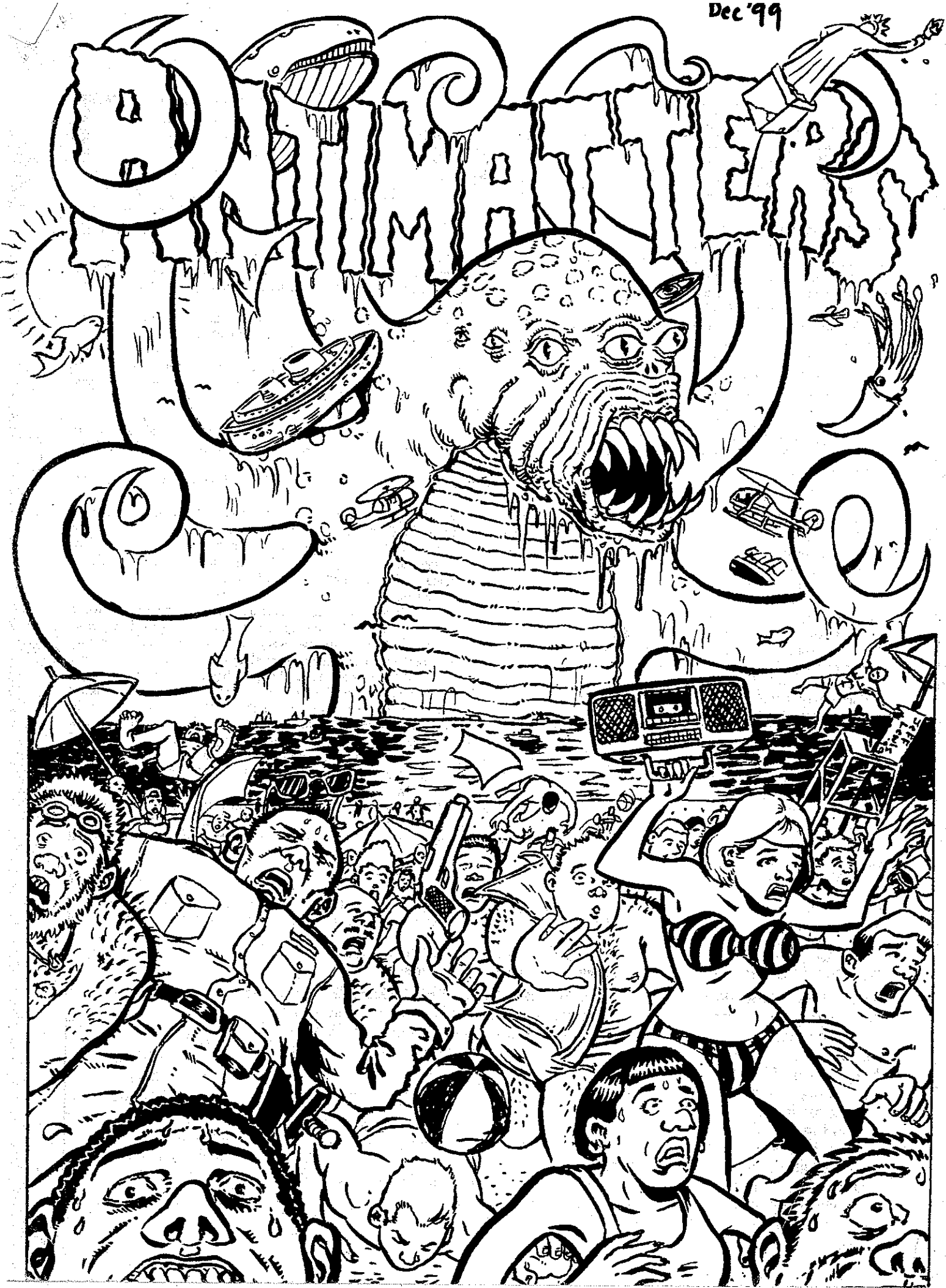


Dec '99



# AntiMatters

The Chronicler  
Jonathan Berger

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a rebuttal to the response to the editorial on the reaction to the puppet-stained issue  
(by the progenitor of the Puppet Issue)

Some years back when I lived in Chicago I went once to a theater near my house called The Annoyance Theater. And true to their name they were the ones who put on live versions of Brady Bunch episodes and frequently had plays with titles derived from the formula: kitsch item+sexual/drug reference+element of horror=ticket sales. But I guess they were right cause when a friend of mine suggested one evening that we attend a performance of "Cannibal Cheerleaders on Crack" I said, "Sure."

Needless to say, the production was atrocious, but there was one redeeming moment to the evening. Due to the state of my finances at the time, I was reduced to paying the \$7 admission charge completely in change. This would have been fine but the theater employed the rather demeaning practice of making the audience line up outside and collecting money from them while they were on line instead of the more traditional & dignified ticket-buying scenario. Anyway, as the fellow collecting money came to me and received in his palm not the tidy bundle of bills he was expecting but rather a copious waterfall of coins, he glared at me and said something to the effect of, "Next time, pay in bills, kid.", to which I snottily replied, "Do you mean that I've annoyed the Annoyance Theater? Shouldn't I get a t-shirt or something for that?" whereupon he stormed off.

While I enjoyed my little victory, another employee of the theater came up to me and said, "Don't look so satisfied, it's not real hard to piss off Glen." As if simply because someone is giving away his goats, you should not be pleased to get one. Well, I thought I had learned my lesson right then and there, but I guess I didn't.

It's like in the first chapter of Moby Dick, when Ishmael is explaining why he prefers not to captain a ship and instead to work as a lowly sailor. He says,

What of it, if some old hunks of a sea- captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Do you think the archangel Gabriel thinks anything the less of me, because I promptly and respectfully obey that old hunks in that particular instance? Who aint a slave? Tell me that. Well then, however the old sea-captains may order me about — however they may thump and punch me about, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way — either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each others shoulder-blades, and be content.

This point was forced home to me today when I went into work and was immediately told by my supervisor, an annoying man, that he would like me to vacuum the hallway. I humbly said, "OK." and promptly proceeded to not do it. As I type this, I am still avoiding the lowly task. For I once worked as a janitor (back when I lived in Chicago) and vacuumed 10 floors of hallways every day. I feel as if the vacuuming portion of my life has been ended and that I don't wish to vacuum the hallway for the incompetent and superfluous president of the company. The summer I worked as a janitor was the same summer they torched Waco and I remember quite liking my boss, the building manager Kathleen, even though I detested the work. It was the summer that that Whitney Houston song, "I will always love you" was insanely popular and I remember wandering through the halls, hearing that song coming out of apartments all the time and thinking, "My god, people really do listen to this stuff." My favorite moment of the summer was when a woman in the workout room berated me for missing a spot as I was vacuuming the floor in there and telling me, "You should have seen that before I did. It's your job to see things that no one else sees." Looking back, I think it was good advice, but at the time I snottily retorted, "What if I started seeing bats everywhere?" (I had just read Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.) "Would spending my time trying to get the imaginary bats out of the building make me a better janitor?" and for the remainder of the summer, every time I saw her in the halls I would start swatting at the air.

Through all of this, Kathleen was a good building manager and while quite stern, was just and made sure that the caring of the building went smoothly. Sadly, near the end of the summer she caught lung cancer and before long was using a cane to get around. Then she didn't show up at all. I visited her in the hospital shortly before she passed away and she was mostly concerned that I would trip and clumsily pluck out one of the many tubes that was keeping her alive.

All of this is to say, I stand by the Puppet Issue. I have to go vacuum the hallway now.

**Dave Wechsler**

p.s. And I do confess, that while I don't believe you all suck (Why I hardly even know any of you!) I do believe that the best way to see your name in this magazine is to write for it. Put simply- the satisfaction from seeing your name on something you wrote is greater than that of seeing your name in some puff piece about a show you played.

In other words, I am hard at work putting together the 'AntiFolk Synchronized Swimming Issue'. If you would prefer that it not see the light of print, I suggest you give Berger some contributions toot-sweet snookums!

A strangely cool thing happened on the way to making this issue, the last of the 90s. Like every month, give or take, I was trying desperately to make AntiMatters out of a pretty amazing lack of contributions. Somewhere in the last twenty four hours, aware I had to produce the usual ten pages of JB content, I asked some of the members of my AntiFolk community to write, at the end of this year, some of their most important AntiFolk memories. I'd like to say the response was overwhelming, but the word doesn't do justice. Maybe there's nostalgia in the air, maybe there's something in the topic, maybe it's the question that just needed to be asked at just this moment. It doesn't matter.

There is none of the usual ten pages of JB content. You people who responded, you who wanted to share what you remember of this decade of AntiFolk, you kept me from writing a damn thing. Thank you. Very much. (*Gustav Plympton*)

## CREATORS

Jonathan Berger  
Brer Brian  
Tony Hightower  
Egils Kaljo  
Jeff Lightning Lewis  
Major Matt Mason  
Dave Wechsler  
The AntiFolk Community

# Report about the Fort

*EGILS KALJO was commanded to write for AntiMatters. Never one to fail to live up to a challenge, he wrote about the highlights of all of the last hoots. Let's see what he saw...*

## Antihoot, November 1, 1999

Even after my rambling op-ed piece in the last issue of Antimatters, Jon still invited me to write more, suggesting that I write about the Antihoots that I happen to be present at.

So I figured I'd give it a try. With pen and paper handy, I went to the Nov 1<sup>st</sup> antihoot with visions of journalistic brilliance. Though failing in that goal, I jotted down a few observations and memories I had that night. These are not meant to be critiques or commentaries, but merely things that, for whatever reason, stuck in my head from that night – either lyrics I heard, or events that transpired. And they are all true...

(I apologize in advance if I misspell anyone's name, or misquote their lyrics!)

Lach starts off the night with a BLANG – “baby take your sugar back” – talk about the top 10 bong hit moments in music (we only determined one – when Billy Idol says “Shotgun” in the song “White Wedding”)

Bendik and Beethoven? Bendik played loud enough that even old Ludwig in his advanced stage of deafness, would have been able to hear.

Dave's Place became Paul's Place (that's McCartney) at the sound of a tick-tock.

Talk about Lach's new guitar pedals – the decomposer, the paralytic equalizer (the one that makes every other guitar as good as you – which is done by paralyzing them...)

Joie, the Thanksgiving orphan – “If you knew me way back when, you wouldn't give a shit”

Sharon Fogarty - “Pornographic folk songs in an East Village Bar” and then the song with the line about the midjets. Steve Espinola and Norwegian women. “I love watching people who are talking to themselves”

Joe and talk of missing doors in the men's room. Use Instinet for all your ECN needs.

Randi Russo. Songs about Obsession and Possession. “All confessions lead to depression”

Lori Cohen (from Canada) talking about how her pegs were screwed up, due to the soft case! “Your eyes are shooting blanks.”

“Geek” – stories about how he couldn't buy milk at 11:52 PM. Also called himself MCPC.

## Antihoot, November 8, 1999

I missed most of the beginning performers, as I drew #5, so I spent the first half-hour of the night downstairs, practicing in a nervous frenzy. Actually, while I was downstairs warming up, the artist known as “Geek” was wandering around looking for someone to play backup guitar during his set. The only problem was that he was #43, so it seemed unlikely that he would find someone to play that late. Maybe he did, I didn't find out...

Other memories from the evening.

Lach goes into a lengthy soliloquy about people who dare ask him what number they are on and if they can get bumped up,

about people who have to get up early in the morning and work some shit job, or have to get up early to go to school so that they can get a degree so that they can wait tables... I agree with what he said though, even though there was an uneasy silence about the room when he was done. Like he said, you have to get the priorities straight – if your sleep/job/school-work is more valuable to you than performing, then what are you doing here? (I've pulled numbers in the late 30s before, and though I was dead tired all day at work the next day, the opportunity to perform is well worth it...)

Anyway...

Kid Lucky, using no instruments besides his voice, was able to make it sound like three instruments were playing at once. His second vocal performance was aided by Lach reading the lyrics to the long-forgotten Foreigner classic, “Women”. At other points in the night, Lach would read more entries from the “Foreigner Poetry Collective.”

David Davisio (again, sorry for any misspellings) gave some lengthy speech about how his computer (I believe it was a Newton?) would output strange things when he wrote things left handed and backwards. “Flying fish” backward had some ironic interpretation by the machine. I don't really remember the details. It went on for quite a while.

I made a REALLY lame joke about how they were making a sequel to “Being John Malkovich” called “Being Jon Berger” and NOBODY laughed. It was pretty embarrassing. I guess it is reassuring to know that when this music thing fizzles out, I won't have comedy to fall back on.

Patsy Grace could sing songs about changes in the tax code, and I would still listen.

In probably the most impressive debut of the night, Holly (from Michigan) wowed the crowd with two songs, most notably the song “Lie Here”. Unfortunately, by the time this sees print, she will be back in Michigan. She expressed interest in moving to New York some time in the New Year, so hopefully we will see her again soon.

## Antihoot, November 15, 1999

This particular Monday night we were all treated to lessons in how to speak Klingon, which was actually very helpful in many ways. Especially the Klingon cursing stuff. In the typically unpredictable nature of the Antihoot, often times performers would start to hear the guttural tones of the Klingon people in the middle of their set, leading to many a surprised look.

Other memories...

976-DAVE brought his girlfriend onstage to “serve her, but even Dave admitted that they weren't “good” (i.e. not your typical mushy love ballad) He sang so about math. His second song he actually asked his to leave the stage, as the song was written during had with her. Someone in the audience suggested



agreed) that he should have left her up there, just so we can see her reaction to hearing the song that was a critique of her...

The duo of Joel Mole played songs with country flavor and a rock attitude. There was a great guitar solo by the one guitarist (sorry, didn't catch the name.) "Her eyes are on the road past you."

Due to the large number of artists who signed up, Lach decided to go into the one-song wonder round. Usually this is a good thing, as it helps speed things up a bit, and gets more people on stage than would normally appear. But sometimes, it doesn't give an artist enough time to show their capabilities. Such was the case with Jessie Murphy. Her bluesy style and voice lend itself to some great songs, so it was unfortunate to only hear one.

Oh, and thanks to the unidentified lady who sang backup during my song! She had a great voice and did more for my song than I ever could...

In probably the debut of the night, Ray Greisch performed country influenced music, including a song called "South of Heaven" (wasn't that a Slayer album?) - "I'll be somewhere south of Heaven drowning in a lake of sympathy."

#### Antihoot, November 29, 1999

Sparser crowd tonight - Lach commented that usually the first cold Monday keeps people away, but I guess they get used to the cold after a few weeks. And I guess they realize that there isn't much to do at home on Monday nights (well, besides watching either Ally McBeal or WWF Monday Night Raw).

Jon Berger's ankle seemed to have healed after his Hong Kong mishap, as he returned to his regular stalking mode. He did some piece about how "it's not love", then a piece detailing a story about buying his girlfriend some socks.

Guinevere (who is a recent newcomer to the Sidewalk stage) claimed she was going to be breaking the rules of Antifolk that night. But I thought the whole point of Antifolk was that there weren't any rules (Besides the 2 song 8 minute rule, I guess). The two rules that she believed existed - #1 - no covers, #2 - play a fast song to start and a mellow song to close - were immediately broken. She played "With or Without You"

by U2 to start, breaking both rules with one song.

John and Chris tried to upset the natural order by asking the audience themselves if they deserved a gig. The audience responded in a positive manner, but then Lach scoffed at their attempt to create "socialism and democracy in a dictatorship" and offered them the plum spot of 2 songs next Monday. But I think they got a gig anyway...

Lief put on what I believed was a stand up comedy routine, which mainly involved yelling very loudly about how he makes money being a guinea pig and how he uses Tabasco as an aphrodisiac. Might be worth a try...

In the most artistic moment of the night, Joie did an interpretive dance to Kenny's first song. In more dancing about later in the evening, Joie, Lach and (I think it was) Atoosa did a little conga line or something dance around the room while Dave's Place was on stage.

Erika, a first timer at the Sidewalk played a Johnny Cash song to start. Erika was playing directly after Vader Vader, so at random times people (including Erika) would shout "Lobotomy! Lobotomy!" during her song.

#### Antihoot, December 6, 1999

Rebounding this week from last week's smaller crowd, this Monday night the Fort was packed! Very cyclical business, this open mike stuff. Or perhaps it was the milder weather outside.

Viagra Fall's tape player seemed to be low on batteries or something - it would speed up and slow down periodically. Or maybe it was intentional - you never can tell with that woman. Ms. Falls did a number about the lack of bordello's on Martha's Vineyard (something I have noticed as well, and had meant to write a song about, but haven't gotten around to yet).

The larger audience begat a louder audience as well. Lach had to shush the crowd a few times, as well as ask them to be respectful to the performers. I agree - there were some people in the back who were being very loud - I mean, unless you're really drunk, there's no reason to be talking very loudly to someone sitting at your table.

Andrew McCann, the anti-lounge singer, sang his two standard songs - the lovely song about pedophilia, and then the "1-2-3 All Right" song.

Yet again this week, we see Kenny Davidsen's song bring people to their feet and dancing - but not in the traditional way. This week, it was Jon Berger and Pablo of Testosterone Kills, both of whom were obviously recent Bolshoi ballet graduates, displaying their prowess in modern dance.

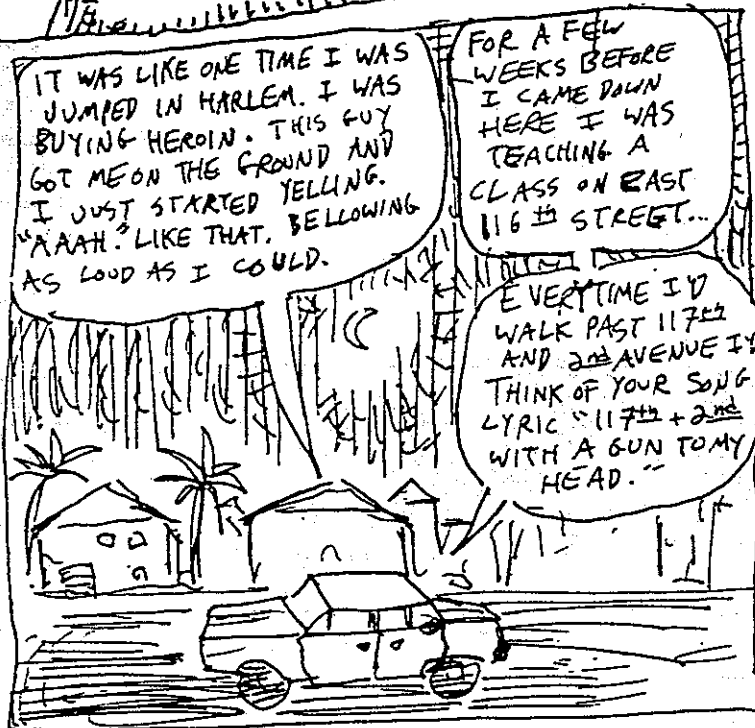
The return of the night award this time goes to Kara, who wowed the crowd with her great a capella singing. And deservedly so, she got a gig and wild applause from the hard-to-please East Village crowd.

And tonight also saw the first of the year retelling of the Kwannakuh Mass story, which is made even more special this year by the potential first appearance of the Frankie Kwannikin.

# Report about the Fort

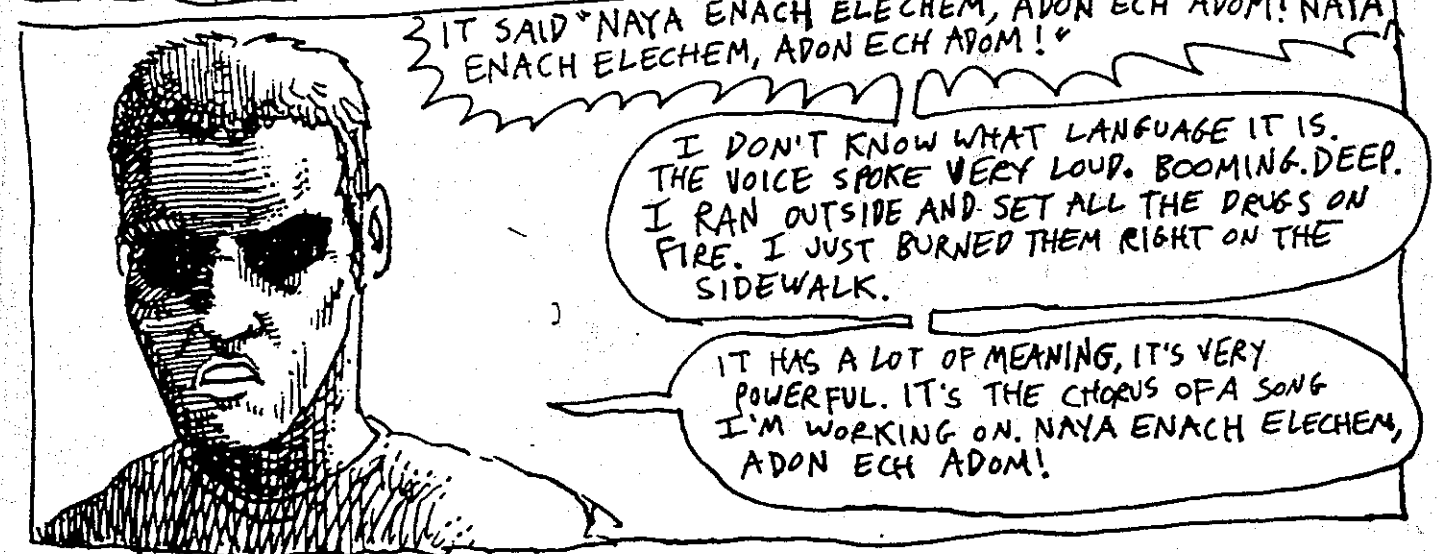
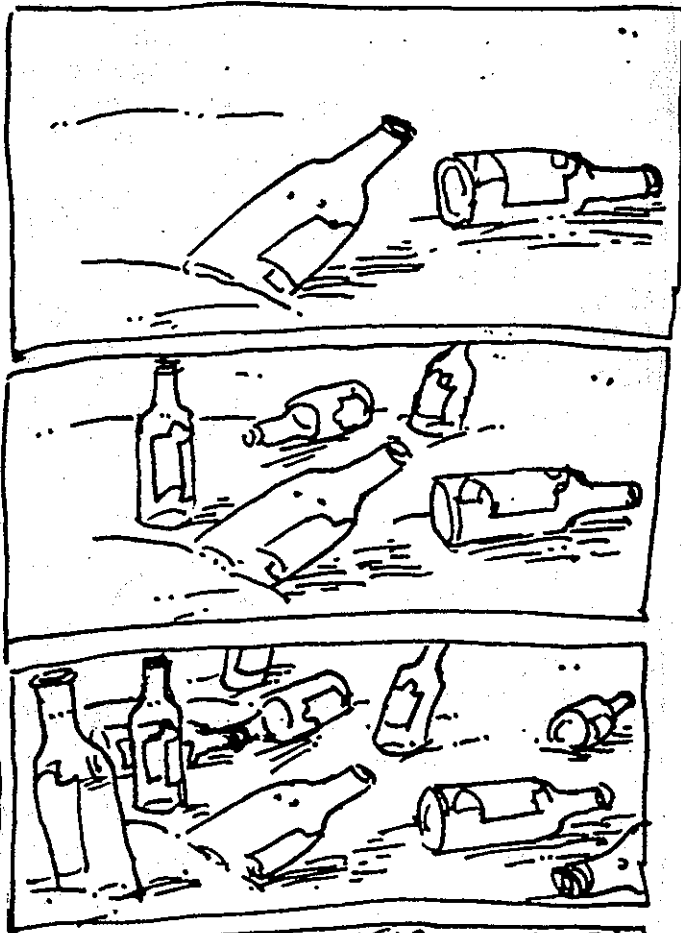
# That Jeff Adventure...

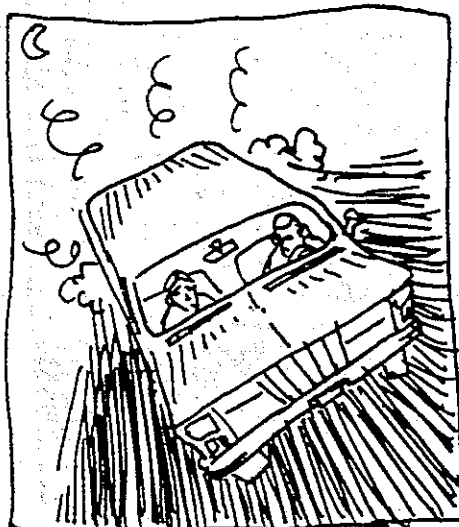
Jeff Lightning Lewis continues his exploits in Florida. After days and days of trying to get in touch with Dan Monahan, Jeff buses to West Palm Beach, where he finally reaches him....













# The Best Record of 1968:

*They don't make albums like CRAZY LIKE AN AMBUSH anymore, so Grey Revell wrote one on his own*

First of all, none of you bastards know anything.

You think you know what antifolk (or folk, or punk, or songwriting, or rebellion, or the zeitgeist or your own asses or that pothole on 7<sup>th</sup> Street or whatever) is all about, what parameters hold what constitutes your personal musical universe together like some bag of cheap Napa Valley wine and keep it separate in style and market share from Limp 92 or Master-B or whatever silicone turds they're overworking to give Howard Stern his piss breaks over on KROCK. You think that just because you've seen every pieceashit hero that's crawled up the pop charts like the first fish to grow legs get their start lugging their guitars up & down Avenue A saying novenas for a good number at the Anti-Hoot, that gives you the right to decree that Grey Revell's new record is some kind of artistic waste.

I've heard y'all, in the couple of weeks I've been walking around with this promo copy burning a hole in my stereo. It's too busy-sounding, I've heard, it's too unfocused, there's too many sounds on it, it's too much to pay attention to at one time, it's sounds too drugged up and fucked up, it'll never get airplay, that's no way to become a Big Rock Star, my diaper needs changing, it's overproduced, it's overmixed, why can't he just be a punk like Bendik or a pretty songsmith like The Voices or something?

And it's not that these allegations don't have some merit. It is probably the busiest-sounding record anyone with no budget will ever make, and sometimes there's effects for effects sake, and sometimes they get in the way of some pretty damned catchy songs and subtle lyrics & musical fiddlydoos that could have maybe been executed a little better.

But who listens to lyrics anymore anyway? I mean, really. Haven't we learned anything from the Spice Girls & Pokemon? With good sizzle, you can sell any steak. And I'll take this 12-song collection of burps and cycles and (yes) excellent songs over anything Lou "Mr. Mambo Even Though I Only Speak German & Have As Much Artistic Credibility as Milli Vanilli" Bega will ever do, eight days out of seven, danke shane.

Like many records I love (*Blood & Chocolate*, *I Feel Alright*, *Blang!*), the record really starts with the second cut. Not that "Morning Sun" is bad or anything, actually the looping chant of the chugging guitar serves as kind of a watch swinging back & forth to lull you into the trancey trippy tableau that makes up the rest of *Crazy Like An Ambush*.

But things really start cooking with "Getaway Car," which is easily the best noisy song on the record. Some drunk-sound-

ing woman yells like she's being tickled or hallucinating at the top of the song, and then Good evening,

boys & girls & welcome to the skyscraper concert, Grey welcomes you to the party, before double-tracking his spoken introduction over some overloaded bagpipes or maybe they're accordions (the whole thing, and really the whole record, sounds like the scene in Oliver Stone's *The Doors* where they're doing peyote in the desert and Val Kilmer is dancing like crazy and trying to scare the vultures, and even though you're thinking, gawd that's goofy, you're still a little transfixed), and it sure sounds like he ends the intro with *All you young children with old souls, sit back, enjoy the ambush*, which if it isn't what he really says is sure as hell a pretty good way to start the record for real anyways.



And although "Getaway Car" sounds like it's about 58 minutes long, it tops out at 4:23, you wimps. Shit, Joie DBG has longer songs than that. (Well, one anyway.) And the whole mix is submerged in this sonic sludge, like (producer) Spencer Chakedis managed to upload a half-dozen tracks of someone's repressed memories right onto the tape. (Match that one, Psychic fuckin' Hotline!)

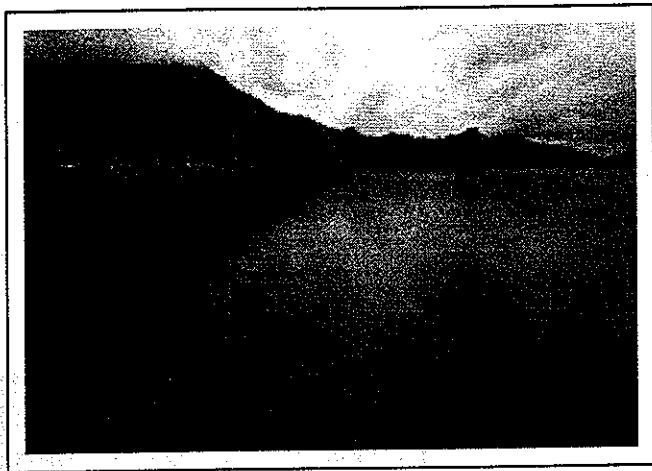
One thing I happen to think is really cool, though so far I'm alone in this one: instead of solos, someone's wailing just slightly off-key, which would be totally grating if it wasn't being done with such gusto, and it makes the whole song sound like some dubby hippy hoppy loopy thing from Side Five of *Sandanista!*

The whacked-out reverie segues quite nicely (I'm a sucker for smooth segues) into the restrained "Live Alisa," which if Aerosmith did it would explode halfway through into full-on power balladry, but Grey plays this song about his inability to love a woman who controls the elements with her moods (literally, she rocks his world) real close and even, and leads it into the darker-toned "Cyanide Girl of the Sea," in which the second off-key wailing solo of the album actually doesn't work, coming as it does in the big payoff part, coming out of the bridge, where Grey finally realizes that maybe there isn't a future between him & the self-destructive *objet du désir* his mother warned him about long ago.

*This album was reviewed by  
Mister Tony Hightower. Ask  
for him by name.*

# The Best Record of 1968

as Perceived by Tony Hightower



One reason I think *Crazy Like An Ambush* reminds me of Carlos Castaneda doing peyote pellets in the Mojave (or some similar semi-surreal interlude) is that even more than most albums, the great biblical elements are all over it: *dressed in new lightning, burn your body down, neon fills the sky*. That and the relentless sonic otherworldliness really makes the whole thing sound like it came from an ultrafaraway somewhere else, and not from that cute little El Lay transplant we all know (& secretly just a little bit maybe c'mon admit it wish we were) who takes his semi-regular shift in the East Village scene with all the rest of us footsoldiers in the NY Songwriter Army. Just because he won't lie in the gutter the same way the rest of us do doesn't mean he can't wonder about the stars.

The title track is kind of the halfway point of the record, and it's played so straight (pretty much just acoustic guitar, hi-hat & piano!), it reminds me of Clapton's MTV version of "Layla," all self-referential ("*I flipped him like the devil / no one else would write that line*") & stripped back, with a real guitar solo (is that John Kessel? Just curious) and everything. And after this little enticement to the sober to keep them listening (dude, we can't afford to be stoned *all* the time, eh), he then falls back off the level surface into the sparkly tinny guitar swirl of "Burn Your Body Down," which parks him in your left ear, sounding like he's had enough of New York City & doesn't want to be here or anywhere anymore, sounding just this much too tired to actually build himself a new life for him & his friends. It's nice for this old fart to see that the kids get all weary from time to time too. (People do get weary.)

The happiest surprise for me was "Ballad of a Man Called No One." I'd heard him play it live a couple of times, and it sounded like little more than a slightly boastful little rant. Here, except for the frankly annoying tremolo that flows through the whole mix like you're listening to it through an electric fan, a defiant & angsty little blues song is revealed that I could

totally hear Stevie Ray Vaughan doing (even though he can't because, well, you know). Grey cries and bends the lines like he's finally started telling his own story & not some character he's putting on for three minutes, and it's a revelation. He gets to *I really wanna help you, but I'm lying on the outside looking uu-uu-uup*, and it's hard to breathe out until he does first. The goddamned thing is freaky, although it would have been absolutely perfect if—oh yeah, I already mentioned the tremolo being annoying.

Maybe Grey (& Spencer) just wanted to piss off the minimalists. The Village is crawling with 'em (when you're living in a shoebox with nothing but your guitar and an empty bar fridge, minimalism kinda comes naturally), but it doesn't have to be the only way. Grey can make a big sloppy record with maybe too many gadgets and a cast of thousands and have it still be a street-level songwriter's album, can't he?

Can't he?

Anyway, the greatest joy on the record is followed by the biggest disappointment. I had it in the back of my mind (bad idea, I know) that "Violent Jack" was going to wind up as the single, with its chuggachugga rhythm, Helter-Skelter lyrics and Horton Heat pace & cadence, it was a sure thing for some horror movie soundtrack (or at least college radio). But the whole song sounds like it was fed through Lach's overdrive pedal, and Grey's angry riddims wind up being all but indecipherable. And there's these computer-space noises that remind me of ELO or disco or something that *boing-ng-ng & beeeee-yoop-oop-oop* in between the squiggly slide guitars (which sound good, but there's a lot of them). Not to deny "Violent Jack" its inherent rockingness, though. Even with the mangling of it, I still have to pace my apartment like Rollins or Mike Tyson in the dressing room whenever I hear it.

It took a long time for *Crazy Like An Ambush* to grow on me, but the investment in time has paid off. There's no shortage of wonderful sounds and lines and clevernesses and little moments of genuineness on this album. I just had to get used to the addled murk of a record that was made in a different frame of mind than the recent spate of perfectly fine albums from the New York Antifolk Scene that feel like they've been put out more as documents of their progenitors' times than as genuine musical explorations.

I think Grey Revell should be congratulated for making this record. There are times I will actively seek it out to listen to. (Probably not during the day, though. Maybe while driving drunk.) This album feels like it was recorded in 1968, and it would sure sound excellent on vinyl. But what else could we expect from our Californian spiritual traveler pal than an abstract allegory on the state of his universe, love life, new city & all? And what chances have you taken recently?

# AntiFolk Memories

It's the end of century, and we've been partying like it's 1999 for so many months now, we haven't taken the time to stop and listen to the rose. Here's an opportunity. Take a minute to think: What have been the highlights of *your* AntiFolk experience? Some of the scenesters you've seen had this to say...

## Major Matt Mason

The third open mike I played at two in the morning. I was poor alone but I had just booked my first gig in New York City. I thought that I'd be famous for sure now!

I met Paleface outside of Sidewalk once in '95. I gave him a homemade tape and then we went and had a beer and he told me about the time Daniel Johnston stayed with him.

## Laurel Hoffman

It's a nice place to visit. Safe and warm.

## Jeff Lewis

The period of time when I was staying at the Monday Night Antihoot til the bitter end produced some really special moments, with Kenny and John Kessel and Joie and Marilee and Grey and Lach... We'd all been there til about 2 or 3 or maybe later, with the place basically to ourselves to just bug out and all sing together while Lach played or Kenny got on the piano... Then one time Joie DBG played the greatest version of Drinking with God on Kessel's guitar a pinnacle. Of course the most special night to me was my welcome home party in Patsy Grace's backyard, with almost a who's who of Antifolk All Stars passing a guitar around until late, late into the night... That was also the first time I met Adam Green. And anytime I get a compliment in a special moment is scene history for me. The night Grey and Adam and I stayed up all night sitting on Avenue A trading songs until we wandered down - demented through Key Food and had a fat breakfast of Pop Tarts and tea. Kessel doing his mind-altering impression of Jon Berger. The "Blood on Your Face" night, last year. Any Peter Dizozza or Mike Rechner show.



## Adam Green's Favorite Antifolk moments

Joe Bendik as a beautiful hulk.  
Lach as the sock puppet.  
Jon Berger as the dancing buttermilk fart.  
Barry Bliss as the singing voice not there.  
John Kessel as the boy next door mouth.  
Randi Russo as the methodical hander tears.  
Kimya as the eye bunny.  
Joie as the gravel rub mopper howl.  
Mike Rechner as the industrial-prop commander.  
Ish Marquez as the bendy-faced ancient.  
Grey Revell as the grinning low fry.  
Jeff Lewis as the guy from "friends."  
AJ Cope as the girl from "friends."  
Jude Kastle as the girl next door.  
Turner Cody as the girl next to Jude.

## John Kessel

I was getting toward the end of a very special one hour show (It was my birthday). The place was packed with friends and fans; more than usual for a Thursday, for a gig, for any birthday party I've ever had, for that matter. In the back of the Sidewalk performance room appears my current favorite songwriter - Major Matt Mason USA. In tribute to him, I launch into his great composition, "Rock Star."

There's a great cluster of lines in the song:  
"The brighter you make that birthday cake  
The darker it seems to get  
And all of the wind that filled my sails  
Now blowssss riiight throooogh meeee..."

At this point there is a pregnant pause in the tone. Air and silence and resignation.

What happened when I rested the music was the procession of a bevy of lovelies (Nan Turner, Patsy Grace and Michal the Girl) carrying a flaming strawberry cake and leading the audience into the Birthday Song.

As I blew out the candles at the microphone, I felt like a winning contestant on a game show. I bathed for a moment in the applause, and resumed into the next line of Major Matt's song:

"I think I'm in love with myself.  
I'm not who I thought I was.  
I'm stoned and I'm watching TV and I'm thinking  
I don't wanna be a Rockstar anymore.  
I don't wanna be a rockstar.  
I don't wanna be a rockstar."

But I was. And I guess I always will be.  
Thank you, Antifolk scene.

## Barry Bliss

I've seen some interesting people and some not interesting people here in New York City. As for the "Anti-Folk" category, I suppose some use that to explain what they do. I sure don't.

## Adam Brodsky

i remember the first time i drove up to the antihoot...i had bumped into the humans in new hope pa and they told me about lach and the hoot and until then i thought i had invented something...that was the night i learned, that not only had it been invented 8 years previous (if you use lach's date) but the scene's greatest whitest hopes had all been dropped from their major label deals. as i watched hooter after hooter perform sets that would KILL in any other open mic, i felt like one of those gay teens on who writes "Oprah, till i saw your show i didn't know there were others like me, i thought i was the only one. thank you..." one magical strange-folk sunday i played with al lee wyer, eric schwartz and lenny molotov. there was something magic about the night. there weren't many people there, but we entertained the pants off of each other...every one had such great sets...it was one of those evenings that sound stupid when you write about them in 2 sentences, but i'll always remember it.

remember that really hot intern lach had...i still remember the table i was sitting at when i was told that she was boinking joe bendik...i was looking at my drink ticket sitting there...

the first time i played "why i didn't call" (the failed radio single on my last record) i remember it went over so well that charles herold changed his set to play a song with a similar theme...and as he is one of the most brilliant songwriters i ever met i was so honored...his song by the way was something about losing a girls number and it was easily 3 times as brilliant as anything i'll ever write...but i did steal some of his banter that night, and have never looked back.

don't you love it when jon berger comes in to the fort halfway through your set dressed like a perp from cops, sits down, and when the tip jar comes around he tosses in a copy of antimatters that apparently he used for a towel some where around midtown? now that's livin' baby!

the first time i played the fort...back in 1958 i think. there were only about 7 or 8 people there, and even fewer that didn't come up in my car, but one of them was brenda kahn and one was ed hamell...lach was impressed...i didn't understand one of the great ironic postulates of antifolk that made that evening possible...you see i was a big fan of hamell and brenda. so therefore they came to my gig at the fort...i have not yet been able to pull off this trick with anyone outside the antifolk community, like tom waits, or parker posey, or chuck bednarik. that first strum of your guitar at the fort is really great...there's something about the sound there that warms my cockles, and every time it happens i suppose it feels like coming home...not my home, with the clutter and the fighting and the "why don't you get a job" but a nice home.

at the philadelphia antihoots when someone debuts a brand new, instantly great, song like butch did wednesday. There's a special feeling of "this was created by the scene" and you get proud and jealous all at once. one time i was checking my email and jon berger emailed me and asked me for antifolk snippets cause he was putting together an issue...man i felt special to be the only one asked.

# AntiFolk Memories

## Randi Russo

Antifolk Thanksgiving was x-tra special. After the usual din-din with the family, and being assaulted with the usual questions of what I'm doing with my life, I went down to the Sidewalk. Joe Bendik was already on stage, and I really like his song where he sings "Nothing Bothers Me Anymore" - that line has become a mantra of sorts for me, and I seem to have it in my head when I'm feeling most bothered. Then came John Kessel with his quirky songs, ending with this great song with these non-sense syllables (or maybe in a language I can't understand). Jude Kastle graced the piano as well as her guitar with her melodic songs. The Voices followed with their best set that I have ever witnessed as of yet. They did a great special turkey/stuffing song for the occasion. Drew rocked as usual (his songs have also taken possession of my head, also when I'm feeling bothered and "insane with shame"). Joie DBG didn't strip this time around, but, it was a family affair that night and the kids haven't gone to bed yet. As usual with Joie's shows, I was singing along to every song. Then Lach took the stage, commanding the attention of the audience like always. It got very cozy and family-like when we all joined in on "Home, Home on the Range" (I don't know what his title of that song is). The whole evening was then topped off with a special Anti-Hoot, which I was fortunate enough to open up (thanx Joie!). I was followed by some great "All Stars" which was like gravy on the bird.



## Brian Wayne

Seeing the Voices play.

## Michal the Girl

Sitting in Patsy Grace's backyard on my birthday passing the guitar around between me, Joie, Grey and Patsy. My first Antihoot.

"Shades of Grey" and the killing off of "Shades of Grey". Talking to Bryan Wayne (The Voices) outside of the C-Note at the Summer Antifolk Festival about how much we both love New York.

The outdoor portion of the Summer Antifolk Festival in Thompkin's Square Park.

Seeing Lach play with his band at Brownies. Lach looked so happy and the band and kicked ass.

Seeing Hamell for the first time was a life and mind altering experience. He is so amazing.

Patsy's show with the violin and cello behind her. That was truly breathtaking.

When Joie stripped down to his bikini underwear at Halloween.

## Dan Emery

Seeing Jon Berger partially disrobe (again) as he frenetically runs to and fro.

## Steve Espinola

# AntiFolk Memories

Dang, I've been hanging out at Sidewalk for four years. I guess that makes me an old timer, which is weird, because I remember when I was one of the new people in a scene that was already extremely vibrant. I used to go to open mics every 2 weeks or so. Now it's not that often, as my music projects take me out of town almost every week and I have fewer free days—a situation I credit Sidewalk for helping make possible. It IS weird to come to the open mics and realize that almost nobody knows who I am, and that I know only, maybe 10 people.

There has been at least one nearly complete turnover in the time I've been at Sidewalk, maybe two. I'm sure it will happen again, as long as Sidewalk (or an Antifolk scene) continues to be around. The biggest change, as I see it, came from about 3 sources:

- \* People got married, and maybe had kids

- \* People put their energies into recording albums and trying to play outside the city (a.k.a. making a living at this) and which will mean nothing to you whippersnappers, \* Craig Gordon moved away, and Little Oscar left soon afterward. Craig (on bass) and Little Oscar (on drums), with Mr. Scarecrow (on guitar), backed up a remarkable number of different Sidewalk acts. In twos and threes, they were Lenny Molotov's Illuminoids, Joe Bendik's Heathens, Anne Husick's Shameless, Karen Davis' Redneck, Liz Brody's White T-Shirt of Mother... the list went on. Plus, Craig had one of the best recording rigs in antifolk, on which much of the first Dan Emery Mystery Band album was recorded (what a great piano he had!). Some nights at Sidewalk were analogous to listening to a 60's Motown compilation — same band, different singer, same-yet-different sound. Craig never took center stage himself, but when he left, everyone had to form a new band, and many of these acts never showed up as much as before.

Wait, that's a tangent — back on track! Highlights and memories!

During the brief few months that I ran sound at Sidewalk, I saw and participated in some very strange things. I recall fondly the night that all tables were moved back during a "Scott Wilson and His Arabian Nights" bellydancing performance so that 30 drunken Hungarians could circle dance to "Hava Nagila". (yes, this happened at Sidewalk.) I also recall fondly watching a middle-aged couple try to seduce a cute young masseuse by demonstrating full-fledged cunnilingus right there at a table in the front room. (These sorts of things only happen after midnight...) And there were far stranger things that I won't ever reveal, lest I get in big big trouble.

The early days of the Dan Emery Mystery Band were lovely. We'd play 2-hour Sunday night sets, which usually consisted of Dan teaching the band songs as we played. We had a short, muscular guy named Robert Smith on atrocious harmonica. He had a bizarre act which led people to believe he was perpetually drunk, but in fact he only drank ginger ale. He rapped in a high voice, and had such a deep mock-southern drawl that we rarely understood a thing he was saying. I miss that guy!

A couple of little jam sessions are particularly fond memories: One Sunday night, with almost no audience, when Adam Brodsky, Al Lee Wyer, and Eric Schwartz all traded some of the funniest, sickest songs I'd ever heard. More recently, an acoustic, backyard off-campus jam where I got to hear Joie/DBG sing a shockingly quiet "Hello Mom, Hello Dad, I'm Alright," and a similar on-campus jam with Kenny Davidsen backing lounge versions of many of the current faves.

A few months ago I got three pieces of terrible personal news in an hour (breakup, death of friend, another pal with apparent cancer), and luckily I was right near Sidewalk. How wonderful! I walked in and my friends were there. I had people who could hug me or hang out as I bawled my eyes out, so I felt much better. What a wonderful comfort to know it's there. But the best experience that I get to have, again and again, is that joy of seeing someone for the first time who's mindblowingly great. This is often followed by the joy of seeing someone for the fifth time or tenth time, still mindblowingly great.

Here's a little list of the first songs I heard some of my favorite Antifolkers do. This is not inclusive in the least. Some of my other faves, for example Tom Warnick and Joe Bendik, I just don't remember what I first heard from them (But I sure remember the impressions they made!).

Mary Ann Farley—"My Bare Hands" and "Breathless"

Dan Emery—"I'm An Open Mic Man"

Jeff Lightning Lewis—"Life" and "Sexual History of Jeff Lightning Lewis, Part One"

Lach—"Ballad of a Thinning Man" and "Dreamboat"

Bionic Finger (though they were called "Ripe" at the time)—"Leaving on a Jet Plane" and "Just a Moment"

Peter Dizozza—"When I look into your eyes" (love song to a seal from Doctor Doolittle)

Dan Kilian—"Long Black Limousine"

Aki—"Love Train"

Moldy Peaches 2K—"We're not those kids sitting on the couch" (which had been written that week) and "Lazy Confessions"

Rick Shapiro—some monologue about clitorises which included the phrase "hot buttered shrimp"

Dina Dean—"Golden Rose"

Little Oscar—"Elvis on Dilottin"

Anne Husick—"Your Version of Me" (I think...)

Jessica Kane—"I'm Gonna Vomit" (which she claimed was written by her grandma, "who died today of stomach cancer". A terribly lie.)

Lenny Molotov—"The Waitress Song"

Lee Chabowski—"Clown Killer"

Charles Herold—"A Cockroach named Ghandi"

But really, I suspect that the best is yet to come. And that's a nice feeling.



# AntiFolk Memories

KIMYA

towards the end of july i was up to my waist in the sapphire river. most of me in the still still water, my butt in the current. as my shit escaped me and my ass was wiped clean by natures fury i looked around. i looked around at the green grass and wildflowers, at the fallen logs that i assumed were inhabited by rattlesnakes, and at the clear blue sunfilled sky. i looked at the two naked boys sitting on the riverbank and thought "i hope we never fix the van".



and then the boys started singing and i started singing too. and we sang the theme from full house and the theme from growing pains. we sang about midgets riding cows and we sang about ligers. we sang about snakes and panning for gold. we sang because our hearts were filled with song.

i crawled on shore and laffed at the fact that i'd seen more balls so far

on that three day drive than i had in my whole life. i couldn't believe i had convinced a posse to roadtrip to new york city to play one show at the mysterious sidewalk cafe. i stuck a piece of grass in my mouth, pulled a caterpillar out of the back of my shirt, leaned back and felt my kneecaps start to sunburn as the others hitched into bozeman to find a new head gasket and distributor cap for the van.

up til then i had only sang three times with a band in front of an audience. i was known more for my sometimes sad, sometimes political, (and oftentimes about poop) poetry. i had never fancied myself any sort of rock and roller. i wanted to live in a house in the woods near a lake or beach, but here i am five months later and still in new york. and still trying to make it to the fort every monday for the antihoot whether i have accompaniment or not.

i had never heard of antifolk before, but i am pretty sure i lived it alright. sometimes i have to remind myself that being an "antifolk all-star", like being a moldy peach, is more a state of mind, and a feeling in the guts than anything else. more than a scene and more than rock and roll.

it is about sharing the songs we have in our hearts without being bound by words or fashion or music or fame. it is about being real. it is about supporting each other, and not using each other, right? it is about the only god damned reason i am still here in the dirty dirty city. mp2k is on hiatus so that we can regain the true spirit of what we are here for. and that is to spread the truth (as we know it) in a simple and fun way to as many people as possible. we need to stay fresh and not burn out and not let schedules and rehearsals and such cause us to get sick of each other. friends are the most important thing on earth, you know?

so, yeah, we played that first night and i looked out and saw people singing along to words that i had written and just about lost my mind, i was so so happy and proud. then i stayed for rick shapiro's whole set and (having miserably done stand up at the comic strip as a part of my sordid past) thought "hmm. yup. this is the fuckin place!"

and we kept getting booked and kept getting booked and i went off all of my prescriptions and stayed relatively sane and completely sober, thanks to all the "antifolk".

so, i stayed. our roadies, matt and usana went back out west in august, jest, our guitarist, left in october, and justice, our drummer, left last week. me, adam, and brian are still here but i am the only one left from the group that made the journey in the big peach van. and that's a pretty lonely feeling.

maybe i'll leave too. the thought has crossed my mind. if i do it won't be because i'm not thrilled to be a part of all this. i just need the space to fill myself with forests and lakes and bike rides. i need slumber parties and picnics and climbing trees. maybe i'll go back to port townsend and tell tales of the crazy times i had in new york city, like the time i drank my piss onstage during a performance without anybody knowing it. or about all of the good people i met that liked my songs and gave me hugs. and then i'll run down to the beach and jump in the water in my clothes. as a group of kids sit around a fire with guitars and spontaneous lyrics maybe i will give a name to their outpourings. "antifolk" i'll tell them.

or maybe i'll just close my eyes and keep it to myself.

thanks everyone. happy holidays.

MARY ANN FARLEY

When Steve Espinola played "Sweet Dream Last" for the first time. It was as though the audience took a collective gasp halfway through the song and held their breath until he finished. A gorgeous, heartbreaking tune, and an incredible performance. The crowd went nuts afterward. When he came back to our table and sat down, he looked at me with one of those "what-the-hell-just-happened?" kind of expressions. One of those moments that ONLY happens live.

When I played "Strange and Wonderful" for the first time at an antihoot. The sound system went out, so Lach had us play in the middle of the club completely unamplified. I intuitively knew that the setting couldn't have been more perfect for the introduction of that song. It was an incredible performance experience.

The night tons of people came to the antihoot after the Village Voice article appeared. It just so happened that it was "Do a Song in the Style of Another Antifolker" night, so all these new people had NO idea what to make of this insane scene. It was just so perfect.

When Lach commented after one of Aki's incomprehensible Japanese-accented songs, "not only is it beautiful, but oh so true." It was one of the funniest things I'd ever heard him say. In fact, Lach induced many sublime, comedic moments that often left me slackjawed and marvelling at his gift for the verbal riff and his ability to bring everyone in on the joke. It was all inadvertently touching, and I still haven't found the words to fully describe what I'd feel on those evenings.

to make it to the fort every monday for the antihoot whether



## LACH

(Mr. 'Time is an Illusion' Himself)

There are so many performers who the current readership of AntiMatters wouldn't know of. I've seen literally thousands of acts and heard tens of thousands of songs. The scene you see today is a scene I've seen before. Different actors, different costumes but always surprises, community, encouragement and wonder. I am always curious what will happen next.

(1984) Walking down Ludlow street with Kirk Kelly and Cindy Lee Berryhill a few nights before opening the Hidden Fortress and Cindy talking about the NYC Folk Fest and me saying "If they are Folk, then I'm Antifolk!"

(1984) Steve Jones of The Sex Pistols stops by the Fort while my band is playing. He is in yellow hooded sweatshirt and on dope. I am quite disappointed.

(1987) Paleface plays his first song at The Fort at Chameleon. Two strings break right away and he just keeps flaying away and roaring. The rooms divides between love and bewilderment.

(1982) Jack Hardy tells Kirk Kelly to stay away from me if he ever hopes to make it. Kirk immediately buys me a drink.

(1999) In the space of a few weeks seeing John Kessel debut great new songs with tight delivery and moving from bass to guitar with ease. Pure dynamite.

(1997) First release on Fortified, Lach's Antihoot debuts and Antifolk has it's own label.

(1986) Michelle Shocked playing "Johnny 'Cross The Holler" and my jaw hanging wide as she says it's her first

(1986) Bob Dylan stops in to The Fort at Sophie's and watches most of my set until the crowd gets too claustrophobic. It felt like meeting a brother.

(1998) Joie/DBG gets sober and the world changes. His songs become bound muscles of redemption.

(1999) Outdoor Antifolk Fest in Tompkins Square Park and the tribe becomes aware of itself.

(1997) MuchMusic TV in Canada broadcasts a nationwide special on Antifolk featuring Beck, Ani, Hayden and myself. It begins with Elvis Costello saying "Antifolk? Is that like Antimatter?" Elvis says the word "Antifolk!"

(1986) Missing Foundation sets the original Fort on fire during closing night party.

(1996) Antihoot cable shows 30 episodes on Manhattan Cable filled with the clowning of Muckafurgason, The Humans and scores more.

The constant renewal of the scene by such performers as The Voices, Dina Dean, Beck and so many others. Each in their own time. Each in their own way.

(2 am and Monday) Playing my set to the Waitresses, the Walls and the Weirdoes. Making up songs on the spot in the lazy, golden glow of the post-antihoot hangout.

Antifolk scenes begin in other cities (i.e.- Adam Brodsky in Philly, Tony Hightower in Toronto, Andras Jones in Olympia.). Road warriors Roger Manning and Hamell On Trial spread the word.

(1999) Jude Kastle covers my song "Beautiful" and evaporates time into a rainbow of possibilities.

(1985) Our 'bartender's' motorcycle is blown up by the local street gang and he goes hunting them with a crossbow.

(1998) Jeff Lightning Lewis arrives at the Antihoot and each week brings a song to top the previous Monday. His cartoon flyers tie with Dan Emery and Dan Kilian as best gig flyers.

## AntiFolk Memories

### Dan Kilian

I had a particularly off night, in front of a rare good size crowd. I think the booking agent, in a last ditch attempt to get something

happening for me, put me on before someone I thought was named Hammer Entrail, and the crowd was there to see him. I botched it and sat there sulking the rest of the night.

If you're looking for good memories I once had a good blackened chicken as I watched Dan Emory, Jeffrey Lightning Lewis and another fine songwriter whose name I can't remember trade off songs in an excellent show. Also liked videotaping Peter Dizozza's slide show as he listed all the things he was, songwriter, pornographer, son, everything he could possibly be termed, and concluded "I don't want to be any of those things."

**HAROLD GOLDBERG**

At the old anti-folk lair, the Chameleon, I watched Beck, a poor, then-unsigned Beck, sing a song about coal miners at Christmastime, the lyrics of which brought tears to the eyes of hardened East Village punks.

**LACH, Continued...** (1997) Comedian Rick Shapiro brings his firebrand humor to The Sidewalk and Fortified releases his album Unconditional Love to rave reviews in Billboard, Penthouse, Icon, NYPress and more.

(1999) I record and release Blang! the third Fortified release and tour the west coast. Record is entered into the Grammy nominating process, charts on over 50 stations, and gets an Italian record deal. I realize that I can no longer run the Sidewalk every night, run a record label and promote and create my own work. I turn over my soundman, hosting duties to Pablo and Voya. I will continue to book, promote the club and host the Antihoot but let go of being there every night. I can now concentrate on bringing Antifolk and Fortified to a National/International level.

(1999) Major Matt Mason USA's Me, Me, Me debuts as Fortified's 4th release. It debuts top twenty on over 25 stations and the cool reviews are starting to come in. Working with Matt I realize the future looks bright for the label, touring etc.

(1997) John Taylor of Duran Duran plays the Sidewalk! The place is jammed with 30-something ladies trying but failing to remain calm.

(1999) Moldy Peaches 2000 arrives on the scene and charms and alarms the scene.

(1985) Billy Nova releases the first Antifolk compilation. A cassette entitled Fortunes 13 with songs from Brenda Kahn, Roger Manning, Kirk Kelly. One writer, Bob Gulino, over-turned his van shortly after the release. A quiet, hard-working man with family. He is still missed.

(1992) Starting the scene up in San Francisco at The Sacred Grounds Cafe. Realizing, this Antifolk stuff can work anywhere. Scene attracts Lenny Molotov, Mr. Scarecrow and scores of others.

(Today) realizing how many talented, special people there are and how the dark conduit of the media is so stacked against them. These are the true voices of America. This is the freedom of spirit that has institutions and salaried government workers quaking with fear. I have quite the bad cold as I write this. Head is foggy and I regret not being able to give props to everybody. But you know who you are, don't you? You're the person whose song I am waiting to hear, the warm light in this plastic, digital, conformist world. Billy the Kid with a guitar. The microphone is on; we are waiting, so...step up!

### Mimi Cohen (of GENE & Mimi)

I remember lots of things from the Fort gone by, it's my short term memory that's breaking down.

GENE & I got introduced to Lach and his scene when he was the bartender at The Chameleon, not when it was a moveable club and then made a short home at Sophie's. Cindy Lee Berryhill was really my introduction to the whole scene. I saw her open for Marshall Crenshaw at the Bottom Line and I thought, "Wow. Finally, someone I can relate to." Marshall put GENE to sleep and I was so embarrassed by his head bobbing up and down and his occasional snore. Then I went to see a triple bill of Kirk Kelly, Roger Manning and Cindy Lee Berryhill at the old Knitting Factory, when it was on Houston Street, and Lach was the midnight act. Kirk opened up the show by running in from the back of the room, beer in hand, jumping on a "wobbly" table and singing a rousing a cappella chorus of some old protest song, probably inciting the audience to drink more. Roger came on singing Blues #1 - 34 and pissed everybody off; which was his plan, ya see. Cindy Lee come on, disgusted with the lack of attention the sound man was giving her and her friends, and announced, "It sucks, doesn't it." Then slid into the most charming grin and sang "Damn I Wish I Was A Man." I just thought, "Gee, how can I meet her?"

Kirk was running an open mic at the Space at Chase. Who remembers that? The open mic was called Kirk's World. I was so excited to go down to it cause I figured if I met Kirk that was a definite in to meeting Cindy Lee. One night I went to see Kirk and the Kirk's World Orchestra. The orchestra consisted of Mark Humble on standup bass. Their opening song is one of the few performances I've seen that I remember vividly. They sang "Working in the Vineyard" and to this day I can still see Mark dancing with his bass singing perfect harmony. I was surprised to learn later that Kirk wrote the song — it sounds so classically folk, I thought it must have always been around.

Then it was suggested that I check out Mark and his own duo, Perry/Humble; at one point signed to Meat Loaf's management. GENE & I were trying to do serious Simon & Garfunkel harmony with Beatles-influenced songs and so were Perry/Humble. After the gig, which was fantastic, I tried to introduce myself to Mark but he ran away from me. Many years later he told me he thought I was a record company person and he didn't want to talk to me. Recently, on my daughter's fourth birthday he bought her the "Barbie Red Sportscar." How we do change. By the way, if you check out the dedication Lach makes on the Anti Folk Open Mic CD, it's to my daughter. She had just been born when the recording was made. Lach really wanted us on it but I had just had a cesarean about 2 weeks before and was not up to singing or anything else. So Lach said to me on the telephone, "Barbra would do it." (Streisand, for those not in the know.) I still didn't go.

### Scott Fralick

I had just moved to NYC from the sticks - Spokane, Washington. I had played some open mics there and done a few gigs, but not many. When I got to New York, the second thing I did (after mortgaging my soul for an apartment) was visit The Fort's open mic. I was intimidated, but figured I had nothing to lose. I was an anonymous guy in a city where anonymity is pretty easily achieved. If I sucked, I would never meet any of these people again.

I played a few open mics - nervous as hell. After about the fourth or fifth time up on stage, I had a pretty good set. As I was unplugging, Lach leaned over and told me to call him that Wednesday about a gig. I was walking on air. It was the best confirmation I could get that, perhaps, I wasn't wasting my time and everyone else's.

My other best Antifolk moment: Watching Lach win over the crowd in Portland, Oregon (where I live now). Totally unfamiliar with his set and style, the audience didn't know what to expect. After the rousing chorus of "Drinking Beers with Mom," they were awestruck. For me, that was confirmation of what I already knew - that Lach guys got it going on.

### Peter Dizozza

I enjoyed seeing Lach and Duran Duran's bassist and Lenny Molotov with Oscar and Anne and Scarecrow, is it possible they were all in the same band?

### Mike Rechner

I remember when Jon Berger gave me a copy of Revolutionary Whimperings and I got excited, dreaming of a two-zine war bond.

### Dan Kilian

My favorite memory of the Anti folk was probably seeing the same backing band (Mr. Scarecrow on guitar, Craig Gordon on bass and Little Oscar on drums: the AntiSection) back up just about ever antifolk act in town, one after the other, on Little Oscar's birthday.

### Nan Turner

Seeing Jeff Lightning Lewis set up three radios with "East River" blaring out of them and then try to sing the song at the same time.

I liked the Summer Antifolk Fest out in Tomkins Square Park cause it was neat seeing Sidewalk people in bright daylight.

I liked seeing Bionic Finger get into a rumble with the audience and each other at the 1999 Winter Antifolk Fest. Not to mention they beat up Jon Berger!

Seeing Dina play her homemade drums with Mike Rechner.

Seeing Lach make up a song for my sister Adrienne at a gig in August 1999.

Seeing Major Matt Mason USA become a superstar.

Seeing Jon Berger threaten people when they don't come to his gigs.

Seeing the Moldy Peaches for the first time, in all their splendid costumes.

### Lorijo Manley

Being there on Monday night open mic when I was still new to the Fort and seeing Maggie Roche get up and play. Thankfully well well AFTER my two songs. Or was that one loooong song?

Dragging various family members down to partake and watching their reactions to the scene. Especially when Lach gave a rather nice introduction for my set and Grandma didn't have her hearing aid in!! (But I heard it.)

### Dina Levy

Jon Berger dancing to the Dan Emery Mystery Band. My first open mic (last week), during which I was so nervous I was shaking afterwards.

Hanging out at the Fort for the past six years, never performing, yet always feeling welcome, an integral part of the scene.

The Fourth of July party (A loooong time ago), and going to someone's roof (I don't remember who's), watching fireworks with Lach and Mike Rechner and a bunch of people I don't know.

## AntiFolk Memories

# AntiFolk Memories

**JUDE KASTLE**

COMMUNITY, UNLIKE ANYTHING I COULD HAVE DREAMT UP IN MY WILDEST DREAMS.

**Atoosa**

My favorite anti-folk moments are created through the great friendships the community is made up of – there's nothing like hearing your friends get up there and express themselves – we inspire one another.

**Ed Hamell**

Played in my first band in the Fourth grade. (i ain't saying what year). A constant struggle all during high school and college. No support at home for music. Having seen the depression years they knew there was no \$ to be made. Playing the rock and roll was the ONLY thing that made me happy. Got out of college and was free. Wrote my first song at 25. A late bloomer. Played in a band that played three sets of my original material. Hard working group. 200 nights a year. Fueled by a LOT of drugs and booze. After 7 years I broke the band up. Something was wrong. We were good, we were not great. For two years I tended bar, trying to figure out how to play, Jesus, no more bands. I saw Neil Young @ Farm Aid. (on T.V.) Alone. In the middle of a sea of people, and lordy, lordy the man was ROCKIN. I bought my first acoustic guitar, moved to Albany where nobody knew me, and worked on a show. At a local underground record store they suggested the Roger Manning record on SST, one of my favorite labels. I stared at the cover for hours. I couldn't believe his voice. I listened to Pearly Blues over & over. He mentioned the Clash.

What was this Anti-Folk stuff? I scoured record stores, and ordered a compilation. A fucking compilation!! There were others that knew about this shit! My friend Mike Eck told me a young woman named Brenda Kahn was playing at QE2. My wife and I went to see her. She was so good I was pissed off. It would take me forever to write like that. I found Lach's Contender cassette in a store. A treasure. I kept my ear to the ground, I bought the Cindy Lee Berryhill record. I wanted to be a part of this. I hadn't had that feeling in a while, it was a great inspiration to me. I moved to Austin. I heard about Beck. I got signed and moved to N.Y.C. I played the Fort. Was the scene dying? I met Lach, Jon Berger, Anne Husick, the Humans. This year, more than ever I sense a resurgence. JOIE, Patsy and the new faces seem fired and talented. Everything else, Rap Alternative Rock, Radio Jam Bands seem tired and old. I'm very optimistic that Anti-Folk could break in the upcoming year. But even if it don't, I'm very proud to be a part, and I can see kids 30 years from now discovering this shit.

**Joie/DBG**

The Antifolk scene moments are so hard to pinpoint and just one would be difficult to mention. I've been playing on this scene for about 2 ½ years. It has all been an eye-opening experience. Antifolk to me is a state of empowerment to yourself. A place like the Fort lets you be you. Anti-folk is going against the normal of what doesn't ring true in your heart. I have loved and lost and found and kept and let go parts of

myself on the great stages of the Fort – and in other AF shows – and in quiet conversations with the performers. I feel closer to the rag tag bunch of realistic dreams than to most of the world. I get out of this scene what I put in. And I've gotten a lot of myself and truth, good times and a lot of great memories. To pinpoint one as really special would not be very Antifolk. They all are special.

**Greg Weiss**

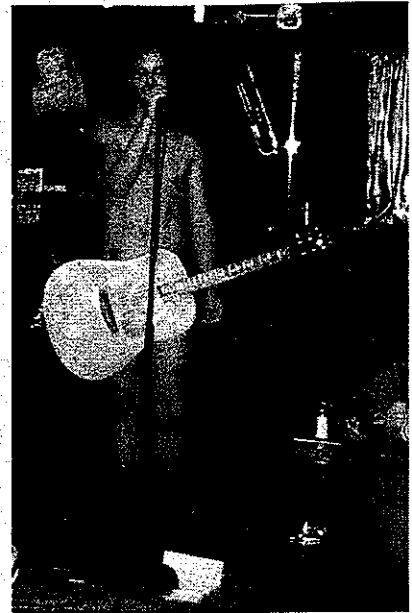
☞ *Simultaneous numbers at the AntiHoot last winter, in the darkest of.*

☞ *Feeling alienated and alone amongst those I thought were friends. Finding strength in return.*

☞ *Anti-folk has taught me the length and means people who don't understand each other will go to give a sense of support to an alone, sad, angry or longing person.*

☞ *Only others aren't us.*

☞ *Lach might love you, but you can't grease his glove with honesty.*



**Turner Cody**

The first time I heard all of Lach's jokes I thought he might be the next Grouch Marx, but then I realized he says them every week – which is fine. I guess he'll just be the next Paul Stanley. I also remember the first time I stayed at the open mic real late, me and a few other people, and Lach started making up songs and I gave him a subject and I remember feeling real included, 'cause I've always been a bit shy.

## 57 by JB in '99

Seeing Brenda Kahn in that black Batman shirt and felt purple pants take the stage and ask if the guy she was playing pool with was there, before going into a steamy and stormy version (my virgin hearing) of "Mint Juleps and Needles."

"There Must Be Something Wrong With Me" (Duane's Therapy)

Approaching Brenda Kahn outside of CB's in New York, before she opened for David Byrne, and chatting about how Sony was going to re-release her first album, Goldfish Don't Talk Back (they never did).

"He Stopped Loving Her Today" (JT Lewis)

Seeing Joe Bendik smash an old guitar at the end of a set with his original set of Heathens.

It was a superhoo atmosphere at the CD release party for Lach's AntiHoot album, each artist getting two songs, except for Lach, who got, like, eighty two. Muckafurgason, the three piece inter-instrumental comic combine, decided not to play the song that was their selection on the CD, but rather, Zane Campbell's, "Fucked Up on Jesus." Normally done as a solo acoustic number, Muckafurgason performed it as a country stomper. It was simply perfect. When it was Zane's turn, he returned the favor by doing a piss-poor, unrehearsed version of Mucka's "Killing Flies." It muddled Mucka's triumph a little bit, but only a little.

"Loser" (Estelle McKee)

Driving to Ed Hamell's house with Joie, Patsy and Grey for a house-warming/BBQ. Good food, good times, long fucking drive. Lots of plans for the future that may never be accomplished. Lots of planning, lots of dreaming...

"Lunch" (Muckafurgason)

My birthday fell on a Hoot some two years back, and I was the star of the night. Cakes, cookies, gifts, glad tidings, all were thrown before me in '97. The best part of it, though, was when Peter Dizozza hit the stage, hit the keys on the piano, and hit the notes of "Your Birthday," a song, apparently, he'd written for the occasion of my birth. Peter Dizozza, mad genius extraordinaire, mover and shaker of the AntiFolk scene and his own particular horror-subsection of it, had written a birthday song for ME! Being a member of a community is damned cool, but being in the center of it is sublime...

"Four Fingers of Fun" (Dan Kilian)

Lach rolling up his pant leg, pacing the stage, and reading a video cover in the style of Jon Berger.

John Kessel composing an original poem about pumpkin seeds in the style of Jon Berger.

Pablo of Testosterone Kills dancing during an AntiHoot poetry-reading, dancing violently, horrifically, viscerally, all in the style of Jon Berger.

Tom Nishioka opened for John Popper one Thursday night. (You know, John Popper of Blues Traveller? He's big in New York....), and the place was packed. Tom was debuting his one-man techno-synth/samplethon, a band in a box concept that sounded organic despite the high technology involved. The show was good. The audience was clapping, though, really, the squeezing-room-only space wasn't exactly there for Tom. I was sitting near the wall with Billy Kelly, who clapped for Tom, and, at the end of his set, got up to go.

"You're heading out?" I asked.

"I saw Tom, so I'm going home." Heading against the on-rush of traffic looking for space to gawk, Billy left the club.

"The Jester" (Lach)

Brenda Kahn hugging me after reading my virtual love letter in the Obsession issue of AntiMatters.

Lach doing his spoken word piece, "After You Left," which pissed me off, because it was: a) SO derivative of my work, so obviously a take on my poetic style and rhythm and cadence and everything, and b) written YEARS before I'd done a single spoken word piece at the Sidewalk.

"Guy in a Tie" (Bionic Finger)

Going to Roger Manning's pad, hearing about the history of AntiFolk from his point of view and his record collection. Dubbing some long-out-of-print records from the long-out-of-business 109 Records.

"Mint Juleps and Needles" (Brenda Kahn)

First reading: AntiHoot at midnight, about seven months after first hitting the scene, bringing in Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, a children's book by Bill Martin. The audience loved it. Nich Haber shook my hand. JT Lewis asked for my pen.

Talking to Kristin Fox (nee Kristin Johnson, AKA Kris Cog) about Ex-Poseur, the first AntiFolk fanzine from the eighties, and getting to borrow the original masters of those zines, stealing articles and ideas from my predecessors.

"Lunch" (Casey Scott)

Matt Sherwood inviting me to his Stuy Town party, with incomprehensible directions. I stood outside his door for a good ten minutes, too afraid to enter, too embarrassed with myself to leave. Eventually, it got cold, and I went home.

Tom Nishioka inviting me to his Williamsburg birthday party. This one, I went in to. Talked with Dan Emery and Steve Espinola about Paleface and everyone else we'd heard on the scene.

"I Love You, Grace" (Hub Moore)

Drew Blood brought in an impressive crowd at Brownie's. It was clearly important for him, "This can take me to the next level," he'd confided. It probably did. At the next level was Casey Scott's latest creation, the four-piece band, Diva Machina. Before a crowd of forty (a third of whom were carry-overs from Drew's show) Casey Scott led the band through it's polyrhythmic, semi-psychotic songs about... geez, god knows what. Reactions were mixed; it wasn't the strongest show Diva Machina had played, but Drew's irregular breathing and semi-regular rantings about Casey's talent and beauty, his insistence in an introduction, the enthusiastic audience response between songs... it was just a great night.

"Reiss Five" (Patsy Grace)

Running into Kimya, Brian Piltin, Grey Revell and Patsy Grace on 10th Street. They were heading to Brian's car to listen to the newly minting recording of Patsy's last show.

"You want to come?" Brian said. I left my bike outside.



## 57 by JB in '99

We all  
crammed  
in and lis-  
tened to

the CD of Patsy's debut performance with her band. The music was gorgeous, and added dimensions to already fine stuff. I'd missed the show the first time around, but had gotten to relive it along with the others. Afterwards, the ladies danced to 80s music outside of the car while the boys, stuck inside, watched.

"Melissa" (John Kessel)

Kessel needed help, and the people gave it. I've never seen a New York apartment so filled with stuff, so needing a major overhaul, and John Kessel had to move out in a week's time. In desperate straits, in desperation, Kessel turned to the people he could trust, the people he could ask. And people who knew him well and knew him a little, people who saw the need in his situation, people who had the resources to offer and people who didn't, they all came through to support one of the most altruistic members of the AntiFolk scene, and Kessel got moved. Slowly, painfully, but finally, completely. Everyone who helped out John Kessel proved what it is to be in a community.

"Sheenagh Says" (Kirk Kelly)

Dan Emery's populist strategies to get Love and Advertising made in '98. Having fans pre-buy CDs and donate capital for Executive Producer credit were acts of inspired genius, getting money in place and having an audience invested in the product. Dan says he came up with the strategy on his own. I still don't believe him.

"I Loved Her First" (Tony Hightower)

My one overnight at the Sidewalk was in '95, while I was unemployed, unemployable, and unlovable. After Tom Nishioka played a late night set (after Jen's Revenge had played a nine o'clock set), the three of us talked through the night, fueled by beers and cokes and some strange dynamic that allowed strangers to bond on myriad subjects. Well after daylight but well before the worker drones' day began, I begged off, and took a couple of empty buses home.

"Sandra" (Dots Will Echo)

The Sunday Brunches. From '96 to '97, the Unusual Suspects would get together every weekend at around one in the back room of the Sidewalk to talk, schmooze, and plot out AntiMatters. It was originally put together by Rachel Sparks and Lach, but somewhere along the lines, I took it over. Every week, different folk would get together and bond and talk and eat and drink and plan and scheme and dream and chat and... they were great times. We should do the brunches more often.

"Mid-Life Crisis" (Paula Carino)

Driving up to Albany with Lach, Major Matt Mason, and Paula Carino, in support of the Lach's AntiHoot album, playing at Border's books with Michael Eck in round robin style.

Watching John S Hall at the AntiHoot in Tompkins Square Park, reading "Take Stuff From Work" and other pieces. For over a year, I'd been trying to rip off the AntiFolk Poet Laureate, trying to make my work as much like that of King Missile as I could. I could tell from my intonation, from my sentence structure, from my style that I was nothing but a cheap suit derivative of John S Hall. At the park, watching the rhythm of his words, seeing the power of his work, seeing his humor and his style in full effect, I recognized I wasn't much like him at

all. While trying to copycat John S Hall, I'd become my very own Jonathan Berger.

"More" (Mark Humble)

Anticipating my second show, I'd decided, if it didn't go well, I'd quit the performing thing. I had other reasons to be part of the AF community; I didn't need to be on-stage. But after a bigger crowd than ever before, professional writer/poet Harold offered me a third gig, and Cindi, some cute chick I'd never seen before in my life, gave me her number and said we had to get together. Stopping performing was the furthest thing from my mind. More applause was all that crowded my thoughts.

"Up and Under" (Tom Nishioka)

Casey Scott coming to my uptown apartment, recording a compilation tape for David Foster Wallace. Her horrified jump away from my amp after some feedback.

Gene & Mimi's record release party for 36th Street was certainly not the first time this device was used, but it worked incredibly well. Mimi introduced different acts to take the stage and cover songs by the dynamic duo. What followed was an hour's worth of Gene&MimiMania, with various AntiFolk personalities paying tribute to the very tuneful two.

"Been a Killer" (Jeff Lang)

Going to the Fort's benefit show for the family of Don Brody, leader of the Marys, co-founder of Camp Hoboken, an important part of the Hoboken music community. When he died of a heart attack in '97, friends, family, and various folk got together to create a fund for his wife and children.

"Beginning to Lose My Mind" (Gene & Mimi)

Arriving for my first spoken word performing gig at the Fort, and seeing a crowd of people there, all there to see me.

"Love Song While Running Away" (Steve Espinola)

Before taking over AntiMatters from Mr. Scarecrow, I generated Revolutionary Whimperings, a smaller, faster, autonomous AntiFolk fanzine, which I gave to artists on the scene I really liked. The response it got was small, but it made me feel intrinsically involved in the AntiFolk scene.

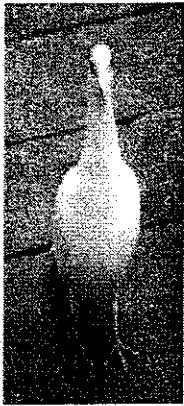
"My Bare Hands" (Mary Ann Farley)

Patsy Grace's Williamsburg pad, where she creates a salon-atmosphere for the various and sundry. Late nights, lazy afternoons, birthdays, Independence Days... it's an out-of-the-way neighborhood for just about everyone, but it's been on many occasions, a center of community and conviviality.

"The Meeting" (Hamell on Trial)

Trying to find the music at the 94 Avenue A back in January '94. Hearing Brenda Kahn was playing, I tried to find the stage, but could only find some empty back room featuring the Psychic Penguins and a bunch of Xeroxed articles taped to the walls, retelling ancient glories of AntiFolk, from its early history on Rivington Street to its month-old stay at the Sidewalk. The articles told me of a musical scene in the room right before me. I fantasized of its resurgence, and my place in it as some quirky fanboy geek. I dreamt of people recognizing me sometimes, in the corner, as I kept to myself and occasionally scribbled in my notebook. "That's Jon Berger," someone might say, "he belongs... sort of."

Talking at John's Pizzeria with Patsy, Grey, and Michal the Girl about how small my early AF dreams were...



Got a question about love, dating, or Kansas?

# Ask Major Matt.!

**Hey Major Matt...I am a single artist living in New York.  
How do I use my art to ENHANCE my love life?**



I was sitting on a park bench in Union Square eating fish and chips last Thursday feeling pretty good and in the moment after sort of a groggy morning. Anyone who has ever tried to eat in Union Square or just about any other park in New York City knows that it doesn't take long, after having revealed a food item or anything remotely resembling food, to soon be overcome with the distinct feeling that you are being watched. Not by people mind you. I'm talking about our little friends that share the rare soft spots on this big limestone apple. Of course, I'm talking about pigeons and squirrels. It's amazing how uninhibited these little guys are. (note for future elaboration: *Squirrels don't act like this in Kansas*) Yes, anyone with a french fry in New York can go to a park and be Dr. Dolittle for a few minutes. Less than a minute after I had sat down I was immediately surrounded. And with every crunchy bite I could feel the pack swoon in hopes of a stray crumb.

Art is like a big steamy Styrofoam container of fish and chips in a New York City park. People who indulge in any artistic endeavor all share one thing: **Hunger**. They crave to express, create, doodle something that they do not get from what ever it is that they do that they define as not being art. And if they choose to do this publicly then they also hunger for **attention**. And quite often attention is the freeway upon which love travels. So viewed under the proper light, anyone who publicly

practices some type of art is in tune with a creative way to satisfy their need for attention, validation, and love.

As you have labeled yourself an artist in your question I am going to assume that you have at least displayed your art to others. And this says to me that you have already begun to use your "art to

enhance your love life." Yes, you enjoy the meal that expressing yourself artistically has created for you. But you want more.

1) One thing I would suggest is to continue to drop crumbs. Get it out there. Talk about it. The more crumbs you drop the more squirrels and pigeons you're going to attract. The more squirrels and pigeons you attract the more likely you are going to attract that special pigeon or squirrel that is right for you. They're not going to jump through your window.

2) Pick your favorite park and go sniffing for crumbs. Spend at least one night a week being a squirrel or a pigeon yourself. Go to an art opening, a poetry reading, an open mike, modern dance, **GO TO A MAJOR MATT MASON USA SHOW!**

3) No one can make love happen. It just does. And sometimes it doesn't, for awhile. It's a matter of motivation. Anyone can make art happen. The only way that you're going to develop a worthwhile relationship through your art (and I'm assuming this is what you're looking for... if not stop reading now and go pick up a copy of *Poison* - the band's biography), is for your art to truly reflect something about yourself.

- Here's a little exercise. Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the center. On one side of the line: make a list of some of the most horrible and/or embarrassing moments that you have shared with someone who you love or have loved in the past (be specific). On the other side of the line: make a list of your favorite memories or moments that you have shared with someone who you love or have loved in the past. Now, remove the line, add one egg, a pinch of salt and... write a song, paint a picture, make up a dance, write a poem, make a movie! And then show it to someone...

**- Any more questions?**

**To ask a question:**

Vist the "Ask Major Matt" section of  
the Olive Juice Music Website  
@ [www.olivejuicemusic.com](http://www.olivejuicemusic.com)

**or write:**

Ask Major Matt  
C/O Olive Juice Music  
P.O. Box 20678  
Tompkins Square Station  
NY, NY 10009



# THE EUROPEAN MUSIC SCENE

A SAD FIRST HAND REPORT BY JEFF "MR. SUBJECTIVITY" LEWIS

What European music scene? I didn't see barely anything going on anywhere, with rare exception, just a lot of fuckin' DJs and dance party-type things all over Eastern and Western Europe. Not that all DJs should die or anything, but Geez... Lemme lay it all down for ya.

I began in London, where I checked out a venue called The Garage. For five bucks there were four bands, the first of which I don't recall at all. The second were called something like "Cuckoo Jive," a wanna-be glam punk group with average tunes and an average amount of grabbing of crotch and spitting of mouthfuls of beer at the audience. There was a decently cool-sounding indie/industrial band from Wales, called something like "The Robots From Space" (but I could be wrong), and another band whose name and music I can't remember, except they did one rockin' song that people danced to until they realized it was a cover of a song they would ordinarily consider unhip (might have been that 1980s "You Spin Me 'Round Like a Record" song but I can't recall). Not a terrible assortment, but nothing worth writing home about. Then on Friday night I went to a place in the center of the city called The 12 Bar, supposedly one of the better places to see local London acts. It cost ten damn bucks, but I coughed it up. There were four acts: three bands, ALL featuring cello players in addition to the usual drum/bass/guitar - what the heck's up with that?!?! I mean it was kind of cool (would have been cooler if any of them'd had more interesting songs to go with the interesting sound of cello accompaniment), but is there some kind of British Cello-Core scene that I don't know about? You gotta admit that it's kind of weird to see multiple bands in one night with cello players. Regardless, if these groups were the best local bands London could muster on a Friday night, there's certainly a lack of inspiration going on over there. Made me want to export a few songwriters I know over to London - maybe it's time for a reverse British Invasion. Anyway, the most interesting songs came from a solo-acoustic dude named Ari Vais. I talked to him after the show and it turned out he was from Boston (so much for seeing the local talent), and as if I couldn't guess from his sound, he had once played the Sidewalk Cafe! Unfortunately Ari'd apparently made the mistake of griping to Lach about the inconvenience of having to play late on a Monday night, for which Ari had received the ol' on-stage tongue-lashing (about the uselessness of waking up early so you can go to work so you can go to open mics so you can leave early so you can wake up early so you can go to work, or however it goes) and was so terror-stricken he'd had to evacuate the country for the UK.

From London I made my way to Calais, France - it was totally dead. Like, practically ghost-town status. So on to Paris, supposedly a cultural capital of the world... lotta beautiful buildings, but there ain't much in the way of a music scene at all. At least not at all like in New York, which is weird consider-

ing Paris is the only city that I've ever visited that has anything like that New York-big-city-feeling. I felt like the old lady in the "Where's the Beef" commercial - where's the damn scene? Gregg Wiess and Seth (Dufus/Fun Wearing Underwear)Hebert had given me a phone number for a Parisian songwriter they'd met; the dude was really nice, and I got to hear some of the decent, acoustic Will Oldham-esque tunes that he and his friends write. These Parisians confirmed what I'd been suspecting; there ain't much of an original music scene in Paris nowadays. Sure, there're a few Bleeker Street-quality tourist-oriented jazz clubs, and lots of DJs, and any major world-touring band will play in or around Paris, but the venues just don't exist to sustain the kind of 7-day-a-week musical smorgasbord that we got here in NYC. However, from Nantes, France, the folk-rock-psychedelic-grunge band The Little Rabbits sure do rock my world. A French friend introduced me to their music a few years ago, and my brother and I have been spreading the gospel of The Little Rabbits ever since - they've got five albums out, feel free to drop me a line (weja4@aol.com) and I'll tape some LR stuff for you, you'll like it. Seriously, they're pretty awesome, like if Serge Gainsbourg wrote a bunch of songs with the Pixies which were later covered by the Violent Femmes in heavy French accents. Sadly, the Little Rabbits weren't playing any shows during the time I was in France.

Then I went to Barcelona (by the way, this whole time I was just traveling by good old fashioned hitchhiking. That's one thing Europe is definitely superior to the US for - people here are such paranoid wusses) and saw an okay grungey band called something like One Thousand and One, but they were from the midwestern US, so they don't count as European music. Also saw the band Get Animal, a total 80s glam cock-rock revival project fronted by New York's Adam Bomb. After the show, Adam confirmed what I suspected as I watched their highly professional fake-blood-spittin', leather pants-wearin' Kiss-isms, at the high profile Barcelona Hard Rock Cafe... that back here in NY those dudes are stuck playing The Continental and The Spiral. And deservedly so; if only Adam'd learn (and learn from) a couple Dead Blonde Girlfriend tunes it might give his act some needed sincerity and credibility instead of being a tongue in cheek style-tribute. Barcelona, however, was definitely a pretty fat city, with lots of cool record stores and lots of folks busting out with various kinds of live music right in the street, which I always dig seeing. Out East, things got sparser (and I started taking trains, which are much cheaper out there). Didn't see any bands in Budapest (I'm not saying they weren't there somewhere, I just didn't stay long enough to look); the only live music I saw in Bucharest was a two-man blues act, an acoustic/electric duo doing old Robert Johnson tunes and the like, all with heavy Romanian accent and misinterpreted lyrics. Not bad, though. I heard a bit of

the "Bucharest Underground Mafia" in various places, a pretty good sounding Romanian hip-hop outfit, despite (or because of) my not understanding a single word. In Krakow, Poland, a group of Boy and Girl Scouts played me some fat Polish Scout songs, including one really cool Polish Western song, which had a great melody and an addictive "dip-dip-dip" chorus and lyrics which translated into something like "the big valley is asleep/ I have everything I need/ My horse and my gun." Warsaw seemed to have a good amount of posters around for various bands playing, but other than checking out the songs of the kids who hung out playing an acoustic guitar in the snow and freezing cold everyday at the Barbican, I didn't catch any local Warsaw acts. Prague, like Warsaw, seemed to have a somewhat healthy live music selection, although, like Warsaw, situations kept preventing me from actually seeing any shows (other than one okay jazz band). Prague looked like there was definitely a thriving squatter-punk music community, too.

Finally, returning to England, I checked out Manchester for a few days, and boy I'm glad I did. Manchester's the only damn place I saw in all of Europe that had what we know of as a music scene! Well, I suppose London may have just as much live original music going on, but since Manchester is much smaller and more compact the venues didn't have that "few and far between" feeling. First off, I discovered the "Night and Day," a bar with a stage in the back area. Although they didn't have bands playing every single night, they did have a gallery of original Daniel Johnston artwork currently on display! Apparently I had missed Daniel himself, who appeared at the gallery opening the week before, and people there didn't seem to be aware of his music, but it was still an awesome surprise to see. In the four nights I spent in Manchester I certainly had my pick of a decent handful of venues in which to check out local original bands, ranging from Brownies-sized venues like Night and Day or The Roadhouse to larger theaters like Planet K and the University, places where Echo and the Bunnymen, The Fall, Ani Di Franco and Billy Bragg had shows going on. I stuck to the Roadhouse for a couple nights and saw some enjoyable bands, the best of which were the high-school-lookin' Nirwana-bes called Scapegoat, and the indie-rock bands Magnetic Soul and Fat Shaft. The Friday night headliner was an aspiring Brit-pop band called Morning Star, who were very confident of their soon-to-be fame, although Blur they were not. The lead singer had this sort of Roger Daltrey-learns-some-hip-hop-moves thing going on.

I must admit, this report cannot be taken as the ultimate authority on the matter of the current state of European local music scenes, considering that a five day visit to a city isn't a very long time in which to expect a place to reveal

all of its hidden fatness. It's quite possible that any or all of the above mentioned places may have had tons of incredible original songwriting and performing talent which I just happened not to stumble on; but from talking and staying with multiple locals and songwriter/musicians, this did not seem to be the case. Truly, there just ain't anyplace that's got what New York's got. I had the feeling that one well-placed David Dragov (or any number of other Antifolk all-stars) could blow away an entire local songwriting community anywhere in Europe. And think about it; on any given night of the week, often for as little as three to seven dollars, if not free altogether, one can see bands and performers of every variety and flavor here in New York. Just off the top of my head I can rattle off venues like Brownie's, The Knitting Factory, The Spiral, The Sidewalk Cafe, Baby Jupiter, The Living Room, Wetlands, The C-Note, CBGB's, Arlene's Grocery, The Mercury Lounge; I'm sure as you read this list you're thinking of a half-dozen others that I haven't mentioned. Then there are the larger venues as well, like Irving Plaza, Roseland, The Beacon Theater, all the way up to Madison Square fuggin' Garden, if you can shell out the dough. Notice I'm not even mentioning those fake-ass tourist traps over on Bleecker, yet if I had seen Bleecker Street in Paris it would have been the closest thing they have to a musical Mecca! I mean, what the fuck? I guess maybe it's 'cause Paris is so damn expensive none of the non-corporate, artistic, sensitive/broke creative types can live there, thus the scene has withered away, if there ever was one. And let that stand as a warning to NYC; already with people willing to fork over \$1,000-plus for a month's rent, it raises prices so that most musician/artists I know have already begun to split, like Dust Bowl Refugees, for Brooklyn, Jersey, Providence RI, Portland OR, etc. Already this year Tramps and Coney Island High have shut down... a sign, perhaps? And like some European dude wisely pointed out to me, before my pro-New York music rhetoric gets totally out of hand: when was the last time New York had a music scene that produced any songwriters/bands that have achieved any real acclaim? Perennial NYC-spawned superheroes like

Lou Reed, Talking Heads, Television, Sonic

Y o u t h ,

Patti Smith, etc., etc., haven't been emerging for almost twenty years already...

unless of course you consider that NYC has consistently produced hip-hop

champions like Tribe Called Quest, Biggie Smalls, and the Wu-Tang (baby you're on Staten Island) Clan, who have thoroughly taken over the world!

Okay, I'm naturally biased towards New York, but how can I help it? We rule.

*(P.S. — I've written this immediately after returning, and I'm feeling all funky and jet-lagged... I hope this makes sense tomorrow.)*

# THE EUROPEAN MUSIC SCENE

by Jeff Lewis

# The Train Is a Gold Mine, My Friend

A HANDY GUIDE TO QUITTING YOUR DAY JOB AND LIVIN' LA VIDA LOCAL BY BRER BRIAN

Pardon the Ricky Martin joke, I know how last week those are. Before we begin our discourse, I'd like to ask you something: Just who do you think you are? Are you an Artist? Do you have important things to say? Compelling ways to say them? Are you assured of your craft and wed to your ideals? So much so that you're willing to hold to them until death do you part?

If you are, then you have no future playing music on trains. It was that last part that got you. Of course you can fiddle around some in your spare time, working on overcoming your stage fright, polishing your chops, fishing for that rare, random individual who understands your "vision". But you'll never attain an income there equivalent to that of a menial, low paying job like typing or food service until you learn to be a complete sellout. Like me.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Brian, and for several months now I have supported myself in New York City playing music for tourists and business folk on the shuttle train. I get up when I feel like it, work when I want to, dress however I like, take breaks when I want to, and drink whatever I want over the course of the work-day. I don't take drug tests, and my hair-style is entirely up to me. (That is, until I go home for a holiday and my mom starts freaking out about my appearance and threatens to not do my laundry. She thinks I still work at Sam Ashe.)

To be honest, I do not consider myself a complete and utter sellout; I rarely if ever perform music I don't like. The only time this ever happens is if someone requests it. I usually oblige them as best I can, though I'm incapable of performing "More Than Words" in its entirety without finding some way to make fun of it.

My early busking repertoire consisted almost entirely of Beatles tunes, and I nearly wore out my Paul McCartney impression singing "Yesterday" so many times. Over the course of time I learned and perfected a series of semi-virtuosic instrumental crowd pleasers, which I usually play first and follow up with some sweetly crooned pop or folk tune. (a la "Turn Turn Turn", "He's A Real Nowhere Man", "The Times They A Changin'", or perhaps an original.) The train I ride permits me to play two or three songs before it stops, and I've found that this formula works pretty well. It's the nimble fingers first, and the sweet balladeering afterwards.

It is illegal to perform music on trains, and to solicit donations. I avoid this latter offense by keeping my mouth shut

and never actually asking for the money; the former offense is so negligible that in my months of doing it for a living, I've been thrown off the train a total of three times. I've received one summons, for twenty-five dollars. Some folks hate musicians on trains. Those people don't bother me; there are always enough people that like it for me to stay in business. Once every three blue moons, someone will ask me to stop playing, or actually threaten me. I always defy them. I look forward to these exchanges because they heighten the entertainment value. An increased number of passengers respond with bringing me money, thus supporting the Arts and striking a blow against the Guy With The Bug Up His Ass.

Busking is a good way to hand out flyers and promote yourself. I credit my busking with allowing me to perform three shows in November that weren't completely unattended disasters. I operate under some vague assumption that this lifestyle is only temporary, but at the present time I kinda dig it. If you've devoted your life to the composition, performance, and study of music, and you want more in return than the stuffy repression of a life in academia or those pesky dishpan hands, Be Like Me and become a beggar.

## The Official Pop Chart of the Grand Central/Times Square Shuttle

### Instrumentals

1. Sing Sing Sing
2. Misirlou
3. The Youngest Girls (original!)
4. Tequilla
5. The Albanian Genius

### Songs

1. Hey Jude
2. The Black Velvet Band
3. Harlem '99 (original!)
4. When I'm Sixty-Four
5. Strawberry Fields Forever

Brer Brian's first solo instrumental has rocketed to the top of the pop charts in Uzbekistan.

The Sidewalk  
Café  
94 Avenue A  
212-473-7373.

Mon.Dec.13- Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.  
Tues.Dec.14- 8-Wanda Phipps, 8:30- Vince Martin,  
9:30- Sean Fitzpatrick, 10- Bibi Farber, 10:30- Jun,  
11- Sean & Chris  
Wed.Dec.15- 9- Anna Tucker and Zeke Mullins, 10-Waaw Band  
11- The NYC Jam Session Inc.  
Thurs.Dec.16 - 7:30-Stephanie Wright, 8-The Court, 9-Jen Halpern,  
10- Jonas Grumby, 11-Alpha Cat, 12- Ultra Venus  
Fri.Dec.17- 8-The O, 9-Shameless, 10- Zephyr, 11-Tom Clark and Phil Cohen  
Sat.Dec.18- 8-Michael Packer Group, 9-Johnny Seven, 10-TBA, 11- Peace By Piece  
Sun.Dec.19-7:30- Farrah, 8:30- Parker, 9-Liz Skillman, 10- The Buzzards, 11-Sean Lee  
Mon.Dec.20- Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.  
Tues.Dec.21- 7:30- The Brothers, 8-Randi Russo, 8:30- Robert Secret, 9-Springwell,  
9:30- Chris Osburn, 10-Turner Cody, 10:30- Tony Hightower  
Wed.Dec.22-Jazz TBA  
Thurs.Dec.23- The Fifth Annual Kwanakuhmass Party Featuring: 9-Voodoo Martini,  
10- Hamell On Trial, 11-Lach and The Secrets, 12-Fragile Male Ego  
Dec.24 & 25 - No Shows. Happy Holidays. Celebrate somewhere else, dammit!  
Dec.26 - 8:30- Adam Wade, 11-Soulwork  
Mon.Dec.27-Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.  
Tues.Dec.28- 8-Jocelyn Ryder, 8:30- Al Lee Wyer, 9- Ben Arnold,  
9:30- Gene Bryan Johnson, 10-Steve Espinola  
Wed.Dec.29- 9- Destefano and Mcleod, 10- Ed Littman and Splat!, 11- The NYC Jam  
Session Inc. (open improv jazz stage)  
Thurs.Dec.30-AFNY2K Fest: 8:30- Jude Kastle, 9-Testosterone Kills, 9:30-Brian Piltin  
Fri.Dec.31- AFNY2K Fest Antifolk New Year's Blow-out:  
8- Heather Eatman, 8:30- Major Matt Mason USA, 9-Joe Bendik, 9:30- Patsy Grace Band,  
10- The Grey Revell Band, 10:30- David Dragov, 11- Joie DBG, 12-The Humans,  
1am- Lach and The Secrets

Admission to this night is free (2 drink minimum). There will be a free Champagne  
toast at Midnight!

More entertainment to come in the new year. Updates available at the number above...

## COME THE REVOLUTION

Up against the wall, club kids!  
Up against the wall, Air Supply!  
Up against the wall, chocophiles!  
Up against the wall, protozoic fanciers!  
Up against the wall, Emergency Medical Technicians!  
Up against the wall, surfer babes!  
Up against the wall, cretins...

Come the revolution, you and your kind will be  
demolished, damaged, desicated, destroyed.  
We, the future, shall rape you, rend you, devour your  
young.

Come the revolution, all will be ours  
and we will correct all your mistakes  
and we shall twist everything you thought righteous  
into that which is wrong-tious.

Come the revolution, you and your kind will disappear  
without a trace.

Unless, of course, you have a friend in the revolution.  
Which, for just a few spare dollars, you just might...

## JONATHAN BERGER BIRTHDAY BASH

### Featuring:

*The wit and wonder  
of Jonathan Berger  
The Dan Emery  
Mystery Band  
Hamell on Trial*

Presents for the  
Birthday Boy  
Fun for Everyone!

12/21/99!

### Baby Jupiter

- 170 Orchard Street

(One block south of Housto  
one block east of First A

From seven to ten: bir  
celeb

Attendance mar  
See you