking at me funny. I sat there ready until my name was called.

I went up, timidly handed over my guitar wire and asked for a chair. I needed to sit down for this one. Lach announced to everyone that I'd just moved from Canada. "How long have you been in New York?" he asked. "A week...so I'm a little nervous." "Oh, don't worry, it's just a room full of people judging you." Lach said. "great" I said. I played my first song, "Miss Guided". Everyone was very attentive, very polite, and surprisingly quiet. When I was done, I said, "I was going to play this other song, but this crowd seems to want something BITCHY. It's up to you. Do you want a sweet song or a bitchy song?" "BITCHY!" they said (of course). I then sang "Emptied", a song about an ex-boyfriend getting married. I even got the "Fuck" applause. I was loosening up and having a good time. Then, like that, it was over. I was still kind of high when Lach said, "So, what do you think? Should we book her?" Everyone said, "Yeah!" I was completely shocked. I never expected a show out of my first visit. Wow!

And so began my Antihoot visits. I eventually became one of the crowd that knew all the running jokes, clapped for the "fuck" applause and sang along to Lach's songs. Lach was so kind to me that first night and continues to be so every time I see him. I consider myself so fortunate to have met him. I think he is a real talent. Who else could be the front man for such a unique movement in music?

I've ventured out into the night to see some of Lach's shows. I think he's wonderful and I always have a good time. When the audience gets involved is when it gets really fun. Sometimes we, the audience, sing back-up for him. It's great. At one show he actually went up to these people in the back of the room that had been talking through the whole show. "Do you mind not talking for just ONE of my songs?" he asked. That took guts. I'll always admire that.

This last week of February marks my one year anniversary of my first Antihoot experience. Lach says I have to call myself a New Yorker now. I guess I'm no longer a guest of this city, but a resident. Scary thought.

The best of luck to you, Lach, on your WICKED new release!! Rock on! Kiss loves YOU, man!

Just before I began writing this, on the bright screen of my idiot box, for a few fleeting moments, shone the glimmering image of the sexiest black actress on television. At least, that's what

all the grandmasters of spin in all those important entertainment magazines geared towards the African-American community have told me for the past year or so. Though I seldom take these monuments to hyperbole seriously (their tendency to celebrate *only* the already overcelebrated wears even on my tough skin), I figure that, as spins go, they haven't stretched the truth too much here, really. This assessment is based on personal experience. In an entirely different world and time, long before my anti-life kicked in, Kendra (not her real name) was a struggling actress/singer in Harlem and an unquestionably pretty girl to look at. Vivacious (and somewhat buxomy), she could easily hold her own on and off stage, and it was clear to anyone that she had the stuff that gets call-backs. I was a songwriter/lyricist and looking to promote a lead singer to an all black female hard rock band I knew. She was talented at playing coquettish types. This no doubt could be attributed to the fact that Kendra was – in form, fashion and function – an unrepentantly deceitful person in real life. I would only discover this (as most naïve young guys do) after getting burned for trying to help along the career that now loudly pronounces itself from the screens of motion picture theaters, television sets, and the covers of magazines as the latest sexual miracle out of Black Hollywood. The last time we spoke, was a few days before Christmas at a Black Rock Coalition function held at the Cooler more than five years ago. It was the end of our non-relationship and the beginning of her notoriety, and she began our seconds-long conversation with a too-sharply stated demand to know my whereabouts when the rock band I'd gotten her into opened up for Living Colour. I lied, telling her that I had to work that night. I left the affair right after this exchange with the sick feeling that comes from knowing there isn't much point in staying. There are a but a few things in this world I am certain of. My not wanting to speak to Kendra again was/is one of them.

I'll catch flack for saying this, (most probably from Lach) but a part of me, seeing this transformation of hers from mere actress to star, thinks it was fitting that she should have come to prominence in the nineties, the age of Clinton and the deification of celebrity talent over substance of character. Clinton, (not his gaffing GOP predecessor, Reagan) most successfully embodies the actor/politician ethic, the belief that facts really are stupid things or that looking good is more important than upholding it. Real virtue, for the most part, is unglamorous, sometimes painful for the doers and largely

My Big Blang Theory

by Penner MacBryant

uncelebrated while the images of virtuous conduct are always photogenic; capturable in film and playable sound bites. The one of a certain figure walking

presidentially down the steps of a church, a Bible in one hand, an ill-explained adversaries list and

a scented stogie in the hidden one, is just the most telling of our time.

All this ranting isn't without point: One of the most important qualities that the Anti Life has ever offered its citizens is not simply its embrace of the genuinely talented, but of the genuine. Here, in the country of Anti-Folk, it hasn't simply been about obtaining the often empty credentials of so-called stardom, but it has been about being the best musical person you can be in your chosen genre and learning to nurture the others in your midst in whatever constructive way possible. Get nothing wrong here. The drive to make it in the business isn't (and won't be) discouraged. It just isn't worshipped, and never will be to the point where, to borrow from Chris Decker, our blessed overdrive (that which makes us stay up late, create fervently, talk incessantly about the music, etc.) spills into the muddled logic that can justify driving *over* somebody to itself in pursuit of goals. Anti-Folk hasn't always existed, but I believe its attitude has. It's just the method of expression changes and reinvents itself constantly to fit the times. We've all found our own particular personal meaning for the term, but for me, Anti-Folk is a world that gladly grants you license to celebrate the meaningful and shoot down the pretentiousness around you creatively and with impunity. It insists on seeing no good as insignificant. Seeing the aforementioned starlet on my screen for one hot – uh, I meant *cold* – second, just after listening to "Ambition Burns" gave me assurance of something I've suspected for a long while. Being an Anti-Folkie might just be one of the more righteous things a person can be. And, at the worst, it's a damn great deal of fun.

...I don't want to win, be kingpin

Live in the din of clamoring kin...

I don't need acclaim

Fame maims... makes great names lame

Blang, the latest offering from the mother/father of this here Anti-Folk scene, lives all that and more. It is a wonderfully kinetic thing that doesn't stay anywhere but in your face and ears for all of its fifty minutes and fourteen tracks. Yet it never lets the need for outrageously energetic rock get in the way of saying something whimsical or important. Without taking himself too seriously (which, after all, *is* quintessentially Lach) he has crafted an album that should be taken seriously. Produced by Richard Barone, *Blang* delivers all the favorites Lach plays live at the Fort, but gives you a few musical surprises along the way. The great thing about the best of Lach's material is that it blurs the line between campiness and ferocity, tenderness and frenetic musical energy. It challenges

Continuation of the Big Blang Theory

by Penner MacBryant

the notion of what meaningfulness is supposed to *sound* like. Hell, it just blows it apart with the sound of one crashing chord. When the album opens the way it does – with the chord and the speeding locomotive's velocity (heightened beautifully by the harmonica sequence) of "Coffee Black", the tone is set perfectly – when you're riding with Lach the rocker, you're riding a speeding train: hold on or get off – but don't even *try* to get in the way. At first listen, Lach's lyrics seem like disjointed phrases and ideas strung together – not always in meter, not always in the rhythm you'd choose it to be. But they aren't strung together – at least, not *artlessly* so – rather it seems as if he's underscoring the disconnection modern people from nearly every walk of life feel they have in and/or outside of themselves. Maybe it's best said in the lyric of the opening cut: *Couple of summers ago/I lost track of things/But then I thought/"Hell, so did everybody."* But if a generation of young and relatively young adults – black, white and otherwise are disconnected from themselves and their environments, they are united in their common pains and searches for meaning. I hope the young urban kids reaching for some brutal parody of psychic relief in Stevie Wonder's *Too High* or Eric Benet's *Chains* and the neglected "some-burbia" kid in Lach's *Teenage Alcoholic* (on the album) discover how much they really have in common – and that both find deliverance from their common demons.

My own personal favorite of the cuts is Lach's own take on the industry and the men in suits, *Ungrateful*. It remains, in my opinion, one of his best songs on the album. Of course, the equally rousing *Blue Monk*, which was inspired by a dream he had of being in a Japanese Zen garden with a monk with an undeniable aura of holiness, is also a contender for that top spot. Ironically enough, it *has* earned Mr. Anti-Folk some regular air play on WNEW FM. While the quality of the ballads waver a bit, none are boring. Maybe if more men wrote songs like *I Love Them* as skillfully as Lach crafted his self-acknowledged ode to women there'd be a few more cease fires in the battle between the sexes. *Gasoline Blue* is an excellent example of how good Lach is when he weds his world of inventive and witty abstract lyricism with his already evident gift for musicality. The song is – gasp! – good enough to appear on a progressive radio station's play list. (kudos to whoever suggested trumpet on the track). *The Jester*, on the other hand, despite its cool Orbison-like arrangements, infectious chorus (with smooth vocal backgrounds provided by the humans) seems just a bit on the precious side. My theological differences on the song aside (;)), there's a fine version *Dreamboat* on the disc. The album closes with a Fort favorite, and his most requested song in performance,

Drinking Beers With Mom. A bona fide ode to youthful stupefaction (ugh!) Lach gives nearly as spirited a performance of it on record as he does on stage. From start to finish, it's a million bucks' worth of ball lightning for a mere ten and the sort of thing that makes a body restless for the Anti-Grammies. Being a part of the world of Anti-Folk hasn't made me a star, but it has made me a creatively and musically richer (if less sane) human being Records as these are the proof of that. I suppose were this Hollywood, I'd be thanking the little people who made my happiness possible. But there are *no little* people in the world of Anti-Folk, so I guess it's just back to the business of learning to be genuinely observant, genuinely creative, genuinely crazy, genuinely caring, and genuinely cool, as it is for us here. As a friend used to say, not a bad way to waste your time.

All right you dummies? You've heard about **Blang!** until your ears have fallen off, but you think you know Lach? You don't know **SQUAT!** Lach, you should know, has a long and illustrious recording career, and this... this recent **Blang!** is just a blip on the screen of history. You hear what I'm saying? **Blang!** is the moment, but as Lach will tell you until those fallen ears have melted, time is illusory. So take a moment to experience some past history of the master of antifolk, and his tempestuous relationship with the studio.

Electric Boy/Sound The Alarm - Proper Id: This 45 vinyl was first released in 1980 when Lach was a mere teenager. It was first aired by Meg Griffen on WNEW-FM and began to ride the club charts when, of course, the band broke up. A very rare item.

All Folksed-Up With Nowhere To Go - The Folk Brothers: A cassette-only release from 1985, starring Lach and Kirk Kelly. The tape included Lach's "Days Gone By" and Kelly's "Crossroads". Kirk went on to record for SST and Mugsy Records. There are constant rumours and occasional evidence of a Folk Brothers reunion.

ForTunes 13 - Various Artists (Meek Records/MetaMedia Productions): This 1988 cassette was the first Antifolk compilation and featured 13 acts (including Roger Manning, Zane Campbell, Ross Owens, Kirk Kelly and Brenda Kahn) from the original Fort on Rivington Street. Some copies still exist and a re-release is often threatened. It contains Lach's song "Crazy House".

White Trash - Various Artists (109 Records): This 1989 Vinyl LP was the 2nd Antifolk Compilation, and included Roger Manning, Mark Zero, and Sarah Hauser. Featured on side two is Lach's song, "Poor Town". Completely out-of-print.

Joe Folk and The Soho Mountain Boys (109 Records): Produced by Roger Manning, this 1990 cassette features a Noise-Folk cut by Lach entitled "New York-Hoboken". This, like all of 109's AntiFolk recordings, is a rare find. Joe Folk has recently released a sequel recording, though there's no clear evidence of Lach on the recording.

Contender - (Goldcastle): Produced by Tom Goodkind, this CD/Cassette is now out-of-print. It received rave reviews and started to climb the college charts when, of course, the record company went out of business. A possible re-release on Fortified has been discussed, after the anticipated chart-topping success of **Blang!**

Family Values Pack (Crystal Egg Records) - Released in 1992, during the presidential campaign, the vinyl EP featured the cult hit "The Hillary Clinton Song," perhaps more pertinent today than ever before. Also included: "Drinking Beers With Mom," "TV Dad" and "I Love America (But She Don't Love Me)".

Lach's Antihoot - (Fortified/Shanachie): Produced by Lach, this CD was released in 1996. It is the definitive document of the recent Antifolk scene available in the East Village's Fort at The Sidewalk Café. It features 15 artists and includes 3 Lach songs: "Hey," "The Ballad of The Thinning Man," and "Drinking Beers With Mom (Everything Is Alright)". It is now available at a cool record store near you... and Tower.

BLANG!

There is no one person capable of speaking of such a monumental work as this, this Blang! Because of this, the AntiFolk community took arms to discuss this work of popsmithery, this production masterpiece, this achievement of cosmic proportions, this album, this lifestyle, this Fortified release. Enjoy the words of Lach's fellow musicians, all of whom have something to say...

Artists Speak out on Lach's Album

MARY ANN FARLEY: From the blast-off opening bars of "Coffee Black," Lach's "Blang!" lets you know that this is going to be a raucous ride. The production is absolutely superb--warm yet punchy, full yet not overwhelming--and Lach's vocals are boldly front and center, conveying the real spirit and message of the album.

It's obvious that there was painstaking attention to detail with this disc, with arrangements and production values that can rival anything put out by a major. Blang doesn't sound labored, though--everything feels natural and seamless, and in service to the song. There's nothing extraneous, and arrangements are tight and to the point. Lach and producer Richard Barone obviously admire economy, and it shows.

As for the songs, those recorded here are the best of what Fort fans have been hearing from Lach in the last two years or so. Always entertaining, and often keenly observant, the standouts are "Ambition Burns," "I Love Them," and "Jester." Overall, it's a great summation of his work from the last few years--a real milestone.

MR. SCARECROW: The first time I ever saw Lach play was in 1992, in the Mission district in San Francisco at a hole-in-the-wall bar called the 16th Street Rendezvous. Similar to the Fort, the Rendezvous Bar had no signs or indications of any kind that there was live music in the back room, nor did it show any indication of even having a back room, except for a large black curtain that covered the door in the back of the pool room. The back room was a small, dark and dirty collection of creaky used chairs and various bar debris with a wood platform that served as a stage and a Radio Shack quality sound system. It was also one of the few places you could go to see folk music in San Francisco, a city that celebrates only the freakiest of the freaks. I was at the Rendezvous that night with a songwriting friend who had heard that this guy from New York City was supposed to be really good.

I witnessed my first show-de-Lach, which was sharp and edgy and tight and humorous and self-referential and pretentious as fuck, but all-in-all well-executed and energized by the freshness of

performing for a new crowd.

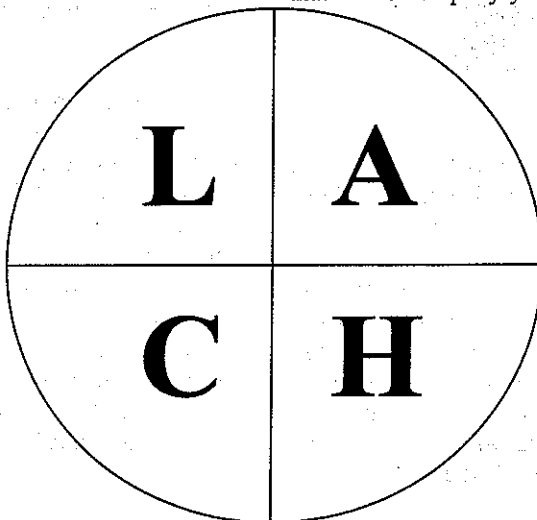
I don't have a set-list, but I think *The Boy Who Never Went Outside* was played because I know I was somewhat impressed (my friend loved the show and thought Lach was amazing). But I wasn't *blown away*. I wasn't knocked out. Lach's guitar-playing wasn't really up to snuff, I concluded, and his lyrics seemed contrived and too based in pop culture to have any lasting value (I was really into the critique aspect at that time). He seemed bent on speaking to the lowest common denominator, but he seemed much smarter than that (my suspicions were confirmed at a later date when I spoke to him and discovered he was an Intellectual). Besides all of that, his songs didn't seem to have commercial potential, which is no crime in itself, but it simply added to my frustration with his performance.

Lach hasn't changed much during the years since then, in his songwriting, guitar-playing, and performance, though he has gone through some mutations.

So why would I recommend Blang! as the Best Album of 1999? No, not because it's so early in the year. Lach hasn't really changed, but my perception of him has. Over time, I started to know Lach the man, and I started to *get it* about his music. I can't dissociate myself from this knowledge when reviewing Blang!, so, more than the album, I am recommending Lach as the Best Album of 1999. Blang! captures the essence of Lach, the man, archetypal songwriter, and in this role Lach has few equals. As a songwriter, Lach becomes that old transparent eyeball that sees everything. Anyone who knows Lach the man knows that in his company you become aware that this is now, that

past and future dissolve and you are effortlessly able to focus on the very moment you are experiencing. Lach is able to turn your entire attention to the now, and he helps you understand that right now is the moment of creation, the moment of Blang!, only this time you get to take the helm and steer the stars. Lach does this by hyper-inflating his (and your) ego until it gets so ponderous that a pinprick (usually of humor) pops it.

The fact that Blang! the record captures Lach's essence



and displays it is a triumph. After I came to know Lach and saw his potential and knew that his potential had never been realized on record, I hoped that someday he would make this album. From the very first guitar-splash, Lach announces "Hey, look at me. I'm the guy who blangs his guitar. Wanna hear it again?" But he doesn't wait for an answer. He does it again, and again and again until he loses himself and he's joined by the other blangers on drums, bass, harmonica, and organ and they're all off full-speed into *Coffee Black*. The band members have just had their espresso, and the energy just doesn't let up. I was immediately impressed with how well the production (Richard Barone) filled out and complemented Lach's guitar and vocals, which by themselves on stage can sometimes beg for a band.

Teenage Alcoholic is next. It's one of my favorites of Lach, even without a band, but with the band it really kicks, and the David Kahne-ish production doesn't do anything to hurt it.

I won't go song by song, but everything on here is good. *Blue Monk* ranks up with the best of the Dylan romps. *Gasoline Blue* ironically reminds me of a melancholy black and white film of Tompkins Square from the '80's. *Ambition Burns* is a reason to live for any modern artist. *The Boy Who Never Went Outside* is beautifully realized in all its enormous sadness.

Throughout *Blang!*, Lach sings unencumbered. Perhaps he's lost his ego entirely. Perhaps he knows his core audience won't care whether he sounds smooth or

NEW YORK



commercial. All his vocals sound like first takes, revealing and reveling in the moment of creation. He hides nothing, and thanks to that, we are able to find everything.

CHARLIE STARKWEATHER: I'm driving over Morrison Street Bridge into downtown Portland, Oregon. I like this drive. With the aging industrial buildings from before the Second World War rising beside me, it's one of the few times I feel like I'm still living and working in Manhattan. It helps, of course, that I'm listening to "Blang!"

BLANG!

Artists Speak out on Lach's Album

"Teenage Alcoholic" is blaring through my stereo. I take another sip of the Henry Weinhardt's I have resting in the cup holder just below the dash. It's been a long time since I heard Lach yelling out 1,2,3,4 before hitting a giant chord to start his song.

One year, five months and two weeks, exactly, since I last visited NYC. Things have changed.

Maybe because I've been away for so long the power of Lach's hooks – the critical turn of phrase that sideswipes the obvious and leaves the listener hitting the rewind button to find what exactly he said – all of it is so fresh.

*"She played the trumpet and the walls turned into fish
Flopping on the carpet, man, she
didn't even flinch"*

With "Blang!" Lach has raised the bar for anyone who claims to own a piece of the Antifolk folklore. From song writing to production, this is the strongest CD to drip out of the fingers of any performer who has played The Fort's antistage.

The production is thick. Instrumentation changes with each song. It's not a wall of sound, but a tide that flows in and out with the rise and fall of each verse.

Producer Richard Barone is obviously a genius. There's more weaving here than a tapestry of the Sistine Chapel.

We're all going to have to work harder if we want to follow Lach's lead.

I'm driving through downtown Portland now. It's raining. Again. It doesn't snow here. Or rarely does, at any rate. And when it does snow, you're in for a treat if you're on the roads at the time. No one knows how the hell to drive once the flakes start flying.

I've zapped "Blang!" up to cut eight. "Kiss Loves You." I've already learned how to play this. "G" key central. At least one of the two bands I'm in right now has added it to our playlist. The crowds love it. I'm often asked who does it. Who wrote it.

Lach is gonna break out.



The turnout for the Reader's Poll has been **INCREDIBLE!**

So naturally, rather than let you reap the benefits of your opinions, we'll prolong it. Fill in this short questionnaire, give it to the AntiMatters editor of your choice, or leave it with a well respected soundperson, or *Anne Husick* or *Kenny Davidesen* who created the amazing thing in the first place. Put as little information or as much as you want, and, in the next issue of AntiMatters, we'll present the results.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?!?

THE 1ST ANNUAL ANTI-MATTERS READERS POLL

Best solo artist	_____
Best band	_____
Best song of the year	_____
Best male and/or female songwriter	_____
Best male and/or female performer	_____
Best male and/or female singer	_____
Best male and/or female guitarist	_____
Best male and/or female pianist	_____
Most uplifting song/songwriter	_____
Most depressing song/songwriter	_____
Most offensive song/songwriter	_____
Best original song	_____
Best cover song	_____
Most original act	_____
Best Lach wannabe	_____
Best scene tape/CD of the year	_____
Best non-scene CD of the year	_____
Best improviser	_____
Most humorous	_____
Least sober artist	_____
Best image	_____
Best self-image	_____
Best Promotional effort for an event	_____
Most likely to succeed	_____
Most likely to burn up in their own juices	_____
Best hair	_____
Cutest male, and, of course, female	_____
Best AntiFolk couple	_____
Favorite waitress (Pictures required)	_____
Best dancer	_____
Best club outside the Fort	_____
Best soundperson	_____
Best AntiFolk Zine (Don't strain yourself on this one)	_____
Rookie of the year	_____
Desert Island Discs*	_____
Questions, comments, rants, pictures...	_____

*this questionnaire is confidential, but if you'd feel more comfortable, send us your desert island disc list on a separate sheet of paper with you name.

Le Schedule d'Fort

Mon.Feb.8 - Antihoot sign-up at 7:30

Tues.Feb.9 - Mostly Spoken Word - 7:30 Jessica Kane, 8-Jonathan Berger, 8:30-Bryant Rowe, 8:45-Peter Dizozza, 9:30-Robert Priest, 10-Project Blue, 10:30-Manas Brothers

Wed.Feb.10-8-Holly Cosner, 8:30-Paul Page, 9-Uncle Carl, 10-Rick Shapiro

SPECIAL WINTER ANTIFOLK FESTIVAL DATES

@ C-Note

Sun.7 - 8-Gregg Swann, 9-Al Lee Wyer, 9:30-The Reachers, 10:30-Trouble dolls, 12- Gil Coggins

Mon.8 - 8-Jessie Murphy, 8:30-Michal The Girl, 9- John Kessel, 9:30-Mike Rocklin, 10- Jack Pedler, 10:30-Gilligan Stump, 11-Johnny Seven

Tues.9 - 8-Curtis Eller's American Circus, 8:30-Pat Harper, 9-Carmaig De Forest, 9:30-Tony Hightower, 10-Roger Manning, 10:30-Lee Chabowski, 11:30-Anna

Wed.10 - 8-Neal with an A, 9- Bionic Finger, 10-Dan Emery and The Mystery Band, 11- Regular Einstein

@ Sidewalk

Thurs.11- 7:30-Jeff Lightning Lewis, 8 - Mike Rechner, 8:30- Marilee, 9- Butch, 9:30-Adam Brodsky, 10-Tom Clark, 11- Ruth Gerson, 12- Mia Johnson

Fri.12- 7:30-Gentleman Jim Noone, 8-Lenny Molotov, 8:30-Mr.Scarecrow, 9-David Dragov, 9:30-Shameless, 10-Mary Ann Farley, 11- Jarrod Gorbel, 11:30-Joe Bendik, 12- Hamell On Trial

Sat.13 - 8-George Usher, 9- The Humans, 10-Deni Bonet, 11-Lach

Sun.14 - 7:30-Kenny Davidsen, 8-Billy Kelly, 8:30- Grey Revell, 9- Joie, 9:30-Major Matt Mason USA, 10- Dina Dean, 10:30-Steve Espinola

and now, your regularly scheduled... schedule.

Mon.Feb.15-Antihoot. Sign-up at 7:30

Tues.Feb.16-8-Lovepie, 8:30-Matt Sachs, 9-Alex Quick, 9:30-Harry Nagle, 10-Stellan Wahlstrom, 10:30-Allan Orski

Wed.Feb.17-8-Chris Decker, 8:30-Jesse Murphy, 9-Troy Boonsboro, 9:30 Jack Grace, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Feb.18-8-Amelia's Dream, 9-Matt Sherwin, 10-Mike West & Myshkin, 11-Jane Brody

Fri.Feb.19-8-Gilligan Stump, 9-Three Normal Humans, 10-Eletfa, 11-Magges, 12-Copper Dalton

Sat.Feb.20-8-Nick Petrick, 9-Gene & Mimi, 10-Lounge-O-Leers, 11-Smelt, 12-Larry Goggin

Sun.Feb.21-7:30-AB2Solomon, 8-Valkyrie's Reckless Abandon, 8:30-Adam, 9-A Kite is a Victim, 10-The Choice of Tragic Wives, 11-Leroy Montana

Mon.Feb.22- Antihoot. Sign-up at 7:30

Tues.Feb.23-8-Jim Knable, 8:30-DB Leonard, 9-Joe Bidewell, 9:30 The McCarthy's 10-Bouva, 10:30 - Mich Van Hautem

Wed.Feb.24-8-Leah-Carla Gordone, 8:30-Thom McFarlane, 9-Gregg Weiss, 9:30 David Dragov, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Feb.25-8-Blasco, 9-D.A.Jones, 10-Sean Lee, 10:30-Bibi Farber, 11-Daniel Harnett

Fri.Feb.26-8-Ben Eyler Trio, 9-Lucas Shine, 10-Richard X.Heyman, 11-The Bones

Sat.Feb.27-8-Ruth Gerson, 9-Janet Vodka, 10-Matthew Puckett, 11-Bioic Finger, 12-Lorijo Manley

Sun.Feb.28-5-7 Art Opening for Lester Rapaport, 8-Roxanne Beck, 8:30-Glenn Pettit, 9-Evan Samuel, 9:30 Dan Monaghan, 10-Cody Melville, 10:30-Jesse White

Mon.Mar.1- Antihoot. Sign-up at 7:30

Tues.Mar.2-8-Lovepie, 8:30-Kazar, 9-Kevin Kadish, 10-Enid and the Boys

Wed.Mar.3-7:30-Christine, 8:30-Andy If, 9-Grey Revell, 9:30-Marilee, 10-Kenny Davidson, 10:30-Arlan, 11-Shameless, 11:30-anti-folk jam

Thurs.Mar.4-8-Haale, 8:30-Jolie Rickman, 9:30-David Newbould, 10-Julie Grower, 10:30-Zipthunk

Fri.Mar.5-8-Gilligan Stump, 11-The Meanwhiles

Sat.Mar.6-8-Yukka Flats, 12-Larry Goggin

Sun.Mar.7-7:30-Meg Flather, 8-Fire-Dean, 8:30-Kathleen Manstream, 9-Kaz

Mon.Mar. 8- Antihoot. Sign-up at 7:30.

The Fort is at Avenue A and 6th Street (94 Avenue A, to be exact). These shows are written in stone, and no change of the schedule will be permitted. Don't even think of verifying.

Reviewing The Situation: My Big Blang Theory.
Lach--"Blang" (Fortified Records)

By Penner MacBryant

Just before I began writing this, on the bright screen of my idiot box, for a few fleeting moments, shone the glimmering image of the sexiest black actress on television. At least, that's what all the grandmasters of spin in all those important entertainment magazines geared towards the African-American community have told me for the past year or so. Though I seldom take these monuments to hyperbole seriously (their tendency to celebrate the already over-celebrated wears even on my tough skin), I figure that, as spins go, they haven't stretched the truth too much here, really. This assessment is based on personal experience. In an entirely different world and time, long before my anti-life kicked in, Kendra (not her real name) was a struggling actress/singer in Harlem and an unquestionably pretty girl to look at. Vibrant and vivacious, she could easily hold her own on and off stage. I was a songwriter/lyricist and looking to promote a lead singer to an all black female hard rock band I knew. She was talented at playing coquettish types. This no doubt could be attributed to the fact that Kendra was in form, fashion and function, an unrepentantly deceitful person IN REAL LIFE. I would only discover this (as most naïve young guys do) after getting burned for trying to help along the career that now loudly pronounces itself from the screens of motion picture theaters and television sets, and the covers of magazines as the latest sexual miracle out of Black Hollywood. The last time we spoke, a few days before Christmas '94 at a Black Rock Coalition gig held at the Cooler, at the end of our non-relationship and the beginning of her career's ascent, she confronted me with a too sharply stated demand to know where I was her band had opened up for Living Colour. At last it was my time to willingly tell a self-serving falsehood, a half-truth, saying that I had to work that night. I did, actually: tending to the first symptoms of the disease that eventually took the life of my father but a few years later. I left the night's affair right after that, certain that I probably wouldn't deal with her again.

I'll catch flack for saying this, but a part of me, seeing this transformation of hers from actress to star, thinks it was fitting that she should have come to prominence in the nineties, the age of Clinton and the deification of celebrity talent over substance of character. Clinton, (not his gaffing GOP predecessor, Reagan) most successfully embodies the actor/politician ethic, the belief that facts really are stupid things or that looking good is more important than upholding it. Real virtue, for the most part, is unglamorous, sometimes painful for the doers and largely uncelebrated while the *images* of virtuous conduct are always photogenic; captureable in film and playable sound bites. The one of a certain figure walking presidentially down the steps of a church, a Bible in one hand, an ill-explained adversaries list and a scented stogie in the hidden one, is just the most telling of our time.

All this brings me to an important point: One of the most important qualities Anti-Folk has ever had is its disdain for well-marketed vacuity. Here it hasn't been about obtaining the often empty credentials of so-called stardom, but it has been about being the best musical person you can be in your chosen genre and learning to nurture the others in your midst in whatever way possible, slickness and major deals (though nice when they happen) be hanged. Anti-Folk hasn't always existed, but its attitude has. It invents and reinvents itself constantly to fit the times: it's a world that allows you license to shoot down the creative pretenses around you creatively, then I start remembering the track, on the album: the one that hit me and started me on this rant. "Ambition Burns", with its admonishing tone.

*...I don't want to win, be kingpin
Live in the din of clamoring kin...
I don't need acclaim
Fame maims...makes great names lame*

Blang, the latest offering from the mother/father of this here Anti-Folk scene, is a wonderfully kinetic thing that doesn't stay anywhere but in your face and ears for all of its fifty minutes and fourteen tracks. Yet it never lets the need for outrageously energetic rock get in the way of saying something whimsical or important. Without taking himself too seriously (which, after all, is quintessentially Lach) he has crafted an album that should be taken seriously.

Produced by Richard Barone, (the Ramones) *Blang* delivers all the favorites Lach plays live at the Fort, but gives you a few musical surprises along the way. The great thing about the best of Lach's material is that it blurs the line between campiness and ferocity, tenderness and frenetic musical energy. It challenges the notion of what meaningfulness is supposed to sound like or, hell, just blows it apart with the sound of one crashing chord. When the album opens the way it does -- with the crash (the blang?) of the opening chord and the speeding locomotive's velocity (heightened beautifully by the harmonica sequence) of "Coffee Black", the tone is set perfectly -- when you're riding with Lach the rocker, you're riding a speeding train -- hold on or get off -- but don't even *try* to get in the way. At first listen, Lach's lyrics seem like disjointed phrases and ideas strung together -- not always in meter, not always in the rhythm you'd choose it to be in were you the writer. But they aren't -- or at least, not *artlessly* so -- rather, it seems as if he's underscoring the disconnection people have in and outside of themselves.

Growing

Use I Your love was like ice cream in winter!
Supply that endless hot what fills me after dinner
But now your love is what fills me after dinner
And its delicious to the touch

Chorus Your loves a hunger in me
Tea has swallowed the thin me
And its growing all growing.

Verse II

Once I was so lonely
Peanut butter was my only friend
~~But~~ Jack Calane he turned me into half ~~the~~ ~~man~~
The man I used to be
But now your made me whole again

Chorus

Verse III

Yes! Its true I love you
and I don't care how much you lied
About your dirty, cheating ways
So long as you (tho)pe my Tummy ~~stuffed~~

Chorus

So I stopped, jumped in the vehicle
It's like this, because of that who-ride
N.W.A. is wanted for a homicide
Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last
Fuck wit me, I'll put my foot in your ass
See I don't give a fuck, cause I keep bailin
Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?

No bass

Chorus:

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"It's not about a salary, it's all about reality" - KRS One
Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"He'll tell you exactly how he feel, and don't want a fuckin thing
back"

Bass Back

Verse Three: Ice Cube

Homies all standin around, just hangin
Some dope-dealin, some gang-bangin
We decide to roll and we deep
See a nigga on Dayton's and we creep
Real slow, and before you know
I had my shotgun pointed in the window
He got scared, and hit the gas
(Right then, I knew I has to smoke his ass)
He kept rollin, I jumped in the bucket
We couldn't catch him, so I said fuck it
Then we headed right back to the fort
Sweatin all the bitches in the biker shorts
We didn't get no play, from the ladies
With six niggaz in a car are you crazy?
She was scared, and it was showin
We all said "Fuck you bitch!" and kept goin
To the hood, and we was fin to
Find somethin else to get into
Like some pussy, or in fact
A bum rush, but we call it rat pack
On a nigga for nuttin at all
Ice Cube'll go stupid when I'm full of eight ball
I might stumble, but I won't lose
Now I'm dressed in the county blues
Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last
If you Fuck wit me, I'll put my foot in your ass
I don't give a fuck, cause I keep bailin
Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?

stop

No bass

Interlude: Ice Cube, Dr. Dre

Gangsta Gangsta

[Wait a minute, wait a minute, cut this shit]
{Man whatcha gonna do now?}
"What we're gonna do right here is go way back"
[How far you goin back?]
"Way back"
"As we go a lil somethin like this" - Slick Rick

stop

Here's a little somethin' bout a nigga like me
never shoulda been let out the penititary
Ice Cube would like ta say
That I'm a crazy mutha fucka from around the way
Since I was a youth, I smoked weed out
Now I'm the mutha fucka that ya read about
Takin' a life or two
that's what the hell I do, you don't like how I'm livin'
well fuck you! — Stop
This is a gang, and I'm in it
My man Dre'll fuck you up in a minute
With a right left, right left you're toothless — Stop
And then you say goddamn they ruthless!
Everywhere we go they say [damn!]
N W A's fuckin' up tha program
And then you realize we don't care
We don't just say no, we to busy sayin' yeah!
To drinkin' straight out the eight bottle
Do I look like a mutha fuckin role model?
To a kid lookin' up ta me
Life ain't nothin but bitches and money.
Cause I'm tha type o' nigga that's built ta last — No Bass
If ya fuck wit me I'll put a foot in ya ass
See I don't give a fuck 'cause I keep bailin
Yo, what the fuck are they yellin

Chorus:

Bass back

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"It's not about a salary, it's all about reality" - KRS One
Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"Hopin you sophisticated motherfuckers hear what I have to say"

Verse Two: Ice Cube

When me and my posse stepped in the house
All the punk-ass niggaz start breakin out
Cause you know, they know whassup
So we started lookin for the bitches with the big butts
Like her, but she keep cryin
"I got a boyfriend" Bitch stop lyin
Dumb-ass hooker ain't nuttin but a dyke
Suddenly I see, some niggaz that I don't like
Walked over to em, and said, "Whassup?"
The first nigga that I saw, hit em in the jaw
Ren started stompin em, and so did E
By that time got rushed by security
Out the door, but we don't quit
Ren said, "Let's start some shit!"
I got a shotgun, and here's the plot
Takin niggaz out with a flurry of buckshots
Boom boom boom, yeah I was gunnin
And then you look, all you see is niggaz runnin
and fallin and yellin and pushin and screamin — Vocal Solo
and cussin, I stepped back, and I kept bustin
And then I realized it's time for me to go

Verse 1

Well, it's so funny to be seeing you
after so long girl.

And by the way you look, I can tell you

I see you looking up and down ^{are quite impressed} my body

Checking out my awesome chest.

Hey, we could go out for coffee, we could
talk over all the old times.

And when you ask me how well I'm doing
I won't answer w/ typical lines

Chorus

There were days

when I was lonely without you

And there were nights

but those nights are through

Here's a lil gangsta, short in size
A t-shirt and Levi's is his only disguise
Built like a tank yet hard to hit
Ice Cube and Eazy E cold runnin shit

Verse Four: Eazy E, MC Ren

Well I'm Eazy E the one they're talkin about
Nigga tried to roll the dice and just crapped out
Police tried to roll, so it's time to go
I creeped away real slow and jumped in the six-fo'
Wit the "Diamond in the back, sun-roof top"
Diggin the scene with the gangsta lean
Cause I'm the E, I don't slang or bang
I just smoke motherfuckers like it ain't no thang
And all you bitches, you know I'm talkin to you
"We want to fuck you Eazy!" I want to fuck you too
Cause you see, I don't really take no shit
[So let me tell you motherfuckers who you're fuckin with]
Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last
If you Fuck wit me, I'll put my foot in your ass
I don't give a fuck, cause I keep bailin
Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?

Chorus:

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"It's not about a salary, it's all about reality" - KRS One
Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"He'll fuck up you and yours, and anything that gets in his way"

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"It's not about a salary, it's all about reality" - KRS One
Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin
"He'll just call you a low-life motherfucker, and talk about your
funky ways"

Verse III

We could get together, you and I
Between you, me, and hotel sheets ~~and~~
I'll bet we'd have some fun

So why you got to play me like that,
Saying that you got to run?

I thought that now you'd seen how
Soft I'm living,

You'd surely apologize

But I can tell, by how you're landing,

You're bawling all those stupid lies

Chorus

There were days ~~that~~ I thought
had faded love away

But now I see, ~~the~~

~~those days are~~

Those dreams are through

I still love you

So don't be cruel

Cuz my aim is true

Here's my review:

From the blast-off opening bars of "Coffee Black," Lach's "Blang!" lets you know that this is going to be a raucous ride. The production is absolutely superb--warm yet punchy, full yet not overwhelming--and Lach's vocals are boldly front and center, conveying the real spirit and message of the album.

It's obvious that there was painstaking attention to detail with this disc, with arrangements and production values that can rival anything put out by a major. Blang doesn't sound labored, though--everything feels natural and seamless, and in service to the song. There's nothing extraneous, and arrangements are tight and to the point. Lach and producer Richard Barone obviously admire economy, and it shows.

As for the songs, those recorded here are the best of what Fort fans have been hearing from Lach in the last two years or so. Always entertaining, and often keenly observant, the standouts are "Ambition Burns," "I Love Them," and "Jester." Overall, it's a great summation of his work from the last few years--a real milestone.