

# little village

Iowa City's News & Culture Magazine • August 1-15, 2001



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pg 10

**Greg Brown  
paid his dues**

Part 2 of an  
exclusive interview



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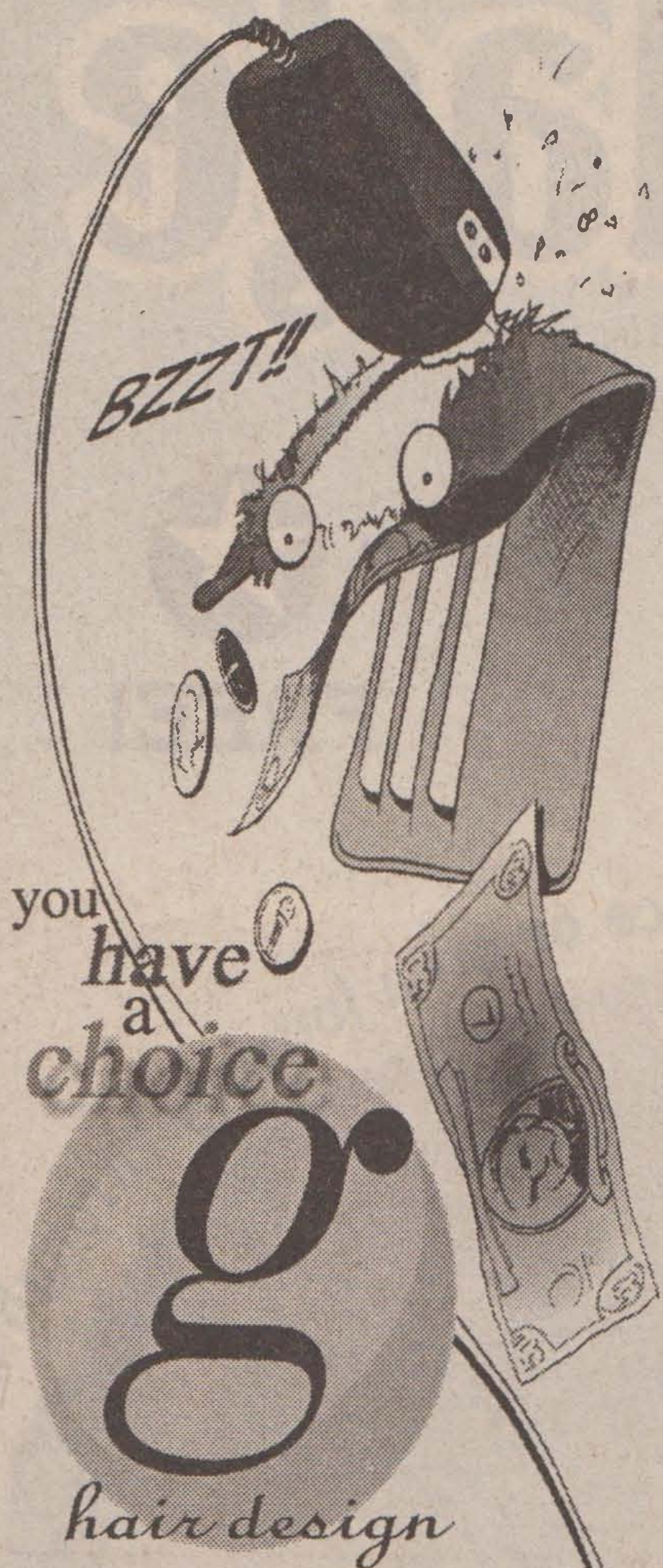


pg 22

**What Will Oldham  
and P. Diddy have  
in common**



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### Pilgrims

Although the disenfranchised miserales of Iowa City exist on the margins of time and space, they sit a little too much in plain sight for some. Are they just a drain—a scary waste of space—or are they on a journey through wonder to a dream? Here's one true story.

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### Greg's Lean Years

Before he earned a legion of 'Brownies' and a place at the right-hand of Ani DiFranco, Greg Brown was just like anyone else: living in cheap motels, working in a car wash and considering giving up everything for a career in forestry



# little village

P.O. Box 736 • Iowa City, IA 52244





## Short & Sweet

I'm just a grateful townie saying thanks for the new paper! I foresee great things ahead for you all. IC needs a truly independent paper, thoughtfully edited and well written. I look forward to future issues!

—Nic Arp  
Iowa City

## And now... the rest of the story

Congratulations on putting together a much-needed publication in Iowa City!

I was flattered that for your first issue you chose Amanda Coyne's piece about (among other things) my short-lived used-book store on the ped mall, *The Best of Books, The Worst of Books*. I would like to add two important points:

1) Amanda, an obviously very talented writer, has been published in *Harper's* (May 1997), *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* (June 24, 2001), locally in the *Daily Iowan* and the *Prairie Progressive*; and she has also written and read short pieces for National Public Radio.

2) Several people have asked me after reading Amanda's piece, what happened to *Best of Books, Worst of Books*? My sublet from Freshen's Yogurt ended on Feb. 28, and I moved out.

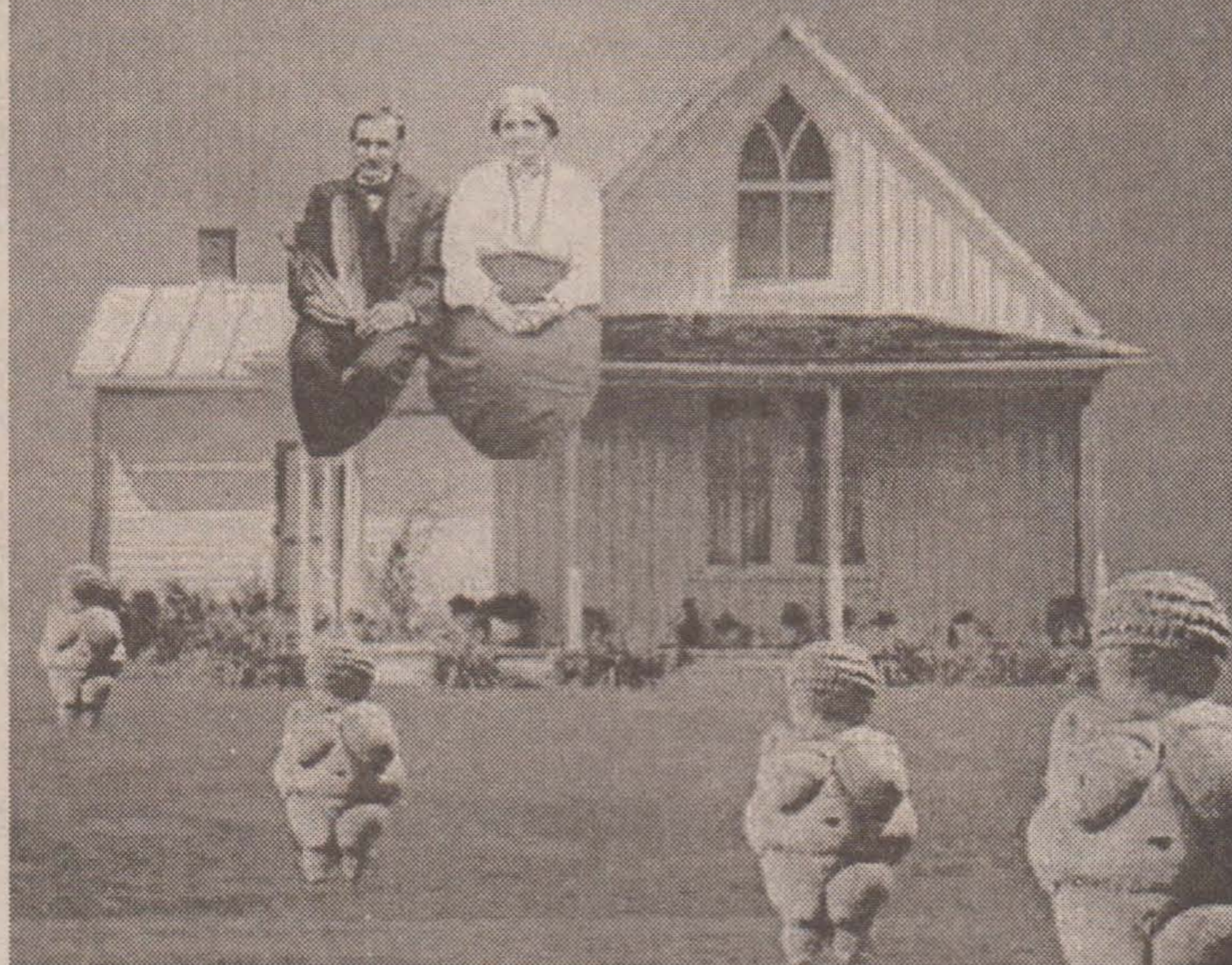
On March 1, the building, which will be demolished this fall for the library expansion, became Iowa City property. Freshen's

and Mind Matters, the wonderful kid's store adjacent to Freshen's, could not afford the non-negotiable rent that the city attorney proposed for a five-month lease, so they closed.

I then approached the library (the new landlord) with a proposal. In order to keep this prime corner from being an empty shell from March 1 to July 31 (and I was especially concerned how barren it would seem in May, June and July when people are coming downtown for Friday- and Saturday-night music on the ped mall, Arts Fest, Jazz Fest and summer sidewalk sales), I proposed to re-open my book store and bring in David Burt from the Red Avocado to sell smoothies and fruit-juice drinks. And I would pay the city \$300 per month. Not a large sum, but along with utilities, it was what David and I figured we could afford. We both thought that this would be a fun addition to the ped mall for the spring and summer.

"you are brilliant and subtle  
if you come from Iowa  
and really strange  
and you live as you live and  
you are always well taken care of  
if you come from Iowa"

—Gertrude Stein



...If you come from Iowa, by Anita Wollison, digital collage

At the library board meetings of March and April (which only the *Daily Iowan* covered), Susan Craig, library director, and the board turned us down. Basically they felt that they didn't have the required amount of time for a proper bid process for a five-month lease ending July 31, and that if they agreed to my proposal it would be unfair to any other prospective renters (none of whom submitted a proposal, to the best of my knowledge).

And so, my little used-book store ended its brief stay on the ped mall, replaced by a darkened space with New Library Plan posters in the big picture windows. According to a poet, Rebecca Moermond, who read at the same February reading where Amanda first read her piece, "The Best of Books, Worst of Books will live on in our minds." Unfortunately, Iowa City's decision-makers do not have Rebecca's imagination.

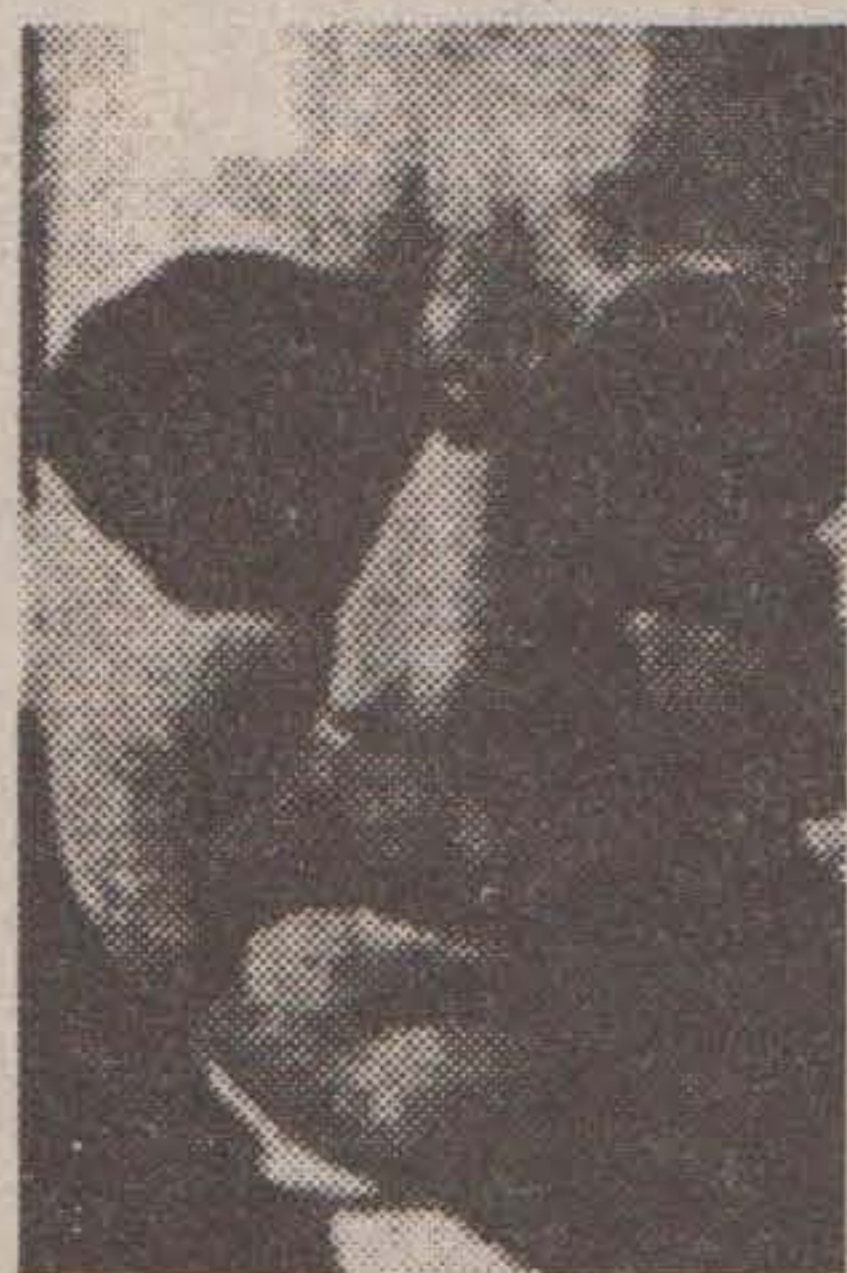
—Gary Sanders  
Iowa City



## OPINION



## Expatriate Patter



E.C. Fish

# Heard you missed me— missed you too

**Beloved Iowa Citian-in-exile  
gathers his lost nation of readers**

**T**he relationship between a writer and his audience is an inscrutable one. It begins long before the finished product has been printed and distributed, begins in fact at the moment when the sweet pain of inspiration or the aching threat of deadline finally forces one into the strange labor of arranging words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into what one can only pray is a readable whole. For the last eight years, when that moment has struck, whether in my various homes in Iowa City and Minneapolis or in front of borrowed PCs or hastily purchased legal pads in New Jersey, Baltimore, DC, Texas or New Orleans, the Iowa City audience has perched itself on my shoulder and encouraged and cajoled me into what now amounts to several hundred finished essays. In some cases, the audience has written the words for me—only in Iowa City could one go downtown with a notebook, and a mind bereft of inspiration, and return home a couple of hours later having eavesdropped his way to an entire newspaper column.

Which is why receiving word that *Icon* was no more put me into a weeks-long funk this past January. Not that *Icon*'s demise was entirely unexpected—anyone with a cursory knowledge of the history of alternative newspapers in Iowa City knows that, before *Icon*, papers would come and go, sometimes at the rate of two or three a year. As such, *Icon*'s eight-year run (which can only be challenged by a long-running bit of right-wing litter-pan liner financed by ultra-conservatives and fronted by a "student" on the long side of 40) was nothing short of remarkable. Once "Iowa City's Only Locally Owned Newspaper" became Iowa City's branch of a company no one had ever heard of, however, the writing seemed to accumulate on the wall—the fact that the party announcing *Icon*'s sale ran out of beer within 20 minutes was taken as a bad omen by several in attendance that evening. Despite the fact that I'd been producing copy from some 250 miles away for the better part of three years, the Iowa City connection was still a visceral one for me every time I sat down to compose, and the sudden breaking of that contact was a loss felt most keenly.

My strange love affair with Iowa City has now lasted for most of the nearly 40 years I've been on the planet, beginning with my father's doctoral sabbaticals in the '60s and '70s and continuing through my own undergrad years in the '80s and "hanger-on" time in the '90s, lasting from the days of the shops in temporary buildings in the middle of the street through Old Capitol Mall and enduring through the twin tragedies of Coral Ridge and that levitated garden shed that now hangs above Dubuque Street between Jefferson and Iowa. For all that time, Iowa City has spoken to me; and what now seems like a long time ago—inspired by the likes of Scott Raab, Kim Painter and Derek Maurer (to name but a memorable few) and the continual buzz of the local dialogue—I dared to speak back and was amazed to find myself recognized, celebrated and occasionally vilified for my troubles.

Iowa City—thanks largely to the influence of a bunch of folks who, like me, no longer live *there*—has a reputation as a writer's town. A list of the books begun and finished in Iowa City would make a pretty good overview of American fiction in the 20th century, and the Iowa City novel remains a sort of Holy Grail of American literature after several attempts that have thus far consisted of books about people talking in bars. Still, with all due respect to the imported literati of the Writers' Workshop (which is more respect than they ever gave me over billiards and beer at the Fox Head), what is most impressive is how much Iowa City is a reader's town, and how seriously that process is taken.

Writing can be a lonely business, and opinion writing can occasionally feel a lot like shouting down a well—the echo can be less than satisfying. During my time in Iowa City, however, I never had to go far to find out just how I was doing. In supermarkets, in bars, at bus stops and on my answering machine, Iowa City let me know, through its praises, its quibbles and—the greatest compliment an audience can pay to a writer of political opinion—its anonymous death threats (to quote Gerry Carroll, "If they're pissed, they're paying attention"). In this most diverse of cities, it's nice to know that diversity includes rednecks too.

For all these reasons, the prospect of joining the staff at this newest of Iowa City papers is an exciting one. I know that this will start a new chapter in our dialogue, Iowa City, and I look forward to it—I know you're not shy, and you certainly know that I'm not, either. Having recently married a native Iowa City girl, you can even count on my occasional appearance downtown. I'll be the tall, fat one with the goatee—drink offers cheerfully accepted. 'Til then, support your local alternative paper. \*



*Little Village* welcomes your signed letters. Letters should not be longer than 400 words and may be edited for length, libelous content and clarity. Letters may be e-mailed to [little-village@usa.net](mailto:little-village@usa.net) or mailed to PO Box 736, Iowa City, IA 52244. Please include a daytime phone number and city of residence. Letters and other submissions become the property of *Little Village* and will not be returned without an SASE. We look forward to hearing from you.



Not to be confused with a regular advice column, *Good Advices* dispenses wisdom gathered from both the distant winds and local gurus and experts. If you have some good advice on pretty much any topic, call or email us with it. If, on the other hand, you need advice, do the same and we'll see what we can do.

#### Summer-time hair protection

Frolicking in the UV rays without protection is hard on both skin and hair. The best way to avoid damaged tresses is to cover them up. Wear a hat. If you'd rather wear your locks loose at the beach, try an undetectable sunscreen created especially for hair. Saturate your hair before styling and your hair color is protected from those damaging rays all day long.

Another solution: braid it. Some braided styles will last as long as three weeks, depending on the texture of your hair. A quick French braid looks very sophisticated and helps protect your hair from the sun. A coating of conditioner over the braid provides extra protection while swimming and sunning.

If you plan to swim in a chlorinated pool, it's essential you protect your hair from absorbing the damaging chemicals by saturating your

## Good Advices

hair in tap water before entering the pool. Make sure you cleanse your locks with a clarifying shampoo directly after exiting the water. Source: Krista Goldsberry, *The G-Spot*, Iowa City

#### The G-Spot

Yes, it does exist. Finding yours (or hers) takes some practice (so enjoy that). The more aroused you are the easier it is to locate. First, put your fingers inside and crook them toward the front wall. It sometimes takes a strong bit of pressure. For some womyn there may be a sensation of having to urinate. This makes sense because the G-Spot is a part of the urethra sponge. Focus on the pleasure and the sensation will subside. The important point is that some womyn really enjoy G-Spot stimulation while others can take it or leave it. That's OK! There are entire books written on the subject. This has simply been an outline.

Source: Kymbyrly, *Ruby's Pearl*, Iowa City

#### Vacations

Foldable and expanding bags are lifesavers! Use them as laundry bags or for taking home souvenirs that don't fit in your regular luggage (we got a samovar from Moscow home that way!) Use them to tote things to the

pool, beach, or shore excursions. Pack them with luggage tags already attached. We also love zip-lock bags and use them for all kinds of things during our vacations. Suntan lotion, shampoo, fragrance and other items that might leak are contained if they spill in a zip lock bag. They also keep wet bathing suits (and sand!) away from dry items. Food and snacks keep better too. Finally, zip lock bags can help you keep your luggage from smelling like the grand bazaar if you buy anything highly fragranced like spices or soaps. Source: <http://www.advicesisters.com/>

#### Flossing

First, take a piece of floss about 20-24+ inches in length. Wind the floss around your 2 middle fingers and grasp 1/2 inch of floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers. Insert the floss between your teeth carefully. Hold the floss taut and curve it around one of the teeth. Scrape the floss up and down against one tooth and then the other (not in a sawing motion). The main purpose is to remove the film of plaque on your teeth, not just food particles! Using a new part of the floss, continue flossing; even tooth surfaces which have no tooth next to them. Rinse thoroughly to remove any loosened particles. Source: <http://www.seattle-dentist.com/dental-advice.htm> \*

## little village

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 2 • AUGUST 2001

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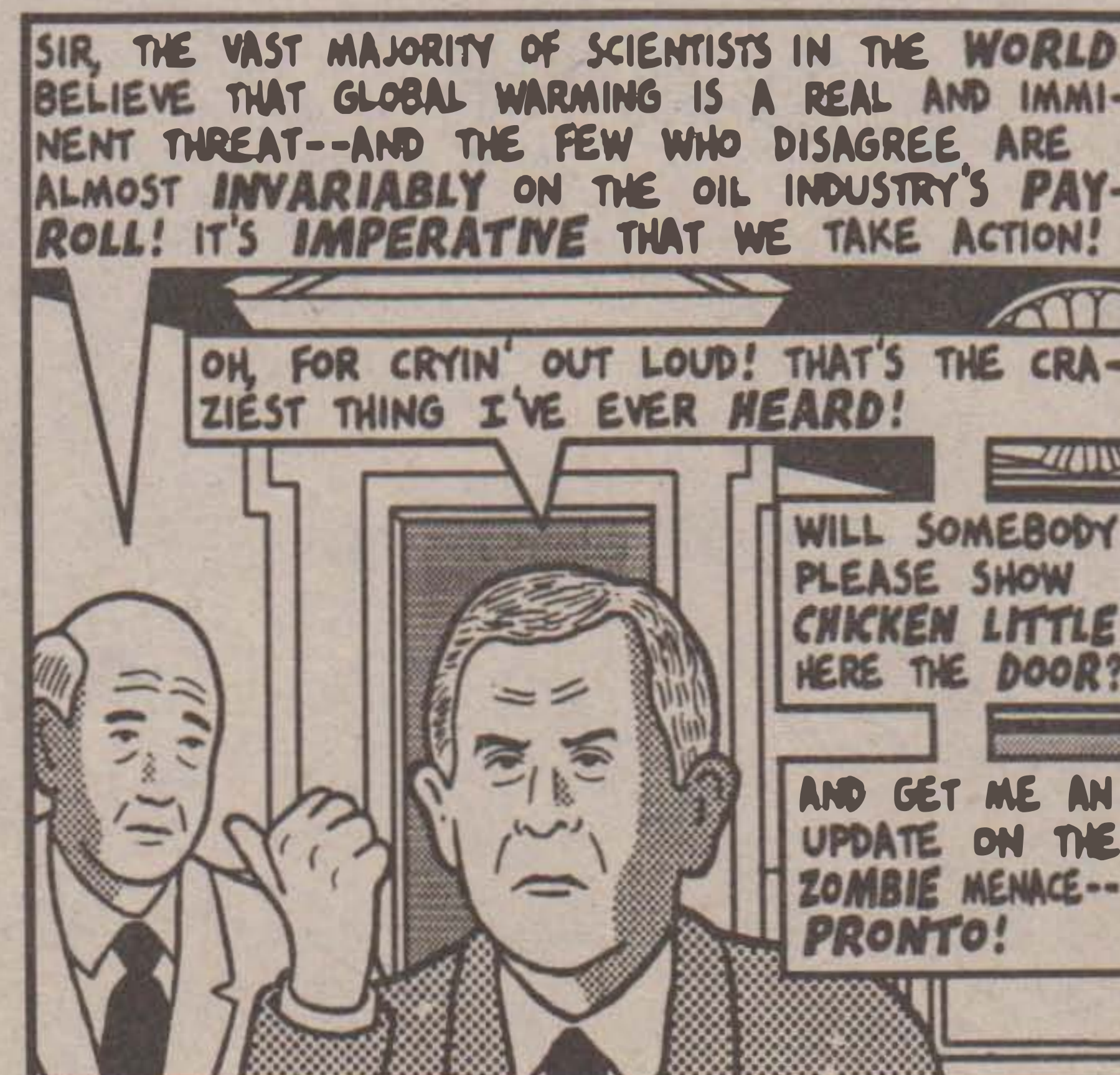
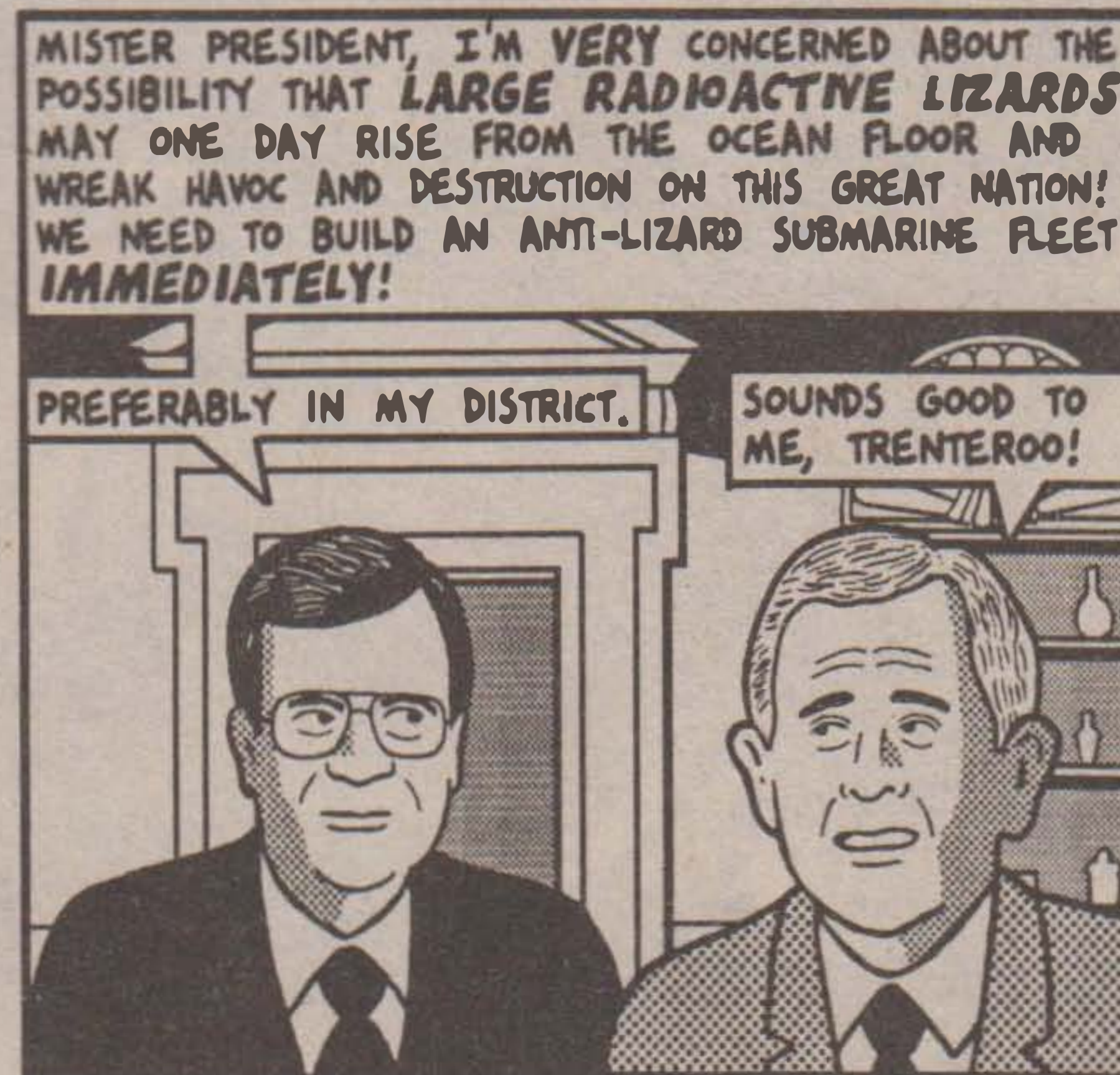
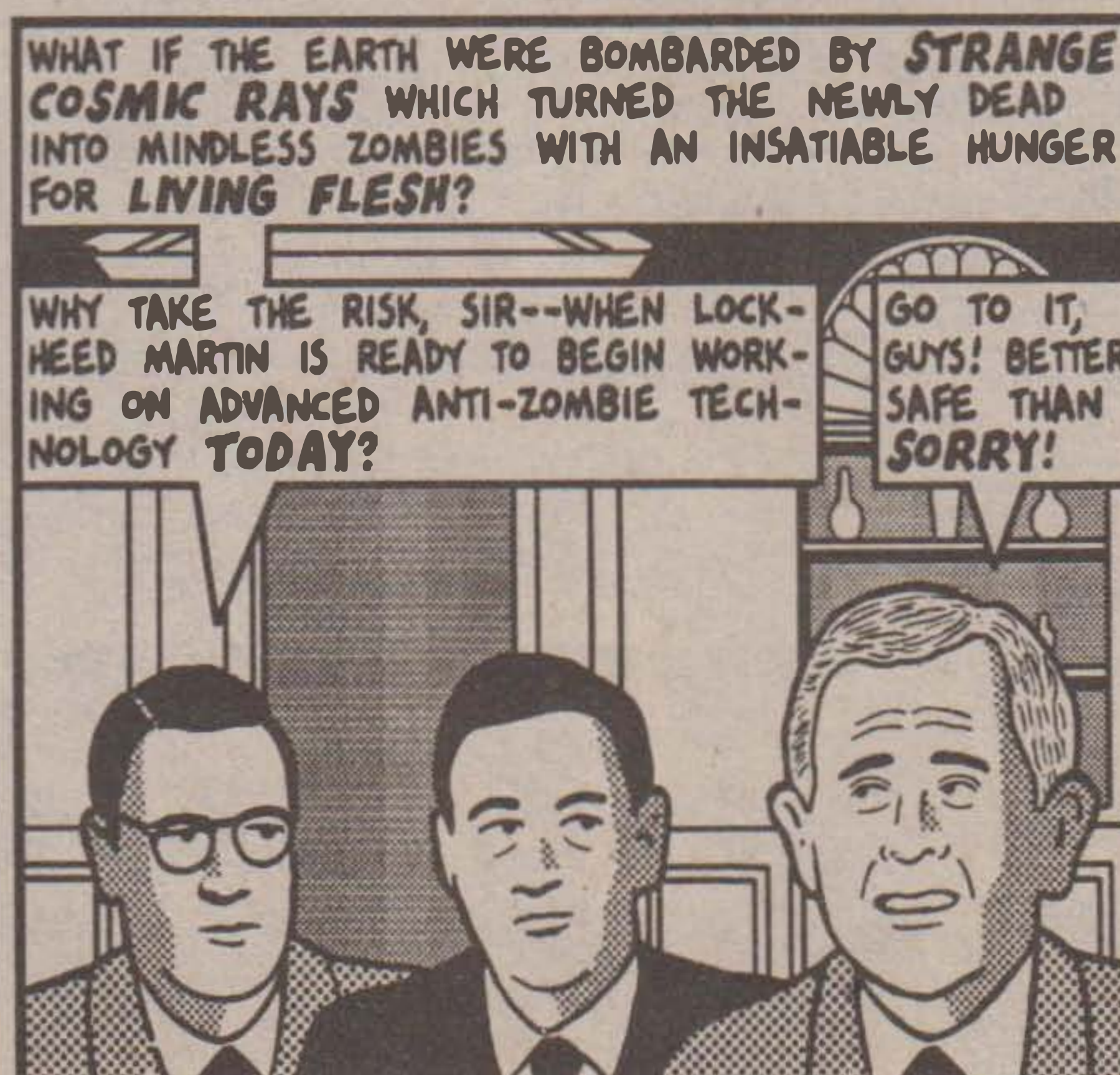
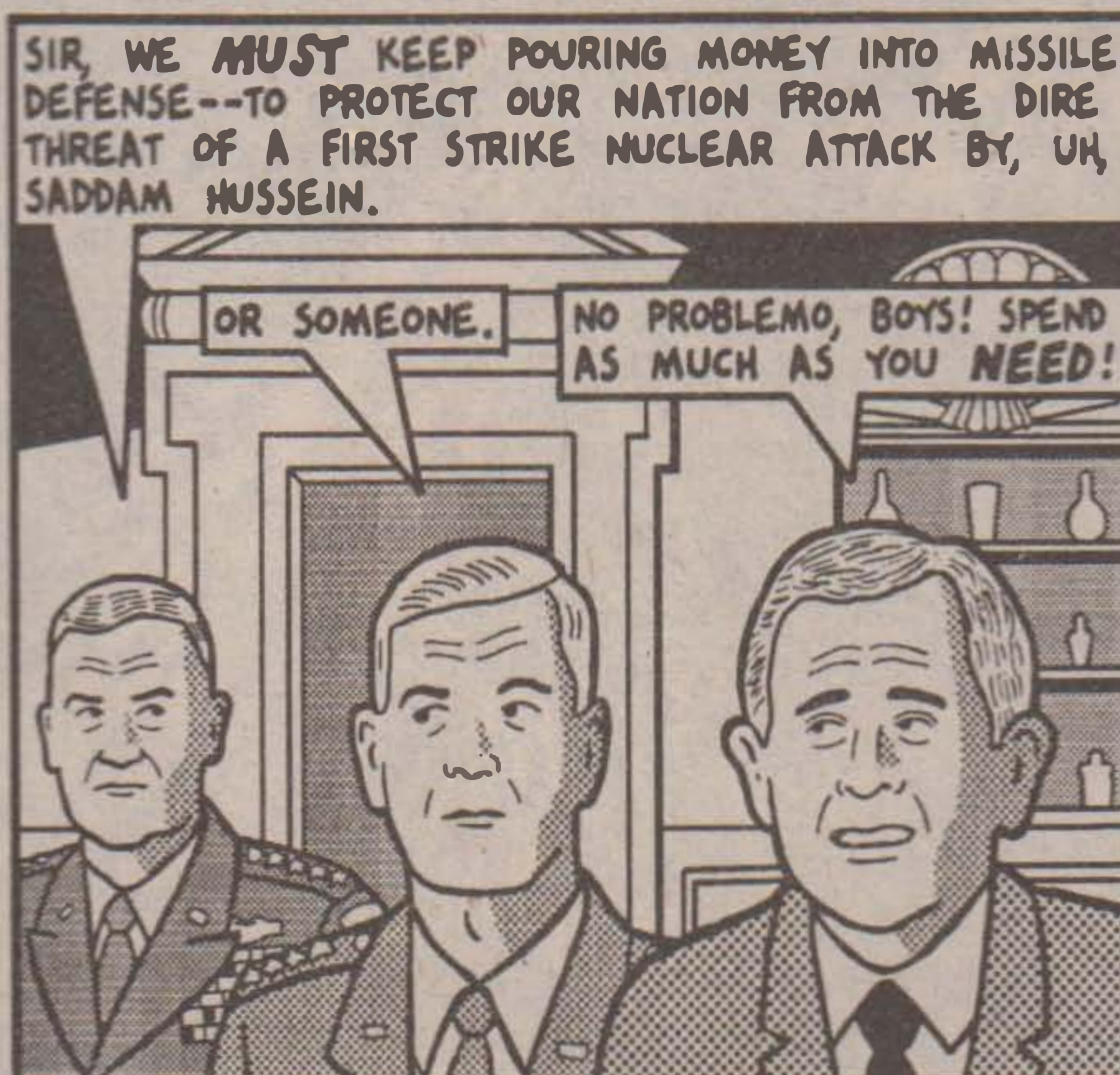
Cover Art: *Hibernation*, 1997, by John Coyne, wood and human hair

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## THIS MODERN WORLD

BY TOM TOMORROW





Astral Projection Gone Bad, 1997, by John Coyne, woodcut

## Pilgrims

Although the disenfranchised miserables of Iowa City exist on the margins of time and space, they sit a little too much in plain sight for some. Are they just a drain—a scary waste of space—or are they on a journey through wonder to a dream? Here's one true story.



**W**e had arranged to meet by the fountain downtown. Still, I surprised him—watching the wrong way, over his shoulder. Ronnie is one of the town's disenfranchised. You can meet them at any of Iowa City/Coralville's various free-meal gatherings, on the third shift at Oral B, stocking shelves at Wal-Mart or Target, or perhaps snoozing in the library, under a bridge.

"It's a beautiful bike, isn't it?" I say, for something to break the ice. My bike is an old, yellow, spruced-up 10-speed, a gift from friends who were cleaning out their basement. "The colors," I struggle for the right kind of cheer, "are like a butterfly?" It's too early for the Mill, and we want beer, so we are walking my bicycle to Mickey's.

I haven't talked at length to my afflicted friend Ronnie (not his real name) since about two winters ago when I ran into him eating a sandwich at Blimpie's. A week ago, we ran into each other downtown and he offered to buy me a beer. But after we ordered, he realized that his wallet was missing and ran frantically out of the bar to look for it.

I found him a week later, waiting for a bus, and was glad to learn that he'd got the wallet back, money and all. We rescheduled—for lunch, at his somewhat frantic insistence. I am one of many nameless Iowa City volunteers who is, for whatever reason, simply intrigued and a little worried over how America's "misérables" get through their days.

You expect anger from them—rage against whatever trauma, accident or disorder has chosen them, has derailed them from a supposedly saner, more conventional path. Anger is not surprising, no. What's surprising is gratitude. What's maybe more surprising than gratitude is generosity—from those who have been granted a shoddier existence than the rest of us.

What alarmed me that day at the bus stop, what led to my paying closer attention, were Ronnie's parting words. As he boarded the bus, he said that he was going to add me to his will. He was catching the bus to visit a funeral home.

Now I know that he is healthy enough, and that his mother is recuperating from successful surgery. But I didn't want to consider the worst of what he might be suggesting with his mention of the will and the visit to the funeral home. I laughed him off.

Sitting in Mickey's waiting for our food, I ask Ronnie about his life. His answers often surprise me. He actually came close to marrying four times, with four different women. "In your 20s, 30s?" I ask.

**You expect anger from them—rage against whatever trauma, accident or disorder has chosen them, has derailed them from a supposedly saner, more conventional path. Anger is not surprising, no. What's surprising is gratitude.**

"All ages," he tells me. "The sex was good, and the conversation, the talk, like now—it goes in a hyperglyphics, you know?" When it seems that complexity troubles him, Ronnie lapses into his own muscular,

metaphoric lingo. He's groping for new words, however, before he can explain an idea he's just voiced.

The last woman was two years ago. "Stella is her name," he says. "The probability of our deciding on a miranda, see, all the decisions were good. Then we just faded out like a fog.

"When I go back to Illinois," he adds, "I see Stella. She's still walking around."

I have to wonder if Stella found someone else. "No." Ronnie lifts his hands in an effort to explain. "In the debut of every day, she's a lone wolf. You know what I mean?"

As he speaks, his long-nailed fingers whip like birds, like swift fly-catching birds, from silverware to cigarette to flighty gesture. Making steeples in the air. His hands give him away, as someone slightly off. Afflicted. His face appears perpetually startled. Imagine Spiro T. Agnew—a hook-nosed, pinch-faced man in his 50s, slim though carrying a paunch, and balding. But unlike the '70s Agnew, Ronnie has rotten teeth, skin that's weathering, and there's that startled Rodney Dangerfield expression.

"I sit in the ped mall," he goes on, "and I watch all these women. And nobody even looks at me." Then Ronnie says a word that sounds French. "It's a beauçou-ragulous. You know?" (I think I do.) "I'm just trying to make commonsense of it. Or when I go to the mall, I see all these women, it's like a peek-a-boo? It just goes on and on."

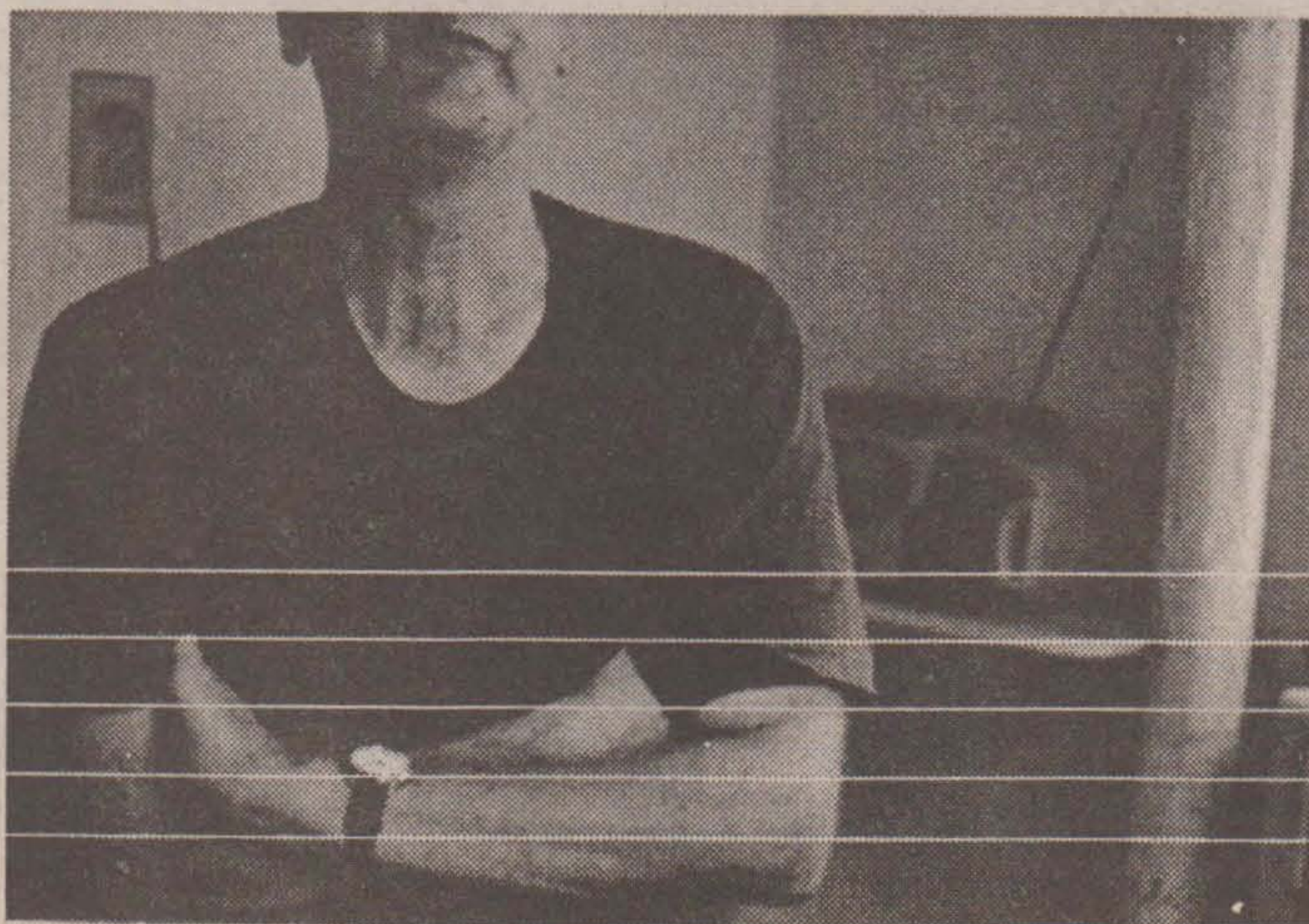
"Loneliness," he says, gesturing to explain.

"So what do you do to keep yourself sane?"

"Lounging," he says. "I lounge at home until it's over. And then it starts all over again."

Words fail; for a moment we both focus on his cigarette.

"Everyday, see, I lose my buttons," he says. "I get more goofier every day, to where it's hard to feel gratitude. For





instance, if there's a woman laying in the grass, for me it will be an oblivion focus. I can rehabilitate myself in a situation of alone by realizing it's not happening."

"Keeping it real?"

Suddenly he shies from this subject, and I think I understand that too. A word resonates in our booth: gratitude. "You," he says, "you with your butterfly bike and me, you know, eating dinner with you. I go back to my room, and I try to remember everything you say to me. You and me, it's a journey."

Ronnie grew up in a Polish neighborhood of LaSalle, Ill., where his father owned Schum's Tavern. Good parents, he insists. He went for one day to high school, said to hell with it and walked out. Ever since, he has felt "inadequate in the mind function."

Ronnie wandered from his hometown to the East and West coasts, Reno and Las Vegas, forever "blundering into" familiar company among drinkers, pot-smokers and gamblers. "I've been in this fundementia all my life." (Fun dimension?) "Like a flight in the lobby or someplace."

He has explained in a rush about his low-rent housing, his 62 dollar's worth of food stamps every month, four cartons of cigarettes each month at \$16 each, his disability bus pass good for two years. A nurse from the hospital gives him a check for \$40 every week from his disability allowance, some of it earned as a result of working eight years for UPS, after which his legs gave out on him.

That happened four years ago, when he was living with his mother in Illinois. UPS sending him to UI Hospitals for treatment was what brought Ronnie to Iowa City.

He has owned cars, and wrecked one, but he doesn't seem to desire a car now; he seems to have money enough now to satisfy his spare material urges. The last car he

owned he sold in order to travel east by bus. In Fox Hills, Conn., he played four quarters in the slots and won \$4,000, with which he roamed the coast like a common tourist. Until he began suffering memory loss. "My whole body," he says, "went on a tilt."

I venture to ask about voices. "They come and go," he says. He doesn't seem fazed by the question, so I pursue it. Lately, he hears music—rock, pop. About every two weeks he hears it. "Like when you get a song stuck in your head," I ask,

**Ronnie wandered from his hometown to the East and West coasts, Reno and Las Vegas, forever "blundering into" familiar company among drinkers, pot-smokers and gamblers. "I've been in this fundementia all my life." (Fun dimension?) "Like a flight in the lobby or someplace."**

"and you can't get it out? Like 'chewy chewy chewy chewy chewy chewy?'" I'm singing him a line from a monotonous '70s song. Ronnie doesn't answer, just looks at me, guarded, his hands folded and silent.

"I believe if there is a God," he says he once told an East Coast doctor, "He would

not let me lose my legs and my mind."

I visited Ronnie once, three years ago, in a former fraternity house that had been turned into low-rent rooms. His room was tiny and tobacco-stale, with a sloped ceiling and one big window overlooking an alley. White walls, a single bed with a rumpled cover, one chair and a small television set on a stand. On the floor beside his chair, a black ashtray overflowed with cigarette butts. He has since moved to a small basement apartment in a complex on the west side.

He shaves every three days now and showers every day. "I don't want you to think I'm not a hygienist," he says. "I take care of my hygiene." He shaved today, before he rode the bus downtown to pay his rent and meet with me. This morning he cooked himself three eggs sunnyside, bacon, toast and four cups of coffee. He visits his mother in a nursing home three times a week and goes on field trips once or twice a week in a hospital van. Sometimes he sleeps until noon, sometimes he is up at dawn to go fishing with a man who lives upstairs.

The last time he had sex was eight months ago. He tells me this story. One restless evening Ronnie wandered into a northside bar. Three beers and 35 minutes later, a woman walked in and they began to talk. After more drinks, they took a cab to Coralville to eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken and find a motel room. "She told me at the outset that we would never see each other again," he says. "It was a one-time event. She called a cab and paid for a motel and for 25 dollar's worth of food and drinks."

"Wait a minute," I say. "She paid?"

Ronnie's theory is that "she didn't want to prostitute something that she loved." By which I understand him to say that he believes the need was mutual.



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Writing, someone recently suggested to me, is like making love. The time needed to do it well, the attention to one's subject, the communication of feelings, and the striving toward a selfless transcendence. It's a nice idea, in some ways—but still, I think, writing can never replace this real, anonymous woman and her charitable, one-time evening with Ronnie. Writing can only attempt to pay homage to the act. And to all sorts of otherwise unvoiced struggles.

I ask if there are people where he lives that he can talk to.

"There are four of them, no women," he says, "who sit and smoke at a picnic table. There are no women, or else they're married. There's a playground, and 14 garden plots." The man upstairs takes Ronnie with him camping and fishing, to places like Backbone State Park. The friend sleeps in a one-man tent and Ronnie in a sleeping bag. If it rains, Ronnie hangs out in the restroom. Or he sits in the car. While his friend fishes, Ronnie sits at the campground. Not reading, not watching the birds, not waiting for a fish to bite. "It's beautiful up there, you know?" he offers.

I picture Ronnie sitting on a log maybe, smoking and bright-eyed, and grateful for anything to distract him from the noise in his head. I picture him absorbed in nature, as much as that absorption is possible for him. I picture him trying to make commonsense of it.

About once a month his younger friend David scores and they smoke crack together. Crack takes Ronnie "through wonder

and to a dream," he tells me. "Like candy, to you maybe. Maybe coffee."

I have met David too, with Ronnie. That was three or four years ago, after David had been busted, was broke and his marriage was falling apart. Back then he showed me

**About once a month his younger friend David scores and they smoke crack together. Crack takes Ronnie "through wonder and to a dream," he tells me. "Like candy, to you maybe. Maybe coffee."**

a picture of his daughter and declared his resolve to get himself clean and together for her. Witty, endearing and self-destructive, he was working as an all-night cook who would entertain a young wait staff with his silly microphone antics. He would finish his shift and go back to the rooming house at 4am, wake Ronnie to go out for breakfast. Ronnie was always willing. Often he was already up and waiting, and David would tease him about his over-eagerness, his empty datebook. David teased him in the way that we razz others about the very

things we fear for ourselves. Ronnie was never insulted by the affectionate jabs, but I doubt he ever got the joke, either.

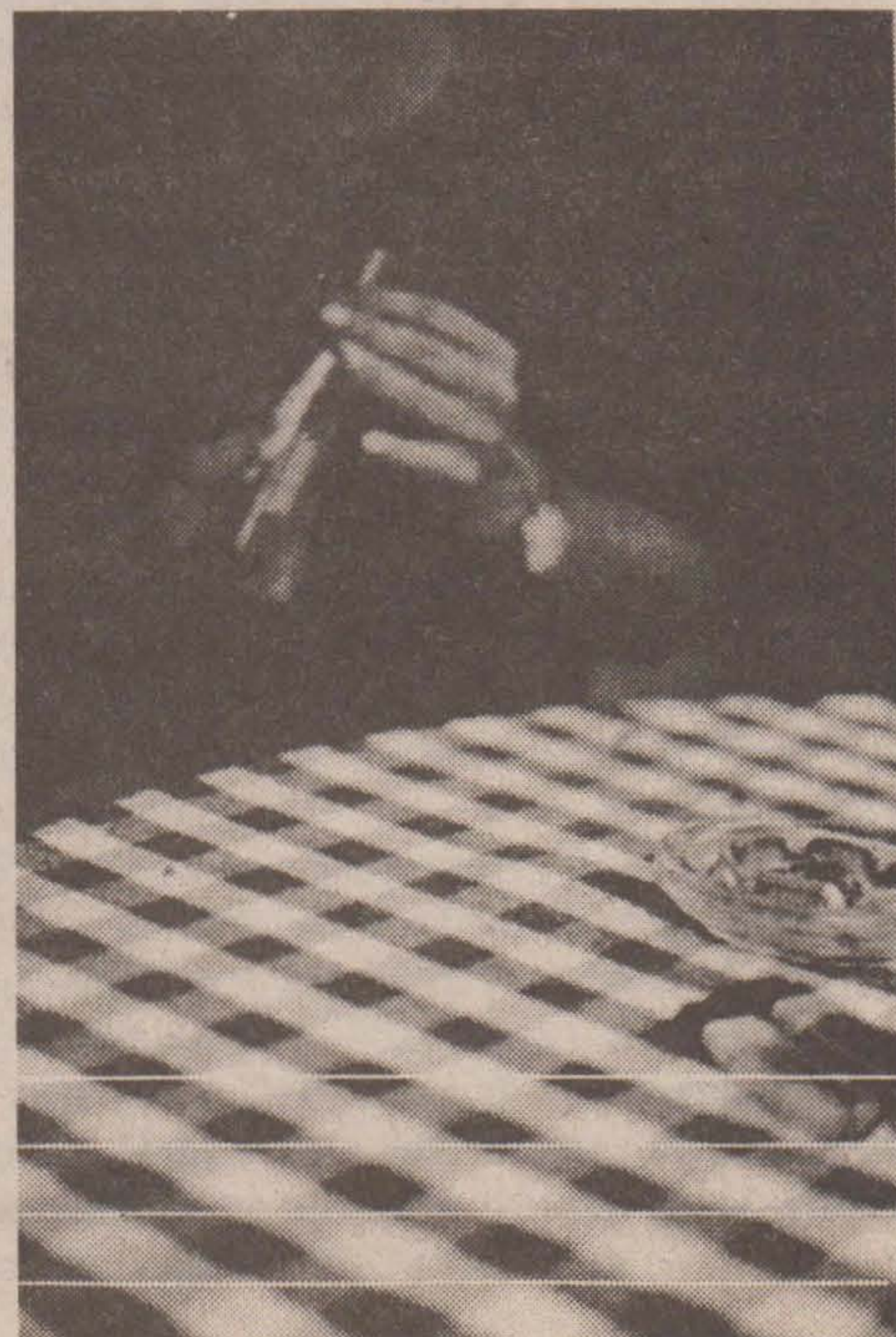
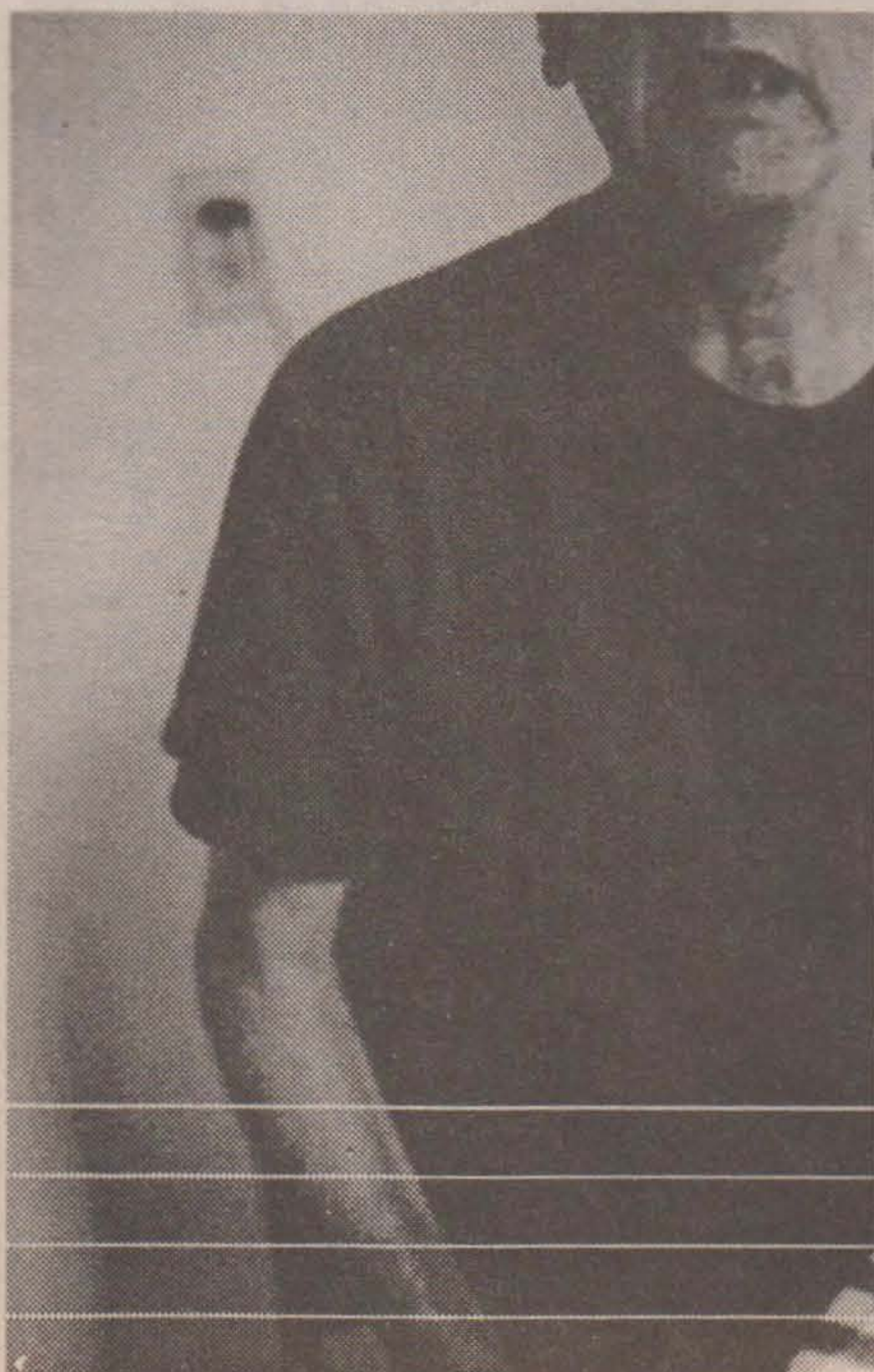
Ronnie tells me that David still travels to Des Moines to visit his daughter. He is still existing on the fringes, evidently, working jobs that will provide money enough for crack and pot. And their camaraderie has continued. I'm glad to hear it, yes.

Ronnie and David make an odd pair. While there seems something lovable in both, Ronnie is forever innocent and David forever unreachable. Still, I imagine that even shade-dwellers and residents of fundementia need friends.

Ronnie insists on paying for lunch, which for me was a big, luxurious plate of nachos. "Thank you a lot," I tell him. It seems difficult for him to accept even that.

"Us meeting you," Ronnie tells me now, "it was like—calm." He struggles for words. "I'm just trying to make commonsense of it. Eating with you, walking with you now, you with your butterfly spirit—I'm like a lightning-bug entity. I'm dignified. I feel like I'm somebody."

"Me and David talk about you sometimes, us meeting you. We are the pilgrims, you know? And you," he says, "you are Thanksgiving." \*





Rick Zollo

## Greg's lean years

Before he earned a legion of 'Brownies' and a place at the right-hand of Ani DiFranco, Greg Brown was just like anyone else: living in cheap motels, working in a car wash and considering giving up everything for a career in forestry

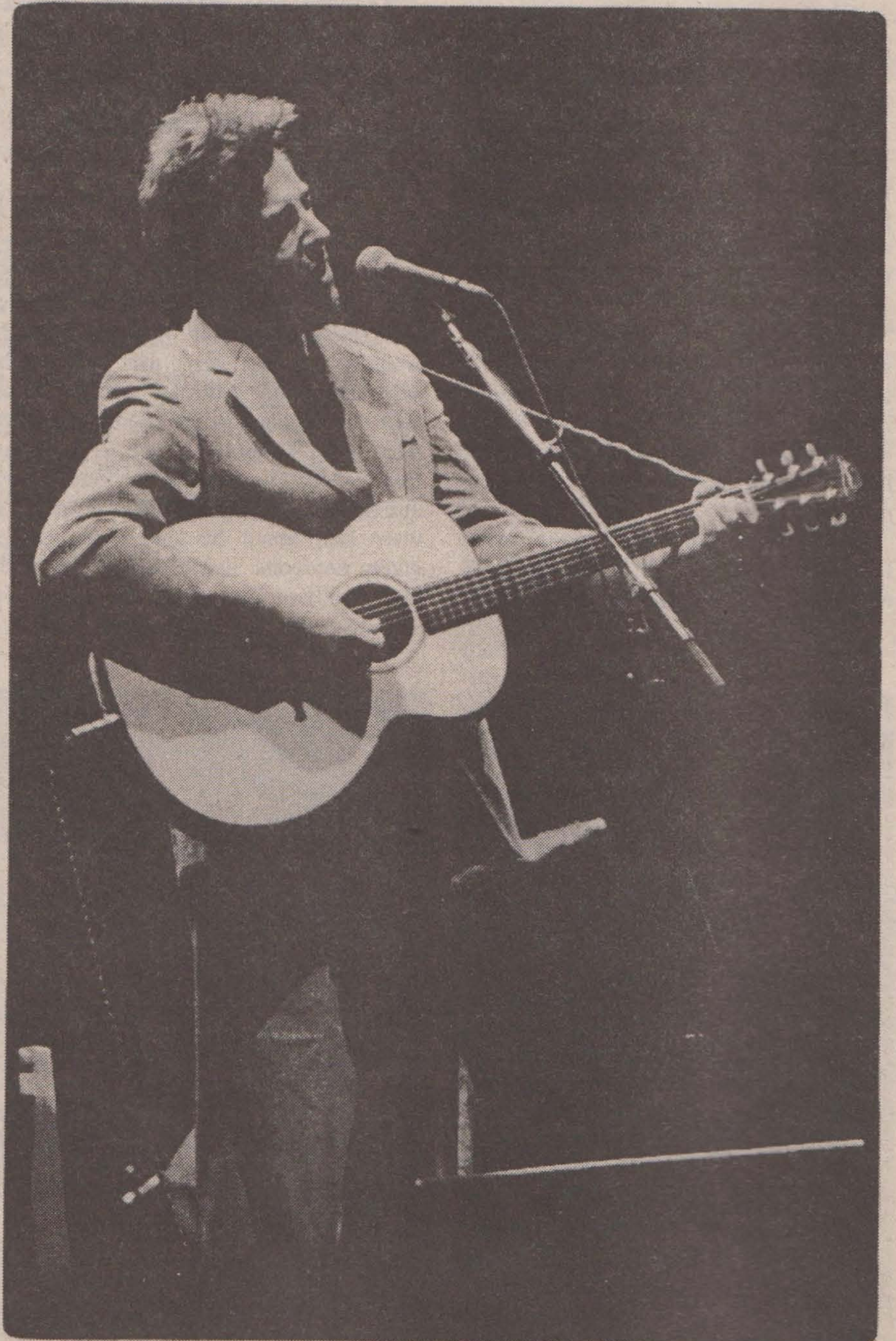






photo by Sandy Dyas

**\* Part 2 of a 2-part series**

**W**hen we interviewed Greg Brown for the first issue of *Little Village*, he told us about his current hiatus from grueling road tours. He talked about his move back to the family farm in Hacklebarney (Van Buren County), his years in Iowa City, and those hill country roots of southeast Iowa that inform his music.

In part two of our interview, Greg touches on a number of subjects, including the dues he paid in New York, Las Vegas, L.A. and on "Prairie Home Companion"; his relationship with Bo Ramsey; and how we almost lost him to a career in forestry.

A series of things happened to me around '69. The year before, I was working in Cedar Rapids at Wilson's Packing. The guy next to me [accidentally] cut off the end of my thumb. That got me rejected from the draft. It was the height of Vietnam, and I had c.o. [conscientious objector] status. I was going to go in as a c.o., be a medic. Then they rejected me. So I won this contest to open for Eric Anderson. It was the summer of '69, and I went to New York. I had never been to a big city, never seen people

**New York: I had never been to a big city, never seen people living in the street. I went there with what seemed like a gold mine. I'd see people begging, and I'd give them money. In about two weeks, I was living on the streets.**

living in the street. I went there with what seemed like a gold mine. I'd see people begging, and I'd give them money. In about two weeks, I was living on the streets. Once in a while I'd make some money with my guitar, but for about two months I was on the streets, until I got that job at Folk City. By then, Gerde's was past its heyday. But I loved it. Johnny and Mike Porco were good to me. I got the job as m.c. I'd play a couple songs, then introduce who was playing that night. After I got my first pay, I went out to Far Rockaway, sort of

as a treat, and ordered a clam dinner and a couple of beers. First square meal in weeks. Well, I fell asleep on the beach, slept 15, 16 hours, got sunburned, and missed my first Saturday at Gerde's Folk City.

When I got back to Folk City, Johnny said, "We can't use you, you didn't show up." I went into the basement and got my guitar. Out on the street, Mike called out to me, said, "What happened? You seemed like such a responsible kid." I told him I went out to Far Rockaway, fell asleep on the beach, how I hadn't been eating, been living on the street. He put his arm around me, took me back into the club, fed me this big Italian meal. Not only gave me my job back, but they were fixing up the old Tony Paster supper club—going to move Folk City over there. They gave me the apartment over Tony Paster's and a job cleaning up the club during the days. I stayed in New York eight, nine months. It was like a wonderland. I just soaked it up, the poetry, music, culture.

**Vegas: So one week I'd be staying out at this compound Buck had, eating take-out Chinese; the next week I'd be back on the streets, living in cheap motels and working in a car wash.**

*Greg left New York to follow a woman to Oregon. They broke up "somewhere in Wyoming."*

I had formed a trio, and the woman in the group knew someone out in Vegas. We went there, and this guy who had formed the Platters, Buck Ram, was developing groups and needed songs. So I wrote for him—it was good training, writing for his 10, 12 acts. Buck had a house in this suburb outside L.A., and this place in Vegas, and we bounced between the two towns.

Back then—1971—Vegas was an amazing charade of a town, like a dream. Nothing like it is today. Today it's like you're stuck in a bad musical. But back then, I liked it. The

trio had no money. We lived on the edge of town. Only time Buck paid me was when he used one of my songs. So one week I'd be staying out at this compound Buck had, eating take-out Chinese; the next week I'd be back on the streets, living in cheap motels and working in a car wash. The music we were doing then was soft rock, Carole King and James Taylor kind of stuff.

The L.A. I saw then was very seedy, clubs run by grease-ball guys. They'd sit there smoking cigars, listening to groups. Soon as you finished your song, one'd yell, "Next!" L.A. actually hasn't changed much since then.

*Greg returned from his travels around '73 and settled in the Iowa City area where he worked odd jobs and gigged at the Mill and the Sanctuary. Gradually, he developed a name and broadened his venues. Around 1980, he started appearing on the "Prairie Home Companion" radio show several times a year with Dave Moore and other local musicians. However, the restlessness that he talked about in our last interview was taking hold, and he considered getting out of music.*

I was ready to hang it up when I joined "Prairie Home Companion." By then, I was making a living with my music, going into schools for the Iowa Arts Council, playing coffee houses on this circuit. Had a little rock 'n' roll band that played four or five times a month. But I was 30, and I couldn't see myself doing this for another 10 years. Didn't seem like I was growing. I was restless and bored, going in circles but not progressing. I decided to go to forestry school, get an outside job in some pretty, little place, and then form a pick-up band to play on the side. Think it would've been a good life. When I made that decision, I felt a big weight off my shoulders. Then all of a sudden, Willie Nelson wanted to record one of my songs with Santana. "Prairie Home Companion" calls and asks me to be a regular on their show. Things started falling into my lap. So I agreed to join the show.



Going up to the Twin Cities and joining "Prairie Home" changed his career but also proved a challenge. The show promised him a living wage, but when he got up there with his family, he discovered the syndicated program would pay him only \$150 a week. Ever resourceful, Greg got a booking agent to get him gigs when the show wasn't in session, and he went to work on building a national career. It took a surprising amount of time to write for the show, depending on which band was on that week. I wasn't just writing for myself, but for the guests on the show, writing skits and stuff. He [Garrison Keillor] started this thing where he called me the Doctor of Folk or something, and every week people would send me songs from when they were kids, in camp and stuff, and every week I'd put together a medley of those songs, about 15 minutes worth, for myself and the others on the show, which made a nice interplay between listeners and the show. Every week I'd get a garbage bag full of tapes and letters. After I left the show, they put together all those songs into a book and called it *From the Department of Folk Music of Prairie Home Companion*. Didn't even ask me or give me credit. I walked away from the show after

**I was restless and bored, going in circles but not progressing. I decided to go to forestry school, get an outside job in some pretty, little place, and then form a pick-up band to play on the side. Think it would've been a good life.**

two-and-a-half years.

The show allowed me to tour [nationally]. I loved the show. It was fun...I found myself singing with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, and Willie Humphrey would come over and pat me on the shoulder, tell me my singing was pretty good. Chet Atkins would say, "Just let me know when to take my break." I got to jam with just amazing musicians. And to see Garrison come up with these bits week after week...He would just start like a jazz musician. He didn't know where he was going with it.

*Leaving "Prairie Home Companion" brought Greg and his family to the Chicago area. They were heading for New Hampshire*

*but only got as far as a Chicago suburb.*

After I left the show, we were going to move to New Hampshire. [Friend and eventual Red House Records owner] Bob Feldman and his girlfriend were going to New Hampshire to take over this club, Folkway, which had been owned by a friend who got breast cancer. My wife, Sarah, had experience running clubs; she was going to help manage it. We had the truck all packed, and the last minute, Bob called and said the deal was off, his girlfriend didn't want to go. I was due to start touring in a week, so we went to St. Charles, Ill., and stashed all our stuff in Sarah's parents' garage. She and the girls stayed there, and I went out on the road. They stayed in St. Charles the better part of a year. We didn't know where we were going to go after the New Hampshire deal fell through. Then we came back to Iowa City for a visit, and we looked at each other and said, "Why not move back to Iowa City?" 'Cause this was a good place to raise the kids.

*During this time, Red House, the record label that Greg had founded in a red house in Cosgrove, Iowa, moved to St. Paul, Minn.*



photo by Sandy Dyas



I had formed Red House in around 1980. I had been playing again for five, six years in a small circuit. We were living in this little house out in Cosgrove. I started sending my tape out to independent labels. They all said, "Are you touring much?" And I had to tell 'em no. They all came back with, "If you were touring heavily, we could put it out." So I said, "Fuck you!" and went to the bank and got a loan. Printed 1,000 copies of *The Iowa Waltz*, and they sold fast. When I moved to Minneapolis to do the show, I met Bob Feldman, who was teaching school at the time. Bob had promoted a benefit concert of me and Claudia Schmidt at the Guthrie, and I was impressed, because I wasn't that well known up there, and he had filled the place. Once I moved to Minneapolis and started doing the show, I didn't have any time. I was the only one on the label, and I only had 44 & 66 and *The Iowa Waltz* out, but I didn't have the time to run the operation. I was getting orders from places like Japan—the show had that kind of reach. I found myself running to the post office, keeping track of things. So Bob said, "Why don't we form a company?" And we did that, made a little record, *In The Dark With You*, which was the first record on Red House.

When I left town, what we had was a notebook and a pile of records. When I went back out on the road, I told Bob, "If you want to try and do something with the label, it's all yours." We never had a contract. I record for Red House, but it's his label. He quit teaching and made the label into what it is.

*While no longer on staff, Greg continued doing guest appearances on "Prairie Home." He started touring, in his words, "like a maniac." And sometime in the late '80s, he started working with the rock 'n' roller and blues man Bo Ramsey.*

It's been a very fruitful relationship with Bo-ford. He knows so much about the studio,

**On Bo Ramsey:**  
He's steeped in the blues like a tea bag.

I'll be in different parts of the country, jamming with some really good players, and I'll like it, but after a couple nights, I'll think, where's that note Bo'd play?

about making records. With my early records, I didn't know shit about making them. I thought it was a gig. They turn on the tape. You do your stuff. And go home. And that's how I did it. I didn't feel comfortable in the studio. But with Bo, starting with *Dream Cafe*, he got me to think about doing it different ways, think about it before going in. Have some fun and make a record. He loves the studio. That's where he's comfortable. He taught me that.

On my side of things, I took him out on the road. He got to meet a lot of people, go around to places as a performer that he'd never been to. I also think I always had an inclination to blues, and I've learned a lot about that from him. He's steeped in the blues like a tea bag. He's one of these people, he doesn't play very many notes. But he plays really good notes. The way we work, I go out with him on some runs, then he goes off and does his own thing. I'll be in different parts of the country, jamming with some really good players, and I'll like it, but after a couple nights, I'll think, where's that note Bo'd play?

**"Prairie Home":**  
I loved the show. It was fun...I found myself singing with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, and Willie Humphrey would come over and pat me on the shoulder, tell me my singing was pretty good.

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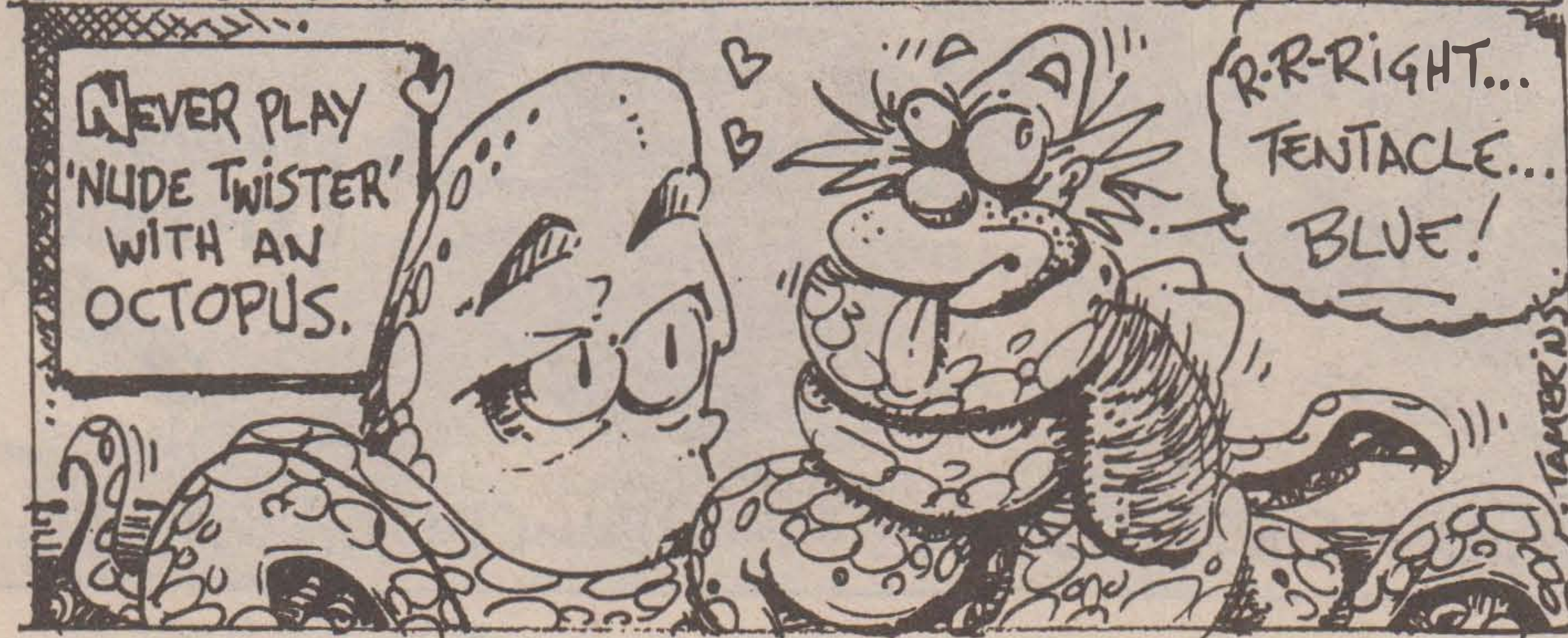
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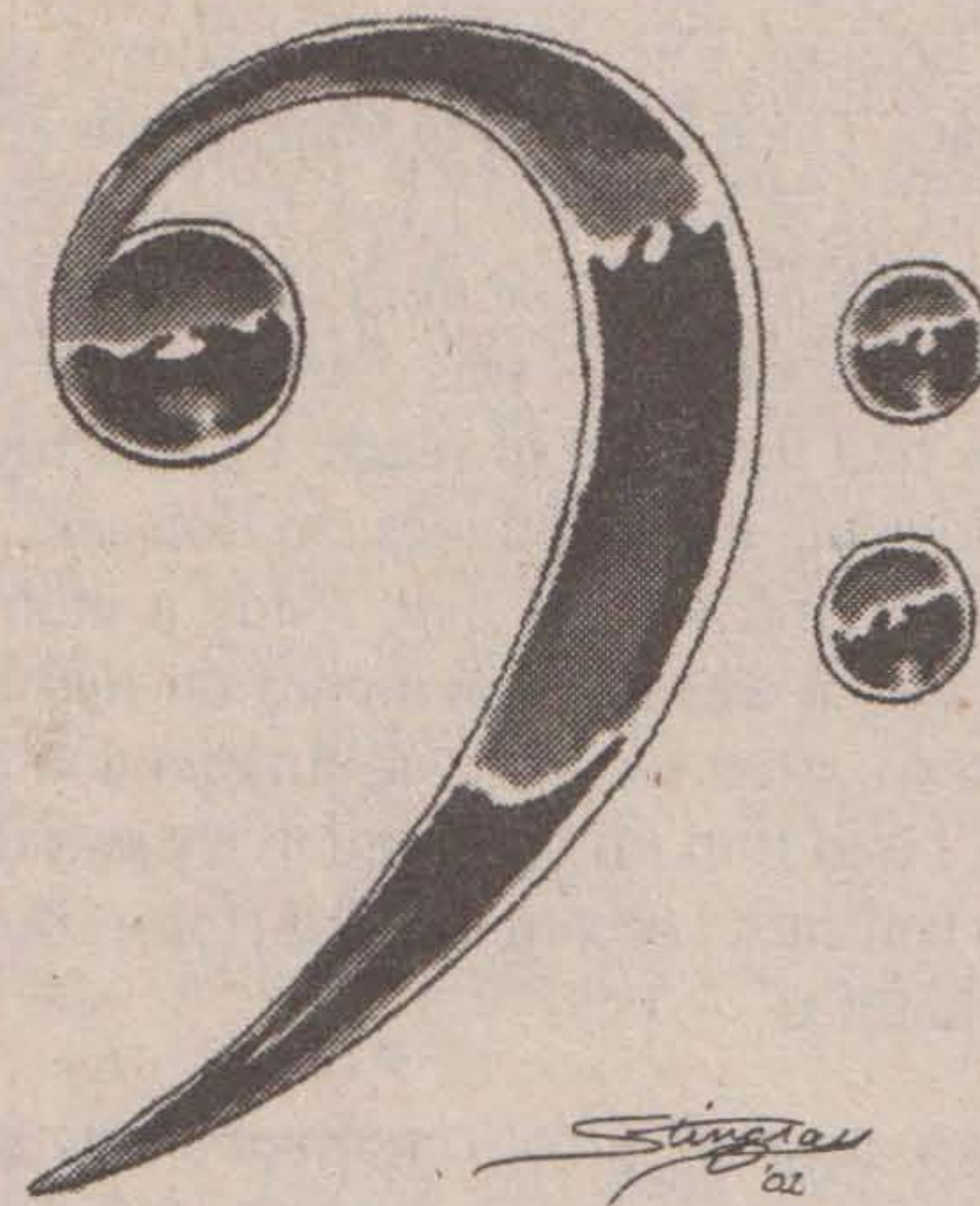
Ramsey, for his part, experienced something of a shock moving from rock 'n' roll venues—with their sometimes surly, dishonest promoters—to the genteel atmosphere of folk clubs and the folk concert circuit.

One of my first gigs with Bo, we were playing near Traverse City in Michigan. We turned the corner on the highway to head up the Michigan coast, and we ran into some lake-effect snow. I was ready to hang it up, but Bo said, "No, let's make the gig." He expected that when we'd get there, it'd be a bar with four or five drunk people. We called to let them know we'd be late. The snow was brutal—total whiteout—but we kept driving, and finally we get to this theater. It's like the *Wizard of Oz*. They had been over to the bar, and now they were waiting for us. We'd been in the car for 14 hours. They met us with hugs. Did the gig, then went back to someone's home. For Bo, after all those years of playing bars and clubs—bar owners trying to rip you off—it was a whole new world for him.

During their years together, Ramsey gained a national reputation as a studio producer and session man, as well as continuing to work as bandleader, sideman and guru to the Iowa City music scene. (He's currently on tour with Lucinda Williams, promoting her album, *Essence*, which he helped produce.) Greg spent the last decade turning out award-winning CDs, touring constantly—sometimes with Bo, sometimes solo—until the past year, when he went on hiatus—except for the fact that he's still playing locally and doing many benefits. So now we come to the future. Greg's at a pinnacle,

about to change his ways. What does he see in the future?

It's going to be a different life, that's for sure, moving down to those woods in Hacklebarney. At this point in my life, I want to do a lot of outside work—gardening, grow an orchard. And I'll do a lot of writing—as long as that keeps coming—and recording. The big change will be, instead of being on the road 140 days a year, I'll be on the road 50 or 60 days. Some people keep touring 'til they keel over. I still enjoy my gigs, but being on the road, that I don't enjoy as much. \*



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# Tin prayers banged out by a Midwestern mystic

Regional memoir/manifesto is a lot like Iowa: unsophisticated but sublime

**I**n Iowa, people honestly believe and are taught that if you were really any good at anything you'd be living in New York, Boston, Atlanta, California, Paris, with a view of the mountains, or at least in Chicago where important things happen. If you're any good you certainly wouldn't be living in a place like Tipton, Iowa.

- *The Tin Prayer: Words of the Wolverine* by Steve Semken

I recently left Manhattan—and 14-hour work days, crying jags in the subway and my toxic industrial wasteland of a neighborhood in Brooklyn—to return home to the Midwest. As a matter of fact, I moved to Tipton, to a ramshackle Victorian on the edge of town, after 20 years of wandering from Paris to Los Angeles to Zagreb to New York to Prague to a dozen other cities, never considering the Midwest as a final destination. I took years to make the decision to return, many months to find a house and more than a few weeks to begin to unpack. I admit I've been terrified to become the Midwesterner that I am—but the geography of Iowa reflects my soul more clearly than any other place on the planet; the joy and annoyance and ambivalence I feel about living in these parts are akin to how I feel about living in my own skin. Understanding this—and coming to see that my place of origin has a beauty bordering on the sublime—is no less than a gift from God. Received with truckloads of anxiety, of course. I've eased the transition with doses of Willa Cather and—thanks to a housewarming gift from an Iowa-bred friend—with a quirky, startling apologia of Midwestern regionalism, *The Tin Prayer: Words of the Wolverine* by Steve Semken (The Ice Cube Press, North Liberty, Iowa, 2001).

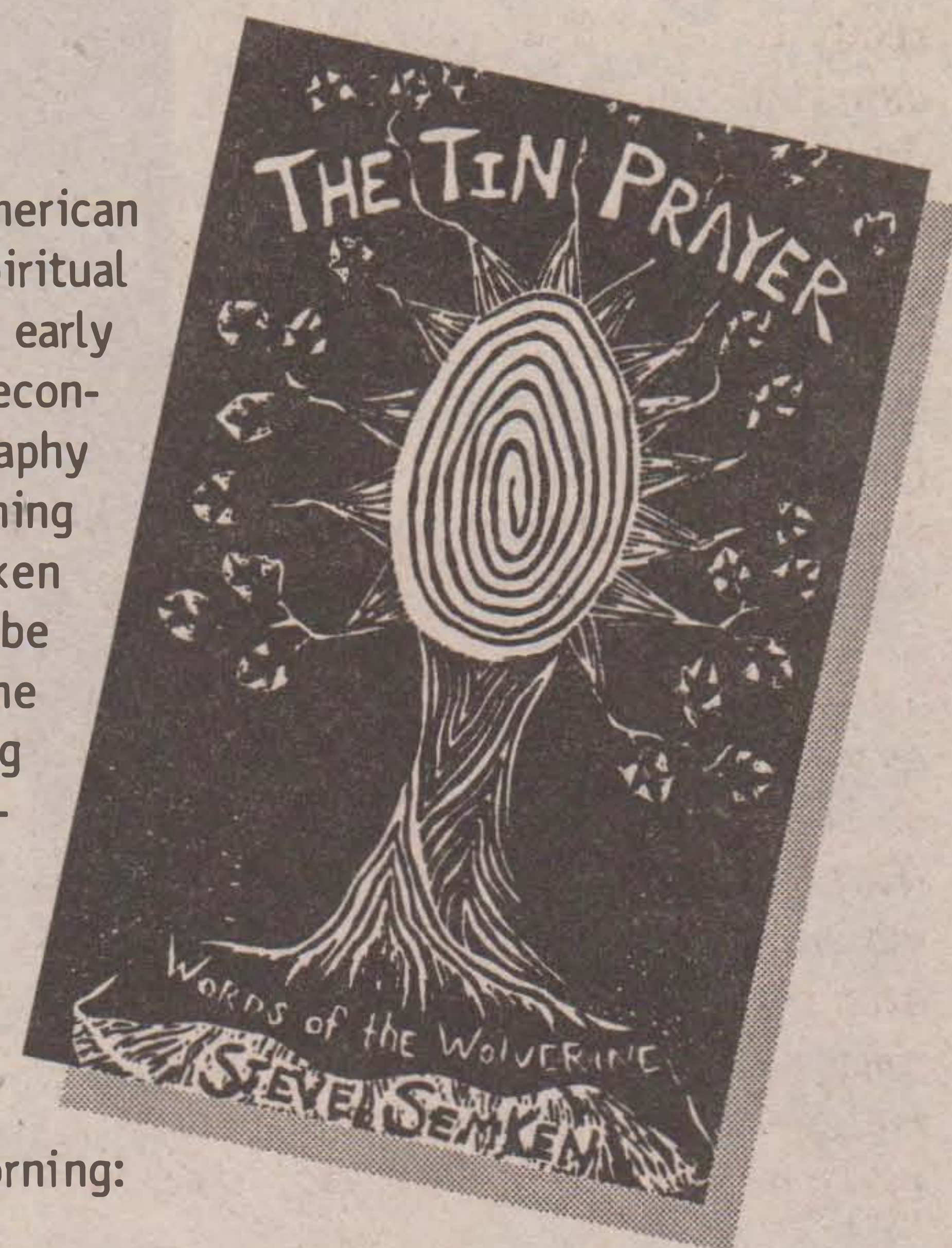
*The Tin Prayer* is part-memoir, part-manifesto, written with the naïve hutzpah of great folk art. Semken's mix of childhood recollections and old-time almanac philosophizing about myth, story, the imagination, suffering, adulthood, prayer, marriage, haste, the modern mind, roots, Rilke, Lao Tzu and contemplation is as chaotic and deeply ordered as virgin prairie, a kind of homegrown proof of chaos theory that'd make Wes Jackson proud. Mixed in with Semken's theories about the unconscious and creativity and nature in Iowa are descriptions of his imaginary friend Coig, his first-grade "Show and Tell" revelations, fourth-grade test fiascoes and junior-high band humiliations. Refreshingly frank as they are, Semken's meditations on children and "rotten and faulty big cities," the "true feeling of greatness" he experiences seeing "canned vegetables lined up in rows" and "the seduction of science" as a kind of "tyrannical knowledge" are not as moving as his extended descriptions of Iowa itself—especially its thunderstorms, when "everything goes berserk"—and its prairies:

*One simply can't imagine the depth and beauty that five acres of Iowa topsoil can produce, it is Earth Mother at full glory. The depth of prairie grass roots is unimaginable. The drift of clouds blow the numeric restrictions of calculus clean away. To think that mystics are glorified estimators, or lucky guessers is nonsense. Rumi writes, "Mystics will feel very happy, as a meadow feels when it hears thunder."*

Semken's is a wholly American voice that echoes Puritan spiritual autobiographers and other early writers who struggled to reconcile their vast, new geography with an equally overwhelming spiritual landscape. Semken asks: "Why can't the world be as an icon expressing the kingdom of all understanding without words?" The "sublime aesthetic bliss" wedding heaven and Iowa is a moment Semken embodies through a daily "dosage of wild rosary," a "pinch of earth" he swallows every morning:

*We come to know our place, our home, our hopes not by a mission, not by a career, not by a thought, but with the simplicity of bliss and faith. We must also literally eat and drink of where we reside. One should avoid taking where they live lightly. At the same time, one will do their place harm by trying too hard to know it. One will lose their soul, their religion by trying too much to have it. This is a world of backward principle. It must be observed while laughing and sneering.*

Augustine of our Midwestern mysticism, perhaps, Semken and his confessions are as intuitive and awkward as prayer, and as humble as tin, filled with grammatical chinks and painful earnestness. To read the work (or Iowa for that matter) with anything but a humble heart is to miss a great beauty. Books and American states don't come less sophisticated than this, but few show up with as much undercover substance and few require such humility on the part of the reader. To understand the depth of the "pied beauty" of either *The Tin Prayer* or Iowa, one must have eyes to see and ears to hear what Hopkins would call their inscape. I only catch glimpses of Iowa's peculiar, sublime thisness, still the outsider. Fortunately in Tipton, though, there's enough space and time to bump around for a time while I adjust to the light, step inside and muster the faith to unpack. \*





# THEATRE



Rob Cline



UI Theatre's innovative production of *When the Angels of Heaven Saw the Daughters of Man* last November was created through the collaboration of visiting writers and actors working with UI theater students.

## Let's put on a show!

Mickey Rooneys and Judy Garlands of the area take note, the local theater scene is bursting with variety and excellence. So what's the downside? Well, still no mimes.

**N**ext year, Iowa City's oldest active theater organization, the Iowa City Community Theatre (ICCT), takes over its new home in the Englert Theatre. The move will help save an area landmark and provide a great improvement in facilities for this amateur theater group that currently performs in something of a barn at the Johnson County fairgrounds. ICCT gave its first performance in 1956, and as David Pierce, president of the ICCT, pointed out, "Back then, we were pretty much the only game in town."

The area theater scene has, to use Pierce's word, "exploded" since 1956. Iowa City and Coralville companies include ICCT, Dreamwell Theatre, City Circle and Riverside Theatre. Cedar Rapids offers Liars Holographic Radio Theatre, The Drawing Legion, Theatre Cedar Rapids (TCR) and a yearly show on the grounds of the Brucemore mansion, while those willing to travel just a bit can take in performances by the Old Creamery Theatre Company in Amana. In addition, area ivy towers—Coe College, Kirkwood Community College, Mt. Mercy College, the University of Iowa and Cornell College in Mt. Vernon—all stage productions, with Coe, Cornell and the UI offering full-scale theater programs. The UI's Summer Rep program allows students to work with theater professionals during the summer while producing several plays by a given director, a popular format that this year featured the work of George F. Walker. The program gives performers, technicians and audiences the unique opportunity to explore a writer's style more completely than does a stand-alone play.

Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City and the Paramount Theater in Cedar Rapids round out the theatrical offerings available in the area, bringing in national touring companies to perform some of the most popular of current Broadway plays and musicals.

### Finding a niche

To survive in such a crowded theatrical market, area producers of live theater have had to carefully carve out niches for themselves. As a result, area theater-goers have lots to choose from, ranging from the perennially popular to new and "cutting-edge" material.

Liars Theatre and Dreamwell Theatre seem to occupy the most clearly defined niches in the area theater scene. Liars was created in 1991 and adopted its current format, Liars Holographic Radio Theatre (LHRT), in 1997. An old-fashioned revue heavy on the local references, LHRT presents a fresh show every month, usually at the Campbell Steele Gallery in Marion. The show's growing popularity has required regular migrations to the TCR and Coe College stages as well. Performances have been rebroadcast on Kirkwood Community College's radio station, KCCK; and on July 21, a live show was aired from Coe on KCRG-TV9. Regular performers like Liars director Craig Campbell (as master



of ceremonies Cruz Steele) and disc jockey Scott Schulte were joined on stage by KCRG news anchor Bruce Aune (who turned in the strongest performances of the night) and Cedar Rapids Mayor Lee Clancey. The music-and-skit format has reminded many of Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion," while the 10:30pm TV broadcast invited comparisons with *Saturday Night Live*. The skits, while clever, tended to go on a bit too long (the "Three Basses Sing Carole King" skit featuring Campbell, Schulte and Aune as the basso profundos was a prime example of this, as the faux commercial, though amusing, seemed to last longer than most Thighmaster infomercials). While there may be analogs on

the national level, Liars LHRT is a unique part of the area theater community.

Dreamwell Theatre, which produces plays at the Unitarian Universalist Church in downtown Iowa City, has a core mission that ensures its offerings will be just as unique. Executive director Matthew Falduto said his company's goal is to produce plays from which other area groups may shy away.

"We're going to do the lesser-known shows," he explained, "and we're going to do them very well. People are going to flock to see them. I'll let the other theaters do the 'crowd pleasers.'" That's some pluck for such a small and relatively fresh company; but Dreamwell delivers.

Although the company has been known for producing adventurous material since its first season in 1997, only recently have Falduto and his board of directors solidified the group's edgier approach. Prior to a retreat held in January of this year, Dreamwell was still flirting with some mainstream material.

"We did [Neil Simon's] *Barefoot in the Park* last year," Falduto said, "and my wife, Sharon, and I played the leads. I think it's one of the better shows we've done, but it's not Dreamwell."

So Neil Simon is out and Terrance McNally is in. In June, Dreamwell staged an excellent production of McNally's controversial *Corpus Christi*, a play that imagines Christ as a gay

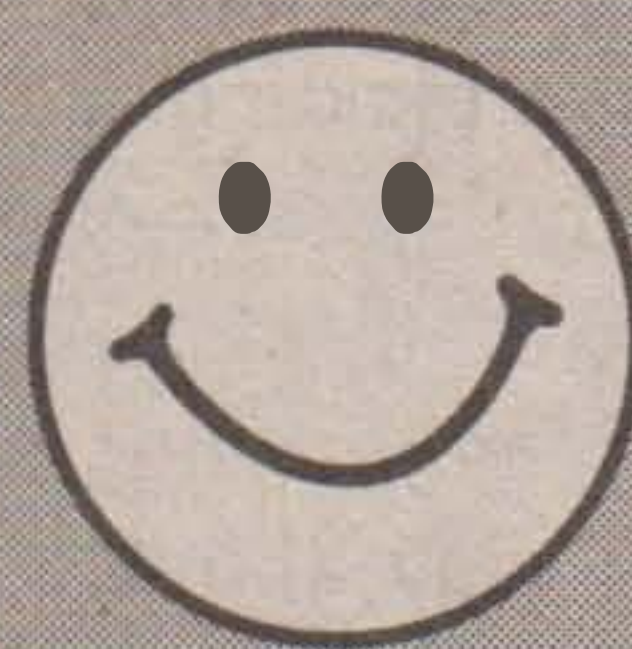
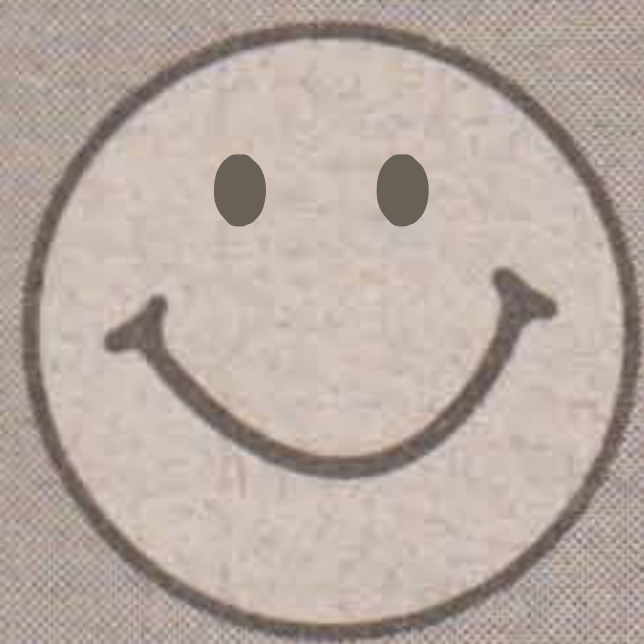
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man. It turned out to be Dreamwell's highest-grossing production to date.

While Dreamwell explores the cutting-edge, other groups struggle to find a balance between productions guaranteed to pack in the audiences, and lesser-known shows that may appeal to the artistic sensibilities of those involved in producing them but draw smaller houses.

### **Pleasing the crowd vs. cutting the edge**

Professor Susan Wolverton of the Coe College Theater Department suggested that theater groups affiliated with educational institutions may have the opportunity to do more artistic work than other companies.

"Our goal is to provide the Coe and Cedar Rapids community with art that is aesthetically rich and intellectually stimulating," she said. "This does not mean that the work we do is not entertaining but that it is nourishing on many levels. Some would say that we enjoy a kind of luxury no longer possible in a world where the dollar rules."

While Wolverton may have a point, she strays dangerously close to the problematic construction, "If it's popular, it must lack artistic merit," an admittedly tempting position to take in an entertainment environment where the masses often demonstrate remarkably bad taste.

Thomas P. Johnson, producing director of the Old Creamery Theatre Company—which started out in Garrison, Iowa, in 1971—is well aware of the popular-vs.-artistic dichotomy but also believes some theater-lovers make incorrect assumptions about a play's quality based on its popular appeal.

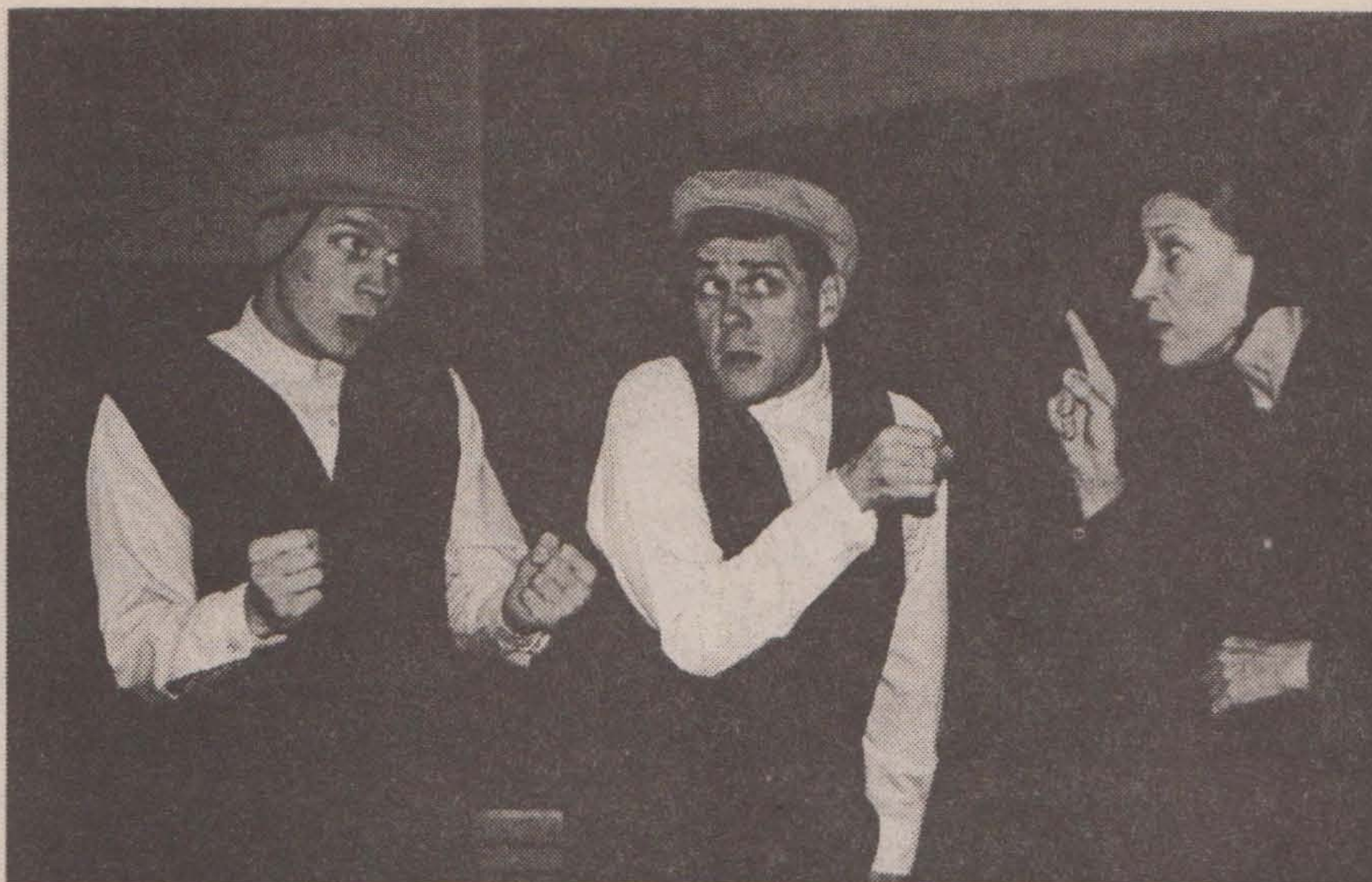
"Remember, 'cutting-edge' or 'original' does not always equate to 'good' theater, any more than 'crowd-pleasers' equates to 'bad' theater," he said. "Personally, I've seen a lot more artistically awful 'cutting-edge' theater than I have artistically awful 'crowd-pleasers.'"

"The trick, I guess, is to offer a combination....," he continued, "so that the income from 'commercially viable' work will pay for that which is not commercially viable. The dilemma is when the organization is reliant on only commercial work. The question is, 'Why should the organization continue to exist?'"

### **Sophisticated audiences raise the bar**

Pleasing area crowds, however, isn't simply a matter of picking popular material, said Ron Clark, co-founder and co-artistic director, along with Jody Hovland, of Iowa City's professional theater company, Riverside Theatre.

"You have a pretty sophisticated audience here," Clark explained. "It's an extremely bright audience.... We have an audience that sees theater all over the world and we'd better do our homework and we'd better pol-



**Amana's Old Creamery Theatre will reprise its original Amana-history revue, *Home on the Iowa*, later this fall.**

ish up our work as best we can because we have a demanding audience."

Riverside consistently lives up to this goal, offering some of the area's best performances while tackling a variety of challenging work. In January of this year, for example, Hovland delivered a masterful performance as the lead in Margaret Edson's *W;t*, a deeply moving play about a fiercely proud woman dying of cancer. The role calls for great comic timing, as well as the ability to move the audience to tears. Hovland and the rest of the cast were up to every challenge.

While Clark is excited about several new playwrights, including a number of women, TCR executive director Richard Barker is concerned about the amount and quality of new work available.

"The most affecting national theater trend is the lack of good new scripts available to us," he said. "There are way too many revivals and not enough solid new plays that don't read like a screenplay."

The problem is exacerbated, he said, by Broadway's reliance on bells and whistles over the last several years.

"Because we look to Broadway as our main resource for material, it is disconcerting to see such a reliance on immense technical prowess to sell a show," Barker continued. "If a show's interest is centered on a multi-million dollar set—and budget restraints at our level negate that element—there's not much left to choose from."

### **Original work abounds**

The production of original work is also a crucial part of the area theater scene. Though LHRT is the only troupe working solely with original material on a regular basis, most organizations in the area produce some original shows. TCR, for example, created *'40s on First: A Zoot Suit Revue* in 1999, performing

the skit-and-music production in the Great America Building in downtown Cedar Rapids. Old Creamery's Tom Johnson regularly contributes original work to his company, including this summer's two-person screwball comedy *Anything For a Laugh* and the Amana-history revue *Home on the Iowa*, which the company will reprise this fall. The UI has a yearly festival of original work by members of the Playwrights' Workshop and produces a wide range of original shows (including the innovative, collaborative *When the Angels of Heaven Saw the Daughters of Man* last November). Coe College supports an annual playwriting contest. Riverside offers local writers and actors the opportunity to participate in its annual "Walking the Wire" monologue performances, while Dreamwell holds workshops for actors—Fadulto and company hope to eventually collaborate with workshop participants in building original plays from the ground up.

While every area theater organization is subject to financial insecurities in a crowded marketplace, indicators such as the recent advance sell-out of the Riverside Theatre Shakespeare Festival's "As You Like At" and the consistently sold-out performances of LHRT suggest that the area theater scene is thriving and will continue to do so by offering audiences a variety of high-quality productions, including original work, from which to partake. \*





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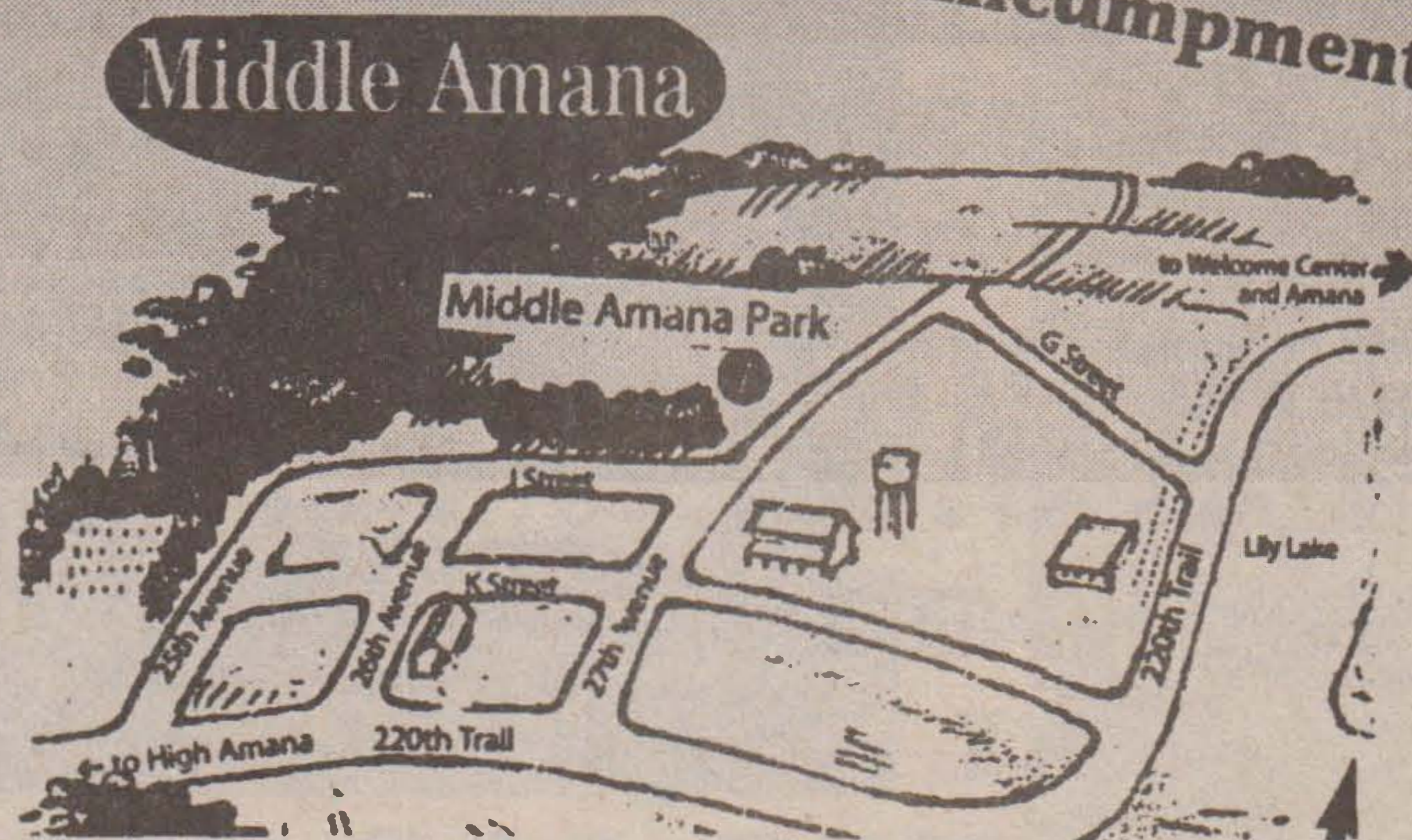
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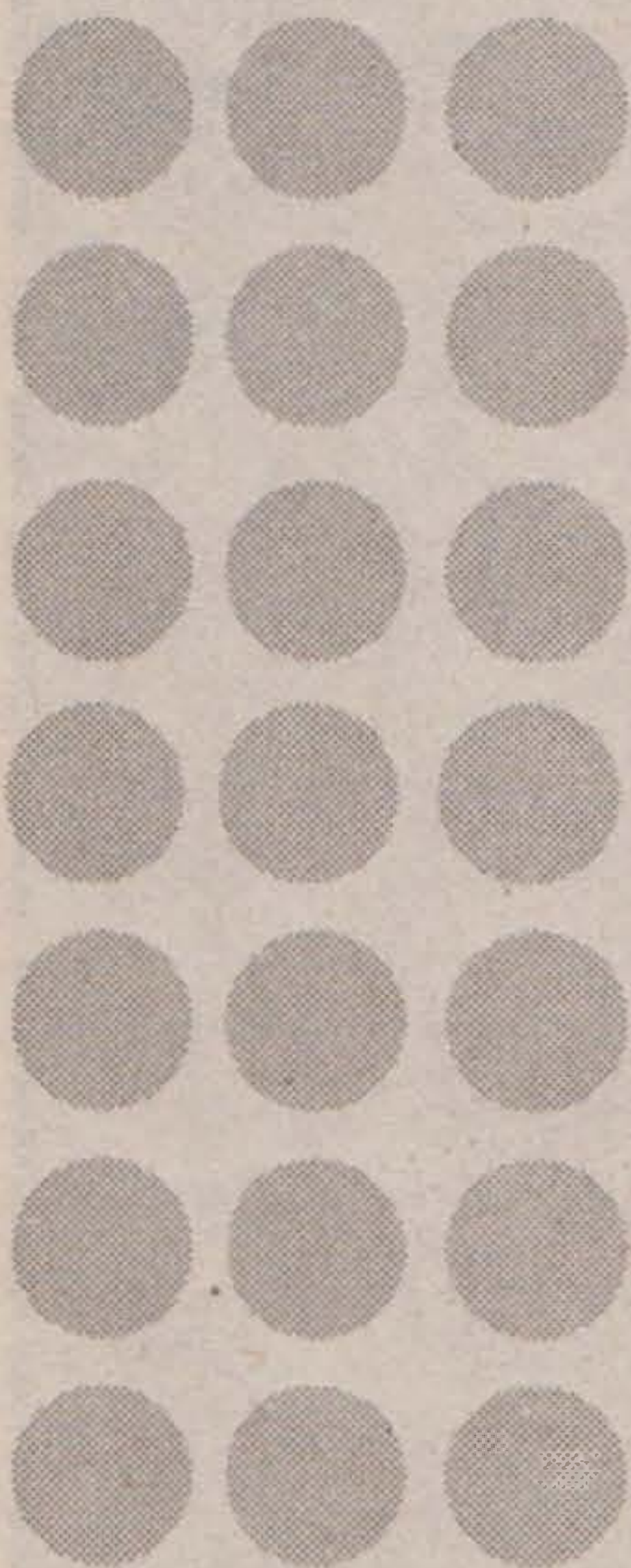


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Adam Witte



# Urban sprawl with a twist

Tom Aprile's exuberant suburban lawns go head to head  
with Michael Harker's desolate barns in Project Art of UIHC exhibits

**M**ichael Harker's stark barns and Tom Aprile's surreal lawns at first seem like an odd pairing, displayed as they are across from each other on the walls of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) Boyd Tower Lobby. Harker's black and white photographs are constructions as stark as the buildings they depict, while Aprile's oils overflow with lushness and life.

Harker, a staff member of the UIHC Ophthalmology Department, began his "Barn Project" in 1993 with the aim of documenting an architectural phenomenon that is slowly disappearing from the Midwestern landscape due to agricultural modernization and encroaching development. Harker views the barn as an "icon of rural heritage" and his photographs are intended to celebrate them as monuments to "amber waves of grain."

Celebration, however, isn't the first thing that comes to mind when viewing these works. No living things inhabit or warm these photos; no overalled farmhand baling hay, no cows lowing, not even a barn cat stalking along a roofline. These barns feel like tombs.

One print in particular, the ominously titled *Before the Demolition—Newhall, IA*, displays an ancient barn,

like a thousand glimpsed out the window on car trips. The roof has begun to peel away and the rafters inside appear skeletal and frail. The entire structure sags, tired under the weight of use and years, ready to collapse and be gone. The photo summarizes the exhibit well.

The only thing stark about Aprile's paintings is their stark contrast to Harker's cold barns. Brilliant colors and bold strokes at first blind you to the forms behind. Then, slowly, like the spots from a camera flash fading from your vision, you can see that there is quite a lot going on here.

An associate professor of sculpture at the UI School of Art and Art History, Aprile uses oil stick on paper to create a sort of hybrid of Monet's *Haystacks* and a child's Crayola musings. The colors are rich and dark and seem to have been created in a manic hurry; in fact, it appears that all of the dozen or more pieces in the exhibit were created in the same frenetic year. Instead of trivializing, though, the style is joyous and alive.

What you will see first is grass, not wavy fields of knee-high wheat or lush blades of jungle fern, but the soft, shorn green of lawn grass. Aprile says he



*Goddess of Barns* by Michael Harker

## Two Exhibits

**What:** Oil paintings  
by Tom Aprile

**When:** Through  
August 31

**What:** Photographs  
by Michael Harker

**When:** Through  
September 3

**Where:** Boyd Tower  
Lobby, UIHC,  
Iowa City





*Flushed into Grass* by Tom Aprile,  
oil stick on paper

cannot escape the "images of a childhood in suburbia," and the backdrop of Aprile's paintings will be immediately recognizable to anyone who has sat in the backseat of a Dodge Caravan on the way to a little-league soccer game. What Aprile finds hiding in these lawns is what is so amazing.

A Fulbright scholar, Aprile spent nearly a year studying with a Yoruban woodcarver in Nigeria. He explains that it was considered a symbol of a woodcarver's mastery if he was able to carve a chain from a single block of wood. Chains further tie in to the mythology of the Yobruban peoples, symbolizing connection and continuation.

It is these chains that Aprile discovers in the lawns of suburbia. Spouting from the canvas are chains of brilliant colors, colors made more brilliant by their contrast to the benign greenness of a fresh-mown lawn. The chains rush across the grass, flowing or flying, but moving like a toy snake spring-coiled into a faux peanut brittle can and released to your Aunt Judy's complete surprise.

With *Two Open Grass Drawers*, Aprile gets in a Magritte state of mind. Drawers coming from the grass, pulled out as if the Earth were a bureau or desk, hide more of his chains. If you look closer, you see the tiny faces inside each chain link. They are smiling.

So who laughs last? Harker's "politically correct" indictment of progress or Aprile's more ambivalent spiritualization of it? The pairing of Harker's bleak barns with Aprile's exuberant lawns is pretty inspired. One artist seems to lament a vanishing way of life and the other celebrate what's replacing it. But appearances can be deceiving. While Harker does essentially resign us to our fate, Aprile playfully transcends it. \*

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Steve Horowitz

The artist presently known as

**Bonnie 'Prince' Billy**

Will Oldham returns to Iowa City in his latest incarnation as Bonnie "Prince" Billy

**W**ill Oldham has gone by many monikers: Palace Brothers, Palace Music, Palace Songs, just plain Palace, and now Bonnie "Prince" Billy. The vastly talented, alt-

country/indie-rock/folk-blues singer/songwriter guitarist has performed and recorded about a dozen discs during the past decade. He's currently touring in support of his fabulous new record, *Ease Down the Road*, as Bonnie "Prince" Billy.

Speaking in a droll voice from his Louisville, Ky., home, the musician explained that the name changes aren't some attempt to mythify or even mystify himself to the public. Instead, the names are meant to clue his listeners into what approach he's taking to the music—i.e., Bonnie "Prince" Bill is folksy while Palace Brothers is more alt-country.

"I don't want to be too successful as any particular person," he added, speaking softly and purposely plain. It was difficult to tell if he was kidding or not. Elaborating, Oldham said he recently stopped recording for Drag City, his record company for the past seven years, because the label was doing too well. "My brain, in particular, is in constant motion and needs to attach itself to things," he said. "Drag City had fewer and fewer problems. I need problems in front of me, so I started my own label, Palace Records. Now I have problems in front of me all the time."

Oldham lived in Iowa City for about 18 months around 1996. He came here to join his significant other who was a graduate student in the UI film school. (Oldham has appeared in several movies as well. He played an elderly miner who relates the action over flashbacks in John Sayles's 1987 film *Matewan*.) "I remember Iowa City," Oldham deadpanned. (During our conversation, his voice never changed inflection but seemed somewhat bright and flat simultaneously.) "It's a small city, about

four-and-a-half hours from Chicago. Somewhat isolated. I played there first and thought Iowa City was a nice town." While he's not overtly critical of the town, it was obvious he found Iowa City somewhat provincial. "I'm a city boy," he said. Still, his time here was productive: He recorded the *Arise, Therefore* album and *Black Rich Music* EP in North Liberty. Oldham's honey returns to Iowa City this fall to teach in the film department. Although Oldham won't be joining her, conjugal visits are a given.

As the name Bonnie "Prince" Billy suggests, Oldham's current persona embodies faux traditional-folk trappings. (He's

recorded one other disc as Bonnie "Prince" Billy, 1989's *Black Dissimulation*.) Many songs on *Ease Down the Road* at first seem like plaintive ballads—but then something else, something weird and often violent or sexual goes on. Consider the words to the midsection of the strangely cheerful "Just to See My Holly Home": "In come babies one two three/like to bounce them on my knee/want to stay and grow up with us/baby stew will surely fill us." The song is about a

couple who are both happy love birds and murderous scoundrels.

"I don't know what my songs are about," Oldham said. "Each song goes beyond me and transcends the need to talk about it." He didn't say this pretentiously; in fact, the statement implied just the opposite. Oldham doesn't have anything to say about his lyrics because he doesn't consciously make them up as much as he shapes whatever comes out of his head. Oldham also said he doesn't follow

**Bonnie  
"Prince" Billy**

**Where:** Gabe's  
Oasis, 330 E.  
Washington St.,  
Iowa City

**When:** Wednesday,  
Aug. 15



in any particular musical tradition, because he's woefully ignorant of them all. "Although my music might sometimes sound like Americana or roots rock, it's just an accident because my playing is so bad." While Oldham considers himself an experimentalist because he's forced to take chances as a result of his limited talents, he refuses to place himself in any avant-garde musical tradition. "I take risks, but personally I like Hank Williams Sr. more than Captain Beefheart," he said sincerely. "In fact, I've never even heard a Captain Beefheart song."

The last time Oldham performed in Iowa City, the microphone towered over his head. He scrunched up his face and sang up into it as if reaching for someplace spiritually higher. Oldham said he doesn't always sing that way but likes to leave the sound equipment the way he finds it on stage. "I sang that way because I never want to offend the mike," he said. This comment, like others Oldham makes about himself and his music, seems somewhat self-effacing and humorous. But there is something deep and serious about Oldham's playful unaffectedness. He doesn't want to categorize, explain or interpret his songs or himself. He wants the music to present itself without context. The fables of human behavior Oldham presents as Bonnie "Prince" Billy make listeners draw their own morals. \*



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④ **Swankin' Midget All Stars**  
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⑧ **Alto Heceta**

⑨ **Kathryn Musilek Band**

⑩ **Dave Moore Band**  
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**Turin Brakes**  
*the Optimist Lp*  
Astralwerks

Critics have compared the South London duo Turin Brakes with the Everly Brothers and Simon and Garfunkel because they all share a passion for acoustic, folk-based pop music with high and lonesome vocal harmonies. While Turin Brakes may be Brits, their accents come off more like an unidentifiable American-regional drawl. "Ah-am da fuchure boy," lead vocalist Olly Knights earthily sings on "Future Boy," and he sounds more like Ralph Stanley than Mick Jagger. His musical other-half, Gale Paridjani, ethereally joins in on a higher pitch, and then the two men weave their vocals together in a moving and plaintive singular voice.

There are some missteps on *the Optimist Lp*, in particular, the five middle songs that move at a snail's pace, as the singers tend to drone more than emote in a self-conscious way for atmospheric effect—there are even sounds in the background of wind blowing through trees and ocean waves hitting the beach. While this attempt at solemnity comes off more like somnolence, the other seven cuts that frame these tunes sound bright and moving.

The group's lyrics range from the cute and clever ("Cub Scouts are screaming/needing ice-creaming/and all of the pleasures of June") to trite and tedious ("Wine bottle, why are you weary and why are my eyes so grey?"); but the way the words sound seems much more important than what they actually say. Many of the words are slurred or blended together when sung, making them impossible to understand—that is if the lyrics had not been provided on the CD cover.

There's also a hidden track that sounds a whole lot like "Future Boy" played backwards; and damn if it doesn't still sound pretty—if a bit spacey and psychedelic. Like the best songs on the disc—which include the soothing "Feeling Oblivion," the intimate "Emergency 72" and the dreamlike "The Road"—the backwards track uses repetition as a way to create tension, and vocal harmonies as a way of dissolving or transcending that tension. \*

Steve Horowitz



**The Beta Band**  
*Hot Shots II*  
Astralwerks

A few years back the Beta Band's 3 EPs seemed to come out of nowhere and land on the top shelf of nearly every self-respecting music fan's collection. The real surprise came when the band not only stormed back with a brilliant debut LP less than a year later, but immediately after its release, dubbed it the "worst record all year" and promised to start taking themselves a bit more seriously.

Making good on that promise, the Beta Band has at last fired back with the record everyone (including themselves) knew they were capable of creating. *Hot Shots II* is stuffed to the gills with the band's trademark space epics and arrangements more focused than anything they've ever released. Showcasing their newfound knack for saying as much in four minutes as it used to take them to say in eight or nine, the Beta Band has traded the ambient freakouts that bogged down their self-titled debut in favor of schizophrenic melodies, monstrous drum breaks and sing-along fade-outs. This is one of those rare records where new directions are not only forged by the band behind the wheel, but the result seems so effortless that you can't help wondering why they didn't take you there before. Among the record's many standouts is "Quiet," a track that starts innocently enough with guitar, a few stray bells and voice, before a slow drum groove pounds in and the speakers are awash in lazy, moaning harmonies and a chorus of "You can go outside where the sun and the people will blind you/You can go outside where the love of the people will find you." The album's bonus track, "Won," ends things on a high note with a sample from the chorus of Harry Nilsson's "One" and guest MC Sean Reveron filling out the verses—simple, clever and downright groovalicious from end to end. With making "music that matters" back in vogue, it's truly refreshing to see a band not only surpass expectations but do so without gettin' all intellectual on ya. \*

Jeremy Erwin



**David Garza**  
*Overdub*  
Lava/Atlantic

In an ideal world, Top 40 radio would be playing David Garza to death this summer. His new release, *Overdub*, conjures summer dusks at Lookout Point with your best girl (or guy) and T. Rex frying your factory-installed single speaker. Garza's second major-label release, and 13th overall, is essential summer listening, featuring the kind of spine-tinglingly sweet rock 'n' roll that casts summer memories in amber.

The dusky, multi-layered "Drone" kicks off the CD and sets the lyrical theme: "used to get down/used to get wild/used to get holy/used to start fires." Garza considers these layers—what "used to" be versus what has been "overdubbed" (both literally and figuratively)—throughout the album.

The meandering lyrics of love, lust and loss recall those of T. Rex's Marc Bolan. Garza's vocal phrasing also resembles Bolan's; and whether intentional or not, it works amazingly well.

Sometimes Garza's influences aren't so obvious. Is "God's Hands," for example, an Indian raga or update of Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song"? The confusion does, however, underscore the song's point: Where do you draw a line between the sacred and the profane? Are they one and the same?

*Overdub* is heavy in more ways than one, though. Musically, the able assistance of Will Calhoun (drums) and Doug Wimbish (bass)—both ex-Living Colour—ensures that Garza has plenty of room to rock; on "Crown of Thorns," this Tex-Mex-T. Rex shows that he can throw down harder than Alejandro Escovedo turned up to 11.

And if the sheer, beautiful perfection of Juliana Hatfield's ELO-flavored backup harmonies on "Keep On Crying" doesn't convince you to leave your office for the beach—or at least drag your cubicle out there—then you should join the living dead.

*Overdub* is a summer disc, but it promises to keep you warm through the coming fall and into winter. Grab it before the season's over. \*

Joe Derderian



# 666

**O**n July 17, 2001—a date that will live in infamy—female cock-rockers **Betty Blowtorch** blazed their way through Iowa City, leaving a trail of crushed eardrums, men and women with crushes, and, literally, fire. Bassist/singer **Bianca Butthole**, guitarist/singer **Sharon Needles**, lead guitarist **Blare N. Bitch** and drummer **Judy Molish** ended a blistering one-hour set at Gabe's with a nod to the 1980s metal bands of yore: They brought the pyrotechnics. Actually, it was no over-the-top Poison-esque spectacle (just two sparkle-spewing, store-bought fireworks laid out by their male roadie/bitch), but it perfectly topped off a rawking set of ugly and pretty ditties that included "Shut Up and Fuck," "Size Queen" and "Hell On Wheels," from their awesome, hair-raising new album, *Are You Man Enough?* (Foodchain). Coming off like the hell-spawned love child of Annie Sprinkle and Spinal Tap (sample lyric: "I don't want no conversation/I just want penis penetration") or a more retarded L7, Betty Blowtorch have successfully mixed a love of Joan Jett, Motley Crue and the Misfits to create a stunning, rocking and hilarious debut. The combination of four women, 120 decibels and 800 tons of pure rock excitement pushed this writer, during the encore, to unironically flash the devil sign and crush a can of Schlitz on his forehead. R-O-C-K in the USA, indeed.

**N\*E\*R\*D**—hip-hop production prodigies **The Neptunes**, plus a friend—also worship rock 'n' roll, but in a slightly skewed way. "Rock Star," from their debut album, *In Search Of* (Virgin), is based on a beep, beep, beep/boo-boo-boo-boop touchtone telephone rhythm, alternating between wavering, quavering off-key

singing and campy, in-your-face rapping ("You can't be me I'm a rock star!/I'm running on the top of a cop car!"). Most of the songs are left-of-center hip-hop, though in this genre, what was once viewed as avant-garde experimentalism soon becomes the form's norm—which is good, because the world is crying out for the type of nutty normalcy found here. Along with Timbaland, The Neptunes exemplify the coolest, most creative wing of hip-hop's Southern synthetic production aesthetic, a sound that has cast its electric boogaloo voodoo across the hip-hop nation. One of the best recent singles that sports this flava is **Kardinal Officshall's** "Bakardi Slang," which—with its off-kilter electro blasts—represents the current blip 'n' bleep hegemony at its best, as does the entirety of his debut release, *Quest For Fire: Firestarter, Vol. 1* (MCA).

Last year, the bald-headed blip 'n' bleep king, **Moby**, rode his techno horse down capitalism's yellow brick road, cashing in with his *Play* album by pimping out over 800 song licenses for use in commercials and movie soundtracks. *Moby's Play: The DVD* continues to bring the bling bling by collecting a multimedia gumbo of videos from the album, as well as an aptly titled 20-minute movie by Moby called "Give an Idiot a Camcorder," a 90-minute megamix comprised of his own remixed songs and various recent television appearances.

It's surprising that Moby, commercial slut that he is, doesn't appear on the new various-artists compilation *As Seen On TV: Songs From Commercials* (UTV Records). Even more surprising is that this well-programmed compact disc is as good as it is. It begins with quiet, introspective artists (**Nick Drake**, **Badly Drawn Boy**, **Red House Painters**), veers in a jazzy direction (**Sarah Vaughan**), then uses a **Propellerheads/Shirley Bassey** collaboration to launch into a meaty, beaty, big and bouncy electronica segment (**The Orb**, **Handsome Boy Modeling School**, **Fatboy Slim**) before crash landing into glam/punk (**Iggy Pop**, **T. Rex**, **Buzzcocks**). Commerce chews up and spits out art time and time again, but sometimes sleaze and money can conspire to inspire unique moments of compelling weirdness.

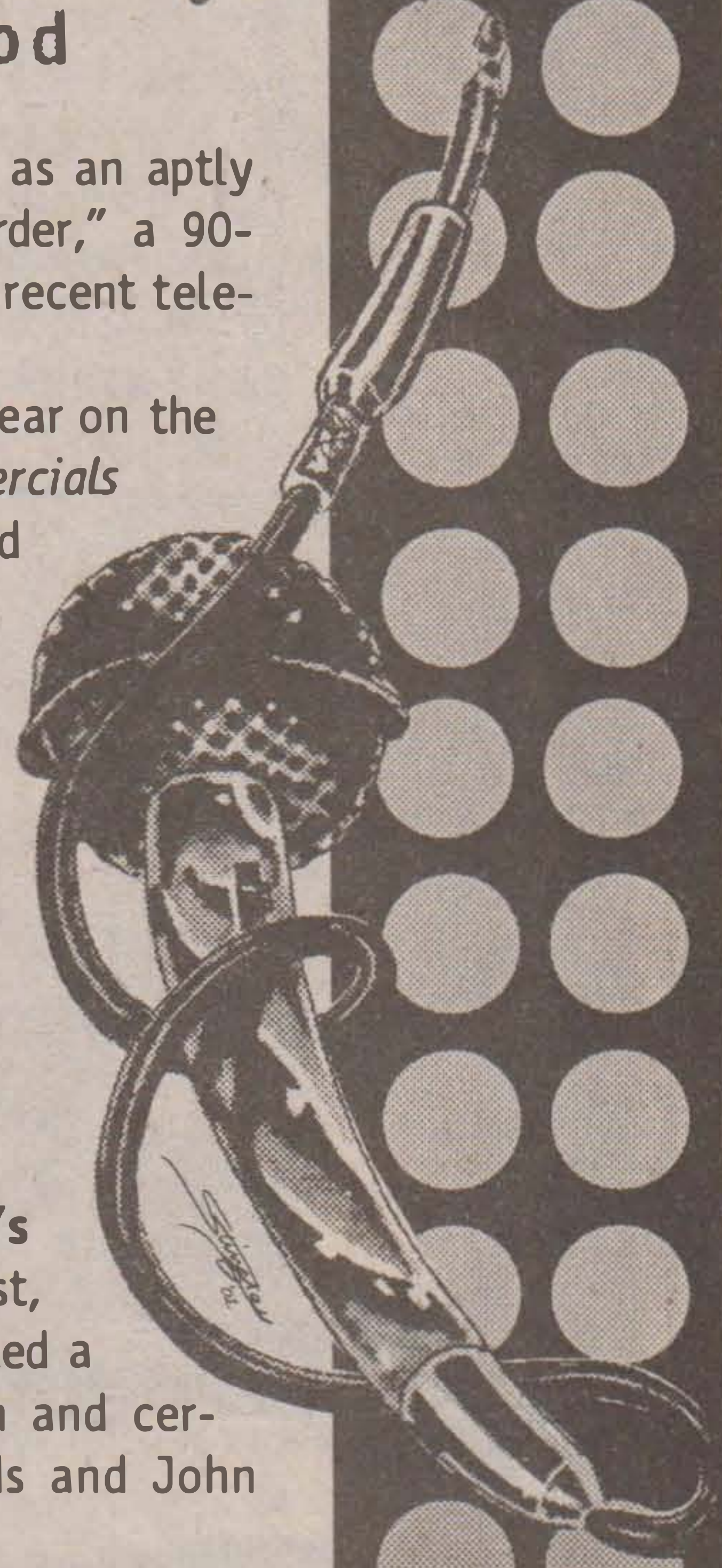
Hefty Records has seen fit to unearth and reissue **Phil Ranelin's** *The Time is Now* and *Vibes From the Tribe* albums, two great, lost, jazzy space-funk classics from the 1970s. Ranelin, a trombonist, led a big-ish band that occasionally orbited Sun Ra's aesthetic terrain and certainly felt the gravitational pull of Miles Davis' late-1960s bands and John Coltrane's freaky freeness.

Together, **Jad Fair** and **Daniel Johnston** approximate free jazz's spirit, though it's manifested sonically in a very different way on their long-out-of-print collaboration, *It's Spooky*, recently reissued by Jagjaguwar. The highlight of this freakfest is one of the six bonus tracks, a demented cover of the Butthole Surfers' "Sweat Loaf." In this version, Johnston and Fair rework the original's spoken-word intro, with Johnston as the dad: "Daddy? Yes, son? What is hell? Well son, a funny thing about hell is that it's better to burn in hell for all eternity than to bother to try to live a good life while you're alive on this Earth. And by the way, if you see the Butthole Surfers this week, be sure to tell them—SATAN! SATAN! SATAN!" Christian rockers take note. \*

**Betty Blowtorch**  
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## Prairie Pop

Kembrew McLeod



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## Masks of China

UI Hospitals and Clinics

Aug. 3–Sept. 30

This historical and contemporary look at Chinese mask traditions features 60 masks of Chinese gods from the Natural History Museum in Beijing, China. Sponsored by the Iowa City Area Science Center, the exhibition explores the history and mythology of Chinese culture through its elaborate and artistic masks. The pieces are made of materials such as bronze, jade and tortoise shell. Photographic images are also included. The exhibit aims to promote an aesthetic appreciation and understanding of China's rich history of mask-making spanning nearly 3,000 years. Project Art of UIHC, Main Lobby and Gallery B of the Medical Museum (take Elevator F to the eighth floor), UIHC, Iowa City, 353-6417

## Deke Dickerson & The Ecco-Fonics

Gabe's • August 4

They just couldn't keep rockabilly guitar god Deke Dickerson down on the Missouri farm where he grew up. In 1991, he left the Midwest for the West Coast where he (what else?) hooked up with fellow Midwesterner Dave Stuckey to form one of the hottest hillbilly duos to ever come out of L.A. The two parted ways in 1996 and Dickerson formed the Ecco-Phonics with the help of manager Allen Larman, who also ushered Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys to success. Armed with his trademark custom double-neck Mosrite guitar, Dickerson perfected his unique brand of rockabilly, surf and rock (with a healthy dose of Roy Nichols-style jazzy country guitar), releasing acclaimed albums on HighTone Records. Dickerson is 100-proof positive that rockabilly is here to stay. 330 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 354-4788.

Mrs. Harry by Joan Liffing-Zug Bourret



## The Amanas: A Photographic Journey 1959–1999

Senior Center, Iowa City • Aug. 16–Sept. 30

Amana really is more than refrigerators, accordions and sauerkraut served family style; this exhibition of over 50 photographs by Joan Liffing-Zug Bourret eloquently proves that. The photos reveal a rich and paradoxical people who founded a religious communal society west of Iowa City in 1854 and in 1932 surrendered to capitalistic pressures, securing the community's fate as Iowa's top tourist attraction. One photo, taken in 1967, shows a modern bride in white with her mother wearing a black church bonnet and a grandmother dressed from head to toe in the traditional black worn in the Amana church. The photographs are printed digitally on archival paper and set off by walnut frames milled by the Schanz Furniture and Refinishing of South Amana. The exhibition photographs are taken from the book *The Amanas: A Photographic Journey 1959-1999*, released last year. This is the first time the full exhibition has been displayed at one location. An Iowa City documentary photographer, Liffing-Zug Bourret has illustrated many publications about Iowa's Amana Colonies during the past 40 years. A gallery lecture by Liffing-Zug Bourret and Madeline Roemig Bendorf, first director of the Museum of Amana History, is planned for Thursday, Aug. 16 at 2pm. 28 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 356-5220.

Todd Kimm

ART

### Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 366-7503

*Making Waves in the Midwest: The Art of Asian Paper*, a variety of pieces by 25 artists, many local, who use handmade Asian paper in their work, through Aug. 5 • Related event: Open-Book Tour of exhibit with Lynn Amlie and CRMA curator Jane Milosch, Art Sandwiched In, Aug. 1, 12pm.

• *Michelle Acuff: Recent Sculpture*, features installation piece called *Shelter* by this Iowa City artist, through Aug. 12, Iowa Gallery.

• *Remnants of Journeys Reconsidered*, multimedia work by Cedar Rapids artist Velga Easker, Aug. 18 through Oct. 7, Iowa Gallery.

### Iowa Artisans Gallery

117 E. College St., Iowa City, 351-8686

*Jewelry Invitational: Baby Jane & Carla Reiter*, through Aug. 10 • *With Wooden Handbags: Shinichi Miyacaki*, through Aug. 10.

### Lorenz Boot Shop

132 S. Clinton St., Iowa City, 339-1053

Photographs by Sandra Louise Dyas; mono-prints and monotypes by Lucy David; sculpture, photos and prints by Chris Burd, all Iowa City, through Oct. 1

### Mythos

9 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 337-3760

Ethnographic art, antiquities and museum copies; specializing in African, Mayan Indian from Guatemala and Asian, ongoing.

### Senior Center

28 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 356-5220

*The Amanas: A Photographic Journey 1959-1999*, exhibition of over 50 photographs by Joan Liffing-Zug Bourret, Aug. 16–Sept. 30 • Related event: Gallery lecture by Liffing-Zug Bourret and Madeline Roemig Bendorf, first director of the Museum of Amana History, Aug. 16, 2pm.

### Studiolo

415 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 341-8344

*A Romance with Life and Nature*, monotypes by Korean artist Keum Won Chang, through Aug. 30.

### UI Hospitals and Clinics

Project Art of UIHC, Iowa City, 353-6417

UI Printmaking, Thesis Prints: 1992-1995, through Sept. 10, Hospital Dentistry Gallery, fifth floor Pomerantz Family Pavilion • Ina Loewenberg, photography, through Aug. 31, Patient and Visitors Activities Center • Tom Aprile, oil paintings, through Aug. 31, Boyd Tower East Lobby • Michael Harker, photography, through Sept. 3, Boyd Tower West Lobby • *Masks of China*, an historical and contemporary view of Chinese mask traditions, Aug. 3 through Sept. 30, Main Lobby and Gallery B of the Medical Museum (take Elevator F to the eighth floor).



# THE LIST

Calendar listings are free, on a space available basis. Mail PO Box 736, Iowa City, Iowa 52244

## The Iowa State Fair

East 30th and University Avenue,  
Des Moines • August 9-19

Last time I went to the Iowa State Fair, Bob Dylan performed. I don't recall if he played well, but I do remember the sweltering heat, the bunny rabbits dyed blue, pink and yellow, the world's biggest boar—a gross monster of a pig so big that it could hardly move—and all sorts of food available on a stick, including a steak with baked potato.

Waiting for the Dylan show to open, I came across a John Birch Society booth. I enjoyed the irony of the situation (one of Dylan's early songs was "Talkin' John Birch Society Blues") but had trouble believing the John Birch Society actually had a stall. I went over to see what it was about and a man conspiratorially whispered to me, "They've already won." It turns out that Spanish-speaking people from Mexico and farther south had already taken over our country and I didn't even know it.



Well, Dylan's back. He performs the night of Aug. 10 at the Grandstand, and so are the rabbits, the giant pig, lots of food and probably the high heat and humidity. The Iowa State Fair presents kitsch at its most extreme. The noted butter sculptor Norma "Duffy" Lyon—who last used almost a ton of milk fat to recreate *The Last Supper*—this year presents a butter version of the Iowa-born actor John Wayne as a cowboy. (No word if it will be the young hunk Wayne of *Stagecoach* or

the older, overweight edition a la *Rooster Cogburn*). The fair features competitions in everything from chess to horseshoe pitching to fiddling to men's legs; plus one of the state's largest art shows and some of the world's largest livestock competitions.

Check the fair's Web site ([iowastatefair.org](http://iowastatefair.org)) for a detailed listing of performers, exhibitors and events.

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Iowa City 354-4788

1	from the Meat Puppets <b>Kurt Kirkwood</b>	9	<b>Gidjits</b>
2	Argon Evolution	10	<b>DJ Alert</b>
3	<b>Techno DJs</b>	11	<b>Rotation DJs</b>
4	<b>Deke Dickerson</b> & The Ecco-phonics	14	<b>Arab on Radar</b>
5	<b>Dillinger Four</b>	15	<b>Bonnie "Prince" Billy</b>

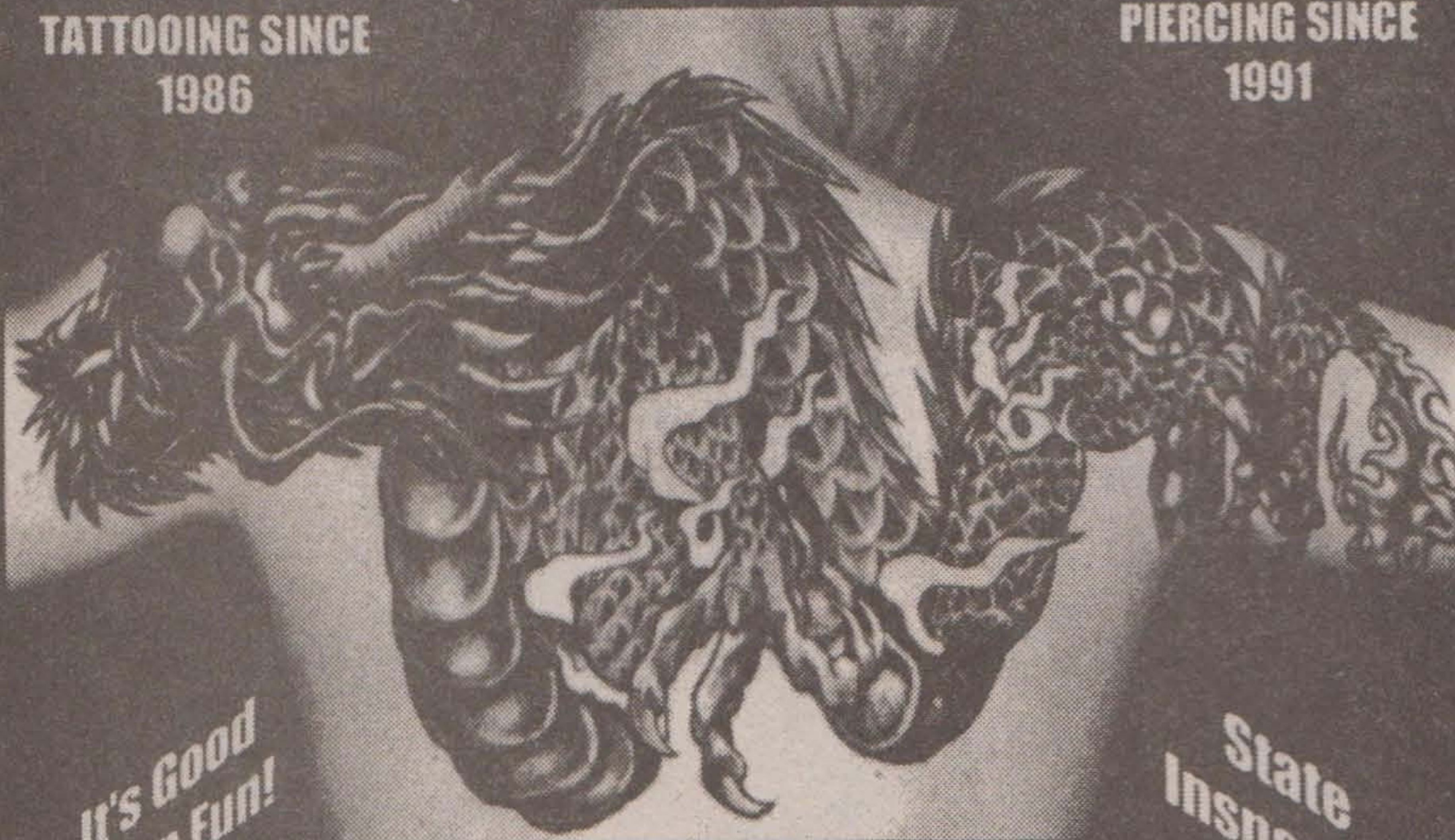


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**MUSIC**

Gabe's

330 E. Washington St.,  
Iowa City, 354-4788

Kurt Kirkwood (of the Meat Puppets), Aug. 1 • Argon Evolution, Aug. 2 • Techno DJs, Aug. 3 • Deke Dickerson & the Ecco-Phonics, Aug. 4 • Dillinger Four, Aug. 5 • The Gidjits, Aug. 9 • DJ Alert, Aug. 10 • Rotation DJs, Aug. 11 • Arab on Radar, Aug. 14 • Bonnie "Prince" Billy, Aug. 15.

### The Green Room

509 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 354-4350

Blues Jam Mondays, Latin Night Tuesdays

Drums & Tuba, with Dr. Z's Experiment, Aug. 1 • Frodoe, with E.D.I.T.H. and Burn Disco Burn, Aug. 2 • Jim White, with The Brave Fireman and Ben Ripani, Aug. 3 • Swankin' Midget All Stars, with Jimmy Sex Machine, Aug. 4 • Shiner, with Critical Gopher and Kita Houston, Aug. 5 • Alto Heceta, Aug. 8 • Kathryn Musilek Band, Aug. 9 • Dave Moore Band, and Pieta Brown with Ben Ramsey, Aug. 10 • Nickel-bag-o-funk, with The Diplomats, Aug. 11 • Kelly Pardekooper & The Devil's House Band, with Skunk River Bandits and Protostar, Green Room three-year anniversary, Aug. 15.

### The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City, 351-9529

Solo Songwriters, Aug. 1 • Nathan Basinger, Aug. 2 • The Diplomats, Aug. 3 • The Mayflies, Aug. 4 • David Huckfelt, Aug. 10 • Jan Smith, Aug. 16 • Sam Knutson with Shame Train, Aug. 17 • Ben Schmidt, Aug. 18.

### Northside Books

203 N. Linn St., Iowa City, 466-9330,  
Sunday Live!, all 2-3pm

Matt Bar, folk/rock/rag originals, Aug. 5. • David R. Miller, folk singer-songwriter, Aug. 12 • Dustin Busch & Co., back-porch Americana, Aug. 19.

### Sanctuary

405 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 351-5692

Robert "One Man" Johnson, Aug. 3 and 4 • John Rhodes Jazz Band, Aug. 18.

### Third Street Live!

1204 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids, 365-6141.

Buck Cherry, with Sinomatic, Aug. 17

**FESTIVALS  
/SERIES**

Bluesmore

Aug. 4, 4-10pm,  
Brucemore, 2160 Linden  
Dr., SE, Cedar Rapids,  
362-7375.

The Blue Band, 4pm • Big Al and the Heavyweights, 6pm • Miss E.C. Scott, 8pm.

### Friday Night Concert Series

Plaza Fountain Stage in front of the  
Sheraton City Plaza Hotel, Iowa City,  
6:30-9:30pm

Aug. 3: Rich Webster • Aug. 10: Orquesta de Jazz y Salsa Alto Maiz • Aug. 17: Lazyboy and the Recliners • Aug. 24: Bohemian Soul Tribe • Aug. 31: Big Wooden Radio

### Market Music

Chauncey Swan Park, Iowa City, musicians entertain Farmers Market-goers, 5-7pm, Wednesday evenings through August

Aug. 8: Saul Lubaroff • Aug. 15: Acoustic Mayhem • Aug. 22: Mike Haverkamp • Aug. 29: Guy & Megan Drollinger



**Saturday "Just Jazz" Series**  
**Plaza Fountain Stage in front of the**  
**Sheraton City Plaza Hotel, Iowa City,**  
**6:30-9:30pm**

Aug. 4: Grismore Trio • Aug. 11: School Daze •  
 Aug. 18: Abilities Awareness • Aug. 25:  
 Theolonius Assault • Sept. 1: Blue Tunas

**THEATER** **Old Creamery Theatre**  
**39 38th Ave., Amana,**  
**800-352-6262**

Performance times: Wednesday,  
 Friday & Saturday 8pm; Thursday &  
 Sunday 3pm

*Over the River and Through the Woods*,  
 new comedy by Joe DiPietro about a young  
 executive and his two sets of grandparents who  
 try to keep him from moving away, through  
 Sept. 2.

**Riverside Theatre**  
**213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City 887-1360**  
 Season Preview, short scenes from this season's  
 plays, Aug. 19, 4pm, free, but ticket required.

**AUDITIONS** For the Dreamwell  
 Theatre world-premiere pro-  
 duction of X. J. Kennedy's new  
 translation of Aristophanes'  
*Lysistrata*, Aug. 14-16, 6:30 to  
 10pm, Wesley Center, 120 S. Dubuque  
 St., Iowa City. Performances take place  
 the last three weekends in October. Scripts  
 on reserve at the Iowa City Public Library. For  
 more information, contact 339-7757 or  
 338-0580.

**WORDS** **IC Public Library**  
**123 Linn St., Iowa City,**  
**356-5200**

Summer Reading Program:  
 "Jacqueline Thompson: Let's Go on  
 an African Safari," Aug. 2, 3pm, Rm A  
 (K-6 only); "Reading Road Trip Party for  
 All Ages," Aug. 4, 1:30pm, Rms A,B,C.  
 Irving Weber Day Programs: Aug. 7-9 (see  
 events).

**Spoken Word Festival**  
**Aug. 18, 3-8pm, Shakespeare Theatre,**  
**City Park, Iowa City**

All ages invited to read poems, stories or song  
 lyrics; readers will be provided for shy authors,  
 signers will be present for the hearing impaired.

**EVENTS** **Hooverfest**  
**Aug. 5, West Branch**

**Irving Weber Day**  
**Aug. 11, Downtown Iowa**  
**City, activities Aug. 7-11**  
**Tuesday, Aug. 7**

"An Afternoon with Irving," screening of  
 Weber's Iowa City history videotapes, Iowa  
 City Public Library, 123 S. Linn Street, also on  
 Library Cable Channel 10, 1-4pm • First Annual  
 Irving B. Weber History Lecture by Norwood  
 "Bud" Louis II, Iowa City Public Library, 7pm,  
 free dessert reception and tours will follow at the  
 historic Englert Theater, 221 E. Washington St.

**Wednesday, Aug. 8**  
 Guided Bus Tour, "Towers, Cupolas & Steeples of  
 Iowa City" with Jeff Shabillon, 6pm, advance  
 reservation required, free tickets available begin-  
 ning Aug. 1 at the IC Public Library AV Desk, call  
 ahead for availability, 356-5200, x125, ticket  
 holders should meet at the College Street Bridge  
 entrance to the Chauncey Swan Ramp.

**Thursday, Aug. 9**  
 Iowa City History Quiz Bowl with quizmaster  
 Dottie Ray, 7pm, Iowa City Public Library.

**Friday, August 10,**  
 A Historical Perspective on Early Johnson  
 County by Loren Horton, 2pm, Johnson  
 County/Iowa City Senior Center, 28 S. Linn  
 Street • Tours of the historic Englert Theater  
 every half hour, 7-8:30pm, 221 E. Washington  
 St.

**Saturday, Aug. 11**  
 Official Opening, 9am, State Historical  
 Society, 402 Iowa Ave. • Old-Fashioned  
 Games, Heritage Garden Tours, and "Blooms &  
 Bulbs" book signing (a new gardening book by  
 Judy Terry), 1-4pm, Historic Plum Grove, 1030  
 Carroll St. • Weber Ice Cream Social,  
 Community Band concert, Antique Car Show,  
 vocalist Wayne Neuzil, and program honoring  
 Irving B. Weber, 6pm, Lower City Park.

**CLASSES** **IC Public Library**  
**123 Linn St., Iowa**  
**City, 356-5200**

World Wide Web Classes, a one-  
 hour hands-on introduction, call  
 356-5200 ext. 125 to register, Aug.  
 15, 7pm, Rm D; Aug. 18, 10am, Rm D.

**MEETINGS** **City of Iowa City**  
**Civic Center, 410 E.**  
**Washington St., Iowa**  
**City (unless noted other-**  
**wise), 356-5236**

Aug. 2: Planning & Zoning  
 Commission formal, 7:30pm, Council  
 Chambers; Public Art Advisory Committee,  
 3:30pm, Council Chambers. • Aug. 6: Board of  
 Appeals, 4:30pm, Lobby Conf Rm; Planning &  
 Zoning informal, 7:30pm, Rec Ctr, Rm B. •  
 Aug. 8: Parks & Recreation Commission, 5pm,  
 Rec Ctr, Room B; Board of Adjustment, 5pm,  
 Council Chambers. • Aug. 9: Historic  
 Preservation Commission, 5:30pm, Council  
 Chambers; Airport Commission, 5:45pm,  
 Airport Terminal. • Aug. 14: Police Citizens  
 Review Board, 7pm, Lobby Conf Rm. • Aug.  
 16: Council Economic Development  
 Committee, 9am, Lobby Conf Rm; Planning &  
 Zoning formal, 7:30pm, Council Chambers;  
 Housing & Community Development  
 Commission, 6:30pm, Lobby Conf Rm.

**MISC** **Ruby's Pearl**  
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# STARS OVER Iowa City by Dr. Star

FORECAST FOR AUGUST 1-15, 2001



**ARIES** (March 21–April 19) Even for an Aries there might be too much excitement, inspiration, opportunity and luck these next two weeks. Take your time. The opportunities will be there for awhile. You'll discover your family is more loving and protective than you knew. At times, though, you might wonder whether your biggest dreams or worst fears are coming true. Big changes can be scary and they take time. There might be dark goings-on in the neighborhood and some legal issues in the mix.



**TAURUS** (April 20–May 20) You are at a major turning point. Your relationship to your whole money thing is about to be thoroughly restructured. Some stuff will disappear, stuff you don't need and don't really like and stuff you're better off without but to which you are, naturally, attached. It will be replaced by something far more exciting, beneficial, lucrative and enjoyable. This is a wonderful turn of events. All changes—even good and necessary ones—make Taurus nervous, though. Keep a stiff upper lip.



**GEMINI** (May 21–June 20) With effort, you could return some sanity and fairness to relationship matters. The home scene could get shaken up a little. Some pretty serious changes could go down in the neighborhood, too, but you'll like them. At the same time, love and caring could flood your life, bringing wonderful financial opportunities with them. If you must decide between laughing and crying, time will show that laughter was the right choice. There's genuine magic at work here. Trust it.



**CANCER** (June 21–July 22) Cancers are right to grumble about work during the next two weeks. Heavy vibes at work are hitting you in all your weak spots. Don't let these irritations distract you from the big opportunity about to bang on your door. One of the sweetest, most lucrative aspects possible is taking place right in your Sun sign. You could soon be the envy of the whole darned zodiac. The aggravation at work might get extreme, but broader horizons and greener pastures beckon.



**LEO** (July 23–Aug 22) It could be a nervous couple of weeks if you spend it worrying about what significant-others are thinking. Spend it cheering your favorite radicals or admiring the inspired high jinks of the youngsters instead. Or you can spend it nurturing that warm, secure, loving glow you've been feeling. Inspiration is flowing. Long-term creative projects are turning a corner and creative energies are peaking. Let everyone know there's a new you and it's even better than the old you.



**VIRGO** (Aug 23–Sept 22) The armies of darkness coming one way, imperial storm troopers from the other, Darth Vader down the middle. Lots of other worries besides. It's looking bad. But the Force will be with you. Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive. You'll be leaping tall buildings all over the place. You'll be out of there with the brass ring, a lot of surprised bad guys on the floor. Turns out you're a super hero. Who knew?



**LIBRA** (Sept 23–Oct 22) You could experience a very sudden expansion of demands at home and at work, along with a lot of big opportunities. Trouble in the neighborhood and a weary spirit could weigh you down. Follow your ideals, stick to your guns and pursue your dreams. Take the playful way out. Above all, follow your bliss, just like they say. Some might recommend a diet of boredom and routine. That is NOT what the stars recommend for Librans right now.



**SCORPIO** (Oct 23–Nov 21) You'll be a match for anything the next couple of weeks. The guidance and support you get will more than suffice. You'll probably have a serious financial tug-of-war, but somebody in charge could turn you on to a great financial opportunity. It would more than cover possible losses from recent ups and downs. That family thing could reach another nerve-wracking turning point. But your reserves of love and inner strength are way more than sufficient right now.



**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov 22–Dec 21) This could have been one of the toughest couple of weeks Sagittarians have ever faced, but it won't be. The sky is flowing with benevolence and compassion and lucky breaks and good feelings for Sagittarians. Sagittarians are right in step with all the big changes going down too. Count your blessings. Still, don't let all the starry generosity blind you to the risks in partnership areas. Partnership issues could be much closer and larger than they appear in the mirror.



**CAPRICORN** (Dec 22–Jan 19) Do you feel like things are pushing you into a maze? Do you feel like, once in the maze, you'll face a lot of judgment calls, tight squeezes and tough choices? Are you thinking some new relationship is about to blossom? Do you think this relationship holds the magic thread that will lead you through the maze? Do you think you'll come out the other end in a better place? If so, you're right on all counts.



**AQUARIUS** (Jan 20–Feb 18) What more could an Aquarian ask for? Lots and lots of people fighting fiercely on behalf of favorite Aquarian issues. Aquarians are playing big roles in important decisions. They're getting lots of people upset enough to change things that need changing. Work recently turned lucky and loving and especially profitable. Big progress toward long-term financial goals is likely. So Aquarians have lots of reasons to smile; but be cautious, others might not find things so amusing.



**PISCES** (Feb 19–March 20) The boss and the family could both be causing you grief. Personal concerns could also upset the status quo at work—big time. A dramatic shift in personal areas could really help things at home and at work, long-term. A marathon chat or two with family and work associates will help an awful lot too. Rest and recreation could lead to love and renewed fortunes for Pisceans, along with real relief from worries. Some happy horsing around is strongly indicated.

Write Dr. Star at [doctortwinkler@home.com](mailto:doctortwinkler@home.com)



# News Quirks

Compiled by Roland Sweet

## Strange but True!



### Curses, Foiled Again

When Joseph Magnotti, 48, walked bare-chested into a Subway sandwich shop in Miami, paid for a drink with a \$50 bill from a bag bulging with large-denomination bills and offered an employee \$20 for his shirt, another employee stepped outside and stopped a police officer. He asked if the police were looking for anyone. The officer said yes, explaining that a bank had been robbed a block away by a suspect who fit Magnotti's description. The suspect, now wearing a Subway shirt, was taken into custody.

Malaysian police arrested a gang of armed robbers after their victim spotted them enjoying a beverage at a roadside drink stand near the mobile phone shop they had just held up.

After robbing a South Philadelphia bank, a man and a woman stopped at a nearby bar for a drink. Bank employees trailed them there, then called police, who found the couple carrying bundles of cash from the heist. When the man, George Ruiz, 32, was sentenced to five to 10 years in prison, Assistant District Attorney David Desiderio noted, "The one for the road killed him."

### Justice Served

The traffic tickets that filled the coffers of Kendleton, Texas, have ultimately caused the infamous speed trap to go broke. Texas officials, citing a 1995 law that allows cities of fewer than 5,000 people to keep traffic fines equaling only 30 percent of their total revenue, said Kendleton collected too much money from speeding enforcement and owes the state \$1.7 million. It seized all \$18,599 in the city bank account, prompting the city to file for bankruptcy.

### Thanks for Nothing

Former police officer Wayne Olivo, 49, was driving across the Yellowstone River in Billings, Mont., when he saw a couple standing beside a van struggling over a bundle. After Olivo heard the woman plead with her companion not to toss "my baby" off the bridge, he stopped to intervene. He wrestled the bundle away from the man, who pulled a gun and fired, hitting Olivo in the hand. The couple fled, leaving behind the bundle, which contained a puppy.

### Trade Bait

After being traded from Manchester City to Cardiff City, British soccer player Spencer Prior agreed to a new contract that requires him to eat sheep's testicles and a cooked sheep's brain.

The clause was the idea of the Welsh club's Lebanese-born owner Sam Hammam, who believes that eating the Middle Eastern delicacy is responsible for his players winning the team's promotion from the second division. "It must be the strangest contract in the history of football," Prior said. "But I'll try anything once."

### What's in a Name?

The New Jersey Supreme Court overturned the drug conviction of Andre Johnson after police justified entering his apartment without knocking because of his nickname. "The state contends that the defendant's nickname, 'Earthquake,' signaled his propensity for violence and thus furnished a valid basis on which to justify a no-knock warrant," Justice Peter Verniero wrote in his majority opinion. "The right to be free of unreasonable searches cannot hinge on a person's nickname."

The World Intellectual Property Organization denied Canadian Tire's claim to extend its trademark to include the words "crappy tire." The tire company had asked the WIPO to turn over to it the domain name www.crappytire.com registered to Mike McFadden, arguing that McFadden is "attempting to create an impression of an association with Canadian Tire." Canadian Tire insisted that it has long been known colloquially as Crappy Tire.

### Ground Rules

The final of one of Brazil's most important soccer championships was delayed nearly half an hour while the two teams argued over who would sit on which bench. America-Belo Horizonte players refused to enter the field when they saw rival Atletico Mineiro occupying the bench to the left of the tunnel in Belo Horizonte's Minerao stadium. The game finally got under way, but the late start meant the game had to be finished in near darkness due to a ban on floodlights because of Brazil's acute energy shortage.

### Something's Got a Hold on Me

An Estonian couple won the world wife-carrying title for the fourth year in a row, using a toting method called the "Estonian carry." In it, the woman squeezes her thighs on the sides of the man's face and holds on to his waist while hanging upside-down along his back, leaving his arms free to swing as he runs along the 277-yard course. In defending their title against 20 other husband-and-wife teams in Sonkajarvi, Finland, Margo Uusorg, 22, and Birgit Ullrich, 18, won Birgit's weight in beer. She weighs 75 pounds.

### Courtesy Counts

Virginia state police quickly apprehended three men suspected of robbing a Red Lobster restaurant in Spotsylvania County because shortly before the robbery, a Red Lobster employee had noticed their car parked in a handicapped parking space and asked them to please move. Instead, the driver cursed at her. The employee wrote down the tag number and a description of the vehicle. When the man who robbed the restaurant was seen getting into the same vehicle, the employee handed the information to the authorities. "If [the driver] had just been polite and moved the car," said Maj. Howard Smith of the Spotsylvania Sheriff's Office, "[the employee] wouldn't have written down the tag number or paid any further attention to them."

Compiled from the nation's press by Roland Sweet. Send original clippings, citing source and date, to P.O. Box 8130, Alexandria VA 22306.

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**The Buddha**...The perfect balance of tomato slices, spinach, fresh zucchini and black olives, atop an olive oil and fresh garlic base, finished with a triple crown of mozzarella, white cheddar and feta cheeses.

**Wedgetable Garden**...Vegetable lover's delight. Tomato sauce layered with a hearty combination of garlic, broccoli, pineapple, jalapenos, green olives, mushrooms, red onions, tomato slices and mozzarella.

**Obi-Wan**...Barbecued chicken breast, parmesan, red onion and roasted peppers, sheathed in mozzarella, all layered on our house tomato sauce. "You will eat this pizza.....and you will be rewarded."

**The Duke**...A six gun salute of pepperoni, sausage, ham and beef, blanketed in mozzarella and white cheddar, on a tomato sauce base. This town's not big enough for more than one Duke.

**Tootie Fruitie**...A tropical blend of pineapple, mandarin oranges and sliced ham, atop tomato sauce, covered in mozzarella, then splashed with ricotta.

**Love Supreme**...A fusion of sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, red onions and green peppers, laid down under a bed of white cheddar and mozzarella. Truly a love supreme.

**Red Hot Pepper**...A traditional fresh garlic and refried bean base, piled high with tomato slices, yellow onions, beef, jalapenos, hot sauce and mozzarella, oven baked, then topped with lettuce and chips.

**The Nutcracker**...An enchanting creation of mozzarella, parmesan, gorgonzola and fontina cheeses, sprinkled with pistachios and roasted peppers, all topping our house basil pesto sauce.

**The Meatball Parmesan**...This Italian classic is sure to please with red onions, parmesan cheese, meatballs, garlic and white cheddar, decorated with a layer of fresh sliced tomato. Mama would be proud!

**Chicken Fajita**...Grilled chicken breast, roasted onion, red, and green peppers, mozzarella and monterey jack cheeses on a refried bean and garlic base. Served with sides of salsa and sour cream.

**Chicken Alfredo**...Grilled chicken breast, onion, mushroom, artichoke hearts, alfredo sauce, topped with mozzarella cheese.

**Veggie Fajita**...Roasted red and green peppers, zucchini, onion, mozzarella and monterey jack atop a refried bean and garlic base.

**Fat Tony 'Roni**...Flavor country! Pepperoni, gorgonzola, green olives, white cheddar and red onion on an olive oil and garlic base.

**Pesto Chicken**...Our house basil pesto sauce with grilled chicken breast, red onion, mushroom, feta and mozzarella cheeses.

**Little Green Martian**...Our house basil pesto sauce with zucchini, spinach, tomato, garlic and mozzarella cheese.

**Veggie Alfredo**...A delicious veggie alfredo combo of broccoli, onion, sun dried tomato, mushroom, light jalapeno and garlic with white cheddar and mozzarella cheeses.

**Ragin' Cajun**...Spicy Cajun Chicken Breast, Red Peppers, Onion, Mozzarella and White Cheddar on an Olive Oil and Garlic Base.

**Cinco Fromage**...Mozzarella, White Cheddar, Monterey Jack, Feta and Parmesan Cheese a top your choice of our 5 sauces.

**Medium ... \$12.00 Large ... \$16.00**