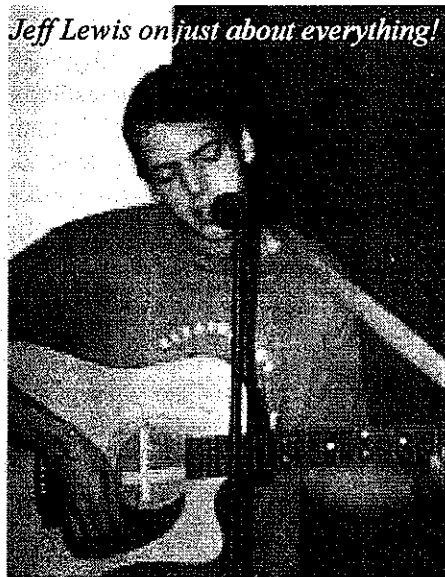


February, 2000

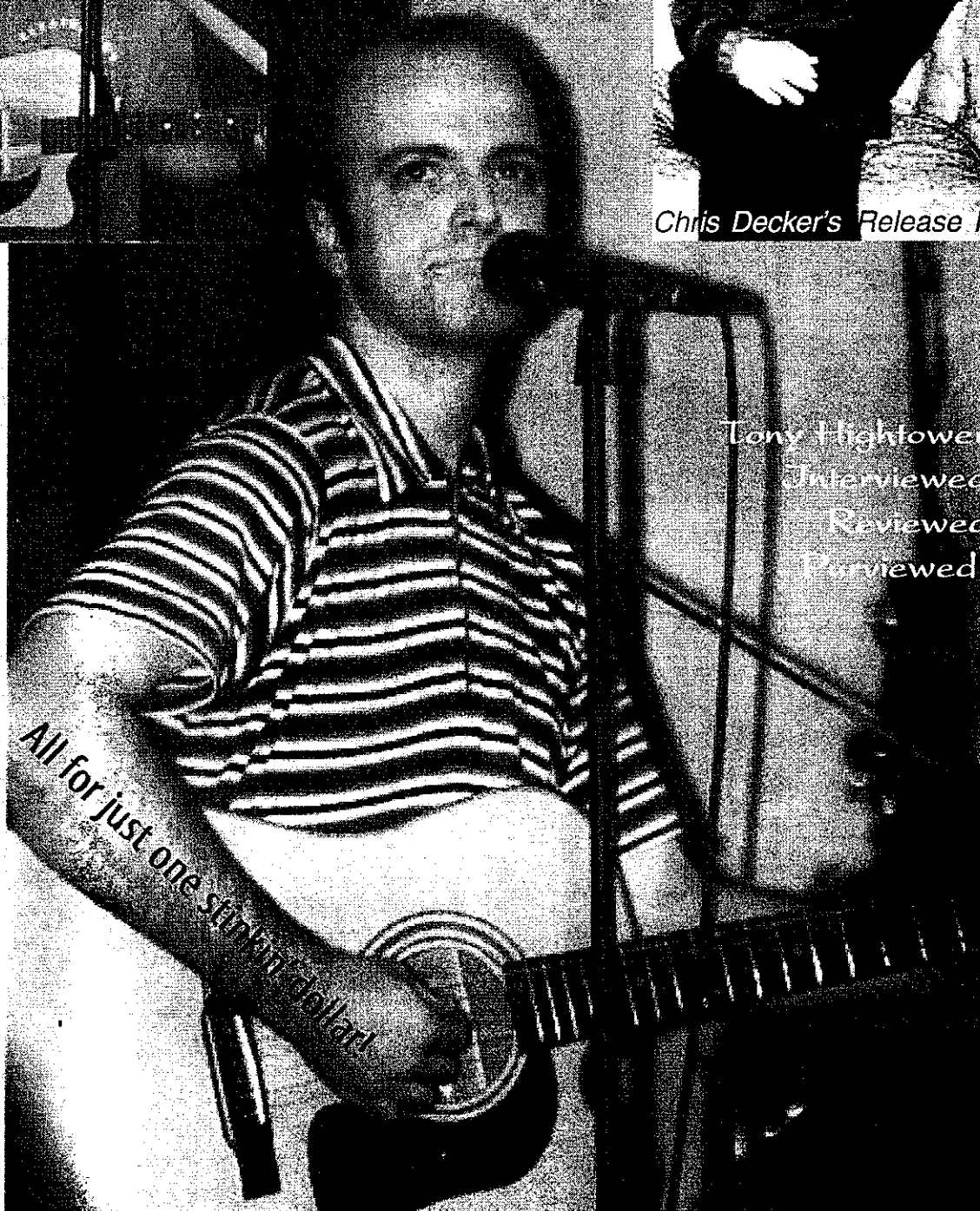
ANTIMATTERS

Jeff Lewis on just about everything!

SO MUCH TO SEE...!



Chris Decker's Release Party!



*Tony Hightower
Interviewed
Reviewed
Reviewed!*

AntiMatters

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(Small note: After the interview, featuring a whole lot of Tony Hightower, hit first pressing, we discovered that Tony's house burnt down. Poor Tony! If you see him, please offer him a drink, a meal, a blanket, a hug. He's a nice guy. He deserves it...)

A lot of what's going into this issue is catch-up.

This issue includes the final installment of Jeff Lightning Lewis' Florida adventure, and thank GOD! Interesting a tale as it may be (and it is. Jeff's story-telling style in both the graphic medium and the musical is so fine, so detailed, so humorous... it's a joy to watch him work), it's now hopelessly out of date. Since beginning this tale, Jeff has spent a summer in a log cabin and a lifetime in Europe. He's been here there and everywhere, and we've only been chronicling his adventures in Florida? Good god, we're lame. Hopefully, in the near future, we'll be seeing more of Jeff's lime chronicles, or maybe some plain old story-tellin'.

Jeff's epic feature, "In my Humble Opinion," is carried over from last month, when it just squeaked past deadline.

Similarly, the feature on Tony Hightower is LONG overdue. Coming to our shores from Canada sometime in early Fall, Mr. Hightower had been considered a vital member of our scene since before his introduction to it. So why is he only being interviewed now? Again, it's the lameness of the medium. The lameness of the zine.

And the record reviews just speak for themselves. While it's not surprising that none of the albums carry a 2000 copyright on them, it's shameful how far out of date some of these reviews are. Just take it from us, though, the content is well-worth reading, reviewing, appreciating, even if it's late, overdue, and old.

Trust us. When have we ever steered you wrong?

Jonathan Berger

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Anti-Graffiti Bulletin March 1, 2000

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Report from the Fort

1/9/00 - The Fort at the Sidewalk Cafe

Tony Hightower had himself a birthday party. It was a Sunday night, it was late, and still the people came on out to celebrate the birth of a foreigner. Selecting friends and fans to briefly perform, with the inimitable power of Jonathan Berger at the hosting helm, reading 'poetry' and harrassing the audience. Tony Hightower had numerous acts pay tribute to him, all without ever admitting his age. His final set, at the end of the evening was raw, intense, and blew every other performer away. (*Gustav Plympton*)

1/12/00 - The Raven

<Firstly, to clear up a potentially damaging misconceptions about me and the junk I write, I cannot take credit for the Antihoot report of January 3rd. The brilliant wit and biting satire must be the work of the guy who writes those Harry Potter books>

Though Joie's Open Stage night has been up and running successfully for a few months now, this was the first time that I participated. I immediately regretted my long neglect of the Raven (194 Avenue A), as I had a great time that night, and though there are many similarities between this open mike night and the "others," there are many unique things about it that make it a very worthwhile stop for all those on the open mike night circuit.

Signup is a bit different. I was told to show up at 7, but when I arrived at 6:55, there were already 20 people on the list! Not that I'm not used to playing later than everyone else anyway, so no big deal.

In the ironic event of the night, I was talking to the guy from Vader Vader about forgetting people's names right after we meet them (he even quoted me a Billy Joel lyric on the topic) I promptly forgot his name! We also spoke further about the time he got snubbed by Christopher Walken, as well as a lengthy discussion about Weird Al Yankovic.

Lunchin' played a song about losing your job at the shoe store. "What the hell are you complaining about". During that song, Jon Berger swung his shoe at the band.

Gonzalo, at only his second open mike night in New York, played a very cool number on his bass guitar. Surprisingly, he's only been in New York two weeks and has not yet been mugged (an integral part of the New York City experience). Many of the Sidewalk regulars also stopped by to show support for Joie's open mike - he calls it an Open Stage. Fort stars such as Lach, Patsy Grace, Tony Hightower, Jude Castle, and many others were on hand to play.

Another highlight was the CD auction, where you can buy CDs that no one else wants for bargain basement prices. Lach got all worked up cause Joie was auctioning the Bleeker Street CD, which had beaten out Blang in the Grammys for cover artwork or something like that. But I thought staunch Antifolkies didn't give a shit about the Grammys?

Anyway, if you haven't already, definitely check out this open mike night - the crowd, though smaller, is great - a much more intimate setting. Also, you will be able to play before 11

PM (something that is not guaranteed at certain other places!) I will for sure be trying to get here more often. (*Egils Kaljo*)

1/21/00 - C-Note

Do you know that line in 'Sultans of Swing' where the singer's all, "guitar Johnny/ He knows all the chords"? That's Chris Decker, he, who with the many modal maneuvers and the crisp clear singing of a George Harrison would be the perfect accouterment to any group, particularly my own. Alas, he writes. It's hard guitar pop, and he's got some good tunes. I really like 'Falling Down' and 'Sweetness', they taste like them sour patch candies after dipping in hot mustard.

Decker's music is chock full of good things, ribbons of Elvis Costello, Zeppelin chips, a remoulade of Squeeze on top, a delicate scent of XTC. That was my first bite. On my second, I masticated thoughtfully and discovered some Radiohead with Johnny Marr axe jangling, and if I didn't detect a distinct Alex Lifeson influence on one of the guitar licks, I would have pegged this guy as a total Anglophile.

This frigid night would have scared away just about anyone who lives in an apartment with a working furnace, but Decker hails from Albany - bred for winter! A few dozen of us soldiered into the C-Note and it very comfy. Decker has been performing his act on the acoustic songwriter circuit for the past year armed with nothing but a sense of humor, a voice, a lonesome electric guitar, 611 effects pedals and a yen for sushi. And even though he spotlessly executed his creations time and time again, I have never seen him totally win over a room without playing a cover, and there's a simple reason why. His songs are total band songs. So he brought a bassist and drummer this time. All of the arrangements he used to octopus alone became fully realized, and became an overall splendid rock experience. Most of the lyrics were relationship-based, and Decker's eyes were drawn inward to wrench pain out of his heart, or dream about falafel. I was thinking that he should wear some eye shadow. He did, come out of his shell to make some arena-style poses from time to time, and I even detected some of that Dave Matthews foot shuffle. If you watch a rock show from the back of the room, you can miss out on a lot... Just as it was appropriate for Louis Prima to record LPs, Chris Decker has just put out a CD with 6 songs (smartly with the two that I recommend above), graciously entitled, 'This is Your CD'. They are produced with a full band, just like this music should be recorded. I haven't heard it, but I am definitely interested after hearing the full treatment live. And speaking of treatments, I'm gonna treat myself to some pizza. All the food references I made earlier have made me hungry. (*John Kessel*)

YOU WANT MORE?!?

Turn to the last page, for more
Report from the Fort

MY HUMBLE OPINION

by Jeffrey "Humble" Lewis

Editor's Note: Jeff Lightning Lewis, that musician and cartoonist and storyteller and all-around guy, submitted an essay to AntiMatters just hours before the publication of the January issue of the zine.

"It's a great article," we royally told him, "but it's huge. If we publish this now, the issue'll be twice the size." "But you have to publish it now," Jeff whined, "If you don't, it'll be dated!"

"Better to be dated," we surmised, "Than not dated," and promptly jotted down our clever comment.

In any case, enclosed is Jeff's lengthy essay on the state of AntiFolk, reviews of events in December, debate over record reviews, and, good GOD, so much more...

Hey, this is Jeff Lewis here. I've had a few articles in my head that I wanted to write, so I figured I'd condense 'em into one column of random ramblings.

First on the agenda: **Grey Revell's** *Crazy Like an Ambush* album, and **Tony Hightower's** review of said album in last month's *Antimatters*. Tony called *Ambush* "the best album of 1968"; no disrespect to the wonderful and talented Mr. Hightower, but he obviously hasn't heard very many albums recorded in 1968 (I can already picture the viscous noogie he's gonna give me for writing this). When I think of albums from '68 I think *Beggar's Banquet*, *The White Album*, *White Light/White Heat*, *A Saucerful of Secrets*, *Axis: Bold as Love*, *Wheels of Fire*, and maybe *Silver Apples*. Grey Revell sounds nothing like these albums. In a certain way I might be able to see *Crazy Like an Ambush* being compared to the progressive folk elements of Beck's *Mutations* album, although I'm not the hugest Beck fan, and the records aren't all that similar anyway. Grey sounds like a pure product of the 1990s, his futuristic-folk tempered by retro concerns only because of Grey's well-developed knowledge and love of pop music from the past thirty-five years. Sure, "Cyanide Girl of the Sea" begins with some *Led Zeppelin III* Celtic vibrations, before the curtains open on the shimmering, descending tune itself, which has a certain echo of "Venus in Furs," it's true, but the stuff on the *Ambush* album smacks mostly of a silver, mercury, 21st Century, CD techno-ecstasy folk. The retro label is appropriate only because Grey's learned his lessons from other-dimensional shimmer-Goth-pop masters of the past, from Arthur Lee to Tom Verlaine. Revell, however, has his heart aimed straight into tomorrow. Which isn't to say his aim is always true. He (unintentionally?) alters the lyrics on the recorded version of "Live Alisa" so that the original climax ("I can't give an answer/but I'll give you the reason/and I'm the reason why/my live Alisa cries") mutates into a less powerful, and almost nonsensical, "I'll give you the reason/am I the reason why..." The man's sleeping on his own lyrics. Despite some nice lines and great production touches, "The Bad Faces" is still a damn spin-off of that fuckin' "Praise You" Fatboy Slim song. When **Matt Cusack's** drums start relentlessly assaulting the adrenal glands, "Violent Jack" is probably one of the best songs to ever come out of this scene; too bad Grey sacrifices the melody for the sake of unnecessarily speeding the already powerhouse song up a wee bit. I also wish the brain-rending distorted slide solo wasn't buried in the mix (though it's still a great song). The album's opening track is a half-assed one-take mangling of California Littlefield's wonderful "Morning Sun" (will Grey be forever opening his albums with cover songs?). The true

album opener is the fantastic "Getaway Car;" producer **Spencer Chakedis** has done a breathtaking job on this album and nowhere is this more apparent than here in his looping of **Ish Marquez's** Mayan Earth-worship vocal improves (from a group psychedelic jam at Siberia back in September) into a cohesive, propulsive, hip-hop club backdrop for Grey's masterful melodies. If you still have any doubts as to Spencer's sonic intuition just check out the twinkling snowfall glory of "Burn Your Body Down." And what the hell is Tony Hightower talking about when he says "the title track is played so straight..."? There's more production on that track, with it's Wah-Wah pedal solo, added piano part and fully fleshed out band sound, than most of the cuts on the record that Tony disses for having too much added to them. I suppose it's just that an in-your-face guitar solo, with a pedal effect to boot, is more *familiar* than the more subtle computer blips, dulcimer tickles and other trance-y touches that adorn tracks like "The Bad Faces." Sure "Violent Jack" has the famous Chakedis UFO-swoop noise on it, but doesn't it sound totally cool and appropriate? (Hightower goes on to say that *Ambush* is a response to the drab minimalism of most scene album productions, and I can't help but take it personally. The thing is, Tony acts as if most Antifolkies just record themselves and their guitars for the same album sound as in a live solo performance, and while I often wish many people would take the "Lo-Fi" leap, to more purely preserve their uniqueness, I think most of the Antifolk regulars would have to agree that I'm one of the only people putting out no-frills recordings at all! Everyone from Lach to Brer Brian to Hamell On Trial to Mike Rechner to John Kessel to Matt Mason to Carraig DeForest has released only studio-style digital-quality recordings with various degrees of production, arrangement, overdubbing and/or microphone placement sophistication. Unless Tony was thinking of Joie DBG and Kenny Davidsen's questionably thought-out releases of substandard live shows. I think what Tony means is that Grey and Spencer are among the very few that have really come up with *interesting* production ideas.) Overall, *Crazy Like an Ambush* may be the scene release most likely to succeed in the Real World beyond this tiny neighborhood; it's accessible as all get-out, without losing its underground, slightly ragged, psychedelic edge. Hightower complains of too much studio-effect clutter throughout this album, but he doesn't allow that these different flavors of sound are spices (kinda like putting oregano on a slice of pizza) which serve to naturally accentuate what Grey's music always has been; cinematic, atmospheric, attempting to drape the room in a different shade of light with each song. I actually wish there

JEFF'S HUMBLE OPINION

was a tiny bit more space between the songs on this album, to allow one song's flavor the chance to dissipate from one's palate before the next song begins; some of the quick transitions work, but sometimes I feel like I'm eating a grape before I've had the chance to finish swallowing my ice cream, y'know?

Uh, yeah, what Jeff said

Tony Hightower's response to Jeff Lewis' critique of Tony's assessment of Grey Revell's album

Not to take the wind out of Mr. Lightning's sails or anything, but I believe Antifolkdom's Cartoonist Laureate is dissing me for stuff I think we actually pretty much agree on.

First of all, the "Best Record of 1968" thing was merely a reference point, and I still think it's appropriate.

Mr. Lewis is the biggest Arthur Lee fan I've ever met (with the possible exception of Grey himself). But come on. To say that *Ambush* doesn't fit thematically on the same shelf as the albums he named is to deny it its context. The whole album is very clearly of a time and place, and that sure ain't here or now. It fits way better with, oh, *Astral Weeks* or *Waiting For The Sun* (let alone *We're Only In It For The Money* or *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, or even *The Transformed Man* or *In Search of the Lost Chord* or *Hair* or *Head*, shall I continue?) than with Hamell, Kessel or Carmaig's latest opuseseses. This is, let me repeat, to its most righteous advantage.

We agree that *Getaway Car* and *Burn Your Body Down* are the two most fully realized performances on the album. The hippy-hoppy *Car* is genuinely groovy, and shows that Spencer has it in him to put all that studio expertise and machinery to transcendently cool use. But *Burn's* "twinkling snowfall glory"? My man, there is such a thing as too much tremolo.

I didn't know nearly as much about the production details as Lightning seems to. My point on calling the title track straight-sounding is that the song actually has room to breathe a little. They left some of the spaces between the notes unfilled, and the song just floats up out of the surrounding muck as a result. A wah pedal and a piano overdub, compared to the blizzard of sound effects & samples on most of the rest of the album, sounds positively blissful.

I didn't realize Spencer's UFO-swoop noise was "famous" — it sounded like an ELO sample the first time I heard it, and no, it doesn't sound appropriate on *Violent Jack*. It hides the natural propulsion of the song. And to call Matt Cusack's drum work "a relentless assault on the adrenal glands" is to cut off Keith Moon & Ginger Baker (Class of '68!) at their stylistic knees. I maintain that *Violent Jack* is overmixed to the point where its impact is diminished. And that's a mad shame.

Great. So now I'm attacking an artist (in Jeff Lewis) whom I totally admire and respect and think the world of, and picking apart a record that's on many levels a fairly amazing piece of work.

I'm not saying *Crazy Like An Ambush* isn't going to start a whole expressionist hedonist revolution among the real Generation

Next, because it very well could, and I swear to god I hope it does. It just took me by surprise that it wasn't more accessible (to me, Jeff, to me) than it wound up being. Grey is more than good enough as a songwriter and performer, & I (a relative antifolk outsider, new to this country & less familiar with Grey's stuff) shouldn't have had to listen to it for three weeks straight to get into it on its own level. That's my only gripe with it.

And, personally, I happen to like grapes with ice cream. Especially heavenly hash. (Oh, and Jeff? The noogie you've got coming won't be viscous at all, unless you don't shampoo.)

But enough about Grey for now, he gets enough attention on his own around here. I wanna say a couple words about a songwriter who made a mark on me from the first time I ever saw him play, yet who has not quite gotten his deserved props. I wanna talk about **Turner Cody**. I'm going to try not to go overboard, 'cause I don't want to kill him with self-confidence after poisoning him with words, but hearken to the following comments. I've heard what some people have said about him; "too wordy," "totally Dylan-derivative," "long and wordy for the sake of wordiness." Sure, Turner's obviously put in his time at the alter of Another Side of Bob Dylan. I'll admit that. Now all of you detractors shut the fuck up and listen to what Turner actually has to say. If you can, get your hands on his tape "Saddle Up." I have no doubt in my mind that the small handful of home-recordings on that piece of plastic will convince you that it's time Turner started getting his due respect as one of the best songwriters on the downtown scene, bar none, with his own individual style and a lot of genuine heart. It makes me think that maybe he should flee this scene before it corrupts him. The last time I saw him play a show it seemed like he was trying to be an honorary member of Moldy Peaches, while Turner Cody has quite enough power and presence in his own songs, done in his own style, to enthrall any cafe audience without resorting to theatrics. Sure, I know all too well how lame it can feel to be playing one's own quiet music when rocking and rolling looks like so much more fun. I can only hope Turner can keep on doing and developing his own stuff in his own directions without falling prey to the pressures that our happy, demented, songwriting family can unwittingly exert.



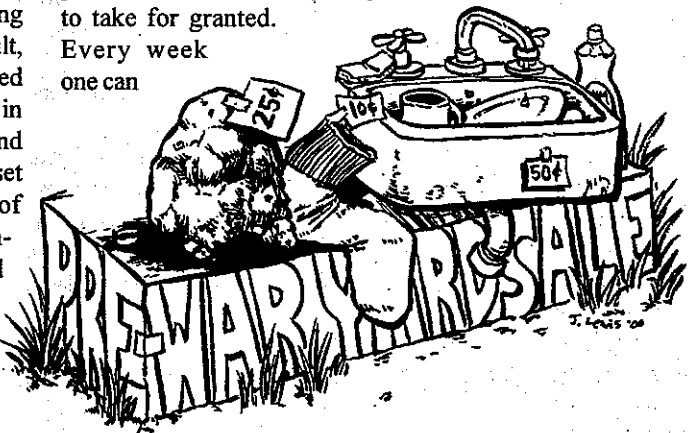
JEFF'S HUMBLE OPINION

And, on the note of our supposedly happy family... John Kessel is in trouble. John Kessel should call his band (or himself) the John Kessel Catastrophe. If there is a word to describe John Kessel, the word is Embattled. Sure, he's touchy. Any skin gets touchy when its being whipped raw by life. When this man took the stage at the Fort on Thursday, January 6th, in The Year of Our Lord 2000, there were not many in attendance. It was one of those sort of last minute shows, I believe, with little time for promotion. I myself missed the "Bone Cold" set-opener. I also, in the songs that followed, pinned down an on-stage fault of Kessel's- he often turns his head from the microphone before he's finished a line, leaving an uninitiated audience with a bunch of slurred partial-sentences instead of comprehensible lyrics. This was apparent during "Kamikaze," and a couple other songs. But I'll tell you something else about Kessel. When he's on, he's ON. After a good rendition of "I Wish Melissa," he played an incredible newer song ("Sun"?), followed by the most breath-taking, heart rending version of "Innocent" that I've ever had the honor and privilege to witness. He took his time, enunciating every superbly crafted sentence, every warm and beautiful melodic turn, and I wept. Yes, I literally wept. Tears not only came to my eyes, but rolled down both cheeks. This had never happened to me at a Sidewalk Cafe performance, and rarely at any musical performance. I was crying as I watched him, and I realized through the shuddering emotions that he'd brought up in my face that perhaps ART only happens when the creator is creating in the face of heartbreak and poverty and madness and ruin. Seeing Kessel, all in black, ripping notes from his black acoustic guitar, his back up against the wall, crying out "I'm innocent! I am in-noo-ceedent!!," I saw every human being who has ever been unfairly convicted of crimes they did not commit, sentenced to be evicted from their long-term homes, to kiss their long-accumulated possessions good-bye, to be the victims of brutal (although natural and unblameable, which almost makes it worse) love triangles, to be broke, to struggle long years and receive nothing, to prowling night by night just for a floor to sleep on while other younger artists are getting homes, relationships and record contracts, to have their girlfriends break up with them on New Year's Day, to suffer all the petty sufferings of a modern-day version of the biblical Job; I saw this man standing alone against the black tide of shit, screaming his innocence for all the world to hear, making his case before the court of the universe that it's not his fault, standing up for all of us in all our ten thousand undeserved misfortunes (ever read Voltaire's "Candide"?), persevering in the only way he knows how... by playing his heart out. And playing some of his best harmonica solos ever, too. The set also included a slow, near-falsetto, best-ever version of "You've Got a Lot to Learn" which segwayed into his "Country Singer" send up, including an excellent new verse, and during which he somehow, through some slight of hand, managed to play one of the verses in the middle of the song on the piano (which was in exact tune with his guitar) and seamlessly continue the song with the guitar. How'd he do that? Absent from the set was the usually omnipresent "Fear

of Accidents Mabel" (A.K.A. "FOAM"), which was a nice breath of fresh air. Kessel's got too many good songs to act like he needs to rely on one trusty, supposed "showstopper" (apply also to Joie DBG and "Drinking With God"). What Kessel needs to do is record some of these newer songs, because they far surpass most of the older material on his Born Late album. Too bad his fantastic home studio has been cruelly scattered to the winds as part and parcel of his eviction from his Brooklyn residence of 12(?) years. Somebody please give him a home!

I finally got to see Mike Rechner's new incarnation as "Pre War Yard Sale," with wife Dina Levy on percussion and co-vocals. The songs I saw were almost all recent ones, with the exception of the mindblowing "Eldorado" encore. The opening tune was that superlong one about subway travel, with the fearless repetition of the "Step up, step down, fair is fair" section. It had the yuppie yahoos in the back of the Fort grumbling audibly in dismay as Mike refused to quit repeating his words and his chords, while Dina kept up her relentless Moe Tucker-beating-on-a-cardboard-box thing. Needless to say I was in ecstasy. I don't think many people get what Mike is doing, and where he's coming from, but for those of us who can't get enough of that New York Subway Car Indie-Rock Two-Chord Rumble, he is a living testament to the sheer industrial musical power of this city, carrying on a monumental NYC folk-punk-poet-noise legacy, passed down from Allen Ginsberg ranting on an A train on speed at three in the morning to the Fugs to the Godz to Lou Reed to the Ramones to Sonic Youth and into the future. The newer, mostly beautiful, Pre-War Yard Sale songs, like their title track and the "Weird" song, incorporated Dina's voice to add a whole new dimension and an unexpected cozy heart to the music. Although I know nothing about their relationship I can only hope to one day maybe be connected to someone with whom I could make a musical union like that (not to dis my brother... I mean, like, with a chick). If anyone's ever seen the husband and wife Indie-rock team of Ira Kaplan and Georgia Hubley in Yo La Tengo you have an inkling of what I mean. Now I just hope some recordings come out of this that reflect the majesty I witnessed that Wednesday night at the Fort.

The week before New Year's Eve, I experienced three different incarnations of Lach. First there was the common Lach we all know at the ol' Monday night Antihoots, a performing persona that can be very easy to take for granted. Every week one can



JEFF'S HUMBLE OPINION - AND FEEDBACK

expect to see the man in the environment he's made for himself, on his own turf, doing his usual thing. Generally the songs will be chosen from the same familiar batch, performed with more or less the same familiar energy (except his late-night song improv sessions, which tend of course towards the less predictable). On a Monday night at the Fort Lach is a trusted trooper, but not really the star attraction, and not generally the performer considered the highlight of the night. He's almost like the house band on Saturday Night Live or Conan O'Brien; nothing to be disappointed in, but rather the sturdy backdrop for the unpredictable events about to unfold, the cartoon which used to get shown as warm up entertainment before the main feature at the movies. I don't mean this in a demeaning way; for a lot of those old movies it was the case that Bugs Bunny was a hell of a lot better and more enduring entertainment than the movie itself. The point is that at the Antihoot, Lach is an old standby. When I saw him again two days later at the Raven this was not the case. When reduced to the status of just another dude at an open mic, Lach took on an energy and fire that's harder to see at the Fort. Like looking at a red flower against a red background as opposed to the same flower against a blue background, or that painting reproduction in your parents' living room that you've seen in that exact spot since you were a kid and now you suddenly see the original up in a museum where it takes on a revelatory glory, or a song on a favorite and time-worn album which unexpectedly comes on the radio while you're in a faraway land. These are imperfect metaphors, but I hope you get the idea. Lach stood against that cigarette ad painted on the wall at the Raven, and as he played the radiating lines which center on the girl in the ad seemed to be radiating from him like an aura of power. At one point he glanced up at the TV across the room and incorporated the new developments from the ballgame into his song, which was a great tune I hadn't heard before. "Little Bummer

Boy" also revealed itself as a song of pure grit, taut and scary and real and full of desperation and love, not the cute send-up it can sometimes be perceived as in its comfortable home back at the Fort. I saw Lach's folk-punk roots asserting themselves, the rawer, younger, scrappier Lach of Contender instead of the poppier Blang! incarnation. This was Lower East Side Lach, not East Village Lach. Y'know what I mean? It really was an experience. Then a couple days later I saw him with The Secrets as his backup band for the first time, and boy did it feel like a let-down. The musicianship was pretty top-notch all around, and it was great to hear Lach get the chance to take some rockin' guitar solos, but I felt the arrangements muddled and diluted the man I had been awed by two days earlier. Some songs, like "Sober Tonight on North Beach" retained their power, but seemingly in spite of rather than because of the added bass, drums and keyboard. The drums were masterful, but too delicate, dancing lightly about when I wanted them to pound like Dina Levy. The show hit a definite high point when Lach went into an extended Jim Morrison-as-Batman shtick, with Doors-esque accompaniment, but compared to the pure Antifolk power of Lach solo at the Raven, the Secrets gig at the Fort sounded like a non-descript bar band or lounge act. Yep, one might be inclined to say they were "ignoring every raw sound..." Tell the Secrets they should attend more Pre War Yard Sale performances, i.e., gimme the Velvet Underground and the old Rolling Stones over Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen any day.

But that's just my humble opinion. Extra tidbit: everyone should see/experience Seth (Dufus) Hebert's free-form un-rock opera Fun Wearing Underwear, which is currently being performed every Saturday night at Midnight at Surf Reality, 172 Allen St., for the duration of January. Attend more than once; it changes all the time. Catch it on a good night and you will be forever altered (for the better).

My One Cents

Jack Lewis responds to his brother

I'll try to make this quick. A few weeks back when my brother visited me up at school (Bard College), he couldn't stop raving about some kid named Turner. Jeff stayed for at least three months (or four days... I don't remember) and day in and day, out it was Turner this and Turner that: "Turner is great, I suck; I should write soft songs like Turner, Turner and I played in the subway together." *Oooh, Jeff you're so cool.* I couldn't get him to shut up. So when I finally caught Turner Cody's act at Sidewalk, the hype had shot him down before he even sang out. I don't remember the one song he sang, but I knew I wasn't into it. What I do remember is that the open mike was great. I also remember that at the end of the night, Lach asked for suggestions on song topics, and both Turner and Adam gave some various long complicated subjects (Something about Einstein masturbating. Are they prophets - how did they know Time would choose him as the man of the century?) Kimya pleaded with them to shut up, to just sit there "and look cute." (It is true that my own suggestion to Lach was just as complicated and "cutesy." It included Kwuanikins and Mike Rechner) So last night I finally heard Turner Cody, and heard some more today. He is quite good. Maybe even damn good. He really has great presence. He fills the air with just him and a guitar. I understand perfectly why my brother couldn't stop talking about him. Great guitar, witty and rhyming - not to mention honest - lyrics, and beautiful melodies. Okay, enough on Turner Cody - though I really like that Cooper Union song - enough - and that song about the jappy girl who likes to talk about her prom dress - Stop! - more people should listen to Turner - AAAAAAA! - Turner Turner Turn...

The Rechner show rocked hardcore. Or should I say the Prewar Yardsale show rocked hardcore. The harmonies were so damn perfect. Mike and Dina's voices meshed so well that I felt that maybe they had practiced a little too much; they almost sounded commercial. After the show, when I complimented both Dina and Mike on the harmonies, I may have been too excited and said, "Really great melodies, you should use more." So now I'm correcting myself, but if I did say harmonies forget the above. Everytime I hear Rechner, it's truly inspiring and I want to be creative.

Kessel was a jolt of thunder. I was on the verge of tears as well, but held them in. I'm not as effeminate as my brother. Now I will ask my bro to read this one cents and learn that it sucks and he is cutting half of it. Okay okay, cut away.

REVIEWS: THINGS WE NEVER COVERED

Sometimes, in the rush of eighteen million records sent to you for review purposes, you miss some. Sometimes, in the rush of eighteen million records sent to you for review purposes, you hear some. Somewhere in between are the reviews. Sometimes, it takes a while to hear something that you wished you'd heard sooner, when it was new. But slush piles are there for a purpose, and sometimes, things get wet in there. Moldy. Decrepit.

Sometimes, you regret it. Anyway, here are a couple of records that should have been reviewed a damned long time ago...

Gregg Weiss: *It's Own Sweet Time* (1999)

Gregg Weiss handed out his dual album project, *It's Own Sweet Time*, months and months and months ago, asking me to listen and give comments.

"A review'll be in when I'm good and ready," I puffed and huffed.

"Not a review, necessarily," Gregg said, "Your thoughts, your ideas, your comments, your reactions."

"Yeah yeah yeah, whatever," I replied, and went about my business.

The CDs went on the shelf with all the other crapload of music today's thriving fanzines regularly receive.

Every now and then, I'd look at them, or look at Greg when he asked me what I thought of them, and I'd say, "I'll get to it. I'll get to it..."

It's always annoying for today's reviewer to have to be hustled and jostled into writing a review, when today's reviewer has so much else to keep them busy.

"I'll listen to them," I promised, month after month.

Eventually, I did.

When I next saw Greg, he asked what I thought.

"I..." I said, "I'm speechless."

Greg smiled. Soon enough, I got over that speechless thing and gave him my *reactions*.

"That first disc," I said, "It's so careful, so thought out. The sounds on it... You did them all yourself?"

"Well, most," he conceded.

"I gotta say, I never much listened carefully when you played... the performances are so delicate, so ethereal, it's hard to concentrate on them live. But with this, You put so much work into it!"

"Well, yeah!" he said.

"'Bleeding Heart Plate' is so potent, with the breathing."

"What do you mean?"

"That a cappella thing, with the breathing. It's amazing!"

"Cool."

"Your version of 'When the Saints Come Marching In,' that was goofy, but it goes into the really soulful 'Ocean.' How does it start?"

"'Out here in the dark, with my legs bound and twisted.'" He recited.

"Yes! And then, that... 'The Grape Song'? Is that all you?"

"No, that's a band."

"Oh," I said, disappointed. "I kind of hoped it was all you."

"The liner notes give credit," Gregg said.

"And the package was cool, too," I raved, foolishly. "It's soft and subtle, like the album."

"They're each individually made."

"Whatever. It's so smooth."

"So you liked it?" Gregg said.

"I liked it. I was surprised how much I liked it."

He didn't seem to take offense, which is always good.

"Even that ridiculous transition. 'This is the next part of the record.' Normally, that shit seems forced. And maybe it did here, too, but just a little. Then, going into that 'Another Man' number... That sounds like Paul Simon – and that's a good thing!"

"And what the hell is that Carmine freak voice about in 'Hello in There?'"

"Oh, I don't know," Gregg said, "What did you think?"

"I still don't know. It's so strange... The voice was cool, though he sounded pretty egotistical, don't you think?"

He shrugged.

I thought maybe that was something that happened in other songs, too, like the opener, "On this Road," and the closer, "#7," both of which seemed to be almost educational treatises. A bit much lyrically, but the sonics all through the album kept me ranting on.

We talked some more. I raved some more. I didn't say anything about the second record, the later installment. I tried to be politic and, as careful and thought out as part one is, that's exactly as ill conceived as part two comes off. Rawer material, conversations, rambling soundscapes, and other strangeness. In the middle though, is the pretty cool (also sounding something like Paul Simon) was "Travelling Moon" and, soon after, "#9," with a subtle organ that sweetly insinuated into my headphones. "The Heart that Knows" just teases with rollicking rhythms, then gives them up again. It's all a cut beneath the first disc, but it really goes downhill after the listed songs are done. It ends with a live recording from an unimpressive show at the Sidewalk with a band that was basically jamming... it was probably an all right performance, but having a commemoration of the loud paralegal in the audience talking about her life... who needs that? It was just lame. Not bad for his personal collection, but ridiculous for circulation. Like I said, though, I didn't mention that.

"I liked it," I said, "I liked it a lot."

"Thanks," Gregg said, taking his records back.

"My pleasure," I said, walking away and grinning.

Maybe now he'll leave me alone.

(Jonathan Berger)

HEY!

Want to review some albums? We got 'em! Contact AntiMatters, and get free music to judge judge judge!

REVIEWS: THINGS WE NEVER COVERED

the humans: **Plastic** (1998)

MTA Antifolk mods the humans do what MTA Antifolk mods do best. Looking wistfully towards the endless repetitive depression of the gray rain bathing the broken promise land of dreary London, the humans take stock of their own situation and their own contradictions and in true antifolk style, say what they need to say, and how to say it. **Plastic**, an EP released in 1998 by the humans, stands as a short synopsis of the MTA Antifolk mod experience. The humans set do not practice the classic mod example of participation amongst a large community of like-minded mods which defines and governs itself via rigorous stipulations in dress code, transportation code, and musical taste united against an enemy: the rocker (who in turn define and govern themselves via rigorous stipulations in dress code, transportation code and musical taste united against an enemy: the mod). The humans, as MTA anti-folk mods, are dispossessed from the larger mod community and in turn have had to redefine the mod experience, localizing it in terms of dress code, transportation code, musical taste and common enemy. Wary of a city built on the celebration of difference – the ruthless tooth and nail infighting amongst special interests – the humans are pretty down.

The humans employ a basic mod dress code and they accessorize that look with some eighth street flourishes and some military regalia. I believe this is due to some cross-over between MTA Antifolk military accessories are a response to

Mayor Giuliani and his crippling policies of systematic social and cultural destruction. Mayor Giuliani and his current administration are the target of most of the humans scorn. However, on the song "Today" they clash ideologies with the MTA Gangsta. This is a classic situation in which a dispossessed group, the MTA Antifolk mods, feel violated by another dispossessed group, the MTA Gangstas, who in turn feel the same way. Two dispossessed groups at odds. How could they work together? The humans initiated their feelings into song (communication), and now it is addressed again in this article (communication), these are the positive actions because I feel knowledge, learning, communication and love are the keys to Antifolk. As Antifolk mods the humans combine the classic mod transportation mode, the Vespa, with the new geographic location of the bands home turf on Staten Island, necessitating the use of the Staten Island Ferry and the underground to get around when Vespa travel is impractical.

Musically, **Plastic** has a neo-new romantic tinge piled upon new wave structured Antifolk. Built up from pop-folk melody and harmony (a la Simon and Garfunkel), the humans layer waves and washes of sound over what originates as tried and true acoustic folk-pop guitar lines. Heartfelt lyrics sharpened by longing, idealism, and rough-hewn scene politics add the perfect lyric combination to match their moody yet driven soundscapes. **Plastic** is an excellent CD EP that has my ears eagerly awaiting a full-length humans disc. Another key track to check out is the humans track "Hypocrite" included on **Lach's Antihoot Live from the Fort at Sidewalk Café**, on Fortified Records. (Mike Rechner) <the humans: 68 Twombly Ave, Suite #4 - Staten Island, NY 10306>

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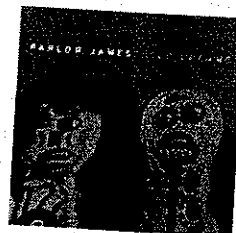
Parlor James: **Old Dreams** (1998) (Sire Records)

Amy Allison is a Fort semi-regular with her band, the Maudlins. In that project, she's an old-school country girl, with some modern lyrical sensibilities.

In Parlor James, Allison, with compatriot and co-genius Ryan Hedgecock, she inverts that juxtaposition, using country lyrics over synth and samples and sound collages.

Parlor James' two members, aided/abetted/executed by producer Malcolm Burn and a couple of percussionists put together huge and exciting sounds. Right off with the opening Tom Petty song, "Turning Point," you can tell something strange is happening.

Following with a sappy Allison original, "Why Must It Be?" which starts with a soundalike guitar to Smokey Robinson's "Second That Emotion," we approach song after song of heartache, angst, and pain. What could be just old school country lyrics is amped a couple notches by the instrumentation, loud and hard, abrasive and mighty. The breakbeat in "Why Must It Be?" shows us what can be done by mixing flavors. Sometimes, of course, the sounds are just old school. "Don't Go Downtown"



REVIEWS: THINGS WE NEVER COVERED

is about a wife, or mother, warning her partner to stay safe. *"Don't go downtown, just to hang around. If you do, I'm telling you, you'll be trouble bound."*

Speaking of trouble, there's a great version of the traditional weeper, "Clementine," that reappropriates the song from its public domain, nursery rhyme status, and brings it back to its creepy, death-ballad roots.

The album ends with the title track, cowritten by our two principals, is about the final breakup, mixing the past and the present, juxtaposing opposing ideologies. *"It's just a waste of time to talk about our love. We didn't have a dime, we had the moon above. I want my old dreams back and not these cold hard facts. Bring me my old dreams back..."*

In the context of the screams of anguish in this cut, Allison's harmony vocals, normally so nasal and somewhat annoying, are perfect. Anguish, pain and heartache. Yummy! (Gustav Plympton) <936 Broadway - NYC 10010>

nicely. All the favorites ("A Single Angry Word," "I'll Have Fun If It Kills Me," "So the Hell What") are expanded by the band, though "Fun" sounds a little strange around its transitions, something that's never a problem when Tony's live.

There's a bunch of goofy sounds. In the otherwise excellent "The Waves," there's a guitar part that's hidden enough not to be laughable. It sounds like something from the Shondells. The end of "A Single Angry Word," right after the evocatively whispered last phrase, there's a piano outro that's so old school, it make that Shondells' reference seem pretty new wave. The same kind of smooth jazz stylings do work in "Annex in February," though.

Sometimes, a subtle approach works nicely. On "Christie Pits Story," there's an upright bass that adds depth and beauty to a beautiful song about a dive into the depths. "A Toast for Leyna," in its slow parts, gets similar sensitive treatment.

A great example of how it can sound acoustic stylee is what Tony does with the single polite cover, "Picaresco," which is just the boy and some extra vocals. Nice. Simple. Unadorned. It's good. Why's the boy gotta fuck with a good formula?

Oh, the album's great. It's gonna sell a million copies. More power to him. I just hope, after the millions are made, and the tours are booked, Tony's not gonna keep protecting himself with some... band. I hope he just gets out there and rocks!

{Editor's Note: According to the Tony Hightower interview: the artist will be forming a band to further develop his sound.} (Gustav Plympton) <Nervous Nero Music - nervous@interlog.com - <http://www.interlog.com/~nervous>>

Tony Hightower - A Single Angry Word (1999)

It's one motherfucking slick album. I'm not saying that as a bad thing, but it's not necessarily a good thing, either.

Look, you've ever heard Tony Hightower do his thing, solo acoustic, in the East Village clubs, you can tell he's got major pop hooks. Songs like "Dead Awhile" and "Dina Doesn't Talk to Boys" or that crazy psycho-anthem, "The Waves," they show that he's a power pop boy, and if you check out his bio, you see he wears that banner proudly.

That's all fine. The thing that sets him apart (yes, of course, Tony, the sheer brilliance of the writing. You're a genius, Tony, a GENIUS), is that he's willing to go it alone. While that doesn't make him particularly unique in the AntiFolk community, it still makes him cooler. He plays solo with the fervor and passion that a band might be able to replicate, and his shows, well, it's just him, and you don't miss none of the rest of it. So why, then, on both of his albums, does he do the band thing?

Make no mistake, Tony (and I have no doubts he'll be the only one reading this. Who else checks out reviews in this zine? You either know you want to get it, or not), it's good stuff you do on the album. You've fleshed out the songs pretty

Chris Decker: This Is Your CD (2000)

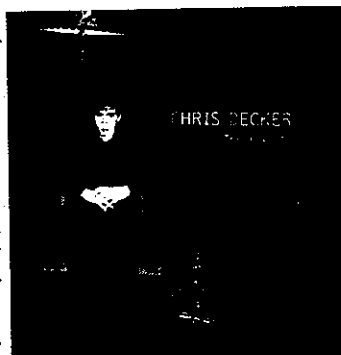
What do I like about This is Your CD? The one-two-three opening cuts, "Falling Down," "Sweetness," and "Obsolete." Each of these songs (a full half of this EP) has forced its way into my head, and onto my lips, while travelling through the City. Half of the "Falling Down," is about travelling through New York with a best friend, a dangerous, screwed up, self-abusive best friend who's *"been falling down, again."* It's Ethan Eubanks' funky drums, though, that makes it such an effective hummer while going through the city.

The entirely too-short album is all full-band production, with Chris Decker taking on much of the responsibility (he's credited with vocals and guitar, plus bass and synth throughout), and so much of it improves on Decker's great songs. "Sweetness" is his masterpiece, in the #2 slot. It's slow burn about the woman who leaves him, for no good reason. *"Do I displease you, and make you turn away...? Did I confuse you by passing every test? Did I amuse you by calling you the best I've had or am likely to ever have? Did I abuse you like the last one did?"* It's heart wrenching, and, because of Decker's delivery, you can't immediately tell how bitter he is, or how sincere his questions are. Of course, it gets a little more obvious. *"Keep it simple, I'm still unclear. Dig up all the eloquence you need. As you explain away, I'm sedated by your sweetness... sweetness... corrupted, crippling sweetness - I am faced with all my weakness."*

Then there's "Obsolete," whose chorus just bursts into my head at the most inopportune times. *"People say, 'it only matters if you try,' and I will never stop trying!"*

The rest of the album's good, too. The latter-day Elvis Costello influence in "Where Shall I Begin" is pretty neat, though and the Big Fun rip-off "Ecstasy Follows," that's moody and evocative, the way a solo Chris Decker tends to play. It's all good.

But it starts off so strong, really, there's not much of anywhere to go but down. (Jonathan Berger) <Contact: 718 599 3141 - Decker_music@yahoo.com>



THE CONCLUSION

Though it's called *Jeff's Trip to Key West*, at this point in his adventure, he's on his way home, or, at least, taking the bus to Philadelphia, for reasons that will immediately become quite clear...



This is the last chapter of *Jeff's Relatively MEaningless, "What the hell am I doing here?" Trip to Key West*. If you enjoyed it, then you should buy it -- as well as other works of cartoon genius -- from the author.



We all got some good free food from the good Free Food school bus people (they were from Food Not Bombs, I think) and then about ten of us piled into a white van + went off to the Squats on the other side of Philly.



Then just as we were all packed in and about to take off Tofu shows up after all, with his portable drum kit, too. So then we were really tightly packed + all overlapped + under sleeping bags. I told everyone the Russian folktale of all the animals who squeeze into one little mitten to keep warm.

THIS IS SO COOL, TRAVELLING IN THIS COZY VAN FULL OF SQUATTER KIDS, I'VE GOT MY ARM AROUND KASIA...

I WONDER IF I SHOULD TRY TO KISS HER? MAYBE I BETTER NOT... IT COULD PUT HER IN A WEIRD SITUATION SINCE SHE'S DEPENDING ON ME FOR A PLACE TO STAY TONIGHT.



I'LL ROLL OVER ON MY SIDE AND SHAM, NOTHING. TURN AWAY TO SEE IF SHE RE-ESTABLISHES CONTACT.

I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE PEE'D BEFORE WE TOOK OFF...



BUT WAIT! HER HAND MOVES TO MY BACK! A DEFINITE SIGN. BUT WHAT IF I'M READING IT THE WRONG WAY?

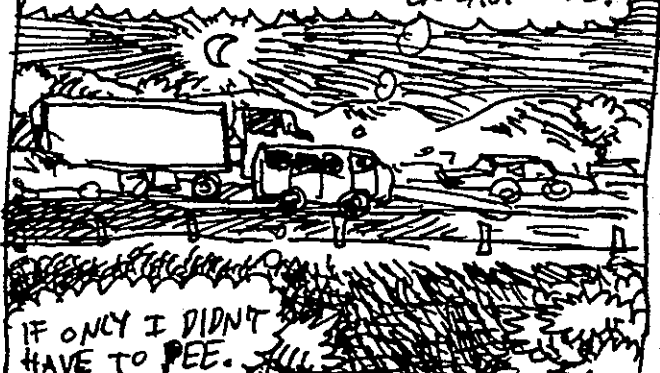
YEAH, BUT WHAT IF THE WORLD ENDS AT THE MILLENIUM? THEN I'LL WISH I TRIED. BESIDES, THIS VAN COULD CRASH + KILL US ALL IN FIVE MINUTES ANYWAY. I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.



SUCCESS!!

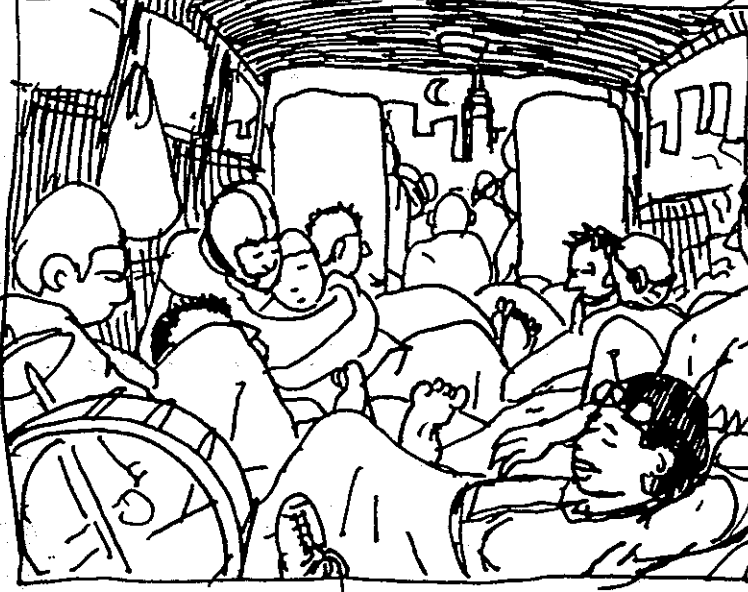
WELL OF COURSE SHE LIKES ME, SHE READ MY COMIC BEFORE TALKING TO ME! THAT'S HOW I NEED TO MEET ALL PEOPLE.

AHH, HEAVEN. A RELAXING END TO MY TRIP. DOZING OFF AND SMOOTCHING A GIRL WHO LIKES ME FOR MY COMIC BOOK ART IN A VAN PACKED FULL OF COOL KIDS, HEADING STRAIGHT BACK TO THE LOWER EAST SIDE!



IF ONLY I DIDN'T HAVE TO PEE.

By the time we got to the Holland Tunnel into Manhattan, the need to piss was at an absolutely critical state.



WE'RE ONLY ABOUT A MILE AWAY NOW, BUT I DON'T THINK I CAN HOLD IT THAT LONG! MAYBE I SHOULD JUMP OUT HERE AND GIVE KASIA AND DAN DIRECTIONS TO MY HOUSE?

OR I COULD JUST MEET THEM ON ELEVENTH STREET, WHERE THE VAN IS HEADED. TOO LATE, WE'RE MOVING AGAIN!

The ensuing agony was monumental!
STOPPED AT ANOTHER LIGHT?!?!
GOTTA BITE MY LIP AND HOPE THE PAIN
DISTRACTS MY BLADDER... I CAN'T
EVEN MOVE IN HERE! HOLY FUCK
THIS IS TOTALLY UNBEARABLE!!
I'VE NEVER HAD TO PEE SO BAD
IN MY LIFE!



NOW THIS BOUNCY VAN IS
MAKING ME FART AUDIBLY!
BUT I CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH
THAT... THIS IS TAKING EVERY iota
OF CONCENTRATION TO HOLD IN...

UH-OH, NOW
KASIA AND DAN
ARE CONFERRING
ABOUT SOMETHING...

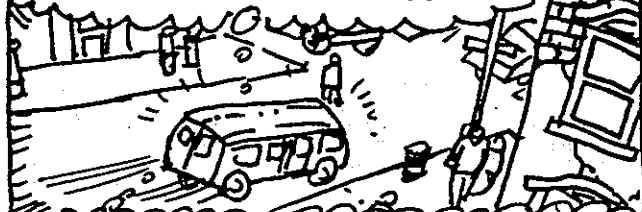


DO YOU THINK
IT'S POSSIBLE
TO DROP US OFF
AT GRAND CENTRAL
STATION
INSTEAD?

IT'S NOT
EVEN TWO AM,
MAYBE WE CAN
STILL CATCH
THE LAST
TRAIN UPSTATE...

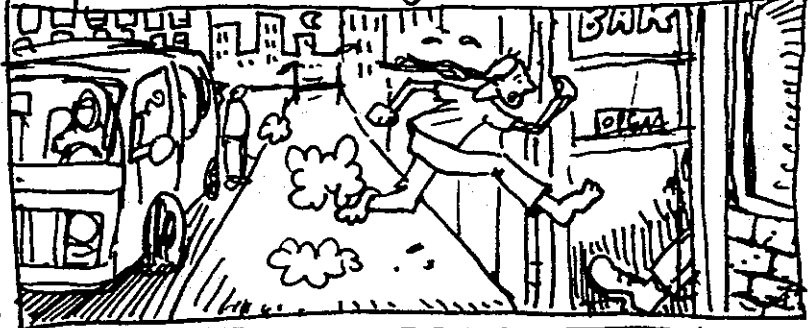
EXACTLY AS I SUSPECTED! FINE!! I DON'T
CARE IF MY FARTS REPEL YOU! I DON'T FUCKING
CARE IF YOU COME HOME TO FOOL AROUND WITH ME! DO
YOU HAVE ANY CONCEPT HOW MANY GALLONS OF
RAW PISS ARE WITHIN A NANOSECOND OF
FLOODING THIS ENTIRE VAN?!?!?

EVERYTIME THIS THING BOUNCES, IT JOLTS
ANOTHER FART OUT OF ME! BUT I DON'T
GIVE A FUCK ANYMORE!!



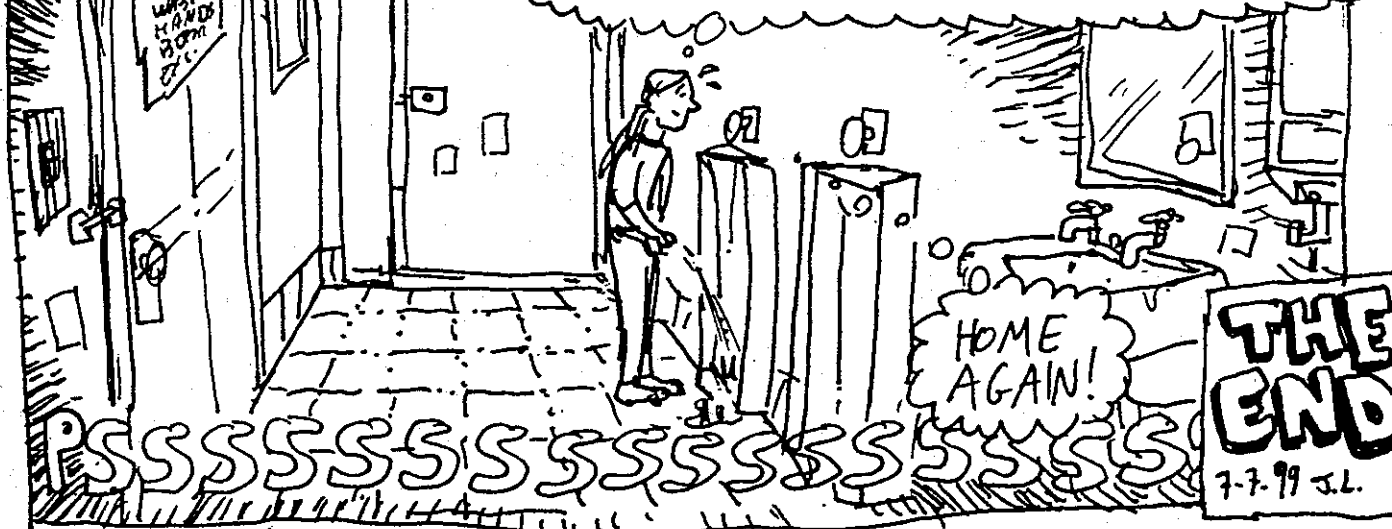
I HAVE TO PISS RIGHT NOW!!!

Indescribable minutes later we pulled to a stop
at last, on 11th street between A and B. I
leaped at barefoot and jetted into the nearest bar...



And thus, at about one-thirty A.M.
Sunday morning, April 25th...

AAAAAAAHN!!!



HOME
AGAIN!

THE
END

7-7-99 J.L.

floor, then hit the bathroom to give Kasia the easy chance to place Dan between us, but when I returned she was on the floor with the spot next to her available. A good sign, but I still wasn't about to bust a move.

It was pretty late and I was almost asleep.

CAN I ASK
YOU SOMETHING?

SURE

WHAT ARE THOSE EXCERSIZES THAT YOU WERE DOING IN YOUR COMIC?

OH, THOSE'RE, LIKE, THESE
PRACTICE EXERCISES I'M
DOING TO TRY TO GET DIESEL
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY FIRE-
FIGHTER EXAM...

(HA! REALLY?)

YEAH!

...ARE YOU JUST
GONNA GO TO SLEEP?

I DON'T KNOW.

Abort an hour later



I'VE BEEN FINGERING
HER FOR A WHILE BUT
I CAN'T TELL IF SHE
CAME OR NOT...

THAT "OH
MY GOD" WAS
AN ENCOURAG-
ING SIGN, BUT
THEN NOTHING
SEEMED TO
HAPPEN.

SHE SEEMS NOT TO SHOW A VAST
INTEREST IN SATISFYING ME. THAT'S
OKAY, THOUGH, HAVING HOOKED UP
AT ALL IS SATISFACTION ENOUGH -
WHAT'S THAT FLICKERING ORANGE
GLOW FROM THE TERRACE?

FUCK, THAT'S
NOT STREET
LIGHTS!

THE TERRACE
IS ON FIRE!

 filled a pot of water, which I then slopped onto our bed stuff on my way to the fire. 

SORRY!

MAYBE I'LL JUST SLOW TO A STOP.

JEEZ,
WAY TO GIVE
ME A HEART-
ATTACK!

GREGG MUSTA
NOT PUT A CIGARETTE
OUT ALL THE WAY..
GRRR!!

WHAT WOULD'VE
HAPPENED IF NO ONE HAD
BEEN AWAKE TO NOTICE?
IT'S 4 IN THE MORNING!
HAT REALLY PISSES ME

..AND THERE WE WERE
JUST TALKING ABOUT
FIREMAN STUFF, TOO!

Ⓜ We just went to sleep after that, and they left in the morning. I gave Kasia my number, but I didn't get hers and she's never called.

TONY HIGHTOWER INTERVIEWED

FINALLY! TONY HIGHTOWER SPEAKS TO VETERAN ANTIFOLK INTERVIEWER JON BERGER ABOUT ANTIFOLK, CANADA, ALBUMS, BOOKS, AND MAYBE ACCORDIONS...

AM: Mr. Hightower, you're a recent immigrant to the City. You'd been in Toronto for a whole mess of years. You'd made a name for yourself. You were one of the highlights of the city's nascent AntiFolk movement. You had a band, and were just putting out an album when you pulled the plug on your life and moved to New York. What in God's name possessed you to come down?

TONY: You know, you're right. My God, what have I done?! Toronto has an awesome local scene, with lots of songwriters & clubs that'll let you do basically whatever the hell you want, fans of independent music who like to go out and drink, two or three good radio stations and lots of alt-weeklies & dailies. And Canada, even though it's a huge country without any people in most of it, has a supportive and thriving touring scene - you can tour the Trans-Canada Highway forever & make a decent living in the smaller towns.

My problem was that I wanted more than that. The music community in Canada is very small - the whole country's musical tastes run through the ears of about six people who more or less don't like each other. I just finished this new album, and it's really fucking good, good enough that I had to, y'know, find out how good it really was. And that wasn't going to happen anywhere other than in New York.

AM: Why New York? Because it's the center of the known world? Does that matter so much now with technology leaping and bounding in all possible directions?

TONY: It matters less and less where you're based these days, but it still matters. It's a lot easier to get into some poor unsuspecting impresario's face (or touring partner, or publicity type, or whoever) if you're in the same town as they are. And Toronto, while it has lots of players and clubs, and enough drinkers to keep the scene going, didn't have a whole lot of anything else (zines, publicists, bookers, the kind of people that help start worldwide movements). New York, being (sure, I'll agree with you) the center of the known world, is home base to the best of the best of the best of all these people. That is why I'm here. In Toronto, I felt like a flower (or a weed) pushing its way through the pavement. Why knock myself out just to survive long enough to get run over by the dump truck of apathy there when there's a big fertile meadow right over here?

AM: How do you find NYC?

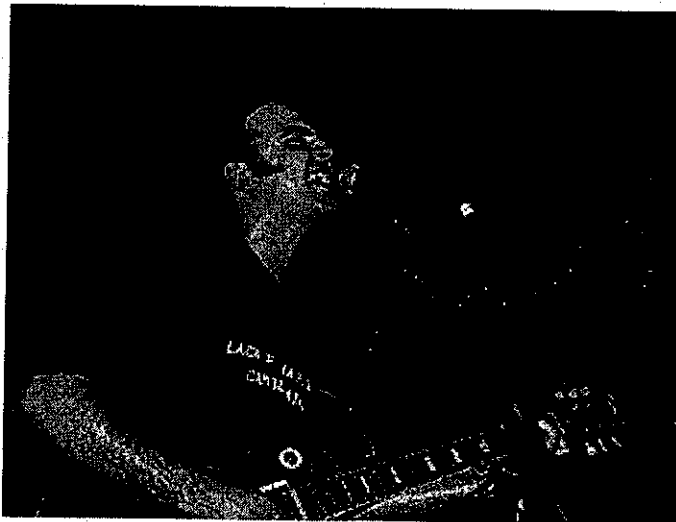
TONY: Make a right at Albany and follow the signs. There is an immense well of energy just under the pavement of this city that keeps everyone running. The people who can succeed here are the

ones that can harness that energy without it burning themselves out. Everyone I've met here shares one trait, and that's the absolute desire to be the best at whatever they're most passionate about. That fucking rocks, and that's why I'm here.

AM: How has it been acclimating yourself to New York, as a fucking foreignerlike you are? Have you had any difficulty finding a home, a phone, e-mail, friends, family, whatever?

TONY: Well you know, Jon, when I fell off the back of the Toronto turnip truck back in October, I had nothing - no clothes, no teeth, no class, I was just a nude guy with a getar with two strings on it and a bunch o'sawngs and a dream, wanderin up & down Avenue C all hours of the night screaming Lach's name like a banshee. And now, well, the limos, the supermodels, the hot & cold running scotch from the taps in my penthouse, well ... maybe it's time to go see a dentist. Oh, alright. It's been a lot easier (touch, um, touch wood) than I thought. My phone only got hooked up a couple of weeks ago, because someone was using my social security number for their own service & I had to prove to Hell Atlantic that I was really me and not this other felon. But aside from that, I can't believe how smoothly everything's happened. I have a decent apartment, I'm a little closer to my family, and even the uncool parts of the antifolk scene are still pretty damned cool. The Fort is appropriately named - it's like the clubhouse, where people go to hang out when they're not at Raven or Brownie's or out in Philadelphia or the Bronx or someplace. People here have been warmer than I could have imagined. After only a couple of months, I really like it here, and I've made a few friends I respect and admire, and who (far as I can tell) don't hold my fucking foreignerhood against me. (In fact, many of them are fucking foreigners too! We go to special parties away from the born & bred NYers, where we do nothing but play fucking Foreigner albums and play pinochle & cuss & spit & stuff, really let our hair down, you know.)

Okay. One thing I've found that I'm still getting used to: here in New York, there's an awful lot of people talking shit all the time. They got this on the go, this is happening, such&such from so-and-so is coming to my show, I found a producer-slash-promoter-slash-publicist-slash-extremely influential entity that is going to propel me and anyone I'm currently boinking into the stratosphere, wherever that is. All that desperate chatter never stops, does it? People in Toronto didn't talk shit to each other as much. Maybe because there wasn't really any way out of the (slightly smaller) local scene there, and if someone managed to get called up somewhere, everyone knew about it pretty



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quickly. Here, the field is a little more wide open. You can disappear for a little while & then show up a little further downstream in a slightly different guise. So the yakyakyak maybe serves a purpose. I suspect I'll just have to get used to it.

AM: How do you find AntiFolk?

TONY: Here's a dirty little secret - AntiFolk is really what used to be called Folk. It's not even dressed up in anything. That's why Joe Bendik can sing Folsom Prison Blues and everyone understands both the joke and the homage, or why every other performer can quote/cover/namedrop Bob Dylan or Joni Mitchell or Laura Nyro or Elvis Costello and we largely understand. This rebel pose is part of a grand folk tradition going back to Charley Patton & Woody Guthrie & before, and it's cool that it's continuing and changing. The difference between "Antifolk" and "Folk" is that "Folk" these days is like doo-wop or skiffle or something, dinosaur music that's stuck in its time. It can't change itself anymore, while AntiFolk is just the name that modern songwriters in these parts are using to separate themselves from the Peter Paul & Marys and Harry Chapins of the world.

AM: Small point. I'm not sure if Bendik's ever done Folsom. Hamell does Folsom. Bendik lifts from lots of people, but his covers, recently, have been Beethoven and Ricky Martin.

TONY: Okay, Hamell, then. I think the point still stands - Beethoven was as punkasfuck as anyone else, and hey, I wouldn't rule Our Pal Enrique Morales out yet, Groucho - he may yet turn out to be Too Much Loca, Not Enough Vida, if you know what I mean. We can only hope.

AM: Isn't there any change? Isn't there a difference in style, or attitude, that's less reverential than the tradition?

TONY: There doesn't have to be. Rebels get old. All "revolutionary" acts, whether political or social or artistic or musical or whatever, either succeed and become part of the new tradi-

tion, or peter out. The greatest transgressions are those that reject this tradition of rebellion completely. But those revolutions are unmarketable, not very sexy, and so will not, as I think has already been mentioned by someone else, be televised. "Rebellion" (don't confuse it with the real thing) is a commodity. A new haircut, a couple swear words in places they weren't before, and boom, meet the new boss.

Now the Real Thing still exists, and may yet carry the day, but to be effective at all, true rebels, due to their absolute otherness, have to convince people one at a time that what they're doing, despite its lack of media coverage and thus legitimacy, is really cool. That's why new rebel musics, like the blues or rockabilly or punk (or now antifolk) is so excellent when people first start playing it. That's why Hamell on Trial is a mythical figure. He's the Johnny Appleseed of Antifolk. Like the Ramones used to be for punk, like Hank Williams was for Country. He's spreading the gospel from house to house, block to block, town to town, everywhere he goes. He's just this much ahead of his time.

See, I have a dream, that one glorious day, there will come a time in, like, 2008, when the bastard children of Hamell & Mojo Nixon & Lach & Shawn Santalucia & Major Matt Mason & Mike Rechner & Adam Brodsky & me will be sawing away on their acoustic guitars on a Gap Ad or whatever about how fucked up they are, blowing their green hair out of their eyes & glaring at the camera like, *c'mon, heckle me, motherfucker*. O, what a bright sunshiney day that will be!



MAKING SENSE OUT OF SEX

It isn't easy
trying to figure out
the difference between loneliness and love
the space between a kiss and a miss
It isn't easy making sense out of sex.

As you try to clue me in,
screw me into your life
- a permanent fixture -
as you try to ease my mind
you make it no less hard to make sense out of sex.

Still, as you insert...
Your coin of your realm into me and mine
While you struggle to help me
- a private dancer - understand
while I worry about some dirty copper
getting into me...

As I finally begin to make some cents out of sex
I feel somehow rewarded.

Jonathan Berger

Storming the Fort!

Spewing a salvo of sentences that will stun,
surprise, satisfy, suckle, smash and
smorgasbordify you into submission... surely!

FEBRUARY 17TH, 2000 Sidewalk (94 Avenue A) 8:00.

TONY HIGHTOWER INTERVIEWED

ent, less like a mixed tape and more like, oh, a mural.

AM: What kind of success are you looking for?

TONY: I love writing, more than anything else in the world. Songs, novels, obituaries, whatever. I love to write stuff. Also I'm a big suck. So performing serves two neuroses at once. If I can keep recording and selling records and getting people in love to hum my songs, then I've done my job. I have lots of larger goals as well, like ending poverty & coming up with a viable and sustainable alternative to economic imperialism, but — well, you know, first things first.

AM: You've put out two albums now: *Messiahs Galore* and *A Single Angry Word*. Each one is filled with great songs and strong performances. Do you prefer one over the other?

TONY: After I finished *Messiahs Galore*, I wasn't crazy about it for a while - I didn't like the songs, I would have rearranged it, all the songs were in the wrong order, it was my first, so of course I learned from it and so at the end I would have done it differently. But then I heard someone play it at a party, and I thought, it does sound pretty alive, doesn't it? And Neil Gardiner is the best accordion player I have ever heard. *A Single Angry Word*, on the other hand, took more time, money and effort to complete, and it feels a bit more, whaddyacallit, sophisticated. The first one I think stands fine on its own, but I'm still all proud-papa about the new one. Funny thing, though - the new band I think is going to wind up sounding rather more *Messiahs* than *A Single Angry Word*, all raw & rhythmic & righteous.

AM: Do you see a difference in the songwriting from one album to the next? You still seem to play a fair amount of the material on *Messiahs Galore*.

TONY: Some of the stuff on *Messiahs Galore* I still totally love - "What I Didn't Do On My Summer Vacation," "Last Night," & "Dead Awhile" are still pretty good songs, far as I can tell - and you know, "The I In Iconoclast" sounds a lot better in New York than it ever did in Toronto, and I don't know why. Something about the pace of this city serving as a better backdrop for that song's furious self-mocking swagger than comparatively nicey-nice Toronto was. There were definite differences between the two CDs. The first record was written under a heavy punk influence by a fucked-up postadolescent (me) who had a genuine medical need to listen to the Replacements' *Let It Be* album at least once a day. I really think I wear my influences on my sleeve on the first record - there's so much Nick Lowe and Mojo Nixon and Buddy Holly and the Clash ("White Guy In Lee's Palace?" What was I thinking?), whereas *A Single Angry Word* sounds a lot more melted together, to me at least. Also I've been listening to a lot of modern power pop in the last 18 months or so, and so there's a bit of an Everclear/Sloan/Fastbacks thing in it that I really dig.

Also, *Messiahs Galore* was, like, the best of everything I had written up to that point, where *A Single Angry Word* was a lot more of a particular place & time, which makes it more coher-

ent, less like a mixed tape and more like, oh, a mural.

AM: What have you done for Word? What kinds of opportunities did you think would be available for you in the US?

TONY: I'm looking for three things here. One, I'm going to see what I can do promotionwise with *A Single Angry Word*. Now that I have an apartment & a phone & proper e-mail access again, I can follow up with the people I've already met, and start harassing the people I have to. Two, I wanted to find a home & a community I felt good being a part of, with people who are producing challenging stuff and are as committed to being as good as they could be at what they were doing (something else that was mostly missing in Toronto, actually).

As for what I've done so far, I've set up a home base from which I can do these things. Other than that, I've basically spent the last couple of months getting settled in, making myself at home in my new city, getting to know people. It's been nice.

AM: What inspires your writing? Which form of media are you most comfortable with?

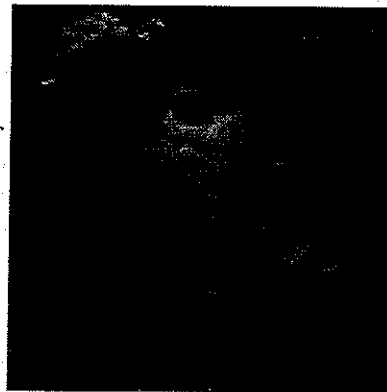
TONY: I don't mean to get all airy & wierd, but there is so much poetry and art in everyone. People are a lot more wise and clever than they usually give themselves credit for. And even the dumb ones will sometimes put words together in a way that will just ring as odd and magical in my head. Everyone can hear this stuff if they just listen for it. I love copying this stuff down, and that's where 90% of my songs & stories come from, matching phrases with ideas and overlapping them on top of conversations I've either had or heard.

Also, I make it a point to fall in love at least twenty-five times a day. Nothing says inspiration like being smiled at.

As far as being comfortable, right now, I'm really into songwriting, just because I've been focusing on it for a few years now & there's so much ground to cover, stylistically. I could spend my whole life just writing verse-chorus-verse & probably never get bored, but I'd be just as happy spiritually, oh, writing a column for a newspaper, or maybe a screenplay, or manifestoes for some anarcho-leftist blanket organization. Ultimately I suspect I'll start writing novels again once this boogie woogie thing I've been doing runs its course. Unless I get bored.

AM: You've written novels? What other writing styles have you experienced?

TONY: I started out as a teenager figuring that one day I'd win the Nobel Prize for Literature. I decided after reading Faulkner & GG Marquez that that was the noblest vocation I could choose. So I started working my way up to writing nov-



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els. Now I was like 16 at the time, and I had the attention span of a hummingbird, so I stunk at writing something coherent that was that long. But I stuck at it, and wrote every day, and even though the first two novels I finally finished will never see the light of day, the writing practice was good, and many fragments & chapters & stuff have become songs or other stories or anecdotes elsewhere.

What else did I do... Well, I was a freelance music critic in Toronto. I had a real shitty attitude about criticism then, though. I was 23 and had a chip on my shoulder this big. Now I've, like, matured: I even actually like some of the bands I hear. Maybe I've mellowed some. Then again, maybe the musicians are just better.

I also wrote book reviews for a Canadian trade magazine. I was their weird-book guy. I'd get the stuff written phonetically, the S&M terrorist novels, things without punctuation, screwy shit the more staid CanLit people didn't or wouldn't deal with. But after about a year, the magazine got sold to some conservativist consortium, & they decided it would be a lot more profitable to have five people catching Margaret Atwood's farts every month than go out and find new authors & maybe some other good books. So that was that.

AM: So you're trying to tell me you were a member of Canada's stillborn AntiBook scene, before the corporate masters destroyed it? What was that like?

TONY: I guess you could say that - I never thought of it that way, but... I guess I always thought zines and self-published chapbooks were the real anti-books. Literature never had a punk movement the way rock and roll did, until desktop publishing and cheap (or free) photocopies made DIY publishing worthwhile and possible for lots of people.

And by that definition, Canada's Anti-book scene is thriving quite nicely, as good as here, far as I can tell.

It's just like now, where it's easy enough to make a CD that anyone can do it. And now lots of people in the AF scene have CD's they can share or trade or sell or whatever. This is awesome. It's another medium for performers & songwriters to get their shit out, and the only surprising thing is when you get out of New York City and realize that it's not like this everywhere. Because it's not.

AM: How have you been keeping yourself busy? What creative projects have you been involved in?

TONY: I just signed on to play the lead in Peter Dizozza's musical, "Prepare to Meet Your Maker", which will show at Baby Jupiter every Sunday in February, and I'm going to be rehearsing this new band I've put together, with members of Lunchin' and Testosterone Kills, as well as John Kessel. Aside from that, I've overhauled my website & am now just taking the bugs out of it. Anything else? Nope, I think that's it.

AM: Are there differences in putting a band together in New York and in Toronto?

TONY: Not really. There's tons of excellent players, and you're just trying to find people you like and a style that sounds good. I'd bet that's pretty much universal.

Although there are far fewer Celtic players in New York than Toronto. God, every other band has a half-dozen Gaelic songs in their set, and two fiddlers and a hurdy-gurdy, and I like the stuff, no really, but in Toronto, it's a bit relentless. But that's just the scene up there.

AM: Will your new band have an accordion?

TONY: Oh yeah! I'd love to go back to that acoustic anti-Cajun power pop vibe. Do you know anyone who might be interested?

Report from the Fort (continued)

1/28/00 - C-Note

AJ Cope is something of a superhero to the AntiFolk community. Unfortunately, she's sort of like Plastic-Man. As one of the biggest players in getting people gigs, in regularly organizing evenings of AntiFolk entertainment, in just making sure that members of the tribe converge, the beautiful and talented AJ is one of those people that makes the AntiFolk scene a scene. And, like so many important players, she fails to get the respect she deserves.

Anyway, Friday night at the C-Note was another evening of excellence for AntiFolk pleasure-seekers, featuring new gun JC Sone opening up the evening, followed by all-stars Barry Bliss, Kenny Davidsen, Spencer Chakedis, and then, finally, a set by Ms. Cope herself. Playing alongside her was stalwart guitarist Brian Halloran, but also on board was some nameless drummer guy and next month's It Boy, James Telfer. Telf's presence made a band out of AJ's ragged crew, leaving the small but consistently growing crowd to groove to the rock style beyond the country-folk songs of the super-heroic AJ Cope. (Jonathan Berger)

1/31/00 - Don't Tell Mama

Funny... Sheesh Alternative Variety Show. This was a fast paced cabaret show. Kim Carnes sound-alike Haale sang a couple tunes, Jon Berger delivered a sharp economical set of high energy poems. Sharon Fogarty was very funny, working with Al Quagliata and Kelly Sue Deconnick on improvisational themes. "Downtown Vocals" is a small pop choir, with a refreshing sound. There were three stand up comedians: Jason Hefter was rather mundane with his penis jokes and send-ups of TV commercials. Leanna Conley (Who writes for Dennis Miller and Politically Incorrect) was decidedly unfunny. The show's producer, Jason Grossman was genuinely hilarious. Overall a good show. (Borge Haine)

2/1/00 - Elbow Room

Chris Dillons rock group "Das Frogge" produces a headbanging pseudo-goth sound. Besides a splendid version "Toxic Boy" this show kind of sucked. Before the show Chris told me he was in a low spirits. Maybe that explains the performance, but it certainly doesn't justify it. (Borge Haine)

The Schedule for The Sidewalk Cafe

(for further information - 212 473-7373)

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

Tues. Feb. 8- 7:30- Steve Lavner, 8:30- Robert Bob Roberts, 9-D.A.Jones, 9:30- Ben Arnold, 10-Jason Pendergraft, 11- Al Lee Wyer

Wed. Feb. 9- 8-Thin Crawl and Agro, 9- Ekayani and the Healing Band, 10-Urban A Capella

Thurs. Feb. 10- 7:30- Molly's Last Word, 8-Boshra, 9- Inspector Nine, 10- Kenny Young and the Eggplants, 11- Peace By Piece

Fri. Feb. 11- 8- Bree Sharp, 9-Kirk Kelly, 10- Bionic Finger, 11- Dan Zweben, 12- Jarrod Gorbelt

Sat. Feb. 12- 8- Betsy Thomson, 9-Janet Vodka, 10-Circus, 11- Mia Johnson and Hoagy

Sun. Feb. 13- Valentine's Day Special: Lady's All-Star Hootenanny with: 7:30- Marilee, 8-Randy Russo, 8:30- Michal The Girl, 9-Haale, 10- Atoosa, 11- Jude Kastle, 12- Laurel Hoffman

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

Tues. Feb. 15- 7:30- Jim Knable, 8-Reclinerland, 8:30-Evan Samuels, 9-Cincha, 10-Tryst, 11-Bill Dixon

Wed. Feb. 16- 8-The Boling Suite, 9-Kirsten Williams, 9:30-Brian Piltin, 10-Fred Haring, 10:30-Linda Draper, 11-Cynthia Hilts Trio

Thurs. Feb. 17- 7:30 - James Jewel, 8 - Jon Berger, 9 - TBA, 10 - Deborah Marlowe, 11 - Kenny Young and the Eggplants, 12 - Bill Popp & the Tapes

Fri. Feb. 18- 8-Diane Cluck, 8:30-Lara Ewen, 9-Troy Boosboro, 10- John Kessel, 11- Joe Bendik and The Heathens, 12-Cedric and So So Human

Sat. Feb. 19-8-Patsy Grace Band, 9- Major Matt Mason USA, 9:30- Pre-War Yard Sale, 10- Joie Dead Blonde Girlfriend, 11- Lach and The Secrets, 12- Grey Revell

Sun. Feb. 20- 8 - Badger, 8:30 - Karen Rush, 9 - Deborah Lucas, 10 - Doug Stambler, 11 - Peter Dizozza, 12 - Kenny Davidsen

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

Tues. Feb. 22- 7:30-Andrea Halverson, 8-Kevin Brady, 9-Craig Chessler, 9:30- Stoley, 10- Liz Skillman

Wed. Feb. 23- MP3 Allstars featuring: 8-Josh Alan, 9- Pat Cisarano 10-Phoebe Legere, Elvis Sinatra, Lach and Friends

Thurs. Feb. 24- 7:30-Patty Giurleo, 8- Tom Nishioka, 9-Jun, 10- Michal Towber, 11- Drew Blood, 12- The Bones

Fri. Feb. 25- 8- Three Normal Humans, 9- Fragile Male Ego, 10- Shameless, 11- Bobby Syvarth Combo

Sat. Feb. 26- 8-Stephanie Wright, 10- The Humans, 11- Life in a Blender, 12- The Costellos

Sun. Feb. 27- 8-Dave of Dave's Place, 8:30-Micheal Casceel, 9-Jim Flynn, 9:30- Time Wounds All Heels, 10- Joie/Dead Blonde Girlfriend's Mega Antisocial

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

Tues. Feb. 29- 8-Kevin Kadish, 8:30-Celia, 9-Sean Lee, 9:30-Tom Keso, 10- House of Pernod, 11-Jamie Stellini

COMING ATTRACTIONS IN MARCH:

Wed. March 1-TBA

Thurs. March 2- 8-Tom Nishioka

*Fri. March 3- 7-Trancesenders, 8-Sprinkle Genies,
11- L. F. Ant*

*Sat. March 4- 9-Ruth Gerson, 11- Ultra Venus,
12- Dots Will Echo*

*Sun. March 5- 8-Elektra Complex, 8:30- Andrew
McCann, 9:30- Micheline, 10- Chris Glenn*

Coming Soon:

Stone Soup!

Ask for it by name...