

U N D E R C U L L A T U R E

deck magazine



Snuff
What Charlie Saw
Abu Garb
Simon Norfolk
Deerhoof
Anti-Flag
Chris Cleave

Brutality
incident

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The Brutality Incident Issue 20

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“Why is snuff, as a concept, so widely discussed – so inherently interesting, so often the topic of films, articles and discussions? More importantly, since it seems so obvious that *someone, somewhere, at some point* would’ve arranged and filmed a murder, why have none been found? How can we possibly accept that none have been made? Are we missing something?”

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People killed, maimed,
disfigured or otherwise
involved in the process of
creating this Incident



clothing • jewelry • makeup • hair dye • alternative magazines & books • bags & packs • adult novelties • obey posters • artwork • stickers • papers

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Letter from the Editor

When Nova and I first started Deek, the focal point of our distribution strategy was abuse. We would stand like streetside preachers on Forbes Avenue in Oakland. We would yell vaguely offensive phrases. We would shout fake headlines. We would accost people with nonsensical slogans. And we did it all while handing the magazine to whoever would accept it. Guerilla marketing, I guess you could call it. Or Tourette's syndrome.

This approach worked, sort of. It afforded us the opportunity to inflict Deek on the general public. But it also presented predictable frustrations: It snows in Pittsburgh, for example. And some people don't respond positively to unprovoked (hilarious!) cruelty.

I remember one particular instance when things got bad. It was a cold January afternoon. We were circulating our fourth issue, the War Incident. Nova had been yelling something absurd – *"Satan's worms are eating through your consciousness like the termites of Hell! Read it here in Deek Magazine!"* – when some dude (we'll call him "Schooze") took a magazine from her and immediately threw it into a garbage can.

This did not make Nova happy. And she's not a large woman. But when that happened – when that guy literally trashed Deek – the cord that connected her to whatever big tent proselytizer she had been satirizing... well, it snapped. She dropped all the magazines in her hands and ran after Schooze. She grabbed him by his shirt collar and threw him to the ground. She shouted at him, straddled his chest, pointed in his face.

I don't remember what she said exactly. But the gist of her spitting rage was: **Every day you are exposed to so many uncreative, visually boring, intellectually worthless, money-grubbing media outlets trying to manipulate your time and your thoughts and your cash. You are coerced – by the second – into purchasing, for example, that \$40 Abercrombie t-shirt you're wearing. Or that gel you're using to spike your ridiculous hair. Or the rings on your fucking fingers. And you accept it gladly. But when provoked, you can't even give a free, independent publication a chance? You can't even give us a minute of your time before you offer a closed-minded dismissal?**

She was upset. This was an overreaction. And it was totally out of character – not only because Nova's generally fairly reserved, but also because people had been tossing Deeks into garbage cans all day. But her frustration was understandable. It was the unhelpful result of working a full time job, taking classes, and spending all her free time on a project that guaranteed no tangible compensation. It was a representation of what we all felt at the time. And after Jesse, Nate, Houston, Mandy, Ben, Tasha, Ben's mom, Sancho, Melissa, Doug, Lenny, Mo, Tiffany, Wu and I dragged her off Schooze, I think we all felt vindicated. When Schooze stood and apologized, we understood that we had achieved a small victory – something minute, but exhilarating. It was an emotion we hadn't felt before. It was a feeling we couldn't clarify. Yet, somehow, it allowed us to take pride in our work, even during those times when no one else seemed to.

~THIS SPACE REPRESENTS THE PASSAGE OF TIME ~ THE RELEASES OF INCIDENTS: RED PENCIL, HOW-TO, SELF-DESTRUCT, CELEBRITY, MANIFESTO, GREED, POLITICS, ROCK, MADNESS, DETOX, DIVINE, SEX, FUTURE, RACE, FRAUD ~

Now, Nova's matured since then. We all have – everyone who works closely with Deek. And while The Brutality Incident is the print result of similar pent-up frustration (more toward parts of our culture than any particular person), it's also positive. It has the controlled focus of twenty issues' practice. It offers the rewards of a release we've finally experienced. It has the foundation of a group that knows it can't completely rearrange society, but it can certainly comment with some modicum of understanding.

So, before you check out what we've prepared for you – before you read about Snuff films and Charlie Whitman; before you scope our interviews with Chris Cleeve and Anti-Flag and Deerhoof – allow me to kiss Deek's ass. Just for a moment. Allow me to thank everyone ever even remotely involved with Deek. Allow me to thank those who have helped us grow over two years. Allow me to thank the people reading Deek for the first time. Allow me to raise this huge plastic bottle of vodka in the air as a toast to you – the weird bastards who have helped Deek live far beyond its anticipated lifespan.

Et cetera. We hope you enjoy what we've created this month. It's taken a while to put together, and it's gone through incarnations beyond any of our expectations. But it's here now. And we hope you'll give it a chance...

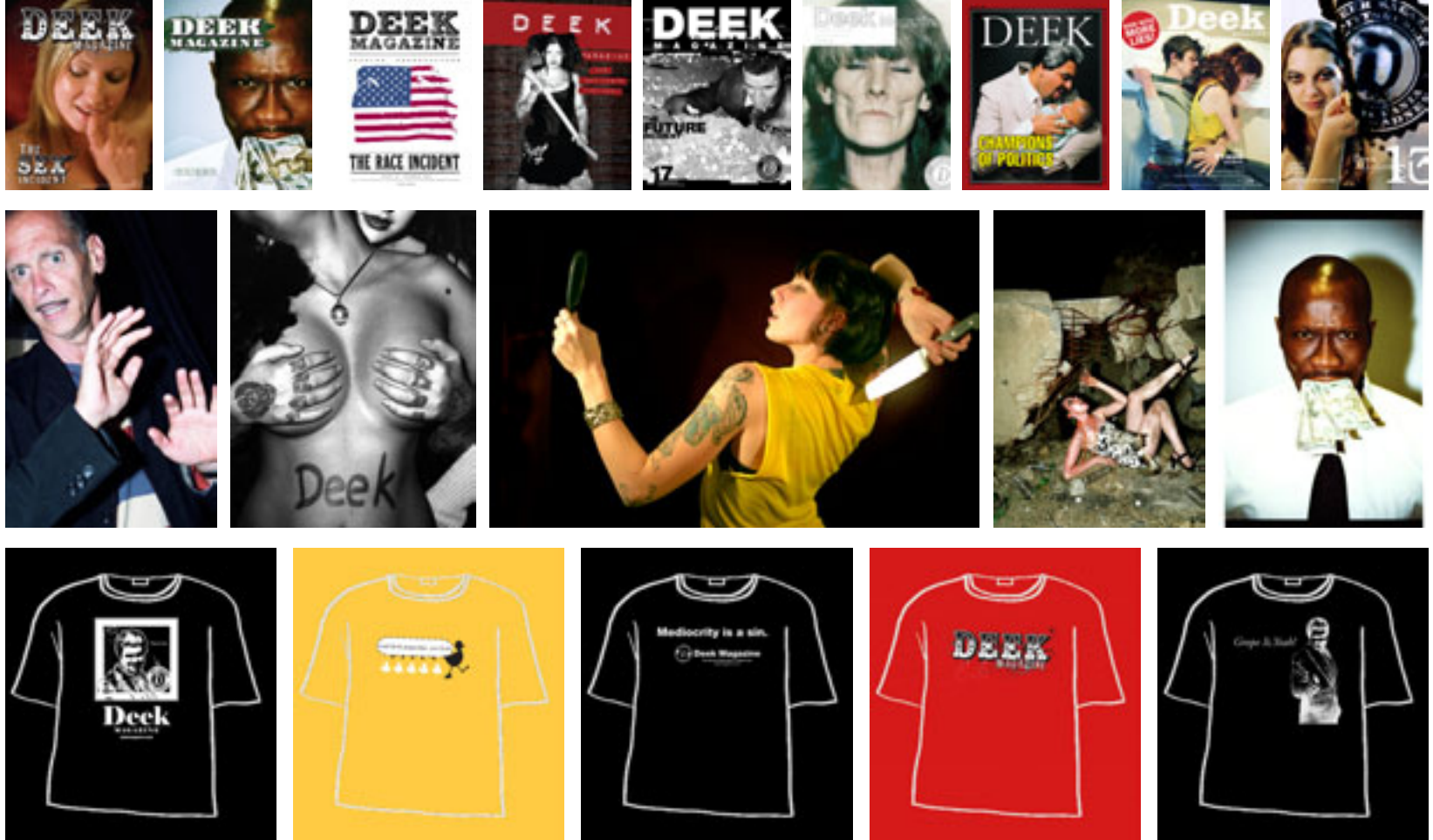
At least until we finish this bottle.



With love and squalor,

Stroud





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Please make sure that all files are saved in CMYK with an 1/8 of an inch bleed and a resolution of 300 DPI. **Deadline for files is 4pm on Wednesdays (48 Hour Turnaround).** Files can be emailed to pgh@the2ndstep.net. Please include all of your contact information so we have a way to get back in touch with you.

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deck magazine

POPULAR UNDERCULTURE

Chief: Matt Stroud | **Nonsense Management:** Nate Bog(os/uszewski)
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Minister of Propaganda: Ben Edwards | **Willy Loman:** Mo Mozuch
Fashionista: Tiffany Boden | **Gallery Attendant:** Wenying Wu
Bid'ness: Tashia Govan | **Interns:** Emily Newman, Nicole Sebula
Contributing Writers: Zach Braden, Katie Pegher, Lenny Flatley
Models: Alan Lai, Pam Elaine, Jessica "Davka" Trimbaud
Apologies To: Katherine

SUBMISSIONS
Deck Magazine gleefully accepts submission, but prefers to work with writers and visual artists on Incident-specific assignments. So! If you want to write or illustrate or design or photograph or... whatever, send an e-mail to words@deckmagazine.com (for writing) or art@deckmagazine.com (for other artistic pursuits). The aforementioned e-mail should contain your social security number, your political affiliation, whether or not you're susceptible to disease, a photograph of yourself wearing something weird, and information regarding what, precisely, you want to do. If you just want to submit something, send it to words@deckmagazine.com and realize that submission does not ensure publication and that **anything you send might end up on our letters page.**

Also:

1. No poetry. 2. I'm serious. 3. We can not pay you. 4. We do not accept paper submissions for writing (unless you're sending something very silly or bad). But if you want to send your manuscript or your band's CD or your book or movie or comic book or lots of money, send it to:

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20 Brutality incident

CALL TO ARMS -- if you're interested in participating in the Deek Experience and have skills in art, writing, fisticuffery, joining us by sending an email to art@deckmagazine.com, words@deckmagazine.com, and info@deckmagazine.com, respectively.

The "g" in "joining" is optional.

contributors

Can't you just hear her sizzling? A German-style Francine Bratwurst... created from a century-old recipe -- Bavarian-style with beer and zip. She comes with two specialty mustards!

Francine Bratwurst

Photo: Dean's Dancing Digits

Stroke

Something of a social butterfly, Stroke is a man ahead of his time who survives on the largesse and patronage of the rich and powerful. "I know a lot of very important people and am often received in some of the most famous homes in the country," said Stroke, "Sir Winston Churchill and many leading politicians have been among my patients." As a portrait artist, he had members of the Royal Family and politicians sit for him. "Prince Philip, The Duke and Duchess of Kent, and Lord Snowdon have been among my sitters."

Ralph "Bucky" Gaineborough

"The Buck Monster!" is a frequent contributor and, more importantly, one of *Deck's* only staff members willing to share intimate details of his life. He is an illiterate circus freak and a freelance alligator wrestler with a drinking problem. He will not eat anything that has been on the ground more than three days.

Photo: Bryan Senti

Margot List

114 CRAWFORD STREET

Margo is white, tall, beautiful and amazing with pecans.



Brutality

DEEK MAGAZINE INCIDENT 20

Intro

The Golden Testicle Award

1) PEZ MP3

"My name is Pat Misterovich. I am a stay-at-home dad with a one-person company. Last summer I had this thought, "Wouldn't it be cool if there was an MP3 player that looked like a PEZ dispenser?" You see, I had been reading this article about a guy who had turned an Altoids tin into iPod speakers. Out of curiosity I thought I would ask PEZ if they might be willing to license their brand for such a thing. To my astonishment they didn't think I was crazy."

<http://www.pezmp3.com>



2) TONYA HARDING FANTASY (THERE ARE 1512 FANTASY STORIES AND MESSAGES, AND THEY'RE ALL ABOUT TONYA HARDING)

"We jumped in, Tonya driving and together we tore through town, passed Carl's Gas Station, then down a long country road with tons of money, Tonya's tits bouncing, and the sound of a siren wailing somewhere in the distance. We took a corner hard and a hubcap spun loose, disappeared off into a ditch on my right. I'd had a lot of breaks in my life, none good. And now I had resorted to bank robbery. What a life. Maybe not perfect but then again, Tonya had joined me, good or bad. Perhaps my luck would change."

<http://www.tonyaharding.com>

3) PEDOPHILIA AND STAR TREK

"In fact, Star Trek paraphernalia has so routinely been found at the homes of the pedophiles they've arrested that it has become a gruesome joke in the squad room ... This does not mean that watching Star Trek makes you a pedophile. It does mean that if you're a pedophile, odds are you've watched a lot of Star Trek."

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

4) UNICEF BOMBS THE SMURFS IN FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN FOR EX-CHILD SOLDIERS

"The people of Belgium have been left reeling by the first adult-only episode of the Smurfs, in which the blue-skinned cartoon characters' village is annihilated by warplanes."

<http://news.telegraph.co.uk>

5) CUDDLE PARTY

"In a society that is increasingly touch-phobic, many of us aren't getting our Recommended Daily Allowance of welcomed touch. For many people, the only options for getting their touch needs met consist of paying for a massage, having a drunken hookup or getting a pat-down from airport security. Cuddle Parties seek to change that in a way that's conscious, healthy and nutritious."

<http://www.cuddleparty.com>

For nearly a decade, our good friends at *Capital of Nasty* (www.con.ca – [insert retarded Canada joke here]) have been consistently surfing the World Wide Web for the strangest material they can find. And they've found some pretty interesting stuff. But every month or so, they'll run into sites (and news stories) that are just a little stranger, and a little more outlandish than anything else they discover.

These sites deserve attention.

They deserve recognition.

They deserve awards!

And thus, The Golden Testicle Award was created. So, in honor of *Capital of Nasty*, and all the wonderful information flowing through the internet, we bring you The Best of the Golden Testicle. Enjoy

Got something you wanna add to the Golden Testicle? E-mail your suggestions to words@deekmagazine.com. Thanks to Leandro at *Capital of Nasty*. Check out www.con.ca for more.

6) LIST OF FILMS ORDERED BY USES OF THE WORD "FUCK"

Winners include *The Big Lebowski*, *Casino*, *Martin Lawrence Live: Runteldat*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, and *The Devil's Rejects*, which averaged a whopping 5.14 "fucks" per minute.

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

7) ATHEISTS OF SILICON VALLEY

"How are people supposed to know that Atheists in fact do grow up to be the best kinds of American citizens every day – if we aren't visible? Atheists of Silicon Valley is reclaiming the A-word in our community by encouraging local Atheists to come out of the closet and be open with friends, co-workers, neighbors and family. We're standing up and speaking out. 14% of Americans and 19% of Californians identify themselves as some kind of non-believer. We may be a minority, but we're sizable and growing. According to the American Religious Identification Survey, Americans who answered "none" when asked to identify their religion numbered 29.4 million in 2001, more than double the 14.3 million in 1990."

<http://www.godlessgeeks.com/>

8) BANANA GUARD

"Are you fed up with bringing bananas to work or school only to find them bruised and squashed? Our unique, patented device allows for the safe transport and storage of individual bananas letting you enjoy perfect bananas anytime, anywhere!"

<http://www.bananaguard.com/>

9) THE DEVIANT DESIRES MANIFESTO

"We believe that no matter how bizarre the details, sexual fantasies contain dramas and conflicts that are universal. Part of the fun in meeting new deviants is to discover their idiosyncratic ways of mixing and matching symbols from popular culture, literature or mythology, with elements of their own childhood and environment to make a narrative that condenses intense personal meaning with ecstatic sexual pleasure."

<http://www.deviantdesires.com>

10) WHAT IS VICTORIAS SECRET?



<http://www.whatisvictoriassecret.com>



Office of the Protectorate

April 5, 2006

Re: The Question

My esteemed colleagues, as you are well aware, we are at war. A cabal of shadowy and unknown enemies is afoot. We know not their name, ranks, and serial number, but we know this: they are out to destroy us, with a tenacity and single-mindedness that we must be willing to match if we are to win. For rest assured, we are at war with an enemy that will destroy our way of life, and the gloves are now off.

Freedom cannot march shackled by high ideals. We must be philosophically flexible in our pursuit of efficient information-gathering techniques. Some of you, the more squeamish junior members, have felt pangs of moral unease at our coercive interrogation techniques. I've read Voltaire, too; I understand your concerns.

However, they are groundless. The beatings continue as long as they must, for we are in the midst of an epic battle whose outcome is known only to History. Persevere. After all, continual appeals to the judgment of History mean never having to say you're sorry.

Also included are directions to this month's Liberty Mixer with Kappa Kappa Gamma, the theme of which is "20,000 Leagues Under The O.C." I hope you all bought your party hats, and that we won't have a repeat of last month's copier incident.

From the [REDACTED] Turn [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] under [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] up the [REDACTED]

As we walk down that destined road, the future's so bright, gentlemen, that I have appropriated funds for adequate eye protection.

Yours in Freedom,

[Signature]

Wyrnwood,
Senior Officer for Coercive Interrogation Techniques
Vice President, Party Planning Committee

Punk / Counterpunk:

*Should
the Beatings
continue?*

After several hours I no longer recognized the sound of my own screams. After several days of sleep deprivation, night and day blurred to perpetual gray.

On the first night I was led into a small, bare cell. I was stripped naked. My arms were handcuffed to opposite ends of a long metal bunk bed. I was bent over the top bunk. They pulled a pair of women's underwear over my face, whispering "we have so many new things to teach you."

I remember a point about a year into my "stay" - I was hauled out of my cell, hooded as usual, and one of the men grabbed me by my hair. I remember how quiet they were - it was the first time they didn't shout obscenities at me. It was their silence that frightened me more than anything. He, who'd withstood the electrical shocks and the "liberation" of my fingernails, and here I was remembering fear. I heard the sound of running water, and with a quiet motion my hood was removed and my head plunged into icy water. I had no time to breathe. The water washed my face. Then they pulled my head back out again. I choked and spluttered back into the water. This went on for almost an hour, until I blacked out. What I remember most is their silence.

They stripped me of all my clothes, even my underwear. They gave me women's underwear that was rose color with flowers in it and they put the bag over my face. One of them whispered in my ear, "Today I am going to fuck you," and he said this in Arabic. He rubbed my hands with iron behind my back to the metal of the window to the point my feet were off the ground and I was hanging there for about 5 hours just because I asked about the time, because I wanted to pray. And then they took all my clothes and he took the female underwear and he put it over my head. After he released me from the window, he tied me to my bed until before dawn.

I was beaten with a broom. They broke a chemical light over my back, and then they put me with a police baton.

Then they laid me on a bench, flat on my stomach, head extending into the air, and tied my arms against my body with cords. Again the same question which I refused to answer. By tilting the bench very slowly, they dipped my head into a bowl filled with stinking liquid - dirty water and excrement. I was aware of the gurgling liquid reaching my mouth, then of a dull rumbling in my ears and a tingling sensation in my nose.

"LIKE A DOG!"

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 1985



CHARLES NG, made videotapes of their "sex slaves," women they'd tortured and sexually abused before killing them.

The Apocalyptic Sexual Sadists of Calaveras County

By Joseph L. Flatley

SAN FRANCISCO - Officer Daniel Wright thought he was answering a routine call. Soon police would learn about Leonard Lake and his partner Charles Ng, who had raped, tortured and killed at least twelve - maybe as many as twenty-five - men, women and children in the mountains northeast of San Francisco.

Officer Daniel Wright approached a young Asian man who'd stolen a vice. The man - later identified as Charles Ng - took flight, disappearing on foot into traffic. His bearded companion, who seemed older than his identification indicated, apologized and tried to pay for the vice. Suspicious, Officer Wright conducted a search of their car, a 1980 Honda Prelude. In the trunk he discovered a .22 caliber handgun outfitted with an illegal silencer. He brought the man in for questioning.

Police soon traced the Honda's registration to Paul Gosner, who had gone missing in San Francisco nine months earlier, and found bloodstains on the front seat. When they questioned the suspect about the blood, he asked for a pen, paper, and a glass of water.

"Are you going to write a confession?"

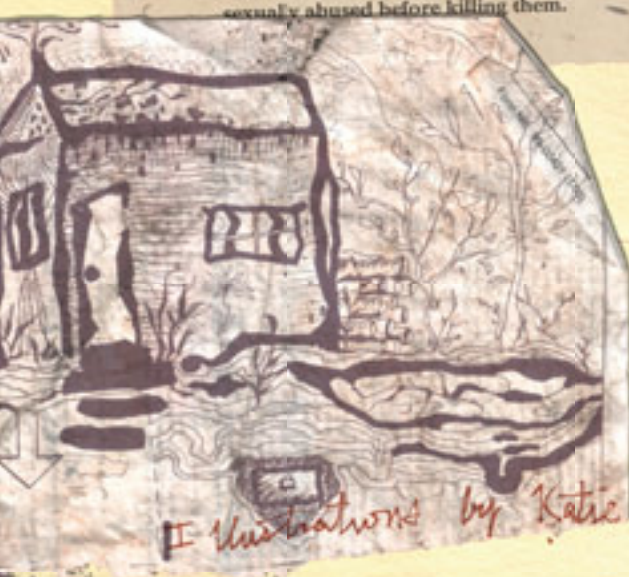
"No, just a note to my wife."

With his handcuffs removed, the man scribbled a short note and placed it in his shirt pocket. He then identified himself as Leonard Lake, a fugitive wanted by the FBI. Then his eyes rolled back. As officers watched, he began to convulse. Lake had swallowed the two cyanide capsules hidden under his lapel; he never regained consciousness, dying in the hospital a few days later. "I love you," the note in his pocket read. "Please forgive me. I forgive you. Please tell Mama, Fern, and Patty I'm sorry."

The bizarre suicide led police to Claralyn "Cricket" Balasz, a teacher's aide and Lake's ex-wife - the two had met while working at a renaissance faire near San Francisco. She took authorities to the remote cabin Lake had rented with Charles Ng. The two self-styled "survivalists" believed in an imminent



LEONARD LAKE, swallows capsules while in police custody the hospital a few days later.



The sexual sadist is hopelessly miswired; he has become conditioned to demand whatever the pleasure of brutality.



head trauma. The sadist's sexual impulse becomes intertwined with an intense desire to inflict pain; as this desire grows, so does the need to express it through elaborate and grotesque fantasies.

At first, the sexual sadist will pursue his fantasies with a willing person: a prostitute, perhaps, or in the case of Lenny Lake, his wife, who during their marriage participated in the S&M-themed movies he wrote and directed. But when the fantasy inevitably wears thin, the irrepressible sadistic impulse finds other outlets. As Mary Ellen O'Toole, a profiler for the National Center for Analysis of Violent Crime in Quantico, Virginia, describes in Jim Fielder's *Slow Death*: "And once the predators start forcing themselves on unwilling women, they continue to repeat the same brutalizing rituals over and over until they are caught."

The sexual sadist is hopelessly miswired; he has become conditioned to demand whatever the pleasure of brutality, and Lake's survivalist philosophy merely enabled him to justify his sexual sadism. Healthy human minds need self-respect as much as healthy human bodies need food and water; if he couldn't find self respect in the real world, Lake would find it in his fantasy world. As he put it, he would live life "with death in my pocket and fantasy my goal."

"The picture that finally emerged," wrote Colin Wilson in *The History of Murder*, "was of a man who spent most of his time living in a

world of fantasy, who indulged in grandiose daydreams of success without any realistic attempt to put them into practice." Lake lived a fantasy in which he and Ng would be the only survivors of the coming nuclear holocaust. What sort of state was he in if he could find "nuclear winter" preferable to his life?

Joel Norris, in *Serial Killers*, writes that "[in] his final journal he described the unraveling of his life after he moved to Blue Mountain Road [the site of the compound]. His dreams of success had eluded him, he admitted to himself that his boasts of heroic deeds in Vietnam were all delusions, and the increasing number of victims he was burying in the trench behind his bunker only added to his unhappiness. Lake had reached the final stage of the serial murder syndrome: he realized that he had come to a dead end with nothing but his own misery to show for it."

Lake's partner, Charles Ng, fled to Calgary, where he was arrested in another shoplifting incident. After more than four years in Canadian custody he was finally extradited.

Ng was something of an expert at delaying his trial, and it wasn't until June of 1999 - fifteen years after his crimes - that he was found guilty of eleven murders and sentenced to death. He is currently on death row in California.



Further Reading

Colin Wilson's *History of Murder* was my first encounter with the case of Leonard Lake. Wilson's book is both encyclopedic in length and epic in scope. CourtTV's Crime Library website is always an valuable source of information. Check out "Charles Ng: Cheating Death," a thorough outline of the police investigation and court case at *CrimeLibrary.com*. I found a few of the details and quotes above from *Evil Serial Killers: In The Minds of Monsters* by Charlotte Greig. Also invaluable to this article was *Serial Killers* by Joel Norris, a book that looks into the psychological and psychobiological make up of the serial killer. Norris dedicates a fascinating chapter to the Lake case. Jim Fielder's *Slow Death*, about the sexual serial killer David Parker Ray, contains quite a bit of information about the sexual sadist. Finally, *Eye of Evil*, by Joseph Harrington and Robert Burger, takes the inevitably lurid true-crime approach to the Lake-Ng case from the viewpoint of fictional reporter Tomasina Boyd Clancy. (Yes, really.)

-Joseph "Lenny" Flatley would never hurt a fly. Really. E-mail him at: mediafaction@yahoo.co.uk

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\$2 ruenglings

for the Common Man

Wouldn't it be fun to be the guy with your finger on the button? – to have the power to be more brutal and violent than any man with a pen or sword? I sure think so. But if I had that opportunity, I would make sure of a few things first. **-Ralph “Bucky” Gainsborough**

- 1.) I would have a castle on a private, unidentified fjord. I would also have a moat with electric eels. And vicious man-eating plants.
- 2.) I would have a room with all kinds of instruments that allowed me to screw with people's bank accounts, fuck with their kids' grades, and manipulate their actions in all sorts of uncomfortable situations. I'd have video cameras filming people around the clock. And I'd call it “Buckyvision” (although I would have to call it that to myself because if I were so powerful and mysterious, I probably wouldn't have many friends).
- 3.) I would constantly smoke great cigars and drink top shelf booze 100% of the time that I was awake.



WILL RESULT IN IMPROPER
OPERATION AND/OR SERIOUS
PERSONAL INJURY

Pravda Vodka - \$22



In Russian, “Pravda” translates into “truth.” I feel this choice is appropriate since the Machiavellian logic behind my new fantasy role – Emperor/Spy/God – says that truth is the last thing you want anyone to know. Truth is something for common people, not great and powerful people like you and your old pal Bucky. You know that you would lie to everyone if you had that kind of clout.

Besides all the truth nonsense, Pravda has several practical purposes as well. First off, it gets you totally mothered. Secondly, you can use the hookah-esque receptacle as either a chemical beaker or a poor-man's spear if you are ever attacked or discovered. Regardless of its uses in our world domination game, the “truth” is that you feel like an African/South American/Antediluvian dictator after the first shot.



Punch Grand Cru - Prince Consort Maduro (8.5in, 52ring) – \$8



This is the kind of cigar that someone cheap would smoke to give the impression that they ruled the earth. First of all, it is fucking enormous. Less seasoned smokers may need two hands to support this monstrosity. If you do this, I'll send you a cattle brand with “little bitch” on it, along with a recommendation that you go back to Hav-A-Tampas (because you obviously need a plastic doohickey to help you smoke cigars. And a bib).

Anywho. If I had this cigar and was in position to rule the world, I would actually use the burning tube to press buttons that would ruin people's lives. The embers would symbolize their pain and destitution that would be a product of my power and dominance.

Furthermore, if anyone tried to take a picture of me, I could actually block out my entire face with this cigar (Try it, it's fun!). Without a doubt, this is the ideal cigar for either second rate world domination or keeping those damned kids in line, all the while smelling like pepper and cinnamon. The choice is now entirely up to you.



Waco MASSACRE OR MISTAKE?

One lesson we all learn with age is this: you can't bargain with a messiah. No matter how many government tanks, snipers, and tear gas canisters you may have on your side, it's really difficult to get past the whole, **“Hey, jokers, I'm the Son of God, and no Whore of Babylon is getting me out of this compound until I'm good and ready.”** **-Jesse Hicks**

SUCH IS THE POSITION FBI negotiators found themselves in during the early months of 1993. On February 28, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (dudes throw a wicked kegger) attempted to execute search and arrest warrants on the Branch Davidian ranch, just outside Waco, Texas, home to a splinter group of Seventh Day Adventists. Led by would-be messiah David Koresh (less glamorously known as Vernon Howell), whose literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation makes Pat Roberston's appear downright sunny, the Davidians had stockpiled massive amounts of guns & ammo in preparation for Armageddon. When law enforcement attempted to raid the compound, someone – neither side agrees who – started firing. A gunfight ensued, killing four ATF agents and wounding 16 more.

What had begun as a relatively routine search-and-seizure operation became a 51 day standoff, with the FBI's Hostage Response Team cutting water and power to the compound. At first, Koresh seemed willing to bargain, allowing several children to leave the compound in exchange for milk and other supplies. As the siege wore on, however, his rhetoric grew more and more apocalyptic. The FBI began psychological warfare, bombarding the Davidians with loud music throughout the night; the group responded with their own music and a large sign reading, **“Rodney King, we know how you feel!”**

By April 19, the FBI had suffered enough of Koresh's stalling. With the authorization of Attorney General Janet Reno (who, mistakenly it seems, believed the Davidians were abusing the children inside), the Bureau began to fill the compound with tear gas. For four hours they pumped in gas, eventually realizing that strong winds were blowing it back outside. (Because of budget cuts, the FBI has to make do with basic cable – no Weather Channel!) No one moved.

Around noon that day, three fires started in separate areas of the compound. The surviving

Davidians claim pyrotechnic tear gas rounds ignited hay inside the building; the FBI countered that bugging devices picked up voices saying, **“spread the fuel,”** and, **“don't light it yet.”** Koresh's sermons often contained references to biblical fire.

Whatever the cause, the fire spread quickly, reaching temperatures of over 3,000 degrees. As government agents watched, flames engulfed the compound, along with 79 Branch Davidians, 17 of them children. By the time the fire cooled enough for EMS workers to approach, they could help no one.

At some point, every conspiracy theory hinges on the question of malice versus incompetence. To most observers, the Waco tragedy looks like a colossal failure by FBI negotiators, who, while trying to coax the Davidians out of their compound, flipped the bird to those inside. Knowing nothing about the Davidian religion and remembering nothing of Jonestown, the FBI went in blind and dumb, and tragedy resulted.

Others, though, see more sinister motives. What about the FBI snipers, who some believe fired into the compound as it burned, forcing the Davidians back inside? What about the disappearing evidence – videotape of the initial raid; CS gas canisters; and the steel front door that would provide forensic proof for just who fired first? Why was the Delta Force in Waco that day, and who told Janet Reno that children were being abused, provoking her to authorize the use of force against the Davidians?

You may have heard of one of those doubters: his name was Timothy McVeigh. On April 19, 1995, the two-year anniversary of Waco, he loaded a Ryder truck with ammonium nitrate and fuel oil, creating a 5,000 pound bomb. With great care and self-righteousness he parked his message in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. At 9:02 AM he detonated it, killing 168 people.



Complexity:
Davidians = Good/misunderstood.
FBI = Evil/incompetent.

Plausibility:
Two guys walk into a bar. First guy says, “I guess that'd be the first time any government has distorted facts to get what it wants or to cover up gross incompetence.” Second guy goes, “Are you being sarcastic?” First guy: **“Oh, I am not. I so. Totally. Am not.”** Then he checks his watch and the time reads: Revolution.

Where It Will Help You Score:
With the Branch Davidians, obviously, though that's not playing your best odds. Instead, clothe yourself in camouflage and Carhartt and head for the Midwest. Roll around in some militia literature; let its musk rub off on you. Finally, when you've caught the eye of that Flecktarn-wearing, Walther-slitting blonde, say to her, **“I'm going to whisper two words in your ear: Waco, Texas.”**

Champion of
brutality

GG

Punk Rock's Blood Drenched Messiah

By Katie Rogers Photos Courtesy of Merle Allin

The angel that appeared to Merle Allin Sr. bore an omen: his newborn son was destined to be a man as great as the Messiah.

So was born Jesus Christ “GG” Allin.

HE CAME INTO THIS WORLD to save rock and roll. He hoped that through his life and death, the genre might be redeemed. Billed as the “sickest, most decadent rocker of all time,” he was unstoppable: “I’ve had death threats, but that doesn’t stop me. I go into every show with full acceleration that somebody’s gonna get hurt.”

Since his debut in 1977 as a drummer with the band Malpractice, GG Allin has become a legend – but not for his music. Despite 16 years of experience in various punk bands including the Cedar Street Sluts, the Scumfuc, and the AIDS Brigade, GG’s recordings are essentially a musical abortion. Simple chord progressions underlay lyrics such as, “Your pussy’s got

fleas / zits all over your body, bitch, give me your disease” and animalistic grunting noises to create almost comically bad songs. (Imagine the Sex Pistols with even more abrasive

vocals, even less instrumental talent, and more lyrics about eating pussy and jamming tampons and shot glasses up people’s asses.)

His live shows were less a display of musical ability and style, and more a three-ring circus of blood, shit, and come. His pre-show rituals included eating laxatives so he would be better able to shit on stage, eat it, roll around in it, spit it, fling it at the crowd, and smear it all over his body. He masturbated on stage and beat himself with beer bottles, microphones, anything he could get his hands on. At one show, GG bared his front teeth and shattered them with the microphone – the same one he’d recently shoved up his own ass.

By the end of his life, GG Allin was so self-mutilated he was barely recognizable. His scalp and face were permanently discolored and misshapen from his on stage brutality. His body was covered in scars and homemade prison-ink tattoos reading, “life sucks scum fuck,” “vomit,” and “live fast die,” alongside

a tombstone engraved with the letters “GG.”

“It’s kind of a therapeutic release,” he once said. “I kind of just crawl inside myself and then I use my body as a weapon against the audience. As far as I’m concerned, they’re the enemy and beyond that stage is enemy lines.” It wasn’t uncommon that fans would be injured at his shows – his motto was, “With GG, you don’t get what you expect – you get what you deserve.” One of his many jail stints came after he viciously attacked a female fan with a penknife during a show. But people kept coming back for more, a phenomenon even GG himself had trouble understanding. Nevertheless, he regarded his fans as his own personal army, existing only to carry out his will.

The incident that secured his place in the halls of rock and roll infamy was his promise, made in a letter to underground punk fanzine *Maximum RocknRoll*, to publicly execute himself on stage on Halloween 1990. He considered suicide a graceful exit from the peak of his career

– he wanted to enter the next world at his strongest. That year, his plan was thwarted by his incarceration for knifing that groupie. Each Halloween he repeated the threat, but somehow always landed in jail the night he was supposed to die.

To GG, this is what rock and roll was all about – the brutality, the way of living. He was said to have mugged people and robbed homes to finance his lifestyle, which included a lot of heroin. He sold his records all by hand and detested record companies. The 80’s found straight edge, political punk rock on more mainstream record labels and in mainstream record stores. “Everybody else has drawn lines and limits, and conformed themselves and sold out, and I’ve had opportunities and I’ve said no – that’s not GG Allin,” he said in 1991. He developed a superiority complex over the rest of the upper East Coast punk scene that led him to believe that he, and only he, could be the scene’s saving grace.

During his 1989 trial in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for the rape of one of his fans (who, he said, “knew what she was getting herself into. [Leslie], she threw herself on the GG Allin altar thinking that she was going to be this big bad bitch and she was gonna outdo everybody and she learned she couldn’t do it. Now, you don’t walk into fucking combat without a gun. You don’t go to a fire and expect not to burn. You don’t come to see GG Allin and expect to have a real sweet time.”) the court declared that GG, while fairly intelligent, was probably a megalomaniac. Given that he was christened “Jesus Christ,” is it any wonder he suffered from a psychiatric condition characterized by an unrealistic belief in one’s own superiority, grandiose abilities, and omnipotence? That he had recorded songs such as, “Kill Thy Father, Rape Thy Mother,” and “I’m Gonna Rape You” probably didn’t help his case, and he was eventually sentenced to one-and-a-half to four years in prison.

During the 15 months he served, he wrote his *Mein Kampf*: the infamous *GG Allin Manifesto*, in which he openly proclaimed

himself as the Messiah of rock and roll. “The Jesus Christ they preach about in the Bible is a phony imposter – just a crutch for the cripples to lean on,” he wrote. “Fuck that weak shit! I am the man to deal with. I created myself inside the womb from the fires of Hell. There are no separations between Jesus Christ, God, and the Devil, because I am all of them. I am here to take rock ‘n’ roll back and prove to the world that I am the real king through the powers I have acquired.”

It was after the *Manifesto* and his release from prison that he began to tell people he was no longer interested in publicly executing himself. He had one reason to live, and he believed he could never rest until rock and roll had been saved, or as he put it, “My mission is to destroy rock and roll as it now stands and rebuild it in GG Allin’s name.” His life, he believed, was the key to saving the dying and corrupt genre of rock and roll.

His fixation with the rock and roll lifestyle eventually killed him at the age of 36, hours after he was seen running through the streets of New York City, naked and covered in blood and feces. The night he died, he played what many fans and critics consider his greatest, most violent show of all time. He had been strung out all day, and after only two songs, the power in Manhattan’s Gas Station club was turned off. GG marched into the streets, with his army of fans behind him. They rioted, throwing bottles at police, overturning garbage cans and breaking windows.

GG went to the Alphabet City apartment of his friend Johnny Puke, where he was found the next morning, dead of an apparent heroin overdose. He was wearing a white miniskirt he’d borrowed from his 17 year-old girlfriend, a denim jacket, and a dog collar. His last words were, “We gotta do that spoken word tour, man.”

Like his life, his funeral was unruly, unconventional, and fairly disturbing. An account by mourner Joe Coughlin, published in a zine called *Pretentious Shit*, describes the leather-clad body as discolored and noticeably “going bad after five days,” leaking embalming fluid. In an acoustic country ballad called “When I Die,” GG had requested to be buried with a bottle of Jim Beam; when the beer ran out, drunken funeral-goers ripped the bottle from his hands. One girl removed her panties and put them on GG’s face. They pulled his dick from the filthy jock strap he was buried in and played with it. Even in death, GG Allin was a public spectacle. The crowd of mourners agreed: he would have wanted it that way.



“Todd Philips’s *Hated* is the definitive GG Allin documentary, drawing on extensive interviews and concert footage to paint the picture of a man who tried to escape his demons by submitting to them.

Besides being a shit-throwing, blood-spraying demon on stage, Allin had a remarkably self-aware offstage presence, which *Hated* hints at but doesn’t fully explore – for a more complete picture of the man, fans will have to dig up the numerous performance bootlegs floating around. For the new fan, though, *Hated* does an excellent job of introducing the man, the demon, GG Allin.”



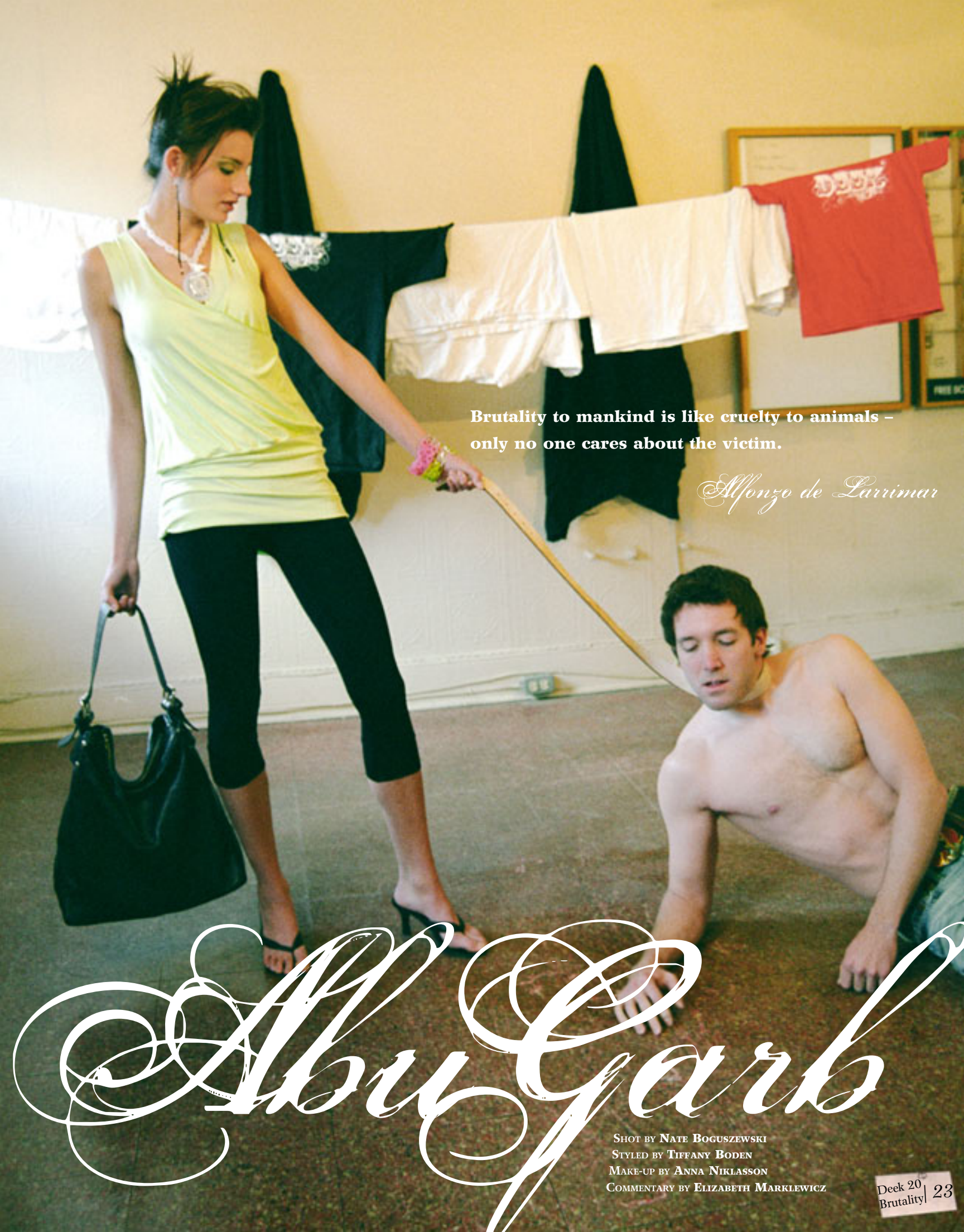
“Everybody else has drawn lines + limits, + conformed themselves + sold out, + I’ve had opportunities + I said no – that’s not GG Allin.”



Brutality

DEEK MAGAZINE INCIDENT 20

Fashion



Brutality to mankind is like cruelty to animals –
only no one cares about the victim.

Alfonzo de Larrimar

Abu Garb

SHOT BY NATE BOGUSZEWSKI
STYLED BY TIFFANY BODEN
MAKE-UP BY ANNA NIKLASSON
COMMENTARY BY ELIZABETH MARKLEWICZ



fashion

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56 58 60 62 64 66 68 70 72 74 76 78 80 82 84 86 88 90 92 94 96 98 100



I hate men as only a woman can, only as one who has seen their brutality, their futility, their stupidity.

Dallas D. Eisensteiner



I see myself capable of arrogance and brutality... And I'm okay with that.

Georgina Steve

Models:
Brooke Miller
Tom Van Gemert
Jonathan Danial
Jared A. Boyer
Johnathan Cyrana
Eric Mitzel
Erin Lindey

Fashionable tops and accessories (except plastic bags and Parliament cigarette) provided by ORIGINAL CIN 1922 East Carson St. / www.originalein.org.
Jeans provided by TORQUE DENIM 1931 East Carson St. / www.torquedenim.com.
Deck t-shirts (designed by M. Poprocki) available at www.deckmagazine.com.

We always seek models, make up artists, hair-stylists, independent clothing designers and suppliers. To get involved e-mail art@deckmagazine.com.



Brutality

DEEK MAGAZINE INCIDENT 20

Features

Lawrenceville, PA



“We were confident that right and truth would prevail, and I would be acquitted and we would devote the rest of our lives working to create a justice system here in the United States. The guilty verdict has strengthened that resolve. But as we’ve discussed our plans to expose the warts of our legal system, people have said, ‘Why Bother,’ ‘No One Cares,’ ‘You’ll Look Foolish.’ 60 Minutes, 20/20, the American Civil Liberties Union, Jack Anderson and others have been publicizing cases like yours for years, and it doesn’t bother anyone...”

– Budd Dwyer’s final words

ROBERT “Budd” Dwyer was a state treasurer of Pennsylvania who, on January 22, 1987, killed himself during a press conference on live television. It’s something you might’ve seen randomly on the internet, or in *The Many Faces of Death, Part 6*, or... somewhere else.

Story goes, Dwyer was scheduled for a court appearance on January 23, 1987. He was to appear before a federal judge to face charges of bribery and conspiracy to commit fraud. If convicted, he faced up to 55 years in prison, a fine of up to \$300,000, and the loss of his position in state government.

On the day before his court appearance, at the press conference, he insisted on his innocence, on the hypocrisy of his government – “as we’ve discussed our plans to expose the warts of our legal system, people have said, ‘Why Bother,’ ‘No One Cares.’” – and then he handed papers to his staff. In a matter of seconds, he pulled a .357 Magnum revolver from a manila envelope, and shot himself in the mouth.

I’m thinking about this on a Sunday night in 2006.

I’m standing in falling snow on an uncovered stoop just off Eighth Avenue in Homestead, PA. I’m wondering about Dwyer’s wife – where she went the night he killed himself. Did she cry? How forcefully? Had she been expecting it? I wonder about this. I wonder about the ensuing cleanup after Dwyer killed himself. After the media fled, who mopped up? I wonder about his kids and their lives, and how they were affected. And I’m lost in these thoughts, thinking about the commercialization of his death and how it’s been distributed over and over again for profit. And, as I’m thinking about this, I realize that, without full consent from my brain, my index finger is actually ringing the doorbell to a house that may or may not contain a living person who may or may not have a video tape documenting the actual murder of a human being. I am looking for a snuff film. And I’m wondering if I’ll find it.

Earlier that week, I had placed an ad on Craigslist¹ looking for “rare and unique pornography.” In the ad, I sort of referenced

snuff. I wrote: “I’m mostly interested in locating extremely rare films and, if you got ‘em, films where people are brutally murdered.”

This was not smooth, I know. But considering what a snuff film *is*,² I couldn’t quite think of a better way to explain what I was looking for without getting too windy... or too weird. It’s debatable whether or not I succeeded.

More background: I had scheduled three interviews for that week, on consecutive days, after work, all with “collectors” who had implied that they owned vintage movies, and nothing more. Via e-mail, when I said I was writing an article for a magazine, they all asked to remain anonymous. This was the third of those interviews. The first was with a tattoo shop owner who collected fake snuff – movies like *Guinea Pig: Flower of Flesh and Blood*, *Cannibal Holocaust*, and the more recent *Meat for Satan’s Icebox*, which I watched and came to the following conclusion: Fake snuff is often pretty dumb.³

The second interview was scheduled and cancelled, but I later found the potential interviewee’s website, and noticed that he mostly specialized in early 60s nudie mags.

So anyway, I’m staring into this house through a screen door and a broken

window and I’m rubbing my hands together, shaking my head, wondering why I’m here. I hope no one answers the door...

But I know someone will. Because, inside, I see that there’s a black man rocking back and forth in a chair facing away from me, next to a kitchen with tile and cabinets.⁴ He’s watching television – a football game – but I can’t tell who’s playing.

In a second, he’ll stand up and keep his eyes on the television (walking backwards, trying to catch one final play before he answers the door). But when he does this, he’ll get tripped up, and he’ll accidentally step on what looks like a pink and yellow stuffed animal on the ground behind him. That’s when he’ll bump his head on one of the cabinets, clumsy, like he’s on a sitcom, trying to keep his balance. In pain, he’ll yell loud... but I... I am totally detached. I won’t care if he’s hurt or not. He’s in there; I’m out here. But as he approaches, it begins to hit me: *I am not a fetishist. I am not sure why I’m here. This is all a very elaborate sociology project.* I’ll be too scared to think. I’ll be too confused to move. And I’ll be too shocked to laugh as he staggers toward the door, swearing, holding his head in pain...

But, again, I don’t know this yet. I don’t know *anything* at this point. All I see is a television, a huge black man, a white door and brightly-colored stuffed animals.

“Whether we like it or not people tend to jump to conclusions very quickly about your character and abilities. Impressions are made within fifteen seconds and there is no second chance. Jumping to conclusions is a natural thing that we do as humans. It is not right, but that’s life, get use [“used”?] to it, and be prepared.”

– Joan Kulmala, Image Coach

“Listen. If you was lookin’ for somethin’ like that you shoulda told me before you showed up and I’d a let you know I didn’t have nothin’.”

“Yeah,” I say, realizing that I have misjudged the issue. My confusion is based in something very simple, fraudulent and invalid. All film, literature, and art, attempts to take us to a place we’ve never been before. And since I assume that anal sex, bondage, masochism and even (what I would consider) torture will be prominently featured in his collection, I assume that, as a collector, he will be interested in what I understand as an extension of those acts – murder. This is untrue. This is not a generalization one can make. What I don’t understand right now is that, for this collector – and for many collectors – there is a rigid barrier between what I consider dehumanization and killing. Regardless of the victim’s concession. And there’s also, along those lines, the implication that violent pornography doesn’t necessarily dehumanize; there is always the probable possibility that, not only do actors agree to their work, but they also find *joy* in acts considered taboo – that they derive pleasure from abuse, torture, bondage. Whether this is a legal or moral issue...? Well, that’s debatable. And I’m not going there. But what’s not debatable is that everyone has varying interests. And that you can almost never tell what’s appropriate and what’s not. And after going through all this in my head, all I could muster for George was a pitiful “Yeah, I know.”

“You do now,” he says. Then he adds: “And don’t you know that if I *had one*, I sure as hell wouldn’t show it to *you*?”

He laughs after he says this. I’ve got nothing to say in response.

“Now do you want to see what I got or what?”

He answers the door politely, laughing, holding his bald head. “God damn man, I hope you didn’t see that.”

I smile and tell him: “I didn’t see you hit your head on the kitchen cabinet.”

He laughs and invites me in, offers to take my coat. We exchange brief pleasantries – “It’s damn cold out there,” et cetera – before he asks what he can do for me.

“Actually, I guess I’ll just cut to the chase here.” I hand him my coat. “Do you have a snuff film I can watch or buy?”

He stops. “What?” He’s not a big man – maybe 5’9”, 160 pounds. From what I can tell, he’s alone in the house, though that doesn’t explain the stuffed animals.

“I’m not a cop or anything.”

“You’re askin’ me if I got snuff movies?”

“Well... yeah.”

“Real ones?”

“Yeah. I mean... I realize it’s illegal. I’m just more or less interested to see one. I figure that—”

George shakes his head no, stops me. “That’s not what I collect.”

“Oh, I know. I was just curious if—”

“No, man. I’m into sex. Not murder.”

He says this slowly, deliberately.

I say “Oh, alright,” but I guess my tone indicates something close to disbelief because his gaze quickly turns cold.

“What do I look like to you,” he says.

“A killer? Someone who watches killers”

“No, I just—”

“You just *what*.” He’s angry now. “You think just ‘cause I collect movies I’m into some sick shit like that? Man, that’s fucked up. And that’s not what I’m into.” He pauses for a second to gather himself, reaches up and rubs his scalp again.

1 Craigslist, if you’ve been living under a rock for the past couple years (as I tend to), is an online classified ads resource. The following is from New York Magazine: “Craigslist.org is changing everything. A simple and free online classified-ad service started by the gnomish Craig Newmark in San Francisco [in 1995], Craigslist is (a) where young urban people conduct much of the traffic of their lives, including renting apartments, finding lost pets, and getting laid in the middle of the day, and is (b) thereby destroying classified revenues for big-city newspapers, which are already in crisis, and so it has become (c) the symbol of the transformation of the information industry.”

2 It does not, necessarily, have anything to do with sex.

3 From Video Universe: “A slaughterhouse in the town of Satan grinds its meat from human prey in this brutal shocker. A teenage couple wind up there after some unfortunate events occur in their lives, but the tragedy is only just beginning as they look on in horror at the deviants who greet them in Satan!”

4 Remember *Videodrome*? It’s a David Cronenberg film about a cable TV operator (Max Renn) who discovers a Snuff broadcast on Channel 83. Max initially thinks the broadcast is based out of Malaysia. He later finds out it’s based in Pittsburgh – where I am, right now, looking for Snuff. HAHAHA! Haha! Ha. Oh, coincidence.

5 David Kerekes and David Slater, *Killing For Culture: An Illustrated History Of The Death Film From Mondo To Snuff* (London: Creation Books, 1995)

6 Examples include, but are not limited to 1) John W. Decamp’s *The Franklin Coverup*, which reports that a man named Paul Bonacci filmed himself raping an underage boy. He further alleges that the boy was murdered on film, and that he and a different boy were forced to have sex with his dead body. 2) In 1982, Susan Hamlin, a resident of El Dorado Hills, outside Fresno, California, intimated that members of a Satanic cult tortured her for three weeks straight. She claimed that her abductors had a stash of child pornography and Snuff films. Neither claim was proven.

Introduction

“Movies are a flexible medium. It’s easy to simulate death on film, which is partly why people think snuff films exist. They’ve seen simulated versions and believe they’re genuine. I think it’s conceivable these films exist, but whether they do or not is less important than the public’s belief that they do – their willingness to believe in an evil fantasy. That’s what’s interesting here.”

*– Paul Schrader,
Director of Hardcore*

According to *Killing for Culture*,

there are fairly strict definitions for movies that feature actual death on screen. They are:

1) The Death Film:

“Centers on the depiction of dead and dying people ... for shock value. The difference between this and the Snuff film, is that in the death film the victims would have died anyway, (i.e. an execution, for instance,) the filming having no bearing on the act.”

Examples: The Zapruder film of John F. Kennedy’s assassination; autopsy films such as *The Act of Seeing with One’s Own Eyes*; driver education films; incidents where people commit suicide live in front a camera (like the case of Budd Dwyer).⁷ These films don’t “count” as snuff, *per se*, because, again, they are accidental – the death is not choreographed specifically for film.

2) The Mondo Movie:⁸

“Contains general documentary material from around the world, generally aimed at shocking the audience with scandal. As the years progressed, competing film makers had to out-scandal the competition. This one-upmanship led to the inevitable inclusion of already-dead bodies, and ultimately actual death onscreen.”

Examples: *The Mondo Cane Collection*, *Faces of Death*, *Shocking Asia, Part 1*, *Real TV*. These movies are not technically snuff because 1) they often feature campy, fake representations of death (or other “shocking” topics like Strip Clubs for Fatties and Granny Sex), and 2) the “real” death they present is recorded rather than arranged. The goal of these films is to elicit shock before you yawn and turn off your DVD player (because you are completely detached).

The difference between a Death Film and a Mondo Movie is, essentially, that Mondo is made to be feature length. Mondo is a collection – it is meant to be put together and sold in a neat little death package you can show at parties. Mondo movies are often comprised of many Death Films.

The sad part is that one can imagine the reaction to Mondo films or Death films wouldn’t be much different than the reaction to true snuff. In terms of genre and topic, the discrepancies are minimal – “Death Accidentally Caught On Film, Then Collected Into A Movie And Sold To Blockbuster Video” (Mondo) versus “Orchestrated Death Funded By Some Very Rich Person For Personal Gratification” (Snuff).

3) The Snuff Film:

We’ve been over this.

Examples: Supposedly none.

Ken Lanning, cult expert

at the FBI training academy at Quantico, Virginia, said: “I’ve not found one single documented case of a snuff film anywhere in the world. I’ve been searching for 20 years, talked to hundreds of people. There’s plenty of once-removed sightings, but I’ve never found a credible personality who personally saw one.”⁹

It should be mentioned here that we are absolutely *not*, as a matter of course, considering feature films like *Snuff*¹⁰ and *8mm*¹¹ as anything even close to “real snuff.” These films help establish the concept of snuff in popular consciousness,¹² but they’re fiction – they help fuel the belief that real snuff exists when, from all indications, it doesn’t. Their existence is more fueled by, as Shrader says, “[the public’s] willingness to believe in an evil fantasy.”

But this brings us to an interesting point:

That word: fantasy. We *want* to believe snuff exists because Snuff *exists* in our fantasies. Why? Because, as previously discussed, you can look at snuff as the logical extension of what all film, literature, and art, attempts to do – take us to a place we’ve never been before. Death is the final chasm of the unknown. A century ago, people used to believe that the eyes captured the last moments of the dead person’s life; detectives would photograph the eyes of murder victims in hopes of catching a glimpse of the killer. It seems like snuff films are similar, in an attempt to catch death at his appointed errands. In controlling the moment of death, snuff attempts to bridge that gap between life and death. We cling to this – this glimpse of final terror; this concept of evil (and life) captured in an instant.

And movies like *8mm* are produced because we can not look away from that ultimate human snapshot. And, to go further, we’re infatuated with the idea of truly evil humanity – with a person willing to kill without guilt. And yet, *8mm* is a perfect representation of how Hollywood deals with America’s penchant for horror and death:

Specifically, Hollywood is forced to turn *8mm* into a battle of “good” versus “evil.” Nicholas Cage is the “good guy.” He has an attractive wife and a small child. He is hired to find the “evil man” who created a Snuff film for an old widow’s dead husband. The story unfolds, and you can probably guess the ending (I’ll give you a hint: Everything works out just fine). Main point: The good guy is a necessary evil – he allows us to explore the more interesting character (who happens to be “bad”).

But real Snuff theoretically eliminates the “good guy” from the equation. And it eliminates sympathy, too. It eliminates pathos and consideration and condemnation and politics and money and CGI and... everything emotive a director or production company can potentially offer. In theory, it brings the viewer to a point where she or he is forced to supply their own emotions. And *that* might be the scariest (and most alluring) aspect of Snuff – that there is not an emotional template in place for the viewer. Religion and social mores tell us that, when we see someone killed, we should react with horror and revulsion, disgust and dread.¹³ But how would you honestly react if you saw someone really killed on screen? What if you weren’t prepared to see it? What if you didn’t know it was coming? What if you were alone? What if you *knew* their death was commissioned?

Would you find it hideous? Would you turn away? Or would you be curious? I don’t mean to imply that you’re a sick individual, I’m just saying: Would you want to see what happens at the moment of someone’s death? Would you want to watch the victim’s eyes turn back into his head, knowing that you had nothing to do with it – that you were completely innocent; that you had randomly stumbled across a video of his untimely demise? Would you want to know the victim’s last words? Would you want to know his name? His last thoughts? His last inclinations? Would you be curious about these things? Would you wonder if he had done something wrong? If he had done something stupid? If he had deserved it? If he hadn’t deserved it?

Would you rewind it and watch it again?¹⁴

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Tagline: “A film that could only be made in South America, where life is CHEAP!” Directed mostly by an unaccredited Michael Findlay, *Snuff* began life as a cheap Argentinean feature entitled *Slaughter* (1971). Allan Shackleton (head of distributor Monarch Releasing Corporation) added a coda directed by porn filmmaker Carter Steven, in which a female cast member is *seemingly* murdered on camera.

¹¹ “Joel Schumacher’s excrementally piss-poor thriller ... finds Nick Cage farting around in his most stylish disheveled chic as a private investigator attempting to track down a ‘real’ Snuff movie. This is a well-trodden path for low-budget, exploitation B-flicks, and anyone who’s seen such straight-to-video bilge as *Final Cut*, *Fatal Frames*, *Cutting Room Floor* et al will already be familiar with the material.” – Mark Kermode, BBC film critic

¹² Neil Jackson, “The cultural construction of Snuff” (*Kinoeye* online, <http://kinoeye.org/03/05/jackson05.php>)

¹³ All you need is that one moment where one person snaps; where one person decides that all of our most revered morals – I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, you shall have no other gods besides Me; Do not make a sculpted image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above; You shalt not swear falsely by the name of the Lord; Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy; Honor your father and your mother; You shall not murder; You shall not have sexual relations with another man’s wife; You shall not kidnap; You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor; You shall not covet your neighbor’s house – are worthless and meaningless and vapid.

¹⁴ ...and I guess I should have some sort of conclusion to offer here – some answer to these questions; some sort of direction you should go; some rationale for why murder happens, or why we wonder if it happens on film... Or why we’re so obsessed. But I really don’t have anything concrete to offer you. Because, to me, there is no tangible solution. And I find myself awake at 4:30 in the morning, knowing that I have to finish this article as soon as I can so I can get just one hour of sleep before I go to work; and I’m trying to understand why these things happen, and I’m surfing MySpace and I’m stuck in webs and webs of links leading to people from my high school – people I haven’t seen in years – and I’m wondering as I pass by each one of them, realizing that we’ve all taken the exact same direction in life – high school, college, confusion, alcoholism, acceptance, settling – I’m wondering how much it would really matter if one of us died, or was killed, brutally, and who it would affect. Would it affect me? [From *The Third Man* : Martins: Have you ever seen any of your victims?

Harry Lime: You know, I never feel comfortable on these sort of things. Victims? Don’t be melodramatic. Tell me. Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever? If I offered you twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money, or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare? Free of income tax, old man. Free of income tax - the only way you can save money nowadays.” Only, I’m thinking, if I was killed. And so I’m left here in this story, wondering how Snuff films happen, and then, in a similar moment, wondering why more don’t happen. And it leaves me nowhere, questioning, confused, hopeless, wanting to give you something more. And I wait for that to happen... I wait for that moment. And then it hits me.

⁷ More info on Dwyer (because it’s fucking interesting). The following is from Wikipedia.com: “During the early 1980s, employees of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania overpaid millions of dollars in FICA taxes. As a result, the Commonwealth began requesting bids for the task of calculating refunds to each employee. One firm, California-based Computer Technology Associates, was owned by a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania native named John Torquato Jr. Torquato used his Harrisburg-area connections and a series of bribes to obtain the contract, worth \$4.6 million. An anonymous memo then reached the governor’s office, describing the bribes that had taken place. In late 1986, Dwyer was charged as having agreed to accept a related kickback of \$300,000. Dwyer never actually received any money. A plea bargain made for Torquato and William Smith [Torquato’s attorney] required them to testify against Dwyer. This coupled with the government’s refusal to name unindicted co-conspirators in the case, made it difficult for Dwyer to defend himself, though the unindicted co-conspirators are believed to have been Republican staffers who ran the Dauphin County Republican Party. During this time, the local United States Attorney offered Dwyer a plea bargain that carried a five year maximum sentence in exchange for a one-count guilty plea, resignation, and cooperation in the investigation. Dwyer refused the offer, and was later convicted but continued to vehemently protest his innocence. Under state law, Dwyer would continue to serve as state treasurer until his sentencing...” He killed himself before this could happen.

⁸ From Wikipedia: “The fad started with *Mondo cane* (1962) by Gualtiero Jacopetti and proved quite popular. Mondo films are often easily recognized by name, as even English language Mondo films included the term often “Mondo” in their titles. Over the years the film makers wanted to top each other in shock value in order to draw in audiences. Cruelty to animals, accidents, tribal initiation rites and surgeries are a common feature of a typical Mondo. Much of the action is also staged, even though the film makers may claim their goal to document only “the reality”. Today, Mondo films are generally considered to be camp.”

N i c k B e r g .

Full name: Nicholas Evan Berg

He was a 26-year-old American businessman. He sought work in Iraq during the U.S.-led occupation. He was captured and beheaded in May 2004 by Islamic militants.

His decapitation was the first in a series of similar killings of foreign hostages in Iraq. Berg’s beheading received worldwide attention, not only because it was filmed, but also because the footage was widely distributed on the Internet. The rationale for the murder? His killers claimed that his death was carried out to avenge abuses of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison.¹⁵

His death gives us much to consider – a lot to throw into this stew of information. Searching for a Snuff film seems a lot like waiting for some sort of depraved Messiah: After so long, after so much debate, it’s almost as if you’re not sure what you’re looking for. And when something remotely genuine comes along, you’re conditioned to believe you’re looking at a fake, simply because you’ve built up the moral and semantic stipulations so high that they’re almost impossible to reach.

Could Nick Berg represent the first real snuff film?

Here’s the definition we set earlier:

“‘Snuff’ is defined as ‘a filmed account of an actual murder, specifically commissioned, recorded and supplied for the gratification of the paying spectator(s).’”

- “a filmed account of an actual murder,”
 - ✓ Nick Berg was killed on camera.
- “specifically commissioned,”
 - ✓ We are lead to believe his death was choreographed for filmed production.
- “recorded and supplied for the gratification of the paying spectator(s).”
 - ✓ This is tricky. Who is the paying spectator? On a base level, it would probably be The Guy Who Filmed It. But because of its political implications,¹⁶ because it was so widely distributed, because it was so widely discussed, the paying spectator becomes... you. And me. And everyone else who saw it. I know this because it was posted online.¹⁷ And because, when released, it received substantial coverage across mediums. So it was used to sell advertisements. It acted as a top story, a main headline, a way to capture your eyes and ears. And I want you to consider this. Consider that the internet brings the search for Snuff to a new level. There are more avenues available today for personal thought distribution than ever before. Anyone with a few dollars can get online and share. And while this is generally constructive, giving us more information to consider, affording us the opportunity to learn more, it also expands the already sizeable avenues we have for viewing mayhem and terror and evil. If the internet didn’t exist, would Nick Berg have been killed? Probably, but maybe not. The beauty of the internet is that it’s virtually boundless – it transcends continental barriers. Would his killers have bothered to kill Nick Berg on tape if they had merely planned on sending it to a television network? Again, speculation – maybe. But it’s interesting to contemplate – maybe the web’s enormity encouraged Berg’s killers to produce something vile, just because they could. Just because the internet allows us to see it, rewind it, tell our friends about it. And so, yes, I suppose it could be argued that, if no one were looking at the internet, this video would’ve gone hidden, unseen. But because so many people wanted the gratification of seeing Nick Berg decapitated by masked men – because we want to be taken to a place we’ve never been before ... well, that makes it significant. That makes it real. That makes it Snuff.

“...because we so desperately want [snuff] to exist and there is no way to prove that it *doesn’t* exist, snuff – for all *emotional and intellectual* means and purposes – exists. And it only stands to reason that the existence of a demand – particularly a demand over two decades old – has already or will eventually lead to a creation of a product to fill that demand.”

– “*The Morbid Urge*,” Daniel Kraus,
Gadfly, July/August 2000

“Snuff is the Frankenstein monster of the media age, the boogeyman that lurks at the crossroads of unchecked media freedom and commercial demand. Each time a new technology makes questionable entertainment more accessible and moral standards are questioned, the monster is awakened and the angry villagers ignite their torches. With the new world of the web, the myth seems ready for an upgrade.”

– “*Final Cuts: The History of Snuff Films*,” Geoff Smith,
Fringe Underground

S o, i s N i c k B e r g t h e e a s y a n s w e r ? Yeah, I guess he is. It definitely would’ve been more fun to battle George, the Big Black Guy with the Stuffed Animals and the Porn. It would’ve been fascinating to step into his basement and hand him ten thousand dollars to purchase a film starring someone killed on tape...

But that’s the idea, isn’t it? That’s precisely to the heart of why snuff is so captivating; because it’s senseless; because it’s vile – because, in terms of Western morality, it’s absolutely the worst thing one person can do to another person. It trumps whatever evil we’ve ascribed to terrorism or other arguably unnecessary forms of extreme violence. Because not only is there no sentiment behind it – not only is the act, in theory, based on a complete disregard for life; not only is it the ultimate example of dehumanization – but it’s also inherently capitalistic. It’s done, in concept, pretty much solely for money or fame or, in the case of Nick Berg, just to prove a point to millions of people.

Which brings us to this:

Unfortunately, living in a society where war and sex and celebrity dominate our headlines, murder captures our deepest, most sheltered interests.

Why else would serial killers captivate audiences so thoroughly – in fictional portraits, as well as real life? It’s because transgression, especially towards a degree of control not afforded ordinary members of society, always captivates. Killers act as god.

And heartbreak sells magazines. And death is the basis of horror films. Depravity and sadness are the bases of heart wrenching books, soap operas, even reality television....

Unfortunately, what we’re dealing with here – with snuff – is potentially the idea that anything can be bested, and that we, as a society, constantly desire to leap into the next level of evil – to not only kill someone, but to film it as it happens; to distribute that visual document for all to see; to not only watch someone get hit by a train, but to see it from their perspective, in complete, true reality.

So does Snuff exist? Yeah, I think so. But what matters is that we’ve come to the point in our development where you can readily access the real, hired killing of a human being online – in Torrent files, or if you search hard enough on Google – whenever you want. It also matters that there’s a market for everything...

¹⁵ For the purposes of this article, we are assuming that the Nick Berg decapitation video was genuine. The following quote ran in *La Voz de Aztlan*, five days after the Berg film was released: “There is now ample evidence that the video showing the decapitation of 26 year old Nicholas Berg of Philadelphia by purported Al Qaeda members is a complete fraud. The real Nick Berg may or may not be dead, but the heavily edited video is nothing but a fake. This is the conclusion of La Voz de Aztlan after a frame by frame analysis and the conclusion of hundreds of film, medical and other experts world wide who downloaded, viewed and analyzed the video as well. Literally thousands of persons world wide requested the video, which is rapidly disappearing from the Internet, after our news service published “Nick Berg decapitation video declared a fraud by medical doctor” on Wednesday May 12 and which was linked by other independent news services on the World Wide Web.” Its disputed existence well fits the Snuff discussion, doesn’t it?

¹⁶ Remember when Fox News commentators suggested everyone should see it, to know the horror of what “we’re fighting” [in Iraq]?

¹⁷ On May 11, 2004, the website of Islamist group Muntada al-Ansar allegedly broadcast the Nick Berg video with the opening title of “Abu Musa’b al-Zarqawi slaughters an American.”

MAY 13, 2004 – The Lycos 50 today reports that Nick Berg is the new number one search term on the Lycos Search engine over the past 24 hours.

The top 10 search requests Web users are specifically searching for regarding Nick Berg are:

Nick Berg video
Nick Berg Beheading
Nick Berg and Iraq
Nick Berg Execution
Nick Berg Beheading Video
Nick Berg Killing
Nick Berg murder
Nick Berg assassination
Nick Berg decapitation video,=
execution of Nick Berg.

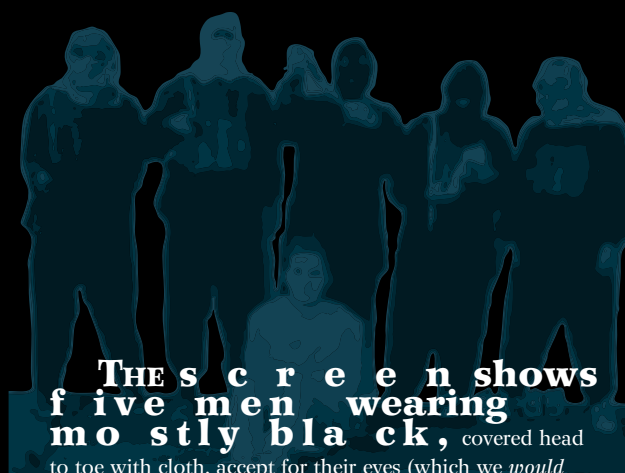
source: <http://50.lycos.com>

It turns out that looking at the aggregation of billions of search queries people type into Google reveals something about our curiosity, our thirst for news, and perhaps even our desires. Considering all that has occurred in 2005, we thought it would be interesting to study just a few of the significant events, and names that make this a memorable year. (We'll leave it to the historians to determine which ones are lasting and which ephemeral.) We hope you enjoy this selective view of our collective year.

Top 10 Gaining Queries
Week Ending May 17, 2004

1. nick berg
2. troy
3. american idol
4. iraq
5. lynndie england
6. lakers
7. e3
8. orlando bloom
9. graduation
10. alexandra kerry

source: <http://www.google.com/intl/en/press/zeitgeist2005.html>



**The s c r e e n shows
f i v e m e n w e a r i n g
m o s t l y b l a c k,**

covered head to toe with cloth, except for their eyes (which we *would* see if the film quality wasn't so poor and grainy; the scene looks like it was filmed on a cheap home camera).

In front of these five men, another man – a prisoner, dressed in what look like orange scrubs – sits on the ground with his feet tied together in front of him. His hands are tied behind his back.

The man on the ground introduces himself eight seconds into the film. He says his name is Nick Berg. Shortly thereafter, one of the masked men reads a pronouncement in Arabic.

After more than four minutes, one of the masked men attacks Berg with a knife. Berg is then surrounded; we hear screams; he is held down and beheaded.

Five and a half minutes into the film, the head is presented to the camera, dripping blood. It is then laid on a headless dead body, wearing orange scrubs. The tape ends in coarse blackness.



What Charlie Saw

In 1966, Charles Joseph Whitman launched a rain of bullets from Austin's Texas Tower and held a city in terror. Four decades later, we all live in Whitman's World, and the bullets haven't stopped. -Jesse Hicks

THE TEMPERATURE THAT MONDAY morning, August 1, 1966, in Austin, was 98 degrees Fahrenheit – the sticky, end of summer heat that rises from the ground in waves, turning the horizon to a shimmering mirage. Thomas F. Eckman, 18, of Toledo, Ohio, walked with his girlfriend, Claire Wilson, an 18 year-old anthropology student, along the tree-lined perimeter of the University of Texas's South Mall. Claire, eight months pregnant with the couple's son, had just finished class. Leaving the shade for the South Mall's upper terrace, an open cement area, Claire and Thomas approached the UT Tower, the 307-foot Spanish Renaissance icon of both the University and greater Austin.

On the Tower's 28th floor observation deck, Charles Joseph Whitman, Eagle Scout, former Marine, and UT architectural engineering student, lowered his bright blue eye to the four-power scope mounted on his Remington Model 700 bolt-action rifle.

Inside, Whitman had left five bodies. Edna Townsley, 47, the observation deck receptionist (and mother to sons Danny and Terry), lay on the floor, her head caved in by Whitman's rifle butt. In the blood-spattered stairwell were Marguerite Lampour and Mark Gabour, dead of shotgun blasts. Nearby lay Mike Gabour, wounded and unconscious, with his critically-injured mother, Mary. Above them, beyond the 28th floor doorway barricaded with a heavy desk and set of chairs, Charles Whitman waited.

How long he paused on the observation deck, watching, is uncertain. How many students his crosshairs lingered over before settling on Claire is likewise unknown.

If Thomas Eckman and Claire Wilson held hands; whether he placed his hand on her full belly, rubbed it, asked if the heat bothered her; and if she laughed at his concern, brushed a stray lock of hair from her face, and told him she was fine: we cannot say. Maybe it wasn't like that.

At 11:45, as usual, the Tower's 17-bell carillon rang 12 times. Resounding over the campus, its song carried the words, "Lord, through this hour/ Be thou our guide/ For in thy power we do abide."

What Charles Whitman, former parishioner of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Lake Worth, FL., thought as he chambered a 6mm Remington cartridge – whether his mind raced or was still, arid and empty as the Texas badlands; whether it was collected, methodical, or the white-noise rush of rage; whether it turned on impulse or calculation: this is unknowable.

Pfc. Whitman's United States Marine Corps shooting score: 215 of a possible 250 points. Recognized with the degree of sharp shooter, he was "an excellent shot who appeared to be more accurate against moving targets."

The Tower's 12 foot gold-edged clock stands at 11:48 as Charles Whitman takes a breath, holds it. He sights down the scope, a white bandanna around his forehead to keep the sweat from his eyes. He sights and slowly lets go of his breath, slides back the trigger, and the rifle exhales its delicate wisp of smoke, a low, whimpering report, and lead launched on fire spirals forward at 3000 feet/sec, outpacing explanation, accelerating beyond the speed of comprehension, meaning, toward Claire Wilson – now an electric lance of pain cutting through her, through her hip, her stomach, her colon and uterus – now claiming its target, the skull of her unborn baby. She screams and falls. Her blood pools on the hot cement, drying to a deep crimson.



*Yesterday is not mine to recover,
but tomorrow is mine to win
or to lose I am resolved to
win the tomorrows before me!!*

Here is bright young Charlie playing piano. He hands flash over keys white and black, conjuring the notes to Claude Debussy's Claire de Lune. The lyrical, melancholic tune drifts through his father's middle-class house in Fort Worth, Florida, where C.A. and Margaret Whitman made their home after several moves early in their marriage. C.A., an ambitious, driven entrepreneur who never ceased reminding his family of what he had provided for them, raised his sons to excel at everything. Charlie began piano lessons when he was seven, just before he enrolled in Sacred Heart's Catholic grade school, and by twelve he had mastered the instrument.

He had an IQ of 138.9, young Charlie, and ranked in the top 5% of students nationwide in standardized testing. He had his father's ambition and craving for financial success. When he turned eleven, Charlie joined the Boy Scouts. Just-over a year later, he was an Eagle Scout, having earned 21 merit badges in only 15 months. (He later claimed to be the youngest Eagle Scout ever, though no official records of such a distinction exist.) To make money, he took responsibility for one of the largest Miami Herald paper routes in Lake Worth.

And Charlie had guns. The Whitman house had as many firearms on the walls as pictures. This was a source of pride for the Whitman patriarch, who taught his three sons to shoot as soon as they were physically able. For Charlie, this meant handling firearms before he was in grade school.

Charlie's teen years were undistinguished – he was just one of the guys, maybe a little more eager to take a dare, a little more eager to please. He, like many high school seniors, slacked off his final year of school, and his grades suffered. One night just before his eighteenth birthday, Charlie came home drunk to find C.A. waiting for him. His disgusted father threw him in the pool, where Charlie nearly drowned. Fed up, he enlisted in the Marines soon after.

After basic training and a stint at Guantanamo Naval Base, Charlie enrolled in a scholarship program that brought him to the University of Texas. There he met Kathy Leissner, and the two were married on August 17, 1962.

The next four years were a strenuous time for the newlywed Whitmans. Charlie's lack of self-discipline led to poor grades, and the Marines revoked his scholarship, returning him to active duty. While Kathy waited, finishing her own studies, C.A. Whitman pulled strings to have his son released from his military commitment. Charlie returned to school with a new dedication.

Then, in early 1966, Margaret Whitman left her husband. She fled to Austin, putting Charlie between his mother and father. His schoolwork had again begun to falter. At one point he decided to abandon school altogether, leave Kathy behind, and simply bum around the country. Only the intercession of professor Barton Riley, a former Marine, kept him from leaving.

At Riley's house, Charlie returned to the piano. For a long time he'd refused to play, even when urged by family and friends. This time, though, for whatever reason, he couldn't resist. He sat down at the baby grand and again played Claire de Lune. Debussy based his piece on a poem by Paul Verlaine, a stanza of which reads:

*The while they celebrate in minor strain
Triumphant love, effective enterprise,
They have an air of knowing all is vain,–
And through the quiet moonlight their songs rise*

The notes came out all wrong. They didn't dance, but thudded loudly and too strong. Yet as he played, Charlie's stress seemed to ease, and Debussy's lyricism returned.

It was only a few months later, on the evening of July 31, Charlie's hands moved across the keys of his typewriter. "I don't quite understand what it is that compels me to type this letter. Perhaps it is to leave some vague reason for the actions I have recently performed," he wrote. "I don't really understand myself these days. I am supposed to be an average reasonable and intelligent young man. However, lately (I can't recall when it started) I have been the victim of many unusual and irrational thoughts."

He mentioned failed attempts at professional help with his rising violent impulses, how he'd tried to face his demons alone and lost. He wrote, "It was after much thought that I decided to kill my wife, Kathy, tonight after I pick her up from the telephone company." So he did, stabbing his sleeping wife five times in the chest. She died instantly. "I love her dearly, and she has been as fine a wife to me as any man could ever hope to have." He continued, "I intend to kill her as painlessly as possible."

"Similar reasons provoked me to take my mother's life also. I don't think the poor woman has ever enjoyed life as she is entitled to." Charlie visited his mother's apartment just after midnight on the morning of August 1, where he strangled her with a piece of rubber tubing. On his unfinished note Charlie scribbled, "8-1-66, Mon., 3:00 AM. Both Dead."

He spent the next morning preparing. He loaded his Marine footlocker with ammunition, his Remington bolt-action rifle, a Sears 12-gauge shotgun, a Remington 35 caliber pump-action rifle, a M-1 30-caliber carbine, a .357 Magnum, a 9mm Luger, and a 6.35mm Galesci-Brescia automatic pistol. He rented a dolly and donned a pair of overalls. As he wheeled his dolly into the elevator at the UT tower, everyone assumed he was a janitor. Vera Palmer, the elevator attendant who would've replaced Edna Townsley at the observation deck 45 minutes later, said to Charlie, "Your elevator is turned off." She flipped the switch to enable elevator #2, and Charlie mumbled with a polite smile, "Thank you, ma'am. You don't know how happy that makes me." The elevator began to climb.

This is how child Charlie to his Dark Tower came.

Some Whys:

1.) Drug abuse: Feeling overwhelmed by the demands of a 14-credit college schedule, his part-time job as a research assistant, and an increasingly fractured family life, Whitman began binging on Dexedrine, a powerful amphetamine that kept him awake for days at a time. The lack of sleep ruined his concentration, and he fell behind in his schoolwork. When he could, he took Librium to sleep. Though it's uncertain just how extreme his drug use became, he often suffered headaches, mood swings, and nervousness in conjunction with his use of Dexedrine, as well as Dexamyl, a barbiturate-amphetamine combo. It's been suggested that August 1 found Whitman in the grip of amphetamine psychosis brought on by his drug abuse.

2.) The tumor: The autopsy on Whitman's body revealed, in addition to an "unusually thin" skull, a grayish-yellow tumor 2 x 1.5 x 1 cm in dimensions just below the thalamus. The Conally Commission, a task force assembled by the Texas Governor to review the events of August 1, concluded, "the relationship between the brain tumor and Charles J. Whitman's

actions on the last day of his life cannot be established with clarity. However, the highly malignant brain tumor conceivably could have contributed to his inability to control his emotions and actions." Speculation didn't end there, with some suggesting that compression of the amygdaloid nucleus – the area of the brain most related to emotion, especially fear and rage – eventually propelled Whitman into his killing spree. Whitman himself made his last wish for biochemical absolution, writing, "After my death I wish that an autopsy would be performed to see if there is any visible physical disorder. I have had tremendous headaches in the past and have consumed two large bottles of Excedrin in the past three months."

3.) Psychological disintegration: On March 29, 1966, Whitman met with UT psychiatrist Dr. Maurice Dean Heatly. Heatly described a "massive, muscular youth ... oozing with hostility," who believed "something was happening to him and he didn't seem to be himself." During his first and only visit to the psychiatrist, Whitman, "self-centered and egocentric," complained about his failure to surpass the domineering father he hated. He spoke vaguely of his problems, excepting a "vivid reference to 'thinking about going up on the tower with a deer rifle and start shooting people.'" He wept. Dr. Heatly scheduled a follow-up appointment for the next week; Whitman never appeared.

4a.) Disregard for human life, Marine Corps: The Marine Corps, some argue, instilled in Charles Whitman the belief he could take lives at will and without consequence. In Stanley Kubrick's *"Full Metal Jacket,"* Gunnery Sergeant Hartman commends the skill of Whitman and Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, saying, "Those individuals showed what one motivated Marine and his rifle can do." He says, "God has a hard-on for Marines because we kill everything we see! He plays His games, we play ours! To show our appreciation for so much power, we keep heaven packed with fresh souls!" Whitman, the architect of fear isolated in his high tower, acted as God acts, killing indiscriminately.

4b.) Disregard for human life, religious beliefs: After abandoning Catholicism, Whitman developed his own religious worldview, centered on a God made of omnipresent energy. Humans, too, sprung from this energy; after "death" they returned to it. Since matter can never be created nor destroyed, Charles reasoned, there must be an afterlife – a heaven. There was no hell, because earth was hell. Death – for his mother, for his wife, for him – was a gateway to a better place.

5.) Emotional strain: Since the beginning of 1966, the score to Whitman's life had descended into a minor key. As his parents' marriage disintegrated, he and Kathy were caught in the middle. C.A. Whitman called repeatedly, demanding to speak to his wife. Meanwhile, Charles's vague, frustrated ambitions – his diaries are filled with life plans and money-making schemes that never went anywhere – gnawed at him. He worried that his wife provided more for the family than he; he worried that he'd never best the father he'd grown to hate. His final notes lay the blame for Charles's impending murders at C.A.'s doorstep. The father's sins – domestic violence, overwhelming ambition – had become the son's, and on August 1 they erupted.

6.) Unhealthy view of firearms as problem solvers: Charles Whitman grew up with guns, able to shoot the eye out of a squirrel by the time he was twelve. One infamous photo captures him playing at the beach, a two-year old balancing himself between two rifles taller than he. Whitman's father said, "Those guns aren't to blame for anything," but had his rage been channeled into less potentially violent pursuits, the argument goes, the son's spree might not have happened.

7.) A heart born deceitful: In the Calvinist interpretation of Charles Whitman, he is an egg with a rotten yolk, flawed from conception. Psychologically, he'd be labeled a sociopath; born with no innate empathy, he soon learned to imitate a concern for others. He knew no aim other than self-satisfaction, but concealed this disregard for the rest of humanity behind a cunning smile. One of his Marine notebooks reads, "Ways to Camof. [camouflage]

1) Hide

2) Blend

3) Deceive"

The Charles Whitman known to others – the Charlie labeled "Best Looking," "Friendliest," and "Most Mature," by his college English professor – was, in this view, a trick of the light shrouding his heart of darkness.

8.) The stars: In Whitman's astrological chart, Mars – the planet associated with action and aggression, named for the Roman god of death and war – dominates the top half. Specifically, it draws energy into the 12th House, the realm of psychological disturbances and self-undoing. Even more ominously, Pluto, the planet of extremes, of all-or-nothing ambitions, forms a Square Aspect to the Ascendant Mars. Two planets in the Square Aspect oppose one another, causing unhealthy stress within the individual.

9.) "Maybe he was just mean as hell," writes Gary LaVergne, author of *The Sniper in the Tower*.

10.) He was mad at the world.

11.) He was crazy.

12.) He was evil.

Does this collage of grim explanation offer any consolation, reconcile one to the horror of the act? To enter the over-bright eyes of Charles Joseph Whitman, go beyond the yearbook smile into his too-thin skull and illuminate the shadowed spaces there – what would it offer us, the survivors, to make his darkness visible?

The French have a phrase for it: "tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner" – "to understand all is to forgive all." The idea pulls with the weight of simple tautology: Understanding = forgiveness. In a proper accounting, with all the facts assembled in their rightful place and context, a picture will emerge. It will remain appalling, but it will be whole, comprehensible. It will be powerless to beckon with its dead zones and known unknowns, a picture in which all shadows are named and thereby made impotent. Such complete understanding offers the possibility of forgiveness, and at the rawest edges of humanity – among the Pol Pots and the Hitlers, the Charles Mansons and the Charles Whitmans, the Dresdens and 9/11's, where the human capacity for atrocity exceeds our ability to make sense of it – the possibility is more important than its fulfillment. If we cannot move ourselves to forgiveness – because our understanding is necessarily incomplete – we need the belief that somewhere in that abyss a light exists bright enough to hold out the promise: Forgive, and live.

And yet still there is Charles Whitman, shade without color, another mirage in the overheated Texas air, climbing his tower like a man ascending a throne, dark sovereign of the twilight kingdom.

He was “an excellent shot who appeared to be more accurate against moving targets.”

Guadalupe St.

H. Walchuk

P. Sonntag

C. Rutt

T. Karr

K. Griffin

Charlie
Texas Tower

T. Ashton

Dr. R.H. Boyer

T. Eckman

B. Speed

South Mall

D.R. Schmidt

100 yards

He held Austin hostage for 96 minutes as he fired round after round from the 28th floor. After Claire Wilson collapsed, her boyfriend knelt beside her asking what had happened. Whitman shot Thomas Eckman in the back; he fell dead on top of his girlfriend. Claire spent the next horrific hour-and-a-half pinned to the hot cement as bullets impacted seemingly everywhere within a 500-yard radius of the Tower. Dr. Hamilton Boyer was the next to die, as a 6mm round tore through his left kidney.

Whitman moved around the observation deck as he continued to shoot, leading witnesses to think there were multiple snipers. Many others were slow to realize the popping noises coming from the Tower were gunshots. As a result, for the first fifteen minutes of his spree, Whitman had his choice of virtually any target he could see. And if he could see it, he could hit it. He shot Thomas Ashton, a Peace Corps trainee, in the chest. Ashton died at Brackenridge Hospital.

When reports of gunfire reached Allen R. Hamilton, Chief of University of Texas Traffic Control and Security, he dispatched two policemen to the Tower. They reached the 27th floor by 11:55 AM, but neither were armed. M.J. Gabour, father to Mike and Mark Gabour, husband to Mary Gabour, staggered toward the two, saying, “Give me a gun, he has killed my wife and family.” The officers closed down all exits to the Tower and warned as many people as possible to stay out of sight.

Meanwhile, Austin Police officer Houston McCoy was making his way toward the Tower. The dispatcher’s voice had been garbled when the call came over his radio; all he could make out were the words “University Tower” and “shooting.” On arriving, he too assumed multiple snipers, and the possibility that Austin was under attack by a well-armed radical group. In the time it had taken him to reach the University, citizens had taken matters into their own hands. They were now firing back.

Whitman, though, had the high ground. He used the observation deck’s concrete parapet for cover, firing through rainspouts. He was nearly impossible to hit from the ground. He fired another 6mm round in the direction of policeman Billy Speed. The bullet found a narrow opening in Speed’s own concrete cover, mortally wounding him.

Houston McCoy was getting impatient. The Austin Police Department was in disarray; nothing like this had ever happened before. Though dozens of off-duty officers had arrived to help, there was little communication among them, and no coherent plan. McCoy reached the 28th floor reception area, where he met fellow officer Ramiro Martinez. They had no idea what awaited them outside the observation deck’s glass-paneled door. Martinez kicked it repeatedly, finally dislodging the dolly Whitman had used to barricade it behind him. They waited, listening to the gunshots and trying to decide their next move.

Martinez had a 38 revolver; McCoy a 12-gauge shotgun. As shots came from the northwest corner, Martinez resolved to open the door, entering the deck from the south. With McCoy backing him up, they moved around the southeast corner. Martinez warned McCoy to stay low as ground fire struck over their heads.

Martinez came around the northeast corner and saw Whitman, seated with his back to the northwest corner, carbine aimed at the observation deck door. Martinez quickly emptied his revolver, six shots, in Whitman’s direction as the sniper brought his rifle around. Yet this time Whitman missed. His shots went high and wild. Houston McCoy turned the corner and looked Whitman directly in the eyes. Then he pulled the trigger, aiming for the white headband. The 12-gauge roared and the pellets tore through Whitman’s head, through his blue eyes. McCoy chambered another shell and fired again. Martinez grabbed the shotgun from McCoy and charged, firing a third time into Whitman’s riddled body. At 1:24 PM, over 90 minutes after it had begun, Charles Whitman’s killing spree came to an end. In his last, desperate act, he had killed 15 and wounded 33 others.

In his diary Whitman once wrote, “I have thoughts [sic] very much about the concept of ‘death.’ When it overtakes me someday I must remember to observe closely and see if it is as I thought it would be.” What he thought as the 00 buckshot silenced his mind, whether he thought he was going to his death like a soldier; whether he felt himself transform into pure energy; whether he saw his ambitions satisfied: this is unknowable. Maybe he thought nothing at all.

Charles Whitman is dead, his body and his secrets buried beneath a simple metal plaque in West Palm Beach, Florida. He is dead and we are alive. Just as Claire Wilson survived Whitman’s bullet, Austin, America, the human world outlived his rage.

But Claire’s unborn son did not survive. The possibilities his life held have vanished, and with his death a different world replaces the one he might have known. Charles Whitman left his crosshair benediction on a different future, in which the echoes of his shots are still heard at Columbine and Jonesboro, in the words “going postal” and by every high school student who cringes at the sound of a car backfiring.

William T. Vollmann, writing in the voice of the revolutionary terrorist, captures the hopelessness of Whitman’s thinking, “The fewer possibilities I have, the more

urgently I must imagine.” That is Charlie’s revenge: with a single bullet, to move the world into the realm of the unimaginable. The culmination of those urgent imaginings is an enlargement of what sociologists call “the social script” – the historically- and culturally-defined collection of possible human action. Where once we could not imagine a lone gunman in a tower firing at random, or a disgruntled postal clerk taking revenge on the system that’s left him at a dead-end by firing on his co-workers, or a pair of misfit high school seniors plotting to blow up the school that so shamed them – we no longer have to imagine these possibilities, and they are open to every angry young man whose incandescent rage flames from the inside out, until finally, like Charlie, it burns us all. We cannot even recapture the horror of Whitman’s act, because the world it ended is so alien to us, so fast receding, that it might as well be Eden. We cannot feel bitterness, or sadness, as the wound of August 1, 1966 fades to a white scar on the collective consciousness. What Charlie saw from his high tower was a different future, and with his bullets he pushed us into it.

But here I want to counter Charlie’s dead imagination. He was human, but we do not have to forgive him, or overestimate his power. Epochs do not turn on one angry man with a gun; postlapsarian worlds are not born with the whimper of rifle shots, and Charlie is only one more flower of evil on humanity’s long, snaking vine. As long as we are human, we can imagine bigger than he could. We can imagine Charles Whitman and Claire Wilson – C.W. & C.W., Claire and clair obscura – twinned at the moment of conception, linked down the barrel of that Remington Model 700. Imagine the world that didn’t happen, the one where Whitman’s ambition failed him and Claire and Thomas finished their walk across the South Mall. Most directly, it is a world inhabited by Thomas Eckman, Paul Sonntag, Claudia Rutt, Robert Boyer, Billy Speed, Roy Schmidt, Edna Townsley, Marguerite Lamport, Mark Gabour, Harry Walchuck, Thomas Ashton, Thomas Karr, Roy Dell Schmidt, Margaret Whitman, Kathy Whitman (linger over their names, if you can). It’s a world where the vocabulary of violence is diminished compared to our own, where the phrase “going postal” has no gravity. This is the world of August 1, 1966, where the heat shimmers in the air and couples walk hand-in-hand over green grass and under shaded trees. It is a world very far away, in both time and possibility, but as all doors to the past are only windows, it is a world still visible, if only through shattered glass, darkly.





Brutality

DEEK MAGAZINE • INCIDENT 20

Gallery

Brad dock, PA

I R A Q



Simon
Norfolk
Et in Arcadia ego

"These photographs are part of a larger project attempting to understand how war and the need to fight war, has formed our world: how so many of the spaces we occupy; the technologies we use; and the ways we understand ourselves, are created by military conflict."

LIBERIA



"The battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq are the most obvious manifestations of this process. However, just as much 'battlefields' – landscapes/surfaces created by war – are the extraordinary instant cities thrown up by refugees; the bizarre environments created by electronic eavesdropping; the cordon thrown around a US Presidential election candidate or the face of a young girl dying from AIDS in a country where an already feeble health system was smashed by years of civil war."

gallery

ISRAEL



"What these 'landscapes' have in common – their basis in war – is fundamentally downplayed in our society. I was astounded to discover that the long, straight, bustling, commercial road that runs through my neighbourhood of London follows an old Roman road. In places the Roman stones are still buried beneath the modern tarmac. The road system built by the Romans was their most crucial military technology, their equivalent of the stealth bomber or the Apache helicopter – a technology that allowed a huge empire to be maintained by a relatively small army that could move quickly and safely along these paved, all-weather roads. It is extraordinary that London, a city that should be shaped by Tudor kings, the British Empire, Victorian engineers and modern international finance, is a city fundamentally drawn, even to this day, by abandoned Roman military hardware."

BOSNIA



"Anybody interested in the effects of war quickly becomes an expert in ruins, and these images are the result of a long fascination with ruins and their portrayal in Art. Some of the earliest photographers were Ruin Photographers and they drew on the devastation and decay in the paintings of Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain; in the garden designs of Capability Brown and in the poetry of the likes of Shelley and Byron. The ruins in these artworks were philosophical metaphors about the foolishness of pride; about awe and the Sublime; about the power of God; and, most importantly to me, the vanity of Empire. The photographs I am showing were all taken since 9/11, a very special time to be thinking about the making of a new global empire. A time to think of the cruelty necessary for its construction and what these new ruins might mean for all of us."

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Brutality

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In Media



Deerhoof

NIGH-UNCLASSIFIABLE SAN FRANCISCO BAND DEERHOOF has been labeled everything from “art-punk” to “prog-rock” to “rock about small, cute things,” inviting comparisons to early Sonic Youth (less so with the “small, cute things” bit).

They’ve consistently defied description, and their seventh album, *The Runners Four*, has garnered the most accolades of their career to date. Guitarist Chris Cohen spoke from San Francisco about crafting the new album, touring, and *The White Album*. *-Jesse Hicks*

Let’s talk about the process of this album. How does it compare to your other albums? I know on *Milk Man* you didn’t play together in the studio; everything was mixed in post production.

Everything has been different. *Milk Man* was like that, but on *Apple-O* we did play that together. Reveille had a lot of stuff – each song was done differently, even each section of each song was done differently.

We’ve done stuff where we all played together in the studio, but I think on this one that difference was, maybe, that we had a lot more time to do it. We recorded this one in our practice space, which we’d never done before. That meant we could be kind of reckless as we were recording, and try things out. If it fails you just hit ‘delete’ and there’s not that much lost. You lose maybe one day out of a hundred, instead of being in the studio, being really pressed for time, if you mess up one song that means the song doesn’t end up on the album.

We got a chance to play the songs in a different way before we recorded them, too. One thing that was different about this was rather than learn the songs and go out and play them live, then come back and record them – which is what we’ve often done when we record together – we learned the songs in the studio one by one, and played each one for a while, and then just hit record after hours and hours of jamming on it. Even section by section – we might play one particular riff over and over again for an hour and record the entire thing, and then just pick the best one. All of those things were new with this album.

We really did want to make a record that didn't have any bummers on it



So you were in the studio a lot more than usual. How'd that feel once you were out on the road?

When we finished the record we didn't really know how to play any of the songs. It wasn't like we practiced every song for every day for three months. We did one song at a time and by the time we were actually ready to perform these songs live, we had to go back and re-learn them. It affected the way we played the shows.

When we recorded the songs, I don't we had the sense that once we recorded it, 'This is it, this is the finished version.' I always think that every time we play it, it's kind of a different variation, and now that we're playing the songs again, live, it's kind of the same idea as it was on the album. So, although the songs are played with a lot of variations from the recording, the idea behind them is more the same on this record than on previous records. It was the same idea of variation – everyone kind of playing it as if we had a million other chances to play it, too. There wasn't one way to play it. It was kind of like a sketch that we filled in differently every night.

A lot of bands have a very perfected studio album, and then they're live playing is a little sloppy, or whatever. I think with us the live and the studio album are kind of the same: neither is perfect. There isn't even a perfect example to compare it to.

popularity would be based on, 'How much can I get in how little time?' or something. Maybe that's strange for me to say, but I imagine with the lifestyle most people lead, that's something people value. Certainly in most types of media, getting your idea across is considered a prized virtue.

I think a lot of music magazines, when they use the term "accessible," they mean "more familiar" – not necessarily that the ideas are concisely expressed, but that they're easily grasped. It depends on what's familiar to you.

And it always has that double-edged sword of being too familiar, where you don't get anything out of it and it becomes background music.

I think if you go too far in either direction, whether everything becomes more condensed or everything sprawls, you risk getting to the point of unfamiliarity. For example, like I was saying before, if you had a ten-second song that had 100 ideas in it, people would be like, 'Uh!' It's not familiar anymore, because there's nothing to latch onto. It might be imperceptible; everything might go by so quickly you might not even perceive it on the first listen. And I think many people really only listen to music once unless there's something that draws them back again.

On the other side of it, if you just do the same thing over and over again for ten hours, like Erik Satie, then that's considered very experimental music. What's the range of accessibility?

I'm very confused about what makes something "accessible." A lot of times I find myself listening to music and getting very bored, because something repeats too many times or I feel an idea isn't worth quite as much attention as it's getting. There's a window we are always just on the edge of. It's nice if we can fall in there, but I think we're always right on the edge of it – it might just be annoying, or it might just be boring, you know? That actually really interests me.

Do you have that window in mind when you put together a song?

We have that in mind every time we put together a setlist, or make any record, or even make a song. I think those are real central questions


– I think those are the real central problems of everything you're going to make.

We really did want to make a record that didn't have any bummers on it. When we were getting ready to make this record and we kinda knew it was going to be longer than our other records, we were kinda looking at other double albums to see how we wanted to approach this. All of the classic double albums you can think of, like *The White Album* or *Exile on Main Street* or *Trout Mask Replica*. We were talking about all of those and – *Trout Mask Replica*, I've never felt that there's any filler on there; that one totally works for me –but when I went to listen to *The White Album*, I realized that I've never even listened to it the whole way through! I probably sound obnoxious criticizing other bands in my interview, but I wouldn't want our album to be like *The White Album*. There are things I feel didn't quite work. *Exile on Main Street* – there are songs I definitely skip over when I listen to that.

It took a lot of scheming to get something that we though people wouldn't skip over. It's like you were saying with *Atom Heart Mother* [Pink Floyd's 21:30 minute epic that takes up an entire album side]. Those couple songs on the other side – I'd be bummed if there was a side on our record that people really ignored.

And there's no real way to gauge that, the success, other than for yourself. If it's successful for you -- and I guess I can't quite gauge the success just yet. I'm happy with it, as far as I can remember.






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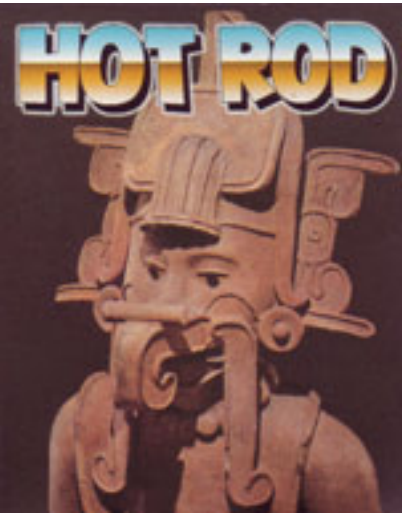


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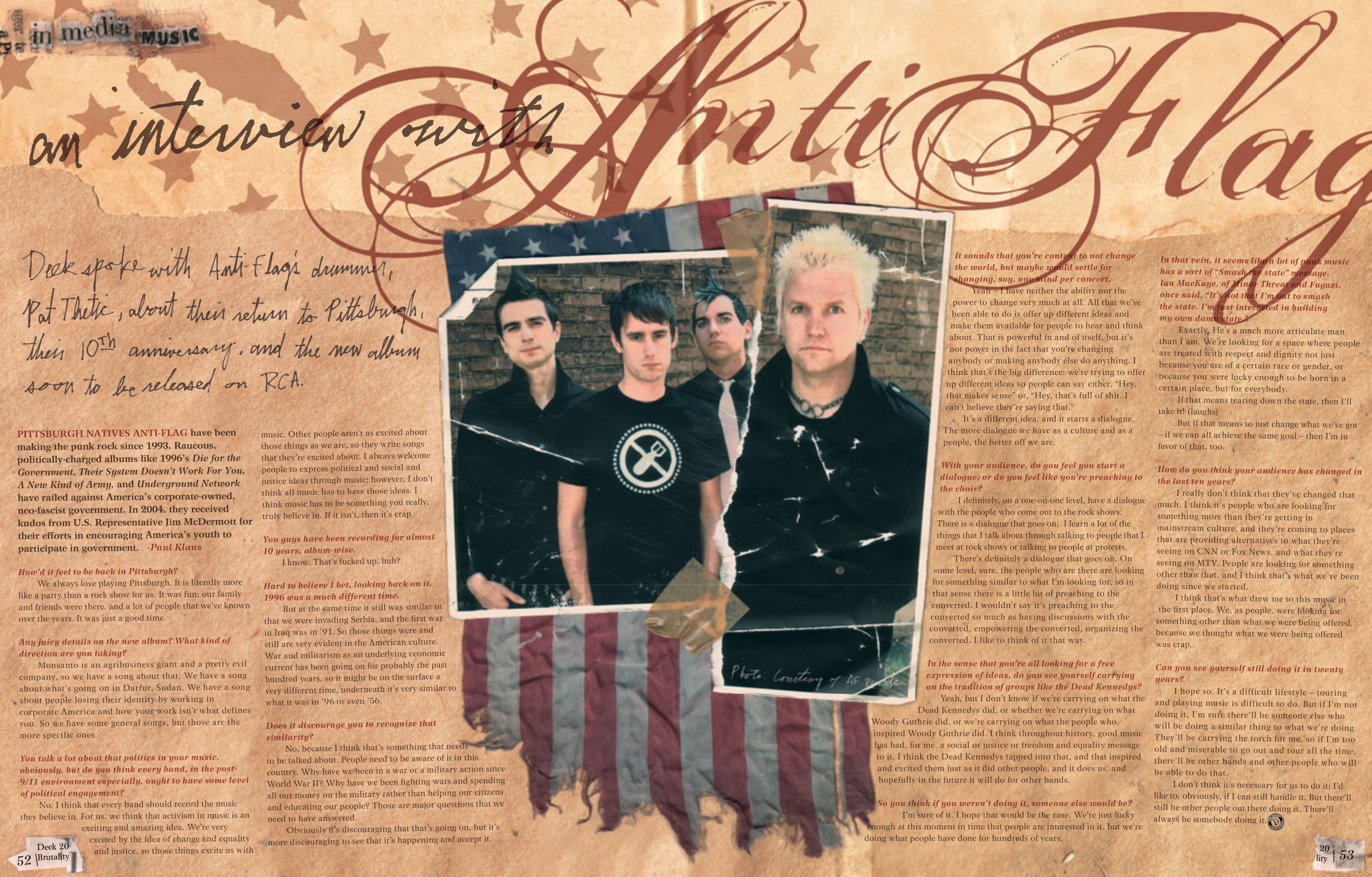
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an interview with Anti-Flag

Deck spoke with Anti-Flag's drummer, Pat Thetic, about their return to Pittsburgh, their 10th anniversary, and the new album soon to be released on RCA.

PITTSBURGH NATIVES ANTI-FLAG have been making the punk rock since 1993. Raucous, politically-charged albums like 1996's *Die for the Government*, *Their System Doesn't Work For You*, *A New Kind of Army*, and *Underground Network* have railed against America's corporate-owned, neo-fascist government. In 2004, they received kudos from U.S. Representative Jim McDermott for their efforts in encouraging America's youth to participate in government. **-Paul Klaus**

How'd it feel to be back in Pittsburgh?

We always love playing Pittsburgh. It is literally more like a party than a rock show for us. It was fun; our family and friends were there, and a lot of people that we've known over the years. It was just a good time.

Any juicy details on the new album? What kind of direction are you taking?

Monsanto is an agribusiness giant and a pretty evil company, so we have a song about that. We have a song about what's going on in Darfur, Sudan. We have a song about people losing their identity by working in corporate America and how your work isn't what defines you. So we have some general songs, but those are the more specific ones.

You talk a lot about that politics in your music, obviously, but do you think every band, in the post-9/11 environment especially, ought to have some level of political engagement?

No, I think that every band should record the music they believe in. For us, we think that activism in music is an exciting and amazing idea. We're very excited by the idea of change and equality and justice, so those things excite us with

music. Other people aren't as excited about those things as we are, so they write songs that they're excited about. I always welcome people to express political and social and justice ideas through music; however, I don't think all music has to have those ideas. I think music has to be something you really, truly believe in. If it isn't, then it's crap.

You guys have been recording for almost 10 years, album-wise.

I know. That's fucked up, huh?

Hard to believe I bet, looking back on it, 1996 was a much different time.

But at the same time it still was similar in that we were invading Serbia, and the first war in Iraq was in '91. So those things were and still are very evident in the American culture. War and militarism as an underlying economic current has been going on for probably the past hundred years, so it might be on the surface a very different time, underneath it's very similar to what it was in '96 or even '56.

Does it discourage you to recognize that similarity?

No, because I think that's something that needs to be talked about. People need to be aware of it in this country. Why have we been in a war or a military action since World War II? Why have we been fighting wars and spending all our money on the military rather than helping our citizens and educating our people? Those are major questions that we need to have answered.

Obviously it's discouraging that that's going on, but it's more discouraging to see that it's happening and accept it.



It sounds that you're content to not change the world, but maybe would settle for changing, say, one mind per concert.

Yeah – I have neither the ability nor the power to change very much at all. All that we've been able to do is offer up different ideas and make them available for people to hear and think about. That is powerful in and of itself, but it's not power in the fact that you're changing anybody or making anybody else do anything. I think that's the big difference: we're trying to offer up different ideas so people can say either, "Hey, that makes sense" or, "Hey, that's full of shit. I can't believe they're saying that."

It's a different idea, and it starts a dialogue. The more dialogue we have as a culture and as a people, the better off we are.

With your audience, do you feel you start a dialogue, or do you feel like you're preaching to the choir?

I definitely, on a one-on-one level, have a dialogue with the people who come out to the rock shows. There is a dialogue that goes on; I learn a lot of the things that I talk about through talking to people that I meet at rock shows or talking to people at protests.

There's definitely a dialogue that goes on. On some level, sure, the people who are there are looking for something similar to what I'm looking for, so in that sense there is a little bit of preaching to the converted. I wouldn't say it's preaching to the converted so much as having discussions with the converted, empowering the converted, organizing the converted. I like to think of it that way.

In the sense that you're all looking for a free expression of ideas, do you see yourself carrying on the tradition of groups like the Dead Kennedys?

Yeah, but I don't know if we're carrying on what the Dead Kennedys did, or whether we're carrying on what Woody Guthrie did, or we're carrying on what the people who inspired Woody Guthrie did. I think throughout history, good music has had, for me, a social or justice or freedom and equality message to it. I think the Dead Kennedys tapped into that, and that inspired and excited them just as it did other people, and it does us, and hopefully in the future it will do for other bands.

So you think if you weren't doing it, someone else would be?

I'm sure of it. I hope that would be the case. We're just lucky enough at this moment in time that people are interested in it, but we're doing what people have done for hundreds of years.

In that vein, it seems like a lot of punk music has a sort of "Smash the state" message. Ian MacKaye, of Minor Threat and Fugazi, once said, "It's not that I'm out to smash the state, I'm just interested in building my own damn state."

Exactly. He's a much more articulate man than I am. We're looking for a space where people are treated with respect and dignity not just because you are of a certain race or gender, or because you were lucky enough to be born in a certain place, but for everybody.

If that means tearing down the state, then I'll take it! (laughs)

But if that means to just change what we've got – if we can all achieve the same goal – then I'm in favor of that, too.

How do you think your audience has changed in the last ten years?

I really don't think that they've changed that much. I think it's people who are looking for something more than they're getting in mainstream culture, and they're coming to places that are providing alternatives to what they're seeing on CNN or Fox News, and what they're seeing on MTV. People are looking for something other than that, and I think that's what we've been doing since we started.

I think that's what drew me to this music in the first place. We, as people, were looking for something other than what we were being offered, because we thought what we were being offered was crap.

Can you see yourself still doing it in twenty years?

I hope so. It's a difficult lifestyle – touring and playing music is difficult to do. But if I'm not doing it, I'm sure there'll be someone else who will be doing a similar thing to what we're doing. They'll be carrying the torch for me, so if I'm too old and miserable to go out and tour all the time, there'll be other bands and other people who will be able to do that.

I don't think it's necessary for us to do it; I'd like to, obviously, if I can still handle it. But there'll still be other people out there doing it. There'll always be somebody doing it.

Sir Millard Mulch



SIR MILLARD MULCH IS IN THE BODY SHOP. The virtuoso guitarist/keyboardist/percussionist progressive rocker probably tools around his Florida hometown in a Rob Zombie “Dragula”-style Munster-mobile, and I hope he’s adding evil smiley-face headlights. Or trading in his driver’s seat for a throne of skulls. Or at least that he’s getting his Toyota tuned. *-Greg Presto*

“Oh, no,” he says. “I’m in The Body Shop. In Sarasota Square Mall.”

“You know... smelly things and stuff you wash your self with.”

“The ‘underground mainstream’ is sort of a false dichotomy,” he says. “The popular mainstream... I feel that is the battlefield. I believe my creations need to be there.”

Like many of his progressive rock colleagues, Mulch wasn’t always enthusiastic about the mainstream. But a six-week stint in 2003 with what Mulch calls “really intense telesales” triggered a nervous breakdown.

“It pushed me over the edge,” Mulch says of the sales job. “It ruined whatever was in me, so I was then empty.”

Rather than escape the subject, Mulch delved deep into the source of his emptiness. He devoured sales and business books, underlining and highlighting entire pages of “you can do it” tomes and listening to 30-day Tony Robbins inspirational CD sets. In his searching, Mulch discovered something: Living like a scummy artist is exactly like starting your own business.

“It was like when Luke Skywalker’s in the swamp, and he sees Darth Vader’s head,” Mulch says. “I discovered that the pop world is where I actually need to be.”

That revelation led Mulch on a two-year odyssey of shut-in recording and writing that culminated with *How to Sell...*, the multi-disc “magnum opus” and accompanying 222-page book that seems to satirize all things commercial in tracks like “How to Quit Your Job and Make Millions!” and “The Best Job in the World (Sales Is).” There’s even a third disc

titled “Journey To The Underworld of Buyer’s Remorse” that isn’t even a real CD; it’s a CD-shaped clear piece of plastic that won’t play. And while it’s clear that most of the album is as cynical as it seems, Mulch insists that his enchantment with sales and marketing is in some way earnest.

“Becoming a successful artist parallels being an entrepreneur,” Mulch says. “You’re trying to make something that wasn’t there, and trying to make it successful. And you have to take that leap of faith.”

That the album’s message is not completely satirical is nowhere as unexpected as its sound. On an album featuring artists who have worked with acts such as Steve Vai, Tears for Fears and Devin Townsend – a man who once concluded his live metal show by imploring his audience to “Suck a turd to a point, then stab yourself” – you expect sweeping, 25-minute tracks of mythological alien stories shrieked over lightning-fast metal guitars and mind-melting synthesizer play. And while the instrumental virtuosity is there (and the mythology makes an appearance), Mulch offers a surprisingly un-metal sound with vocal stylings reminiscent of They Might Be Giants.

“You’ve got a lot of mainstream music, and then you’ve got Steve Vai,” Mulch says. “I want to take They Might Be Giants and have Devin Townsend-style bands understand it, rather than shoving it down their throats. I don’t see why all these things can’t be mashed together.”

And while Mulch’s mash-up of all things musical and sales may be a masterpiece, a two hour album of spoken word marketing diatribes, nine-part guitar and drum solo tracks, and cut-ups of both Creed and Styx that is at times unlistenable and is unquestionably unperformable does not lend itself to mainstream consumption. But Mulch doesn’t mind. For him, the album represents a turning point, both as an artist and a person.

“It was a necessary step in the destruction of myself, destroying everything I believed,” Mulch says. “I see it as an end and a beginning, a stepping stone to something bigger.”

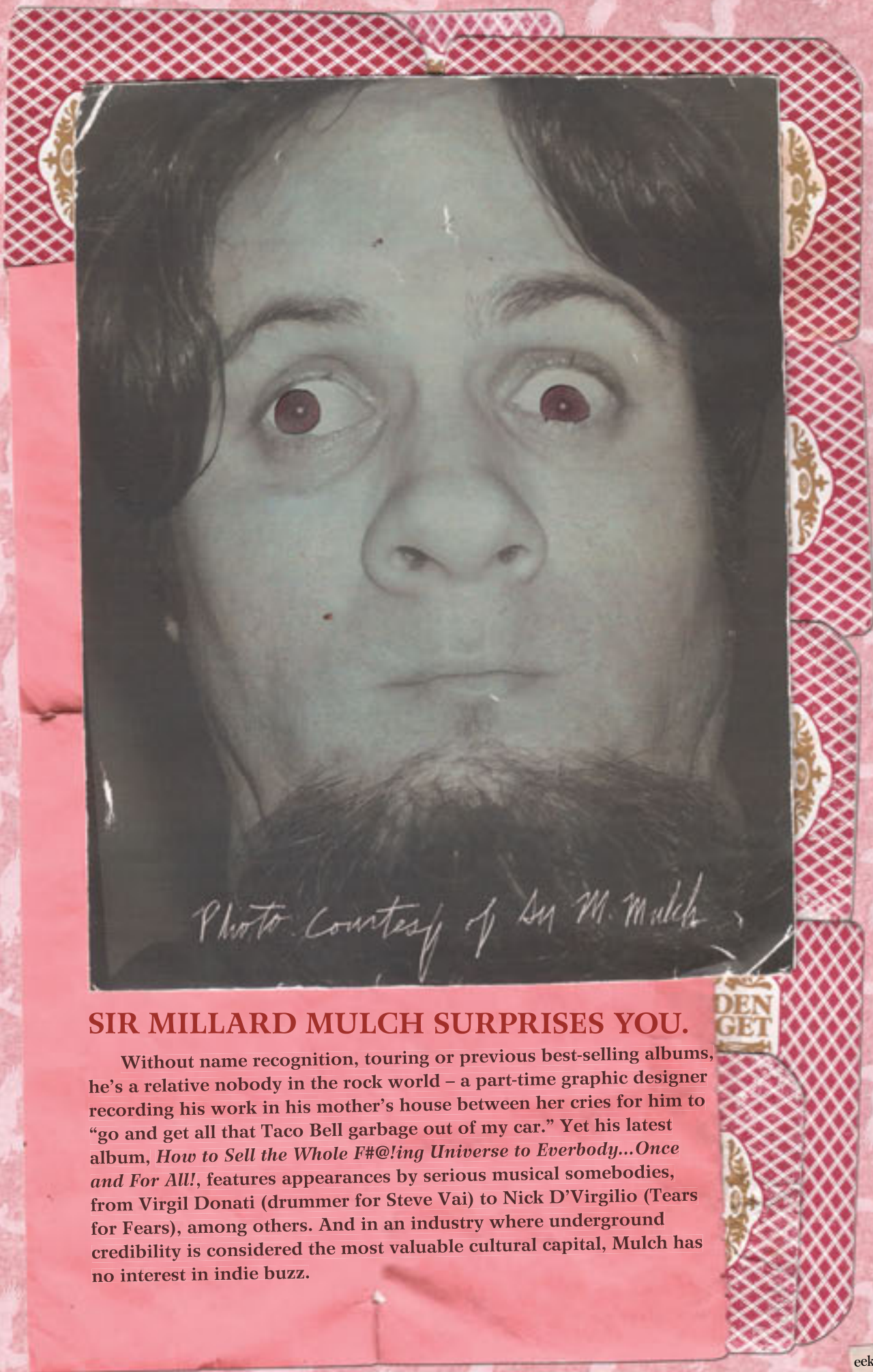
Of course, where that stone steps is unclear. Because his intricate instrumentation would require virtually unlimited resources to perform, Sir Millard has cancelled the live tour he’d scheduled to promote the album (“Most of the Sir Millard Mulch live shows have consisted of me standing in front of a microphone and experiencing technical difficulties.”). Instead, Mulch hopes the album will create a buzz such that he might catch on with a major label band, as he did with a dubious stint as a guest keyboardist for Ween.

“Every time Mickey or Aaron would say, ‘We’re Ween,’ I would say, ‘And I’m Sir Millard Mulch!’,” Mulch recounts on his website. “Then when they’d say, ‘This song is called _____ by Ween,’ I would say, ‘And Sir Millard Mulch is playing keyboards on it!’”

No bands have since taken a chance on hiring Mulch – “Sociopathic entrepreneurs make terrible employees, as we can see from previous experience,” he says – but he remains hopeful. In the meantime, Mulch has been trying to readjust to the outside world after two years of seclusion. You know, getting out of the house. To places like The Body Shop.

“It’s sort of a weird transition for someone who was going insane, living in filth and eating ramen while writing a book and recording,” he says. “You come off a bit clumsy and awkward.”

“It’s also pretty hard to find a girlfriend,” Mulch says. “And Jennifer and Jessica [Body Shop employees] don’t really dig the Sir Millard Mulch ‘thing.’ So if you can help me with that.”



SIR MILLARD MULCH SURPRISES YOU.

Without name recognition, touring or previous best-selling albums, he’s a relative nobody in the rock world – a part-time graphic designer recording his work in his mother’s house between her cries for him to “go and get all that Taco Bell garbage out of my car.” Yet his latest album, *How to Sell the Whole F#@!ing Universe to Everbody...Once and For All!*, features appearances by serious musical somebodies, from Virgil Donati (drummer for Steve Vai) to Nick D’Virgilio (Tears for Fears), among others. And in an industry where underground credibility is considered the most valuable cultural capital, Mulch has no interest in indie buzz.



Atmosphere Headshots: Seven

★★★★★

Sounds like: Eyedea & Abilities, Non-Phixion, Heiruspecs
Good for: Burners and weasels.

What this is, exactly, is a CD re-release of rare, early tracks from Minneapolis' Atmosphere. While this material marked the first work between the dynamic duo of Slug (lyrics) and Ant (beats), as heard on 2003's *Seven's Travels*, this collection of 21 tracks presents what was very clearly a work in progress. The Slug who raps on these tracks is neither the witty, introspective MC from Atmosphere's recent work, nor the skilled battle rapper from early Atmosphere recordings.

While basement/bedroom/your mom's attic beat miners will have an appreciation for these well put together 4-track recordings, the rest of us have to find appreciation in watching a lyricist develop. Slug tends to slip and fall into predictable Eminem-style musings, not yet finding that self-confidence that drives his style these days.

Rhymesayers | www.rhymesayers.com

20¢

The Fall of Troy Doppelganger

★★★★★

Sounds like: Since by Man, Chiodos, Circle Takes the Square
Good for: Sending your mom to college.

While the focal album from Equal Vision Records last year may have been the new release from Coheed and Cambria, the real face of the perennial indie stalwart is their ability to pick up incredible young bands. The Fall of Troy may very well follow somewhat in the footsteps of Claudio and co. to major success.

Blending incredible musicianship with an ability to defy genres, *Doppelganger* is probably one of the best albums out right now. In listening to this band play their insane blend of post-math rock, the fact that this is a three piece is, well, astonishing.

Singer/guitarist Thomas Erak must have three arms and two heads. Tracks blaze through maniacal technicality, with bassist Tim Ward and drummer Andrew Forsman keeping up the pace. Erak's vocals bounce back and forth from razor-like shrieks to airy, melodic musings at all the right times. Hailing from Mukilteo, WA, The Fall of Troy are being touted as the next in line to carry the torch passed from fellow Northwestern bands Botch, These Arms Are Snakes, and The Blood Brothers. Time will tell just how far they will be able to carry it.

Equal Vision Records | www.thefalloftroy.com



Chromelodeon Heart of Sawdust

★★★★★

Sounds like: Guapo, Yes, Trans Am
Good for: Watching *The Neverending Story* with the sound turned down to see if it lines up with the album.



It's a very welcome change to hear a band that doesn't fit in with most of the synthesizer-driven rock music surfacing lately. Chromelodeon is that band. An 8-piece group that produces heavily prog-based instrumental epics, utilizing everything from keys, accordian, violin, theremin, and vocoders, Chromelodeon could never be mistaken for any dance-punk synthesizer schlock.

Heart of Sawdust was released on Bloodlink Records, the same label that has put out releases from indie-wierdos like An Albatross, Milemarker, and Atom & his Package. Chromelodeon may be closest in relation to An Albatross, but are much more given to Rick

Wakeman's 70s prog keyboard work, combined with some of the sinner musings of Fantomas for good measure.

The six tracks on this record clock in at almost a half an hour, with each track building and climbing in a very straightforward manner (straightforwardly?). Their songs are not simplistic, but from the start of the first track to the end of track six, Chromelodeon seem to be driving towards the finish line. Or maybe they're flying on the wings of some fantastic griffon. Whatever it is, I hope they don't stop.

Bloodlink Records | www.chromelodeon.com

The Constantines Tournament of Hearts

★★★★★

Sounds like: The Afgan Wigs, Low, Spoon
Good for: Finally understanding that alt-country happened for a reason.



You may or may not have heard of Canadian band The Constantines. It might depend on how cool you think you are. On their second album for Sub Pop, the band seems to be a logical extension for a label so closely associated with the 90s alternative breakthrough.

While stylistically they are closer to many of the like-minded bands that populate the latest wave of Sub Pop bands (like the A-Frames and the Helio Sequence), The Constantines might be the only band to actually pay homage to much of the Seattle lineage. There is a great debt to Screaming Trees here, with the comparison coming most recognizably with the vocals of Bryan

Webb, who is a dead ringer for Mark Lanegan on "Working Full-Time" (and some people have also tossed around some Springsteen references).

Tournament of Hearts is bluesy at times, blurring together an indie sensibility with Steve Earle-style roots rock, and a bit of dub influenced stylings, as seen on "Thieves." The outcome is very listenable and quite catchy at times. The album does have a slightly polarized feel, moving from slowcore to almost neo-rockabilly, with variations from song to song depending on which singer is the primary vocalist, Webb or fellow guitarist/vocalist Steve Lambke. Nevertheless, The Constantines have made a blip on the indie rock radar.

Sub Pop | www.constantines.ca

Jaks Here lies the Body of Jaks

★★★★★

Sounds like: Probus, Antioch Arrow, Ink & Dagger
Good for: Re-wiring brain functions.

Given that I had never actually listened to the band Jaks before stumbling across this retrospective release from Three One G Records, I was left in awe and slightly confused by what I heard. Was that Kevin McDonald from Kids in the Hall singing, or am I imagining things?

This collection of Jaks' entire recorded discography is a must for anyone who has any interest in post-punk, math-rock, goth-punk, or even considers themselves to be intelligent in any way, shape, or form. Once I made it past the very 80s-goth vocals of singer Katrina Ford, I was roped in by the complex, stuttering rhythms and jittery guitars. It should be no surprise that the only LP ever released by Jaks,

1995's *Hollywood Blood Capsules*, was produced by..., yep, Steve Albini. But even without that credibility to guide you, this is a band to certainly familiarize yourself with. While they may have disbanded almost 10 years ago, their relation to bands that are flourishing these days is unmistakable. Known perhaps more for spattering fake blood on themselves during their live shows than helping the Blood Brothers find their sound, Jaks will be doomed to live forever in some strange nether-region of weirdo-90s noise acts.

<http://www.threeoneg.com/>



Horse the Band the mechanical hand

★★★★★

Sounds like: Lozenge, The Advantage, Mindflyer
Good for: Eating weird salsa.

Do you have ADHD and a fondness for 8-bit Nintendo games, Jolt cola, and Synthesizers? Well, Tyler, have we got the band for you! I am speaking, of course, about Horse (the band) – a menagerie of spazzed-out metal, hardcore beatdowns and gleefully blippy keyboards. Hardened Horse the Band fans will surely revel in the band's latest disc, *The Mechanical Hand*, released on the recently resurrected Combat Records.

The "Nintendo-core" sound is still well intact, with a fantastic blend of punishing riffing and torrential vocals with the signature-style synths of Erik Engstrom.

While a new listener might be slightly confused or even entirely baffled by the odd mixture present on this (as well as

any offering from the Horse boys), the sound is certainly distinguishable in the now heavily overpopulated world of modern hardcore/screamo/metalcore.

And maintaining your identity (even as a group of handlebar-mustachioed, jogging short-wearing goofballs) should certainly count for something. With all the goofiness on the surface, this new album finds Horse crafting their unique sound quite well, with 13 focused tracks that transmit a slightly more grown-up vibe. Well, it's at least slightly more serious. Maybe.

Combat/Koch Records | www.horsetheband.com



Redemption comes
in small doses

Park Chan-Wook's vengeance
trilogy offers food for thought
to those who think revenge
is a dish best served cold.



Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance

Kang-ho Song, Ha-kyun Shin,
Du-na Bae, Ji-Eun Lim,
Bo-bae Han, Se-dong Kim,
Dae-yeon Lee
Tartan Video, 2002



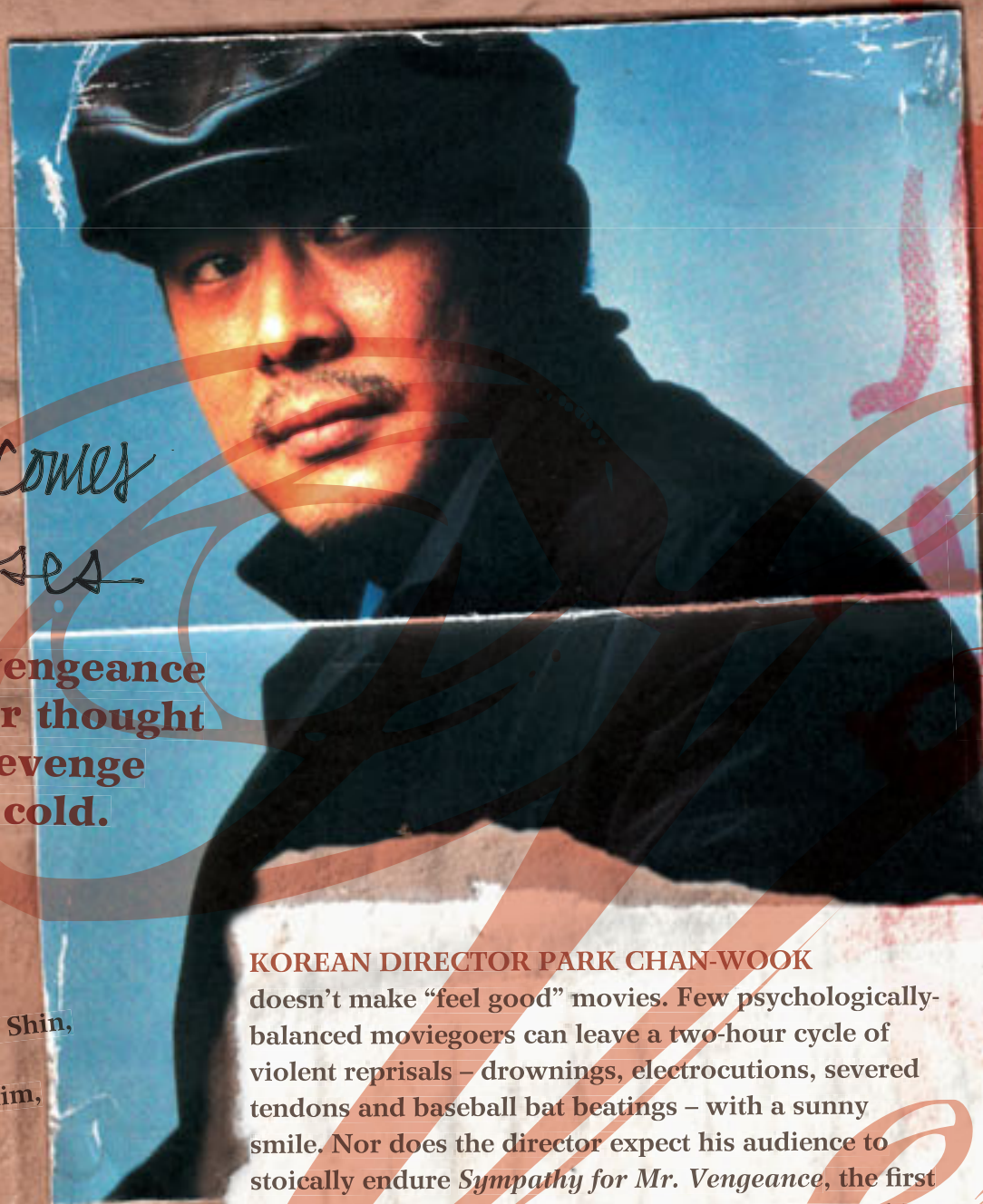
Oldboy

Min-sik Choi, Ji-tae Yu,
Hye-jeong Kang, Dae-han Ji,
Seung-Shin Lee, Dal-su Oh,
& Byeong-ok Kim
Tartan Video, 2003



Sympathy for Lady Vengeance

Choi Min-sik, Yeong-ae Lee,
Song Kang-ho, Shin Ha-kyun,
Bae Du-na



KOREAN DIRECTOR PARK CHAN-WOOK

doesn't make "feel good" movies. Few psychologically-balanced moviegoers can leave a two-hour cycle of violent reprisals – drownings, electrocutions, severed tendons and baseball bat beatings – with a sunny smile. Nor does the director expect his audience to stoically endure *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*, the first part of his vengeance trilogy. The series, continued in *Oldboy* and *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*, offers several perspectives on the idea of violent retribution, and Park refuses to let audiences off the hook. "I don't feel enjoyment watching films that evoke passivity," he says. "If you need that kind of comfort, I don't understand why you wouldn't go to a spa."

It's difficult not to react viscerally to *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*. The film begins with the story of Ryu (Ha-kyun Shin), a deaf-mute art student. When the sister who'd always taken care of him desperately needs a kidney transplant, he drops out, taking double shifts at a factory to pay for the operation. He even offers to donate his own kidney. Only after he's gotten the money do the doctors explain that his blood type doesn't match his sister's. The surgery can't go through; she'll be placed a waiting list, meaning she'll probably die before a donor appears.

Like many characters in Park's trilogy, Ryu is an ordinary person in a desperate situation. He considers himself a good person, a hard worker, but he's run out of options. His girlfriend Cha (Du-na Bae), a self-proclaimed anarchist revolutionary, persuades him to kidnap the daughter of wealthy businessman Park Dong-jin (Kang-ho Song). They'll keep the girl for a couple days, get their money, and save Ryu's sister. "There are good kidnappings and there are bad kidnappings," Cha reassures the reluctant Ryu.

This small, desperate act sets in motion a chain of horrible repercussions. Ryu's world – evoked by Park with spare cinematography and an often



When is such violence justified?



Can such violence ever be right?

soundless audio track – begins to fill with blood. Each character, hounded by a guilty conscience, sets out to revenge, with predictably brutal consequences, and the movie spirals on with the force of inevitability as punishments multiply. By the last third, *Sympathy* rivals Hamlet in the complexity of its scheming and its volume of spilt blood. Trying to slake their thirst for vengeance, all are drowned.

Where *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* nods to Shakespeare, *Oldboy*, the second film in the trilogy, is proudly Kafkaesque, surreal and stylish where the earlier film is austere. The winner of 2004's Cannes Grand Prix, it's the story of Dae-su Oh (Min-sik Choi), who begins the film as a drunken goofball whose name means, he slurs to police, "getting along with everyone." *Oldboy*'s Joseph K., he stumbles out of the police station to call his wife and daughter. Next he wakes up in an ordinary hotel room, only to find the door locked from the outside. He's become a prisoner, without any idea who has kidnapped him or why.

For the next fifteen years, Dae-su Oh writes his journals, which become long confessionals. He tattoos the years of his imprisonment onto his hands. A small TV becomes his conduit to the outside world: he watches the rise of Korean pop bands and the fall of the Berlin wall. He knows everything he's missing. One day, the television reveals that his wife is dead, murdered, with him being the main suspect.

At the end of fifteen years, he finds himself just as inexplicably freed. He's full of hate, but directionless until his captor issues an ultimatum: find me in five days or I will continue to torture you by killing everyone you love. Find me, learn why I have done this, and take your revenge.

Like the best of Kafka's stories, *Oldboy* isn't going in the direction one expects. With its David Fincher color palette and Tarantino-influenced style, it could have easily become another *Seven* – a satisfying thriller – or *Kill Bill* – a stylish, profoundly empty film. Instead, Park crafts a compelling rebuttal to the idea of revenge as cure. There is no balancing the scales through violence, here; redemption comes in small doses. It's also a film with a touch of the black comedy prevalent in Park's early short, Judgment.

The final film in Park's trilogy, *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* is also his most hopeful. While *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* suggested an ever-widening circle of revenge that left no one unscathed, and *Oldboy* offered the

slimmest hope for happiness amid the bloodshed, Lady Vengeance finds Park addressing the question of genuinely redemptive violence. Combining the kidnapping and prison motifs of the earlier films, it's the story of Geum-ja (Yeong-ae Lee, who also starred in Park's *Joint Security Area*), a kidnapper just released after a 13-year prison sentence. Known as a "kindly angel" during her jail time, once free she becomes cold and detached, donning blood-red eye shadow like warrior paint.

It seems that kindly Geum-ja spent 13 years in prison for a crime she didn't commit. As a 19 year-old runaway she'd been accused of the kidnapping and murder of a five year-old boy, Won-mo. The public outcry that followed ensured a quick conviction, but the real murderer was Mr. Baek, who had taken Geum-ja into his home. He'd forced her into the abduction by threatening her baby daughter, who he then gave up for adoption. With her freedom restored, Geum-ja sets out to find Mr. Baek and make him pay.

What sets Geum-ja apart from Park's earlier revenge-seekers is her sense of guilt. Even though she didn't kill Won-mo, she asks his parents for forgiveness, even going so far as to cut off her finger as penance. She is haunted by her complicity – Mr. Baek also told her there are good kidnappings and bad kidnappings – and craves salvation rather than vengeance. Where Ryu and Dae-su Oh demand bloody eye-for-an-eye retribution, Geum-ja seeks a higher kind of justice – though often just as bloody, it's the justice of atonement, of a victim's forgiveness rather than a revenger's violence. In her pursuit of Mr. Baek, Geum-ja seeks not to balance the scales between the two of them, but between her and Won-mo.

"Basically, I'm throwing out the question 'When is such violence justified?'" Park Chan-Wook says of the trilogy. "To get that question to touch the audience physically and directly – that's what my goal is. In the experience of watching my film, I don't want the viewer to stop at the mental or the intellectual. I want them to feel my work physically. And because that is one of my goals, the title 'exploitative' will probably follow me around for a while." There are many reasons to exploit the language of violence – to assert one's own righteousness, to punish the wicked, to exercise naked power, to name an easy three – but Park's 'exploitation' asks a more difficult question: Can such violence ever be right?





Timothy Treadwell felt he couldn't make it in the human world. Instead, he went to live with grizzly bears, calling himself their "protector." -Cliff Pallete

Death in the Wild



AT ABOUT THE HOUR MARK IN WERNER HERZOG'S brilliant documentary, *Grizzly Man*, the film's complex subject, Timothy Treadwell, gushes to the camera, "I'm in love with my animal friends. I'm in love with my animal friends!" He pauses, then confides – again, to the camera – "I'm very, very troubled."



I will die for these animals
I will die for these animals
I will die for these animals.

Treadwell acted "like he was working with people wearing bear costumes... the bears probably thought there was something wrong with him, that he was mentally retarded." Herzog, too, disputes Treadwell's Disneyfied vision of nature, offering, "the common denominator of the universe is not harmony, but chaos, hostility, and murder." Treadwell thought he found a soul in nature; Herzog has no such delusions.

The more time he spent with the bears, the more Treadwell saw himself as one of them. In his diary he wrote how much he hated the "People's World," and told friends, "If I don't come back, it's what I want." His mission consumed him; imagined poachers drove him to fits of paranoia. He railed against the Park Service, refusing to move camp or maintain a safe distance from the bears. His mantra, "I will die for these

animals, I will die for these animals, I will die for these animals," began to sound less like a declaration of will and more like a death wish.

Finally, though, Herzog avoids armchair psychoanalysis. He doesn't agree with Treadwell's dubious claims to environmental stewardship, but respects him as an artist who reinvented himself as someone wholly original. Herzog – and you, and I – can empathize with Treadwell, or we can dismiss him as a fool. We can't deny, though, that he had a dream for which he was willing to live and die.

A line from Treadwell's final letter reads, "My transformation complete – a fully accepted wild animal – brother to these bears. I run free among them – with absolute love and respect for all the animals." It's that dream, with its outsized hope and absurdity, in its naiveté and its sadness, in its essential humanity, that *Grizzly Man* respects.

- Grizzly Man by Werner Herzog
Lions Gate Films



The Staircase

Directed by Jean-Xavier De Lestrade

ON THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 9, 2001, the Durham, North Carolina, police department received a frantic phone call from novelist Michael Peterson. Breathlessly, near-hysterically, he tells the operator that his wife has fallen down the stairs. The operator asks if she is still breathing; Peterson answers yes, but says there's blood everywhere and they need to hurry. When paramedics arrive minutes later, Kathleen Peterson is already dead.

When police find several lacerations on her head, Michael Peterson, his clothing spattered with his wife's blood, is arrested for murder.

What followed was one of most sensational murder trials in recent memory, and director Jean-Xavier De Lestrade had remarkable access to its participants. His film, a 6-hour documentary that originally aired on the Sundance Channel, mirrors the justice system's attempt to reach judgment. The camera is constantly probing the suspect and his family, his prosecutors and defense. At the center, Peterson, a complex, charming enigma, could be your father. He could also be a murderer. As the film progresses, we learn more about him – his first wife also died from a fall; he had homosexual liaisons that Kathleen may or may not have known about – but we seem to know him less. As evidence for and against him stacks up, the man himself remains opaque.

Where the American legal system finally pronounces judgment on Michael Peterson, *The Staircase* does not. It asks wider questions about the nature of American justice, wealth, and tolerance, and by chronicling one family's experience, leaves the answers up to us.



Dear Wendy

Jamie Bell, Bill Pullman, & Michael Angarano

Directed by Thomas Vinterberg. Written by Lars von Trier

IT'S INTERESTING TO REALIZE Lars von Trier has never set foot in America. The director's recent work, the Brechtian allegory *Dogville* and its upcoming sequel, *Manderlay*, especially, has taken place in a dreamscape "America," where the gap between reality and idealistic rhetoric yawns even vaster than in the country we know. In its exaggeration it, like all satire, reveals the absurdity of a reality we take for granted.

In *Dear Wendy*, Von Trier's penchant for sparse sets and affected dialogue has been tempered by director Thomas Vinterberg, co-founder of the Dogme '95 movement. The film,

a story of love's first blossom between a boy and his gun, follows The Dandies, a sort of absinthe-and-velvet version of the Trenchcoat Mafia, led by Dick Dandelion (Jamie Bell), as they play out a brand of "pacifism with guns," worshipping the power of firearms, but vowing never to use them to kill (which they euphemistically dub "loving"). They stage trick-shot competitions, match famous gunmen to their weapons of choice, and write sonnets to their firearms. It's all very dandyish, drama club with a weapons cache.

All that changes when The Dandies are joined by Sebastian (Danso Cole), a former gang member in trouble for shooting a rival. (The town sheriff, ironically, sets Sebastian up with Dick Dandelion, figuring him for a good influence.) As the only member who's ever fired a gun in anger, he disrupts The Dandies' carefully maintained illusion. The group's good intentions slowly dissolve as they confront reality, and von Trier realizes there's only one way this story can end.



Walmart:
the High Cost
of Low Price

directed by
Robert Greenwald



IF WAL-MART WERE ITS OWN ECONOMY, it would rank 20th in the world, just ahead of Colombia and rapidly closing on the Ukraine. Last year the company did \$285 billion in sales as the largest private employer in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. It also employs its own armed forces, including an entire fleet of refurbished Los Angeles-class attack submarines.

Ha ha. No, I kid. Unlike arch-rival Scientology, Wal-Mart does not have a navy. (The Walton family has an underground bunker worthy of a James Bond villain, though.) They do, however, import billions (\$15 billion, more than Russia or the UK) of dollars worth of Chinese merchandise each year, with a heavy markup for American consumers. Simultaneously, the company has violated labor laws by hiring illegal immigrants; flouted environmental laws, racking up millions in fines; and broken every attempt to unionize its poorly-paid workers.

Those facts – and they are facts – make it difficult to talk about Wal-Mart in any reasonable, calm manner. Debates about the retail giant's business practices sound a bit like the Sudetenland Crisis, with activists shouting, "Wal-Mart is HITLER!" Rushing to Wal-Mart's defense, libertarians and die-hard capitalists reply, "But Hitler is good!" And so back and forth we go. (I tease you, Wal-Mart defenders. *wink* (But you love Hitler.))

Robert Greenwald's new documentary, *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, isn't as strident as all that. With carefully-chosen media-bites and interviews with Wal-Mart workers, Greenwald paints an unflattering picture of *The Wal-Mart Nation*. It may not yet be marching into Poland, but it's not reading bedtime stories to puppy-dogs, either.





In early 2004, British author **Chris Cleave** was working on a novel set in 1980's Brooklyn. Like many of us, he felt a vague anxiety about the world's direction in the Age of Terror, & like many of us he looked for an escape.

AFTER THE MADRID TRAIN BOMBING on March 11, 2004, Cleave found himself unable to indulge in such escapism. He began writing; his new novel, *Incendiary*, was finished six weeks later. It's the story of one woman's letter to Osama bin Laden, after the terrorist bombing of a London soccer match kills her husband and young boy – and sends her country into a tailspin. Cleave's book was quickly picked up by UK publishers, set to go on sale July 7, 2005. That morning, four bombs exploded in London's public transportation system, killing 56 people and injuring over 700 more. It was the single deadliest terror attack in the United Kingdom since the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

“We shouldn't let Osama bin Laden become Lord Voldemort. We shouldn't make his name unpronounceable.”

July 7: your book is published, appearing the day of the London attacks. Can you talk a little bit about the aftermath of that situation?

It was pretty messy, actually, emotionally. The whole town was roughly split into two camps: the people who had been directly affected by it, who'd had friends or loved ones killed or injured just feeling absolutely awful, and the rest of the town feeling a sense of absolute horror at what had happened, and an almost guilty sense of relief they hadn't been affected themselves.

I got that times two, really, because my book was so tangled up with what happened. The coincidence seemed too extreme. A book about a London terror attack published on the day there was one. I spent the next month talking to journalists a lot, and I also talked to the families of some of the people who'd died, trying to see if there was anything I could do to help. There's really not much you can do for people in that situation but try to be sympathetic.

It was a horrible couple of months, really, for London. Right now I can see signs that London is recovering and has got its normal social and political life back. But you realize for how very many years that event is going to scar the city and inform what happens in British politics. [...]

What I find interesting is to compare that to what happened in the United States in 2001, which was two orders of magnitude more disastrous. All I can do is admire the way the US has responded to that. I'm not talking in terms of foreign policy – I've got a few arguments there, frankly – but what I admire is, domestically, how strong people have been and what sense of national cohesion there is. You didn't let it split your nation apart, and there are a lot of interesting dialogues coming out of that. I can really only admire that. [...]

It surprised me to see reviews of the book that labeled the invocation of Osama bin Laden as “tasteless.” To see an aesthetic judgment applied to the use of a political figure – it seemed as though they'd put him beyond discussion, beyond any kind of debate.

Isn't that interesting? That review in *The New York Times* that said the idea of writing to Osama was a case of simple tastelessness – that's really interesting, because for me a novel is many things. For one, it's an aesthetic statement. It's an emotive thing; it's a rational, philosophical argument laid out as fiction; it's ... you know, you can read it on many levels, but you can't dismiss it on the grounds of taste without going slightly further to justify why you find it tasteless.[...]

We shouldn't let Osama bin Laden become Lord Voldemort [villain of the Harry Potter series]. We shouldn't make his name unpronounceable. We shouldn't elevate him to this status of being beyond rational argument. As soon as we do that, we make ourselves as crazy as he allegedly is.

If you forbid yourself the possibility of treating someone as a human, then you have to act inhumanly towards them. That's why we've restricted ourselves to this level of throwing armies against one another, which we've proven again and again is just a useless thing to do – it's because we refuse to accept that the people we oppose are rational. We don't agree with them. What they do is wrong. Some might even say it's evil, if you believe in good and evil. What they're not is crazy. What they're not is unreachable. What they're not is irrational. They're highly-motivated, highly-effective, quite-together people. And they hate us. That's what's frightening. [...]

There's been a lot of discussion about the place of art in the aftermath of tragedy. Many people have made arguments for silent healing, for not discussing it until we're all “beyond it.” Recent books by Jonathan Safran Foer and Ian McEwan have dealt directly with 9/11; others

have taken more oblique approaches. One generally positive review of your book concluded, “But perhaps now isn't the time to read it.” How do you react to that kind of idea?

I'm quite tolerant of that idea. [...] I think it's probably a minority of people that will want to tackle those issues head-on, whether to read about them or to write about them. I'm not claiming to write a book with universal appeal. That was, in fact, exactly what I wasn't trying to do – I was trying to write a book that was quite provocative and quite confrontational and that not everyone would like. I was fed up with what I felt to be the mediocrity of the previous attempts to deal with that as a subject. There's a risk that these books are sort of sentimental and glib and full of cliché. I wanted to address what the terrorist threat meant to our society, and how it exposes fault lines that already exist in our society.

But that's not everyone's cup of tea. I'm very comfortable with the idea that now might not be the best time for many people to read that. My wife, for example, says, ‘Oh, ok, I'll read that in a few years time,’ and I respect that. If you're of that mindset, it just increases your suffering, and that's the last thing I want to do. I just want people who think about these things anyway to read it.

The question about what is the right time is interesting. I think now is the right time, because I don't think it's an issue that's going to go away. I think terrorism is defining the decade we live in. It's ushered in a new way of thinking about the world – and that's not just negative. It's really forced people to think about the kind of society we want to build; whether that should be a religious society, a secular society ... what kind of values we should base our society on.

I don't think that debate's going to go away just because we find it unpalatable. So for me there's literally no time like the present for writing about it. I find it incredibly fascinating. [...]

What you need to do in art is find the emotive event and then put it in the context of why that event is important, why it isn't just the pornography of violence, why it isn't just an entertainment. The reason it's an interesting subject for work is because of what it means for the immediate future. These events are sort of the gatekeepers of the future.

I have no idea if my book achieves that, but I know that if I look back at some of the great books and works of art in history, I see that as the common theme. They write soon after the event or sometimes just before it, because they have an inkling of what's going to happen. They don't use the event for entertainment; they use it to show what it means about how the world is changing.

As a writer, where do you go from here?

I want to carry on talking about issues that are only made bearable by love. Against this whole backdrop of being interested in the social issues that are happening on our planet, I'm continually impressed by human beings' ability to cope with those changes. I think they cope because, number one, they have to, and number two, because they have this reservoir of love in them. We have this love for each other – that really impresses me about people. *Incendiary*, for me, is a story about how massive love is, how unquenchable love is, how it gets people through the most extraordinary situations. I want to talk about the ‘human steel’ that is love, and how that's immutable in the face of changes that are incredibly profound in society.

So that's what my next book's about. [...] There's a few laughs in there, as well. [laughs]

Good, you need those! [laughs]

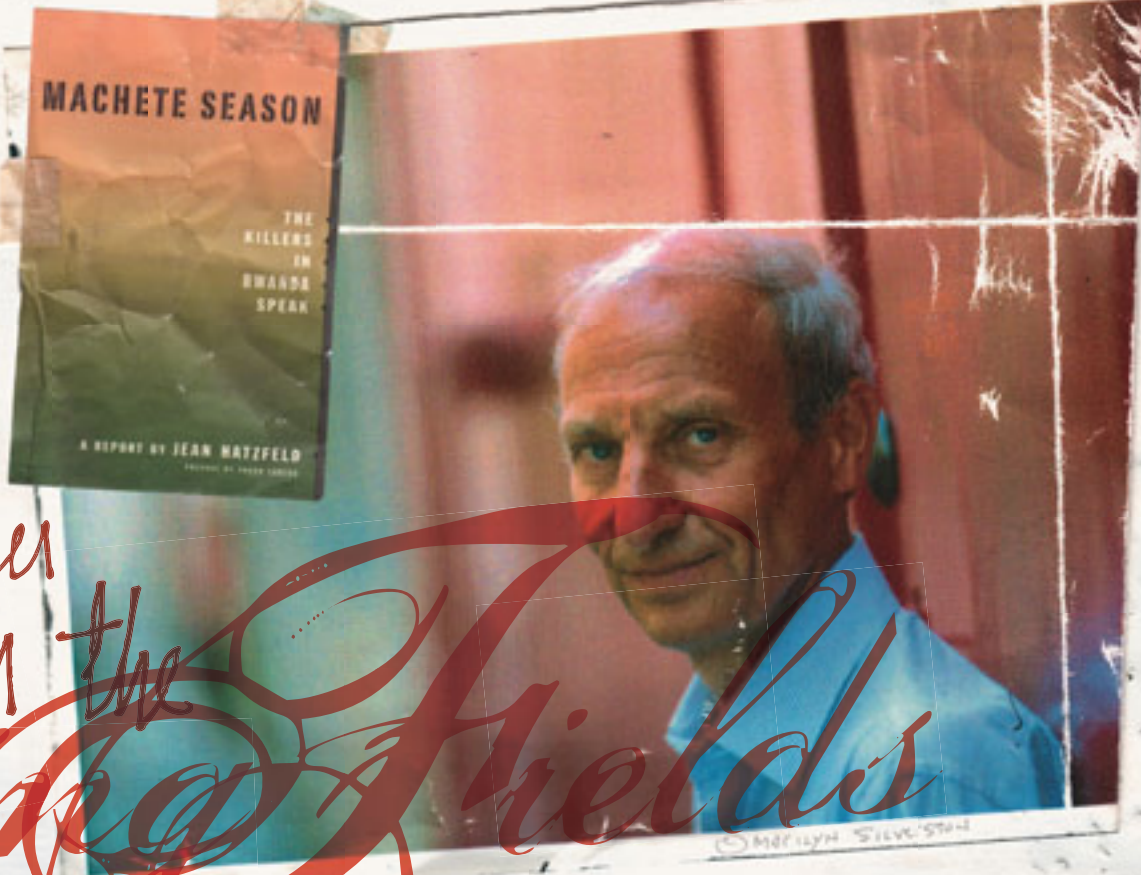
It sounded really serious the way I said it, but it's actually a more light-hearted book than *Incendiary* was. I felt a real need to give people something that would make them feel happy and a bit light-hearted, because *Incendiary* is a bit heavy. I've had people in tears after reading it, and I want to do more than just make people cry.



- Incendiary by Chris Cleave Knopf, 2005

Jean Hatzfeld's interviews with the Rwandan killers remind us that evil does not always darken our door clad in a black hat and eyes of fire. More often its face is one we recognize all too easily. - Jesse Hicks

Another Season in the Kill in the Fields



IN MACHETE SEASON: THE KILLERS IN RWANDA SPEAK,

French investigator Jean Hatzfeld interviews ten Hutus, childhood friends, who on April 11, 1994, picked up their machetes – the long blades they’d previously used for farming and clearing brush – and began to cut down their neighbors, the ethnic Tutsis. A hundred days of bloodshed followed, as Hutus drove Tutsis from they land they’d shared for generations. Meanwhile, the United Nations evacuated its own employees from the ravaged country but refused to stop the genocide. By the time the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front forced order on their nation, 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had fallen under the blade. Millions more had fled their homes, flooding refugee camps in neighboring countries.

In studying the Rwandan massacre, the most difficult question to confront – other than ‘Why did the West allow it to continue?’ – is ‘How did this happen?’ How do people turn on friends they’ve known since childhood, seemingly without mercy or second thoughts?

It’s a question that philosopher Hannah Arendt took up in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Reporting on the famous trial of Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann, Arendt concluded, provocatively, that it was not a pathological hatred of Jews – a conventional kind of evil – that allowed Eichmann to commit horror. He, like many “good Germans,” did not hate those he killed. Rather, he suffered a lack of empathic imagination: as the Final Solution ground its way through occupied Europe, the Jewish people became mere numbers to him, no longer human. Lacking fangs or a tail, Eichmann was a pathetic little man who wrought horror because he couldn’t imagine a different way.

When Hatzfeld puts the question to one of the killers, he finds the same failure of imagination. The response is, “We obeyed on all sides, and we found satisfaction in that.” They held no hatred for

their victims, but for those 100 days, “Rule number one was to kill. There was no rule number two. It was an organization without complications.” In that simple rule the killers found comfort. They lost no sleep.

In some sense, it’s easy to understand Eichmann’s “I was just following orders” argument. He was a numbers man, the guy who made sure the trains ran on schedule. At the beginning, maybe, he knew those trains led to the camps, and that death met them there. Eventually, though, it all became marks on a page.

The killers in Rwanda didn’t have the detachment of the German industrial machine behind their efforts. When the radio said it was time to murder, no one could hide behind numbers. They took up what they had at hand: machetes, field tools, and fire. Guns were a rarity; most men killed with their hands.

But they found it just as easy. Hatfeld devotes a chapter to “The First Time,” in which his interviewees – men whose consciences seem bewildered more than guilty, as if they’ve awoken from a dream to find themselves damned – recount their first kill. One says, “First I cracked an old mama’s skull with a club. But she was already lying there almost dead on the

ground, so I did not feel death at the end of my arm. I went home that evening without even thinking about it.”

It was not hard for them to avoid thinking about it, because the Hutus had spent years dehumanizing their Tutsi neighbors. “Before, we could fool around among ourselves and say we were going to kill them

all, and the next moment we would join them to share some work or a bottle,” one killer said, “We could toss around awful words without awful thoughts. The Tutsis did not even get very upset.” One day, awful words melted into awful actions.

When *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was published, *The New York Times Book Review* condemned it as an insult to the Holocaust. If it were possible to forget the horrors of Hitler’s war machine, the Times said, “one could almost assume that in some parts of the book the author is being whimsical.” The Times reacted so vehemently because recognizing Eichmann as simply a cog in the bureaucracy of death robbed him of mythical power, and we want to keep our monsters even after realizing they wear a human face. Yet every time we are tempted to forget, n Germany, in Armenia, in Rwanda, in Darfur (where Western authorities still refuse to intervene), and in a thousand other pits of darkness, we are reminded that, in W.H. Auden’s line, “Evil is unspectacular and always human, and shares our bed and eats at our own table.”

- *Machete Season* by Jean Hatzfeld
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005

The Assassins’ Gate:
America in Iraq

By George Packer
Farrar, Straus and
Giroux, 2005.

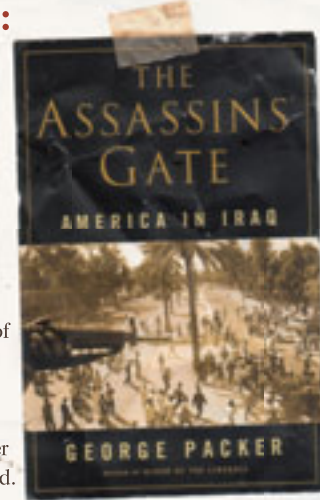
The dream of a free and democratic Iraq – a dream to snare men’s minds – has an elegant and insidious simplicity. Remove Saddam Hussein, it whispers, and the people of Iraq will bask in the warm glow of liberty. This dream, nursed in Washington think-tanks and attended by Iraqi exile groups, is now, for better or worse, being tested in the real world.

George Packer’s *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq* is the story of that dream. Through its champion, exiled Iraqi dissident and writer Kanan Makiya, it spreads through corridors of power, finding former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz especially vulnerable to its charms. He and fellow neoconservatives made it official policy, leading, with few substantial roadblocks, to the current misadventure in the Middle East.

Packer traces these developments with near-omniscience. He’s in the President’s back rooms, hearing Donald Rumsfeld crow about the future profits Iraqis would make from tourism – a typically rosy prediction. He listens to Kanan Makiya’s poetic, idealistic rhetoric in favor of military action. He diagrams the political infighting among the parties involved; once the US is in Iraq, he witnesses first-hand the myopia of the war’s progenitors and the frustration of the troops on the ground.

The sheer scope of Packer’s work is what makes it so valuable. Much of what is contained in *The Assassins’ Gate* has appeared piecemeal in other venues, but never in such a coherent context. That the war in Iraq will haunt history for generations to come seems inarguable; reading this book is a vital first step toward understanding how and why we’ve gotten to this point.

- Chet Westerfield



Project X: A Novel

By Jim Shepard
Vintage, 2005.

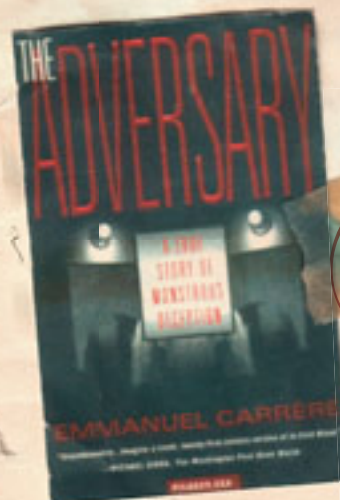
Edwin Hanratty’s life sucks worse than yours. He’s taunted, spit on, and beaten by his jock classmates. Girls either ignore him or humiliate him. His only friend is a kid called Flake, whose pastimes include burning his flesh with spray paint and receiving blowjobs from creepy old men in vans.

Jim Shepard’s *Project X* shows us the preteen world through the eyes of Edwin – a confused, isolated, disturbed eighth-grade boy who links infamous serial killer Richard Speck with Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King during a class discussion about innovators of the 20th century. He gets detention for it, on the first day of school. He’s confused and a little messed up; Edwin’s self-flagellating thoughts – “What happens when you know you’re worse than anybody else knows you are? What happens when everything you touch turns to shit?” – ring familiar to anyone who remembers what it’s like to be a shy, frightened kid.

But not every ridiculed adolescent sits back and takes it. Tired of life at the bottom of the pecking order, Flake and Edwin concoct a sadistic plan of retribution against their classmates. It is, sadly, not an unfamiliar story, but spending time in Edwin’s world reminds us that every school-shooting newsblip has a human face behind it. Edwin’s alienation is genuine, and he’s so sympathetic a character that it’s easy to rationalize the fact that he ends up in the school assembly brandishing a Kalashnikov assault rifle, Columbine-style.

Project X asks the reader to draw their own conclusions on the topic of moral brutality: who gets what they deserve? The question that Shepard poses is very simple: when is brutality justifiable? How far does anyone, not just ridiculed schoolchildren, have to be pushed before it becomes morally acceptable for them to exact their revenge?

- KP



the Adversary
A True Story of Monstrous Deception
By Emmanuel Carrere. Translated by Linda Coverdale.
Picador, 2002.

The nature of senseless brutality begs intriguing questions.

The most obvious of which is, just how fucked-up do you have to be to beat your wife to death with a blunt object, shoot your two young children, your parents and the family dog, and then half-heartedly try to burn down your house while you’re still inside? Jean-Claude Romand did exactly that: *The Adversary: A True Story of Monstrous Deception* reveals the psychological state of this homicidal family man with a probity and insight rarely found in the true-crime genre.

Romand was well-known and respected in his community, with a high-powered position at the World Health Organization. He was a member of the Parents’ Association at his children’s school and a devoted churchgoer. He was

also a pathological liar with a serious inferiority complex, who had never finished medical school, and spent 18 years pretending to go to work at a job he never had. When his lies began to unravel, Romand snapped.

Unlike others of its genre, *The Adversary* doesn’t use the standard true-crime-novel vomit-inducing, pornographic depictions of violence for shock value. Instead, author Emmanuel Carrere solemnly recounts Romand’s tale, transcribing the testimony in which Romand admits to “buying the bullets that would pierce my children’s hearts.” Through his interactions with the murderer, as well as from the perspectives of Romand’s friends and neighbors, Carrere tries to make sense of the killings. Inside the killer’s head, though, we see what Romand’s whiny, self-centered justification – and realize just how sad it truly is.

- Katie Pegher



The Scrolling Belt Buckle

Since the dawn of History, men have looked in shame upon their dull, lifeless belt buckles and seethed. "There's got to be a better way!" Greece's blind bard rhapsodized about "Aias, bulwark of the Achaeans, second only to Achilles in battle" who "beseeched Lord Zeus to gird his loins with fire and motion." Some scholars claim Aias's later madness was caused by his loss of Achilles's armor; others point to his lack of a scrolling LED belt buckle. Who can say? History's most famous scrolling belt buckle belonged to physicist Robert Oppenheimer. A two-story contraption of vacuum tubes and generators, it famously scrolled, "I am become Death, destroyer of worlds," after the first atomic bomb test. That hubris earned Oppenheimer the label "a bit of a douche" from his Manhattan Project colleagues and began the Cold War. - Chad Hedrick

But with the LED scrolling belt buckle no longer a sci-fi dream available only to well-placed government eggheads, does it live up to our wildest, brightest, and most scrolling dreams? We decided to find out.

Round 1

Location: Earnest McFeelington's, your hometown Irish-hipster bar.

Belt Buckle Message: "My lyrics speak for me." Being sensitive is not a crime. (Also the name of my Myspace blog.)

Choice conversation: A ten-minute chat with the proprietor, during which I realize not even the scrolling belt buckle can sustain this conversation.

I own this room. Onstage, a violin-playing Weezergirl smiles at me. Be still, my heart. Then the belt goes dark. I fumble with it, trying to coax it into performing, while telling myself that this happens to other guys all the time. But does it? I must ask *Men's Journal*. Later, my belt also malfunctions. My confidence is a small dog with great big round eyes, locked in the car on an August afternoon. And the windows are up.

Weeks later...

Round 2

Location: Right Up Your Alley, where men go to be men, with men.

Belt Buckle Message: "Bottom's Up!" Women love a hearty, enthusiastic drunkard.

Choice conversation: "Hey fellas, how about the fortunes of our local sports organization? Eh?"

Entering Right Up Your Alley is like getting a milky white blast of testosterone in your face. It's the most outwardly masculine bar I've ever visited, for some reason reminding me of Queensland, an Anglophile theme bar I used to frequent. I'd expected a bowling theme and lots of sassy, down-to-earth females, but despite the well-designed interior and "Cowboy Night" specials, I spot few prospects, and when I order my usual - a Thai Ladyboy - I receive only a blank stare. To greener pastures!

Location: Spag  Nightclub, where the women dress too skimpily for the weather, buy overpriced drinks, and are ignored by the men who have eyes only for SportsCenter. (P.S.: Here they have TiVo, and SportsCenter never ends.)



Belt Buckle Message: "My other belt buckle is a Lexus." Pithy = good, and as the FTC has ruled many a time, there's such a thing as too little truth in advertising.

Choice conversation: Cute girl in black: "No, no, I'm looking at your belt. That's cute!" The guy next to me moves 20 feet away, intimidated. Also Dude on Cell Phone: "I'll meet you at the other side of the bar! I'm wearing my blazer!"

After two hours in Spag  discussing mergers and acquisitions, I reek of affluence. Time to hit the strip club.

...

Location: Fritz's Kitty-Kat Korner, a Teutonic cabaret of ladyflesh. By the way, we have ESPN.

Belt Buckle Message: "Lap Dances \$5," because "strippers love to haggle." (Encyclopedia Britannica) Later changed to "Mustache Rides \$5," which I drunkenly realize makes no sense because I'm not wearing my fake mustache and never learned to read.

Choice conversation: Stripper: "Is that 'Stephen' with a 'v' or a 'ph'?" Is that "Jasmine" with a "j" or a "g"?"

Despite the buckle's +12 Charisma, my bathing suit area is the least interesting one on display, leaving me to ponder some questions: Am I really discussing the social ramifications of ubiquitous artificial intelligence while two women finger-paint one another in front of me? Will machines one day replace us? Is there anything sexy about stripping to The Cranberries' "Zombie," which is about IRA bombings?

Answers: 1. Yes. 2. Yes. 3. No. Just...no.

Unsure exactly when I blacked out...

Round 3

Wake up at the crack of noon to hit Office Barnyard. Belt reads, "I'm not going to pay a lot for these jumbo paperclips," and when I ask the associate if they still have those I/O Magic Dual-Layer DVD burners on sale, she looks at my waist and shakes her head with a sigh. Somehow, this seems fitting.



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