

JANUARY

2000

(STILL ONE DOLLAR)

-JEFF LEWIS '90

# AntiMatters

**Captain of Cottage Industry**

Jonathan Berger

Where were you when the lights stayed on?  
Where were you when civilization stood?  
Where were you when the institutions we all  
so fervently believed in  
    remained standing  
    never stronger  
    never recognizing the danger in the air  
    never noticing the crisis at all?  
Where were you when the lights stayed on?

Where were you when it kept going?  
Where were you when the elevators worked?  
Where were you when we lived as we never  
had before?  
Where were you then?  
Where were you when our faith  
    remained contained  
    kept us humane  
    maintained everything?  
Where were you when the lights stayed on?  
  
Where are you now?

**Contact:**      [antimatters@excite.com](mailto:antimatters@excite.com)  
                    150 west 95th street, 9d  
                    new york, ny 10025

I'll bet you're as disappointed as I am by this. It's an end of an era, that's for sure. I can't imagine how we'll possibly continue, considering his lack. What will we do without Peanuts?

This issue was going to be *Peanuts*-themed, as soon as I heard about Schulz's illness and retirement. Peanuts is one of the finest things in the universe, ever to have been experienced by anyone. Without him... without Charlie Brown... well, you can just imagine how horrible that life would be. After all, you're living it.

So this issue was going to be all about the end of Peanuts, with our favorite characters on every page. It was going to be the post-apocalyptic Peanuts issue, what with it being the first issue back after technology failed us and we all began living in luddite huts.

Only... bigger issues of cataclysm came to light. The warring visions of death and afterlife, in this post-anxiety age, gave me at AntiMatters hope of iconic figures to help me through this Peanut-free existence. And Mike Rechner, presented in his epic interview as desperately wanting to sell out - but with no buyers... well, he seems pretty much like Charlie Brown right about now.

And with our favorite cartoonist and cover illustrator, Jeff Lewis, back in the fold, it seemed this latest issue of AntiMatters was a cause for celebration, not commiseration. So the Peanuts theme got scrapped. that's not to say I'm any less miserable over the loss of Snoopy, but I'll find ways to cope.

Still, I miss Sparky.

*Jonathan Berger*

On New Year's Eve, the world failed to collapse, which was a great disappointment to me and my canned goods collection. Despite my positivity about the unfeasibility of civilization in the new millinium, everything seems to be running along pretty damned smoothly. Oh well. At least it's made me thoughtful about how to survive in the dystopian aftermath of some non-existent world crisis. And I'm not alone. Some of the greatest luminaries in AntiFolk have recently been presenting their vision of the world after this one. Strangely, though, the vision has not been so much through song, but through play.

Peter Dizozza's frightening masterwork, *Prepare to Meet Your Maker*, though several years old, has gained new life these last few months, in anticipation of apocalypse. It's the story of what some people do after death, and somehow involves scenes of necrophilia, dismemberment, reincarnation, enslavement and engagement. Whatever.

Sharon Fogarty's vision is somewhat newer, and, perhaps, fresher. Heaven tells the story of Josephine and what happens to her right she's declared dead. It approaches the afterlife from an exciting point of view, particularly for artists. Read about both afterlifish visions here... in AntiMatters.

## **CREATORS**

Jonathan Berger  
Rhiannon Erbach  
Egils Kaljo  
John Kessel  
Jeff Lightning Lewis  
Butch Ross

# Report from the Fort

## 12/4 - Tin Angel (PA)

Philadelphia is slow to embrace its heroes and even more reticent to let them go. A point that was drummed home Saturday night when Lach opened for Hamell on Trial at the venerable Tin Angel, a spot normally reserved for *Adam Brodsky*. If this wasn't obvious to those present, Adam's "Folk Remedy" blaring through the PA drove the point home. Still, if Hamell is Anti-folk apostle Paul, then Lach is at least it's John the Baptist, and he has stood in the shadow of giants before. The lights came up and Lach hit that "Blang!" chord, launching into "Coffee Black" and barreling out of that into "George Bush". A couple more quick tunes followed and then Lach asked the audience if they were ready for a "love" song. Some lady up front groaned and Lach said "what if I told you it was about four guys." He then started into 'Kiss Loves You' replete with the tale of seeing Kiss at the Spectrum. He was funny, articulate and kept the show moving, even deviating into "the day I went insane" in the middle of "North Beach" to fix a busted string.

Have you heard Hamell on Trial? If not stop reading and go to a show. Because there's no excuse for not seeing the single most powerful solo performer alive, and this review is going to mean nothing to you without some basis of comparison. It starts, as it always does, with a strum, not a blang, but a simple strum from that '37 Gibson flattop juiced up with 18 volts of LR Baggs, and pumped into that peavey PA, with the internal compression (that makes it sound like he brought a drummer too). Then, and only then, run through the house PA. That sound, that low warm rumble, makes me feel like I'm home. Like all is right with the world. Sure my girlfriend's dad hates me and I got \$600 in traffic violations the other day, but did you hear that sound? Hamell's back in town. Men, lock up your folksingers, and put in a tape, so you can record VH1's behind the music, (necessary homework for Hamell shows these days). That strum is followed by a riff, a distinctly Hamell riff. And then the staccato attack of those two low strings. That E and A (tuned down to D and G respectively) work as hard if not harder than Hamell. And that A usually doesn't make it out of the set alive. But then the bald man steps up to the microphone and informs us that he'd "like to know what we've got to say" and the show is underway.

This show was a fairly typical Hamell/Tin Angel affair the crowd filled mostly with serious Hamell fans, and their reluctant, but obliging girlfriends. There were those in the back or near back who insisted on talking through Ed's set. Something up with which, Ed will not put. And the polite "fuck you's" turned into scathes at their fiscal sense, (spending \$8 to talk in the back) but eventually it was Hamell's magnetic charm that kept them quiet. His old borscht belt jokes, his moderate self-deprecation, and his smile, draw you into a mood where your cheeks hurt from laughing so much, and then when you leave you realize that the man has unleashed some truly terrific songs upon you. And this night was no exception. All of the standards were there. "Big as Life," "Sugarfree," Uncle Morris," "The Vines," as well as the songs that occupy the

universe where the toddle house is located, "When Bobby Comes Down," "Choochtown," "Nancy's Got a New Boyfriend."

But thinking of the juxtaposition of Hamell's banter and his songs (mostly tales of junkies and the bottom dwellers with which they associate, can cause your head to spin...but only till you get backstage and begin to talk to "the politest man in rock and roll" as he openly tells you yarns about his past, that include all of the illicit activities that make up a day in the life of chooch town. (There really is a Piccolo Joe. He and the Monkey weren't shot, but they were robbed of their 30 Large by the prostitutes they took upstairs) and Nancy is real too, she's a friend of his wife. But she's married now too.

It is this truth that lies at the bottom of Hamell on trial. And when the show is over, and he has sung "gonna be a meeting" and is back in his car on the road, heading for another joint. You can have faith in the man and his songs and in that guitar tone that reverberates in your chest cavity. It's all true. (Butch Ross)

## 12/6 - Antihoot

Smaller crowd tonight, proclaimed by Lach as the deadest crowd in 5 years. I myself was amazed that even though I drew 27, I still got on before midnight (now how often does that happen?)

Lach is suffering from that rarest of medical mysteries tonight, an affliction otherwise known as "The Crud". Too weak to stand and play the guitar, Lach goes the poetry route. I really liked the poem "Planet Ludlow", which was a very cool reflection on life on the Lower East Side.

Joie played a more subdued version of his song "Rock and Roll Tragedy". Though it did not have the breakneck speed of the original, it was still performed with the same intensity and power.

Atoosa and Jude Kastle played a very beautiful piano duet, though it took them a few moments to find the relative major of G.

Bingo Gazingo read a spoken word piece by the light of the electric Minorah. Very unique stuff, as his first piece was a

**Dan Emery has got it goin' on.**

by Dale Furnier

His vocals ring out,  
clear and open-ended.  
But his guitar does things  
that could get a kid suspended.

He's the boy next door

long list of commands for a servant named Igor. He also had the line "The whole world is a toilet bowl, all you need is a toilet paper roll."

Sly, in what I believe was his debut performance, played two great jazzy - bluesy numbers.

Raising the bar (or lowering the bar, however you may see it) on vulgarity in a performance at Sidewalk, Staten Island's **Terrible Tim** sang two profanity filled songs with many references to bodily functions. Terrible Tim also has a cable access show on Staten Island, and Lach was already suggesting competition between Terrible Tim and another public access personality, **Dave's Place**. (*Egils Kaljo*)

### 12/11 - CB's Gallery

"Well, the show went well," said *Dave Wechsler*, keyboard maven and prime architect of **PinataLand**, after the difficult show. Plagued by equipment difficulties and a sound person seemingly unprepared to deal with any of them, the five-piece band had to finally clear the stage during their encore, thanks to what can only be described as a horrible crackling sound.

The audience didn't seem to mind. The numerous fans of the turn-of-some-century ensemble were out in force to celebrate the release of *Songs from Konijn in Kok*, the brand-spanking-new CD EP. Five songs from the group, all themed around Coney Island, an area principal songwriter Wechsler has not visited in several years, were the focus of the album, as well as the set, which was much appreciated. More so, in fact, than anticipated.

"Sold lots of CDs," Wechsler described, as well as the occasional even-more-pleasant surprise. "Someone who ended up at our show by mistake loved it, got a CD, and just ordered six more for friends of his."

The listening public seemed to love the CD. "As far as I can tell, the only complaint is that it should have been longer," Wechsler, co-manager with Pinata-partner Doug Stone of the record label Mekkatone, said proudly, "So yeah, everything's going well." (*S Biederman*)

### 12/20- Antihoot

Heavy rains kept away a lot of performers tonight, leaving mainly those who were promoting a gig... and me.

Jeff Gaynor was handing out candy canes in celebration of Kwannikuhmass - which was very nice of him. But you'd think

## Report from the Fort

a more appropriate treat for the holiday would be highballs...

Very often I meet some interesting people at Sidewalk, and tonight was no exception. Whilst practicing for my performance, a lady downstairs was playing pool. After speaking with her for a little bit, she informed me of two rather shocking details - she was 80 years old (!) and she had a boyfriend who was 29 (!!) The lady looked to be in her thirties/forties and not even close to her actual age. She impressed quite a few of the waitstaff as well when asked to show her ID. I just hope I'm that spry when I'm an octogenarian...

After (what seemed like to me) a lengthy absence, **Marilee** returned to play at the Antihoot. She played a beautiful new song as well as one of her all time classics "Barbie Doll" (a bit of trivia - for the many of you looking for someone to fault for my presence at Antihoots, blame Marilee, as she was the one who told me about it)

Steve from the Canadian band *Four Star Movie* made his debut at Sidewalk, two years after Lach invited him to play after seeing him in Canada somewhere. Hopefully it won't be another two years before Steve plays again, as his stuff was pretty cool, very mellow songs.

Kimya read a very touching poem about a girl throwing rocks and trying to hit the moon, while other kids (who called her crazy) were playing the Dead Worm game.

**Peter Dizozza**, Lach's campaign manager, played two songs. Lach still appears to be on track to run for City Council in 2001, though it turns out that the odds are against him as the current City Council member will be running again that year, so Lach will be up against an incumbent, which caused distress to Lach, since he would be running against someone who was handicapped.

**Bart "The Christmas Tree Guy"** played the drums tonight. He does in fact sell Christmas trees - on Ave A and 11<sup>th</sup>, as well as at St. Mark's Church. Lach joined him on stage for the second number, a version of Lach's "Little Drummer Boy"

Even though she may play it often, I always enjoying hearing **Jude Kastle's** version of Lach's song "Beautiful", as it is at once melancholic and hopeful, and undeniably beautiful.

He has managed to top himself again, as tonight **Jonathan Berger** presented the definitive poem about carnivorous cows.

And I have managed to ramble on for longer than usual this time. I'm off to Two Boots Pizza. (*Egils Kaljo*)

## STONE SOUP!

C-Note @ 157 Avenue C  
(10th Street) - 1/26/00 - 7:30!

*If you miss it, you just won't be anywhere!*

**Stone Soup** is a creative artists ensemble that includes (this time):

7:30 The Redoubtable Jonathan Berger

8:00 Paula Carino

8:30 Pre War Yard Sale

9:00 The Clam

9:30 Jeff Lightning Lewis

10:00 Adam Green

10:30 Schwervon

# Report from the Fort

## 12/21 - Baby Jupiter

When my star performer cancelled for the most important show of my life, things got a little weird. I'd never put together a show before, and I really wanted to get it right for this, my birthday. I had to scramble to find an act kick-ass enough to fill my missing hour.

The brainstorm was one of desperation. Unable to think of any one person that... 'felt right' to fill the spot, I invited a bunch of my friends to a closed mic. Some of the superstars of the AntiFolk experience all volunteered to do a couple of songs to celebrate my birthday and, apparently, my life.

**Tony Hightower** got the ball rolling, performing a song "You Scare the Hell Out of Me," dedicating it to, of all people me. **Joie/DBG** followed with a song he knew I'd ripped off, "I Wouldn't Blame You," then "Drinking With God," his increasingly epic (now it's got three different musical sections. When oh when will it attain rock opera status?), leading into **Anne Husick**, who dedicated "Your Version of Me" to me, since I'd done a parody of it at her birthday. **Patsy Grace** sang "Reiss Five," **Steve Espinola**, "Love Song While Running Away." **Jeff Lightning Lewis** chose songs so perfect for the moment they bring tears to my brain, neither of whose names I know. Each person had sweet words to say, many people in the audience (a fairly crowded house, considering most everyone I knew said they couldn't make it) gave gifts to me, people hugged sweaty me... it was great.

My set? Well, that could've been better. But **Dan Emery**, who closed the night with his **Mystery Band**, well, they kicked ass just as they were supposed to.

From anxious beginning great shows can grow. I didn't think getting old would be that much fun. (*Jonathan Berger*)

## 1/3/00 - Antihoot

In the spirit of the post-holidays, the AntiHoot was run a little differently.

"You get two songs," said senior uberlord **Lach**, "If one of the songs is written on the spot, from one of these words I give you. Otherwise, you just do one song."

Most people were up to the challenge, or, at least, were up to taking the challenge. Phrases like **Sliding Pond**, **SkullCap**, **Liquorice**, **Betrayal**, **Church Plate** and **Frank Sinatra** were thrown about, and artists had to take their chances. Some people just couldn't get much going on. Others well, there were some impromptu keepers during the night.

### Highlights:

**Grey Revell** picked **Alaska**, then told of young **Johnny's** quest – literally – for satisfaction, as he headed up north, where he knew redemption awaited him.

**Pre War Yardsale** did a mantra-trance thing about **Jesus Presley** and his chocolate fixation.

**Turner Cody** found a way to discuss post-apocalyptic lampposts. It made about as much sense as he usually does.

**Billy Kelly** tried to weasel out of using **Tiger**, then was thrown the bone of **Underdog**, for which he came up with a beautiful verse. Then he gave up.

A duo, including the singer **Vita**, did an exciting blues

romp around **Cat Woman**, which inexplicably did not refer to the supervillainess at all.

Of course, the highlight of the evening, was **Jonathan Berger**, who, after throwing some little poem together about a toboggan crash, recited a piece called **21<sup>st</sup> Century Dick**, about **Robin** plotting to destroy **Bat-Man**, using perhaps twenty of the words that had been used during the evening. Surely, no accomplishment throughout the history of mankind can ever be attained above this. Hail **Jonathan Berger**, lord of all he surveys! (*Egils in Absentia*)

## 1/7/00 - Sidewalk Café

2000 is the year of **Schwervon**. This sort of sucks, as it's the secondary project of two AntiFolk musicians, **Major Matt Mason USA** (recent salesman of **Me Me Me** on **Olive Juice/ Fortified Records**) and **Nan Turner** of **Bionic Finger** (You know: the girl band?). The duo independently intend to put their energies behind their individual projects, with **Bionic Finger** releases a full-length this year, and **Matt** continuing the national push for his record (including, word says, some intergalactic touring), and it'll just be awkward for them both as **Schwervon**, the little side project, takes off, leaving their real art in the dust. But that's just what's gonna happen. Wait and see.

Why? Why is aught zero the year of **Schwervon**? Why will their rudimentary rock be the thing that explodes out of boomboxes and headphones by September? How can I make this prediction? Got me. I can't support my thesis. Still... if their Sidewalk show's any sign, I say the world will soon be singing "Let's Make Dinner Tonight."

There's just two of them, and they're songs are so goofy. God only knows what to call their first number, that strange diner experience about donuts and whatever else. **Nan** sat at the half drumkit, waiting to hit something while **Matt**, on an electric binge, paced a space on his side of the stage, more vibrant and excited about a performance than I've ever seen him. The **Major**, normally sullen, subdued, sitting was channeling for **Schwervon** his inner rock god.

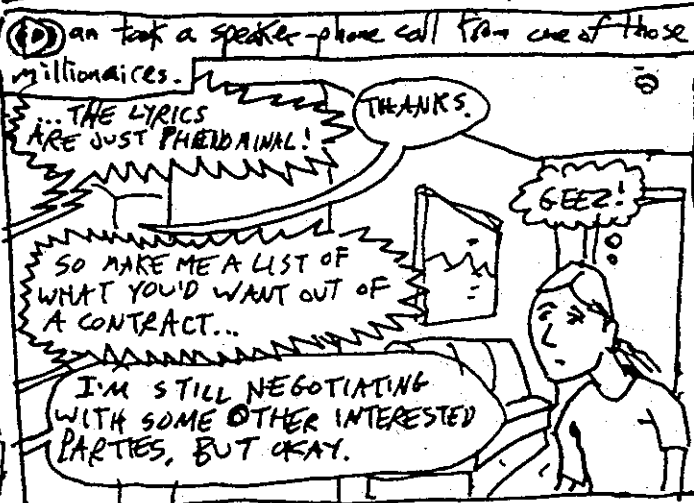
There's just two of them, and their sounds don't exactly mesh, what with **Nan** working her best **Julianna Hatfield** impression, mixed with some faux blues shouter; and **Matt** doing whatever thing it is he does. But together, they harmonize in strangely beautiful ways.

There's just two of them, but they make a big fucking racket. They're minimal as all get-out (the 'solos' you can hear in, say, their soundbite song, "I Said Exactly the Very Worst Thing," are laughably simple: a drum beat, a riff played alone – it's all so bare), but they're loud enough to completely obscure their lyrics, which, word is, are funny as all get-out. There's just two of them, and they're both pretty thin, but so much of their material focuses around food. "If You Can't Stand the Heat," ends with the obvious kitchen reference, though it follows somewhere more interesting... "Cuz I can't stand another minute of you bitching – I love you!" before ending from a great rip-off from **Big Star's** "Baby Beside Me."

Oh, it's all so good. There's just two of them, but they are going to be SO big. Mark my words. Or better, ignore them, and see the damned band. **Schwervon**. Ask for them by name. (*Gustav Plympton*)

# That Jeff Adventure...

Jeff Lightning Lewis continues his exploits in Florida. Dan Monahan, the AntiFolk villain, takes Jeff to a secluded beach, where they drink. Afterwards, Jeff pukes, and goes to sleep...



We hung out at the beach for a while. It was the first real swimming I'd done. Dan stayed in the water a lot longer than I did. We talked a while about folk songs and violence in music and other stuff.



We lamented that last night we hadn't played the guitar + today we'd forgotten to bring it. But we'd go to play at his friend's house, later.



After dinner (for which Bill put on ~~for~~ a copy of Dan's demo tape) I heard more about Villam (Vilhelm?).

DAN ALWAYS SAYS "HE'S LIKE A DISPLACED ROMAN GOD, BRONZED + READY." DID DAN TELL YOU THAT VILLAM FUCKED A DEER IN SOUTH AFRICA? OR SO HE CLAIMS.



I BELIEVE HIM. HE SAYS "SHE WAS IN THE NETS, TRAPPED. I COULD SEE SHE WAS VERY... SYOLLEN." AN IMPALA.



And more, at Dan's friend's house...

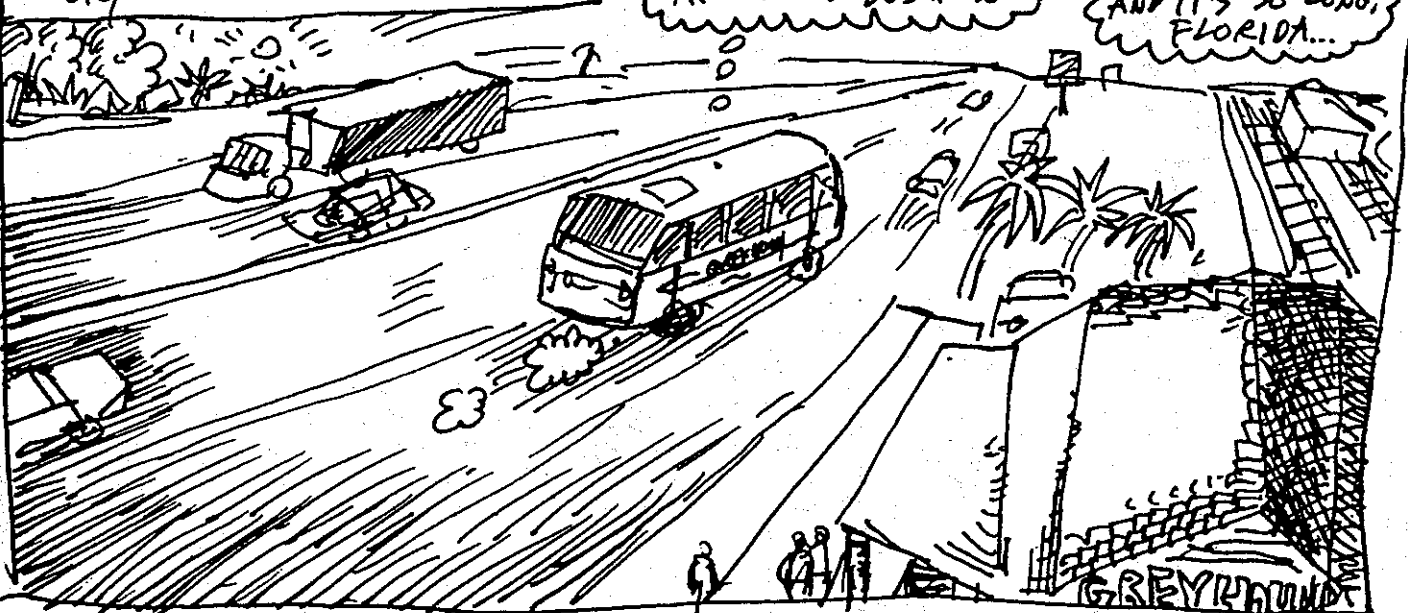
"I VILL FOOK YOU LIKE RAGDOLL" HE SAYS!



Early Friday morning Dan drove me to the Greyhound station and I was off...

THAT WAS A LOT OF FUN LAST NIGHT TRADING OFF SONGS AT THAT DUDE'S HOUSE...

NOW A ONE-WAY TICKET TO PHILLY AND IT'S SO LONG, FLORIDA...





At a stop in Northern Florida, a cute girl in a nice hippie dress asked me to keep an eye on her big bundle of stuff, which included a cheap nylon-string guitar with a broken body. She came back a few minutes later...

I'M SORRY, I WAS TRYING TO TUNE IT AND I BROKE A STRING.

THAT'S OK. SOMEONE JUST GAVE ME A BUNCH OF THIS STUFF... I WOULDN'T BOTHER WITH IT, BUT I'M HEADING HOME TO ORMOND BEACH NOW ANYWAY, SO I CAN DROP IT AT MY MOM'S PLACE.



We started talking about our travels, and when I described my original travel plans...

YOU MEAN LAILA FROM NEW YORK? I KNOW HER. SO DO YOU ALSO KNOW JASON AND BOBO AND ALL THOSE PEOPLE?

YEAH, THEY'RE OLD FRIENDS OF MINE FROM HIGH SCHOOL!



BOBO AND I WERE HITCHHIKING TOGETHER FOR A WHILE. WE TRAVELED THROUGH MEXICO. YOU DON'T HAVE HIS ADDRESS, DO YOU?

YEAH, I DO! ACTUALLY I HAVEN'T REALLY SEEN HIM THAT MUCH, EVEN THOUGH HE'S BEEN BACK IN NEW YORK LATELY...



Before we parted ways in opposite directions I mentioned I was low on food (I regretted not restocking my granola supply before leaving Key West) and she gave me a bag of organic carrots! Also...

HERE, TAKE THIS... IT'S A HAWK'S CLAW FROM MEXICO.

KINDA GROSS, BUT VERY SWEET OF HER!

I WISH I HAD SOMETHING I COULD GIVE BACK... I'VE ONLY GOT NECESSITIES...



SAFE TRAVELS!

YOU TOO!



BOY AM I GLAD I MET HER! THAT WAS SO NICE! AND THESE CARROTS ARE REALLY GONNA HELP... I'M AT THE END OF MY BRAIN + BUTTER.



Maybe I was doing more work on my comic at a rest stop, I don't remember, but it came to the attention of the suntanned man sitting next to me. He became the first person to read it, as the bus travelled on through Georgia (at that point I was up to about page 15).

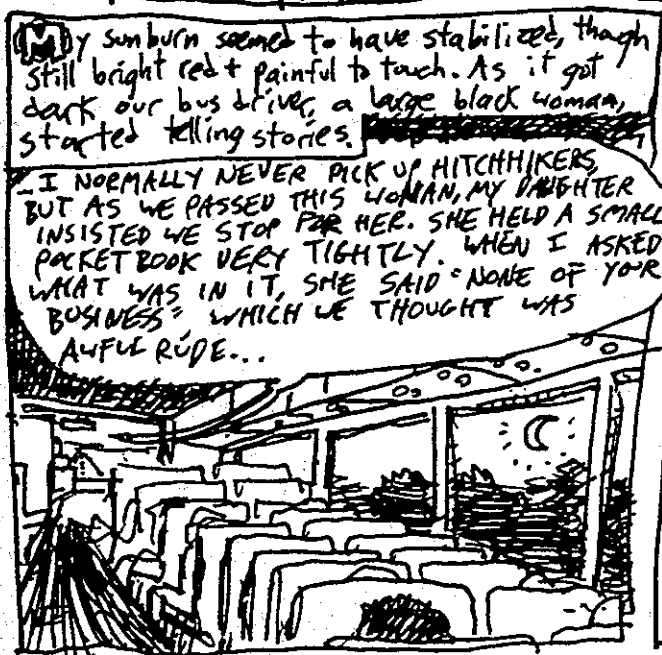
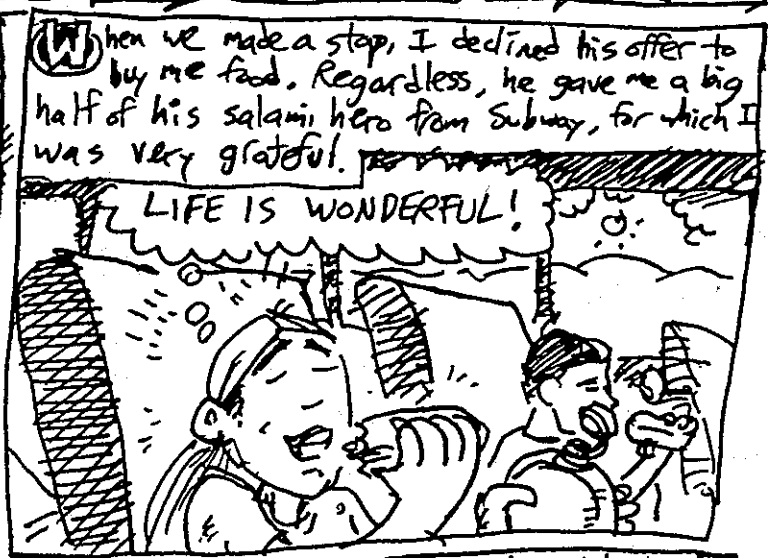
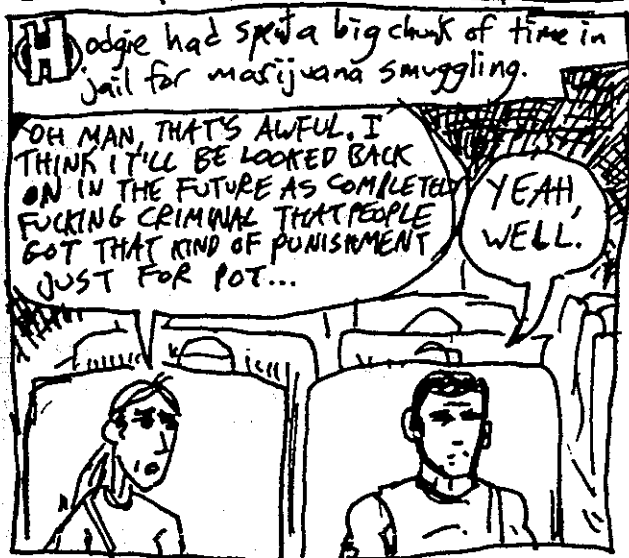
HA! OH MAN... THE GUY SITTING NEXT TO YOU ON THE BUS WAS GAY? THAT'S FUCKED UP.

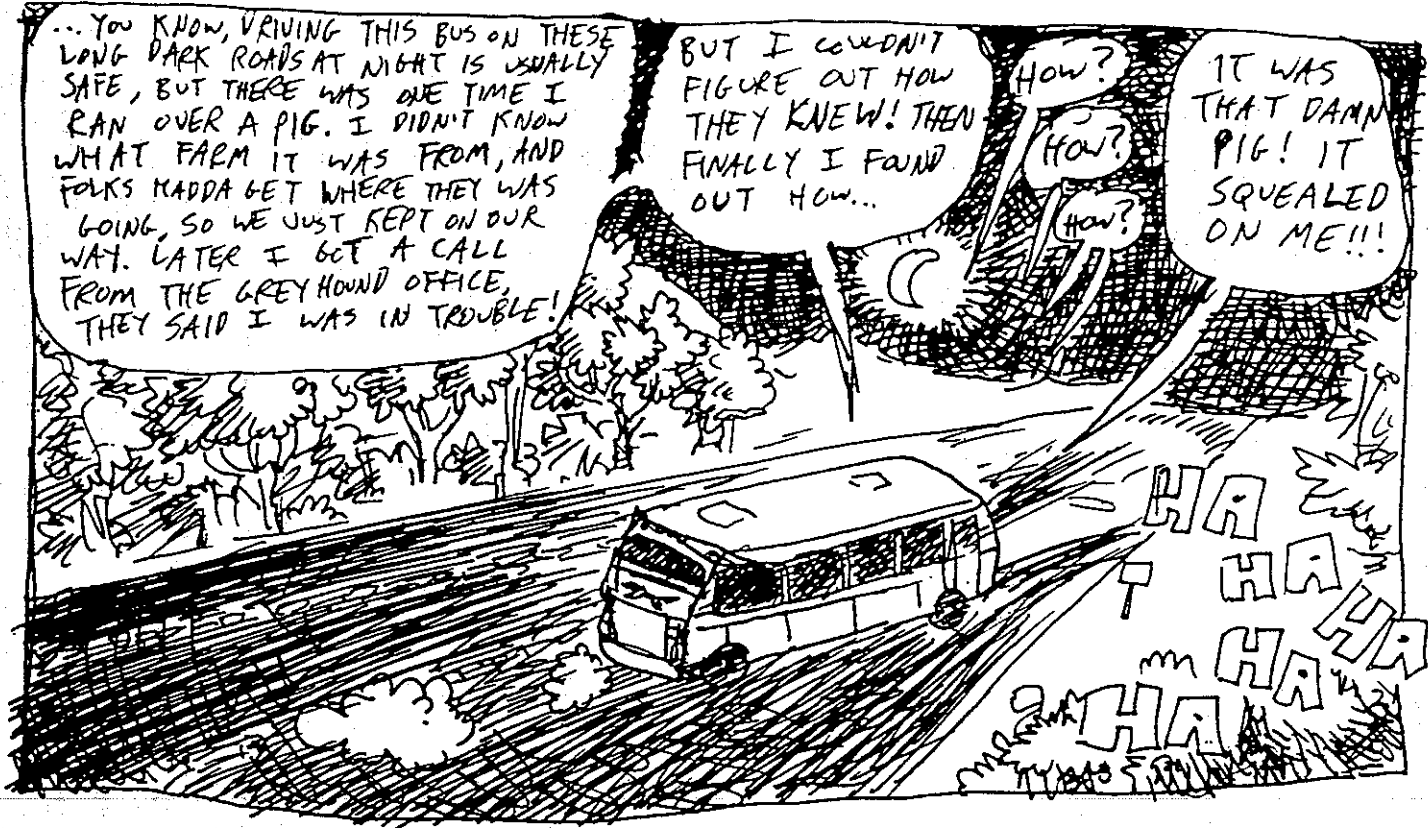
NO, THAT'S JUST THE DIALOGUE FROM THE GUYS IN THE BACK...

I GUESS I DIDN'T DO A VERY GOOD JOB MAKING THAT CLEAR.









We're nearing the end of Jeff's Spring adventures down south, and thank god! In the mean time, our resident hippie-freak has had a myriad of other adventures.

Expect further illustrated narratives from Jeff Lightning

Lewis after next month's conclusion of his

Trip to Key West

BUT if you wish to own a copy of the complete story. Contact: Jeff Lightning Lewis

[weja4@aol.com](mailto:weja4@aol.com)



**PinataLand: Songs from Konijin Kok** (Mekkatone Records)

What's up with these guys? Don't they realize when they're living? These songs about the glory days of Coney Island and airships are as dated world wars and hunger. Don't the fellahs in PinataLand know that music today is about bass, drums and rock and roll? Can't they see that this is the nineties, not some ridiculous turn-of-the-century reactionary era? God, PinataLand, wake up and smell the future!



The five songs on Konijin Kok, performed by the five members of PinataLand (guitar, tuba, violin, accordion, and drums), all deal with by-gone eras. While not all the material is inherently past tense ("Everyone Says I Love You," somehow based on Woody Allen's musical), the flavor, with non-traditional arrangements, gives it all

faded flavor (faded in a good way!).

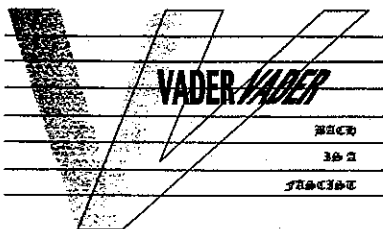
Doug Stone's "Devil's Airship", which begins the EP, recalls earlier forms of travel. "We'll get to San Francisco by tomorrow noon. We're gonna get there soon..." The joy and amazement by this speedy process is obvious in the exuberant playing, not just singing.

"Tunnel of Tears" and "Coney Island Funeral" both deal with death on the peninsula. Dave Wechsler's "Tunnel" is a rollicking good time retelling of a lovers' ride gone horribly wrong, ending with death and dismemberment. The dirgey "Funeral" tells of the execution of an elephant after it's mad turn-of-that century rampage.

It's all thoughtful, it's all complicated, and it's all very non-traditional, though clearly calling upon very old traditions indeed. This is a good album, themed, attractive. It's the kind of novelty record that takes itself so seriously, you're forced to follow it along, recognizing that good original music shouldn't be a novelty at all. (Stephanie Biederman)  
<pinataland@rcn.com>

**Vader Vader: Bach is a Fascist**

Have you heard the news? Apparently, Johann Sebastian Bach was a fascist. It's true, according to the punk rock gospel of Vader Vader, as presented in the AntiFolk community by Pat and Pete. And you know what else is true? Bach, apparently, was a communist, as well. Moreover, Vader



# Reviews

Vader is not only imminently pleased by the death of the 18<sup>th</sup> century baroque composer, but will happily pummel his cadaverous face with their feet.

It's a violent evil stupid song, filled with great retro-energy and sound. It's a return to the Ramones glory days, where idiot punks strode the streets of the east village like giants, or, at least, clowns on stilts.

Live, Vader Vader does a pitch-perfect replication of traditional punk, with less instruments. This studio single (with a dub version as the CD's B-Side) creates a pitch-perfect punk single, with a full band. I wonder which version of mimicry they're more interested in. The CD, naturally, is dedicated to Johann Sebastian Bach: "You're a fascist, you're dead, but we love you anyway." (Jonathan Berger)

**Brer Brian - Bagiddy Ba** (Damn Fine Records)



A quandary is posed here. How an individual with a home studio can put together long player of such tremendous eclecticism, what with all the programmed house and jungle beats mixed in with the punk thrashers and the Appalachian-flavored breakdowns and still

retain a conveyable identity for those solo acoustic shows? I haven't been confronted with such a dilemma since 'Born Late'. The artist known as Brer Brian doesn't have any answers, but there are some catchy songs here and there, like "Rae Marie is a Dream to Me" and "Sail the Dark Road". This young man's saving grace is a desire to amuse the listener and a prodigious musicality. I only wonder if this document represents where Brian is at this moment? (John Kessel)

< **Additional Notes on Brer Brian** - Of course it's not where he is now. The album has keyboards and quirky sound effects and doubled vocals and funk and dance and things that Brer is incapable of replicating live, even with the able assistance of his live bassboy Telf. You can hear him doing a variation of "I Can Smell Your Brains," but it sounds NOTHING like the recording. Still, the album kicks, and is well worth getting. So go out and get it! - Ed. > <Brerbrian@yahoo.com>

## Got something that needs saying?

Say it for **AntiMatters!**

**AntiMatters, the AntiFolk fanzine!**

**AntiMatters, the zine on the scene!**

**AntiMatters, the paper in your hands.**

**AntiMatters, which makes demands.**

**Write for it, motherfucker!**

<antimatters@excite.com>

# Heaven

Sharon Fogarty's new musical/dance/performance thing

Jonathan Berger

"I'm so glad you came tonight," Sharon Fogarty, the composer, choreographer, playwright, star, and narrator of **Heaven**, greeted me after the show, "It was so much better tonight than last night?"

"Why?"

"Well, it was the first night, and it was a smaller crowd, and we were working things out on-stage..."

"So what have people had to say about it?" I asked.

She laughed a little as she thought of her response. "Response has been good. Everyone's said they think it's inspiring."

I nodded. Inspiring was the perfect word for **Heaven**, the adventures of Josephine after she dies of a tragic skateboarding accident, only to find herself in the name that is the title.

In **Heaven**, she quickly learns, you do what you like, so long as it makes you happy. So, Josephine immediately begins a choreography gig with the manifestations of Courage, Honesty, and Humor (played by Fogarty's bandmates in the **Dinosaur Sisters**).

Alas, even in **Heaven**, things are not so simple, and Josephine almost immediately gets distracted at the hands of manifestations of Doom, Mercy, Gloom and Fixx. In **Heaven**, apparently, you still need to focus on what you want to do.

**Heaven** is a glorious embodiment of the difficulties that artists have to suffer in trying to create their art. Josephine realizes

that in **Heaven**, where there are no limitations on space, time, or any other resources, the only constraints come from within. Of course, in this nominal dance piece, those constraints are represented by the cast, the standouts being the Self-Esteem Fairy (Rory Gregg DeSoto), Honesty (Leigh Garrett) and Phil (Jason Grossman).

Josephine constantly loses her way, presenting the crisis of imagination that all artists suffer, even when there's a dearth of external sources limiting us. **Heaven** is an incarnation of every artists' life, nightmares, and, finally, triumphs.

After Thursday's show at the Greenwich Street Theater, a half-score of us went out to celebrate the excellent show. Sharon and some of her cast fielded congratulations from an appreciative post-audience crew.

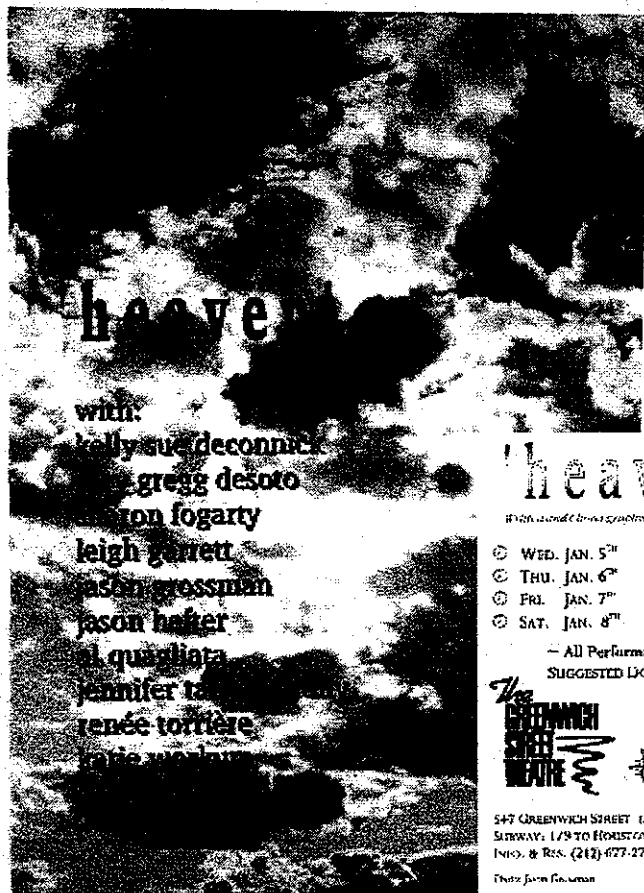
"I really loved it," John said.

"It really spoke to me," Irene added.

Sharon asked me what I thought, and I couldn't think of much to say. The climax, wherein Josephine suggests that art is best presented through living one's life, more than through any externalization... it spoke to me. It spoke to me more than I could speak about what I'd seen. I needed to ponder and think about this wonderful show.

"Uh, it was inspiring?" I said.

Sharon laughed, and turned to another of her fans.



## Prepare to Meet Your Maker

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- |                           |                            |
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Photo: Jason Grossman



Fogarty has written lyrics and music and a life band - but not a life band - Fogarty has written lyrics and music and a life band - but not a life band - Fogarty has written lyrics and music and a life band - but not a life band -

# Prepare to Meet Your Maker

## *"I don't want it to be a shot in the dark"*

Listen closely. Can you hear the soft, melodious pining for ancient times and self-realization? It's Narcissus singing melancholy showtunes at the reflecting pool. But it is the Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris that stare back, through archetypal eyes that convey the soul of eternal struggles bearing innumerable names throughout the course of history. For now, though, call them Quasimodo and Cementeria – a hunchback and a prima donna sex goddess – so considered in the reflective eyes of one local artist.

It is the Dawn of the Age of Romantic Enlightenment, and Peter Dizozza, in his cataclysmic play, "Prepare to Meet Your Maker," tells a tale ripe and rife with mythological references and psychological twists, turns, and ruptures. Our leading star-crossed couple is separated and reunited with the frequency and severity of tectonic plates. At times it is not only the two being split apart from one another, but the body parts of each (14 in Dizozza's epistemology) being periodically severed and scattered across the globe (two in each of the seven seas). From the graveyard to the pearly-gated heavenly kingdom, from a common American household dinner party to the ancestral basket of civilization, the audience is assaulted with images of creation and dehumanization, depravity and redemption – a search for self externalized.

For the past four years, singer-songwriter and playwright Peter Dizozza has quietly carried out his comedic cabaret of religious and political criticism onstage. With Rudy Guliani acting as self-appointed parent, priest, and policeman to nearly every local citizen and gathering, it seems that "Prepare to Meet Your Maker" may finally have met its day of ultimate judgement. Will the work be granted admission through the gates of critical attention, or cast into the flames of admonition? Remember: this is the world of socially controversial progeny. Heaven, hell, acceptance, and exile are all incestu-

ous bedfellows.

The creators ask that anyone offended by this material look upon it as a "cry for help." Peter Dizozza has been exploring these boundaries for years, and doesn't plan to change a thing. In a world of slick Silicon Valley executives and wipe-down formica countertops, the rugged humanism in this production is refreshing.



## *"Each piece expands traditions and myths that we've grown up with."*

It is true that many of the characters are gods and goddesses, but in the tradition of Greek and Roman mythology, they are far from perfect. In fact, they embody some of our most severely disturbing human predispositions. From necrophilia to narcissism, suffering humiliation and human bondage (slavery, that is), these are individuals who toil like Oedipus and triumph like Cinderella.

In fact, the infamous sweethearted step-sister and Ouanchu (renamed Cementeria when she is unearthed by lonely gravedigger Quasimodo – it really almost makes sense in context) have a couple things in common. They both start out basically as impoverished matchgirls and end up reborn (or revamped) in the arms of a charming prince (or sensitive hunchback). Except, of course, that Cinderella never does a striptease to achieve higher social status or please the higher powers.

A conversation with Dizozza, writer of "Prepare...", provides a glimpse into the reasoning behind one man's unholy imagination, and reveals some quite-pious intentions lying behind the veil of sacrilegious self-exploration. "It's all based on the intensity of the feeling of commitment. My ultimate intent is to fulfil a certain responsibility."

In this respect, Dizozza seeks not only to entertain and to facilitate social commentary, but also to encourage others to produce and to use theater as a powerful tool of personal healing through self-expression and exploration. "I encourage people to find, discover, understand that which they don't understand about themselves, to put it into an expression, even if its not comprehensible to themselves, to package it so that we can help each other with that."

There is additional encouragement that we be public and accessible to each other. "The issue of privacy may produce the opposite effect of festering within." Peter believes that we ought to cultivate a "sharing of the introspection." He points out that, while we're well educated in the art of "shutting doors and shutting our eyes, there's nothing to hide." From Gibraltar to Alexandria, heavenly gates to basements and grave bottoms, Quasimodo and Cementeria search for themselves within a chaotically "ordered world."

by Rhiannon Erbach



# Prepare to Meet Your Maker

***"You and I, we're not like them. We report to a different authority, you to a mother goddess, I to an overlord. Yet here, in the United States we've become ensnared in a materialistic Judeo-Christian-based culture from which we must escape." (Quasimodo, Act Two)***

Cementería becomes quite comfortable basking in the glory of the power and pedestal she secures (mainly through sexual prowess) in the male-dominated kingdom of the overlord, but Quasimodo wishes to shed all layers of the socio-economic and quasi-spiritual hierarchies they operate within for a return to some sort of "matrimonious" purity. Or is it sanctioned perversity he is seeking? Either way, the escape route cannot be simple when running from cultural and religious institutions that trace their roots through ages of empires and dominions. Remember the short in which Bambi meets Godzilla? The demise of the lash-batting little fawn was far from cute. Try Beauty and the Beast meets The Rocky Horror Picture Show. The characters of "Prepare to Meet Your Maker" have some serious fetishes and esteem issues to conquer.

"It embodies some of the beauty and also the skepticism that comes with growing up Catholic. It's not exactly universal, but we can see parallels everywhere. Even in the boys schools of England, we have the Jethro Tull characters rebelling against their Anglican authorities," said playwright Peter Dizozza. It's all based upon "things that have touched" him — those core issues of the human condition that threaten to tether us all with psychic bonds of servitude. That is, hold us back from realizing and assuming our true natures by tying us up in fear. Perhaps in "Prepare" those tethers are physicalized, but in truth it's all deeply symbolic. It's these "issues of insecurity and inadequacy" that, through creating, I've been able to work through."

***"I feel a responsibility that if I'm going to say something, that I have to make it available."***

"Each piece is a rather personal self-exploration in addition to drawing upon many [universal and historical] sources, and hopefully adding to and expanding those traditions along with the myth element that we've grown up with," said Dizozza. The iconic nature of the production is captivating, though of-

ten difficult to comprehend. Imagine Salvador Dali realized onstage. With its surrealism, it begins to seem strangely like the film "Brazil." Peter Dizozza, as Quadimodo, is reminiscent of the Jonathan Pryce's scrawny superhero in medieval armor, fighting moguls and golems that want to brainwash him. But instead of the consistency of delusion in Gilliam's masterpiece, Dizozza's enemies play gorgeous Broadway medleys as he

battles demons of self-defeat and social rejection. It is a world where dreams are played out to their most dramatic and satisfying extent. A world where heroes bear their vulnerabilities like marks of war, following their most unlikely desires with blind ambitions and wearing their emotions out loud like purple hearts on fluorescent orange sleeves.

This escape into illusion is a prime aspect of Dizozza's art. He attributes his initial interest in theater to a childhood fascination with fictional escapades. "With movies, books, and so forth, I was able to create a fantasy world that could become a reality," he said, continuing to point out that "today's fantasy can become tomorrow's reality." Of course, Dizozza is aware that "other things remain in the world of fantasy," becoming experiences "one can live through safely" without the possibly dangerous consequences of material manifestation. "I support this [play of imagination] as part of our culture, and I think we already have it — with the comic images of Batman, Superman, the new mythology of movies, etc. — that is, a refined expression of someone's self-exploration." And though the audience is advised to remember the very real metaphorical significance of every detail within this production, they will find themselves thanking the heavens that Dizozza's visions remain onstage. We all secretly want to be superheroes. Even the maimed and deformed — no one wants to be excluded from moments of glory and triumph. And in Dizozza's world there are no secrets, at least, none guarded well enough to escape the triumph of omniscience.

First performed on Bastille Day in 1996, "Prepare to Meet Your Maker" is saturated with both surface and subversive symbolism. "Its source is an honest expression of human interaction and a personal expression of the experience of that," said Dizozza. He goes on to explain that more specifically, "by implication, in the relationship that I'm in, the person is not even conscious for me to be comfortable with being in her presence. This translates into the necrophilia of the gravedigger, Quasimodo,



by Rhiannon Erbach



## Prepare to Meet Your Maker: Peter Dizozza's millennial masterpiece



and later his transformation when he finds somebody who comes alive from his interaction with her, on the most basic level.

"You can go forward from that with other issues that touch upon Catholicism, like a baby dying before it goes to the baptist. The infant goes to limbo, the orphan child having no place in the universe."

Dizozza is quick to point out that he is seriously affected by the issues being confronted within the play. "There's a grappling element. From that there's energy, there's an element of anger, a mixture as well as a searching, an inquisition, a desire, and a wish to believe. We all want to have this security, the comfort of, let's say a 'father figure' looking over us, someone who I can talk to who has a plan for us all."

### *Meet the Maker.*

Peter Dizozza received his primary education at Queens College, where he majored in music and English. In the Humanities program, he studied the philosophy of Western culture, while his musical training soon led him into musical theater. He went on to study the formal elements of the theatrical tradition at the BMI musical theater workshop. He succeeded his liberal arts training by getting a law degree, which, to this day, serves as his primary source of income.

"My life is an open book."

Needless to say, his background was Catholic. "Where I grew up, within Forest Hills, there was a 'Lady Queen of Martyrs' cathedral church and school that I would attend. Coming out of the St. Patrick's tradition, this was a very conservative, big group of parishioners, not much bonding, not your town and country church like Our Lady of Mercy down the block where Geraldine Ferrara and other community minded people went. I have an Italian background but the Italian connection came up largely because of all the godfather movies in the 70s. That was when I began to realize I was Italian-American and became more identified with that. But I was a product of educated parents, unique in that few from their neighborhoods (East New York and Greenpoint, Brooklyn) had been to college."

He calls his desire to create a big picture "self-propelled," stating that "it continues to be my ambition to the present



day." Dizozza created "an entertainment company that administers all different media — [primarily] music, visuals, and movies — under the auspices of my business Cinema VII." He wishes to broaden the eclectic surrealist approach to encompass other artists' work, thus producing and administering very diverse forms of entertainment, in the endless search for creations that "stimulate," "entertain," and push limits. He looks forward to producing such material, "wherever it comes from."

Dizozza is a playwright, composer, pianist, and performer, appearing regularly at the Sidewalk Café (Ave. A & 6th). "My music is grown out of 'antifolk scene' which itself came out of the Punk scene and the Bob Dylan legacy (Dylan's folk later having electric guitar and



drums behind it). Then the punk scene of the 80s where the Sex Pistols made a tremendous impact, and then from them self-destructing, my interest went more to Elvis Costello, along with others in the antifolk scene that are still around, primarily a fellow named Lach who continues to book the Sidewalk, who has been very supportive of my music and theatrical work. The antifolk scene is a vital source for meeting talented collaborators."

In terms of the Catholicism, there is definitely an element of rebellion at work. Onstage it is a world of Dizozza's creation, no holds barred. This is a love story, but only in the most modern sense of the phrase. Peter Gabriel is gatekeeper to the pearly ones, while Quasimodo is our tragically handicapped hero. It could be frightening, but so is the world at large. Some of us choose to laugh instead of cry.

***"The overwhelming metaphor, I hope, is that of the makers being our parents. That's as far as we can go."***

Most nursery rhymes originate from some tragic occurrence in the history of humankind, or were created to frighten children into well-mannered submissiveness. There's a revival in the art of madness, in the practice of fear-inspiring passion, in the utilization of socially shocking images and ideas to stimulate exploration of personal inhibitions. Queen Victoria is turning in her grave. If Giuliani and the art police catch wind of this, there may be some public stake-burning to appease the wrath of the masses. Come see for yourself what all the fuss is about. Be the judge: is this shockingly honest modicum of self-exploration offensively obscene, or a practice of imagination that we ought to pass on to our children — when they are old enough? For Dizozza's sake, I hope that the Almighty's got attitude — playful yet biting, like his — and a sense of humor to match. Otherwise, he's in trouble.

***Prepare To Meet Your Maker is playing Sundays in February at Baby Jupiter (170 Orchard St. 982-2229) from 7-10PM. Admission \$10.***

*by Rhiannon Erbach*



# RUMMAGE

*Jeff Lightning Lewis interviews Mike Rechner*

Jeff Lightning Lewis got a hand-held tape recorder for Christmas last year. He has since used it to interview a couple of his favorite local songwriters and bootleg some live shows (and record an album). All summer long, Jeff had been envisioning writing an article about the music of Mike Rechner; in the imagined article Jeff figured he would say things like "Mike Rechner's music is like what Bob Dylan's first album would have sounded like if it had been recorded immediately after Bob had experienced a brief time-warp which allowed him to listen to "Sister Ray" ten times in a row" and other statements like that. Then Jeff decided to just use his wonderful little tape recorder to do a Mike Rechner interview instead. The following interview occurred late one Monday night...

**JL** - Okay, we're walking away from the Antihoot on Avenue A, this is Jeff Lewis. I'm here with Mike Rechner; we're gonna go grab a beer at the bodega and find someplace to sit down and do this interview thing. We're passing a black car with some sketched-out girl inside who looks like she's on drugs or crying or both and we're crossing Avenue A... and we just left after that kid Turner (Cody) played. What do you think about that kid Turner's stuff? Had you heard him before?

**MR** - No, I never heard him before. I thought, Boston Indie/ New England Indie, combined with, you know, 60s Cambridge/ New York coffee-house folk. Combined with, like, uh, hmm, I guess straight-forward concerns about societal conditions.

**JL** - We're in the bodega now, I'm banging my guitar into things (no guitar case), and we're grabbing a couple beers and walking towards the counter. Turner is from Boston, I think. What I really like about some of his stuff is his non-phonetic rhymes. I really like stuff like that. Like in that first song he played, he rhymed "sailors" with "killers," and uh, he rhymed "crimson" with "reasons"... I got it (referring to paying for two Rolling Rocks). I'm now buying Mike a beer...

**MR** - Wow, thank you. You sure?

**JL** - Yeah, I sold a couple tapes.

**MR** - You gave me a tape, man.

**JL** - Yeah, but you gave me *Wrecked Car* and I'm sure *Wrecked Car* cost a lot more to produce than my fuckin' cheap-ass walkman tape... And is much higher sound quality.

**MR** - You want me to carry that? (Referring to the bag of beer, as I was having trouble maneuvering with my guitar and the other stuff)

**JL** - Yeah, thanks. So, we're now heading back out into the street. Let's see... if there are no security guards at my building (on 4th Street) we can maybe sit in the lobby here... this is where my parents live.

**MR** - Oh really, wow.

**JL** - This is where I've been staying. Actually we can try sitting on the benches here or we can try going inside. What do you think?

**MR** - Whatever. I'd rather sit outside, 'cause I'll smoke cigarettes and stuff. I can sit anywhere, like over there, on a stoop or whatever.

**JL** - Let's sit in here... (a bench, removed from the avenue) Ordinarily I wouldn't give a fuck but I just got a 25-dollar ticket for having an open container of alcohol, which I'm going to fight 'cause I feel it was unjustified, but I'd rather not get a justified one 'cause it would weaken my case for the other thing (by the way, with assistance from Grey Revell,

and moral support from Peter Dizozza and the rest of the Antihooters, I *did* beat the rap).

**MR** - Rather go inside?

**JL** - No, I'm sure this is fine. So anyway, I was just talking about stuff like non-phonetic rhyme things, and that's part of what I like a lot about your music. You don't give a fuck about whether something is like a June-moon-spoon rhyme, you're much more into saying something interesting than saying something that that's going to conform to a rhyme.

**MR** - (obviously not understanding what Jeff's blabbing about) But everything seems to conform to a rhyme, even in the moon-June-tune frame of references, like I don't even know what that means, "phonetic" and "non-phonetic."

**JL** - Well, I mean some rhymes *rhyme*, like if I said "I'm looking at the moon/ and it's in the month of June," that's a rhyme; but when you say "Jack climbed the beanstalk, he didn't get what he expected/when Jack climbed the beanstalk he ended up in a Laundromat"... (from "Beanstalk" on *Wrecked Car*)

**MR** - Oh yeah...

**JL** - ...That's a whole different story there.

**MR** - That's true.

**JL** - For me it rhymes somewhere deeper than just my ear, like it rhymes in my pituitary gland or something. It makes a certain rhyming sense, but not a phonetic, *s o u n d* rhyme, more like a ... umm... uh... weird, subliminal connection that twists the



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neurons back and forth... Things like that (Mike doesn't respond). Do you set out to say "this song's gonna be a rhyming song, this song isn't," or do you just let things flow?

**MR** - Well, I think rhymes are really, really important, and it's really important, at least for pop songs, to have pop songs grounded in rhymes. But if you can't have rhymes it's also important to have, I guess, certain alliterations, where if the pop song isn't gonna necessarily rhyme certain alliterations should take the place of the rhymes so, uh, you can make kind of an intellectual leap while you're listening to the music as to how the words fit together, even though they don't rhyme necessarily, they rhyme, you know, in a psychological space.

**JL** - Can you off the top of your head give me a couple of the lyrics you've written that are some of your favorites?

**MR** - (pause)...

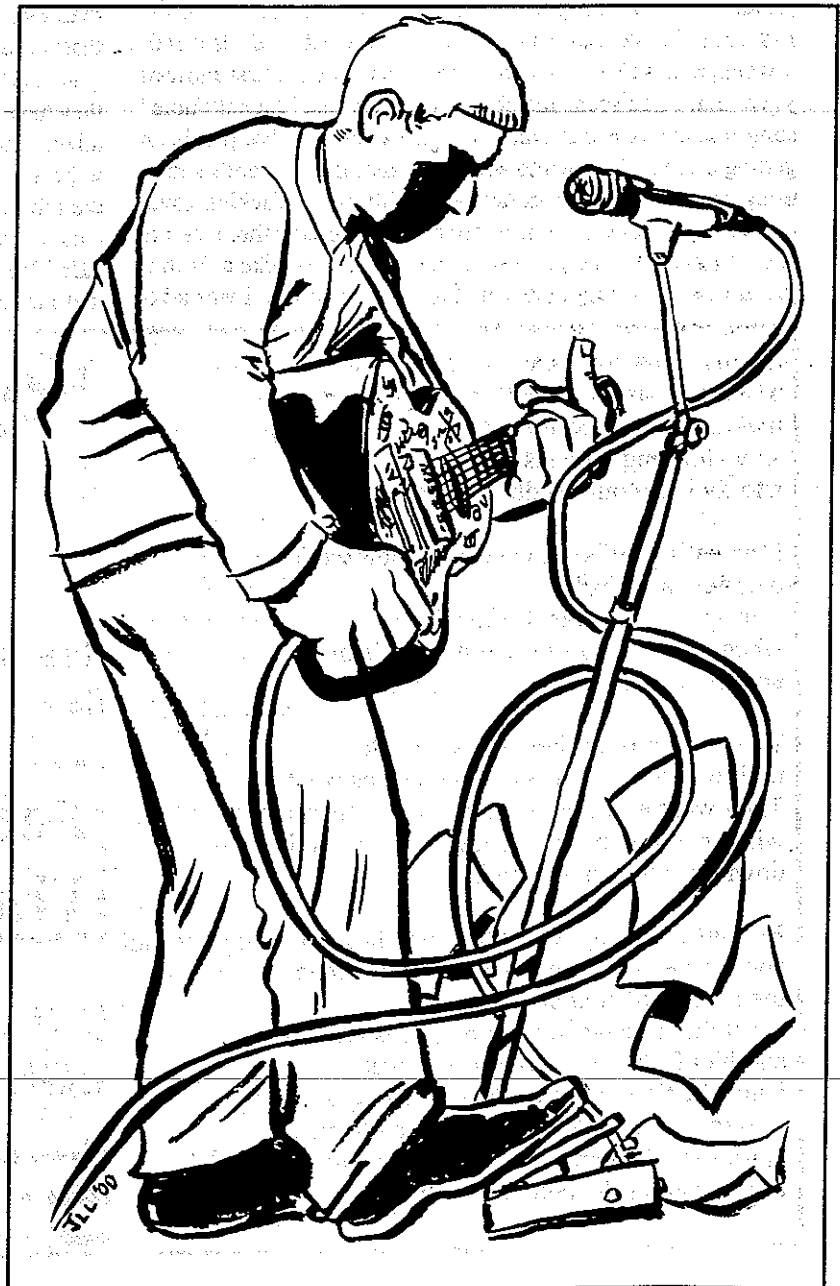
**JL** - It doesn't have to be your most favorite lyric, just give me a couple lines that you wrote down and you were like, "wow, these are cool."

**MR** - You know, whenever I do a song I just think it's cool, I wouldn't do it if I didn't think it was cool, cuz I write a lot of songs that aren't cool and I just scrap 'em, you know. I definitely at some point in time think that when I perform a song that it's definitely cool and enjoyable for me to perform it, cuz if I no longer think it's enjoyable I stop performing it; so it's definitely like a "fun" sensibility, and if the rhyme or the idea is not fun anymore I definitely decide to just write new stuff that's more fun, in that particular state of mind.

**JL** - Who would you consider to be your musical influences? I know it's a pretty broad question, but what bands, what songwriters, do you think have inspired you the most over the years?

**MR** - Well, that's like a two part answer for me. Number one, I could say I have a basic working structure that I work off of, and it's basically taking structures that other bands have pre-invented and I work inside of the structures that those bands have pre-invented, and I'd have to say that that would be Bob Dylan, and the Rolling Stones and the Velvet Underground, and Indie-rock ([Now I switch to third person descriptions of the interview scene:] Jeff can barely contain his exuberance, as Mike has just answered the question almost exactly as Jeff himself would have!), from the early 80s to the late 80s, including REM, Husker Du, the Replacements, so on and so forth. I'd also have to say that another key influence that operates on a totally different strata, and is, like, a more immediate influence, is the Antifolk scene, and whatever I happen to be part of at the moment, whether it's looking at artwork or watching television. Like, I can remember a specific instance where I actually watched you, Jeff Lightning Lewis, do a bunch of songs and I said

"hmm, that gives me a bunch of really interesting ideas," (Jeff immediately enters a Heavenly state) because I had been writing a bunch of really short, fast, punky songs... I had been really concentrating on trying to combine ideas between the band Pussy Galore and Rick Shapiro, and then I heard you play some songs, and I thought, maybe, "lemme get a new idea," and my immediate response to that was to write some really long songs, 8 or 9 minute long songs, and they were basically combining issues around your style of music, which is more like a classic folk style of music or an updated folk style of music circa the 60s or 70s, and I was trying to recombine that idea with your own lyrical ideas and some lyrical ideas that I had heard on the "Country Thursdays" that were taking place at the Sidewalk, and I wrote a song called "Au-



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Jeff Lightning Lewis interviews Mike Rechner

thentic Minstrel" and a song called, uh, I think it's called "Jackal and Hyena" or something like that. But that's just an example of, uh, to fulfill a circle, you know...

JL - (not sure exactly what Mike's talking about, but in a state of mind-racing excitement and disbelief) Those two songs that you named are two of my favorite songs right now in the entire world! I mentioned this to you before, but right before I left for Maine I bootlegged the show that you played at Sidewalk, on this same little tape recorder, and it actually didn't turn out too bad, and I listened to that tape a LOT while I was up there and those songs are exactly the kind of songs that really turn me on and get my blood pumping, especially the "Jackal" one. On the tape I wrote down a title, I was making up the titles since I didn't know the titles for a lot of them, and I just wrote down "Fable" 'cause it seems to be telling this fable. That's the song that got me into your stuff... It was the first time I'd ever really hung out with Grey (Revell), last Halloween, and we saw your show here, that was the first show of yours that I had seen, and seeing you play that "Jackal/Fable" song was the one that really won me over and I've just been getting more and more into your stuff since then. There's something about that steam-roller sensibility that I fucking love, that a song is gonna be one chord or two chords or three chords and just keep on going... a song that knocks you like a fist but just keeps on rolling over you like a steam-roller. I was talk-

ing to John Kessel about your stuff, and one of the ideas that came out of our conversation was that the Blues is, like, a form where when someone plays the Blues in a standard blues form they're not ripping off of someone else's song, they're playing in this particular genre. The form itself is so powerful that it can lend itself to a million songs, and it seems like what you're doing is almost defining a certain genre of music that can be flexible in that same way, that hasn't necessarily been used as much as, say, the Blues standard structure. We (John Kessel and Jeff Lewis, that is) talked about it in terms of the Velvet Underground song "Sister Ray," or that whole album **White Light/White Heat**, which is one of my all time favorite albums; just the way "Sister Ray" will just roll over you and keep going and going and going, it has you completely hypnotized and refuses to let up, it's just relentless, and I love that about your music on stage. You also have some songs that are extremely short, I mean like the "Vomit Eldorado" song and "Prison Farm," they just kind of appear and say what they have to say and then stop, which is really cool also. (Realizing that he's dominating an interview which is supposed to be a revelation of Mike's opinions, not Jeff's, Jeff changes the subject and tosses the conversational ball back into Mike's court) **Wrecked Car** is your first album?

MR - Yeah, essentially it's the first full-length recorded project that I ever did inside of a real studio with full production, and

Carnivorous cows are not your friends.  
Their furious teeth shall rend your flesh  
making restitution for a hundred generations of farmers  
slave holding humans  
and their devourous dining habits.

Man eating bulls are careful in their work,  
detailed in their diet.  
They prepare a feast for the future  
when no animal need fear another's hunger  
and these vengeful times are forgotten

These vicious bovine seek an end to  
their modern brutal ways as much as we do.  
They want a return to the prehistoric herbivorous life  
when prehumans and eocow walked arm in hoof  
down dinner's green road.

But until that day, when the cook lies down with the calf  
and the veteran veterinarians are afforded  
the respect of *real* doctors...  
Until the time when cannibalism is redefined  
and NO fork may be raised in anger...  
Until the time when the Smiths sappy song  
is made an INTERNATIONAL anthem...  
Until then, beware the carnivorous cows  
lest you enter the belly of the beef.

Jonathan Berger

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# RUMMAGE

Jeff Lightning Lewis interviews Mike Rechner

that was fully realized to a producer's realization and a writer's realization. I had done demo tapes, not even demo tapes, but just projects in the past that were shorter and more acoustic, and I had also been in bands earlier when I was younger. I always played acoustic, for a very long time. But that was really the first project that I'd ever worked on that I felt was fully realized when it was finished.

**JL** - The production on it is really amazing and dazzling, particularly on the second side, with "Wrecked Car," "Surrealist Sail," and "Madison Avenue" - that side is, I think, the most perfect album side to ever come out of the Antifolk scene. In fact, that album is just about my favorite album to come out of the Sidewalk scene here. Did you envision something like "Madison Avenue" with the whole string arrangement and all of that? 'Cause that's almost the stark opposite of your really stripped-down on-stage style. How much input into that did you have as opposed to the producer?

**MR** - We both had a lot of input...(lighting a cigarette)

**JL** - Can I have a cigarette?

**MR** - Sure. It was definitely important input on both our parts. Anthony Arrichi produced the record, and he was definitely an integral, integral, integral, integral part of making that record. When we structured the songs we definitely had an idea that we wanted to make the songs sound like a 60s record, and we were listening a lot to the second Beatles anthology record, and we weren't listening so much to get ideas about content, but we were listening to get ideas about production, and the way to pace a record. 'Cause we only released that on tape and it's a side one and a side two situation.

**JL** - Which is becoming a lost art.

**MR** - Yeah, in a lot of ways, and we definitely made that a side one and a side two situation, the *Wrecked Car* cassette...

**JL** - (interrupting) It really comes through.

**MR** - Anthony did a lot of work; we had a lot of extra players play on the arrangements. It was a lot of editing, with different organ players and keyboard players and piano players, and drummers and bass players. I think we were trying, at least I was trying, to make that album sound like a late 60s Stones record, like uh, *Let it Bleed*...

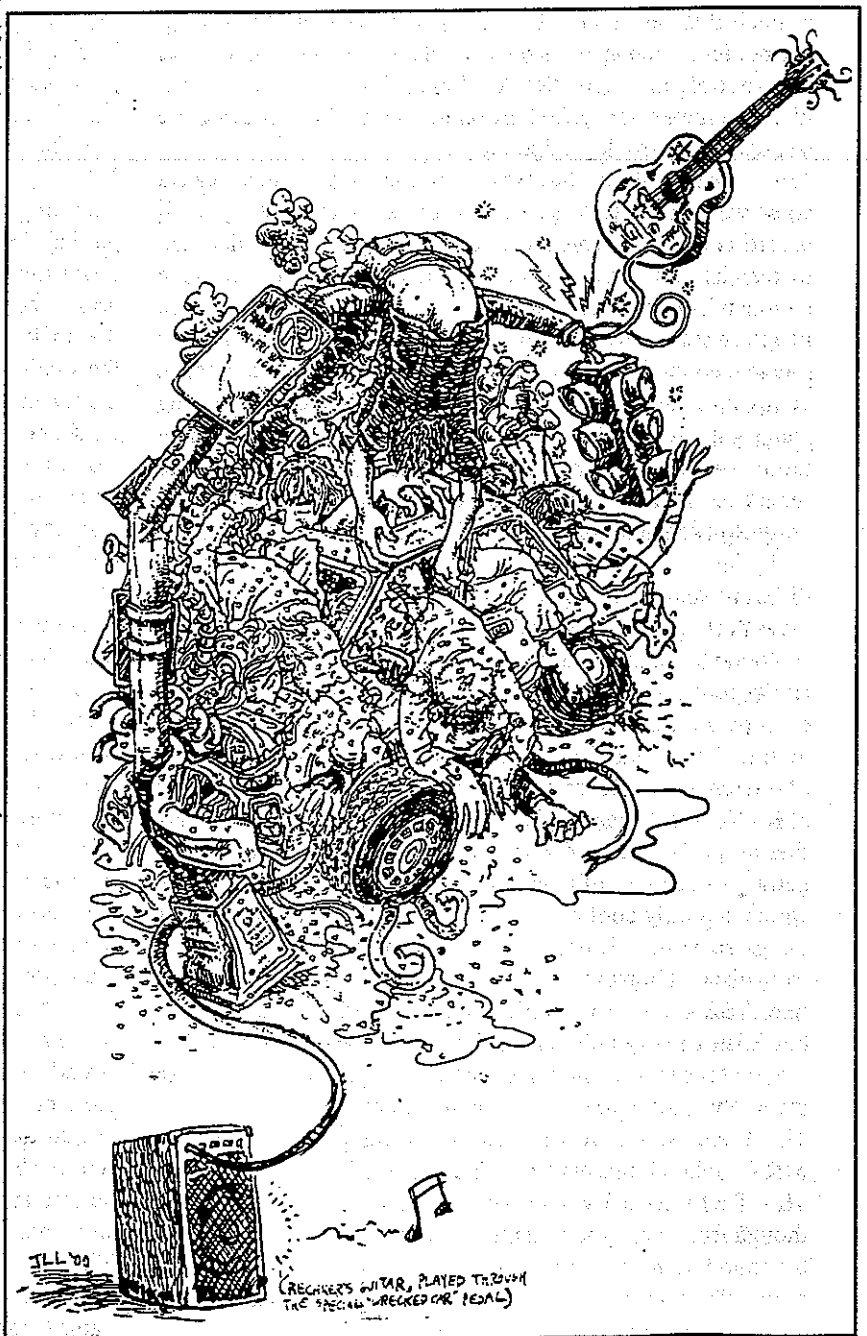
**JL** - (interrupting again) *Let it Bleed* is actually my favorite rock album of all time! (At this point, Jeff's embarrassed 'cause it sounds like he's only enthusiastically agreeing with everything Mike says, but it's all true - no wonder Jeff is such a big Mike Rechner fan, Jeff is thinking, Mike's stuff is inspired by Bob Dylan, the Velvet Underground, *Let it Bleed*, and Jeff Lightning Lewis!)

**MR** - Yeah, I guess that's exactly what we were

trying to make it sound like, a *Let it Bleed* record but with more of a psychedelic sensibility (Jeff is now writhing in ecstasy to hear the words "*Let it Bleed*" and "psychedelic" in the same sentence) which was closer to part two of the Beatles anthology...

**JL** - What is on the Anthology Part Two? I mean I've got the Beatles records, but I don't know what the song layout is on the anthologies... is "I Am the Walrus" on that maybe (Jeff is obviously thinking of the album arrangements of the songs "Wrecked Car" and especially "Madison Avenue")?

**MR** - Yeah, all those psychedelic songs, "I Am the Walrus," "Lovely Rita" is on there, "A Day in the Life," those types of



# RUMMAGE

*Jeff Lightning Lewis interviews Mike Rechner*

songs are on there, it's got that kind of beat, the... some kind of beat...

**JL** - The hypnotizing psychedelic beat...

**MR** - Yeah. I wrote another song very quickly after that, "John Wayne and John Ford," (an amazing song, which appears on Mike's album *Adjective*) which is kind of a synopsis, in a different style, of, uh, of that endeavor, and trying to move that to another space, to try to take that to another point which we could record and write out of, and arrange out of. So we could work on another project.

**JL** - *Adjective*, which is the follow-up album, is produced in a much different style, it seems to me. Maybe it's just the harmonica which appears on a couple tracks; but it seems like a more straightforward "Rock" album, although there are definitely moments of psychedelia on it, it seems like a much more standard blues-rock production.

**MR** - Yeah, I think that was a different experience, 'cause when we sent out *Wrecked Car* I sent it to a lot of really small record companies, companies that are smaller than, like, uh, to keep it relative, probably even smaller than *Fortified*, and a couple of songs got picked up. I mainly sent it to places where people were interested in hardcore and punk rock, and a San Diego cassette label picked up two songs to put on a cassette comp, so I said maybe from that point I should start writing songs so that I could maybe deliver a product that would be more consistent to that kind of a sensibility, 'cause I would repeat the mailing and try that again; but I don't think that really worked at all once we got into the studio. We got some really interesting sounds, but it was still more like, we got a different sound. It (referring to *Adjective*) has more like a New York, gut-check sound rather than any kind of DIY ("Do It Yourself") punk sound, which I had envisioned the *Adjective* record for. And it was really difficult for me to actually even be with that record as we were making it, 'cause it was getting further and further away from...

**JL** - (confused by the "that record" bit) *Wrecked Car* you mean?

**MR** - No, the *Adjective* record, it was getting further and further away from a DIY stance that I wanted to have. It was getting to be more of a polished, "New York Crunch" sound, which is totally cool in a way, it's so cool that it, like, covers things so vast... it borrows stuff from rap, it borrows stuff from disco, it borrows stuff from Queen, it borrows stuff from, like, ABBA, it borrows stuff from, like, Saturday Night Fever; but it isn't really DIY, and I'd wanted to make a really DIY project 'cause it seemed like the most response we had gotten from *Wrecked Car* was DIY punk people...

**JL** - Which songs were put out on the compilation tape?

**MR** - "Soho Gangsters" and "Bean Stalk."

**JL** - That's what I would have figured, from that scene, although from what you told me a couple minutes ago, and from the sound of the album (talking about *Wrecked Car* again), it seems like you would have had a lot more luck sending it to indie labels rather than punk labels.

**MR** - Yeah. I sent it to only one indie label, I brought it to Matador...

**JL** - The indie label...

**MR** - Yeah, and I basically write off of a lot of Matador bands, you know, John Spencer Blues Explosion. Of course, John Spencer was in Pussy Galore, I write off of Railroad Jerk heavily, which is a Matador Band, and I write off of Pavement heavily, which is another Matador band, so I just thought I would let them know what I was doing. I would just hand-write letters and drop 'em off with a tape, it wasn't like a big push. I just pretty much gave the stuff out to people I knew, and then would mail it to the really small companies that you read about in the DIY punk magazines that you can pick up at See/Hear Books: *Your Own Fucking Life*, and *Maximum Rock'n'Roll*, and uh, *Under the Volcano*, and those types of publications.

**JL** - From what you told me a few days ago, you're doing some new recordings?

**MR** - Yeah, I'm working with (Major) Matt Mason, we're recording some new tracks, and uh, we're about halfway done putting down vocals and guitar tracks and we're gonna put down some more songs; Dina Leavy, my wife, is gonna play drums, actually not drums, but just percussive materials, to the tracks and we're gonna try to maybe manipulate them in the studio, maybe not. We're gonna see what we have when the tracks are finished, to see how much manipulation we're gonna do. Then we're probably gonna put that out.

**JL** - Cool. All this sort of mystifies me because when you say you go for a DIY sound, to me that means you just hit "record" and play the songs and Boom! there you go. That's what I've done; partially because I don't have the means to do anything else, but also because I like the DIY aesthetic. Is that more what the stuff with Matt is gonna be like?

**MR** - The funny thing about that is that it's gonna sound like it's more like that, but essentially I'm recording with Matt in a studio that's as sophisticated as any of the studios that I've recorded in in the past. Basically, we're just setting up pretty rudimentary recording arrangements and recording the work very quickly, in one take, without any soundchecks or anything, and whatever it is, is what we're gonna stick with. So in a sense it's strange because it's not recording on a boom box, you know, but uh, you know, it's like, "DIY" is a tough question, a lot of people probably have a lot of different points of view about what "DIY" is and what it entails, you know.

**JL** - Sort of jumping topics here, you're wearing your New Museum shirt; you work at the New Museum, which is on Broadway, a little downtown of Houston Street (i.e., in Soho). How much of "Soho Gangsters" is autobiographical or connected to experiences you've had working at the New Museum or being in Soho? For instance, is "Paula Cooper" a real person, are the situations in that song fantasies about real life situations?

**MR** - Well, I actually wrote "Soho Gangsters" when I worked uptown at the Guggenheim Museum. I worked security there. Paula Cooper is a real person and she owned a gallery in Soho.

# RUMMAGE

*Jeff Lightning Lewis interviews Mike Rechner*

It's a great gallery, she's a great gallery owner. She's moved her gallery to Chelsea; she primarily shows minimalist and post-minimalist work and she has a great sensibility and she shows great artists and she does a great job. One day I was just home, you know, fucking around, and there was a gallery guide and I started writing a song, and the first gallery listed was AD Gallery...

**JL** - (quoting "Soho Gangsters") "Gallery A-slash-D"...

**MR** - Right, and that's in the song. The second gallery that was listed, or close thereabouts, was Brooke Alexander Gallery, and that's in the song as well, and then close by as well was Paula Cooper's gallery, and, uh, I just kind of concocted this song. Maybe it has some, uh, you know, psychological undertones though (laughing), like, because you're a security guard you want to destroy artwork, or something, but you know, it was really tongue in cheek, at least I thought so when I wrote it. Just for a laugh. You know. But, you know, I could never say anything bad about any of those galleries 'cause they all show great stuff and they all do a really good job.

**JL** - Is "Donald Judd" a real artist, I guess?

**MR** - Oh yeah, Donald Judd is a real artist, and uh...

**JL** - ...An "uptight elitist minimalist/who went out like a bitch" (still quoting "Soho Gangsters")?

**MR** - Oh, he is (both laughing), he's an uptight elitist minimalist, who, some people will insist quite fervently, went out like a bitch! But I just copped that idea from other people, and just added it in. He's the kind of artist who some people will say is a visionary and other people say he's so uptight, he's just, like, a crazy ego-maniac, so it's just like... I just tried to write a song that just, like... (groping for words, Mike giggles) ...just to allow that dynamic to exist in a song. It's not like a real big deal. I don't feel one way either/or about it. But, you know, his work is very good, and it's very effective, so...

(At this point the tape comes to an end; the conversation continues unrecorded for quite a while, and of course the most interesting parts occur after the tape has stopped rolling. But this interview was sort of long as it stands anyway. In the final analysis, Mike Rechner's music defies all words. Buy *Wrecked Car*, and see Mike perform live for two totally different, yet equally mind-altering musical experiences. Also buy *Adjective*, perhaps a less perfect integrated-album statement than *Wrecked Car*, but a unique and sometimes astonishing work in it's own right... And, in more recent developments, see Mike perform with some sort of additional musical accompaniment, including at least Dina Levy on percussion, as *Pre-War Yard Sale*. At the moment I'm waiting impatiently for those Major Matt Mason USA-produced recordings to be made available... In a PS to Mike Rechner: I'm sorry for being such a groupie, I just think your music is so fucking cool!) **Jeff Lightning Lewis**

## AntiFolk Memories

*Some people had additional thoughts on the highlights of their AntiFolk experience. A continuation from December, 1999's*

*AntiMatters*

### Butch Ross

Seeing Hamell on Trial at J.C. Dobbs for the first time, the wind from the bass bins was blowing my pantlegs even though I was 15 feet away from the stage.

My first Anti-hoot, Adam and I driving around the Lower East Side using BK lyrics for directions.

Playing the hoot on a Sunday night after being awake for three days in upstate New York. I followed a band that played two encores by audience demand. I was out of my mind with sleep deprivation, the crowd shut up listened, and I had a great show.

Folk meets Anti-folk at George's 5th Street. Lenny Molotov, Gentleman Jim Noone, Bob Andrews, and Elliot Kennen. Two acts from Philly, two from NY, two folkies, two anti-folkies, two capitalists, two communists. Nobody showed up.

### Jonathan Berger

Occasionally, Lach puts together themes for the AntiHoots. A couple of them were good. I missed the one when everyone wrote songs based on the theme of Coffee, and I missed the one where everybody used Lach's melody and lyric, "Baby Doll, I'm falling for you," to write their own song. But I did catch the time when everyone got up and performed a song in the style of another AntiFolker. I covered Gene & Mimi and Lenny Molotov, Charles Herold, the funniest man in AntiFolk, did a AF Opera, seven song-styles in five minutes. It was hilarious, and pretty much dead on. Joe Bendik did "Doing Drugs with Dad." Steve Espinola and Jonathan Segol became a diminutive version of the humans and did a song about masturbation.

There was this other AntiHoot where three people ended up doing Steve's song, "Love Song While Running Away." It was amazing.

### Jeff Gaynor

...I'll never forget the first Anti-Hoot I attended and the feeling that washed over me as soon as I walked in the door. A strong sense of community, warmth, and camaraderie. Everyone listening to one another, supporting one another, and learning from one another. Seeing Jeff "Lightning" Lewis perform the world premiere of "Shoot the Head! Kill the Ghoul!"...Seeing the first Anti-Hoot performance of the Voices on their first night in town, doing "Theatre of Laughter"...Kenny Davidsen singing "Melody"...Sharon Fogarty's Anti-Hoot debut, doing "He's So Hairly"...among many others. I just felt incredibly jazzed and inspired, as both a listener and a musician, hearing an endless parade of music that was completely new to me. It was beautiful...period.

# SCHEDULE

The Sidewalk Cafe

All shows are free. Please call the club for further information: 212-473-7373.

**Mon. Jan. 10 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30. An open stage for poets, antifolkers, comics and their ilk. "Best free entertainment in NYC"- NYPress**

**Tues. Jan. 11 - 7:30 - Brian Sendrowtiz, 8 - Jen Halpern, 8:30 - Linda Draper, 9 - Nancy Falkow, 9:30 - Lara Ewen, 10 - Geoffrey McCabe, 10:30 - Drew Blood (of Lach's Secrets)**

**Wed. Jan. 12 - 7:30 - Ed Littman and Splat!, 8:30 - Haale, 9 - Blonde Sheriff, 10 - Freq, 11 - NYC Jam Session <Improvised music is making a huge comeback in the NYC jazz and music scene and NEW YORK CITY JAM SESSION INC. is on the cutting edge of it. Terry (kid lucky) Lew hosts an improvised open mic jam session at the Sidewalk Cafe. It is the place to be on a late Wednesday night. Some of the musicians that have shown up to play or just check it out are Sabir Matten, Codi Mundi, Luther Thomas, Ed Littman, Danny Zanker, Bruce Mack, On Davis, M, Thierno, Adam Feller, Tom Chess, Tor Snyder and countless others in the Free Music scene.>**

**Thurs. Jan. 13 - 8 - Atoosa, 8:30 - Jim Flynn, 9 - Troy Boonsboro, 10 - Randy Kaplan, 11 - Jude Kastle**

**Fri. Jan. 14 - 8 - Paul Sachs, 9 - Billy Populus, 10 - Janet Vodka, 11 - Elephant (featuring Voja!), 12 - Uncle Carl**

**Sat. Jan. 15 - 7:30 - Betsy Thomson, 8:30 - The Black and The Jew with Epstein and Hassan (Comedy: No One under 18 admitted), 9 - Shameless, 10 - Ruth Gerson, 11 - Butch Ross, 12 - The Humans**

**Sun. Jan. 16 - Very Strange Folk Sunday (No one Under 18 permitted) - 7:30 - Michael Merenda and The Voltage Box, 8 - Stoley, 8:30 - John Mars, 9 - AB2 Solomon, 9:30 - Peter Dizozza, 10 - Eddie Trap**

**Mon. Jan. 17 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30. More fun than root canal!**

**Tues. Jan. 18 - 8 - Jen Halpern, 8:30 - Guinevere, 9 - Michal The Girl, 9:30 - Randi Russo, 10 - Barry Bliss, 10:30 - Jeff Lightning Lewis, 11 - Steve Espinola**

**Wed. Jan. 19 - 8 - MP3 All-Stars with Phoebe Legere, Elvis Sinatra, Lach, Lenny Hat, Pat Ciserano, Robin Hackett, 10 - NYC Jam Session (Open stage for improv Jazz)**

**Thurs. Jan. 20 - 8 - Patty Murray, 9 - Venus, 10 - Kenny Young and The Eggplants, 11 - Shamsi**

**Fri. Jan. 21 - 8 - PinataLand, 9 - Eletfa, 10 - Hamell On Trial, 11 - Animal Head**

**Sat. Jan. 22 - 8 - Michael Packer, 9 - Patsy Grace, 10 - Bionic Finger, 11 - Deni Bonet, 12 - Dots Will Echo**

**Sun. Jan. 23 - 7:30 - Love's Greatest Loser, 8 - Daniel Dick, 8:30 - William Fleischer, 9 - Sean Lee, 9:30 - Doug Stambler, 10 - Tristan, 11 - Brer Brian**

**Mon. Jan. 24 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30. 2-for-1 drinks before eight PM!**

**Tues. Jan. 25 - 8 - Jen Halpern, 8:30 - Patty Giurleo, 9 - Vesper, 9:30 - Carol Lipnik: The Singing Mermaid, 10 - Nicole McKenna, 11 - Cedric**

**Wed. Jan. 26 - 9 - Ekayani and The Healing Band, 10 - X12, 10 - NYC Jam Session (Open stage for improv Jazz)**

**Thurs. Jan. 27 - 8 - Billy Kelly, 9 - Grey Revell Band, 10 - The Meanwhiles**

**Fri. Jan. 28 - 8 - Three Normal Humans, 9 - Fragile Male Ego, 10 - Brian Piltin,**

**10:30 - David Dragov, 11 - Joe Bendik and The Heathens, 12 - Swampbelly**

**Sat. Jan. 29 - 8 - Stephanie St. John, 9 - Pets (with Karen Ires), 10 - The Costellos, 11 - The humans, 12 - Joie / Dead Blonde Girlfriend**

**Sun. Jan. 30 - 5 - Young Me Chung Art Show, 8 - Craig Chessler, 8:30 - Kirsten Williams, 9 - Lo Flyer, 10 - Sly Gerald, 11 - Gene Bryan Johnson**

**Mon. Jan. 31 - The Antihoot with Lach. Sign-up at 7:30. Free entertainment that REFUSES to be sneezed at!**