

IPSO

FOUR DOLLARS • ISSUE 6

FACTO



Epic

“After the summer holidays, I decided to shed

my clothes for Ever.” “Seduced by



Collins and Jeff Beck. On Epic Cassettes, Compact Discs and Records.

the call of the ocean. “Waltz Darling.” Malcolm McLaren and the Bootzilla Orchestra. Featuring Bootsy



Artwork by Tom Bonauro. Originally done for center, an experimental graphics/litography project

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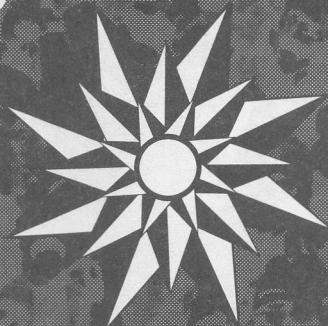
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SERVICES

popularity



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IPSO FACTO #6 - FALL 1989

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John C. Tripp

BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Arthur A. Boulanger

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Geoff Katz

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Stuart Patterson

CONTRIBUTORS

Kim Weller, Scott Burlingham, John Benet, Glenn Helfand, Steven R. Gilmore, Amy Fischel, Rex Ray, Chuck Conner, Tom Bonauro, Gordon Wood, Scott Taves, Aou & JJ, Anne Peshapa, Paresh, Ivan, Tornado

COVER DESIGN

Steven R. Gilmore

SPECIAL THANKS

Patricia
Karen Jacob
Roy Carr

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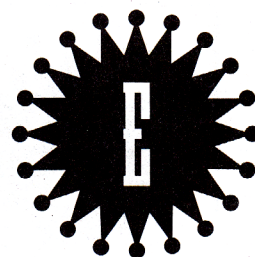
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TWO FORTHCOMING BOOKS BY ~~RESEARCH~~ PUBLICATIONS: A REISSUING OF DANIEL P. MANNIK'S CLASSIC *FREAKS - WE WHO ARE NOT AS OTHERS* WITH "LOTS OF PHOTOS" AND AN ANNOTATED VERSION OF *THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION* - BY J.G. BALLARD HIMSELF - ENIGMA RECORDS HAS PULLED THE PLUG ON BLAST FIRST AND WILL NO LONGER BE DISTRIBUTING THAT LABEL'S RELEASES. BLAST

FIRST'S NEW YORK OFFICE WILL CLOSE AND OPERATIONS WILL RETURN TO LONDON - *EACH MAN KILLS THE THINGS HE LOVES* IS FORMER VIRGIN PRUNE GAVIN FRIDAY'S NEWEST AMALGAMATION, WITH KEYBOARDIST THE MAN SEEZER. SOPPY CABARET MAKEOVERS WITH HAL WILLNER PRODUCING AND SEVERAL RENOWNED GUEST MUSICIANS. VISITING THE U.S. THIS FALL - IN SAN FRANCISCO NOVEMBER 2-5, **THE 5TH ANNUAL FILMS ARTS FESTIVAL**, FEATURES INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FROM THE S.F. BAY AREA. CALL 415 552-8760 FOR INFO - OUT ON CITY LIGHTS BOOKS - *ADVENTURES ON THE ISLE OF ADOLESCENCE*, THE SCABROUS CONFESSIONALS OF POETRESS LA LOCA - THE NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP IS AN EXCELLENT ANTI-CENSORSHIP INFORMATION CLEARING HOUSE. PUBLISHES *CENSORSHIP NEWS*, A QUARTERLY REPORT. 2 WEST 64TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10023 - S.F.'S NEW LANGTON ARTS WILL PRESENT *A HISTORY OF LOSS*, A PROGRAM OF VIDEO TAPES THAT MOURNS THE LOSS OF REAL EXPERIENCE IN OUR SOCIETY. THE LOSS OF TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, THE THREAT OF SURVEILLANCE AND OUR INCREASED DEPENDENCE ON TECHNOLOGY ARE THE PROGRAM'S FOCUS. NOVEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 2 - TO BE SEEN AND HEARD - FORMER RYTHM AND NOISE MEMBER TIMOTHY NORTH AND HIS HOVERDRUM - MONDAY NIGHTS AT S.F.'S KENNEL CLUB IS *BYTE*, AN INDUSTRIAL/NEW BEAT EXTRAVAGANZA. **MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO** WILL APPEAR THERE, AND IN OTHER CITIES IN NOVEMBER.



ENTROPY



With contributions from Glenn Helfand,
Paresh, Geoff Katz, and Anne Peshapa

The Cutting Edge II

With distribution becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible for independent film, the International Film Circuit's *The Cutting Edge*, organized by Wendy Lidell, provides much needed exposure for new international film.

Cutting Edge I first introduced American audiences to *Horse Thief*, *A Time to Live* and *a Time to Die*, and *Second Wind*, all of which have since been successful as independent features.

Cutting Edge II promises to do the same for *The Eve of Ivan Kupalo*, Yuri Ilyenko's (Director of Photography for Paradjanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*) version of Gogol's story of the same name; Derek Jarman's *The Last of England*, visionary telling of the fall of England (or the U.S.), and Clemens Klopfenstein's *Macao - Or Beyond the Sea*, a beautiful story of metaphysical travel, amongst others.

The Cutting Edge II will be "on tour" through September 1990 and in the next few months will show in Washington, D.C., Boulder, Olympia, St. Louis and Sante Fe.

Non-profit Glamour

While there are numerous museums and cultural institutions in the works, San Francisco's artistic base lies in a rich history of alternative and non-profit galleries. A relative newcomer to this scene, San Francisco Art-space, over the past three years, has perhaps become the busiest and most glamorous non-profit gallery in town. This multi-faceted operation, the brainchild of outspoken former museum trustee and arts activist Anne Marie McDonald, includes two exhibition spaces (a main gallery and an annex across the street) and a variety of programs with which to offer

exposure to important local, national and international artists who aren't being recognized by larger Bay Area institutions (ie: museums). The impressive roster of previous shows includes Jenny Holzer's enigmatic signs, General Idea's AIDS installation/poster campaign, and Mark Pauline's deafening and dangerous gallery takeover. Currently you can experience an ambitious structure by Lisa Hein which explores the issues of the presentation of art, and installation works by Enrique Chagoya and Irene Pijoan in the Annex. Upcoming is a series of holiday art events under the title "Instinct for Happiness," and exhibitions by former Survival Research Laboratories member Matt Heckert and European artist Rebecca Horn.

Art-space also publishes *Shift*, a handsome art magazine (designed by Rudy Vanderlans who is profiled elsewhere in this issue) which includes essays by prominent art critics like Gary Indiana, interviews, and reviews. The elaborately packaged fall issue, produced on video in collaboration with artist Tony Labat, features on-camera look at the San Francisco Art Institute Performance and Video Department and an actual pillow. The gallery also sponsors a veritable list of programs: The Forum, a discussion/meeting-place for artists and interested individuals; and offers annual painting, sculpture and arts criticism grants to West Coast artists and writers; and there are plans to present Karen Finley's powerful and hilarious play, "The Theory of Total Blame," at SF's Theatre Artaud, and later an unlikely opera collaboration between Finley and Mark Pauline. In November, the gallery will expand its South of Market territory into what was once the Billboard Cafe. The move will attempt to Helms-proof the gallery by getting everyone who eats involved in supporting the arts. By day, the as-yet-unnamed restaurant will feature coffee and food with a portion of every dining dollar going towards funding the art programming. After dark, the space becomes a private performance space/bar for Art-space members—making the whole prospect of supporting the arts much more fun. (1286 Folsom Street, Annex 1329 Folsom Street, San Francisco, 415-626-9100)



1989 Art-space sculpture grant exhibition by Mark Pauline

Sixth Street Studio



The Redstone Press

You've seen the books. The tiny books — neatly packaged in crudely labeled boxes — on Frida Kahlo, J.G. Posada, Frans Masereel, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Much of the recent popularity of these artists can be attributed to these books, released by London's Redstone Press, operated solely by graphic artist turned publisher Julien Rothenstein. Rothenstein began Redstone when he noticed that no books of Frans Masereel's work were readily available in London. He then released Masereel's *Passionate Journey*, with an introduction by Thomas Mann. The "novel told in 165 woodcuts" sold so well that Rothenstein quit his job and became a fulltime publisher.

Redstone has gained a respectable niche with its boxed books. And why the boxes? "People seem to love boxes. They are more personal," said Rothenstein.

Boxed books aren't all that Redstone releases though. A Masereel appointment calender and six silkscreen prints of his woodcuts are also offered. And not all of the boxes are for books. One of Redstone's

more popular editions are a set of 24 postcards of works by and photos of Frida Kahlo, with an essay by Angela Carter.

Rothenstein mentioned two forthcoming releases: a text by Osip Mandelstam, introduced by Bruce Chatwin, to be released soon, and a photography book on Mexico's Day of the Dead Ceremony, with a new twist to the box theme. Inside the box, under the book, will lie a tin skeleton.

Write for catalog: 21 Colville Terrace London W11 2BU. Redstone Press books are available at: FORMA, Nestor's Universe — S.F./ Mythology, Little Rickie, and Civilisation — N.Y./ New Stone Age, MOCA — L.A.

A Day in My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult

If you haven't gotten the joke by now, put on *Cooler Than Jesus* for your Aunt Thelma in Pansy, Alabama and electrify her teeth. She'll most likely take off her bones and dance wicked little jigs with the cats, if she doesn't writer her congressman first. This music is made just for Jesse Helms and Tabatha the Teenage Witch. It's an irreverent adventure of madcap hilarity.

When I spent an evening with the Thrill Kill Kult in San Francisco on their spring tour, they were bouncing up and down on the beds in the Travel Lodge doing a three-ring re-enactment of the Moscow Circus. They were nothing if not fun. The driver of their van had to wear a fake arrow through his head. There was a little squid stuck to the window. I was repeatedly encouraged to take it down and do whatever I pleased for idle amusement — as long as I washed it when we were done. Squids? Yucch! Yumm... Are you well versed in the pleasures of squid?

The following afternoon, a loopy rambling bunch of Thrill Kill boys and Bomb Gang girls romping down Haight and perusing the occult shops on the quieter side streets. Then, into the bars for some story-telling. Like the time that Groovy turned green and floated through a haunted hotel in Gold Rock, North Carolina and they all had the same nightmare in three different rooms — images of bodies wrapped in canvas with cryptic symbols, an apparition that creeps right out of their music.

Just listen to *These Remains or Heresy* on *I See Good Spirits, I See Bad Spirits* where Groovy sings and writhes in a mystically laconic drawl. It's no wonder. He was on 4AD in the seminal days of that label. Now on Wax Trax he shares equal writing for the band with bassist Buzz. They have captured a subtle sensitivity as well as the more punctuated, surging rhythms and cutup creativity that label is known for. The band consistently brings a fresh approach and more varied soundscape to the

electronic dance genre, with such additions as the Bomb Gang Girls, a voluptuous trio of dancers who also add outrageous quips to the songs in sampled form.

Road manager Captain Dave was once a Chinese linguist at Fort Bragg teaching interrogation techniques. It didn't take water torture to get him talking though. He was affable and friendly, a big bear of homespun hospitality with the computer background and musical sense to unveil some surprises about himself as well as the band. Music spun of fractal geometric structures and cadcam design. Look for the Control Boys, a possible future project with he and Groovy and Chris Connelly.

The Ritual. Well, apparently this girl in Salt Lake City offered herself up to the Kult for unspeakable acts of indulgence. Either with or without her, they spent a day out in some stark desert wasteland and everyone came back with amnesia. No one remembered anything about it. Ask them yourself. If Jesus could conjure up a bout with Satan, I wonder what happened to these lunatics?

Cooler Than Jesus... their new 12", has plenty of steady pulse with the girls on sampled vocals and slices of electronic staccato providing the breaks. I hear Prince, the Flying Lizards and some swinging gospel grand dames. The b-side, *Devil Bunnies* is an upbeat, gum-popping, finger snapping spoof of speedway chicks. It'll give you a tuneup you'll never forget.

My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult. If you can actually be serious about what's going around you, then you can sit and sulk to their haunting moods. If not, then laugh your way to Hell with them in gleeful abandon. For more information write: Wax Trax Records 1659 Damen Avenue Chicago, IL 60647.



Frida Kahlo and husband Diego Rivera.

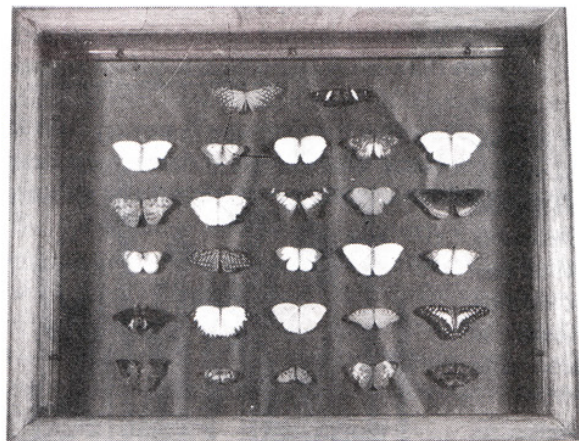


Museum of Jurassic Technology

There is something perversely fascinating about museum dioramas. They are the ultimate connection of art, science and Hollywood falsity; past and present; lifelessness and the living. *The Museum of Jurassic Technology* is an elaborate "institution" dedicated to just such fascinations. A labor-of-love by Los Angeles-based artist and film special effects wizard David Wilson, the "museum" is comprised of nearly 20 understatedly elaborate exhibits and dioramas which combine the traditional physical form and content of museum of natural history presentations with technological glitz and a very dry wit. For the month of October, Wilson has relocated his museum from its permanent Venice, California storefront home to San Francisco's New Langton Arts.

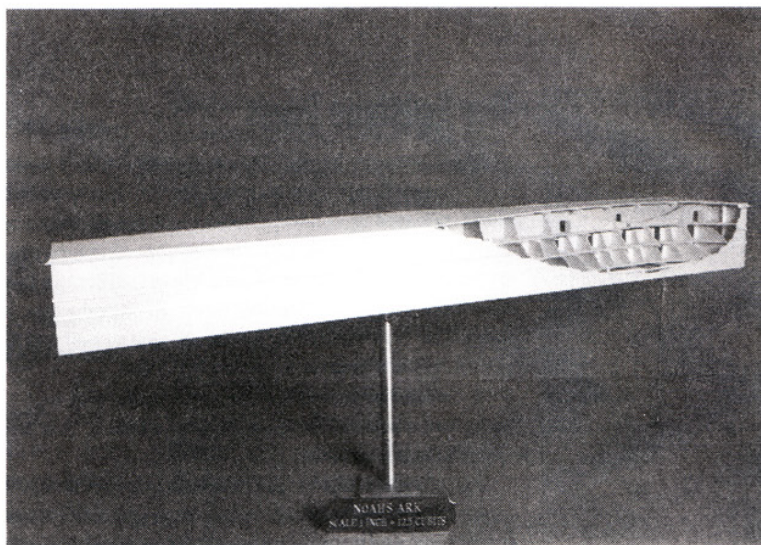
A cross between Ripley's Believe It Or Not and any museum of natural history, the surprisingly well-appointed *Jurassic* visually has more in common with scientific imagination than art theory. In the darkened gallery, we are treated to a series of dramatically lit, official-

looking display cases filled with pseudo-historical objects, stuffed animal heads, and bizarre machinery, each with its own museum-style glowing red buttons and telephone receivers which offer taped explanations of these "phenomenon." Strange, bogus creatures and fabricated historical mythologies and inventions are legitimized within this sepia-toned setting. For example, Wilson presents us with a viewing apparatus that allows



us to see the dreams emanating from a sarcophagus and another that allows us to see the flesh upon a skeletal hand, operating something like an high-tech, inverse version of a pair of joke X-ray glasses. Though the *Jurassic* is fascinating purely for its technological prowess and imagination, it also comments on the truthfulness of objects and information encased within the museum format and theological beliefs—as well being an example of post modernism at its most enticing. Its easy to believe in anything that looks this authentic.

(Through October 28 at New Langton Arts, 1246 Folsom Street, SF. 415-626-5416.)



Noah's Ark as seen at the Museum of Jurassic Technology

13 RECORDS

1. The Beatmasters
Hey DJ, I Can't Dance to that Music You're Playing
2. Nurse With Wound
United Diaries
3. Various Artists
SSR Compilation
4. Mbilia Bel
Dans Phenomene
5. KMFDM
UAI/OE
6. A.R. Kane
Pop
7. African Head Charge
Great Vintage Volume 1
8. Gruesome Twosome
Hallucination Generation (12")
9. Various Artists
The Elephant Table Album
10. Baaba Maal & Mansour Seck
Djam Leeli
11. John Zorn
Spy Vs Spy
12. Sly & Robbie
Silent Assassin
13. Erotic Dissidents
Jack to the Air (12")

M-1 Alternative's new alternative

Using "alternative" to describe music has always been problematic. "Alternative to what?" one asks. Alternative, by definition, implies choice so just about anything could be - Top 40, big band, speed metal, whatever you want. In using "alternative" as part of their name San Francisco's M-1 Alternative play with the word's connotations, and by announcing themselves as "alternative" point out the absurdity of taking such a stance.

M-1 Alternative are fully aware of the ludicrousness of terms like "progressive", "alternative", or "new". The problem is, as a band, they are subject to the labeling they find so absurd. And in a city like San Francisco, everything has a label. The (fortunate) problem is M-1 Alternative don't fit in any of them, "we fall in a category that is not generally considered part of the "San Francisco Scene". We're not death rock, we're not thrash/heavy metal, not San Francisco power pop, we're not psychedelic, we're not speed metal, glam, and we're not rap," said vocalist Bruce

So what kind of band is M-1 Alternative? "We generally think of our music as danceable pop music, but we will play and nobody will dance and people will look at us like we're funny. So, we tend to regard it "privately" as pop music," explains Josh. We just undetectably slipped from the stage of being very strange interpreters of a certain obscure musical tradition into doing something that is totally different from anything else."

That something different is an ecstatic hybrid of styles, ranging from funk to synth-pop. It's what one might expect from two Columbia educated post-modernists. Needless to say, their influences tend to be literary - Gleick, Shandy, Hegel, and Adorno are recent acquisitions. Snotty intellectuals making pop music? Not quite. Though they display a common reserve which could be mistaken for pretentiousness, M-1 Alternative aren't interested in posturing, only in writing the perfect song.

Although they've been together for seven years, only in the last three have M-1 Alternative become a concise unit. They first appeared on C'est la Mort's *Dr. Death Volume One*, with *Rain*, along with Throwing Muses and other unsigned bands. Since then there have been other compilations and a full-length album *La Llorna*, a hauntingly beautiful recording released on their Boxman label.

La Llorna has succeeded in gaining a loyal following for M-1 with airplay on college radio and several commercial stations. But M-1 want what any band wants - a contract. Being difficult to label can have its drawbacks, "most of the time you hear "pop" it's coming from the mouths of someone who is essentially using it to designate a band as bad. what it comes to mean is what the record company says to you when they say, 'well gee...you're not x enough' or 'we're looking for band that are more y' and we find a lot of that," said Josh.

Meanwhile, M-1 Alternative continue to re(de)fine their sound and performance, which features the sublime visuals of photographers Rico Schwartzberg and Jeff Hunt. A second album is also done, and waiting. Write: 2269 Chestnut #143 S.F. 94123



M-1 Alternative - Josh (l), Bruce (r). Photo by Rico.



Boy With Arms Akimbo

They call themselves *Boy With Arms Akimbo*, and like Act Up, are using attention-grabbing techniques to call attention to their cause. Incited to action by the recent spur of censorship attempts by Jesse Helms et al., *Boy With Arms Akimbo* have gone on "art attacks", hanging posters throughout the city that confront people's attitudes towards sex. So far, its membership of 40 or so concerned individuals is anonymous, though their recent participation in the S.F. Arts Commissions "What's Wrong With This Picture" and a planned expansion to other cities indicate they may be ready to come aboveground. Be on the lookout for their activities.





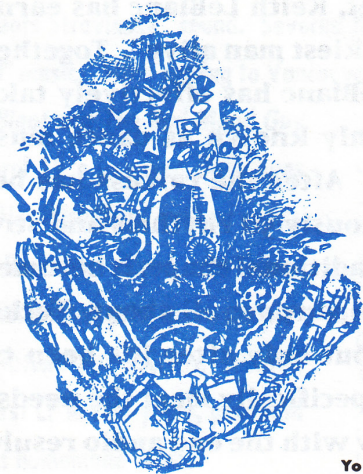
Percussionist Keith LeBlanc cut his teeth as a member of Sugarhill Records (*The Message*, *White Lines*) house band. Moving to London he hooked up with Adrian Sherwood. The rest is history.

TECHNOLOGY WORKS...

TECHNOLOGY DELIVERS

BY SCOTT TAVES

As the drummer who forms the rhythmic backbone behind psycho-funk units Tackhead, Mark Stewart's Maffia and Fats Comet, Keith LeBlanc has earned the heavy rep as "the funkier man alive". Together with Adrian Sherwood, LeBlanc has effectively taken the beast that is commonly known as dance music and turned it inside out. After the carcass has been tattooed with some seriously 3D rhythms and stretched completely out of a traditional shape, it becomes clear what LeBlanc and company are all about. Technology is always welcome, but only after it's been twisted and manipulated to specifically meet the needs of the group. Old meets new with the end audio result being the only one that matters. ►



Yo Mama

Following a fairly typical stint as the drummer for a high school rock band, Keith LeBlanc's musical perspective underwent a drastic about-face in the mid-70's. Skip McDonald and Doug Wimbush (presently guitarist and bassist with Tackhead, the Mafia et al) were in a funk outfit called Wood, Brass and Steel and their drummer had just dropped out. Keith stepped in to fill his place. This move seemed to better reflect his musical tastes at the time – old Stax records, Miles Davis and Jimi Hendrix.

Stage two in LeBlanc's musical development was what he refers to as "boot camp." In 1979, Sugarhill Records (responsible for *The Message*, *White Lines* and many other others) had just released the now legendary *Rappers Delight* by The Sugarhill Gang. The studio was looking for players to record and tour. LeBlanc was subsequently drafted into the ranks. Wimbush and McDonald soon followed and LeBlanc, fresh off of the street and with no track record, spent the next few years cutting his teeth during 'round the clock sessions and massive live rap shows. When internal conflicts at the label and a suspicious lack of credit on recordings became too much, LeBlanc struck out on his own.

As it turned out, LeBlanc didn't need the assistance of anyone to come up with the goods. Solid evidence of this fact is the 1983 Tommy Boy single *No Sell Out*. The cut employed hip hop beats and bass lines together with powerful, passionate dialogue samples from speeches by Malcolm X. *No Sell Out* received brilliant reviews in the press, extensive airplay in England and quickly achieved dancefloor cult status in the U.S. Without a doubt, it introduced the fundamental elements of hip hop to a whole new, predominantly white audience and preceded the current mania for sampling found pieces of dialogue by half a decade.

The most recent chapter in the constantly mutating Keith LeBlanc story began around 1985. In London, ex-Pop Group member Mark Stewart had been suitably impressed with *No Sell Out*. He was working with On-U Sound head and mixologist supremo Adrian Sherwood and it seemed a logical step for Adrian to get in touch with LeBlanc. The fateful meeting occurred at the 1986 New Music Seminar when Tommy Boy president Tom Silverman introduced the two. Thus began a noise-terrorist coalition that would soon produce some of the most timely, crucial records of the decade.

Tackhead's *Mind at the End of the Tether*, *What's My Mission Now?*, *Ticking Time Bomb*, and Mark Stewart and the Mafia's *As the Veneer of Democracy Starts to Fade* are all, without question, essential 80's listening. LeBlanc's solo outings – 1987's *Major Malfunction* and this year's *Stranger Than Fiction* – feature the same ingredients: the fat, evil grooves collide head-on with bass and noise that seem to come from every direction at once. But on LeBlanc's material, the rhythm is right in your face and his drumming and programming brilliance is undiluted and impossible to ignore.

Interviewing Keith LeBlanc is at the same time enticing and slightly intimidating. Enticing because there are few people working within the music business with his inventiveness and raw talent. Intimidating because he seems to embody every stereotype about New Yorkers. If he doesn't feel like talking, he won't and if you're full of shit, he'll certainly let you know. In

short, Keith LeBlanc is someone who seems tired of explaining things to people who don't listen or try to understand.

And central to comprehending what Keith LeBlanc, Tackhead and the Mafia are accomplishing are the concepts of co-operation and equal rights.

Says LeBlanc: "Tackhead is a true democracy. We're never too concerned about each other's feelings. When we work together, it always comes down to the best idea winning out. When Tackhead records, it's a team. There is no line between producer and band."

The popular misconception that Tackhead and the associated projects – including LeBlanc's solo work – are just another outlet

LeBlanc explains: "There is no way in the world I could do a record that sounds like Tackhead on my own even if I wanted to. If people expect this, they're in for quite a surprise." *Stranger Than Fiction* contains elements of Jazz, fusion, hip hop, rock and, for lack of a better term, Tackhead. LeBlanc sees his most recent material as more complete and less improvisational than past works.

If one thing typifies Keith LeBlanc and his music, it is an almost organic relationship between man and machine. Never has technology sounded so spontaneous and fresh. "People like Public Enemy," says LeBlanc, "started doing music when the technology was already available. Turntables and sampling are

"There is no way in the world I could do a record that sounds like Tackhead on my own even if I wanted to. If people expect this, they're in for quite a surprise."

for the unstoppable production talents of Adrian Sherwood starts to break down when explained by LeBlanc. Sherwood, Wimbush, McDonald and LeBlanc all produce, engineer, edit and play. It's almost like shift work, with whoever's in the studio doing what needs to be done. But it still seems impossible to read or hear anything about Keith LeBlanc without Sherwood coming up in the same breath. Is LeBlanc a separate being or what?

"Adrian and I have always had a lot in common," he explains. "It was amazing how similar our ideas were when we met. Especially since we were working on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Adrian and I are friends and we always work well together. In most ways, I like being associated with Adrian and On-U Sound. But Adrian is associated with a lot of people and I don't always want to be thought of as one of the On-U Sound stable."


And Keith LeBlanc's solo recording have gone a long way to ensure that he is never considered a simple cog in the On-U Sound machine. The *Major Malfunction* LP was the first true testament to LeBlanc's independence. Gone were Tackhead's trademark megaphone rants by Gary Clail and the listener was assaulted by a barrage of amazingly complex edits and armour-plated beats. Dialogue samples from news programs, Einstein and numerous unidentified sources wove in and out of the mix like a distant radio signal. But because of the personnel involved (read Tackhead), the LP still had strong ties to LeBlanc's other projects. LeBlanc refers to the record as "raw and incomplete."

Last year, a co-production deal between Vancouver's Netzwerk Productions and Enigma was formed to release LeBlanc's upcoming LP *Stranger Than Fiction*. It looked as if Keith LeBlanc was about to receive his much deserved break that only a U.S. domestic release could make possible. For reasons unknown, Enigma pressed an initial quantity of the LP and then decided to pull out of the project. Certain parties have suggested that the powers that be at Enigma were expecting another Tackhead LP and, upon hearing the record, were less than thrilled.

the tools they use. But it's only one way of doing it."

"I use whatever technology is available until it stops working. Nowadays, you can program almost everything, but I still need to combine live drumming with technology. Shaping the sound naturally instead of digitally."

But after all is said and done, one gets the impression that LeBlanc is still most comfortable working with the rest of the Tackhead crew. "Solo records," he says, "are more of a challenge. When there's no one who you trust to bounce ideas off of, it is so much more difficult. You find out exactly how much confidence you have in yourself."

Netzwerk is currently organizing the details in order to re-release Keith LeBlanc's *Stranger Than Fiction* in North America. This should be done by the end of 1989. The release of Tackhead's new LP, on World Records, is imminent. 

For information on Keith LeBlanc write: On-U Sound 8 St Bernards Road London E6 1PG

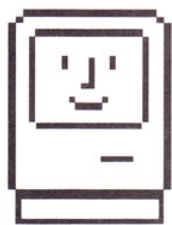
"With the Macintosh the designer can become much closer to the information at hand - he can alter it, he can write it himself and has the opportunity to mold text the way he'd really like it."

-Rudy Vanderlans

BRAVE NEW (MAC) WORLD



BY AMY FISCHEL



In the five years since its introduction, the Apple Macintosh has radically transformed the world of graphic communication, effecting every facet of the medium. With its user-friendly and graphic-intensive interface the Macintosh has initiated the inevitable conjunction of television and the computer. Emerging from this is a new computer-based aesthetic - one which affirms the Macintosh's importance as a design tool. A designer who has successfully assimilated the Macintosh

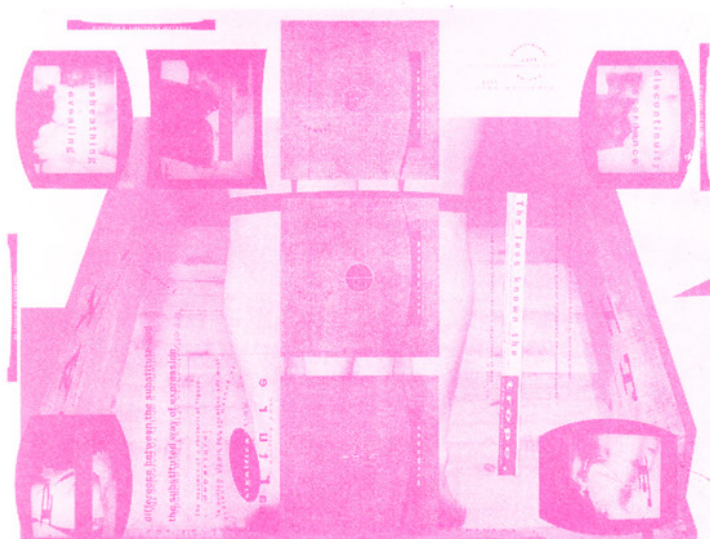
is Berkeley's Rudy Vanderlans. He and partner Zuzano Licko form Emigre Graphics and publish *Emigre* magazine, a purveyor of new Mac design.

The Macintosh is their primary instrument by which original fonts (such as this), and designs are created. Vanderlans has worked with the

Macintosh from its inception and his design has evolved as its parameters have become less restrictive. At Emigre's studio, which contains more computer equipment than standard graphics tools, Vanderlans spoke of the new world of computer design.

Amy Fischel: As Publisher of *Emigre* magazine you handle both its writing and design?

Rudy Vanderlans: Right. I don't have any aspirations to be a writer, but physically I can write very easily on a Macintosh. In the early issues of *Emigre* people would conduct interviews and sometimes I just felt that there was no connection, like the interviewer wasn't knowledgeable enough. With the 4AD issue for instance - out of my own interest I could've asked someone to go and interview the people with 4AD. But then I thought, "well, I have my own thoughts and my own sincere interest, I guess I can just ask the questions myself." Out of that came my own writing, which isn't really writing, it's just



Spreads from *Emigre* (l to r): #9 – 4AD Records, #11 – Graphic Designers and the Macintosh, #13 – Press Time!

typing down whatever it is people say, then editing it. I think the Macintosh is the central point of this, it makes all of that possible, to be your own writer and to design. In a sense it was good that I got involved more in the writing part because I think it contributed to better design. If you want to design very good you have to first have a very good understanding of the subject matter.

AF: Editorial and design are usually such separate functions.

RV: One of the places where I actually learned a lot about editorial design was with the *San Francisco Chronicle* where I worked for three years. There there's a really distinct separation between editors, writers and graphic designers and actually it's the editors that have the final say in most of the graphic design work that goes on there, which bothered me. Also, the editors are very specific about how stories should be laid out and how headlines should be presented in relationship to stories and I always felt that they were overseeing a lot of great possibilities. Now, I also understood that they were working for a gigantic audience so they couldn't do things that were too outrageous, or at least that's what they said. They say, "we've got 750,000 people we're directing this newspaper to and we cannot shock them." So everything was done for a lowest common denominator. If you wanted to do anything out of the ordinary they told you, "you can't do that because people won't understand that." You always ran into this big wall;

everything had to be done in this straight ahead way. *Emigre* gives me the possibility to explore presenting writing in a more expressive and distinct way.

AF: You tend to incorporate your text and graphics quite a bit.

RV: Yes, that came because I thought there was a need to. Text can be more than just this presentation of information, it can actually be expressive in itself. I've always felt it's kind of nice to make the text seductive. I can almost demand from the readers to put in a little bit of effort to figure certain things out like, "why is a headline this way, why is it on its side and why is it in this typeface?" I just like it to activate the reader and this is all possible because of the Macintosh. The whole reading experience is first of all a visual experience and I like the idea of making writing material attractive.

AF: It seems that a lot of more mainstream publications are using the same technique.

RV: There's an enormous amount of trends and styles that are being used and that's because most magazines are not there to look beautiful and to have great articles. For me a magazine is this great vehicle to put ideas and opinions across, but most magazines are not produced for that reason. Most magazines are produced to just make a lot of money. If you want to sell a lot of ads you've got to direct yourself to a very, very large audience. The idea is that

if you make a magazine for a very large audience, again you cannot do very outrageous things; this is what people think, that's not what I think. So, if something works for a large audience everybody is going to do it that way. So you see an enormous amount of copying of trends because nobody dares to step out of the mainstream. If you step out of that it's like, "we don't know what the effect is going to be. If we're going to use six point type in our magazine we might lose 60,000 readers. So, we're not going to do that unless another magazine tries it and proves that it can be done successfully." It's always a lot easier for us, doing alternative

magazines to try out these things that haven't been treaded upon because we have very little to lose. I understand all that but I'm still bothered by large magazines and newspapers where everybody has this idea that the people out there are really stupid so we can't give them anything imaginative. That's what bothered me when I was working at *the Chronicle*, this whole attitude of "just give them what they know and don't make it too imaginative and don't make it too intellectual." And I always thought, "what if we just started giving them something, maybe in the process

we might lose a few readers but you might gain a few on the other side, right?" But they said, "that's all nonsense, we don't do that." So, when you say there are a lot of magazines that look alike and that copy, that's just because they all have to cater to such gigantic audiences and there's so much politics and money involved. Look at a big magazine, you have maybe some thirty or forty people drawing a salary and they just cannot be too experimental, but at *Emigre* we can do that. It's certainly one of the reasons why we want to do it, to kind of experiment with the whole idea of magazine design, which is a lot easier when you don't make a living off it.

AF: With your design there's going to be a certain point where you'll be content with the style you've developed. Do you then reject

everything you've done and adapt an entirely new aesthetic once the "mainstream" has caught up?

RV: I don't think in exactly those terms. *Emigre* is such an experiment for us, each issue is designed entirely different just because we want it to look entirely different each time. The way it ends up looking has a lot to do with what we at that time are working on. We have the past two years really worked hard on trying to use the computer. That in itself became such a problem to solve, like how do you do page layouts in the computer? That's

what we were busy with and what you saw as an end result had much more to do with this struggle of trying to control the computer than it had to do with with, "let's design another style." Of course, eventually it will become a style but that was not what we set out to do.

AF: Do you design a different typeface for each issue?

RV: It doesn't start like that, it's just that the typeface design is a thing that is going on all the time. First of all we think it is somewhat ironic that most typefaces that are available on the Macintosh are typefaces that were

designed in the 30's or 40's when there were different technologies. The first type was designed in lead and looked a certain way because of the material they were designed in. And now these same typefaces that were designed in lead or designed by hand are now being put into the computer and often times are not all that great looking because they are adaptations. It's been our philosophy from the minute we got a Macintosh to design our own typefaces within the computer, within the restrictions of the computer, and that's the process that's going on all the time. We started with very low resolution type when there was only low resolution available and Postscript wasn't available yet. As Postscript became available we started designing typefaces using it. It's just going on and on and on, and it's a very educational thing for us to do. Eventually we like to find usages for these typefaces

ZUZANO LICKO'S COMPUTER FONTS

Oblong

For centuries the design of typefaces has existed on the sidelines of graphic design

as an exclusive discipline reserved for fine calligraphers, engravers and other spe-

Modula

cialists. But today the personal computer provides every artist with the opportunity to create type-

faces relatively quickly and easily. On the electronic page, text and image exist as manifestations of

Matrix

the same media and there is no longer a distinction between illustration and

type. Custom alphabets can be produced letter by letter, as called for by day-

Matrix Narrow

to-day applications. The feasibility of creating letterforms for one time or specific use increases the poten-

tial for more personalization and expression. The adaption of our alphabet to today's digital technology is re-

evaluating the traditions in which today's letterforms are still deeply rooted.

-Zuzano Licko, *Signs of Type*

This is just a sampling of fonts designed by Zuzano Licko. For information on Emigre Fonts write:
Emigre Graphics 48 Shattuck Square Box 175 Berkeley, CA 94704

so we use them in the issues of *Emigre*.

AF: What I've noticed with your typefaces is a clean, sharp edge. Is that mainly because of the limitations of the computer?

RV: The idea, and this is really Zuzana's, was to design typefaces, first of all, that you could easily design in the computer. The program that she's using can do certain things very well and certain things not. The computer can draw beautiful curves, but most of them are simple geometric curves. If you would want to design a typeface that would have very delicate curves, these you just cannot do. So, we would design typefaces that would use defaults and out of that comes a certain look. Also, if you design a typeface in the computer you also have to store it and there's always this problem with memory space. We'd try and design typefaces that don't take up a lot of memory. So, we'd be thinking out of these types of restrictions and out of those restrictions come certain typefaces. We've designed a few typefaces that are very much based on very simple geometric shapes, each character is built up out of the same geometric shape – half circle, quarter circle. Somehow you get a very distinct look that comes out of the computer.

AF: Growing up in Holland was American graphic design a major influence?

RV: It's kind of funny because when I was in Holland where I went to art school and where I actually worked for about three years as a designer, at that time I was most inspired by American graphic design and not so much because it was imperialistic but because I thought at that point it was very expressive. When I went to school in Holland, in the mid 70's to early 80's, design was all influenced by the Swiss international style which was all based on functional design. That was a kind of form follows function idea, it was very stark, it was very traditional and it just dealt with problem solving in graphic design and it wasn't very self-expressive. I was at this time looking at people such as Milton Glaser which was like the God of design here in the United States. People that were drawing typefaces that were three-dimensional; these were really illustrators that were designers at the same time. I thought these people were just doing the greatest things, it was so personal and so human. And we could only use certain elements, it was very, very stark.

I was looking at album covers that came from Warner Brothers at this time and that was actually one of the many reasons why I eventually ended up going to the U.S. And it's somewhat ironic because by the time I left Holland the United States had pretty much started adopting this whole idea of form follows function and the Swiss International style. Holland has started to unmask, picking up on this idea of being more expressive and there were some design studios in Holland in the early 80's who basically were not graphic designers but were fine artists who were starting to do graphic design in a very expressive way. They didn't know anything about type, all they knew was, "yeah, this looks

like a good typeface, it looks fun, let's use it." And they've thrown away all of these ideas about form follows function and they just started to have fun with graphic design. I was in the United States, surrounded by a more stodgy and stale graphic design but for myself it was a great way of getting away from this Dutch design.

AF: Where did *Emigre* come into the picture?

RV: It was about at that time that I finished school at UC Berkeley and after that I was hired by the Chronicle. At this point I was introduced to this whole idea of editorial design and there was a lot of people there who had published their own magazine or were, and this was how I got introduced to magazine publishing and that's where I picked up the idea of starting a magazine, together with two other Dutch artists who I'd met here. At the newspaper there were so many ideas that you couldn't use but I got all these great ideas and I thought it would be nice to have your own magazine to put all these ideas to put into. A magazine was also a great way to get all of your photos published, cause I couldn't get my stuff published, couldn't get into galleries. One of the ideas of the magazine was this really powerful vehicle to show your stuff, having it on the newsstand. So many people would see it; they might not buy it but at least they would pick it up and look through it. Of course, we were tremendously naive about this, we had no idea what it takes to put out a magazine, maybe I'd never have done it had I known.

AF: At that time had the Macintosh emerged as a tool?

RV: Yeah. We pretty much put out two issues working with a typewriter - blowing up the type to make it look a

"I think computers will hook up
to television because people
have an easier time looking at
televisions than the low resolution
computer screen. More
and more of the general information
that is available now
will be available on computers
or television."

little different and after the second issue the Macintosh came out and at this time I was doing a lot of illustration. The Macintosh came out and immediately after that *MacWorld* came out. They were very eager to find illustrators who would work on the Macintosh so they invited illustrators to come over and be taught on the Mac, and this is how I was introduced to it. We got the Mac for

a weekend to work on and we got hooked. The Monday after we bought one and Zuzana immediately designed her own low resolution bit map typefaces using font editor. So the third issue we put out had all this low resolution type we

created. Because of the Mac we were able to continue putting it out because it cuts a lot of typesetting costs and not only that, you can do so much more than if you'd gone to a traditional typesetter because it allows you to experiment.

AF: The Mac has opened up a whole new realm in communication. How do you see it developing, will printed media be replaced soon by the computer?

RV: That's what a lot of the designers are discussing — is that, maybe not the Mac by itself, but just computers and television in general will become the medium from which people will read. I think computers will hook up to television because people have an easier time looking at televisions than the low resolution computer screen. More and more of the general information that is available now will be available on computers or television. I don't know if it is going to really be significant, that people are going to sit behind computer screens to read. I certainly have my doubts about whether people will read novels off a screen, but there's lots of applications for getting other types of information from computer screens.

AF: How would graphic design change if everything went electronic?

RV: Designers who use computers right now would be setting the

standards for how these things are going to look and that's incredibly intriguing. I think the two will always exist, there will always be books — people always want to feel things. I don't think the one will disappear. It's an incredible challenge because no standards exist. Right now the stuff that's being designed in hypercard stacks, in terms of the way it looks are just pure adaptations of how it's in print. Apple Computer's Annual Report for instance — the way it looks in hypercard is just the way it looks on the printed page, they just stuck it on the screen. It seems incredibly stupid — you're dealing with low resolution on screens, and you will be for a long time to come, which makes things look ugly, especially if you take them from print to page. And that's along our philosophy — you have to design specifically for the low resolution screen and the restrictions at hand.

AF: What is the current mood in graphic design. Do you see a new school emerging?

RV: There is and I think the computer has a lot to do with it, especially the Macintosh. This comes from my own explorations and interviews I've had with designers all over the world. Designers are certainly getting to be much closer to content because they're so much closer to text. If you go way back there weren't designers, there were printers and often times you had publishers who were writer, printer, designer, illustrator all in one. Through the years everyone became specialists, and one was graphic design. In the past ten or twenty years designers have just been mostly stylists and what they do is, here's this bunch of text, and designers just gave shape to it. But now with the Macintosh the designer can become much closer to the information at hand — he can alter it, he can write it himself and has the opportunity to really mold text the way he'd really like it. He doesn't have to go to a typesetter anymore, he is his own typesetter and out of this we will see a new design style emerge which is very language based, which is based on the understanding of language, based on the understanding of texts.

AF: It seems the direction has been to get away from text — in a publication image is everything, the picture comes first. Maybe there will be a return to more of an emphasis on reading a magazine rather than just looking at it.

RV: You're right — if you look at magazines right now, for the last five or ten years there's been a trend going towards image only. There's nothing wrong with that because images tell a lot of stories too and you can read images as well. But if that was the case and that was the style, certainly designers have been really guilty of contributing to that. But everything always has a reaction, if you see a lot of images now, you know that ten years from now it'll be different, you'll see a lot of text because designers have this great need of always trying to do something different. It will be a reaction of this image oriented stuff you see now, it'll be this natural reaction of going back to text. (F)

Write: Emigre 48 Shattuck Square #175 Berkeley, Ca 94704-1140.

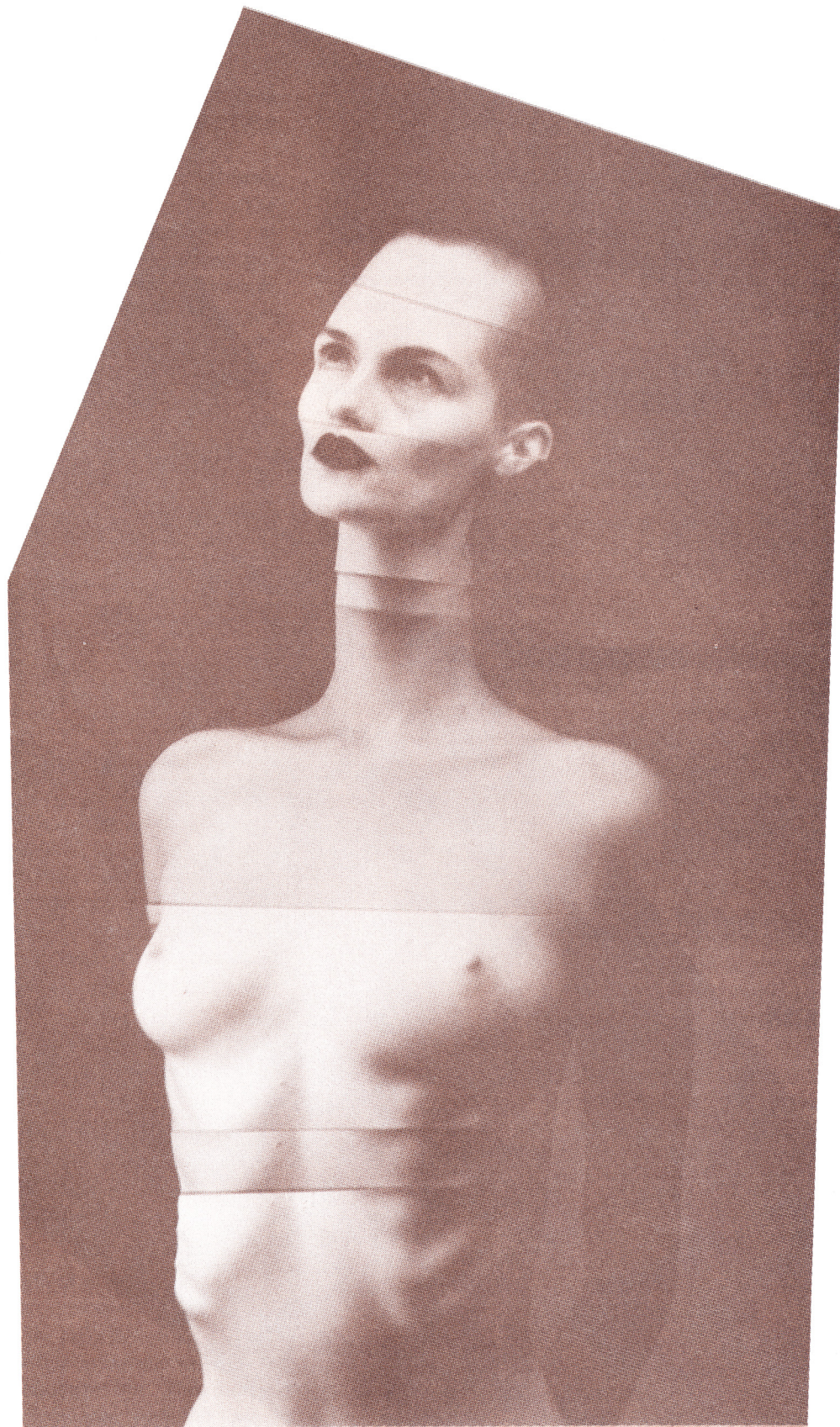
Beauties and Beasts

At first sight one might consider Bobby Adams' work an inversion of the photomontage. Rather than taking multiple images and combining them to form one, he takes a seemingly singular image, the human figure, fragments it, and creates a unique composition. But how singular is the body?

A distinct pluralism surfaces from these photos. The body is exposed as a multiplicity in and outside of itself, a bizarre combination of grotesqueries and gesturals — not unlike the culture that was (and still is) ever so savorily *couped* by the photomontage works of John Heartfield. Similar to the way culture is concretized, edited, cropped, and objectified by photojournalism and much of popular photography, so is the body by portraiture, and the ever-pernicious fashion photograph. By splitting his images Adams offers an incisive perspective on the body.

His deconstruction originates with the subject. Perhaps the greatest similarity between Adams' transmutation and that of Heartfield's is the supremacy of the subject over a potentially dictatorial process.

—Stuart Patterson





Bobby Adams - self portrait





I think it's very confusing if you're not connected to what's going on or if you haven't really gotten into it and figured what it's really about. A lot of it's not accidentally confusing.

—Homer Flynn

AT HOME WITH **THE RESIDENTS**

BY JOHN TRIPP

For fifteen years the Residents have shrouded themselves in ambiguity, cultivating a myth that may never be unravelled – anonymous members, unknown motives, avoidance of “fame”, and, of course, “music” that comes from nowhere.

The Residents are as obscure today as when they began, and as they’ve remained “unknown” they’ve become cult legends to a following that worships them like the pop icons they’ve regurgitated – The Rolling Stones, James Brown, Hank Williams, and now Elvis.

The King and Eye, their first recording on a major label (Enigma) pays tribute to the King in true Residents manner – synthesized reworkings of Elvis songs interspersed by “a guy who used to be an Elvis imitator telling stories of the long dead king from years ago.”

The album is only part of the picture though. The Residents will also be touring with a new performance – *Cube E or The History of American Music in 3 E-Z Pieces*, an examination and recreation of the roots of American ethnic “white” and “black” music.

At the Residents business headquarters, a distressed building tucked between downtown San Francisco and the city’s SOMA district, Manager Homer Flynn described the show, “*Cube E* takes an historical view toward American music as a whole, rather than towards individual composers. There are three different pieces – two of which are more like dance pieces, one of which is more like a pseudo concert piece. The two dance pieces – one is based on early white music, which is cowboy music. So, it’s really based on old trail songs from the 1800’s that have been reworked and rewritten and restylized in an electronic kind of way.”

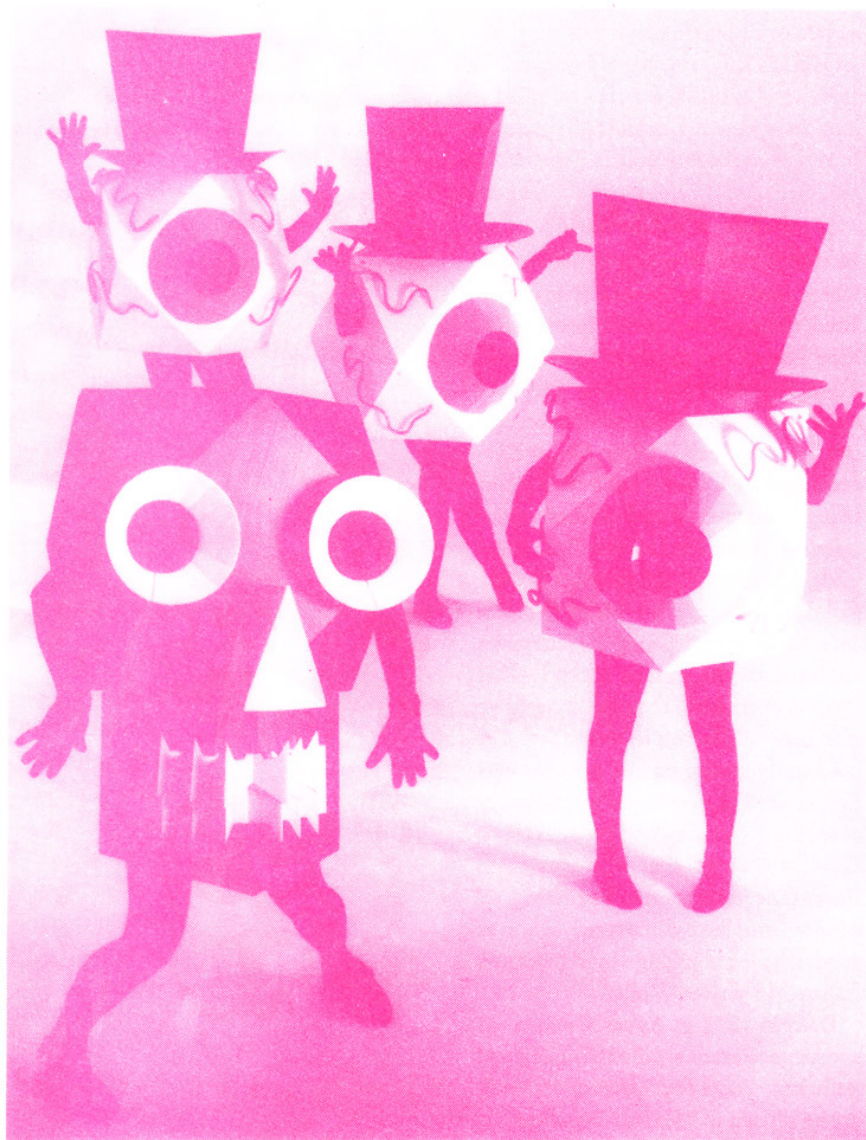
"The second piece is based on early black music, so it's based on slave songs, minstrel songs, a lot of early jazz, blues. The second half of the show – all the music is the combination of the two influences, which is rock'n roll. So, it's sort of a pseudo rock show and all the music is like Elvis music, cause Elvis from a public stand point personified the synthesis of the black and white influences. And the whole thing takes place in the context of a guy who's telling stories to children. He'll tell stories to the kids a little bit, and then he gets up and sort of does some of his Elvis stuff, like we used to do years ago, and then he tells some more stories and that's the way the whole thing unfolds."

If the initial response to Cube E is any indication, they're ensuing tour of Europe, the States (including a stint on Broadway), and Russia should be wildly successful. Cube E's first two parts, *Buckaroo Blues* and *Black Barry* premiered at Lincoln Center this summer to rave reviews and the completed piece was recently performed to sold out audiences in San Francisco.

Like their previous two shows, *Cube E* is more theater than music – costuming, lighting, and dance all assume major roles, adding far greater impact than watching musicians play instruments. *Buckaroo Blues* and *Black Barry* are strictly dance pieces – cowboys slinging around a campfire in exaggerated hats; slaves dancing to spirituals donned in tattered dresses. Part Three consumes Parts One and Two with a steady transformation of their forms into mutant rock'n roll, while its narrator becomes a Cubistic version of Elvis – Cube E. The show ends with an electronic bombardment of English rock music displacing Cube E. The King is dead and out come the Residents in full garb - newly cubed costumes that Flynn calls "a cross between Mr. Peanut and the California raisins." Only the Residents could pull this one off so convincingly - Cube E should propel them into the annals of pop, right up there with the King himself.

The Residents have always been ambitious with their performances. Their first, *The Mole Show*, suffered for being overly so. Flynn explains, "*The Mole Show* was a great show but it nearly killed everybody that was on tour and it nearly killed us financially. At that point everybody was convinced that there'd never be another cause it was just too disastrous."

The 13th Anniversary Show, which began as a onetime performance for a record label in Japan was much more subdued as a result, "the whole idea was just to put something together that was loose and fun and to go over to Japan and perform it there. And then



The Residents in their new cubed outfits. Photo by Kenrik Kam.

it turned out to be so much fun to do and the response was so good that when they came back there was a lot of interest in continuing to perform it," said Flynn. What resulted was a 75 show worldwide tour which included Paris's Olympia Theater, London's Hammersmith Odeon and a legendary performance at New York's Ritz Theater.

The Residents are one of few bands who have *never* compromised and succeeded because of it. With their alignment with Enigma will things change – will they have to reveal their true identities, for example? "The Residents have never revealed themselves and they never will," Flynn answers. "The only thing that will change is the availability of Residents recordings. Anybody who wants to will be able to go into their local record store and find the record." Of course, making the Residents more available doesn't mean it'll make them any easier to figure out. With *The King and Eye* they may achieve a newfound popularity but their mystery, for many, will continue to remain unsolved. (F)

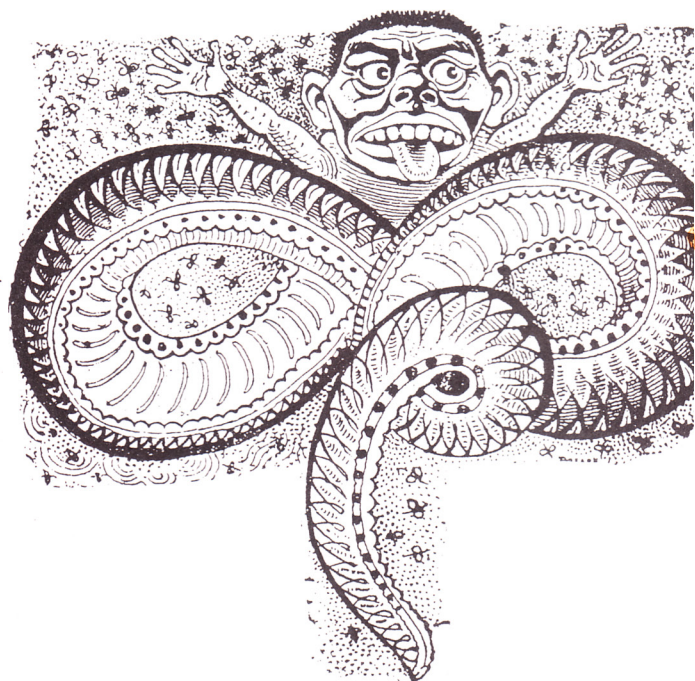
J.G. POSADA

In this period of recontextualization, where meaning is constantly manipulated, the popular prints of Jose Guadalupe Posada are particularly relevant. Though Posada has already been exalted by post-Mexican revolution artists Dr. Atl, Jean Charlot, Diego Rivera, and Jose Orozco, he is once again being rediscovered and defined. *Messenger of Mortality* (Moyer Bell Limited), with nearly 200 pages of Posada prints, and essays by Peter Wollen, Jean Charlot and Diego Rivera gives credence to the Posada legend — his work is as striking today as it could've ever been. "It is clear that the art world constantly draws on the popular arts for material or new forms, particularly at moments of crisis and hence it is not surprise that Posada, who played an important role at the beginning of Modernism is re-discovered again as Modernism is challenged and begins to fragment," writes Wollen.

Born in 1851 in Aguascalientes, as a teenager Posada studied printing and painting. After four years of teaching art he settled in Mexico City where he became chief artist at the publishing house of Antonio Arroyo, producer of the street gazettes and broadsheets that exercised such a great influence in Mexico at the time. At this post Posada produced thousands of images, including illustrations for *Corridos* (popular ballads), *Ejemplos* (didactic poems) and *Calaveras* (skulls).

Posada was a populist and most of his work centered around the everyday aberrations of Mexican life: natural disasters, freaks of nature, human conflicts, sensational crimes, and emotions. He used his work to inform the Mexican people of conditions and to provoke a reaction. That his work is still able to do that today is the genius of Posada.

—Anne Peshapa





"I think a melody is going to last a lot longer in people's memory than a collection of funny noises"

—Tom Ellard

(SEVERED) HEADS ON A

BY GORDON WOOD



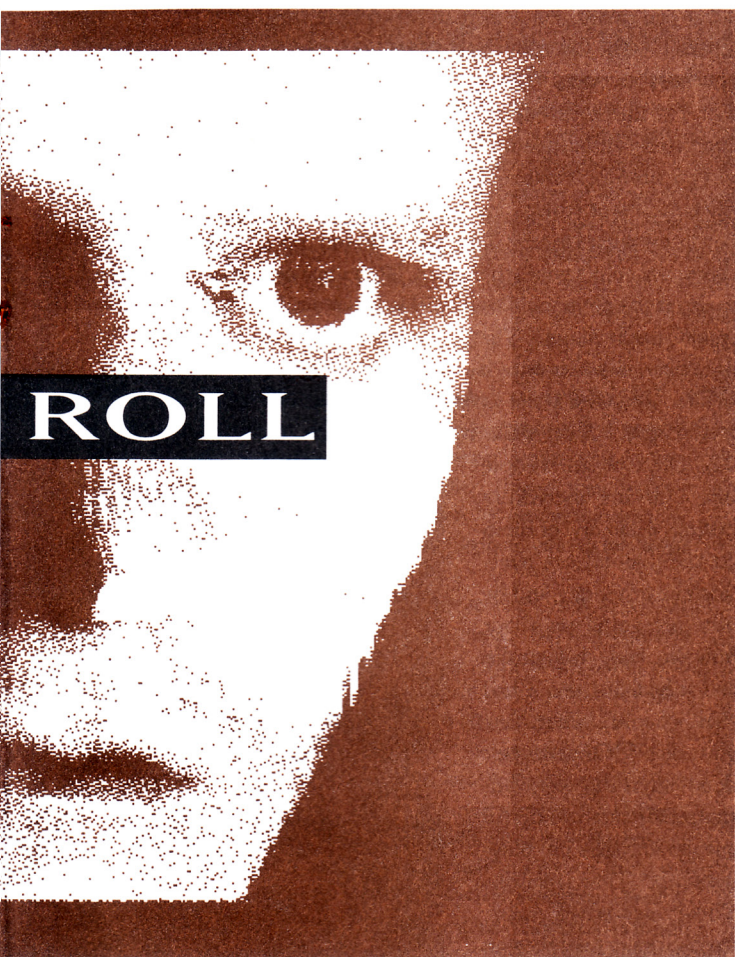
Severed Head(man) Tom Ellard leads an aptly *de-tached* life in his native Sydney. As one of Australia's few experimental electronic groups, Severed Heads remain an anomaly in a land where the guitar rules supreme. Not that it's different anywhere else, or that it bothers Ellard. In fact, he seems the type who thrives on isolation, though there are other Severed Heads including Gary Bradbury, Paul Deering, Robert Racic and videographer Stephen Jones. As one would expect Severed Head's music has similar disjointed effects. A convoluted blend of computers, synthesizers, and tape loops comprise their twisted, "Bugs Bunny meets Stravinsky" sound. Severed Heads surpass the novelty and gadgetry prevalent in much of today's "sampled" music. Since signing to Vancouver's Nettwerk Records Severed Heads have released two LP's — *Meet The Big Bigot* and *The Bad Mood Guy* and several 12"s including *Dead Eyes Opened*, *Hot With Fleas*, and last year's *Greater Reward*. Ellard was interviewed last winter, prior to the completion of *Rotund For Success*, Severed Heads' first LP in two years, produced in Ellard's homemade studio.

Gordon Wood: Did you have an early inclination to tinker with electronics?

Tom Ellard: Well, the advantage I did have was that the old man was into new bits of technology. Being a shrink he had the money to indulge, so when I was a baby we had a reel-to-reel tape recorder. That meant that there were lots of things to play around with of that sort when I was growing up so it'd seem pretty natural that you'd want to play around with tape recorders.

GW: And that just continued on into your adulthood?

TE: Sure. It just took a while to realize that you could do that sort of thing. I was lucky in that I didn't have to go work in a factory or something. That meant that I could play around with things and get the chance to say "I could actually live by doing this. I could do this as my occupation." It doesn't have to be that way but surely that does help.



GW: Did you, from the start, want to do things that were experimental or different?

TE: Most of the stuff that they played on the radio when I was a teenager didn't seem to me to be as interesting as a lot of the music that I was hearing overseas. I'm real keen on the Arabic and Indian sort of Top 40 music – Bombay disco sort of stuff. There's a really witty style to it, a lot of funny off notes and things. Now once you've heard all this weird stuff you really can't be bothered with most of the Top 40. I just built an idea of what I wanted to hear pretty earlier on.

GW: It's kind of funny that while you, in Australia, were doing this, a number of groups elsewhere were doing the same thing. Is that a "stream of consciousness" that carried through, or were you communicating with these people?

TE: No, it's very isolated here, it still is. What really sets me off is in Europe or America it seems like there's some sort of networking, people are talking to each other, they grew up together. Whereas here, it's like coming from some small country town or something. It's a bit of a shock to realize that, growing up and

mucking around with old tape recorders and recording music that I wanted to hear, there were people doing that all over the world around the same time, they just didn't know anything about each other – the people that started reinventing tape loops and the whole thing.

GW: You were one of the first musicians to apply it in a more pop-orientated structure.

TE: You know the stuff that Nurse With Wound does – Steven Stapleton? That sort of thing is great fun to do but it's really not much fun to listen to. It's easy to make endless cassettes of noise-mongering but when you come back to it after a year or so it just means nothing to you anymore. And a whole sort of structure is to have something which means something to a lot of people and means something to people afterwards. I think a melody is going to last a lot longer in people's memory than a collection of funny noises, you know?

GW: Your music is extremely intricate with a multiplicity of layers happening at once. Is this an offshoot of what you listen to?

TE: It just seems to be necessary to be satisfied. It's not a question of developing an aesthetic or any sort of moral dilemma, blah, blah, blah. I'm not satisfied until you've got everything – there's got to be a bit of Stravinsky and a bit of Bugs Bunny in it. The two things have to be there, otherwise I don't want to listen to it again. The last record, *Bad Mood Guy*, we did in the studio with producers and the whole sort of thing like that and there was a lot of trouble with it because it was really too many cooks boiling the broth. I knew what I wanted to do but the other people had other things that they wanted to do so you ended up with a compromise, which just isn't satisfying to anyone. If you're going to do something you might as well incorporate extremes into it because it's going to be more effective in some direction or another.

GW: Will you return to working as a solo artist as a result of this?

TE: You've got to keep some sort of control over it. We've just finished *Rotund For Success*, and it's all been recorded here in the home studio, which has grown considerably. We've actually bought a reverb and things like that and it's so much better that way because it's an environment. There's something in that studio you just don't get when you record at EMI or CBS.

GW: And you've designed the environment?

TE: Well, we're not all that wealthy, we just have to pick stuff up from garbage cells. Most of the reverb in the past has been done on an old spring reverb just because its costs a hundred-and-fifty bucks, whereas a digital reverb costs three-thousand. But, yes it does look a little bit ugly.

GW: Do you plan on eventually getting away from music and working in other mediums?

TE: Well, it's only part of the story isn't it? You can't just do music now, it flows on into other things and as it goes along I'm going to lose touch. Every band, every musician loses touch as

they go on – the records get less and less pertinent. I've just got to set it up so I'm out of music by the time I'm writing shit. I'm not so arrogant to think that everything I'm going to do from now on's going to be great; there's going to be problems as the records go along. The best thing to do is to throw yourself into a new field where you don't know as much and you have to learn again.

GW: Is it the same process of experimentation as it would be with music?

TE: Yes. You can get too expert at things after a while and you've either got to have a lobotomy or you've got to move onto something else, and a lobotomy costs too much.

GW: A lot of momentum seems to be gaining for "industrial" music. Maybe a few years ago a small number of groups were out on their own, but now it's blown up as a movement of sorts.

TE: You think it's growing? As far as I'm concerned industrial music was only in England in the late 70's and this recent stuff is a nostalgia trip. I don't really see the stuff that's going on in Canada and America as industrial.

GW: I guess if you compare it to what happened in England – it's just a convenient tag to put on the music.

TE: But it is misleading. There are bands like, say, Ministry but a lot of them when you hear them are really much more akin to heavy metal than anything else. I think where it comes from is the whole On-U Sound stuff, the way that Adrian Sherwood does production. It comes through rap and dub, that's where the influences are coming from, which is mainly black music. Whereas I think that original industrial was in a way purely white music, it was the white person's music of the time. Rock and roll, soul, disco – all these things are African and bass, whereas I think industrial was truly European. All this recent stuff, you couldn't call them European at all, they're certainly based around African music styles.

GW: The titles of some of your LP's – *The Big Bigot*, and *The Bad Mood Guy* suggest a similar theme. What is the connection?

TE: It's more coincidental than anything else. *Big Bigot* came from an argument I was having on tour once; a lot of these names come from tours. There's a lot of anti-American feeling in various places, but the people who go on like that are usually the first to call people who dislike any other ethnic group bigots. And I was having an argument with a person and I was saying, "for you to go on that way about any group whether it be American or Mexican or whatever is bigotry." Also, the touring thing where you go to see various monuments and the monument being the big bigot. *Bad Mood Guy* was just this phrase that Skinny Puppy and their crew used continuously; they'd call each other bad mood guy every five minutes, you know. I think it started off with this band called Images in Vogue, which is a band that one of the people from Skinny Puppy used to be in, and they used to call each

other bad mood guy, and it seems to have spread.

GW: You mentioned touring – what sort of experience was that?

TE: The European one was an absolute debacle, it was completely and utterly embarrassing because everything that could go wrong did go wrong. It was reduced to myself on stage, having had all my equipment stolen, trying to perform in front of 800 people, you know what I mean? That's nightmare stuff – the band's gone, the equipment's gone, there I am. We've got to do the gig because we need the money so I'm just like, 'what am I doing playing the spoons up on stage.' The European tour was as bad as that, the American one wasn't so bad.

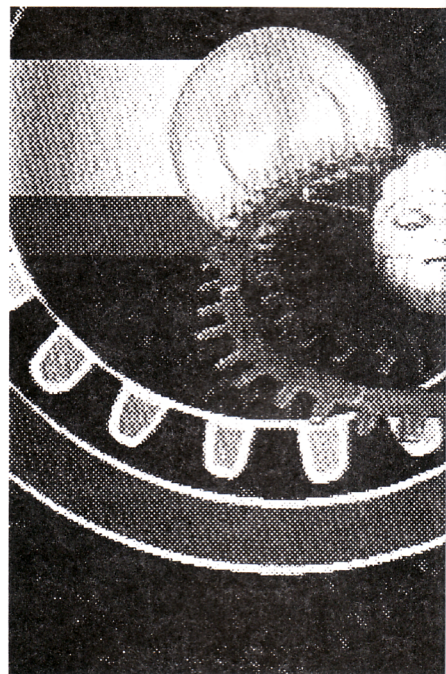
GW: Would you consider yourself to be a wizard type. Are you immersed in technology?

TE: Oh, God no. People like that are incredibly boring. I had one of them on the phone from overseas the other day and he was just going on about how he had this studio and it had this and it had that. I said, 'what have you done?' "Oh, I haven't done anything yet, but there's all this wonderful equipment that I'm playing with." That's terrible. Those electronic music magazines, where they go on about how you can do this and you can do that – a lot of the people portrayed don't do anything. The amount of space in your head that you could be doing music with is being taken up with turning all those knobs and pushing all those buttons.

GW: I got that impression from your music – to me it's very technical and very complex.

TE: It's very simply done. A lot of it's done with just cutting tape with a razorblade. There's nothing particularly fancy in the studio at all, it's very simple. The last LP was the first time we'd used any of this midi equipment. Before that it was all modular synthesizers, we just couldn't afford that sort of stuff. The most technically advanced record is that single *Greater Reward* – that is quite advanced for us but certainly it would be a lot less production involved in that than a typical Skinny Puppy record.

GW: Are you happy with your most recent material? *Greater Reward* seems to have done



well here.

TE: I think we've compromised enough that something should've happened. The record was done with a completely commercial viewpoint. It would've been very disappointing if everyone just told us to piss off and die, which is the usual sort of result, you know, "what's this, piss off." It's all very noble doing fringe experimental music but if nobody's listening then what's the fucking point? You can't take a completely elitist viewpoint – in my record collection I've got everything from Madonna to Voodoo Trance Drums of Haiti; there's something you can get from all of it. I don't get much from Bruce Springsteen or something but the commercial realm shouldn't be neglected.

GW: Marginal and pop culture are one in the same anyway. Either way you're selling a product.

TE: The mainstream always absorbs the parts of the alternative thing that it wants, you see that all the time. Someone like Malcolm McLaren is a perfect example of someone who just took the whole world of subculture stuff, chewed it up, spat it out and somehow made it acceptable. The only thing that really upsets me – it's something in the art world – in the early years you've got the dadaists and they were doing all this stuff. Of course they wanted to antagonize the mainstream, of course they wanted to get under people's noses. And then you got someone like

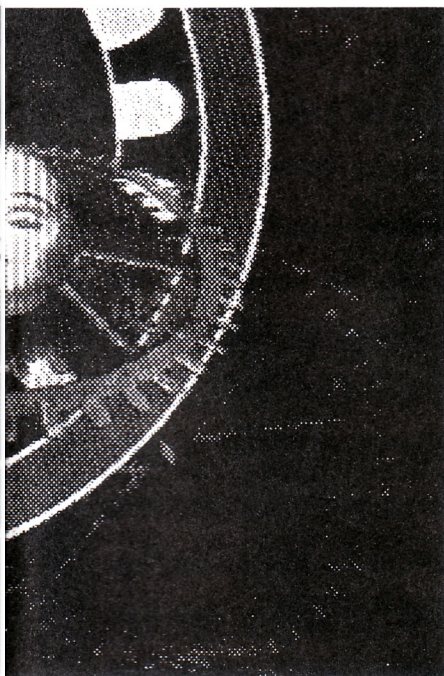


Photo by Stephen Jones for *Hot With Fleas*

Andy Warhol and the Pop art people who've just absorbed all that and made it completely acceptable. It's really disappointing that the early musicians, I suppose back in the 70's like the early Cabaret Voltaire, were trying to again get under people's noses and the people in this field now really are just handing it over to the people and that's a bit of a problem.

GW: And how would you position yourself?

TE: I'm part of that too. I sort of know what I'm doing but I'm not quite sure how to get out of it.

GW: What was the original idea for Severed Heads?

TE: The idea was, OK, you put the records out and then people would write back to you and you'd make friends – you'd get to

know people. There are a few that I've gotten to know that way but the main result I've gotten is a whole lot of people writing in and demanding stuff for free. So I made up these booklets – "write to me and I'll send you these booklets, but you have to pay five bucks." Of course, the number of letters dropped because people actually had to give you something for you to give them something. Most letters are, "dear sir, here's five bucks, send me this," and I think I'm gonna just give up on the booklets too because there's nothing coming from that either. If I wanted to get something across I probably would put it in writing. The music's got the emotional thing but I don't think it has much communicative ability. I'd be a journalist if I wanted to convey that sort of material. The music is really good for emotional communication so that's what I'm pushing for, that's what I'm trying to do. I've got some nut in my head and I want to put it out in this sort of coding so that other people can get it back in that way.

GW: Will your music remain in a dance context?

TE: That seems to be the only acceptable thing at the moment, doesn't it? The albums are going to be like that, sort of like that. I'm actually recording other stuff at the same time which isn't being put out that will be put out at some stage. The main struggle at the moment is trying to get some of the old back catalog pressed by someone like Nettwerk. We've got everything up to the ready-to-press stage, they just keep saying "no, we can't do it, it's not safe." We've got it all ready to go on master tapes but I think Nettwerk just thinks, "we can't do this, it's not going to sell." Well, fuck, if it sells only five-hundred copies it doesn't matter, just have it available for people who want it. So, that stuff has to come first, and then you might get to hear some of the stuff that doesn't go bang, bang, bang, bang through the whole thing.

JT: Where does the LP Clifford Darling fit into the band's chronology?

TE: It's a compilation of our earlier stuff. We put that out because at that stage it seemed like the thing to do. We had a co-operative record label in England, unfortunately a completely crooked one. It was all fine until we asked for some paybacks for the work we'd done, then suddenly there was dead silence. But you get a lot of that.

GW: What interests you beyond your music?

TE: Well, artistically I'm keen on this computer animation stuff that's just becoming available. To be able to do ray tracing and object modeling and all that at home is quite amazing because you couldn't do this stuff five years ago. Personally, I don't go out and party much, I just like dropping in on people's places and that sort of thing. The big thing down here at the moment is dance clubs. Not any particular place but these people who will advertise one night where you go set up at some showground or an old hall or something. "The party, the blah, blah party." All these sort of bright young beautiful things go there at midnight and bump up and down until about ten in the morning and then vomit all over themselves and go home. If that's the nightlife then forget it, I'm

too old

GW: That seems to be an international phenomenon.

TE: People just want more. The just want more, and more, and more. They've got to be off their face, like freebasing cocaine at the same time as dancing to something which is going at the level of aircraft engines. What do they want next – somebody to ram the red hot poker up their bum at the same time? If you're performing, people are bored instantly. You've gotta always give them something extra.

GW: What would you see as its finality?

TE: I don't know. Something's got to blow up – the next live show we're doing is at one of these parties and we've got like nine beam projectors, nine video projectors all working at once. We're only doing a half-hour set cause people's attention spans won't last longer than that. We've got a quadrophonic sound system, we've got every fucking thing you can think of. Where do you go from there?

GW: Just blow it all up.

TE: Yeah, or just get a machine gun and mow them all down, that's probably the next step. The best thing that we've done recently is this installation in a gallery where we had this machine with all these video cameras and stuff and as you walked into the room it played music and played videos as you walked around. That was great – it was just quiet and seductive and involving without having to go through the overkill thing and I think I might do a lot more of that than all of this bang, bang stuff.

GW: I guess if you take it out of the club setting and approach it differently you can do that, but you're probably not going to make any money.

TE: I don't know how you make money, I don't think we're making money at the moment. Making money seems to be a real funny thing. The headliner at this bloody show that we're playing is Grace Jones of all people. Apparently she's going to do a twenty-minute set, but she's going to mime most of it and it's gonna cost like fifty-thousand dollars. That's good going, maybe I should be a model.

GW: How do your collaborations with other people, such as Stephen Jones work?

TE: Well, he (Stephen Jones) makes videos for people, and he's sort of keen on doing videos. He just started off doing videos with the band and now he's become sort of incorporated into it. Basically, he hears the music and says "oh, yeah" and strings stuff together and we come up with something, which is quite an amazing thing because to get a video made usually costs a half-million dollars. The other thing is, to come up with a visual output is really quite fun, it's a good extra thing to have. He does other stuff as well – he's actually talking about setting up his own band soon. He's not involved in the music, but he wants to get involved in it but I'm sort of a bit too cagey about that. The same way I want to do pictures when I'm doing music, he wants to do

music because he's doing pictures. The other main person involved is Robert Racic who hasn't been quite so involved in this last record, but he does the single remixes. He takes the stuff and redoes them, and when he redoes them he just completely redoes it.

GW: Do you have any problems with that?

TE: Well, it takes the pressure off me, that I don't have to come up with a twelve-inch version of things anymore. He's a DJ, he plays in clubs and he knows what people want to hear, whereas I don't really have much of an idea. The reason something like *Greater Reward* has done well is because he's done it.

GW: You site L. Ron Hubbard as one of your influences. Are you a Scientologist in hiding?

TE: Oh, fuck no. But he's pretty funny. Have you seen that book *Bare Faced Messiah*? That's a brilliant book, you should read that. Part of being in the music industry or anything like that is the presentation of information, yeah? And here's this guy who's got this information which is just completely wacko. The guy is an out-and-out bullshitter and yet he's got thousands of people believing in it, avidly, all around the world and that sort of thing is endlessly fascinating.

GW: Would you ever want to live here?

TE: Well, Canada seems alright. I think I'd probably want to live in Canada more – the two countries, Australia and Canada are a bit more similar. In the United States I get a bit worried about people with guns – everyone's shooting everyone else all the time. I don't know whether it's true, you can't imagine the bullshit that you get on the television around here. The national image is not very well conveyed by something like *The Dukes of Hazard*. I think the States is a bit too big town for me. Sydney's a pretty big city, but I think we just a little bit more, I suppose, old-fashioned here. (F)

For information on Severed Heads write: Nettwerk Productions 1717 West 4th Avenue Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6J 1M2



Sylvère Lotringer Interview

By Christof Migone

This interview originally appeared in *Rampike*, a Toronto based arts publication. Because of its pertinence to today's cultural and political mood it is reprinted here.

Sylvère Lotringer is fascinated by culture. He explores it with an active and singular lucidity. While a professor of French Literature and Philosophy at Columbia University he is also the founder of SEMIOTEXT(E). This magazine, through its 13 years of existence, has addressed crucial issues with innovative theory. The latest issue is entitled *Semiotext(e) U.S.A.*, a psychotopographical projection, featuring "neopagans, cults, foreign agents, mad bombers, ban-the-bombers, nudists, zero workers, hardcore youth, witches, unrepentant faggots, poetic terrorists..." *Semiotext(e)* and also the pocket size Foreign Agent Series can be ordered by mail at: *Semiotext(e)*, 522 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, New York NY 10027.

Lotringer is never bored. With Chris Cross he has produced a film called "How to Shoot A Crime". It is an experience in the connections between death, crime, violence, sex, and society. This man of multi facets was recently in Montreal for the Ultimatum II festival to read some of his fiction and to participate on a panel. He will have a book published in May by Random House called *Over-Exposed*. It deals with the treatment of sexual pervers, or rather the perverse treatment of sexuality in our culture. The printed questions for the following interview were derived from the *Burroughs* virus number 23 and the *Ca-bala* number 111, inspired by Robert Anton Wilson's essay "Coincidence" in *Semiotext(e) USA*.

Christof Migone: Let's begin with the inception of SEMIOTEXT(E). What motivated you into the print form and what needs were you fulfilling?

SL: I started the magazine a bit out of hope and a bit out of despair. I wanted to find people I could talk to. I found myself ghettoized in an American university, so it was a way to reach out. The name was a pun on semiotics, and it was intrinsically referenced to Freud. Coming from France, I found that in New York the artists were the real intellectuals. That is people who use their thoughts to do things instead of just commenting on them. So I started the magazine with them, doing interviews with them. I also wanted to purge myself of the too pregnant abstraction of the French language. I did not have a good command of the English language so I began with interviews – having them say things that I could not say myself.

CM: The latest issue *U.S.A.* is a "psychotopographical projection" of America. Can you tell me more about it?

SL: The latest issue is totally different from anything that we've done before. It's a grassroots issue, it's like an earth catalogue. There are a million connections: some great essay, some great fiction, some very trashy stuff...it corresponds to what America is like, a lot of contradictions. After the 60s people were either thrown into being academics and glossified there, or just became carpenters. So this is an attempt, two generations later, to connect to the energies that were lost in the 60s. *SEMIOTEXT(E)*, even though it is always

"The issue of sexuality is overshadowed now by all these religious groups. They raise issues that are so obsolete, so superseded by the society. They give them a last breath that is very powerful, but the movement of the culture is irreversible. There is no way we can help destroying everything, it just depends how fast we do it."

about very crucial things, always has a sense of humor and life. The issues are alive; if it became too deadly we would just be repeating what is inflicted to us from everywhere.

CM: SEMIOTEXT(E) seems to have constant problems with censorship. Why?

SL: With Reagan things have become much worse. Seven printers refused to print this issue. The censored pages dealt with sexuality; we ended up publishing them on our own and inserting them later. The issue of sexuality is overshadowed now by all these religious groups. They raise issues that are so obsolete, so superseded by the society. They give

them a last breath that is very powerful, but the movement of the culture is irreversible. There is no way we can help destroying everything, it just depends how fast we do it. That's why I got interested in people like Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, they are dark prophets of this modernity. Both are fascinated by the modern world and technology, even if they hate it. They hate it with so much love that their point of view is very pertinent. Baudrillard used to be in an anarchist group then turned into a metaphysician, he is a kind of poet of society...I like philosophy as a form of aesthetic creation but at the same time I expect philosophy to have some sort of impact. Most of the thinkers we have spend their time commenting on the margin of Marx at best. So it was time for people that are futuristic.

CM: What is your approach to culture? Is it to actively and accurately document it?

SL: No, it is more interventionist. I like Michel Foucault and all that, but I hate libraries. I hate dust. I also don't have a choice living in New York City, culture is in the air, it is when you talk to people, it is interaction. I think my way of repaying American culture, not that I feel indebted to it, was to try to make the French American and the American French. Originally I was writing a book on the structures of the novel, I spent 10 years of my life doing that, then I realized it was insane because the novel works so well; I tried to find the logical way out. I took the Nietzschean position which is to look at it and decide that there were more premises of death than life in it. Then instead I got interested in death proper which is precisely what semiotics is trying to avoid by making things rational. In the states, behind all this

optimistic energetic culture there is something very strange going on. I quickly realized that I was living in a consumer unreality, which is no news, and that death is used in our society to deaden people.

CM: You come from an academic background. How is semiotics related to SEMIOTEXT(E)?

SL: Semiotics is nothing new. It just gives us some kind of lingo, a logical tool that we've used for centuries. It is basically dialectical logic which functions through binary type oppositions. I've been interested in semiotics since 1966, with people like Roland Barthes and Lucien Goldman. They were exciting people who used semiotics but were not used

recordings

Skinny Puppy

Rabies

Nettwerk/Capitol

Literally, thematically and musically, *Rabies* is a continuation of Skinny Puppy's Bites LP (Bites "Rabies, get it?). The material contained herein is certainly among the best recorded since their early days. If you thought *Assimilate* and *The Choke* were heavy, *Rabies* will absolutely fuck you up.

To be fair, much of the credit for this record's edge and intensity should go to co-producer Al Jourgensen (Ministry). But before you cry "Ministry part two!", listen carefully. Cevin Key's rhythms are as seductive as ever and musically, Puppy continue to evolve. Warlock (a love song, Orgre?) and the first single, Tin Omen, are easily among the finest moments in the band's history. Downright howling. —Scott Tames

Nine Inch Nails

Pretty Hate Machine

TVT

NIN, from Cleveland, OH, is the project of soon-to-be-universally-admired Trent Reznor. Put quite simply, *Pretty Hate Machine* is one of the best LPs to be released in the rhythmic, power-electronics genre in recent memory.

The list of producer/engineers seems too good to be true: Adrian Sherwood, Keith LeBlanc, Flood and John Fryer. Literally, the material reflects a sensitivity and unique perception that is all but assent in this (or any) field. Stop waiting for the next Cabs album and procure this at all costs. —Sparky

Peter Coyle

I'd Sacrifice 8 Orgasms with Shirley Maclaine Just to be Here

Big Massive

The Lotus Eaters released a few good, fairly interesting pop records in England during the early 80s. The teen-idol gloss machine apparently buried them and they were never heard from again. Peter Coyle was the singer/songwriter for The Lotus Eaters.

But this is just a side note because the music of Peter Coyle and The Lotus Eaters has about as much in common as a kiss on the lips and a kick in the ass. Sparse arrangements and minimal instrumentation provide a perfect backdrop for Coyle's dark, deeply sensual tales. *8 Orgasms...* points to the fact that Peter Coyle is criminally ignored. The CD has rarely left my player for a month and everyone that hears it wants a copy. Problem is, mine is the only one anyone has ever seen. —Scott Tames

Revolting Cocks

Beers, Steers, and Queers

Wax Trax

If you haven't heard RevCo lately, you haven't heard 'em at all. Richard 23 (Front 242) is gone, but with the addition of Ogre (Skinny Puppy), Chris Connelly (ex-Fini Tribe), and D.J. Fear (a.k.a. Phill Owen of the Skatennis) no one will care. RevCo have become some mean sons-of-bitches and have just unleashed the leanest, loudest, meanest, and best album of the year.

From the distorto-beat and psycho-rap of the title track to the endless acid-haze guitar rambling of *Get Down* (just wait until the 12") to the nervous tension

of *Can't Sit Still* to the sheer sexual terrorism of *Let's Get Physical*—yeah, that one—to the leather-clad groove of *Stainless Steel Provider* to...well, you get the idea.

Most of the tracks are great from the first listen, some of them take a little getting used to, but each one's a classic. Yeeehaaaw, motherfucker! —Sparky

Think Tree

Hire a Bird (12")

Uncle Records

The nineties are almost here, and for the last decade pop music seems to have been content to admire its own nostalgic reflection. Taking that pop mirror living in both hands, Think Tree smashes it into a million jagged pieces, reassembles the facets into its own fractured image and then signs the completed work with a blood-stained finger. All the scattered elements are here, but in totally new and unexpected combinations. *Hire a Bird* sounds more than anything like an industrial T-Rex, but extra track *The Moon* feels like Michael Gira performing selections from *Cabaret*. A wonderfully disorienting debut from a band that samples styles, not just sounds. —Sparky

Severed Heads

Rotund For Success

Nettwerk

The first time I heard *New Order's Power, Corruption & Lies*, three thoughts stuck in my mind: 1) despite the dissonance of *Blue Monday* before it, it was a great album, 2) they had actually become talented musicians, and 3) they had come to a point in their careers where they could either continue to experiment or take the easy bucks.

Not to invite undue stylistic comparisons, but the same three things come to mind hearing *Rotund For Success*. Although I enjoyed the first two singles—especially *All Saints Day*—their commerciality made me a little nervous. Despite the fact that head Tom Ellard seems to have abandoned the random elements I'd come to love in favor of actual songwriting, the overall depth and quality of the other tracks on the album make it a real gem. Problem is, I can't stop thinking about what happened to *New Order*... —Sparky

Jon Hassell/Farfina

Flash of the Spirit

Intuition/Capitol

Jon Hassell's snakelike siren trumpet is a taunting wail here, awash in exotic electronics and Farfina's ancient rhythms. He has taken existing compositions of this eight-piece balafon, drum and dance ensemble from West Africa and created a unique hybrid with production assistance from Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois. The result is a compelling blend of seduction and strength, past and future. —Pareesh

Consolidated

Consolidated

Nettwerk

Consolidated define themselves strongly and clearly on this six-track debut—"this is not a rock and roll band. It's a democratically executed form for social and political transformation." Such is the meat of the matter. Each cut releases a cut-up verbal assault of surgical imperatives directed at the marrow of the American social infra-structure. —Pareesh

Sylvère Lotringer continued

by it. When I came to America semiotics was so disconnected to the kind of hectic chaotic life I was leading, so it seemed more like a straightjacket. Semiotics is very good for people who need some sort of structure; and it is perfect for academia but I could not deal with it anymore. The only part I found of interest was the area that is deviant and perverse—which tried to use language to produce changes, to connect things together and not to fall back upon itself as semiotics often does. Even though the magazine is called SEMIOTEXT(E) and started as an epistemological reflection on the foundations of semiotics all these were just too much of an intellectual runaround.

CM: How do you define semiotics? Is it an abused tool as much as it is an abused word?

SL: Originally semiotics was produced involuntarily by Saussure. He was a specialist in indo-European language and he was asked to replace a colleague and give a course in general linguistics. Soon he realized that it was total chaos. There had some historical notions but basically they did not know what they were talking about. So he cleaned up the field. I always liked the fact that Saussure was doing that in Switzerland in the middle of the First World War, and at the same time Lenin was playing chess and the dada were in Zurich. Dada was inventing everything, and that is the science of the twentieth century not semiotics. Semiotics is like a pale replica of Hegel's attempt to encompass the world. Hegel did it in a very circular way, trying to build something that would resist any sort of shock, like an ultimate pyramid of science. Semiotics then came to give it some sense of scientificity, so that people who were not really thinkers could use it as a toll to provide organization and make sense out of everything. Saussure was unaware of this effect, it happened after half a century of change through Jakobson to Levi Strauss to... Basically semiotics is like catching disease. Originally it was a science of signs in society, now you have a ready-made tool that enables you to put things into categories in such a way that they mean something. This is very seductive and we were all seduced at the beginning. But the whole of this century's artists has been trying to evade this kind of ready-made signification, they have been trying to keep things alive. I just wrote a book on Antonin Artaud, and Artaud in his flesh felt that his mind was made up of concepts that did not belong to anyone. With semiotics nothing belongs to anyone, they all speak the same language because they have no specificity.

CM: Could you delve deeper on how this theory is a dangerous seduction?

SL: Once you get to the first level of abstraction you are dealing with pure logic which is totally independent of the substance you started from. So it does not matter if it's stylistics, sex, or shit all is the same for semiotics. It makes it very clean. This is seductive because it is like paranoia it protects. You can crouch in it and feel safe; but what it brings out is only in

your mind. You have to find other ways that allow you to breathe. A straightjacket is a protection, but it is also a deadly thing. I am very concerned with being present to my culture, if the culture is fucked up I want to have theories that are as fucked up so that they are at least connected to it. Semiotics is not fucked up enough, it deal with essences and universals. Nietzsche said: "It is only semiotic and not reality." Semiotics, like anything else, can be a good tool and we need as many tools as we can get. But to fetishize it or to confuse it with truth is a total idiocy.

CM: Getting back to the reality of the magazine – with your censorship what is your financial situation?

SL: We had funds for only one year. We got a grant for the Italian issue on the Autonomia movement there. Most of those people were in jail or in exile here like Piperno. Paradoxically, while Washington was giving us money for the art side of the magazine, on the other hand the FBI was after us. When the Polysexuality issue came out some indignant people wrote to their congressman and asked how come we received government money for something where we advocate animal sex. So the funds were quickly cut off. I like the idea of magazines who destroy themselves, otherwise they get too set in their ways and their one idea. That's why with some issues I have not much to do with its production. That's my idea of autonomy, if I trust people I let them do it so that t even if I disagree it doesn't matter. I can't be in power. I thought SEMIO was ripe to be dissolved a couple of years ago when other people started doing similar things. But then I got on the Foreign Agents Series and people thought SEMIO was dead. And since people thought it was dead why kill it? So I went on with it. You need to be loose with these things. Always a step ahead.

Rampike 95 Rivercrest Road Toronto, Ontario M6S 4H7

Welcome to the Edge By Dele Fadele

Real death spills in through the mirrors of our everyday life. All it takes is some imagined secession to wear burning tyre necklaces or to be rendered missing or victims of some unnameable torture in some dark Central American cellar. But the fruits of democracy are myriad and legion. Why, you can even commit sonic suicide to the dislocated noises fashioned by On-U Sound. There's beauty in that it's never a final exit. You're always brought back from the brink ready to dive in again when the time suits you. To diseased stumps of stiltlike rhythm overload, the setting sun and the eyes of Saturn follow your adventures in the dead zone. Losing control to voices conjoined in babble isn't a criminal offence or an infringement of anyone's rights.

Under the auspices of one Adrian Sherwood – producer, controller, mystery-man, dub-meister extraordinaire – the world changes its shape. You wade through cities of dead heroes, hear muzzuein wails and prayer mantras, languish in sound deconstructed and reconstructed as ominous bleeps and pulses signify and codify the year 2000. Science fiction. Rules of thumb. It's all there for the taking. Collages here are never cold-blooded, rather, informed by massed computer memory banks of knowledge and the dislogic and avant-garde overkill of dub.

As empires crumble and the patriarchy weakens, dub-language files back reports in communities in which understanding isn't the main priority. Initially invented in Kingston, Ja, by that masterful demon Lee 'Scratch' Perry, this is a new way of seeing and thinking that discounts easy access and goes for the jugular. Dub is amnesia made concrete, to the clatter of six-gun ricochets. And Adrian Sherwood has taken this methodology into new realms with electronic washes and the certainty of knowing what's left out of the sonic-picture is most important. What remains can be assessed in many ways, none of them reliable – that's the paradox. Earthquakes, stabilized economies, treasury crimes, the shroud of communism, displacement, colonization, scrubland, ice deserts, wide-open spaces, depth charges all come to mind when describing the visceral impact of his output. And there's politics to spare, couched in the language of cut-ups, foldins, drop-outs.

William Burroughs' much-vaunted tape experiments have nothing on Tackhead's missile motion dancefloor stormers, they just form the basic inspiration blocks. As contemporary music disappears up its own arse by re-entering the dark ages, we welcome you to the precipice. One more step and everything goes up in smoke, both ends burning. The voice of 20th century agent provocateurs – Thatcher, Einstein, Preacher XY – get squashed and shredded to get at finite truths beneath the verbal diarrhoea. Guitars decayed and coagulate like radiation's after-effects. And sometimes, as in Mark Stewart's *Fatal Attraction* whole songs are crushed and dragged through the blender. The mushroom cloud of roots rock reggae swirls and envelopes us, forever in the background. The only genre On-U Sound have shied away from could be dentists-drill muzak and elevator muzak, but African head Charge's environmental sounds put a sock in that theory.

Singers & Players, Prince Far I, Gary Clail, Barmy Army, Tackhead, Mark Stewart, Annie Anxiety Bandez, African Head Charge, Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Keith Le Blanc and more have all come under the umbrella of On-U Sound. Trading in speed and velocity these motley crews imitate the seizures of madness like the trajectory of some rocket's flight-path. It's all down to the edit. Sampling is fast becoming an overused term, almost a gimmick, but you can hear On-U Sound's influences on the filed at large and some spreading global network that links Chicago, Berlin, Lon-



don, and New York in some nomadic quest for light and shadows. Those fabulous, disjointed Acid Trax that rely on interference signals and electronic buzzes are a pale homage to Sherwood's efforts. They're too steeped in the tyranny of the rigid house beat and commercial accessibility to ruffle any real feathers.

So we just watch and wait as pictures on the video screen change and blend together, our media circuits relying too much on instant meaning to create any palpable damage. Disinformation is our daily diet, rationed by demagogues and cretins alike. Progress has become a matter of oppression. And yet we struggle for words, grope at some fleeting notion of being able to trap the noises in our heads and defeat



The mixmeister Adrian Sherwood

the government's ever strengthened signal. But rebellion, we are told, is a seriously outdated concept. Consume instead! Flex the muscles of your spending power.

Few artefacts in popular culture have any significance any more. King dollar has taken care of that. McDonalds within easy striking distance of any city centre. More videos, more CD players, more waste. One is only heartened by the pockets of resistance – record labels that aren't spurious designer labels, like Factory, like Fuck Off Nazis, like On-U Sound. Our time isn't up yet, we can still rise above the mire while others sink in quicksand. Don't wait to pay the price of democracy, take these tablets NOW. Originally published in "On-U Sound Album", a supplement to "Pay It All Back Volume II", a compilation of various On-U Sound artists.

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Show N Tell Though its future is presently speculative, Show N Tell remains an hospitable space for exhibits and performances. Run and inhabited by Jean-Louis Pierson it has maintained a Bohemian attraction while the rest of SOMA has gone upscale. See it while it lasts. (415) 864-4680. 1477 Folsom.

Beau Bo One of S.F.'s newer editions, Beau Bo has wasted no time in assembling an impressive lineup which includes Karen Finley's first exhibit, Tony Labat, and retrospective photos by Ira Cohen. One of several new spaces on the Lower Haight. (415) 621-2469. 206 Fillmore.

S.F. Arts Commission Gallery Founded in 1970, this was the first art space dedicated to presenting emerging local artists. The mandate remains the same. (415) 558-4445. 155 Grove.

Upaya Another new Lower Haight space. Alternates between site-specific work and painting and sculpture with an emphasis on first shows for young artists.

Artists' Television Access Concentrates on new video works and offers inexpensive editing facilities. (415) 824-3890.

Galeria de la Raza Provides a showcase for Latino art. Often presents exhibits within a political context. Operates Studio 24, an adjunct store to subsidize the space. (415) 826-8009. 2851 24th Street.

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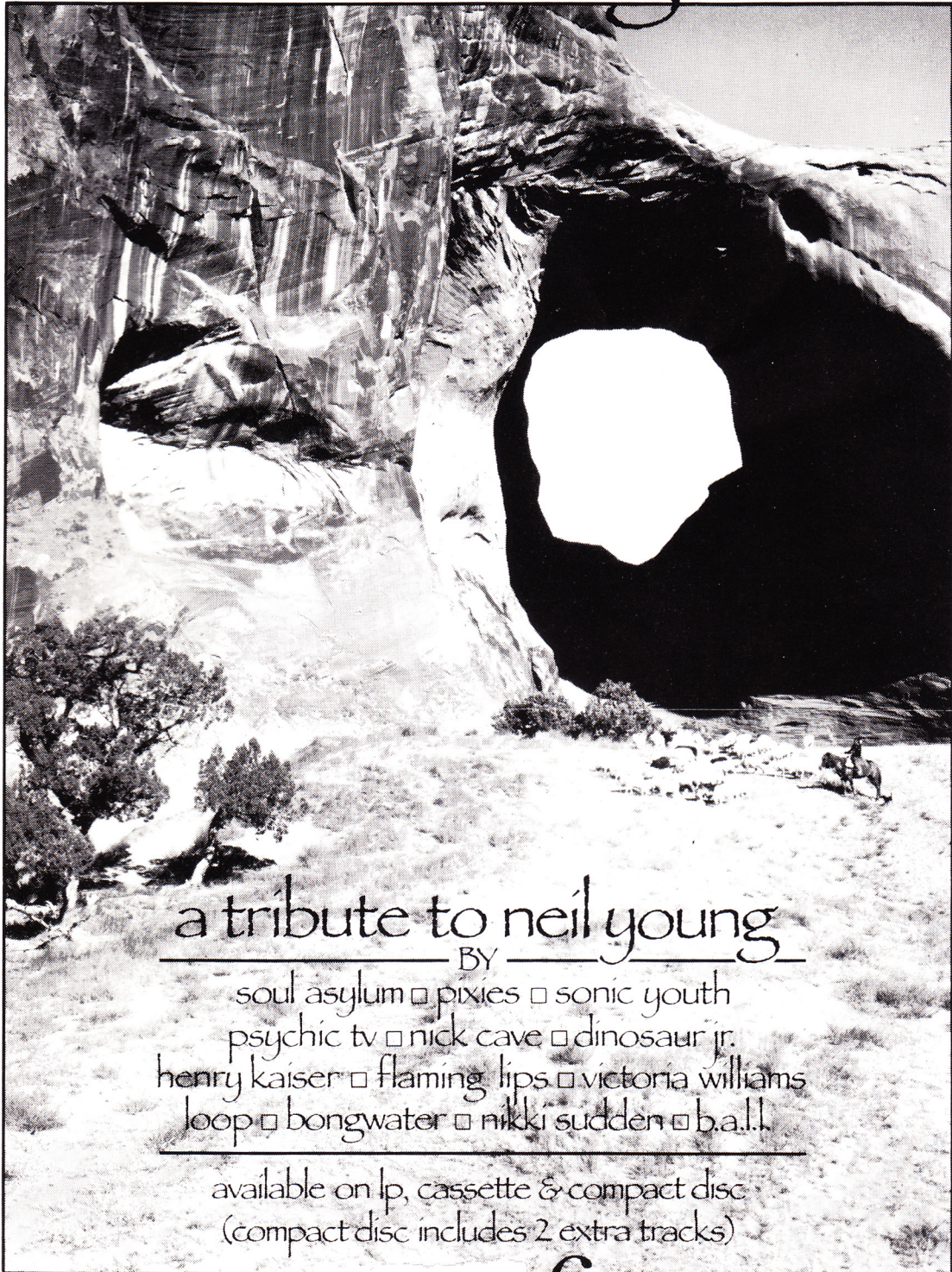
² Ministry/Minimal Compact/Peter Care: Filmmaker/Edward KaSpel/Photography by Stephen Moss/ Artwork by Jayne Yeomans/Aural Wallpaper by Susan Mathews/Industrial Decay and the Endocolony by John Christensen/Southern Exposure: Braille Closet/Dash Rip Rock/Scenes

³ Entropy: SNUB TV, Circle Arts, Chris & Casey, Danielle Dax, Red Hot Chili Peppers, William Orbit, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, ZONE, RAW/The Wolfgang Press/The Starn Twins/Modus: photos by Fred Leutner/On the Beach by Richard Morrison

⁴ Entropy: Jean Cocteau, Biting Tongues, Charles Burns, *Between C&D*, Front Line Assembly, P.E.T.A., Wayne Zebzda, Versus, Third Mind Records/S.R.L.'s Mark Pauline/Adrian Sherwood/Monty Cantan — The Neoist Conspiracy/(Wahumba) Swamp Things/Peter Wollen/Michael Kenna/Cabaret Voltaire/La Troya/The Mark by Daytona Beach, photos by Denise Joy/Anna Domino/Industrialuxe interiors

⁵ Entropy: The Beatnigs, Power in the House, Joe Mama, Manufacture, Butoh artist Andreas von Studnitz, Cintra Wilson, Nelson, Tornado/Heavenly Bodies/Design Asylum/Richard Kern/Visual Track: *Border Radio*, the child in film/Karen Finley/photos by Charles Clark/Shriekback/Hank Ford (fashion)/*The View From Up Here (The Window)* by Daytona Beach/artwork by Jeremy Ritter/CAT by Bob Auclair/Footnotes by Tornado

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a tribute to neil young

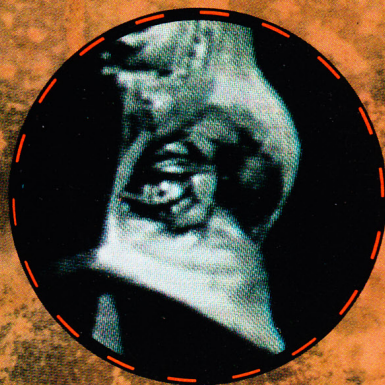
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