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ARTSweek

The Weekly Arts and Entertainment Supplement to the Daily Nexus

Talk Show Guru **AND** UCSB Grad **RICHARD BEY**

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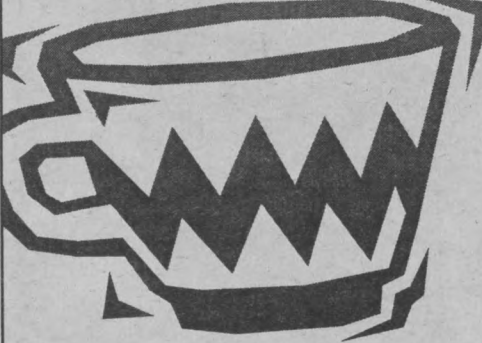
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I met a Zen master this weekend. He gave me a riddle to think about: Who was the best-dressed person at the Country-Western Music Awards?

I didn't have an answer for him so I said, "The host."

He hit me. Then he said, "If you say the Oak Ridge Boys, I will hit you again."

I guess I was supposed to figure out that most of the truths I cling to are only opinions. That was his opinion.

Opinions used to really mean something. I remember a time when people

who liked alternative/modern rock/KROQ-type stations were so into the culture of their music that they would be embarrassed to play a song if it got too popular. I used to honestly believe that your hair turned jet black as soon as you started liking Depeche Mode.

The first "alternative" song I liked was The Cure's "Love Song." I was so proud that I told the people who used to be my friends before they got into their new music all about it.

"You don't like The

Cure," they told me. "You don't know The Cure."

I guess it is kind of inspiring the way some people get into their music. I wish people would be more like that with other forms of entertainment. Besides sports.

I've decided that I should not have opinions anymore. I'm not going to. Either that or I'm going to have way too many of them to be adamant about any of them so as to mock anyone who might have any opinion.

I've decided in the future any question I ask someone will begin with "What the hell are you doing?"

The world would be a lot better if everyone shared the same opinions. Then there really wouldn't be any opinions at all. There would be facts. Cold, hard facts. Like "there are no well-dressed people at the Country-Western Music Awards." If you say Mary Chapin-Carpenter, I will hit you.

Film **BANG!**

He Ping, the director of the popular and critically acclaimed Chinese film *Red Firecracker*, *Green Firecracker*, explains that to him "images are the most fundamental thing in a film." After viewing his actual film however, one would think it was instead metaphors that are so important to Ping. Throughout the 116 minutes of his film, he consistently employs the notion of a firecracker representing suppressed sexual energy.

Chun Zhi is the only descendant of the respected house of Cai. Located in a small town along China's Yellow River, the Cai family control an extensive fireworks empire. Zhi, being a female in China's suffocatingly patriarchal society, has been forced to suppress her feminine side in order to hold the respect of those she commands. She has willingly repressed this part of herself for her first 19 years, but things become complicated as she matures into an elegant woman.

The fuse is lit when Nie Bao (Wu Gang), a handsome, ruffian painter, is hired free-lance to decorate the Cai estate. Zhi is instantly enamored with his rugged free spirit. Their relationship starts softly; she visits him as he paints and they flirt respectively over tea.

Despite the jealous overseer Mr. Mann's (Zhao Xiaorui) best attempts to stomp it out, the fuse continues to burn and the couple's infatuation grows into love. Zhi begins to reveal herself, her customary black suit transitioning into a beautiful red dress. When the couple finally consummates their love, buttons pop like firecrackers as they fly from Zhi's blouse.

Then Mr. Mann and the external forces take over. *Red Firecracker*, *Green Firecracker* is essentially a retelling of the Romeo and Juliet legend with the Montagues and the Capulets being replaced by such things as lineage and tradition.

Ping does a fine job of expressing the sexual tension and social disorder at the heart of his movie. The camera pans are slow and deliberate and his chosen palette of colors scream "repression." He contrasts

this with frequent cuts to the surging and seemingly unstoppable waters of the Yellow River. The actors themselves are also intelligently restrained. It is unlikely Jim Carrey made it into second auditions for this film, as the extent of facial expression utilized is often a quiet look of injured longing.

This movie is based on a novel by Feng Jicai and it sometimes suffers from this. Movies based on novels often attempt to include too much information. *Red Firecracker*, *Green Firecracker* is no exception, and as a result the movie drags its feet in parts. All such symptoms fall away, however, with the stylish pacing of the inevitable firecracker-laden climax, which, by the way, Freud would have truly loved.

Those of you who read this review because you saw the words "Jim Carrey" in paragraph six, please don't go see this movie.

Red Firecracker, *Green Firecracker* is playing Monday Oct. 30 at Campbell Hall.

—Chad Bishop

Film **NATURAL BLONDE KILLERS**

Columbia Pictures' marketing mavens couldn't have picked a better time to release *To Die For* even if they planned it. The film is a sharp indictment of media culture and how even the most obscure nobody can receive his or her 15 minutes of fame. It also serves as a sharp counterpoint to the ongoing tabloid feeding frenzy to obtain the rights to stories of O.J. Simpson trial participants.

Unlike Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, director Gus Van Sant's tongue is placed firmly in cheek. *To Die For* is inspired by an actual New Hampshire case of a few years ago in which schoolteacher Pamela Smart seduced some of her students and convinced them to kill her husband. The

film is structured as a cross between a documentary and bad TV movie of the week. Nicole Kidman plays Suzanne Stone, an aspiring network news star who toils away in the

vinced that he's standing in her way of becoming the next Barbara Walters, only better dressed.

So she decides to do whatever it takes to realize her dream. And when a



New Hampshire boonies, reporting the weather on a local cable channel. When her loving and clueless husband Larry (Matt Dillon) wants to start a family, Suzanne becomes con-

couple of her biggest admirers — flesh-and-blood incarnations of Beavis and Butthead — bump off Larry, the proverbial clock starts ticking on Suzanne's 15 minutes of fame.

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This is Van Sant's first studio film and his best since the 1989 cult classic, *Drugstore Cowboy*. He captures the absurd tone of the material perfectly, chronicling the events leading up to the murder with faux seriousness.

The acting is also top-notch. Kidman, probably best known for being Mrs. Tom Cruise than for her acting abilities, proves herself to be a capable and

worthy leading lady. She simultaneously exudes both perkiness and evil, acting as Katie Couric probably would if she was possessed by the devil. Matt Dillon is convincing as innocent nice-guy Larry, as are Joaquin Phoenix (River's brother) and newcomer Alison Folland as the dopey teenage murderers. Dan Hedaya, most recently of *Clueless*, and Wayne Knight (*Sein-*

feld semi-regular Newman) highlight the supporting cast.

To Die For may well be the funniest film of the year. It also would make a more than worthy double-feature companion for John Waters' underrated 1994 black comedy *Serial Mom*, which stars Kathleen Turner and Ricki Lake and treads similar territory.

—William Yelles

Film

Gettin' Violent

In *Get Shorty*, John Travolta's fifth or sixth "comeback" picture (the last being the engrossing but hopelessly vulgar *Pulp Fiction*), he stars as Chili Palmer, a friendly, relaxed and charming Miami underworld debt collector. Not that he limits himself to this one activity — he also tries his hand at extortion, robbery and murder — a real renaissance man. He takes a trip to Los Angeles and gets a chance to practice his art in the movie business, in particular trying to get famous actor Martin Weir (vertically challenged Danny DeVito, hence the film's title) to star in an upcoming picture. The big joke of this comedy is that his direct methods are well suited to shady Hollywood deals where everyone else is a clown too infatuated with their egos to see what's in front of them.

This film has won much critical acclaim and will no doubt do well with the public also. The enjoyment of the picture comes from watching Travolta's genial, uncomplicated character get the better of other buffoons. You do wonder, though, if he's acting or if he really is that simple. As conventional as his audience, he's the empty vessel whose slick surface mirrors the bland-

ness of our own hopes. I don't know about you, but I'm a little uncomfortable with the idea of violence as entertainment, even the cartoon-like violence on show here. I had the same feeling while watching *Pulp Fiction*, a feeling that my grosser instincts were being pandered to. Any movie that elevates gangsterism has to have a brutalizing effect on the passive viewer. Why is

commercial. The actors are accomplished but sometimes fall into the same trap of overstraining, even going over the edge into self-indulgence. The clever script was based on a novel by Elmore Leonard and the dialogue taken from the book is often amusing. But it's not as funny as people like to think it is — its coy air seduces and flatters its audience without ever really



the perversion of power so attractive?

It's directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, who made the *Addams Family* movies, and he uses the same knockabout style here, which is probably not suited to this material. Like an athlete who tries too hard and ties himself up with tension, he can't resist knocking us over the head with sight gags, being unable to decide whether he's shooting an adult comedy or a pizza com-

edy. In short, *Get Shorty* is a slick, clever comedy where you will find yourself primed to laugh more times than you actually do.

—Martin Knight



Goose to Their Maverick

The Rentals
return of *The Rentals*
Maverick

Riding high on the success of chartbusters Alanis Morissette and Candlebox, Madonna-owned Maverick has gone out on a limb and signed a way-cool band called The Rentals. These guys won't change the face of contem-

porary rock as we know it (as Candlebox has — not!) or speak for an entire generation of kids (like Morissette does — not!), but they are undisputed experts in the creation of witty, poppy songs that recall the Top 40 music of the early 1980s (an era when Top 40 was feel-good and real good). Likely, this stems from the fact that The Rentals are partially composed of

members of Weezer and that dog, bands known for mastering both the humorous lyric and the appealing melody. You've maybe already heard the Rentals' catchier-than-catchy single, "Friends of P." If you have, anyone who lives with you has also heard it because you've been annoying them by

record, return of *The Rentals*, are as quirky and lovely as "P." The Rentals are consistently fun because they employ refreshingly simple ideas to add spice to already great tunes. For example, vocalists Matt Sharp and Cheryl Lynn Westrich often sing in unison, providing the audience a perspective that is neither wholly male



nor female, but instead is an androgynous voice of young love, heartbreak and desire. To complement this unique sound, the band uses a Moog synthesizer, one of those corny-sounding keyboards that punched up so many of yesteryear's pop songs, throughout the disc. It's all very fun. And did I mention that the songs are real catchy? Rent it today.

Unfortunately, it looks as if I'm in for several more blows, as most all of the songs on the band's debut

humming its perky little chorus all over the house. At least that's how it is at my place, where my roommate Mike told me that he'd hit me if I didn't stop singing, "If you're down with P., then you're down with me." I couldn't stop and so he beat me unmerciful.

—Eric Steuer

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Two women stand on a stage in a Seacaucus, N.J., television studio, sweating from the hot lights and the audience's chanting. They are being pressured by the show's host, Richard Bey, to drink a blended concoction made from Coca-Cola, Twinkies, spinach leaves, prune juice and sardines. The topic today is "Get Your Hands Off My Man!" To prove their love for Jimmy, the object of both of their affections, Bey wants the women to drink this hideous potion. They both refuse. "No man is worth that," one of them says. Bey whips out a wad of \$20 bills from his pocket. "Not even Andrew Jackson?!" This makes the audience go crazy. Like a postmodern Greek chorus, they start shouting, "Drink it! Drink it!" Jimmy's laughing; his girl-

He returned to Isla Vista for six more months. "I basically just crashed on my friends' couches and partied a lot. I had no idea what I wanted to do." Soon, however, he was at Yale, where a few years later he received his master's degree in drama. From there he performed in Shakespeare festivals in Marin and did some community theater in Los Angeles. His big break came when he accompanied his girlfriend to an audition for a New York magazine show called *2 On the Town*. He won the hosting job. "She was really pissed off. We broke up," Bey remembers. A few years later, he moved to Philadelphia to replace Maury Povich as the host of a local talk show called *People Are Talking*. "It was a very political

don't pay anybody. So we don't tolerate it. "In fact, it's become sort of a running joke for us to bust people on the air. The audience loves it when I yell, 'You can fool Oprah, you can trick Ricki, you can even pull the wool over Jerry Springer's eyes, but you can't touch Dick Bey!'" His show aired locally in New York for over two years, then expanded to eight cities, where it aired for three years and developed a loyal cult following. This past fall, the show went national and now can be seen in well over 100 cities. Apparently, his idea has proven successful, and Bey makes no apologies. Critics of *The Richard Bey Show* charge that of all the trash rotting on daytime television, Bey's is arguably the most putrid. But he responds to these nay-sayers in surprisingly candid fashion.

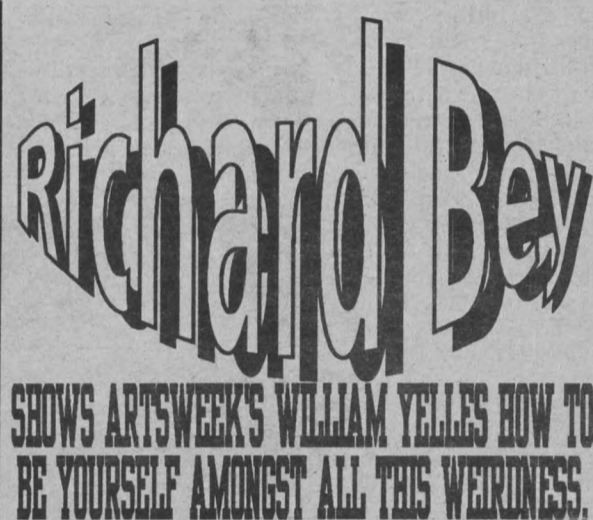
or any other, every single day. "It's just not healthy. The library's open all day — go read a book if you want to learn something. Or go outside." Unlike other hosts, Bey makes no claims that his show is meant to assist those in need. "Most of the people who come on our show are so completely messed up. These people's problems can't be solved in a typical seven-minute segment," he says. "Do you think that producers and hosts have real compassion?" he continues. "Do Sally Jessy and Geraldo care, or do they just say what their producers tell them to say through their earpieces?" "On our show, we're saying that's all bullshit. We're not here to solve people's problems. It's a party." So why do people choose to appear on his show, if they



Bey in an early 70's UCSB theater production

friends still both refuse. Bey then runs into the audience and offers the money to anyone who'll scarf it down. Some guy drinks the whole glassful without even pausing. He wipes his mouth with the back of his arm, hands the glass back and takes the money from a disgusted Bey. "I came here broke, but now I'm leaving here with 80 bucks! Thanks, Richard Bey," he says almost inaudibly over the hollering of the audience. While most people would find this to be a strange experience, for Bey, it's just another day at the office.

show. We featured a lot of topical news figures," Bey says. But when the opportunity arose to move the show to New York, Bey realized he had to change his act. "The New York market was much more competitive. We had to do something different to get attention. So that's when we thought of the idea to combine a talk show with a game show." A regular feature Bey takes great pride in is the "Wheel of Torture." Old boyfriends or deadbeat dads are strapped spread-eagle to a huge disk, while Bey spins them around. Whoever is angry at them gets to throw buckets of creamed corn, Jell-O or chocolate sauce in their grimacing faces. Other times, Bey becomes his alter ego, "the Voice of Truth," and exposes guests on the air whom he thinks are lying. "It's amazing what people will make up just to get on TV," Bey remarks. "But unlike other shows, which encourage this type of behavior by paying their guests, we



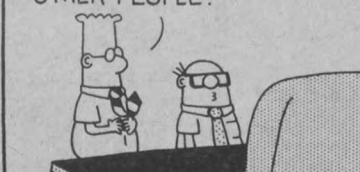
Then: the

"I'd love to do a show like Charlie Rose or Ted Koppel does," Bey claims. "But the fact is, nobody would watch it. TV is there to sell soap and cars. My job is to keep people entertained long enough so they'll stay tuned for the toothpaste commercials or the psychic love lines or whatever. And if enough people buy enough soap and toothpaste, then I get paid. fully know that they are most likely going to be made fun of? "There's a certain validation to going on TV," Bey theorizes. "It's the same reason why people play truth or dare. People like to feel that others want to know all about their most personal, innermost secrets." Bey returned to UCSB in the summer of 1994 to revisit


"every party in I.V. was nude back then. You'd just leave your clothes at the door." "In fact, now that the show's gone national, I just signed a new contract and got a big raise." Bey also believes that nobody should watch his show, some of his college years' haunts. "I was amazed how much everything had changed. I couldn't believe the Bank of America was turned into a

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pool hall!" Bey remarked, referring to the infamous site of anti-Vietnam War protests at the height of the conflict in 1970. The building was fire-bombed and one student was killed.

"It was a different world then, man," Bey said. "People went too far when it wasn't necessary and too far when it was. We closed down the 101, turned over police cars. One time, there was this huge protest in Perfect Park, and the sheriff's helicopters started spraying us with tear gas. The organizers yelled to shove our faces in the dirt to avoid the gas. But there were all these earthworms crawling around. It was pretty disgusting."

Another favorite pastime of students back then, Bey remembers, were "nude-ins for peace."

"Everyone would just go down to the beach at the end of Del Playa and pull off their

progressive grading procedures.

"He'd ask students to bake him brownies instead of taking midterms and finals," Bey said. "When he was fired, a lot of students protested."

Besides the flashier moments, Bey also is thankful for many of his professors. One of them, former drama professor Stanley Glenn, had a passion for the Greeks and their drama that had a lasting impact on Bey.

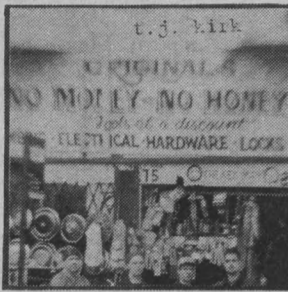
"In his class, we assembled at the crack of dawn on the cliffs overlooking the ocean to recapture the feeling of awe and grandeur the Greeks experienced at Epidaurus," Bey said.

"I was Philoctetes raving at a mad and merciless world, freezing in the morning cold but viscerally connected to my place in the universe."

Bey feels his drama training has proven useful for his

Record Review

t.j. kirk/t.j. kirk/
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Charlie Hunter, the amazing San Francisco jazz guitarist, is up to his old tricks. He and friends play the most mind-blowing stuff ever, without that rock star fakiness. This is a covers album exclusively featuring the songs of The Ionious Monk, James Brown and Raheem Roland Kirk (hence the band's name). Highlights include a funky, laid-back version of "Cold Sweat" and a rousing take on "Bemsha Swing." Crazy rhythms and inspired solos cover this exceptional album. It's more than just a tribute album because these versions are so different and exciting.

Sonic Youth/Washing Machine/DGC



I don't know how Sonic Youth manages to be so consistently innovative and still remain interesting. *Washing Machine's* first track, "Becuz," centers around one simple, perfect chord progression and gets increasingly tense while subtly breaking into relieving choruses. Strangely, "Unwind" has the same riff as a song by I.V.'s now-defunct Soil. "Unwind" and the album's first single, "The Diamond Sea," have that trademark chaotic, awkward beauty.

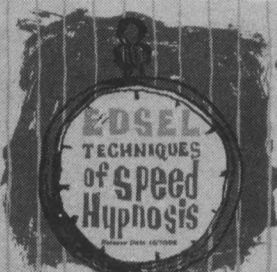
Campfire Girls/Mood Enhancer E.P./Boy's Life-Interscope

This is on the same label as the incredible band Plexi. Campfire Girls have the sad, goofy

More Stuff to Check Out!!!!

humor of Sebadoh. They also have great songs performed less than technically perfect. "Quick Phone Call" is a flawless pop song. I'm really impressed.

Edsel/Techniques of Speed Hypnosis/Relativity



Edsel, like lots of great bands, is from Washington, D.C. *Techniques of Speed Hypnosis* is Edsel's second album in about a year, yet there's no filler at all here. "Laugh Him to Scorn" is the kind of song every guy can relate to. Singer/guitarist Sohrab Habibion tries to convince an ex-lover that her new man is no good and encourages her to "laugh him to scorn." It's the kind of tender, startling song that can just melt you with its distant horns and pained chorus. Twelve awesome songs.

Rocket From the Crypt/Scream, Dracula, Scream/Interscope



That's right, that's their second album in a month. However, there's no filler whatsoever. The title makes you think that this will be a departure to a darker sound. No, it's just a really strange joke. This album is just as fun and serious in a wacky way as anything else they've put out. There's plenty of "Yeah, yeah, yeah" choruses, horn blasts, cool songwriting and completely all-out music. It's dramatic. Singer/guitarist John "Speedo" Reis is also in Drive Like Jehu and has produced some of Superchunk's stuff.

—Noah Blumberg

Teeny-Tiny Titans

Nexus Classifieds Work.



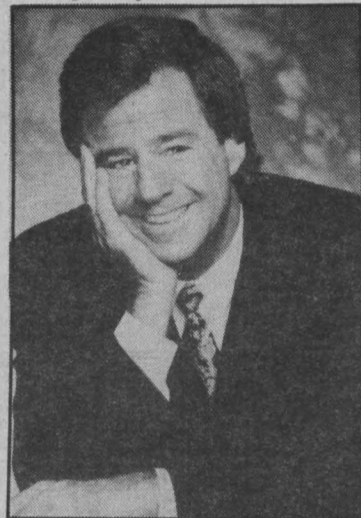
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Richard Bey: the 1972 UCSB grad

Richard Bey: Now: the talk show host

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clothes. Before you'd know it, there would be 200 totally naked people partying on the beach. Once I went there with my girlfriend at the time. I hadn't seen her totally naked yet, but here we were stripping with strangers."

Bey lets out a laugh, lights another cigarette and takes a long drag.

"But then again, every party in I.V. was nude back then. You'd just leave your clothes at the door. It was like being in the Garden of Eden." Bey lived at Francisco Torres his freshman year before moving to the 6500 block of Del Playa.

"The hardest thing about living on the beach was making yourself go to class," he recalls.

But when he did go to class, Bey definitely found it worthwhile.

"Once I was sitting in the last row of Campbell Hall, in geology class. I can never forget that the professor was talking about lateral marine glaciers, and I wasn't really paying attention. But then three girls walked in, wearing only bikinis and high heels and sat down next to me!"

Bey pauses, then asks, "Does that still happen?"

Another of his professors, Bill Allen of the Anthropology Dept., was fired for his

current hosting gig, especially his skills in improvisation.

"Every day, I'm starring in a totally unscripted theater of the absurd. It's like being in the circus."

The psychic love line and toothpaste commercials end. Bey returns from the break and introduces resident "relationship expert" Dr. Gilda Carle, who emerges from behind the stage curtain to the accompaniment of the *Looney Tunes* theme. Carle has some advice for Jimmy and his girlfriends as part of another regular *Bey Show* feature: "The 60 Seconds of Psychobabble."

The clock in the corner of the screen starts ticking. Carle tells Jimmy that he has to make a choice. The audience applauds, except for the guy who drank the concoction earlier. Bey runs over to him with his microphone.

"Why is everyone bashing on him, man?" he asks. "I mean, between lunch and dinner, a man's got to eat some snacks."

Bey stares into the camera with mock disapproval. It's just another day at the office.

The Richard Bey Show airs locally weekdays at 2 p.m. on KADY, channel 14, and at 3 p.m. on KCOP, channel 13.

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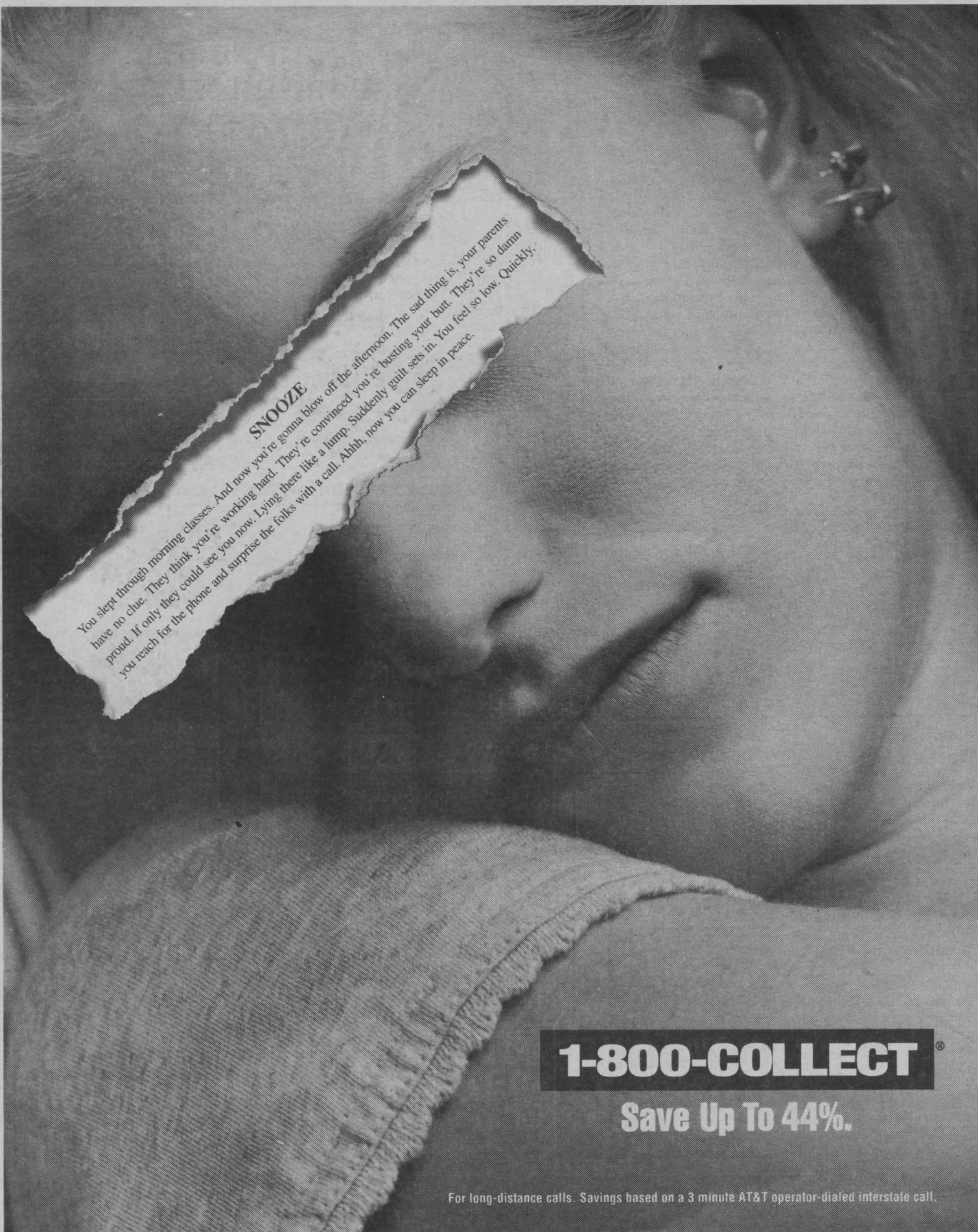
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Adam Sandler's campus performance in Campbell Hall sold out in just a few hours. It's too late to get tickets to the student only show. We're really sorry.

"You have to be a cop to have any fun in Isla Vista this Halloween."

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Urge Underthrill

Urge Overkill
Exit the Dragon
Geffen

Urge Overkill has been hovering on the periphery of the collective pop consciousness for several years. Fellow Chicago scenesters such as Liz Phair and Smashing Pumpkins have already burst into the rock limelight, and now it seems that with the success of the single "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon" from the mega-selling *Pulp Fiction* soundtrack, Urge is next in line.

The band's new album, *Exit the Dragon*, is reflective of their new direction toward mainstream success and a spot in the world of pop culture. Urge Overkill more than belongs — they are pop, and are nothing more. Unfortunately, though, not a single track on *Exit* brings anything new to the music world.

I can't go too far in denouncing the band, as its sound is actually pretty tight. My only problem with *UO* is that they flagrantly rip off other bands by recycling popular trends and sounds in their own music. For example, on the disc's first song, singer Nash Kato attempts to embody negativity and self-destruction a la Hole or Nine Inch Nails by chanting, "I'm the evil that's this world / I'm the evil in you / I'm the evil within this world / There's too much evil it's true".

It's true?
Please, guys, you're about as evil as Mariah Carey on her Christmas album! Unfortunately, this insincere opening track sets the precedent for the rest of the album. "The Break" has the standard spacy guitars and pointless chord changes of "alternative" rock, a combination that pretty much adds up to

another song without substance. They break out the horns for "Somebody Else's Body," which sounds eerily like a rip-off of some unappreciated indie rock band's hardest song. Here, Kato wails about needing an identity. This is definitely true. "The Mistake" trips with stabs of post-grunge feedback, uses a loopy vocal style reminiscent of Dinosaur Jr. and warns of the pitfalls of

best and most honest song on the record. Kato, or more correctly, his band, should take the advice they offer in this song: "Talk a walk upside yourself."

Ultimately, the guys of Urge Overkill are quite able at replication, but leave no room for their own sound. Possibly they will receive some of the respect they often complain of wanting if they create



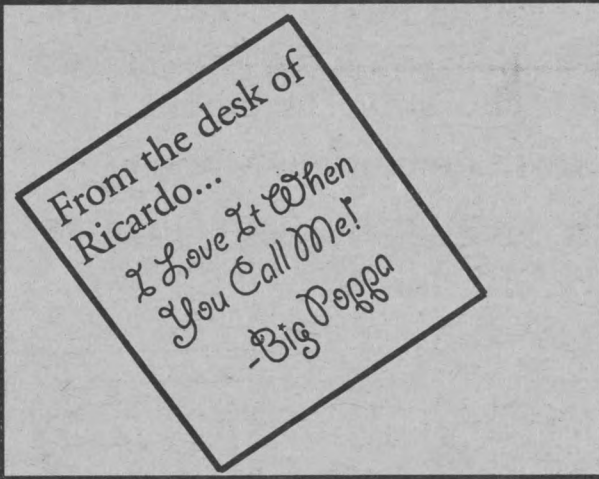
drug use, that ever-present subject among rock bands (right?).

However, I do give *UO* kudos for "A View of the Rain." Resonant vocals combine with sparse keyboarding, quiet guitars and violin to make it the

original music. One of their songs pronounces that the "rock revolution is dead." This is untrue — only the lack of originality in bands like Urge Overkill will kill rock off.

—Nicole Milne

MEMOS by Smuckers



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Twas a night much like tonight...

The howling wind tore and raked at the face of Woody the Delivery guy. He had been told of the long line of great pizza delivery persons who never returned from the hellspawn abomination of a house before which he stood, but the call had gone out. Whether be it for help, or just IV's best pizza, it did not matter. Unknowing of his fate should he continue, Woody hesitated as a black cat mockingly crossed his path.

"I will Deliver this pizza, even if it means eternal torment at the hands of unholy forces!" Woody said aloud.

Now, at the very threshold of the nether-regions lying beyond the door in front of him, Woody painfully wiped the sweat from his brow. The silence that hung on Woody's head was only punctuated by the occasional anticipatory squawk of the vulture circling above.

"RING", called out the doorbell.
"Hello", answered the man behind the door, "ah, our pizza."

The man handed Woody some money, and sent him on his way.

Confused by the complete lack of pain and suffering inflicted upon him by the man, Woody's mind wandered on the long trip back. Consequently, he failed to notice the elephant wandering on to the road. Woody was never heard from again...

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