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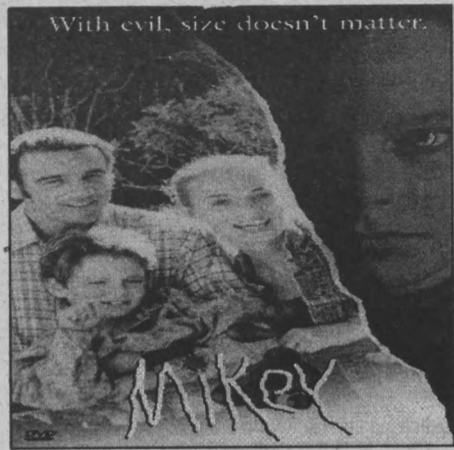
artsweek

mad bad videos | summer music wrap up | calendar | a tribute | jon reiss and "better living through circuits"

almost famous

highway to hell

descending into the wild world of
rock superstardom, p.3A



straight to video classics

MIKEY LIKES IT!
A CHILD ACTOR SALVAGES HIS ART. AND ARTSWEEK TAKES A GOOD, LONG LOOK AT MIKEY

review | trey

From the wild opening sequence to the foreboding conclusion, "Mikey" is a spotlight on the talents of young Brian Bonsall. Bonsall, if you'll remember, played Andy on the "Family Ties" TV show. "Mikey" is no light family sitcom, however, and the role of Mikey is no Olsen sister, smile-'til-it-hurts kiddie crap. Bonsall proves to be up to the task very

early in the film. The very first scene shows 10-year-old Mikey murdering his foster family one by one. First, he tricks his sister into following him onto the swimming pool diving board. While she sits at on the edge, he jumps up and down until she falls in. Mikey looks on with an angry scowl, watching her drown.

Next, he finds his fine-looking mother taking a bath. There just happened to be a hairdryer plugged in nearby, so Mikey

throws it in after a quick bout of trash talking. His father comes home a little later, and after being booby-trapped,

but it becomes classic after Mikey is asked by his new foster dad if he likes to pitch. Mikey, smiling, responds, "Yeah, but I'm a better hitter!" And all of this takes place in the first 15 minutes of the movie.

There are countless other beautiful moments throughout "Mikey," making for a completely enjoyable film. Bonsall took the cuteness and innocence he learned from his days as Andy and incorporated that into his Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality as Mikey, proving his total command over his acting art. He must have felt that he could never top such a wonderful performance because he never acted again. [Trey Clark]

“THERE JUST HAPPENED TO BE A HAIRDRYER PLUGGED IN NEARBY, SO MIKEY THROWS IT IN”

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ON THE KOOL-AID BUS

CAMERON CROWE'S LATEST BOY-MEETS-GIRL MOVIE IS ALMOST FAMOUS

review | brady golden

Ask anyone to list the movies they like to watch after a breakup, and I'll bet that at least one of their answers (at least from people whose breakup flicks do not consist entirely of pornos) will be a Cameron Crowe film. I have two on my list: "Say Anything" and "Singles." Crowe has an uncanny knack for the sweet and sentimental. No one can tell saccharine love stories the way he can. He pushes the easiest tear-jerking buttons, yet somehow manages to keep his films from feeling cheesy or stupid. He's done it again with the heartwarming, goose-bump-fest "Almost Famous." This time, Crowe tackles (relatively) new territory.

"Almost Famous" is an unconventional love story in that it is not expressly about the love between a boy and a girl (although that story *is* in there); it's the story of a love affair between a boy and his music. William Miller (Patrick Fugit) is a rock 'n' roll obsessed 15-year-old in 1973 whose amateur writings for the school paper land him a job with *Rolling Stone*. His first assignment is to write a piece on the band Stillwater. The magazine sets him up with a seat on their tour bus, and he's off on a veritable Mr. Toad's Wild Ride: journeying from city to city on a run-down bus, partying with celebrities and watching concerts from backstage. While most of the band members refuse to talk to William (journalists are "The Enemy"), Stillwater's guitarist Russell Hammond (Billy Crudup) takes William under his wing. In doing so, he reveals to William many aspects of the band's life that it

might not want written in the world's most important music magazine. William also develops a close bond with Stillwater's number one "band aid" (a romanticized version of a groupie), Penny Lane (Kate Hudson), who is deeply in love with Russell, or at least the *idea* of Russell. Imagine all the trouble that could ensue. And does.

"Almost Famous" is a story to which anyone who has ever dreamed of rock stardom (and I think that's just about everyone) can relate. It's about the conflict between integrity and the desire to be cool, the nature of rock stars as pop icons and as people, and a slew of other ideas and

“ARROGANTLY PARADING AROUND, PARTYING LIKE CRAZY, GETTING IT ON”

themes, all of which are presented in an amusing and easily understandable manner.

Fugit's portrayal of the dorky, young, fan-boy William is probably the least impressive acting in the film, and I mean that in the best possible way: All the other acting is phenomenal. Fugit doesn't do much onscreen, but since he is more the audience's window into the rock 'n' roll world than an actual participant, he doesn't *need* to do

much.

Crudup gives complexity to the character of Russell Hammond, a character who could easily have been misplayed as a stereotype. Although he spends most of the film doing rock star things — arrogantly parading around, partying like crazy, getting it on with the "band aids" — there is a sense of the most deeply repressed regret in every line he delivers and every doped-up grin he flashes.

Kate Hudson is simply angelic as the mysterious Penny Lane. She lights up every scene she's in, both for the other characters and the audience.

Period pieces, particularly those that take place in the second half of the 20th century, rarely do well. Often times they end up being tongue-in-cheek, with lots of "Hey, remember bell bottoms? Weren't bell bottoms funny?" cracks that really serve no purpose. Although "Almost Famous" does fall into this trap a couple of times, for the most part Crowe's approach is a reverent one. "Almost Famous" is a semi-autobiographical film, and often times feels like Crowe's tribute to the music and musicians with whom he grew up. He loves the period far too much to get kitschy with it.

"Almost Famous" is probably the most touching film that you will be able to see this year. I might have to add this one to my breakup movie roster, but that probably wouldn't make too much sense: "Oh, I miss so-and-so, but *you'll* never leave me, *will* you, '70s rock 'n' roll?"

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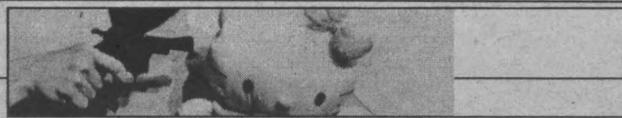
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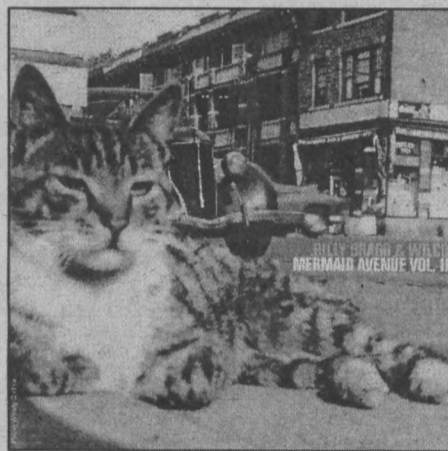


Summer may have come and gone, but these releases will be here forever. We couldn't bear to not inform the public about these good and bad releases



Jurassic 5 | *Quality Control* | Interscope

Probably the most-hyped group of the New Age West Coast underground, Jurassic 5 explodes into the mainstream with *Quality Control*. The J5 emcees show versatility missing in their previous releases, with songs like "Contribution" and "LAUSD" keeping a tight focus and attention to lyrical detail. They can still get silly on the mic, and it sounds as beautiful as ever on "Jurass Finish First." The beats are a given with Cut Chemist and NuMark behind the boards. *Quality Control* serves as the bar for other underground groups on the come up to measure themselves against. [Trey Clark]



Billy Bragg & Wilco | *Mermaid Avenue, Vol. II* | Reprise

British singer-songwriter Billy Bragg and American group Wilco team up for their second installment of country tunes crafted around Woody Guthrie lyrics with *Mermaid Avenue, Vol. II*. The album is basically the same as *Vol. I*, if a bit more languid and not as fresh.

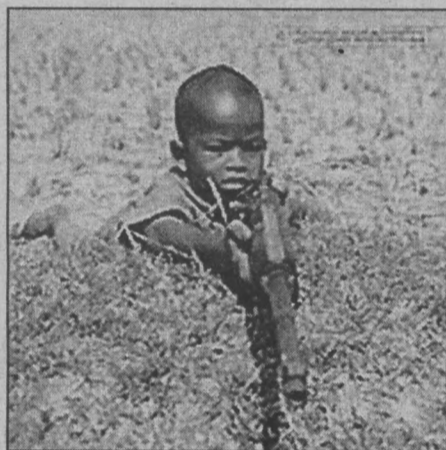
Though many of the tracks try and retain that folksy sparseness of Guthrie's work, it is the loud numbers on the album that stick out. The raucous barn-stomping of "Feed the Man" and the straight-ahead acoustic jangle of "Airplane to Heaven"

make these the two most intoxicating songs on the album. Jeff Tweedy's voice seems to tie into Guthrie's dreamy visions, and this moves the collection forward — even if it lacks the surprises of the first one. [Andy Sywak]



Thievery Corporation | *The Mirror Conspiracy* | Eighteenth Street Lounge 2000

Really fucking good; that's the best way for me to describe this album. *The Mirror Conspiracy*, the latest album from the D.C. duo, is full of Latin and Brazilian style beats that will get your groove thang shaking. Plus, if you are like me, you can practice your French as you sing along with a few of the songs. I highly recommend it, and so does your spiritual adviser. [Robotsex]



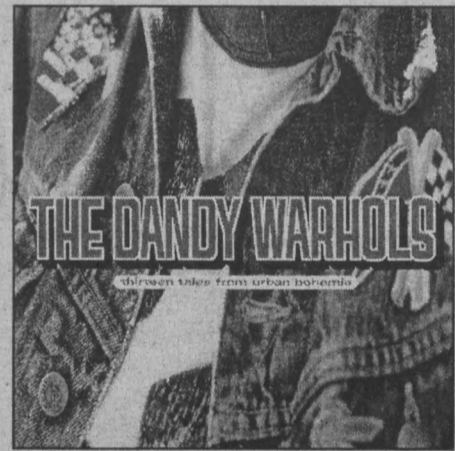
Armand Van Helden | *Killing Puritans* | Armed

Even if your familiarity with house music consists of little more than Del Playa on a Friday night, chances are you've been getting bombarded with the beats of Armand Van Helden for years. Throughout his career, he's consistently released ass-shakin' chartoppers, redefining the parameters of the sound all along the way. Whether the catchy repetitiveness of "Funk Phenomenon," the synthesizer revamp of Tori Amos' "Professional Widow" (which single-handedly changed

the face of UK Garage) or the discotheque ballad of "U Don't Know Me," Van Helden has provided tracks that are simultaneously danceable and groundbreaking. *Killing Puritans*, his latest full-length release, is a healthy injection of grit into a genre that can get too caught up in its technicolor peace, love and happiness; *Killing Puritans* rips the pacifier out of house music's mouth and shoots it up with some humor, distortion and beats instead. This isn't music about hugging a stranger on ecstasy; it's about doing speed off of the dirty toilet seat of some depraved New York club. From the disco-fused lyricism of "Full Moon" to the electro-funk of "Hybridz" to the soul searching anthem "Conscience," Armand Van Helden's album title rings true, as he gives the middle finger to innocence, taking you along for the fun, distorted ride. [Jenne Raub]

People Under the Stairs | *Question in the Form of an Answer* | OM

Question in the Form of an Answer is nothing new from Thes One and Double K, and that's OK with me. The's beats are once again consistently incredible, qualifying him as one of the genre's best producers. Both People are still nice on the mic, staying on subject and always entertaining. Providing one of the few hip hop albums that are both long and free from filler, the People Under the Stairs have created a near-classic. [Trey Clark]



The Dandy Warhols | *Thirteen Tales from Urban Bohemia* | Capitol

Oh yes, the Dandy Warhols, those moody celebrators of sex, drugs and all things excessive. A band that proves once again all you need to be a rock star is three chords, a catchy melody and great production.

The Portland foursome pick up where it left off on its last album, exploring the

land of psychedelic pop minimalism on *Thirteen Tales*, albeit with a decreased sense of urgency and a greater sense of posturing.

As quirky and fun as some of the tracks are, singer-songwriter Courtney Taylor-Taylor doesn't seem to have a whole lot to say this time around. Tracks like "Solid" and "Horse Pills" chronicle urban chicness and sexual interludes with no sense of purpose. But on such stellar numbers like "Nietzsche," "Get Off" and "Cool Scene," Taylor-Taylor finds his groove and minimalism never sounded so good. [Andy Sywak]



De La Soul | *Art Official Intelligence: Mosaic Bump* | Tommy Boy

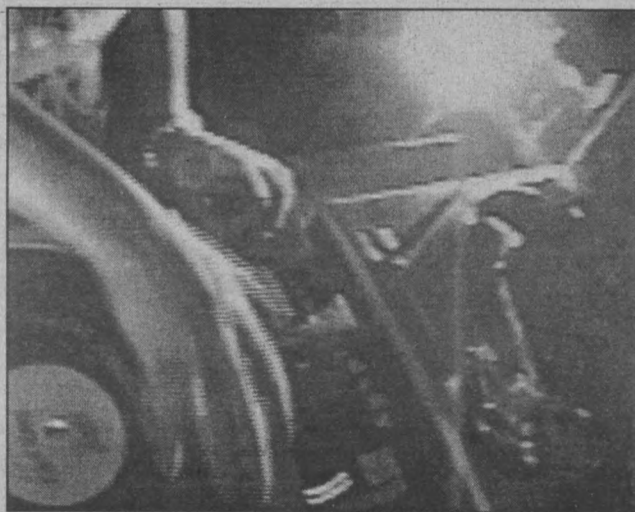
Prince Paul's absence from the De La mix has never been more evident than it is on *Art Official Intelligence*. While Pos and Dave continue to excel lyrically, the arrangements consistently fall far short of those on De La's first three albums. To make matters worse, there are far too many guest spots, allowing little continuity. Standout tracks can be spotted here and there, but overall, *Mosaic Thump* is well below what the best hip hop group of all time is capable of. [Trey Clark]

KCSB91.9
TOP 10 HIPHOP SINGLES

1. Nobody | "For Those Who Never Dream" | Ubiquity
2. The Automator | "A Better Tomorrow Part 2" | 75 Ark
3. Object Beings | "Cannibalism of the Object Beings" | Weapon Shaped
4. Sarah Jones | "Metaphor Play" | Nu Gruv Alliance
5. Live Human | "Lazy Hip" | Matador
6. Aceyalone | "Ms. Amerikkka" | Realized/Nu Gruv Alliance
7. Tommy Guerrero | "Blue Masses" | Mo'Wax
8. MC Paul Barman | "How Hard is That?" | Matador
9. Infesticons | "Hero Theme" | Big Dada
10. Deep Puddle Dynamics | "The Scarecrow Speaks" | Anticon

calendar things to do

today | **thursday**



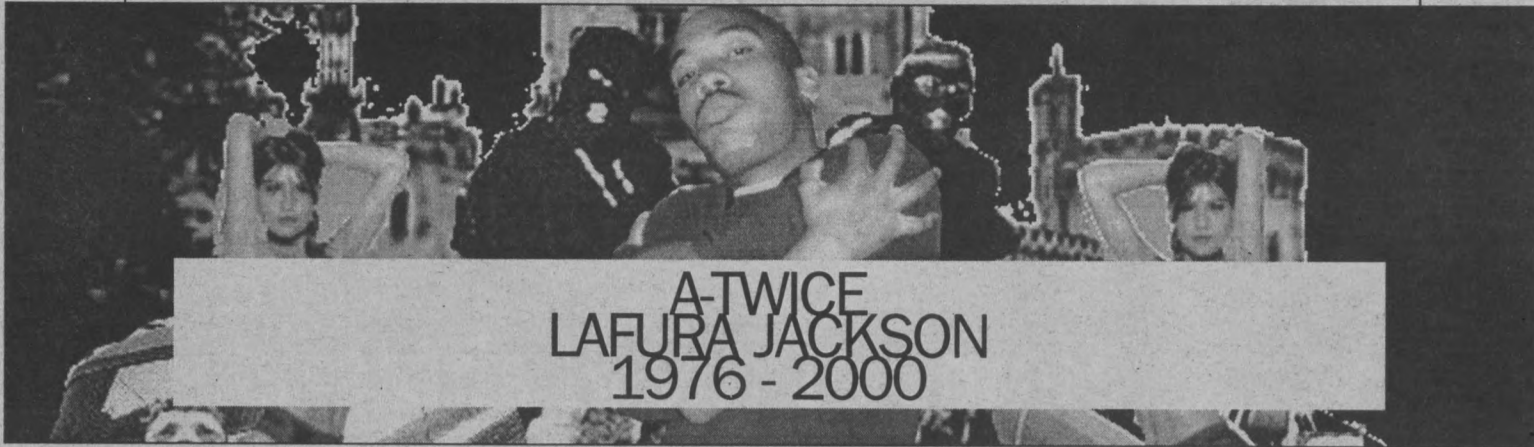
Thursday brings a wealth of opportunity, kicking off the night with a screening of "Winter Sleepers" at Campbell Hall. From the director and composer of "Run Lola Run," this romantic thriller is set in motion by a mysterious car accident. The filmmaker's compelling use of imagery is on full display along with his acute awareness of the impact of chance events. 7:30 p.m. \$5 students; \$6 general. Then get downtown for "The Zoo," that every-other-weekly brought to you by a bunch of good deejays waiting to spin some delicious house beats. Tonight, check out DJ Doubt from the U.K.'s Ministry of Sound and resident DJ Pat at Zelo's. 630 State St. 18+

tomorrow | **friday**



When your classes end Friday afternoon, why don't you make your way over to Espresso Roma for a few pitchers or two during happy hour? If you don't stick around to check out local band House Cup at 7 p.m., there are other options for your culture-seeking mind to obtain. "Better Living Through Circuitry" screens at Campbell Hall right here on campus. This entertaining documentary explores rave culture — its heroes, music, philosophy and participants. It looks at the movement's ethics, use of technology to subvert corporate domination, search for alternative forms of consciousness and advocacy of drug use. 7:30 p.m. \$5 students; \$6 general. Read a review with filmmaker Jon Reiss, p.7A

in memorium



"Warning: If you love the Billboard charts, your heroes are most likely being dissed by my grumpy ass. Punk pinche puto dork."

— A-Twice, October 24, 1998

Lafura "A-Twice" Jackson always began his bimonthly "BraynSirjunz Report" column with a quote. Therefore, it seems only fitting that we begin this tribute to him in the same way. Lafura wrote columns for the *Artsweek* section for roughly one year, beginning in the Spring of 1998 and finishing in the Spring of 1999. The column served as a space for many of Lafura's thoughts. He used it as a forum for vocalizing his concerns for his favorite music genre (hip hop) overrun by ignorance and stereotypes. He also voiced his concern over the oft-prevalent ignorance he witnessed in Isla Vista, to publicize the works of underground, talented hip hop artists often overlooked by mainstream media, and to publish gossip in the hip hop world.

Rather than fill this space with our memories of Lafura, we thought it would be best to remember him by the very words he penned for these pages two years ago. The old columns still stand out from the pages, chock full of slang, energy, anger, compassion, humor and humility, much like the way we remember Lafura's laughing, thoughtful presence around the office. From his employment at Morninglory to his extremely popular hip hop show on KCSB, Lafura left a positive, influential impression on hundreds of UCSB students who may have known him only as a voice or set of words which were passionate about ideals that few can claim at such a young age.

"Sirjunz Report: Give it 2 'Em Raw," October 24, 1998

"Working at a music store makes me ponder a variety of questions that are ephemeral to our existence. Why is No Limit wack? Why my big head? Why is Fran Drescher annoying? Why are Q-tips called Q-tips? Why is Eminem becoming the white hope for the 'burb caucasian hip hoppers all over the states? Why do some folks think being black equates emceeding ability, completely ignoring the contradictions presented by Wack "I pops like a pimple" 10 and "Bird's the word" Magoo?"

"Brayn Sirjunz Report," February 18, 1999

"First off, tragedy struck the world of hip hop once again. On February 15, Tommy Boy recording artist BL (23) was shot to death in his neighborhood of Harlem, New York. Known for joints such as "VIP" and "Ebonics," he was a celebrated member of the Diggin' in the Crates collective, comprised of himself, Diamond D, Fat Joe, Show, AG, Buckwild, Lord

Finesse and O.C.

"The question that will undoubtedly rise in many minds is: Why have so many rappers died by gunfire? To answer that question, one must notice the sociological realities that lie behind hip hop. Hip hop has been, and always will fundamentally be, a music intrinsically tied to the streets. Poverty, living off welfare stamps, living next door to a crack house, having homies and relatives pass due to various circumstances, this is the reality that lurks behind the context of a majority of hip hop. Therefore, hip hop fans (especially non-urban-reared listeners) must understand the power behind an art form propelled by its sociological environment. In a neighborhood like Harlem, for example, unfortunate circumstances can happen to anybody since negativity knows no prejudice."

"Brayn Sirjunz Report: A Day at the B-Boy Convention," March 4, 1999

"The characters assembled at the summit were an eclectic assortment to say the least, as the ethnic/racial variance certainly spoke to a large degree on how widely appropriated hip hop has become in the world. Originally perceived as an art form considered urban, ghetto and very black, hip hop now boasts a significance in every walk of life, whether Asian, Latino, black,

“SEEING CERTAIN RICH KIDS FASCINATED WITH TUPAC CAN BE EXTREMELY HILARIOUS”

white, Christian, Hindu or gay. When attending functions such as the summit, one can notice many non-blacks appropriating various characters (such as lingo, clothing, dreads, etc.) associated with urbanity. I saw groups of white kids in peewee breaker crews (averaging 12-13 years old) kicking it outside with their parents, registering for the competition. Cats originating from varying economic backgrounds proved they could gather together to help support a movement that was initially doomed to end a decade ago.

"Sometimes I have to wonder, though. Hip hop is a benevolent culture that has space to accommodate anybody no matter what gender, religion or race. However, what form of culture originated by African-Americans hasn't been used as a focal point for behaving? Case in point, as with jazz, blues, funk and hip hop, African-American urban culture has been providing new slang, fashion and attitudes for nonblack Americans for decades. Look at words like "phat," "tight," and phrases such as "the bomb" and "wassup." The double snap,

pounce and five greeting, originally cultivated by black pride activists in the '70s in an attempt at differentiating black culture from the white mainstream, is now even utilized by Brian Austin Green and his homies. Examples like this in clothing style, musical selection and terminology exist en masse, and hip hop is the latest information-dissemination device to folks outside the urban, predominantly nonwhite community. How do we draw the line between genuine ideological embracement, as opposed to superficial patronization that undermines the history of the people it is built upon?"

"Brayn Sirjunz Report: Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out," April 8, 1999

"Therefore, I hereby announce my complete exorcism of my allegiance to underground hip hop, and I will make this my final installment of the Sirjunz Report. I thank all the readers, supporters and detractors alike, and wish to bid you good luck in seeking happiness. The next chance I get to buy tickets for anything Master P-related, I'm jumping on it even if it means buying them shits for 50 bucks on e-bay. Company Flow and Aceyalone suck, fuck them.

"April Fool's muthafuckers. Ooops, I forgot; April Fool's was last week.

"Speaking of which, sometimes I wish it was April Fool's every day when I'm reminded of the following innately mundane facts ...

"1) The new Isla Vista soundtrack for the weekends is going to be Eminem's *Slim Shady* album.

"So Long, Farewell: The Final 'Brayn Sirjunz Report' Goes Raving, Takes Music and Looks at I.V. For the Last Time," June 3, 1999

"So this is the end. For a full 23 years I have strived, coughed blood, developed scabs and damn near died in order to concoct my version of an 'informative-yet-talking-shit-so-phukk-you-candy-assed-muhphuckers' (pant, pant ... out of breath) column, fused from a hip hop perspective, of course. In other words, I'm pretty sure there are plenty of fools that will never get the point unless they're being taught by Kermit the Frog or some shit, but those lowly vermin are of no concern. I basically enjoy many WB TV-show neophytes offended, and hopefully there is at least one person who acknowledges that seeing certain rich kids fascinated with Tupac can be extremely hilarious."

Whether you loved or hated the "Brayn Sirjunz Report," Lafura lived his life with a sense of purpose and idealism that many much older cannot claim. His wisdom, laughter and music will be greatly missed.

Much love.

weekend | sunday



Heal your hangover with a little bit of dance and film. The Santa Barbara Dance Alliance brings you the MultiCultural Arts Festival in Oak Park in downtown Santa Barbara, a free event with dance, music, crafts and food from all over the world. In the evening, hop on your bike and peddle over to Campbell Hall for a screening of "Croupier," a film that was proclaimed a "diamond-hard masterpiece" by LA Weekly. British Director Mike Hodges' film follows a frustrated writer who lives out the misanthropic leanings of his fictional protagonist when he takes a job as a casino dealer. 7:30 p.m. \$5 students; \$6 general. For more information, call 893-3535.

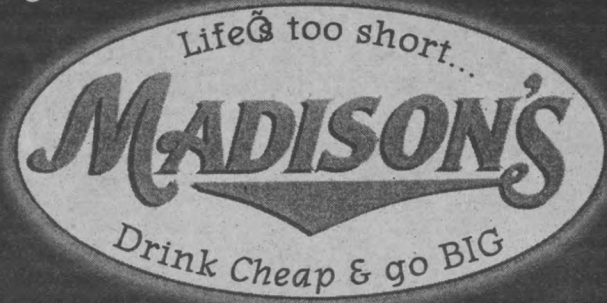
next week | wednesday



At the Drive-Ins have been receiving all sorts of praises lately from the press, so why don't you see whether or not such accolades are deserved? At the Drive-Ins emerged from its El Paso, Texas breeding ground in the alternative nation heyday of 1994 and steadily amassed a loyal following that digs their reinterpretations of punk, emo and other genres. They've got interesting lyrics, chords and instrumentation, so at least they're not more bland; mindless mediocrity sent straight to you from the music industry. True, the show is sort of far away, but here's another reason to fill up your car with pricey gas and have an experience that will last a lifetime. The Glasshouse, Pomona.

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DISSECTING ELECTRONICA BREAKBEAT? NO. TRANCE ... WAIT, IT'S BETTER LIVING THROUGH CIRCUITRY



"Better Living Through Circuitry" is one of many recently released films to tackle the ever evasive, abstract nature of electronic music and its dedicated participants. While it's not as educational as "Modulations" filmmaker Jon Reiss (of Nine Inch Nails' "Happiness in Slavery" video fame) takes the viewer on a fun journey through the world of loud, thumping rhythms.

Artsweek: What attracted you initially to electronic music as a subject for a documentary?

Jon Reiss: Actually it was a phone call from Brian McNellis. I was interested in doing a documentary again and he suggested this. I've always been pretty involved in music and music subcultures, but not so much in this one. He sort of instigated me to go to my first event and I kind of fell in love with it. The incredible energy, openness and intensity that I felt at that first event convinced

me that this was something I should do.

So you were, in a sense, naïve to the whole scene prior to this?

To be perfectly honest, I was, but I feel it was actually beneficial to the project because I didn't have any preconceived notions about what it was or should be. I didn't have any attitudes or jaded impressions or anything. One of the things we had always geared this to was not just toward the people in the scene, though we hope they like the film — and our indication is that they do tremendously so — but also that it would appeal and be interesting to people who had never been to an event before and don't even know very much about the music but who have a curiosity about it. So it not only serves as a portrait of the scene but also as an introduction.

An important element of electronic music is its constantly changing landscape. There seems to be a new genre emerging every few months. How did you attempt to address this

issue in your film?

We addressed it by talking to the people and going to the events that we just felt inspired to go to. I guess there was a subconscious — not overtly conscious — desire to be inclusive. We just kind of always hoped that we would cover a good percentage of at least the major musical forms within electronic music, and I think we pretty much covered that. We have quite a variety of music; it's not just limited to one by any stretch of the imagination. We just wanted to be very inclusive of the scene or scenes. We don't even label them in the documentary. We just present them as 'this is this person' and 'this is that person.' We could hear the music changing, but we didn't want to get into that thing of 'this is pigeonholed as this' and 'this is pigeonholed as that.'

The interview with Jon Reiss was originally published in Artsweek on April 15, 1999.

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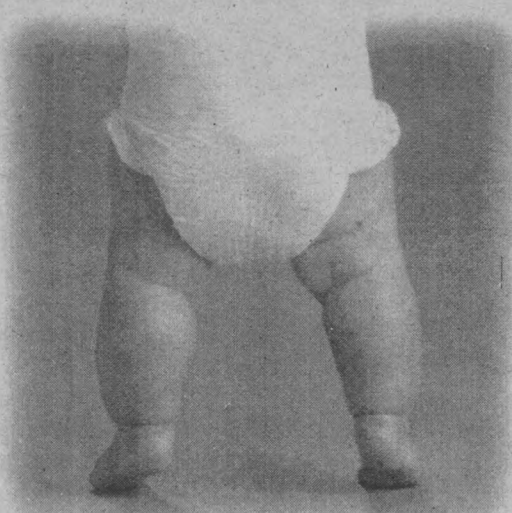
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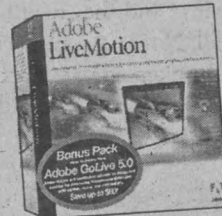
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