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AGENDA

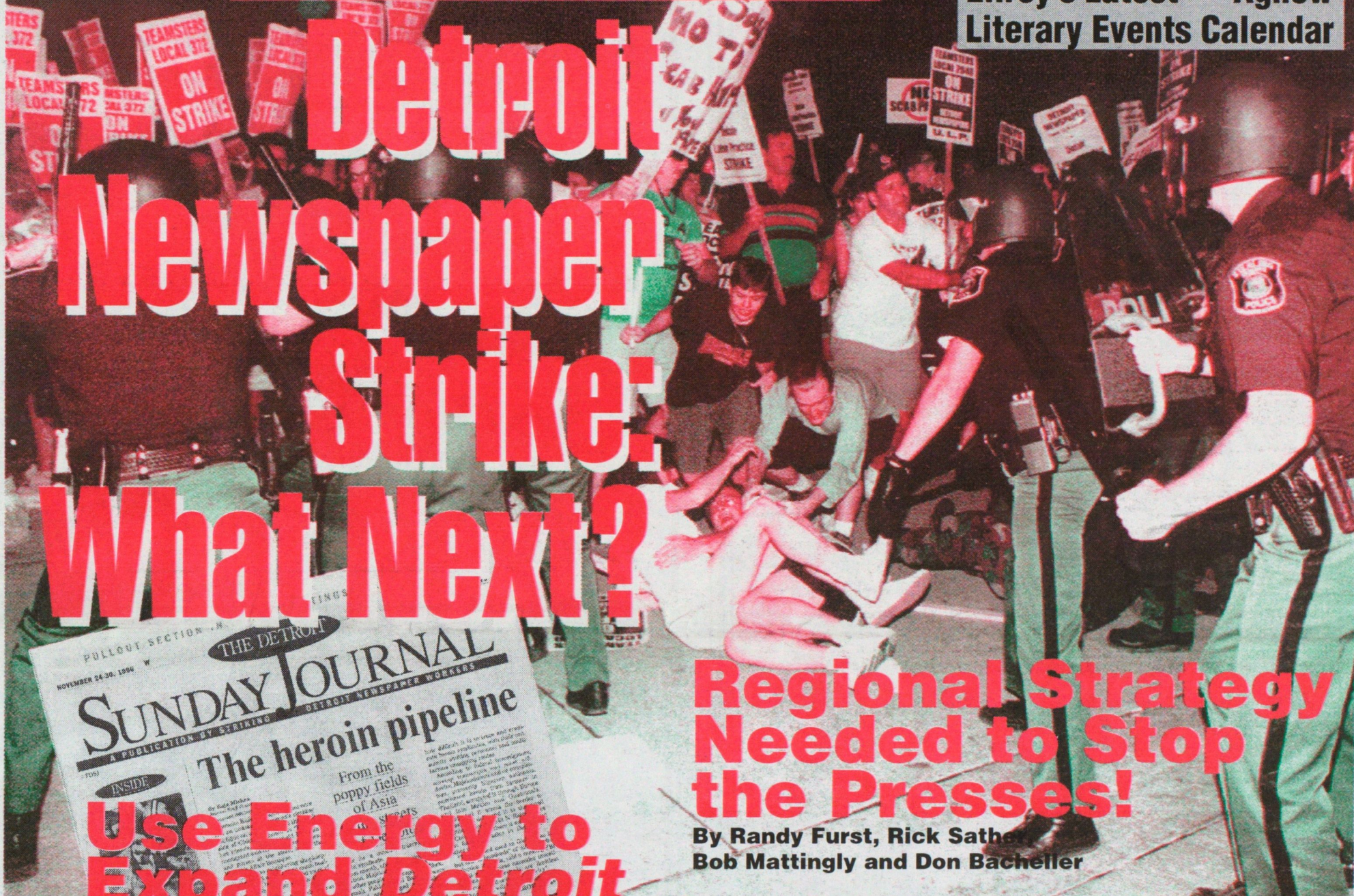
ANN ARBOR'S ALTERNATIVE NEWSMONTHLY

James Ellroy

CREDIT: MARION ETLINGER

BOOKS:

Ellroy's Latest — Agnew
Literary Events Calendar



Detroit Newspaper Strike: What Next?

Regional Strategy Needed to Stop the Presses!

By Randy Furst, Rick Sather,
Bob Mattingly and Don Bacheller

PHOTO: DAYMON J. HARTLEY



Use Energy to Expand Detroit Sunday Journal

By Michael Betzold

Pastors For Peace Completes Cuba Quest

Medical Computers
Delivered Despite Odds
By Phyllis Ponvert

USTEDES ACABAN DE REALIZAR UNA
HAZAÑA QUE PASARA A LA HISTORIA.

FIDEL

PHOTO: PHYLLIS PONVERT



ARWULF:

Words, Words, Words

ARTS:

DMX — The Pure Art of Music? — Buck

SCREEN:

“The English Patient” &
“The Nutty Professor” — Cantú

MUSIC:

The View From Nowhere — Goldsmith
Stocking Stuffers — Shea

BOYCOTT UPDATE

Focus on Borders Books — Vazquez

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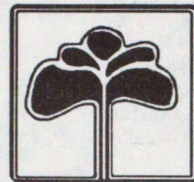
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LETTERS

Send letters by the 21st day of the month preceding publication of our next issue to: Editor, AGENDA, 220 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Please include your address and phone number (not for publication). AGENDA reserves the right to edit or reject any letter. We give preference to letters under 400 words.

GOLDSMITH OBSESSED WITH NEWHOUSE

Alan Goldsmith has been untiringly hyping Kari Newhouse for eight years in Current, and continues to do so now in AGENDA. The intensity and duration of Mr. Goldsmith's obsession with Ms. Newhouse paired with his obvious inability to render anything vaguely resembling objectivity when writing about her rather modest talents raises the question in this reader's mind of whether Mr. Goldsmith's interest in the attractive, golden-haired young songstress may go beyond the strictly musical.

But my main beef with Mr. G. is his apparently nonexistent understanding of the true alternative/underground music scene and its attendant youth subculture. Seeing as how we live in a vibrant university community with roughly 40,000 literate (one hopes!) young adults, it seems negligent on AGENDA's behalf not to employ the resources of a music critic that is a bit more attuned to what's really going down musically at either the local (the beautifully dark and textured sounds of the trio Perplexa, for instance) or national level. I mean no offense to Mr. G. personally, for he seems to be a very kind and caring soul—he's just out of touch. And both AGENDA, which touts itself as being an "alternative" publication, and its readers, deserve more than his tired, breathless declarations of admiration for a singer/songwriter of trite, mainstream pop muzak.

Roland Diaz-Perez
ANN ARBOR

GOLDSMITH RESPONDS

If you had addressed this to me instead of the newspaper in general, I would have phoned you up, invited you out for a beer at the Heidelberg and we could have had a perfectly nice chat about the state of the local scene, your groundbreaking history as a hip concert promoter and what you've been up to since your return to town ... but ... NO ...

Funny, I agree with some of what you say. If I had my way AGENDA would be full of articles covering the vast range of cool stuff taking place in A2 vis-à-vis the local music scene. I've kicked around the idea of starting a local music newspaper even because there is so much going on from metal to noise to surf to even "trite mainstream pop muzak" (to borrow a phrase) that the thousand words or so I get to do each month in *The View From Nowhere* only scratches the surface. I know Ted Sylvester (the editor of AGENDA) would be way way happy if more hipsters such as yourself would submit articles on some of this stuff (note: Ted was a rock and roll drummer at one point for gods sake though please don't tell anyone, OK?) Maybe you would like to take on that task (I'll take your word on Perplexa. That might be a good start).

My comments and review of Kari Newhouse stand on their own. Do what you want with them. I have no desire to be "in touch" with anything whether it be my "feelings" or "to what's really going down" in town, which is silly in the assumption actually, like there is one big truth or something when it comes to art. Give me a break. And equally silly is using the misogynist claim that my comments on Newhouse were based on anything other than her talents as an important American musical artist. It would be like me charging you with having a fetish with young white boys in flannel shirts because you booked so many Sub Pop grunge bands into Club H in your days as a music business type. Both changes are dumb as hell.

If you still want to go out for a beer, give me a call.

AGENDA

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ARTS EDITOR—Orin Buck
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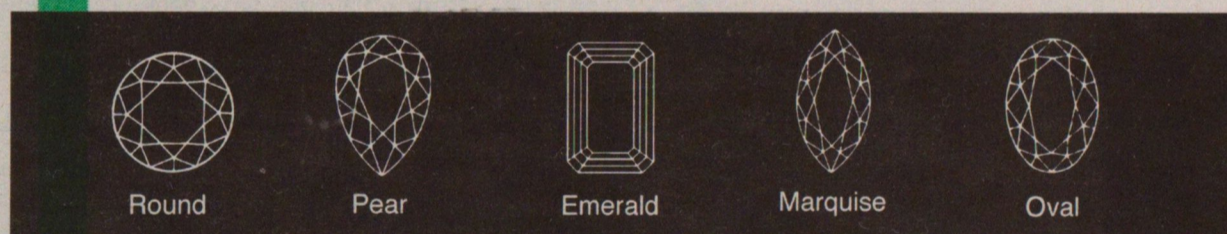
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Business Week Sept. 9 issue

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BOYCOTT UPDATE

BY LUIS VAZQUEZ

FOCUS: Borders Books

Note: AGENDA continues to bring attention to corporate scofflaws who don't deserve a cent of your hard-earned dough and show you ways you can help out.

About three months before she was fired from the Borders Books in Philadelphia, two significant events occurred in the worklife of bookseller Miriam Fried. First, Fried received a glowing evaluation from her manager at the Borders bookstore in Philadelphia who wrote that Fried "provides a fine model for other booksellers with her work ethic and her book knowledge." At the same time, Fried was helping to lead a union organizing drive at the store and wore a button to work signifying her support of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). It is obviously the second significant event that many union activists and others feel led to Miriam Fried's firing. Fried has filed an unfair labor practice petition with the National Labor Relations Board.

Because of Miriam Fried's firing and other anti-union practices, Borders Books has come under the scrutiny of many labor groups and others interested in democratic work environments. Borders pays its booksellers \$5.50-6.25 per hour to start, depending on store location. Borders booksellers receive paltry pay increases—even with years of experience, booksellers make less than \$7 per hour. On the other hand, in 1994, Borders' three top executives received compensation packages ranging from \$247,420 to \$861,639, and held stock worth more than \$22 million (not including long-term stock options). From July 1995 to July 1996, Borders, Inc. reported a sales increase of 10.7% for existing Borders stores, compared with a national economy growing at less than 3%. Borders is the nation's second largest bookseller, with annual retail sales of around \$1.5 billion.

When Michael Moore, author of "Downsize This!" and host of the popular Television program "TV Nation" appeared at the Philadelphia Borders during a recent book-signing and promotional tour, he invited IWW pickets into the store with him. Moore also urged customers to buy their books elsewhere. Borders promptly cancelled Moore's invitation to speak at their grand opening at the World Trade Center in New York City.

Union organizing efforts continue at other

Borders stores. In Chicago, the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) celebrated a victory when booksellers there voted for UFCW representation in November. Borders spent two months trying to convince Chicago store workers that union influence would conflict with "Borders' culture." Organizing drives are also reportedly taking place in Des Moines, Iowa and Albany, New York. In Philadelphia, workers have vowed to rekindle their organizing drive, despite the IWW's narrow defeat and Miriam Fried's firing. More attention is now being focused on Borders' union-busting activities such as the hiring of a notorious union-busting law firm, and flying their executives around to "hot spots" to dissuade Borders workers from joining unions.

In Ann Arbor (Borders' headquarters) and in many other communities around the country, labor activists are calling attention to Borders' union-busting tactics and low wages. The recently formed Southeast Michigan Local of the National Writers Union (NWU-UAW Local 1981) is taking a stand in solidarity with the IWW by organizing and assisting with leafletting and informational picketing during the weekend of Dec. 14 and 15, (the six-month anniversary of Miriam Fried's firing).

Ann Arbor, a virtual mecca when it comes to bookstores, is fortunate to have so many good new and used bookstores to choose as alternatives. It would be a powerful statement if Borders, which got its start right here in Treetown, were to do poorly during the upcoming holiday season.

What you can do:

Shop at stores other than Borders and its sibling stores — Waldenbooks, Planet Music, and Brentano's Books — until Miriam Fried is reinstated. Call, fax, or write the Philadelphia store at 1727 Walnut St., Phila., PA 19103 and/or David Stewart, General Manager tel:(215) 568-7400; fax:(215) 568-7466. Contact Borders' corporate HQ at 311 Maynard St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 and/or Richard Flanagan, President tel: (800) 644-7733 or (313) 913-1100. E-Mail Borders Spokesperson Peter Blackshear at: PBLACKSH@borders.com. Join the IWW and the Southeast Michigan Local of the National Writers Union on Sat., Dec. 14 from 11 am-1 pm, or Sun., Dec. 15, from 1-3 pm, for leafletting and informational picketing in front of the Borders bookstore on Liberty Street in Ann Arbor. Call or write the IWW: Industrial Workers of the World, 103 West Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, tel: (313) 483-3548; email: iww@igc.apc.org

Luis Vazquez is interim co-chair of the Southeast Michigan Local of the National Writers Union.

THIS VERBOSE WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

THE INFAMOUS TEXACO TAPES WERE APPARENTLY JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG... FOR INSTANCE, A PREGNANT AFRICAN-AMERICAN SECRETARY THERE ONCE RECEIVED THIS CHARMING BIRTHDAY CAKE FROM HER BOSS...*




*Happy Birthday Sheryl
It must have been those watermelon seeds.*

* THIS IS TRUE.

NONETHELESS, PROFESSIONAL APOLOGIST-FOR-BIGOTRY DINESH D'SOUZA RECENTLY TRIED TO PUT THE TAPES IN PERSPECTIVE--

"...WHAT THEY DO REFLECT IS THE KIND OF FRAGMENTS ABOUT RACIAL DISCUSSION THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED IN THIS COUNTRY IN PUBLIC DISCUSSION--

--SO WHAT YOU HAVE IS A DISGRUNTLED FORMER EMPLOYEE IN A SENSE EAVES-DROPPING ON A PRIVATE CONVERSATION AND IN A SENSE MAKING THAT PUBLIC IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT!"



--AND WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE MORE CLEAR?

MR. D'SOUZA'S ELOQUENCE ASIDE, SCAPEGOATING THE DISENFRANCHISED IS A LONG-ESTABLISHED TRADITION IN THIS COUNTRY... AND IS--AS THE PASSAGE OF CALIFORNIA'S PROP. 209 DEMONSTRATES--A TACTIC TO WHICH AMERICANS ARE PERENNIALY VULNERABLE...

SORRY, CHARLIE BROWN! AN UNQUALIFIED MINORITY TOOK YOUR FOOTBALL AWAY!



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A. GEORGE WALLACE	B. STROM THURMOND	C. ABRAHAM LINCOLN
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ANSWER: LINCOLN, DURING HIS 1858 RUN FOR THE SENATE BUT YOU KNEW THAT.

YOU TALKED TO TOMORROW ... APOLOGIES TO SOULTZ

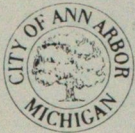
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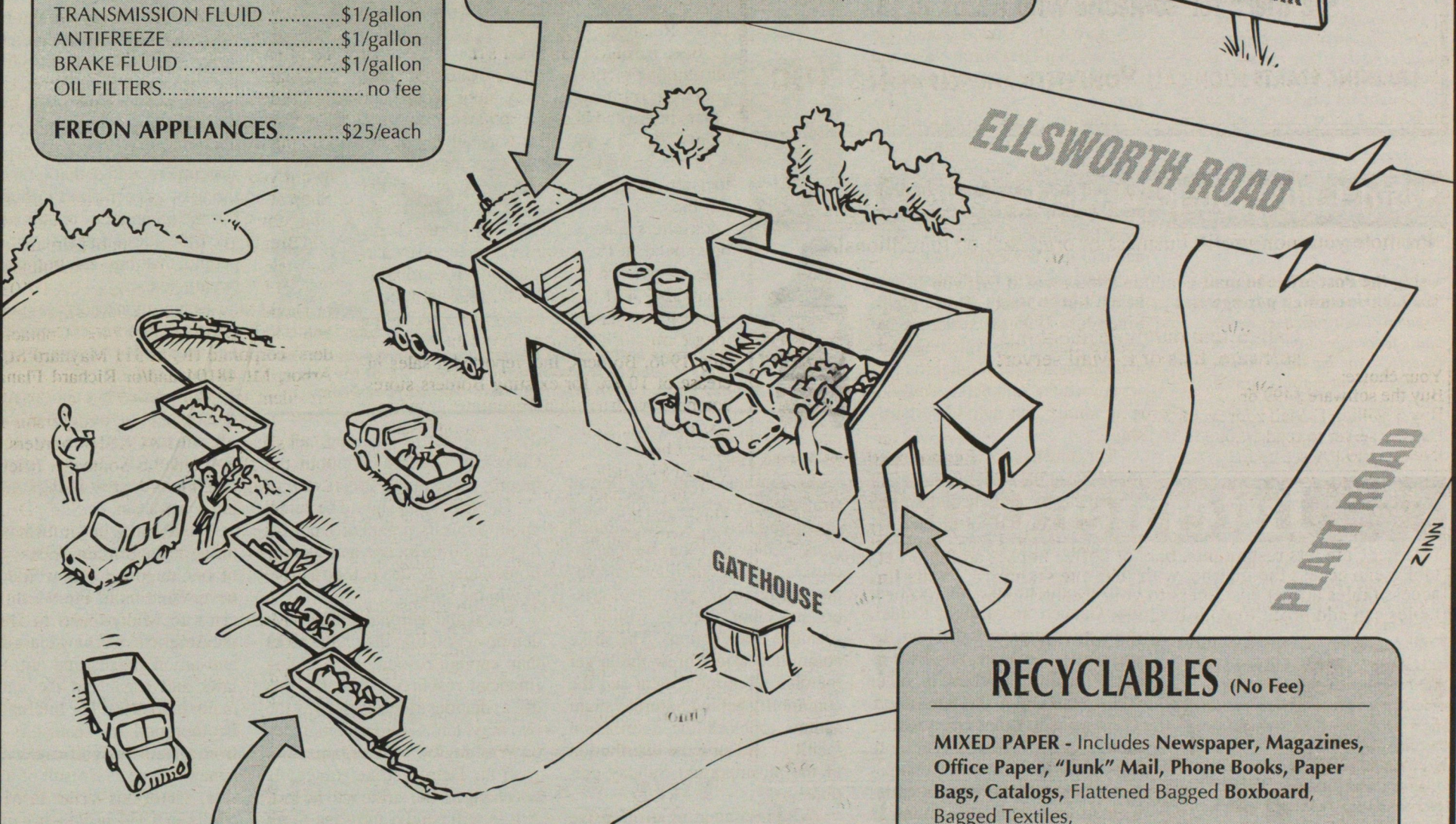
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DETROIT NEWSPAPER STRIKE: WHAT NEXT?

Militant Regional Strategy Needed to Win Back Jobs

By Randy Furst, Rick Sather, Bob Mattingly and Don Bacheller

Editor's Note: When 2,500 workers at two Detroit newspapers walked off the job July 13, 1995, few imagined they would still be on strike 17 months later. But Gannett and Knight-Ridder, the giant media companies that jointly own The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press, are determined to bust the six striking unions at the papers despite \$250 million in losses caused by the unions' strong advertising and circulation boycotts. The stakes are huge: A victory for the companies would send a chilling message to workers nationwide.

Circulation has been cut by at least a third at the papers and it has not recovered. Most advertisers remain out. But the companies refuse to bargain. They say the scabs they have hired and the few hundred union members who have crossed the picket line are their permanent work force.

The National Labor Relations Board is prosecuting the companies for unfair labor practices and a ruling favorable to the unions is expected soon, but the companies vow to drag out appeals for many years.

About 2,000 workers remain on strike, but many have found other jobs. Only a few hundred remain active in picketing, leafletting advertisers and putting out The Detroit Sunday Journal, the strikers' 150,000-circulation weekly.

Community support remains strong. Hundreds have been arrested in civil disobedience protests. In recent months, a coalition called Friends of Labor has blocked gates at Gannett's Port Huron printing plant and conducted actions at newspaper bureau offices, including the Free Press office in Ann Arbor. Locally, Jobs With Justice continues to picket targets including the homes of Free Press Publisher Heath Meriwether and Editor Joe Stroud.

As the strike drags on, debate over the unions' strategy continues. Clearly, winning the strike remains a formidable task.

The following essays are offered as food for thought — options to consider in the days ahead. The time for a new strategy is clearly at hand, and this is AGENDA's way of contributing to the debate.

Randy Furst is a steward in the Newspaper Guild in the Twin Cities at the Minneapolis Star Tribune where he works as a reporter. Rick Sather is a member of the union committee in Teamsters Local 638 at the Star Tribune where he is a newspaper driver. Bob Mattingly is a retired business agent for Teamsters Local 896 in San Francisco. Don Bacheller is a Vice Chairperson of the New York Times Unit, Newspaper Guild of New York.

Seventeen months into perhaps the most important strike in the history of the American newspaper industry, many labor activists across the United States are troubled that The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press are still publishing.

How, they ask, in one of the nation's strongest union towns, can two publishers continue to print and sell their newspapers in defiance of their striking unions, who have the support of the city, state and national labor movement?

The answer is not that strikers haven't been tough and militant. Since July 1995 the strikers have endured outrageous police violence and harassment, held out through a severe winter, and persevered despite family and individual hardships.

The time has come to face up to the fact that the current strategy of advertising boycotts, leafletting and small-scale civil disobedience actions and the like have failed to get the job done. Labor's strategy in Detroit fails to take into account that Gannett and Knight Ridder, the huge corporations that own the two papers, are using the strike as a club against workers in other cities, both union and non-union. Their gains in other cities reduce their Detroit losses. Even more important, these monster companies will stubbornly resist a settlement as long as they think time is on their side. With their deep pockets, they will endure huge losses in order to outlast the unions if the final outcome is a union-free environment and they can enrich themselves more in the long run.

Certainly then, the unions must re-evaluate how they can inflict increased economic damage on the newspapers. What have the unions left undone that they have the power to do? The answer is obvious: The unions, except for a brief two weekends in 1995, have not yet stopped production and distribution of the papers. Instead they have relied on secondary tactical actions and the mere passage of time to wear down the industry giants, mistakenly hoping to win a war of attrition.

If this is not the time for Detroit labor and its many allies to assert their determination to win this cru-

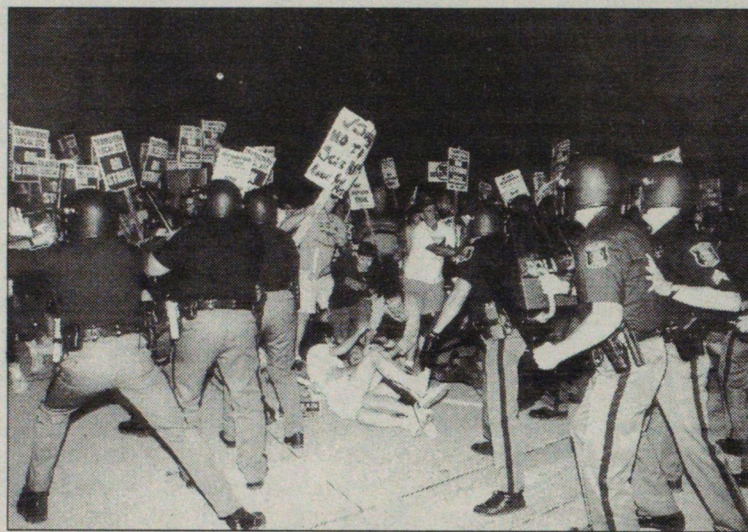


PHOTO: DAYMON J. HARTLEY

Summer, 1995: Strikers and Sterling Heights Police clashed a number of times as picketers tried to shut down the distribution of the jointly-produced Sunday edition of The Detroit News-Detroit Free Press.

cial strike, then why will later on be a better time?

To continue the present Detroit strategy is a certain recipe for a disastrous defeat. A new winning game plan would start with an inclusive strike committee, encompassing the entire spectrum of strikers and labor activists willing to organize mass actions. The strike committee would draw the larger regional labor movement and the community behind Saturday night actions to block the distribution facilities and stop the distribution of the all-important Sunday editions.

While maintaining an offensive against the Sunday editions, the strike committee would organize a Midwestern march on Detroit, which already has the endorsement of some Detroit labor leaders. A successful regional march would provide the momentum for a national march on Detroit, which in turn could inspire Michigan labor to call a one-day regional sympathy strike. Together these actions would likely raise the strike's economic and political costs far above what the corporations and their backers would be willing to pay.

Last year, the new leaders of the AFL-CIO — John Sweeney, Richard Trumka and Linda Chavez-Thompson — announced that they were Corporate America's worst nightmare. Backed by 15 million members of organized labor, they can utilize the Detroit strike to de-

liver a powerful wake-up call to Corporate America by mobilizing labor's ranks in the streets.

The AFL-CIO should be called upon to put its organizing power, its political influence and its millions of dues dollars behind a drive to win the strike.

Local and national unions have demonstrated that they have more than enough resources, including financial resources, to carry this off, as demonstrated by the way the two mass labor solidarity marches on Washington were organized.

If the Detroit strike strategy is not changed, the strike will be lost. A loss will send a message to all union workers that union-busting corporations are invincible and that resistance is suicidal.

The men and women who sacrificed so much to build unions in this country understood the power of a union and the power of the strike weapon. We have to relearn that mass actions that shut down the plants and choke off the profits are an indispensable weapon in labor's arsenal.

Mass actions of this kind have saved labor's bacon countless times. In the Detroit strike, it would mean bringing out thousands of strikers and supporters, clogging up the roadways coming out of the Sterling Heights and Riverfront plants. During the Labor Day weekend in 1995 and the following Saturday night, Detroit strikers and supporters put on a dramatic show

of force and came close to halting distribution. Clearly, the troops are ready and willing if our leaders are willing to lead.

Such a strategy will not only raise the newspaper companies' strike expenses, it can also inspire the corporations' other workers to resist concessionary demands. But most importantly, mass actions will certainly compel the Detroit power structure to realize that it faces the threat of a much more militant labor movement, one that could reverse the tide of defeat for working people that has run for the last twenty years.

Some union leaders say that they cannot support or encourage mass action aimed at shutting down production and distribution or defy court-imposed injunctions against mass picketing because of the risk of contempt violations or prosecution under RICO laws. They warn that it could result in big fines and jail sentences.

If that had been the mentality of union leaders in the 1930s, many of our major unions would have never been built. From San Francisco to Minneapolis to Detroit, the American working class defied anti-union judges and anti-union laws and organized the nation's major industries. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters went from a small, insignificant union to a major force as a result of a massive, victorious strike in Minneapolis in 1934 in which workers, their families and the unemployed took to the streets by the tens of thousands to stop the city's trucks from operating. "In 1934, we papered the walls with injunctions," said Harry DeBoer, one of the leaders of the Minneapolis strike.

If legalities swayed the civil rights movement, Greyhound bus stations would still have "white-only" signs on their restrooms and African-Americans in Montgomery, Ala. would still be riding on the back of the bus.

Oppressive laws or court orders, whether they protect segregation or union-busting, are still wrong and must be defied whenever possible.

It is unclear how the government and the newspaper companies will respond to mass action by

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

A Goal Equal To Our Vision: Expand *The Detroit Sunday Journal*

By Michael Betzold

The Detroit newspaper strike has energized, galvanized, unified, radicalized and inspired more folks in this area for a more sustained time than any cause in years.

It has also wounded, worn down, frustrated, divided, sapped and ruined more folks than any cause in years.

It's wondrous testimony to the backbone, dignity and righteousness of the people of Michigan that this much effort has gone into a fight to win back jobs for 2,000 people. It's remarkable that people have risked their lives sitting down in front of trucks, battling police, staring down armed guards. Truth be told, it's energy disproportionate to the prize.

The strength and persistence of the support is humbling for some of us strikers. After all, thousands of other jobs in this area have gone down the tubes with much less protest; most, in fact, with hardly a whimper. Why is this strike so special?

It's not just because there's a widespread recognition that this is a crucial showdown for labor. It's also because there's an understanding that the Detroit area needs a unifying voice. It needs a trusted source of information. It needs real newspapers.

There's increasing recognition of the dangers posed by the concentration of power over information in the hands of fewer and fewer mega-corporations. There's an increasing distrust of managed, packaged, spoon-fed, generic "news" marketed like fast food for the mind.

The people of Michigan have been fighting for much more than just the jobs of 2,000 strikers. They have been fighting to get the kind of newspaper they deserve. But they're never going to get it from Gannett or Knight-Ridder.

The problem with the strike is not merely that union leadership hasn't adopted the best strategies. The problem is not merely that too many strikers have drifted away. The problem is not just a lack of more widespread labor and community support. The problem is that the goals of the strike are too paltry.

thousands of union activists and their supporters. They might be hesitant to take on the full power of the labor movement. On the other hand, union leaders should be prepared for an onslaught, and have in place a large legal defense team and a big legal fund to bail the strikers out.

We are approaching a key time for the Detroit newspapers — the holiday season — when newspapers become thick with advertising. Some advertisers will withdraw, but plenty more will not — partly driven by the basic affinity of one corporation for another. Advertising boycotts and strike papers have their place in union strategies, but they won't win by themselves. Making them the centerpiece of the strike effort will only prolong it, until it peters out in defeat.

The labor movement can win this strike and achieve a decent settlement. But to do it will require that we harness labor's collective strength to halt production and distribution. Knight Ridder and Gannett may have huge bank accounts, but we have a lot more power than they do. It's time to use it.



Winning the strike would mean 2,000 workers would get new contracts with some pay increases and protections. This would be wonderful for the workers and their families. It would also be a symbolic victory over corporate greed. But the corporate giants, even in defeat, would gird for the next battle. Those 2,000 jobs and those two newspapers would remain under the joint control of Gannett and Knight-Ridder, two corporations which have shown no regard for the welfare of their employees, the integrity of their product or the needs of the people of Detroit and Michigan.

It's likely the companies will close one of the papers sooner or later, probably sooner. Then many of the jobs that we have all fought so hard to win back would be gone.

Even if both papers keep publishing, they will never regain the respect or readership or advertising revenue they have squandered during this senseless war to destroy the unions. Under any contract, jobs will be reduced, unions will be attacked, and lies will be told.

In another language, the control of the means of production will still be in the hands of the bosses.

Unfortunately, a much bleaker scenario is unfolding. National union leadership is

trying to force Detroit strikers to accept the strategy of a "return to work" offer. That would mean some strikers would go back to their jobs under their old contracts. The companies could be forced to let go of some of their scabs to make room for the strikers. The national unions promise they would pour money and energy into a nationwide effort to back an "inside/outside" campaign, trying to pressure the companies for new contracts.

The problems with this strategy are obvious. Our energies would be divided and our ability to pressure the companies would be decreased. The companies' efforts to convince the public the battle was over would be bolstered. Essential community support would dwindle.

It's understandable that strikers and supporters have flagged of late. Time takes a toll; so do the demands of making a living. The companies count on that: Time is on their side. But I think there's also a sense among strikers and supporters that the goals being pursued are not worth the effort.

There is a better way. There are loftier goals. And I believe there is now a unique opportunity to realize them.

Instead of merely fighting to get back our old jobs in the service of corporate power, we could be fighting to create our own jobs. And we could be working to create a newspaper that is responsive to workers and the community.

A major focus of the strike should be invigorating and expanding *The Detroit Sunday Journal* with the goal of more frequent publication. As a weekly, the Journal has become a self-sustaining, well-read and solid little paper. It's the first mass-audience newspaper in memory to voice the concerns of Michigan workers. But it hasn't posed a major threat to *The News* and *Free Press*.

Someone is going to enter the Detroit newspaper market to challenge the weakened *News* or *Free Press*, certainly when one of them closes, if not sooner. That challenger likely will be another soulless corporation,

unless we get there first. With proper planning, *The Journal* could be transformed over the coming months. It's happened in other cities; strike papers have survived strikes and become permanent fixtures.

What form a permanent Journal would take is hard to say. I'd like to see an ownership/investment structure with four elements: unions, a few large local investors, thousands of small investor-subscribers, and employee ownership. Others may have a better idea.

While daily publication would produce the most full-time jobs and the most information for readers, it also would require huge amounts of money and might be out of reach in the short run. I'd like to see a three-times-a-week paper: a strong Saturday paper like the current Journal, a Monday paper with plenty of sports, and a Wednesday or Thursday paper with plenty of entertainment and events listings.

However *The Journal* evolves, it should be a mass-market paper with a strong voice for workers, much like the current Journal. It should be a vital, take-no-prisoners paper unafraid to do investigative reporting and unafraid to offend any abusers of power. And it would kick Gannett and Knight-Ridder in the butt.

Never has there been this kind of opportunity to create such a paper. With thousands of loyal readers, *The Journal* has a leg up. With the new unity forged in prosecuting this strike, there's an audience eager for more of what *The Journal* has offered.

What's needed now is for the community to demonstrate that it would support such a paper. I'm asking for pledges: not real money, but a figure you might be willing to invest in a more frequent, permanent Journal. Obviously, the terms of any such investment are as yet unknown, and your pledge would not be an unalterable commitment, just a show of support. Send name, address, phone and amount of pledge (\$100 minimum) by fax to 313-998-1609 or by e-mail to MBetzold@aol.com.

The effort poured into winning this strike must not be wasted. We need a victory equal to our commitment and vision.

Michael Betzold is a striking Detroit Free Press reporter, a member of The Newspaper Guild Local 22, and an Ann Arbor resident and freelance writer.

ALL-STAR BENEFIT CONCERT FOR STRIKING DETROIT NEWSPAPER WORKERS

As 2,000 striking Detroit newspaper workers face their second holiday season without their jobs, many of the Ann Arbor area's top musicians have decided to brighten up their spirits.

On Dec. 5 at The Ark, 13 headline acts will unite in an All-Star Benefit Concert. Proceeds will go to the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions' striker relief fund. Members of six unions have been on strike against *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* since July 13, 1995.

An eclectic cast of performers, accomplished in folk, pop, bluegrass, blues, rock and other styles, will play solo and in ensemble at the unique benefit. The cast includes Dick Siegel, Frank Allison, Jay Stielstra, Lisa Hunter, Chris Buhalis, drivetrain, K.C. Groves, Brian Lillie, Rollie Tussing III, Jo Serrapere, Audrey Becker, David Mosher and Jere Stormer.

"Everybody wanted to help," said

Buhalis, who organized the concert and will be the emcee. "I just started making calls and there was no hesitation. And the owners of The Ark generously are giving us space."

Tickets to the concert will be \$15. Strikers and members of their families will pay \$5 apiece. Tickets are available at the door only. The concert will begin at 8 pm and doors will open at 7:30 pm.

The Ark is at 316 S. Main. The phone is 313-761-1451.

Buhalis stressed that the concert will be devoted to music, not political statements. Information about the strike will be available at the concert, including how to subscribe to *The Detroit Sunday Journal*, the strikers' weekly newspaper, and how to join Jobs With Justice, an Ann Arbor-based group that works in support of the strike.

The 2,000 workers, including reporters, editors, circulation employees, driv-

ers, printers, photographers, mailers and others, have been struggling to survive in the face of an all-out assault by the nation's two largest newspaper chains: Gannett Co. Inc., owner of *The Detroit News*, and Knight-Ridder Inc., owner of the *Detroit Free Press*. The unionized workers, driven out on strike by the companies' unfair labor practices, have been permanently replaced and the papers have kept publishing with scab labor. A successful advertising and circulation boycott led by the unions has cost the companies an estimated \$250 million. Despite the huge losses and pleas by Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and others, the companies have refused to bargain new contracts with the unions.

Several dozen striking workers live in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, as do the publisher of the *Free Press*, Heath Meriwether, and its editor, Joe Stroud.

Pastors For Peace Complete Cuba Quest

By Phyllis Ponvert

In spite of strong U.S. governmental opposition and very limited media attention, a U.S. grassroots effort scored a recent victory, as Pastors for Peace successfully delivered 400 computers to the Cuban medical project, INFOMED-CUBA without applying for the license required by the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba. On October 11, all the health facilities on the island were connected to the Internet on a full-time basis. With this island-wide electronic information network, Cuba's 66,000 physicians, medical students and researchers can now access medical information within Cuba and around the world. Delivering the computers took eight months of work, including a 94-day fast by five members of Pastors for Peace.

It was another success for the group, which since 1992 has taken six caravans of humanitarian aid to Cuba without ever asking for a license. "We have not and will never apply for a license under the terms of the U.S. embargo," said founder of the group and Baptist Minister Lucius Walker. "The use of medical supplies as weapons against 11 million innocent Cubans is morally repugnant. Participation in the licensing process would be a *de facto* recognition of U.S. policy, and as Christians and people of conscience, we are unable to do this."

In 1960, the U.S. began trade sanctions against Cuba after the 1959 Cuban Revolution overthrew U.S.-supported dictator, Fulgencio Batista. The 36-year-old embargo is designed to destroy the Cuban Revolution. With



PHOTO: PHYLLIS PONVERT

Sept., 1996 — President Fidel Castro at ceremony presenting Carlos Finlay Medal to fasters Jim Clifford, Brian Royhatyn, Seya Sangari, Lisa Valanti, and Rev. Lucius Walker (founder of Pastors for Peace).

the passage of the 1992 Torcelli and 1996 Helms-Burton laws, not even food and medicine can go to Cuba without a license from the U.S. government. At present, all other organizations which send aid to Cuba voluntarily submit to the licensing process. Absurdly, even U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba without permission can receive 10 years in jail and a fine of \$250,000.

Project INFOMED-CUBA began three years ago when Cuba decided to update its medical information system. Funding from the U.N. and the Pan American Health Organization had bought 14 main servers, the backbone of the system, and Cuba was seeking end-user terminals in the form of used IBM-compatible personal computers to connect all hospitals, clinics and

other medical facilities with the already established main servers.

In 1995, Californians Dr. Juan Reardon and engineer David Wald went to Cuba, met with the Ministry of Public Health, and were asked for these end-use computers. The two men formed INFOMED-USA, located the used computers and turned to Pastors for Peace for their expertise in delivering aid to Central America and Cuba. Pastors agreed to deliver the computers as the centerpiece of their sixth Cuba aid caravan.

On January 31, 1996, Pastors for Peace was prevented from crossing the border into Mexico at San Diego. They were met by an army of 1,000 agents from the U.S. Customs Service, San Diego police, U.S. Treasury, San Diego Fire Department, and the FBI.

There were two other attempted crossings in February, and all 400 computers were confiscated by the U.S. Treasury Department.

After unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with the government, five members of the group began a Fast for Life at the border site until the computers were released. The fasters were Rev. Lucius Walker, Seya Sangari, Jim Clifford, and Lisa Valanti, all from the U.S. and Canadian Brian Royhatyn. After 33 days, the Fast for Life moved to Washington, D.C. to better confront the government. Their only nourishment throughout the 94-day fast was a mixture of water, lemon juice, maple syrup and salt.

In spite of an almost total U.S. media blackout, staff and volunteers generated public support to pressure the U.S. government to negotiate with Pastors. The message was simple: Whatever the policies of U.S.-Cuba relations, it is immoral to withhold humanitarian aid from the people of Cuba, and we have put our lives at risk for this cause.

Unrelenting pressure from the international press, thousands of U.S. and foreign citizens and grassroots groups, 70 members of Congress, and nine U.S. religious organizations paid off. After 94 days, the Fast for Life ended May 24, when the U.S. government released the computers to the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church honored Pastors request not to apply for a license, but did provide the government with paperwork proving the computers were going to Cuban hospitals and clinics. As in past caravans, the government issued a license.

Their first evening in Cuba, the

group was met by President Fidel Castro who thanked each member individually at a special reception. Pastors personally delivered computers to hospitals in five Cuban provinces and the others were installed in emergency clinics, rural hospitals, pharmacies, and medical libraries.

President Castro also awarded the five fasters the Carlos Finlay medal, named in honor of the Cuban doctor who did pioneering research on the cause and eradication of yellow fever. In his acceptance remarks, Lucius Walker said, "If I had to choose one image of these past days here, I would choose the image of the Cuban children. We see healthy children filled with great self-confidence, who know they are loved, are special, and that they have a mission to create a new world. Because of those children, we know that in Cuba, the Revolution will never die. For them, we dedicate the next Caravan, in the spring of 1997, to the needs of the Cuban children."

INFOMED-CUBA is being expanded. It needs thousands more computer terminals and is continuing to collect Windows-capable 386 equipment and better.

For information and to participate in the next caravan:

Pastors for Peace, 331-17 Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, (612) 870-7121, FAX 612-870-7109, Peacenet: P4P.

David Wald, (408)-243-4359 FAX 408-243-1229 dwald@igc.apc.org.

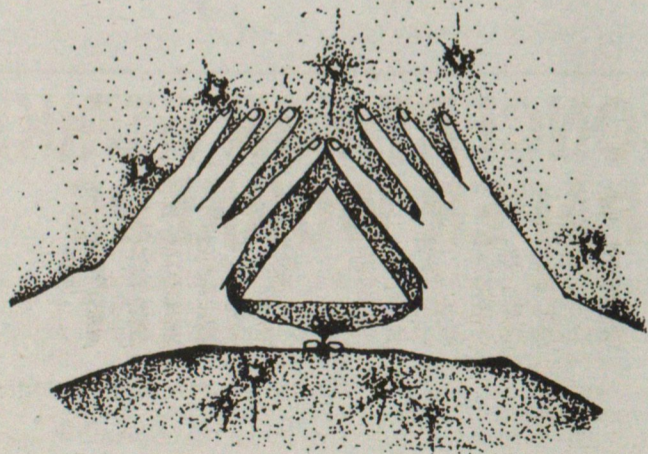
Juan Reardon, MD (510)-926-0917, jreardon@igc.apc.org.

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— Popular Science, Jan. 1996

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words, words, words

BY ARWULF ARWULF

I keep getting in trouble by listening too closely, or not closely enough, to what's being said. This we all share; none of us are adequate listeners! Careful listening has become a lost or endangered art in a clamorous and increasingly knuckleheaded age. I vow to try and shut up and listen to that which deserves a hearing. We need to all take this vow, or something like it, and live up to it whenever possible. Then maybe we can continue to evolve creatively, with grace and maybe even healthy ethics. That's asking a lot. I'm gonna keep asking.

This goes back a ways. One of my earliest memories involves my father hollering at our high-strung poodle. "Betsy!" he intoned, "Don't you understand English?!" I puzzled over that for years. So did Betsy.

Public schooling taught me to translate nearly everything being said by figures of authority into an incomprehensible Adult Noise language, which I could tune out at will to focus instead on inner daydreams. (This is also how one gets run over by Greyhound busses. So pay attention.) Strange prisons, those stunted schools.

What came to rescue me were the silent voices heard inside my head whenever I read words printed between the pages of books, and the frowzy vernacular of the streets, where I began to spend as much time as possible. Surrealist literature and powerful extracts of ergot mold helped me to break language into anarchic confetti. The work of putting it back together again will apparently occupy me for the rest of this particular life.

Listening on the street is still a vitally important part of the research process. When I was twelve, there were new words to learn out there. Another way of speaking; every generation has this. However: I had to adapt some of the slang right away even before I'd had a chance to savor its use. "Chicks" and "Dudes" had been exciting syllables I could toss around like lawn darts. Then suddenly the female article was unacceptable, for carefully explained political reasons. "Chicks" was disrespectful, even derogatory. I struggled to eliminate this word from my speech patterns, as I did not want to be saying the wrong things. I took it seriously.

It was 1970. And a fifteen-year-old girl had questioned my very hippest boyhood terminology. Called into question my ethics on account of what I so casually spoke. It was the beginning of a long process of careful consideration, which naturally became entangled in the sloppiest goddamned behavior imaginable. But that's life.

Point is: We began, many of us, to actively question the power of the spoken word, even as it tumbled from our own lips. The women who lived in the Rainbow communes on Hill Street were quick to explain what constituted sexism and sexist behavior. It was for us to make some changes by altering our ways and means. Calling everything and everyone by their rightful names. Refusing to follow standard guidelines for social action, as these were morbidly disrespectful towards all but a few in positions of great power and privilege.

Over the years, some have taken these principles to extremes while carelessly warping the fabric of the struggle. And how suspect the subject itself has gotten! It has become fashionable to dismiss any such awareness of *unethical language* as "political correctness." This is a term which is applied only to what are called "leftist" politics, despite the famous political correctness of the likes of Ronald Reagan, Anita Bryant and Jesse Helms. Anyway, I think that the questioning of unethical language can be a healthy exercise in individual awareness.

Example: The word "suck." I must have been about sixteen years old when it occurred to me that I was going to have problems with the popular phrase: "That sucks." This was, in the early 1970s, a fairly new application of a word

which had its own history: P.T. Barnum's "sucker born every minute," and any number of put-downs ever since. Why did I eliminate it from my own speech habits? It is something I still never say, no matter how disgruntled I may get; and I love to cuss up a storm, with plenty of piss and vinegar. What's wrong with "sucks"?

Let's check you out at birth for a minute. You are expelled from the womb. A manifest drag. Gasping for breath, you try and acclimate. What's the first thing you start looking for, after your first nap in your new frame? Why, you'd like something to suck. Specifically the nipple of the breast of the mother. This is the first meaning, the primal meaning of "suck": NOURISHMENT. ABUNDANCE.

A dozen or so years later and there are hormonal things starting in to happen, with a developing need to eventually seek the comforting embrace of another individual, finding ways to revel in one's age and to interact gracefully with a lover. There are no limits, no calendars, no constrictions to this love. It is the mystery, so slandered and abused, so grossly misunderstood by most societies for thousands of years: HONEST LOVE. SINCERE LOVE. RESPECTFUL LOVE. The sharing of ecstatic love. To kiss. To apply one's lips, touch with the tongue. This would be a noble and worthy nest of meaning for "suck." What could be more precious? More deserving of humble and respectful gratitude? To be treated with utmost tender loving care? Not in this culture.

Obviously there is a time-worn pejorative thing going on with this word, associated with servitude, oppression and very real hatred. The casual phrase ("that sucks") carries a subtext which, once I recognized it, altered the way I spoke, and have spoken ever since. It's a choice I made for myself. You should talk however you please. But it might be better for all of us if we considered the impact of even our most nonchalant verbal habits. Words are power.

Lindsay says: *Words evoke habitual response belief patterns in people — extremely powerful. Words are vessels which carry with them the emotions of the heart of the speaker. The language to symbolize what has happened, what's happening now, what stands to happen. Thought forms become real; naming is essential to formation.*

Starhawk says: *Language also conveys metaphors; these metaphors, the images we use, shape our thoughts and our actions. The thought-forms of estrangement become bound into our language as metaphors, and the metaphors reinforce the thought-forms, the constricting patterns in our minds.*

So where has the language been, and what do we invoke with the voice? One of my favorite words to sputter is *bastard*. What a great invective! Multi-purpose, like all good curses. Lindsay quietly reminds me that the entire basis for that word is to be found in the history of patriarchal control of the bloodline. A *bastard* is *illegitimate*. Unsanctified by the laws and constricts of patrilineal descent. *Out Of Wedlock* — this conjures the icon of the chastity belt!

I still use the word *bastard*. Especially if somebody rips me off, or cuts me off in rush hour traffic. But the good thing is, *I think about it when it comes out my mouth*. And that I feel is a good habit. Having spent much of my life embroiled in all manner of habits, it's good to have one which I am sure is likely to do some good out here in Babylon. Like Che Guevara and John Coltrane, I would strive to continue to be guided by great feelings of love. Marianne Moore will finish the epistle:

Q: *What is inward beauty?*

A: *Inward beauty affords you contentment. Compensates you for miserable things you see and read about, the happenings and unnecessary mistakes in life that worry you. Good will and concern for the other person; inward beauty — it contradicts bad behavior and ill will.*

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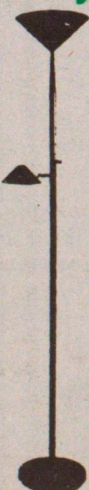
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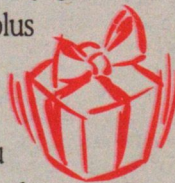
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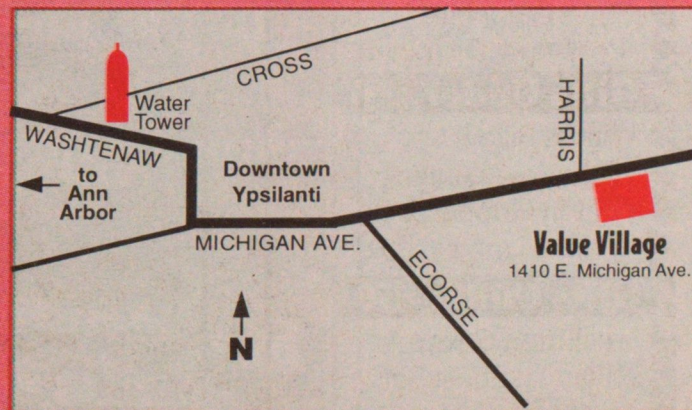
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LOCAL MUSIC

The View from Nowhere

By Alan Goldsmith

Good-bye Cava Java and hello The Gypsy Cafe. Starting this month, Joe Tiboni (fill in the blanks with historic facts about his days as a music life force involved with important rock and roll — flavored stuff like the Ann Arbor Free Concerts and Mr. Floods Party in the '70s, Joe's Star Lounge in the '80s and the laid back (sonically but not artistically) basement performance venue Cava Java in the '90s) has taken over the booking duties at The Gypsy.

Unfortunately, music has been axed from Cava Java. While CJ hasn't been around quite long enough to wax nostalgic over, the cozy space with just the right everything (size, lighting, sound system and cosmic aura) was the first new spot in recent times to take seriously the new wave of singer/songwriters who've emerged as part of the Ann Arbor New Folk Underground. According to Mr. T, it's the same old story. The Cava Java owners weren't happy with the financial numbers, didn't have a clue about music and knew more about roasting coffee beans than art (I'm paraphrasing here ...). While Joe Tiboni continuing as a booker at The Gypsy Cafe without missing a beat is good news, the senseless and shortsighted end of Cava Java isn't.

By luck of the draw, Lisa Hunter and her band got the honor of headlining the last night at Cava Java to a packed, standing-room-only crowd. You should run out right this minute and pick up her new CD, *Solid Ground* (on the local Thursday Records label).

The contrast between her recorded work and her live show was interesting. Hunter is a strong candidate for having the best local release of the year with her collection of catchy, pop-influenced snapshots of personal highs and lows. With the record you get a spotlight blasting into a diary full of tell-no-one secrets with a meditative kind of quality that contrasts with boppy, hook-filled song structures. On stage however, Lisa Hunter can sing about these little scenes and tragedies totally relaxed and cheerful as a Moonie selling roses on a street corner. Telling jokes, and acting goofy oddly enough works in a live setting and the audience composed of obvious Lisa Hunter groupies (in the artistic sense) loved it. Is this face/stage act a triumph over the pain of the songs or a nervous veil that Hunter wears as she bares her soul in song? Probably a little of both. Either way Ms. Hunter is one of the more important singer/songwriters in Ann Arbor as we close out 1996.

With the death of music at Cava Java, there is new hope at the Main Street Espresso Royale Cafe. The coffee place has decided to seriously refocus on presenting live music. The plan now is for a six-month trial with the usual acoustic-influenced suspects. I caught another Thursday Records artist, Brian Lillie, for a Saturday night set and had mixed feelings about the venue. For Lillie, there was a pretty good crowd for a Saturday and the area near the stage seemed like the perfect spot to check out his music. But if you don't show up early and get stuck over by the coffee bar, good luck. Those damn espresso machines make way too much noise and mess with the musical ambience. That didn't seem to bother Lillie though. While singing mostly tunes from his debut recording of last year, a pair of new songs, one called

"Bad Advice," a low key, introspective number about failing to listen to your soul, and another about his grandfather (a pilot during WW II), which became a folk crowd-participation-sing-along, shows that his CD was no fluke. And his carefully picked covers and references to Dylan, Springsteen and Lyle Lovett are evidence of the kind of performer Brian Lillie wants to be — an artist seeped in the American rock-influenced tradition with one eye on telling small truths and the other on having an audience join in.

Unfortunately, good news travels fast. I attempted to pop into The Gypsy Cafe for the Jen Cass and Friends tape release party last month but ... by ten o'clock, the small club was jammed to the roof and even standing room was not an option. While I'm not one to whine for the days about how nice it was when the GC audience was half-a-dozen people and you could grab a table five feet from the stage and how amazingly hip you were to have found such a place ahead of the pack ... it appears that bigger venues are the next logical step in response to the growth in the local acoustic scene.

The idea of Michigan garage bands doing surf music in the 1990s is like watching a rerun of Happy Days — good, clean, dumb fun. There is nothing wrong with fun, of course, and over the past few years, this part of Michigan has been fertile ground for reverbing guitars and ethereal time-warped amphetamine-injected rock that flows from the roots of Dick Dale, The Ventures and hundreds of 60s groups who are probably all working in car washes now but at the time were creating slices, however obscure, of American rock and roll history. *Surfin' The Spillway* (Happy Hour Records) is a 17-tune collection of SURF'S UP kickin', campy, local delights. The Prodigals are maybe the best known group here with four instrumentals, but from The Silencers to the Lustre Kings, this CD is a dance party classic for anyone who thinks rock and roll has to have words or an inner meaning or a "purpose." The BEAT is the purpose, silly ... And you're not going to find any better surf music anywhere, unless you can come up with a time machine with its destination set for 1963.

On a final note, as a newspaper junkie it's been heartbreaking to watch the corporate fascists of Gannett and Knight-Ridder in their attempt to bust the unions involved in the strike against The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press that has gone on for well over a year. And, on a personal note, I ALWAYS toss in the trash anything any of you out-of-touch punks who are dumb enough to actually send me something to review with a QUOTE from one of the above scab papers — I'm funny that way. (Pre-strike quotes are OK ... just so you know). Having said that, be ready to mark Thursday, December 5th on your calendar and catch the All Star Benefit Concert for the 2,000 striking newspaper employees still out there struggling for justice, at The Ark, where for \$15 you can catch the very best of the local singer/songwriter scene. Dick Siegel, Frank Allison, Jay Stielstra, Audrey Becker, Lisa Hunter, Jo Serrapere, David Mosher, Jere Stormer, K.C. Groves, Chris Buhalis, drivetrain, and others will be using their songs to light a few candles in the darkness.

The View From Nowhere, 220 S. Main St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104; or e-mail to: Alannarbor@aol.com.

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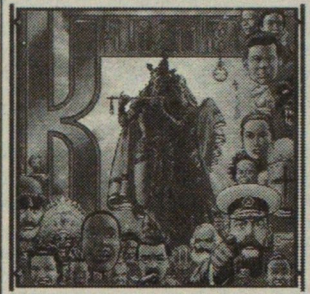
NEW RELEASES

By William Shea

Kula Shaker • K • Columbia

Over the past year or so Apple Records has released "The Beatles Anthology," a series of six CDs which ostensibly deliver a strong yet comprehensive review of the Beatles' recording career and a clear picture of their talents and influence on the entire popular music field since the 1960s.

Included is the first Beatle recording, demos by Lennon and McCartney, and studio out-takes of some of the best Beatle material. The scope of this collection is breath-taking. We hear raw renditions of "Hey Jude," "Strawberry Fields Forever," and "The Long and Winding Road," all in their infant stage.



But besides hearing the creative genius of the Beatles blossom and grow into the full bloom of the product we're all so familiar with, we also hear the influential power of the Beatles as exemplars of popular music. We hear the pop sensitivities, the rocking guitar licks, and jolting sonic blitzes that have come to define both rock and pop music as we know them today. In fact, one could argue that much of the music in rock and pop would be radically different if not for the musical doors opened by the Beatles.

It should not be surprising that it is in Great Britain where one hears much of the Beatles influence. Not to suggest that it started with the group Oasis, but they were one of the first groups to carry the pop instrumentation and vocal harmonies found in much of the Beatles' pop music to the states. Another British group which carries on this long musical tradition of the Beatles is Kula Shaker.

Kula Shaker is a quartet consisting of Crispian Mills, guitar, tamboura (son of famed movie star, Hayley Mills); Alonzo Bevan, bass, piano, tabla; Jay Darlington, organ; and Paul Winterhart,

drums. Their music is Beatle-esque in that it often combines the sounds (and philosophies) of Indian music with the rollicking sounds of the Hammond B-3 organ, the screaming wah-wah electric guitar, and a sprawling production by John Leckie. Laced with, to use their words, "a much needed dose of lysergic chemicals," the results could be a musical extension of the Beatles' "Helter Skelter"—loud, dissonant, driving and mystical. Couple this sonic perspective with their tight vocal harmonies and esoteric lyrics and one gets a very accessible and appealing recording.

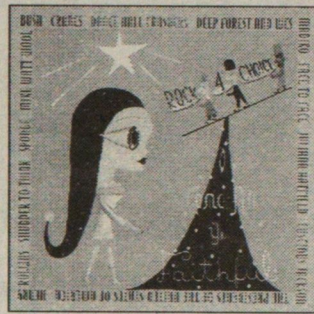
Although the entire CD is strong, two cuts stand out: the irreverent "Grateful When You're Dead (Jerry Was There)" and the brilliant "Tattva." The first sort of mixes Eastern mysticism with Grateful Dead mantra drone music and swirling psychedelia. It's as if the Dead had incorporated more Indian instrumentation and feelings into their extended jams—far out in oh so many ways. "Tattva" is again Eastern in flavor but is propelled musically by Western melodies and harmonies. The result is a very catchy tune imbued with idiosyncratic textures and sounds—à la the Beatles in their Maharishi period. If you have a friend looking for new, good and different pop music, pick this one up as a holiday gift.

Rock For Choice • O Come All Ye Faithful • Sony

Rock For Choice was founded in 1991 by the all-female rock band L7, music journalist Sue Commings, and the Feminist Majority Foundation. Since that time they have garnered support from the rock community, including members of Pearl Jam, Fishbone, Rage Against the Machine, David Byrne, Iggy Pop and others, and organized concerts to galvanize both the music community and fans in the support of abortion rights. Now they have released a CD featuring some of the best alternative music purveyors around. Entitled "O Come All Ye Faithful," this 13-song disc compiles the works of Henry Rollins, Sponge, Juliana Hatfield, Bush, Luscious Jackson, The Presidents of the United States, and others.

This should make a fine stocking-stuffer. It opens with a recitation by Henry Rollins of the seasonal chestnut "'Twas The Night Before Christmas." Replete with eerie sound effects—helicopters, missiles, and gun shots—it is a good representative piece of Rollins' poetic performance style. Dance Hall Crashers do a rocking number on their "I Did It For The Toys." It's loud, fast, just the thing to go with spiked egg nog.

Juliana Hatfield does a wonderful job on her "Make It Home"—raspy, melodic, touching, acoustic. Shudder To Think shows that a seasonal recording does not mean just Christmas. Their rendition of the traditional "Al Hanisim" is stunningly beautiful. Wool does a heavy version of their "Xmas It's Christmas." One has to love the line: "Another Christmas in LA, Another sunny day"—quite an alternative spirit. Bush's "Good King Something-othor" is a live recording sounding like an egg nog orgy. The slurred words of the opening carol slide into a ragged ren-

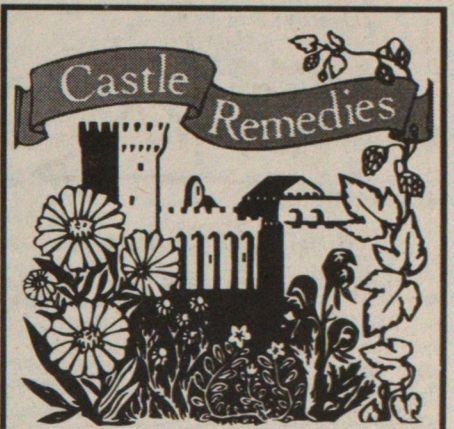


dition of "Hey Joe (Where You Going With That Gun In Your Hand)."

Luscious Jackson does a compelling job on their "Queen of Bliss." Sounding mid-Eastern in texture and incorporating some unusual rhythm patterns, this is perhaps the strongest musical piece of the recording. Mike Watt and The Crew of the Flying Saucer combine dual drummers and squealing dissonant guitar on their aberration called "The Little Drummer Boys." Probably the funniest cut on the CD is the Presidents of the United States Of America's "Christmas Piglet." Chanting "Holy Piglet, Ho-Ho-Ho" over and over again, the marching ragtime piano accompanying howling idiots makes for great fun.

Another strong cut is John Lennon's "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" sung by Cranes. Although the message of the tune is mixed (or is it?), this version is as strong as Lennon's original and a valued addition. Face To Face do a rather tipsy version of Elvis' "Blue Christmas." The harmonies waver slightly, but the two-step rhythm compels one to stare longingly into the eyes of one's partner as you sashay under the mistletoe. Deep Forest and Wes Madiko end the recording with a world music number entitled "Nemene." The production is luscious and the high-tenor harmonies are exquisite.

All in all, I'd recommend this fine recording to all your politically correct friends and to those who want to hear a very good holiday recording.



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Reading & Book Signing: Borders Books 7:30 pm, 612 E. Liberty. DON CANHAM will be on hand for a Q & A session about his book "From the Inside: A Half-Century of Michigan Athletics," the story of his 50 years from athlete to athletic director and how U-M rose to become a major contender in intercollegiate athletics. 668-7652

14 Saturday

Children's Hour: Borders Books 11 am, 612 E. Liberty. ANNETTE BOWMAN will be in the guise of the Winter Fairy to tell stories about the fun of the holiday season. 668-7652

Readings from the Harlem Renaissance: A2 District Library & Links, Inc. 2-4 pm, Main Library, Multi-Purpose Room, 343 S. 5th Ave. Poetry and readings from this vital era, as well as personal stories by members of the A2 Chapter of the Links, Inc. (a professional women's organization engaged in educational and intercultural activities). 994-2333

Slide Presentation: Shaman Drum Bookshop 8 pm, 315 S. State. This summer KARL POHRT, Shaman Drum's owner and founder, traveled with Dordogne cave-drawing expert and EMU Professor, CLAYTONESHLEMAN to Paleolithic cave sites in France. Come see the slides of the drawings and hear the two men talk about the history of the sites. "They are wildly beautiful, and they rekindle in the viewer a sharp sense of wonder about our place in the larger scheme of things," says Pohrt. 662-7407

CRIME MEMOIR

MY DARK PLACES

By James Ellroy
Knopf, 1996
360 pages, \$25

By Jamie Agnew
Owner of Aunt Agatha's

Im no New Critic — when I read I can't help but wonder how the text relates to the author's life — how much of it is "true." When I read James Ellroy I really have to wonder, mostly because it's no secret that his mother was murdered when he was ten.

When it was revealed that as an adolescent, Anne Perry had a hand in the killing of a friend's mother I was shocked. I would never have guessed, although now that I know, of course, I think I can see the cracks of an autobiographical pattern through the surface of her books' fictive veneer, the traces of the strategy she uses to deal with such a past. Perry's character William Monk is an amnesiac, and the more he remembers about his stranger self's history, the more unsettled he becomes. As she writes in

16 Monday

Reading: Guild House Writers Series 8:30 pm, 802 Monroe. JERRY MEREDITH will share his clever series of greeting cards and poet PAMELA GOLDEN will read her free verse. 913-4574

her latest novel in paperback, "Cain His Brother": "He had no idea what lay in his past beyond the last couple of years, and perhaps even more frightening than that, what lay in his character ... Memories of those awful moments were still there, buried in his mind, sometimes troubling his dreams."

But instead of trying to dam up the rush of the past by classifying it as an unknowable country when the self was another person, Ellroy has submerged himself in the crime and the time, aspects of it playing out in all his books, but never more so than in his new crime memoir, "My Dark Places." Like Sylvia Plath, another great writer who lost an opposite sex parent at the vulnerable age between separation and adulthood, Ellroy has made a mythology out of his trauma, worrying the primal wound into a magnificent scar which gives power and distinction to his corpus.

"My Dark Places" is divided into four distinct parts. The first is a Jack Webb just-the-facts style cop-eye view of Jean Ellroy's murder, young James (or Lee Earl as he was then known) glimpsed in the third person periphery

22 Sunday

Reading & Book Signing: Michigan Theater & Borders Books 1-3 pm, Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty. GARRISON KEILLOR and JENNY LIND NILLSON will be signing copies of their new book, "The Sandy Bottom Orchestra." This is a children's story

as a strangely unmoved ten year old. After cutting through a cross section of lower middle class 1958 California USA, the investigation grinds to an inconclusive halt.

The second part is by far the strongest. In it Ellroy unleashes his autobiography, as wild a beast as any of his fictions. With a cold eye and frightening honesty he reveals all his twisted inspirations and sublimations, exposing the deepest roots of his writing, his prose soaring and be-bopping to new heights. This is what his fans have been avid to read, and Ellroy doesn't fail them, testifying a true confession that fascinates even as its language astonishes.

The third part introduces Bill Stoner, the Homicide Detective assigned to the Unsolved. Ellroy presents Stoner as a prototypical Ellroy Cop, justice-driven and corpse-obsessed, a living, brilliant precis of contemporary LA crime.

The final part goes back into the first person, recounting Stoner and Ellroy's attempt to track down Jean's killer almost 40 years later. There's a second headlong race through the facts, faces and photographs of the case,

about Rachel Green and her eccentric parents. Her mother crusades against bad grammar and her father cries when he hears classical music. Rachel fears that she is becoming a nerd due to their influence. The book tells the story of how she grows up and grows away from childhood. 668-7652

this time with computers and 800 numbers, but it all hangs up into the same dead end.

In time, however, both Ellroy and the reader realize that the true mystery is not the identity of the putative killers, the "swarthy man" and his blond, pony-tailed accomplice, but the identity of Jean Ellroy herself. Unlike Plath who adored her father in life then grew ambivalent after his death, Ellroy disliked his mother at the time of her murder, preferring his slothful father and his negative vision of his ex-wife. It's only through his process of cognition and research that he's able to not simply despise or idealize her, but begin to see her something like she really was, and through the reflection of her into his own real self. For a writer who has resolutely charted the heroic and destructive aspects of male behavior, it's a breaking out of the female anima, a reconciliation of the warring parts of his nature and our culture.

Just as all fiction has an element of autobiography, so all autobiography has an element of fiction; in the end "My Dark Places" is an amazing, mind-blowing, unclassifiable, incredible fucking book. James Ellroy's audacity, poetry and veracity are unparalleled in contemporary writing and this book is a magic key, not only to his life and work, but to the mysteries of our dark and violent society as well.

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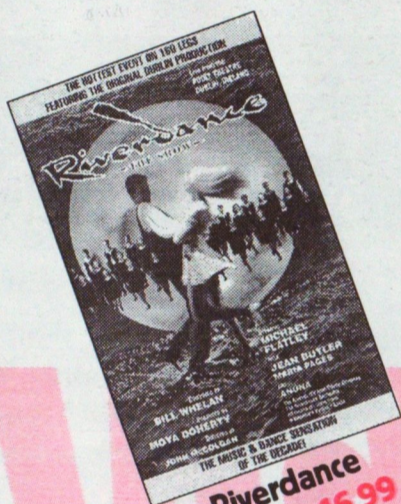
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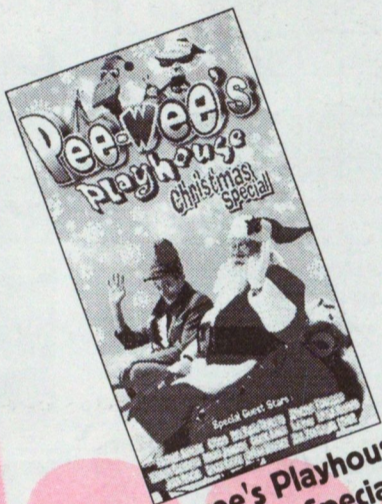
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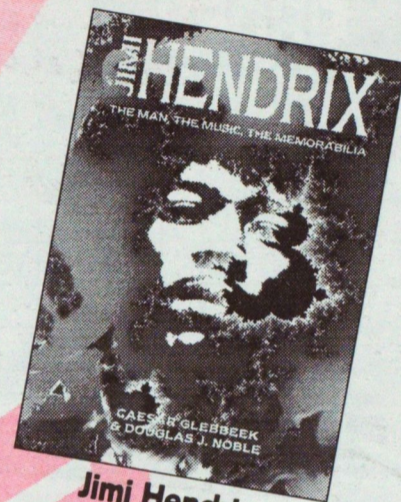
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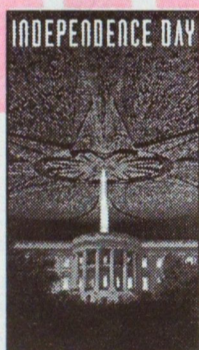
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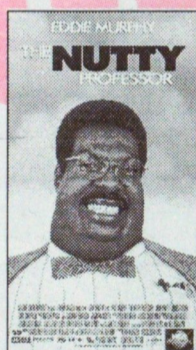
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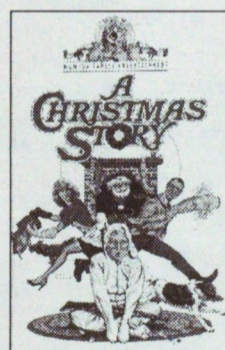
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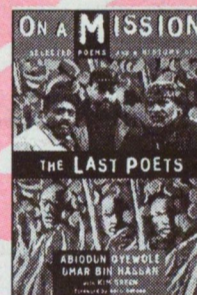
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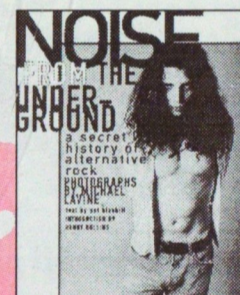
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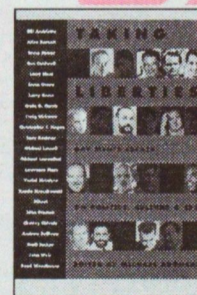
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