

Artsweek

It's Not Bull, It's...

The Weekly Arts and Entertainment Supplement to the Daily Nexus

FAT JOE (AKA Joey Crack and Fat Joe Da Gangsta) is quickly becoming a regular amongst New York's most elite emcees. Fat Joe's new album, *Jealous One's Envy*, is an impeccably produced, lyrically solid album, with guest spots by KRS-One and Raekwon. Joe can also be heard collaborating on new albums by KRS and LL Cool J and countless East Coast videos.

Artsweek's Michael Abramson recently had the opportunity to chat with Joe about his experience in the world of rap 'n' roll.

AW: What's up, Joe?

FJ: I'm just runnin' hectic, you know. Got out of the studio at like 12 this afternoon after recording all night long. Motherfuckers are callin' me all day and shit.

AW: What were you doing in the studio?

FJ: This new remix for "Envy." That is going to be the next single, remixed by TrackMasters. It's hot man, oh God! Biggie [Smalls] gotta watch his back right about now with this one. (laughs)

AW: Yeah. I really liked the new album.

FJ: Thanks a lot man, I appreciate that. It was made for niggas like you to enjoy.

AW: I've read that you weren't exactly pleased with your first effort *Represent*. Why was that?

FJ: There had been many Latino and Puerto Rican rappers before me who contributed to this rap game and never got any acknowledgement and were never given any props. I was layin' in the cut, lovin' this music from day one, and was like, "Yo, when is there going to be a Puerto Rican to blow up the spot?" So when *Represent* came out, and "Flow Joe" hit #1 *Billboard* single, we blew up the spot and did what had to be done. That was my main enjoyment out of the first album, plus it set me up for the next album. Some people were like "Flow Joe" was dope, "The Shit Is Real" was dope, but the album wasn't too tight.

AW: How is *Jealous One's Envy* different?

FJ: It's definitely more lyrical. It's more creative. It's much tighter. You can hear the whole thing and not have to fast-forward through songs. That's the problem with a lot of rappers today, they just think that they are going to have three videos — let's make three dope songs, and leave the other nine songs wack. That's the wack shit! I was tryin' to do the album like it was one song, just tie the

with me, Raekwon, Ghost Face, Nas, AZ and Mobb Deep. That will be the cream tour.

AW: What do you think of live hip-hop shows?

FJ: There are certain people who get busy. Hip-hop shows have definitely gotten less creative in these stages of the game. I remember when I used to go see Run-DMC, Whodini, LL [Cool J], Heavy D — they put on a crazy show. Now to be real in

who want the real. People who can look at Fat Joe in the video and tell that he really went through what he is saying. I like the worst people. I like the baddest people to enjoy my music. I want everybody to enjoy my music, but definitely the scum, the lowlifes. Once you got the underground and the streets, you got it all.

AW: What influence has KRS-One had on your career and your

less and wild. Runnin' around spending money, having fun, cause even then he was still number one. I just loved him. He represented me and represented the Bronx. I remember going to junior high school and everybody was like "KRS! KRS!" I wonder if they talk like that about Fat Joe now. He's a good person. Now that we've become tight friends, almost like brothers he's just great, he's beautiful to see in

(laughs) Lord Finesse, featuring O.C. and KRS-One. That shit is hot. Whoa! Boom Bam! I got the slammin' tape, B. Niggas can't fuck with my tape right now. Maybe I should take you to the old school for the last joint. I'd play "The Vapors" by Biz Markie. No, no, no. I'd play "Hey Young World" by Slick Rick.

AW: What rappers will still be considered dope in five years?

FJ: Nas. Fat Joe. Wu-Tang. 2Pac. That fuckin' Onyx's "Last Days" is hot. LL Cool J will definitely be on five years from now. And KRS-One.

AW: What are some of your favorite non-rap CDs?

FJ: Babyface, not this one, the one before it (begins singing Babyface lyrics). Luther Vandross' greatest hits. Fuckin' Spanish music, salsa, La India. That's pretty dope.

AW: Some of your lyrics depict a grim, crime-filled lifestyle. Why rap about these subjects?

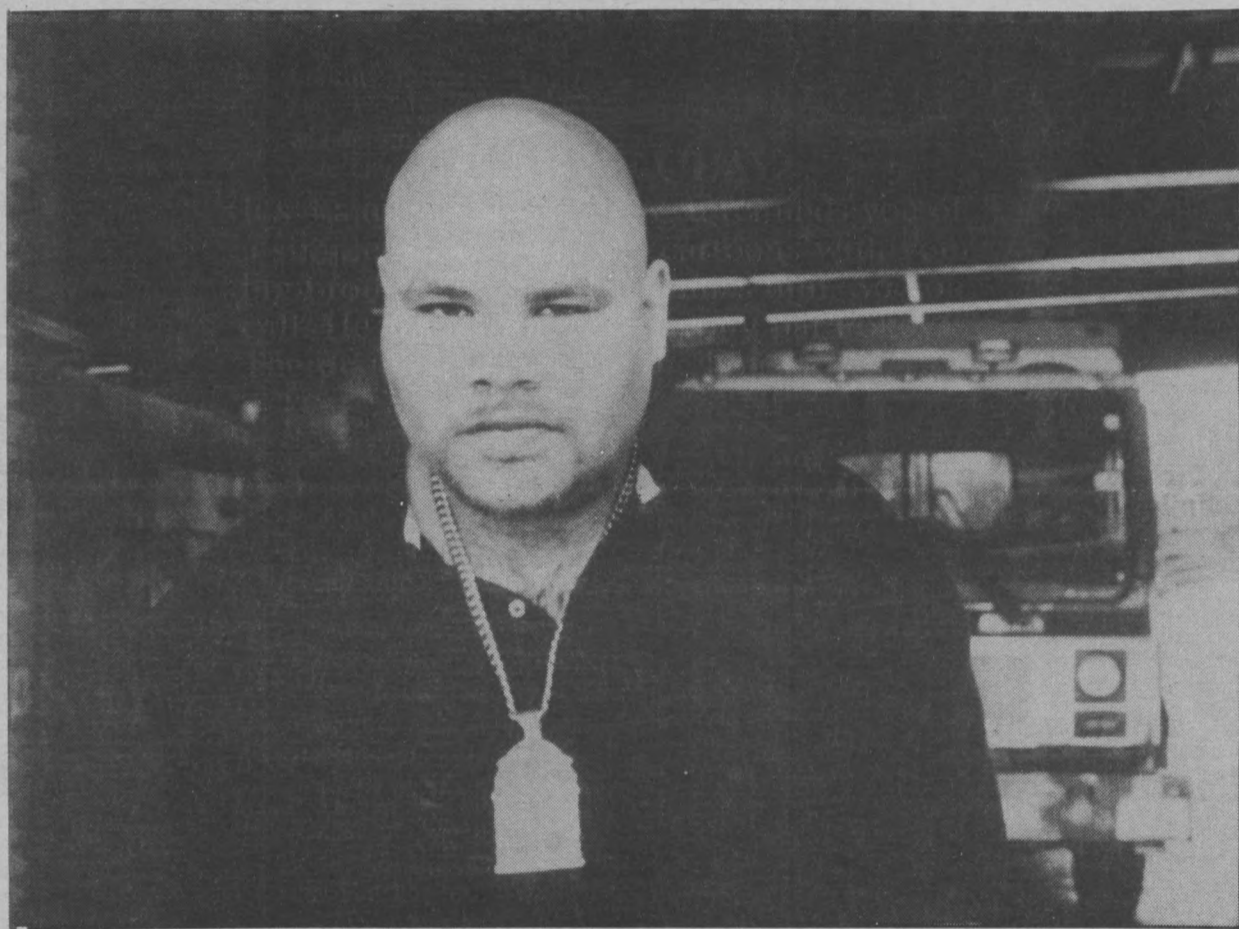
FJ: 'Cause I love it. 'Cause it's what I want to rap about. That's just me. I'm Fat Joe, I walk the streets every day, humble and cool. But if a nigga bumps into me and tries to look at me the wrong way, I knock him out. I'm not one of these ordinary rappers — I do flip. For real.

AW: What do you say to someone who says, while your music may not actually cause crime, it does contribute to it?

FJ: I would say, "All I'm doing is entertaining and just like horror movies, action movies, porno movies and comedy, I'm the gangsta category of rap. If you wish not to listen to this because it may cause you to do some crime, then listen to some MC Hammer, some gospel rap, or some shit — it's out there."

AW: There's a guy in San Diego named Phat Jay Da Pranksta, have you ever heard of him?

FJ: No, but that's dope. It compliments you. It lets you know niggas want to be down.



Mike and the Fat Man

Artsweek's Mike Abramson speaks with Fat Joe

whole thing together.

AW: You've worked with many of the premier producers on both of your albums. Is there anyone who you want to work with that you haven't yet?

FJ: I don't know. Maybe Dre. Dre's off the hook. I love DJ Slip. I'll definitely use him for a remix on the next single. I'll use a West Coast producer as long as it's something I'll enjoy — not some old crazy funk. It's gotta be something that I like.

AW: Do you plan on touring to support the album?

FJ: Definitely. We're talking about a tour

hip-hop you just got to grab the mic in front of everybody, dressed however you feel like dressing, and just put it on. Kid n' Play were entertainers giving you a crazy show. But now we got KRS who rips shows. The Fugees are a mad, dope kind of show. The Roots are dope.

AW: Do you have a certain audience in mind when you write lyrics?

FJ: Yeah. I have a real nigga audience in mind.

AW: What does that mean?

FJ: Like people who are tired of all the gangsta rappers. People

music?

FJ: He's definitely influenced me, he's like my idol. Him and LL Cool J are my two favorite rappers in the whole world. Juice Crew was rockin', MC Shan, Melle Mel, Biz Markie, Big Daddy Kane, Kool G-Rap, everybody was tearin' it up, everybody thought they were invincible and here comes KRS, puts it on MC Shan, something terrible.

The Bronx wasn't saying nothing for a minute, even though we are the home of hip-hop. And my man KRS just came out with a brand new style, ruth-

action.

AW: If you were going to put out a six-song mix tape entitled "The Dopest Tracks," what would these songs be?

FJ: I like the AZ joint with Nas on the hook. That shit is hot. I'll put "I Shot Ya" LL Cool J remix featuring Fat Joe, Keith Murray, Mobb Deep, Foxy Brown and LL. The Fugees have this new song, with that girl Lauryn freestylin'. She's illin' that shit. I'd play Tha Dogg Pound "New York, New York." Umm....

AW: Vanilla Ice?

FJ: Not no Vanilla Ice, are you crazy man?

Film

Solo No More

Sabrina (Julia Ormond), of the new film *Sabrina*, is the daughter of a wealthy family's chauffeur and has grown up with a life-long crush on David (Greg Kinnear of television's *Later*), the youngest son of the family. David lives the lifestyle of a pampered playboy with more than his fair share of beautiful women — a lifestyle financed by his millionaire businessman brother Linus (Harrison Ford) — and mostly ignores poor old Sabrina, his adoring admirer.

Now there can't be a more attractive actress around than the statuesque Julia Ormond, but the plot demands that initially she be overlooked. This is accom-

plished in the time-honored fashion of giving her glasses and a bad haircut.

But then Sabrina goes on a working holiday to Paris where she discovers outdoor cafes, pretentious dialogue and most importantly, contact lenses. Returning to America, eager to claim David, she causes quite a stir. What poise! What a smile! She can hold a conversation! Understandably smitten, David is on the verge of breaking off his engagement to a red-headed heiress, to the consternation of Linus who needs the marriage to cement a business deal.

So far so funny. The jokes are coming in fast and accurately and in between we

have Miss Ormond to look at. However, during the glacial progress of the second half, director Sydney Pollack floods the picture waist-high with sentimental treacle and it's hard enough for the characters to wade to the end of each over-extended scene. The scenes between Ormond and Ford in particular are numbingly long and painful.

Sabrina is a remake of a 1954 comedy with Audrey Hepburn and sometimes its age shows. Its view of Paris, for example, is naive and ridiculous. Another sign of this aging is that women are not so obsessed with money as they are in the film (well OK, *outside* of Southern Califor-

nia). To protect his investments, Linus tries to lure Sabrina away from David with his more heavy-duty handsomeness. She is resistant at first, but once she sees the size of his bank statement and his strapping wallet, it's love at first sight. "After that," quips Linus, "she'd fall for Noriega."

Sabrina is a bad half-hour too long and Harrison Ford's one-paced acting style makes him look a little stiff here. Still there are some good laughs early on and it has its pleasures, especially in the fine acting of Ormond and Kinnear.

—Martin Knight



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I got the hell out of I.V....

Someone told me the neighborhood in Goleta I was moving into was kinda bad. How bad would it have to be, I thought, to be worse than where I lived? Might there be packs of hundreds of white drunk people in front of my house who might come in and ask for beer if I have too many friends over? Probably not. Besides, I grew up around L.A., I've gotten hard looks from some pretty hard people.

I'll never live with six people again, unless they all have hair of gold, like their mother. Things got messy. It was just disgusting by the time we moved out. By an amazing series of coincidences we found a new place, moved and cleaned our house completely by Jan. 1, 1996. As the apple or ball dropped in Times Square I was loading boxes full of stuff I never expected to have in a truck in the middle of a windstorm, of all things. When the taped version of New Year's happened in Santa Barbara I took a break for a couple hours. I didn't really get to party or even relax, but I felt like I was in the middle of a progressive party that was going to make my life better.

I lived and I still live with a good friend I've had longer than I've had pubs. He

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"Even if you are right about something, you lose if you refuse to see what the other person is saying. And if it feels like you won it is only because the other person decided it wasn't worth fighting you."

In another conversation we had after the first good night's sleep in our new house, he told me what he knew about what's going on in my head, "Maybe 5 percent of what is going in your head, I, as another person, can see. You see 100 percent, so of course you feel right and you can see where you are coming from."

I've known for a long time that I have to start seeing what is going on in other people's heads.

Everyone and everything might have something worthwhile to offer, based on that principle we went to a thrift shop to look for some bar stools for our new bar.

Thrift shops are the most elegant poets. They don't say odes to love designed to

Lyric of the Week:

with styles incredible like the Hulk and/ I'm bringin' my point to your ears like a Vulcan -Key-Kool

tells me all kinds of secrets about life. I guess he had just learned a lot of secrets right before we moved because he shared them with me as we worked on moving. "Arguing with people, especially people you care about, is ridiculous," he told me in a voice that sounds like I'm hearing him read a letter that he'd written. "I'm hot," he said.

"OK," I told him.

"You're cold."

"OK."

"Who's right?"

"Oh," I thought. "That's good. I understand what you're saying."

"If you start talking to someone and you get mad or too involved in what you are defending, you lose. Pick your causes."

This was a new criteria for looking at problems and issues. I was shocked, but compelled enough to keep talking. "Then I don't think I've ever won an argument."

woo or confessions meant to impress. They tell stories. They remind us that everyone has had a past they've moved on from. That everyone has had a life consisting of things other than just what we want from them. Thrift shops let people help people out and make life potentially more meaningful at a discount price. Poetry.

It's kinda cool to shop in thrift shops, I hear nowadays. Which made me wonder:

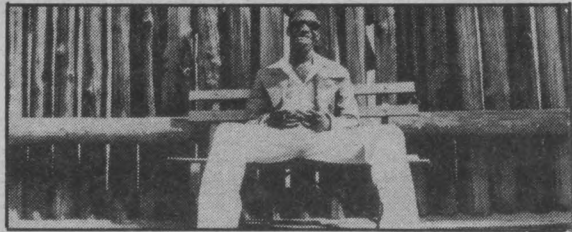
I saw a copy of the New Kids on the Block's *Hanging Tough* video in the video section of the thrift shop after we didn't find any stools. It was the same video a friend told me she was never going to throw away because she's had it since seventh grade. It was the only video the thrift shop had that I recognized.

What if, I thought, one of the New Kids shops at thrift shops nowadays, since it is kinda cool. It might suck to see your old video among all the other shit. That's pretty funny, I thought, I'm going to write an article about that.



and ya don't stop...

Count Bass-D
Pre-Life Crisis
Hoppoh/WORK



I first read about Count Bass-D way back in February in a free copy of *Pulse* they gave away while I was waiting to be seated at the Hard Rock Cafe in L.A. The writer of the piece was going on and on, raving about *Pre-Life Crisis*, Bass-D's debut. I remember dismissing the writer's claims, thinking that Count Bass-D could only be the name of a played-out fool from Miami still doing that bass shit.

But then, through the months, more and more credible media sources were singing the praises of Bass-D. *Spin*, *CMJ* and even *Vibe* were all over D's dick, saying that the man could single-handedly breathe new life into hip-hop with this record. They explained that the Count's style blended smooth jazz instrumentation, bass-heavy 808 kicks and a clever, sing-songy rhyme style and that *Pre-Life Crisis* was unlike anything ever done before.

So I looked and looked, but had no luck finding the album anywhere. I called the rapper's label in June

to try and finagle a copy from them, and was told that they weren't doing press mailings. I asked the publicist if she could at least tell me where to buy a copy, and she said she didn't know.

By then I had figured that Count Bass-D had been dropped from his label or had died or something weird like that.

But he didn't die. His label just fucked him, like Capitol did to Aceyalone. From what I've heard, Sony, WORK's parent label, sat on the project for months, mailing press demos to all the bigwigs, all the while avoiding ever actually printing up albums for DJs to play or for consumer purchase.

Until now. There are copies of the excellent (and it is excellent) *Pre-Life Crisis* out in most stores, and the label is finally doing press mailings. Although Sony's fear that a lot of heads may find Bass-D's

unconventional approach a little awkward or even corny and avoid it like the plague is probably valid, the truth is that *Pre-Life Crisis* is easily one of the freshest albums to come out in the past few years.

Bass-D is almost a one-man band; he sings and rhymes (sounding more than a bit like Michael Franti) and plays bass, drums, keyboards and does nearly all of the album's producing, programming and sequencing. The record's sound is smooth and soulful and I can't think of one song on it that I don't like, although "Sandwiches," "Agriculture" and "T-Boz Tried to Talk to Me" are probably my favorites.

Bottom line: Support Count Bass-D's record and let Sony and the other labels know that the chances they take with non-traditional sounds will pay off!

—Eric Harle Steuer

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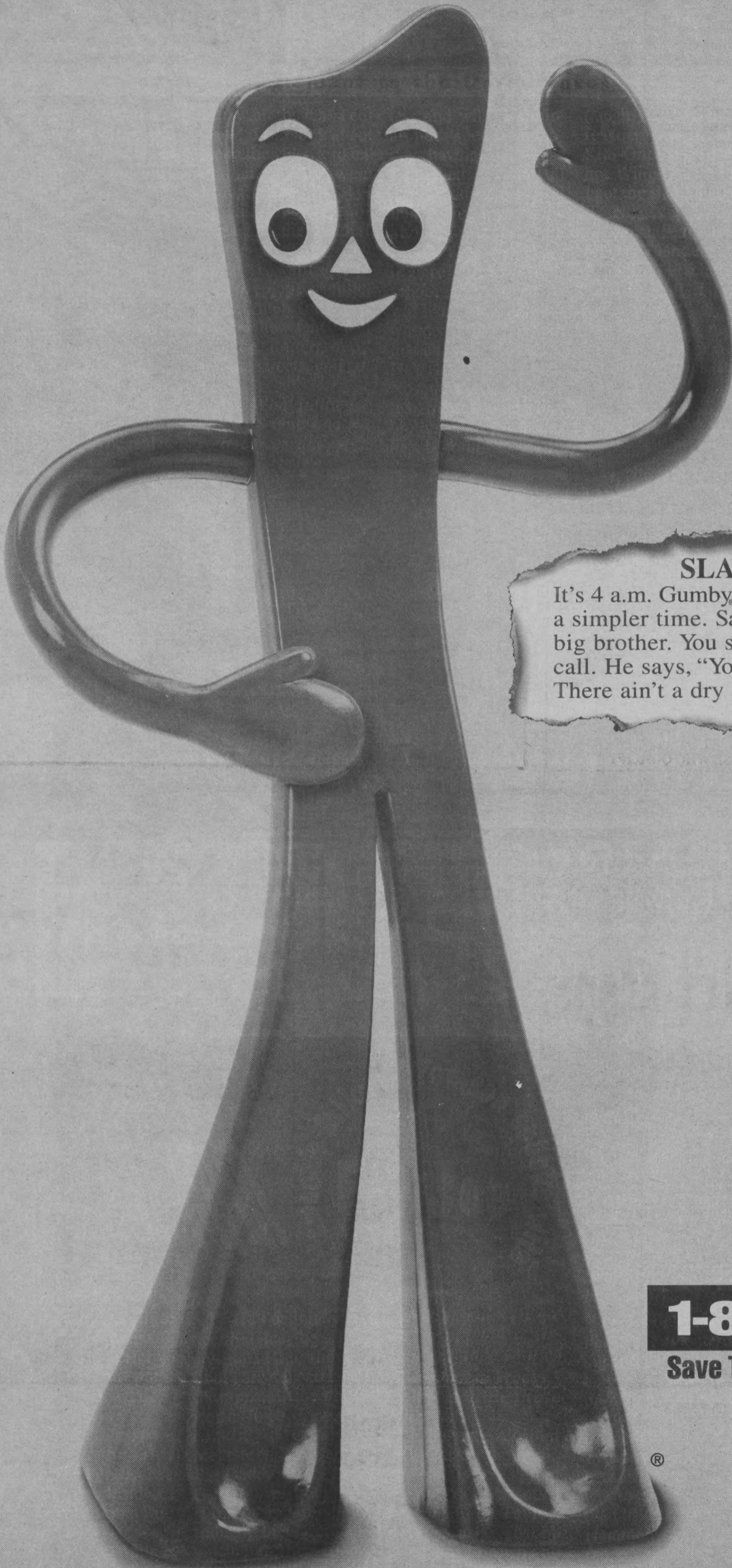
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