

East Village Beat Sarah and Nick are Mised Youth

BY PAULETTE POWELL

Sarah and Nick sit close together, all-American sweethearts. Nick is tall and handsome with sincere eyes. Sarah is a stunner with lily white skin and auburn hair that twists into Medusa curls. In a matter of minutes you begin to understand why their image of innocence is only an illusion. Sarah and Nick wage a David and Goliath war against institutional authority. Nick knows the struggle too well as it is his life experience that fuels their work, a grass roots organization and zine named Mised Youth, Teen Lobotomy.

Their story began when they met as freshmen at The High School of Environmental Science in Hell's Kitchen. They shared a taste in culture and music. "Nick was a bad influence," Sarah says as she laughs. And like most high school students they tested their boundaries. "He turned me on to Punk," she says, "and then we started skipping school."

Nick's mom became overly concerned, interpreting that as a warning. "My sister had a drug problem," says Nick. "My mom was scared that I could have the same problem." So she sent Nick where she had sent his sister, The Family Foundation,

all day. He was so badly sunburned his skin peeled off. That's not even the worst, some kids die," says Sarah. "There's a website at nospank.com that keeps a record of deaths that occur in youth rehabs and institutions."

Nick was at the Family Foundation for 16 months; finally he was allowed to leave the facility to have dinner with his Dad. For the first time

he was able to communicate to a parent the foundation's internal policies without fear. His Dad withdrew him and placed Nick in a summer wilderness program that focuses kids on physical endurance therapy. Afterward Nick was placed in a St Paul's prep school in Arizona to begin his senior year, far away from Sarah. All the while Sarah had no idea where he was. "I didn't know how he was doing, we were allowed no communication in any form. We felt we had no voice about our own lives."

Nick came home from St. Paul's for Christmas and announced to his parents he didn't want to return to the prep school; instead he wanted to finish school in NYC. "My parents said, 'It's only a few months, you can stick it out,' but I had enough so I ran away," says Nick.

Sarah hid Nick at her family home until she started to get calls from the police. "I would get calls from an officer telling me I could be charged with aiding and abetting a runaway," says Sarah, "so I found a place for Nick to stay in Albany with other artists, kind of like a commune." Nick adds, "I had about eight months before I turned 18, my parents came around and I was able to go home."

As soon as the couple reached legal age they became inseparable, using the pain of their experience to educate other kids and parents. "They called us misled youth, so we decided



'They called us misled youth, so we decided to take the name back and turn it into something positive by bringing kids together that have had similar experiences as we had and help focus the energy into creative art outlets, empowering kids to take control of their lives.'

a Christian organization based in Utah that specializes in behavior modification for troubled teenagers.

"I didn't have a drug problem, but because they helped my sister they manipulated my mom into believing they could help me," says Nick. "It was strange because when I first arrived, my sister was still there and they wouldn't let us talk to each other, it was called a Black Out. They even monitor your visits with your family. They control all communication. And if you break the rules one of the punishments was feeding you the same dinner over and over again. Once I had only oatmeal to eat for three weeks."

Nick's story wasn't that bad compared to some other kids. "One kid had very fair skin and was made to work out in the sun

take the name back and turn it into something positive by bringing kids together that have had similar experiences as we had and help focus the energy into creative art outlets, empowering kids to take control of their lives," says Sarah. "Who are [youth intuitions and programs] to say we are misled? I think given the opportunity we can lead better! Look what the previous generations have done to our society, really messing things up. They put us in institutions and use the excuse of how they are so afraid of kids turning out like Columbine High. Well the Columbine High School kids came from their fucking culture, not ours!"

What is their mission? Well their statement reads: "We as young people and as activists believe that we should have a voice in our own education and mental health decisions. To this end, we are focusing on challenging abusive institutions that fail to respect youths as full human beings. Beyond a few books and websites, organized action against these types of programs is virtually nonexistent. We are here to change that. The Mised Youth Network believes that the question of children's futures is not so much 'How can we make sure they're on the right path?' but rather, 'How can we ensure that both parents and children can make informed decisions in all aspects of education and mental health?'"

For more information visit www.mised-youth.org

The Man Inside the Black I Knew

BY CHARLES LAURENCE

Johnny Cash told me years ago that there had been a lot of misconceptions about his life, and we can only wonder what he would have made of *Walk the Line*, the new Hollywood version of his life and passionate romance with his wife June Carter. I have a hunch that he would have laughed—a rumble from the deep, rattling barrel of his chest—and then headed glowering to his fishing cabin in the hills. That was where the Man in Black went to wrestle with his demons, where even his family knew to leave him be. It is probably a good thing that Johnny and June are dead.

Let's start with the idea of Cash as the pious Christian, the kind of guy who would be quite at home in George Bush's Red America. Wrong. Dead wrong. Cash told me that the story of his being "born again" after winning his decade-long battle with amphetamine addiction was simply wrong.

"That's not so. I almost never go to church, don't enjoy it," he said. "But I never lost the faith I was raised with. It is my strength. It is just that, from time to time, I have lost my direction."

It was in losing "direction" that Cash met his demons and the battleground on which to fight them. It was a

saga cast as beer and dope versus family, violence versus country-living peace, and the devil versus God. This was and still is the language of most of America outside the big coastal cities—Red America—and is one that keeps the audience listening.

The version of his huge love for June—the Ring of Fire—that he told me did not have much to do with church. Already married, they both fell in love: the battle was with the devil, rather than God. June wouldn't have him until he had beaten drugs, and it was her love that gave him the strength to sober-up

Why the demons? "Hell, I don't know," he said, never much sold on the American penchant for self-analysis.

He said another misconception was that he carried the anger of the abused child raised in the poverty of the depression-era sharecropper. "I had a wonderful childhood," he said. "My parents never whipped me. We all had to work real, real hard, but we didn't know we were poor, and we loved each other."

Cash never shot anybody, despite the lyrics of his best known song, "Folsom Prison Blues." It is an anthem to raw Americana first because Cash really did understand the power of that lonesome, distant train whistle—he would lie awake as a child, hoping the train would bring his dad home from his latest efforts to find work and a few dollars—and partly because Cash could so easily imagine life as a loser and a criminal.

"You know, I'll tell you this," he said. "When I wrote that I shot a man in Reno and can't be free, I was imagining myself a criminal.

There is something inside me. If I weren't playing my guitar, I think I would be a criminal. Man, I came that close in the '60s when I was violent, on the amphetamines."

In the end, this was Cash's message: "Maybe it's in all of us. After all, most of us were losers, outsiders, when we had to leave England and find a new Country." How many Americans, from the President on down, know that that was what Cash really felt?

I met him in 1996 as he was making his comeback with the Rick Rubin-produced *American Recordings*. Stripped of the glitter and cant, Cash had no trouble connecting with a new generation.

Years after interviewing Cash I met Sam Phillips, whose Sun Records in Memphis made Cash a star alongside Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Elvis Presley. Phillips read my piece and paid me the huge compliment of saying it was the truest piece he had ever read on the character that really lived within the Man in Black. He should know, and I stand by my story.

Jack Kimball

Newton, Mass.

23.

**Not long ago I was a chimera re: investments.
Loved day to day, thick generation to generation.
These are the sounds of a true religion of departure.**

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Art Investigation
Slip

Christopher Stackhouse
Corollary Press



Featuring Japanese binding and a letter-pressed cover, Christopher Stackhouse's *Slip*, the inaugural publication from Sueyeun Juliette Lee's Corollary Press, presents a "Note/Thought" dialectic, a performance of transcription and reception filtering, and thus altering, thought. The thinking here is tethered to an investigative engagement with fundamental questions and conundrums of the plastic arts. Because it is with poetry that Stackhouse documents his work as an artist attempting to make sense of art, a sort of ecphrasis once removed, or a purposeful realignment of the senses.

There is a layered, evasive, yet deeply felt way in which meaning and thinking are married in Stackhouse's text. In fact two of the pieces are labeled as notes taken during lectures,

Moxley is an extremely ambitious poet and this is admirable. Her grandiose desire to create a completely inclusive poetic idiom puts her squarely in the post-avant camp.

those of Alain Badiou and Arthur Danto. Another is given the title, "Notes from a Panel Disc. @ The Fish Tank Gallery." "Untitled for John Cage" is composed entirely of quotations from Cage. Imagine if the strange density of Piet Mondrian's Plastic Art & Pure Plastic Art coupled with the singular lexicon of Wassily Kandinsky's Point and Line to Plane were used as source material for one of the investigative projects of Ed Sanders. Imagine it as the halfway point to describing what Stackhouse does. —NOAH ELI GORDON

Outside the Poet's Gut

The After-Death History of My Mother

Sandy McIntosh

Marsh Hawk Press

The showcase piece of this book, a long sequence titled "Obsessional," is remarkable for yoking an engaging Elizabethan literary detective story to a personal narrative about life as a grad school poet. Even more impressive than this set-up actually succeeding is the way McIntosh is able to tie compassion to dagger-thrust humor. If that's what "obsessional" poetry is—personal narrative of neurosis that is aware a world exists outside the poet's gut, and is not afraid to tell a joke—maybe it will catch on among those still in the stranglehold of the confessional.

The ending sequence is balanced at the front of the book by the title sequence, composed of memorial lyrics and anecdotes in prose and free verse, at once touching and chilling. With pieces about David Ignatow, Allen Ginsberg, and H. R. Hayes the book leaves a haunting lasting impression, like the poet's mother in "The Hospital Chair"—"She touches you

and tells you you are healed/ and may go home," but also warns "No one know what will happen/ when I leave my tomb in the night/ to touch you." —BRIAN CLEMENTS

You Have to Believe

A Magic Book

Sasha Steensen

Fence Books

A Magic Book, Sasha Steensen's first collection of poetry, and winner of Fence Books' 2004 Alberta Prize, maps the "magic" blur of the American "sleight-of-hand." A palimpsest of cultural memory threshing against the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't of contemporary politics—a perfect marriage of anxiety and greed that maintains a kind of fidelity to hysteria and historicity. The ensuing slippage looks something like a snake oil salesman sweating Puritan anxiety, ducking for cover as Steensen's language ricochets off his slicked back hair:

Errand #4

Sail (or sell or buy) as much of the shore as possible, or steal, preferably steal. We were to become the biggest producers of steel in the world, the biggest in a thousand senses.

All of those

grandfathers worked in that big mirrored building to make sure I

could have my metal, which brings me to errand #4:

Make sure we are in a position to mettle.

Steensen troubles the relationship between authenticity and appropriation, faith and naivety, in order to reflect the spectacle against its grotesque silhouette. All of this reminds the reader that often with "astonishment," what-you-see-is-never-really-what-you-get: She's at the head of the table conjuring voices that sound suspiciously like our own. And this ain't tricky ventriloquism, even if she "magically" articulates the pitch of our voices in the movement of her lines. Look closer, you only think you know how the trick works. —MICHAEL CROSS

Middle of the Road

Often Capital

Jennifer Moxley

Flood Editions

American poetry is split down the middle, hanging on the radically divergent aesthetic identities of two camps—post-avant and Official Verse Culture (OVC). It would take a strong poet indeed to stand in the middle and balance these seemingly contradictory approaches, fulfilling the criteria for post-avant and OVC at once. Such a poet would have to be personal but not sentimental, experimental/risky but not frivolous, ironically earnest and earnestly ironic. I believe Jennifer Moxley has become such a poet, but, for my money, *Often Capital*, a repackaging of two of her mid-'90s chapbooks, misses the mark.

It must first be stated that Moxley has released two other, excellent books, which were written subsequently and strike the magic balance. *Often Capital*, however, has caused quite a stir and is being heralded as an "important" text. Unfortunately the arguments for the "importance" of this text have more to do with its style than with its substance; with what it could be rather than what it is.

Moxley is an extremely ambitious poet and this is admirable. Her grandiose desire to create a completely inclusive poetic idiom puts her squarely in the post-avant camp. No worn-out tropes for her, no self-indulgent wallowing, smarmy confessions, or sappy epiphanic reveries. Moxley's great weakness is an inability to show rather than tell, to fulfill the "palpability

quotient" that good poetry needs to satisfy. "Showing not telling" is one of the great clichés of OVC, and can be carried to extremes, but,

There is a detailed concision of what amount to filmic stills, or, in Wilkinson's own words, a 'Green ashtray at the knot of her elbow filled with menthol butts.'

as with all great clichés, it includes more than a grain of truth. "Objective correlatives" bring poems to life when mere language leaves us starving for more. —ADAM FIELED

Eye, Eye

SleepingFish, Issue 0.75

Derek White, ed.

Calamari Press

If *Exquisite Corpse*, *Fence*, or even *Chain* is your idea of an eclectic journal that encourages you to redefine your concept of "poem," "text," and "journal," then prepare to have *SleepingFish* shake that idea too. Perhaps rivaled only by *Diagram* in diversity of content, this journal dispenses with preconceived notions about what is "literary" in favor of texts and images that revel in the pleasure and difficulty of designing and seeing. Even the most accessible works in issue 0.75, such as prose poems by Sean McLain Brown, Peter Connors, and Daryl Scroggins, share a visual/cinematic centering with Mexican visual poetry, smoke drawings by Stephen Hopkins, static cinema by Selah and Noah Saterstrom, and schematic texts by Kristin Prevallet and Chris Fritton. It is quite difficult to tear your gaze from the work, and even from the expertly designed book itself, with some of the best cover art around (by editor Derek White). *SleepingFish* 0.75 is all about the eye and the mind's eye; lucky our eyes have it. —BC

Sudden Bursts of Melody

Suspension of a Secret in Abandoned Rooms

Joshua Marie Wilkinson

Pinball Publishing

If one considers narrative to merely be an accrual of the constituent moments one has selected to represent and to simultaneously create and carry a story, however fractured or laced with discontinuity it may be, then one must call Joshua Marie Wilkinson a narrative poet. But Wilkinson's narrative is buoyed not by what happens next, by the linear progression of plot, or the cathartic release of pseudo-profound epiphanies.

It is his uncanny ability to incorporate moments of radical empiricism within the field of his serial works, with their melding of voice and voice-over; the detailed concision of what amount to filmic stills, or, in his own words, a "Green ashtray at the knot of her elbow filled with menthol butts." These sudden bursts of melody are played on a landscape of textured static, of clear pronouns and the pleasantly opaque "I is Other" of Arthur Rimbaud tethered to Emily Dickinson's "I'm Nobody!" backed by a cavalcade of guest starring musicians, painters, poets, family members, locations, and the unlocatable, shifty sphere of time itself. Wilkinson is a filmmaker, a musician, a culture worker, an archivist, an abstract realist, and ultimately a wonderfully reverent pluralist, and I'm only talking about his poetry. —NEG

ORDERING/INFO

Stackhouse, www.corollarypress.blogspot.com

McIntosh, www.marshhawkpress.org

Steensen, www.fencebooks.com

Moxley, www.floodeditions.com

SleepingFish, www.calamariypress.com

Wilkinson, www.pinballpublishing.com

Happy Holidays

Give the Gift of Music (No One's Ever Heard Of) A Return to New Releases from Old Features

BY JONATHAN BERGER

Brer Brian

Signal to Noise

Brer Brian is a musical genius. What he plays sounds good. Brer Brian is a social buffoon. What he says sounds dumb. He's a pitch perfect example of an idiot savant. His latest solo album, *Signal to Noise*, is packaged in newspaper, produced on a shoestring, and released on a budget so frugal you'd think the artist was homeless. The packaging is a mess. Inside is something a bit more interesting.

As always the music is splendid. The melodies he creates (or appropriates) stay floating through you for months afterwards. Sometimes the lyrics are funny. In "They Kicked Me Out of Electroclash," Brian sings "I'm too old to be a club kid." More often, though, the lyrics try to be funny and fail. And far too often the lyrics don't try to do much of anything. "They Cost Too Much," a rhythm about cigarettes, makes the point in the title over and over again above a keyboard riff that is great, for the first eight minutes, but then begins to wear on you (really the song lasts for less than four-and-a-half minutes, it just feels so much longer). It's just a riff, the beginning of an idea. Sometime near the end of "They Cost Too Much" it sounds like the recording was stopped, then started again, as if the engineer accidentally switched the equipment off, then caught himself.

Signal to Noise is filled with these perplexing touches. "A Lament for Collective Unconscious," a screed against gentrification, features a faux drunken chorus—or is it? They repeat a verse, and it sounds sort of like an accident. This is true lo-fi, like a kid with some new toys on a rainy day. Perhaps this is how Brian finds his inspiration, but is it necessary for us to hear it?

All told, the album sounds like home demos that could be made into something quite good if someone made the effort. Based on the glorious work put into the earlier *Springtime on Planet Love*, Brer Brian could have made the effort, but he didn't.

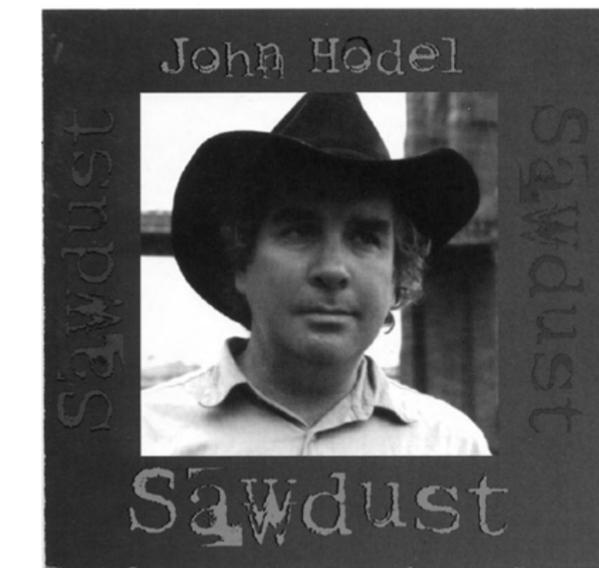
John Hodel

Sawdust

Hard-living open mic veteran John Hodel has finally dropped his debut EP, with seven original tracks produced by Jack Grace. It's been a long time coming, some 25 years after Hodel began visiting songwriting circles, playing out, and experimenting with the ways words work.

It's rare for a John Hodel song to tell a direct story. A dozen people can interpret his allusive imagery a hundred ways. And because the music is so stark, so basic, it is the lyrics that people

focus on.



focus on.

Producer Grace does what he can to add attention to the music, working to fix the warble in Hodel's voice, or keeping him at the whisper that makes him sound something like Dire Straits's Mark Knopfler. It distances the distraction often caused by Hodel's singing, allowing the listener to spend time making sense out of lines like "He learned how to live at the speed of Time Magazine" (from "Whitebread Boy"), or "Her ceiling goes

all the way to Mars; One time a star dropped in" (from "In Her Grey Room").

Expert instrumentation is added by Grace and Neil Thomas's accordion. And while guest vocalists help sweeten the sound, it's still very much a minimalist effort, probably best for those who want to interpret the imponderables in Hodel's twisted head.

Misterlee

Night of the Killer Longface

Lee Allatson, singer, songwriter, producer, and prime architect of the very British Misterlee, generates gypsy recordings of sounds over lyrics that were, according to the band's press release, "made from bubble gum sticker slogans." These songs have an acoustic heart, but include electric guitar, violin, studio manipulation, and samples, which creates something very strange and vaguely horrifying. The sonic palate is wide and weird, and curiously pretty appetizing.

The songs' names give little clue as to what you're getting into. Titles like "Job on a Bike" fail to represent what is to come—the story of a solar battery-powered first person narrator who transforms into 11 demon cats at the hands of the devil. Or the album opener, "The Caligula Waltz," which explains, "Yeah, and that song you heard? It contained a holy word. In fact, there were two—but then I may have missed a few." What's he talking about? The math involved alone boggles the mind.

The ecstatic tin-pot orchestration and moody singing paint absurdist images of sadness. Take the poppy apocalyptic

The harmonica and banjo in Semerdjian's 'Siren Song' have a country feel but somehow end up feeling particularly poppy. The up-tempo, optimistic 'Only Gets Better' sounds like early Joe Jackson, before he got too pretentious.

"Black Soul," which throws self-loathing images on top of a percussive beat that leaves you dancing directly into

the inferno. Representative of the lyrics on this very dark cut are "Hear the wind that sings, but the words are not right," which sounds like a perfect description of the album as a whole.

Alan Semerdjian

When There Was Something Wrong With You (Songs 2002-2005)

Alan Semerdjian, former leader of the '90s alt-pop band Surreal, has been mixing up indie-folk, free jazz, alt-country, and Armenian punk for years. His latest collects 16 songs and clocks out right around when most CDs explode. At 75 minutes this release is certainly full of music. Tastefully played, well-organized, filled with excellent musicians and a strong singer, there's a wealth of good songs in the collection.

With this variety of style and content it's hard to absorb all of it, even after repeated listens. The cuts that immediately jump out are those that seem to take themselves less seriously. "Josie" and "Siren Song," two fast-paced numbers, are each a joy to hear. The harmonica and banjo in "Siren Song" have a country feel but somehow end up feeling particularly poppy. The up-tempo, optimistic "Only Gets Better" sounds like early Joe Jackson, before he got too pretentious. "Waitress" is a dance folk song about the archetypal hot waitress. There's some jazzy vocal styling that stands on the precipice of "too far," but that's the risk of experimentation.

All in all, *When There Was Something Wrong With You (Songs 2002-2005)* is an enjoyable release, like a greatest hits collection of someone you've never heard of.

Dibs

Slivers and Bits

Dibson Hoffweiler, formerly of Dibs and Sara, currently in Huggabroomstik and Cheese on Bread, has the best low-budget packaging in the world. A single sheet of cardboard has been folded into an informative envelope with no excess, and no cuts. The cover art and song listings are generated from wood cuts, adding a homey quality to the affair before you even play the CD.



And then there's the music, which is quirky and curious, and quite interesting. The recordings flesh out his traditional solo sound. "Walkways" starts off as a rollicking guitar and drum song, but builds into a rock symphony, a perfect bit of pop orchestra. The expansive mood grows into the following song, the electronic-sounding "Wine."

Dibs is a consummate collaborator, playing in many more bands than those listed earlier, and many friends return the favor by joining him on *Slivers and Bits*. The leaders of Double Fantasy, Dream Bitches, Huggabroomstik, Cheese on Bread, and the Morningsides all show up to pay respect and add parts to this nine-song release.

Engineer Dashan Coram seems to have smoothed out many of the rough edges of Dibs's performance. The vocals, never the artist's strong suit, are recorded particularly well. Between the great packaging and the intriguing innards, Dibs presents a fascinating gift, whatever the occasion.

Soce the Elemental Wizard

The Lemonade Incident

These days, everybody's talking about Miri Ben-Ari, this hot new hip-hop violinist; but last summer, we featured another Jewish rapper who plays violin. The multi-talented Soce the Elemental Wizard has just released his follow-up to *I'm in My Own World*, and he continues to put all his cards on the table.

"A lot of people ask me, 'what's JGWMC?' Well, I am the Jewish Gay White MC," he explains in "HATAH," which comes after the opening "I Am (So Gay)" and "SD (Sucking Dick)," which uses fellatio as a metaphor for social subservience.

"At least I own up to it," he explains in the coda to "SD"; "Everybody sucks dick one way or another, when you're like, 'Hey! I love your shit.' Buy my fucking album. I think you know what I'm talkin' 'bout. And if you don't know, check out greathiphop.com."

The clever, Ivy-educated New Hampshire native uses the tropes of hip-hop but turns them on their collective ear, all in a danceable package.

"Same 3 Spots" features an infectious recorder solo, and speaks about Soce's current rut. He says he hasn't recorded new material in a while, but "it doesn't matter, 'cuz it's never enough. I could become a better rapper, but I'll never be tough."

The album features increased painful honesty about his sexuality, his addictions (video games and IM'ing), and his loneliness. The closing tracks reprise "SD" as a violin and piano piece, making the story less funny and more aching. The final song, "Sad and Lonely," tells the tale of how isolated Soce feels in the world. It's symphonic, epic, and makes you want to stamp along, until you take in the lyrics.

Soce again subverts his chosen medium. He raps, he sings, he plays most of the parts, he produces, and he wears a silly magician's hat at his frequent shows. Soce the Elemental Wizard covers as many bases as possible, but then, what else would you expect from a Jewish Gay White MC?

ORDERING/INFO Brer Brian www.olivejuicemusic.com, www.brerbrrian.com **John Hodel** www.cdbaby.com **Misterlee** www.misterlee.co.uk **Alan Semerdjian** www.alanarts.com, www.cdbaby.com **Dibs** www.dibson.net/dibs/, www.antifolk.net **Soce the Elemental Wizard** www.greathiphop.com

Florencia Böhlingk

Buenos Aires and Misiones Jungle, Argentina



About the Artist

Böhlingk's large paintings relate to scenes of life in nature. Using Latin American and naïve language her landscapes contain mysteries, the discomfort of us being rare characters. She has had numerous solo shows in Argentina and was part of a group show in Hogar collection in 2004. Her work is part of the Arte BA collection in Buenos Aires, as well as many private collections. In 1994 she received Guillermo Kuitka's artist scholarship in Buenos Aires.

Bicycles Are the Answer A Socio-Cultural History of the Bicycle in NYC

BY MATT LEVY

Any person with a dash of desire, a pinch of personality and that extra oomph of energy knows that the best way to experience New York City is by bicycle: it has always been and will always be the way of two wheels. New Yorkers have a surfeit of options to make our way around, but none carry the zing of biking.

Stomping on sidewalks with our own two feet is the simplest and safest way to get around town, but it just takes too damn long to walk everywhere. We take pride in riding the subway—the veins and arteries of the city and the transit of true democracy—but there's nothing to see down there! Cars have become disgusting hulking giants, clogging lanes and guzzling gas, and we pedal-pushers know that our adrenaline will outlast any fossil fuel. No, it is the bicycle that, having transported riders safely and surely for over a century, is the method of transportation dearest to our hearts, the trip that provides the most visceral thrill over any roller coaster ride in a taxi.

Bicycles have also acted as a definitive social marker on the streets of our magnificent city. The first bicycles, known as Velocipedes (Latin for "fast foot"), were built entirely out of wood, with pedals protruding out from the front wheel and no freewheeling mechanisms at all. They started to hit the streets of major metropolitan areas, including New York, in the early 1860s. They were more of a fad than a mode of transportation. Any rider attempting to navigate a crowded cobblestone street or dusty dirt road would instantly understand the bike's nickname—"Boneshaker."

With the advances in metallurgical sciences all-steel bicycles were developed at the end of the 1870s. With these came solid rubber tires, long wheel spokes, and lighter-weight machines. And finally, the emergence of an actual two-wheeled apparatus: the high-wheel bicycle, with its enormous front wheel and tiny back one. Riders realized that the larger the front wheel, the farther one could

travel with a singular rotation of the pedal.

As a development in the science of bicycle riding, this two-wheeled wonder was a tremendous step in putting the population on bikes. Still, that population was only the top five percent of the city. The disparity of wealth was enormous in Gilded Age America, and bicycles were mostly used as a movable metaphor for the haves versus the have-nots.

Keep in mind that women were not allowed on these peculiar contraptions, as it was thought to be absolutely unthinkable to allow one of those lower members of society to purport



themselves, hoop skirts, corsets, and all, on such a tall, ungainly, vibrating machine. So next in line for the ladies of the time were high-wheel tricycles, allowing the women of the wealthy to ride in style without fear of embarrassment or social faux pas.

Finally, in 1888 a Scottish veterinarian named John Dunlop invented the pneumatic or inflatable tire, and this was the pump heard 'round the world. A comfortable, safe, low-to-the-ground, somewhat lightweight, and fashionable way to commute to work, home, or the saloon. Women, who had previously been confined to the adult tricycle, now had the capacity to go anywhere their bicycles could take them while still wearing the long skirts

demanding by social mores. The development of the bicycle forced the abandonment of the bustle and corset, and Emma Goldman in 1896 said that "the bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world."

Throughout the 20th century bikes had their place on the social register. With the advancement of automobiles and the Roaring Twenties they faded, but during the 1930s Depression there was a renewed source of interest. New York was a car town from the '40s through the '60s. Thanks to the tireless efforts of master planner Robert Moses, the best way to get around the city was via automobile. The funding for the subway was constantly being slashed, the bicycle was an unsafe method of transport and simply not as fashionable as an American built car. But in the '70s with the depressed economy, an unsafe subway, and the city in ruins, the bicycle saw an upturn in use, especially as a job itself, as bicycle messenger employment services exploded in the late 1970s and early '80s.

Now with the city in healthy service again, the population up, and New York rightfully asserting its preeminence among the world's top cities, bicycling has become a full-fledged cause for celebration as well as a truly proletarian role.

Especially in a world fast approaching gas and oil depletion, riding a bicycle is the answer. We have bicycle lanes on all four East River bridges, and the recently completed north-face route of the Manhattan Bridge is bicycle only and glorious. The seven-year long project of completing a "greenway" for bicycles completely surrounding the island of Manhattan is 95 percent finished, with only the East Side stretch between 34th and 59th streets

The monthly Critical Mass ride has been threatened by the NYPD, who seem to believe that the ride is just a bunch of Anarchists attempting to take over the streets just to infuriate drivers and politicians.

yet to be completed due to U.N.-related security concerns.

Transportation Alternatives, Recycle-a-Bicycle, and community groups hold skill shares almost every night of the week. Local non-threatening bicycle gangs host all-day bike carnivals and other bike-related clubs hold group rides. There are bicycle film festivals here in NYC, bicycle parties, bike-themed art exhibits, and, of course, the monthly Critical Mass ride, confounding drivers and thrilling pedestrians on the last Friday of every month since 1993.

Lately though, the monthly Critical Mass ride has been threatened by the NYPD, who seem to believe that the ride is just a bunch of Anarchists attempting to take over the streets just to infuriate drivers and politicians who can't "control" the ride. Although some of our more zealous riders might take this charge as their crusade, it is in no way accurate and even less equal to the over-zealous "safety concerns" of the NYPD, who have been rough-handling cyclists and arresting participants who did nothing more than exercise their right to free speech.

There are a number of lawsuits between the city and bicycle advocacy group Times Up. Nothing is going to be settled anytime soon, but one thing's for sure: our right to ride and adrenaline levels will outlast the police forces trying to force us off the streets. So remember, if the cops are getting you down or in cuffs for practicing your right to ride, know that you've got a whole lot more riding for you than the Victorian Boneshakers of the 1860s.

Ian Hart art

This page will be a good hodge-podge, I hope, of lefty politics, with a special consideration for local goings-ons. If you'd like to contribute, drop me a line, and I'll add you to the monthly call for submissions.

Give a peace of your mind.

**—Deanna Zandt, politics editor
deanna@notanalternative.net**

Shappy Astoria, Queens Attack of the Clones

George Bush
Please stop the war
Because I hate it
I hate the war
I hate all wars
Except for Star Wars
Which totally RULES!
Like a dictator rules
Which is what you are, George
A dick-tater
>>>

You are evil-like Darth Vader
But you don't look as cool as Darth Vader
He wore a black mask-like death
Which is what you are, George
Death
You wear a mask to hide your evil
Only it is not as cool and shiny as Darth Vader's
It is chipped and dented
Like the Millennium Falcon
Han Solo used to drive the Millennium Falcon
Until Boba Fett turned him in to Jabba the Hutt
for a bounty
Jabba the Hutt is a fat, slimy businessman who lives
in a cave
Like Dick Cheney
Jabba the Hutt surrounded himself with bounty hunters
and evil robots and naked alien chicks
>>>

Just like you and Dick Cheney
George Bush doesn't care about Sand People!
And I hate to ruin the whole Star Wars Trilogy for you
George but in the end the evil empire is toppled!
And although I bet you are thinking I am talking about
Iraq, I'm actually talking about YOU and your
administration, George!
The rebels win, George!
Those stupid peace-loving rebels WIN!
And you can appoint as many Jar Jar Binks as you want in the
senate but it's not gonna stop the rebels from
WINNING!
We got Yoda on our side, bitch!
All you got is some smelly old man in a robe who kills
people like your father!
Which is why I love Star Wars
But not wars in General... Grievous?
>>>

Jon Leon

Raleigh, N.C.

A Taste For Tar & Banners

The some musics
succeed in inciting
the public to assembly
this hardly
makes up for
colloquial
manipulation

the sectarian nature
of erection and disenchantment

Painting, the illusory menace, even further
down in its attention to leisure
"creativity" and "inspiration"

*Abstract Boats, Slum Castles,
Lonely Subway Rider's* of L. Bibel
being extraordinary exceptions of
the *American Way*

And yet it was a time
borne of rough context
no need to return, ruminate
for we are now as then
rife with possible content

Cool desire hot want
well-behaved workers get
naught

Christina Strong

Somerville, Mass.

As if wish flying

Broadway... Gordon ...or aren't there enough

THINK permute shoes & make from you — or shake my head re. pg 6.

Doc en space: wave backwards — screen it now or it's going to jiggle
make pretty and smile... of you stood out

poetry not a dog biscuit — grab see up a painter with a mascara
wand be taken away or watch fantasy as art as commerce dust pertain

at first won't notice... change of character a nickel rows caught up

cool marm in for phony tempo of 60 slow down to careen

down hallway still see blips, save ire et tu clan?

think of coddle ended: turn to host

Tanya Larkin

Somerville, Mass.

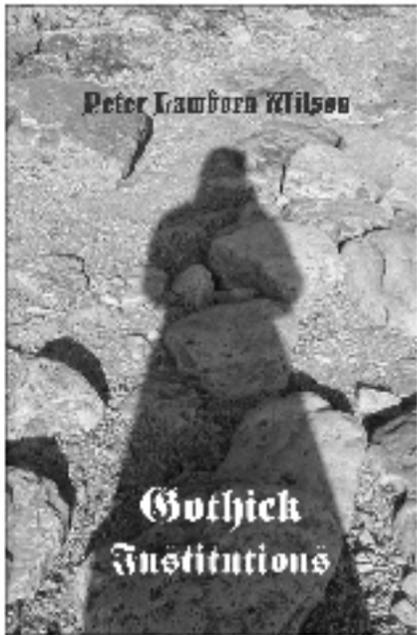
Best That I Bleed

Since every note cannot be
a dying one I throw down the key
in a sock and sing all the way up
petty fury pet dark the shutters are red
and the bridge is black it grows
from my chest raging fate and health
as it breaches toward the future
then demurs like breath to find you

Always on your way a chance of rain
in your step and wolves in your sack
tossed high on a bounce and falling
on your shoulders with a soft melodic
thud that sets your blood to bark
how now young smell? your nose
in its skirts like a fat country priest
convulsed by a wraith of sweet decay

All along the hinterland an underbrush
moan cuts you loose from the crowd
free to roll in shit maybe even your own
while your good doggy death drifts
high above you light as a castrato born
aloft the bravos and helpless shivers
carried up like a baby on a jet of water
swaddled in spume tickled by mist

Whereas my name in your mouth is all
the applause I need to drag a bustle
through the sand and at the window watch
the sadness of a thousand stoops explode
what else but traffic combs through
coked-up like a sea that leaves you
standing sucking the salt from a scab
though the sign says walk



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 SOUND ON A COLLISION COURSE”
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 PERFORMING, TO A PERSONAL
 PORTRAYAL THAT IS A VIRTUAL
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