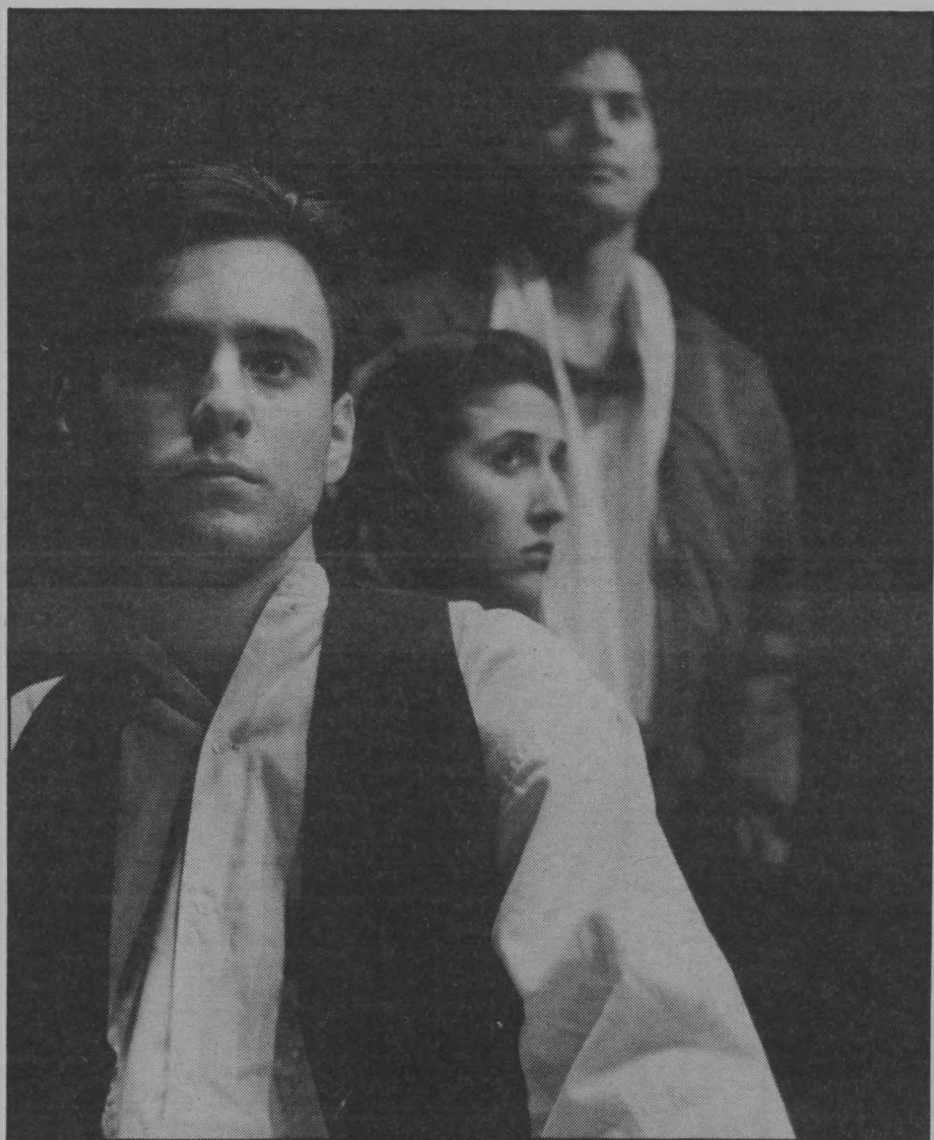


ARTS WEEK

The Arts and Entertainment Supplement to the Daily Nexus, For the Week of March 3-9, 1994.

FROM CHINA TO HERE

The Good Person Of Szechwan



The new production by the Drama Dept. in Hatlen Theatre, Bertolt Brecht's "Der Gute Mensch von Szechwan," roughly translates as "The good person of Szechwan." This particular production would probably be better off being titled "The Good Person of UCSB." Originally set in far-off China, this production attempts to universalize Brecht's play and in the process actually localizes it.

The themes of the play fall right in with our local culture: homelessness, pollution, drug abuse and poverty. Each of these is a serious problem confronting our local area, which makes Brecht's themes that much stronger. Even the visual aspect of the show suggests UCSB, being dominated by bicycles, makeshift stands and construction equipment. With such a strong local tie to the play, Brecht's alienation techniques and harsh, confrontational style make the play's themes extremely effective. We cannot simply say, "Well, that doesn't happen around

here," when it is painfully obvious that it does. The Drama Dept.'s choice of a play was a good one.

As for Brecht's play itself, it takes some getting used to. Originally written in German, the play takes on a very awkward, translated voice. His lines do not have the lyrical beauty of Shakespeare, but they are nevertheless effective. More important are Brecht's alienation techniques. By breaking down the fourth wall and constantly confronting the audience, he continuously reminds them that what they are witnessing is fiction. This destruction of the audience's suspension of disbelief is an excellent counterpart to the social commentaries that run rampant through his plays. His unique style is extremely effective in emphasizing his ideas, and is perhaps the reason that he is so widely acclaimed.

This production of "Person" not only recognizes Brecht's unique style, but actually augments it by making the themes so personal to us. One of the principal ways this production brings

Brecht's commentary home is set design. I particularly enjoyed the prevalence of bicycles, and the implied link to our bike culture. The idea of the gods as painters was also interesting, and provided for some interesting design ideas.

Another high point for the design team was the lighting. L.K. Strasburg has been in rare form in his last few productions, and doesn't disappoint here. His mastery of day-to-night lighting changes was really evident in "Person."

Michael Mortilla also impresses with his onstage sound effects. Perhaps the only aspect of the design I didn't like was the amateurishly drawn hand and cigarette. The constant smoke billowing out of the sewer and the characters' recurring references to smoke were enough of an emphasis on smoke symbolism — we didn't need it spelled out for us on the back wall.

If the production has a fatal flaw, it is the acting. One could almost feel the missing presence of the senior actors from this production. (The seniors were busy doing their production of "Mad Forest.") The lack of experienced actors in the lead roles was really a serious problem in this production. Rina Mimoun and Chris Liebe are fine actors, but didn't seem ready for the leads in such a complex play. In fact, the entire ensemble seemed very awkward and lacking leadership.

While there were a few outstanding performances, such as Wang (Howie Lotker) and the three gods (Jeff Frankfort, John Medeiros and Peter Teaff), it was, on the whole, a sub-par performance. Perhaps with one or two seniors this production could have been all right, but in its present state, and compared to the impeccably acted "Mad Forest," it seems high schoolish. Peter Lackner's direction was good, but from one so versed in Brecht and German culture, I expected something more.

—Davin McHenry





PURPLE FILM

Small towns, beware of the ever-encroaching commodity giants, pandering their wares to a community of consumers hungry for prefabricated goods like those produced by "Burger Barn" and "Food Land." Such corporations are invading Endora, Iowa — "a town where nothing much ever happens, and nothing much ever will," a one-road town where no one is happy, the economy is depressed and not enough people die to keep the morgue in business.

However, the film *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* is an imaginative, brilliantly written and very real story with a personal tone. It is directed by Lasse Hallstrom, who was nominated for his role as director and writer of *My Life as a Dog* in 1985. The film is written by Peter Hodges, who also wrote the novel on which the film is based.

Johnny Depp brings a strong sensitivity

coming over a hill as part of Gilbert and his brother Arnie's (Leonardo DiCaprio) yearly ritual sets the pace of the film and remains a symbol of hope for the future, and movement out of Endora.

"They're doing the right thing just passing through," says Gilbert in a voiceover that works beautifully in the introduction. *Grape* is a visually rich, well-written look at the very real problems of growing up in a small American town with huge burdens, such as supporting a family of five in a fatherless household, and dealing with the shame of having a mother who weighs over 500 pounds and hasn't left the house in seven years.

Gilbert learns to respect his mother despite her size, and to do something for himself for once. He can smile without strain when one of the shiny campers breaks down, stranding a free-spirited Becky, played with a charming air of



to his role as the good son to his mama, father figure to his mentally-impaired brother, a regular "Schneider" to the house repairs, and sexual release for Endora's sexually frustrated, bored, attractive housewife. Gilbert is one of four children rooted in Endora for what seems like eternity.

Throughout the film, one phrase is repeated by different members of the Grape family like a lulling mantra: "We're not going anywhere." In fact, no one goes anywhere in this town unless someone dies, giving the underlying themes of the film a cyclical quality.

"My mom is sort of attached to the house. Did you ever see a beached whale? That's my mom," says Gilbert to Becky (Juliette Lewis). The opening image of shiny, silver, 1950s-looking campers

whimsical spontaneity by Juliette Lewis. She gives him an emotional space in which to just *be*, beyond the stifling problems of his life and obligations in Endora.

Drawing on the themes of this film, it is impossible to ignore the priceless performance of Leonardo DiCaprio's Academy Award-nominated performance as Arnie, Gilbert's alter ego, a childlike 18-year-old with an undisclosed mental handicap. DiCaprio last worked with Robert De Niro in *This Boy's Life*. He met scads of mentally challenged people and watched others on video in preparation for his role in *Grape*, and it shows. There is an open, honest and naive quality in his character that soars above the confines of the problem-plagued Endora, as well as those of the Grape family.

—Allison Dunn



SKIN FLICK

British director Mike Leigh's new movie, *Naked*, is the tragicomic tale of Johnny (played by David Thewlis), a philosopher-comedian-lagabout who totters intriguingly on the edge of mental breakdown. By turns wildly funny and darkly squalid, it's the per-

very good at pointing out despair, it doesn't have the insight or self-awareness to help resolve and go beyond its limits.

Thewlis' character is a rich and fascinating creation; without him, the film wouldn't be much more than a dead-end exercise in morbidity. In his pre-

anyone he encounters, and it's this exploration that gives the picture its momentum.

The story opens when, forced to leave the northern city of Manchester after committing a near-rape, Johnny drives down to London to visit an ex-girlfriend. He finds she is less than thrilled to see him, but to show there are no hard feelings, has sex with her doozy roommate instead. With no money, he then wanders around London for a few days, meeting a succession of people (the homeless and night workers) as forlorn and desperate as he is. Through these encounters, we learn he is not alone in his despair, only perhaps a little less compromising and more explicit in the effects it has on him.

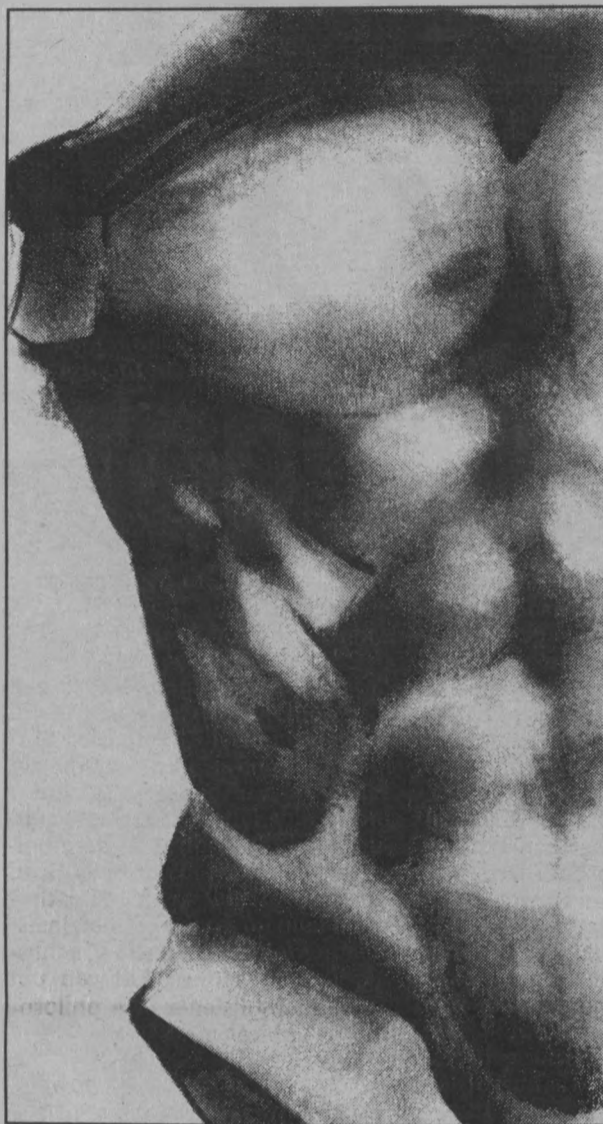
A psychological wreck, he's rapidly becoming a physical one. Someone asks him, "Have you ever seen a dead body?"

"Only my own," he replies truthfully. Educated and well-read — a highly intelligent tramp — he's an apocalyptic figure as he walks the hard streets of the capital. Whether he's a victim of society or of himself is open to question. One can only ponder and mourn such a waste.

Between sleeping on the streets, he tries seducing various women he meets, with a mixed degree of success. Even here, his inner conflict shows through in a shockingly violent sexual persona. In fact, all the men in this picture have this characteristic.

For its sobering realism, willingness to be eccentric and above all for its laughs, *Naked* is worth seeing.

—Martin Knight



MATT RAGLAND/Daily Nexus

fect antidote to mainstream cinema. While broad strokes are sometimes employed, it is generally the depiction of real people with real problems, not a glossy catalogue of slick superficiality. However, though the film is

sense, though, it lights up with a constant stream of profound observations and quirky wisecracks, directed at everything and everyone around him. Totally unembarrassed, he finds no difficulty in striking up a relationship with

MANY FILMS ARE COMING DOWNTOWN THIS WEEK



FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL

(ENGLAND, 1993, 1:40, COLOR)
5:30 p.m. Fiesta, Showing on 2 Screens
Enormously Talented Mike Newell (Enchanted April, Into The West) directs Andie MacDowell and Hugh Grant in this witty romantic comedy about people getting married and those unable to make that dreaded trip to the altar

Santa Barbara is a mecca of fun things to do for the visitor. But for the resident, few tourist attractions suffice. When's the last time you went to the Mission or wandered through the Botanical Gardens? Didn't think so.

Fortunately, there is one thing left that both tourists and locals flock to every year: the annual Santa Barbara International Film Festival, now in its eighth year. With nearly 100 films slated to show from Friday, March 5, through Sunday, March 14, there will be plenty there for everyone — including six world premieres and six U.S. premieres. This festival is unique in its diverse roster of cinema, with films ranging from independents to studio releases, from works by established auteurs to first-time filmmakers.

The festival will begin with the world premiere of *Healer* at the Arlington Theatre on Friday, March 5, at 8:00 p.m. Using his actual experiences as a paramedic, Santa Barbara writer Russ Reina has

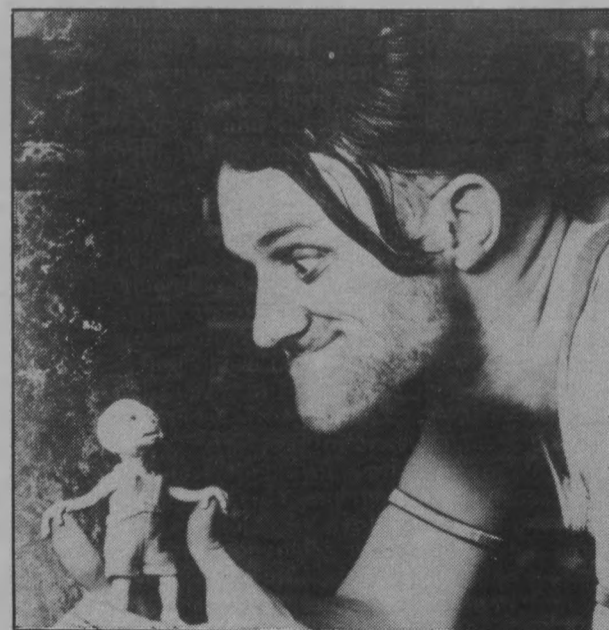
created a superb drama-comedy about discovery and transformation. The story centers on two small-town paramedics with widely divergent outlooks on life, and the profound effects the people they meet have on them.

Besides new movies, there will also be "An Evening with Alfre Woodard" (*Grand Canyon, Bopha!*), in which this actress will watch her film *Passion Fish* with the audience and then answer their questions.

An important filmmaking seminar, "Screenwriters on Writing," will feature a panel of six leading industry screenwriters who will recount the trials and tribulations they faced in writing for movie and television directors.

Because there is so much to do, it is imperative that anyone with the slightest interest in this festival go procure a SBIFF film schedule right away, as there is so much to see and just a week to do it all in.

—Martin Boer



THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB

(ENGLAND, 1993, 1:01, COLOR)
7:45 p.m. Fiesta
One of the most brilliant animated feature films in years. The animation technique (pixilation) is fiendishly difficult and unprecedented: mixing stop-frame models with live actors frame by frame as if they themselves were puppets.



POPSICKO

I'm hangin' out at Espresso Roma, waiting to do my interview with Popsicko, when some freak breathlessly jumps over the flowerpots and sits down next to me. Enter Marko, the bassist and youngest member of Santa Barbara band Popsicko. The rest of the band soon arrives. They choose to impress me and walk through the front entrance.

Keith Brown is the vocalist, songwriter and guitarist. Tim Cullen is lead guitarist and backing vocalist. Mick Flowers is on the drums. This band definitely gets around. Between doing shows all over California, they have an extensive mailing list of over 400 people. "I like playing parties, they're a

lot more ragin'," says Marko. "The lame thing about clubs is that they're not all-age shows."

Popsicko has just gotten back from Sacramento, where they had a show at the Cattle Club opening for Far. "It was great," says Marko. "Everyone was totally into it and dancing around." They take the Family Wagon on all of their road trips. "There's a TV and a cooler inside. Plus no one's gonna suspect anything with a sticker advising you to 'drive safely' on the bumper," says Marko.

They just came out with their third tape, *Back it Up*. The group describes their music as "a little raw and a little nice." After listening to it, I'd say it is a

whirlpool of Cheap Trick, Gin Blossoms, the Replacements and Sugar. Whose sound influences this group?

"Obviously, we have a lot of influences, we just forgot 'em," says Tim. However, he does agree he is influenced by Cheap Trick. Mick's star is Elton John, Marko's way into the Clash and Keith is a true Neil Diamond fan. Somehow these guys manage to pull it all together and come up with one great sound. They've been described as "part aggression, part confection — a kind of candy-apple punk." And while you're enjoying the show, Marko offers a drink suggestion entitled "The Poor Man's Speedball" — a combina-



tion of Jolt cola and Milwaukee's Best, cigarette optional.

Marko's known for collecting weird shirts, and on this particular day, the name Betty is written across his chest. No explanations necessary — he's just one of those people who can pull it off, along

with the 12 or so silver bracelets around his arms. If you want to know, ask him and he'll tell you.

No matter where these guys play, they tell me they always end up with \$150 afterwards. "It's just a thing with us," they say. If they continue doing as well as they have been,

they'll end up with much more in their pockets.

Following recent shows at the Red Dog Saloon and the Roxy, Popsicko is bound to be coming around again soon. Check this popsickness out — they're a disease you'll actually like having.

—Brooke Tessman

BIG BEATS TODD YES, YES, CHICKEN

Living in Santa Barbara, listening to KTYD much of the time, one might have heard and passionately enjoyed the hit single "Bittersweet" by Big Head Todd and the Monsters, and wondered, "Who are these guys and where can I see them play?"

The band has made it big in Santa Barbara with their latest release on Giant Records, *Sister Sweetly*, but have been, in fact, well known in Colorado since 1986. After making it big in the Rocky Mountain state, Big Head Todd branched out to Chicago, San Francisco and Minneapolis, forming a core following. The trio has built and maintained this following over the

course of two prior albums, *Another Mayberry* in 1989 and *Midnight Radio* in 1990, on their own Big Records label.

Big Head Todd and the Monsters is a group formed from high school friendships, with music as the bond that kept them together. Todd Park Mohr is both lead guitarist and lead singer, but Rob Squires on bass and vocals and Brian Nevin on percussion and vocals do more than serve as a background for a brilliant soloist.

The close-knit band works together to form honest, unpretentious rock music that is the result of their hard work and intuitive interplay be-

tween the band members, which obviously developed from years of playing together.

The talent of the trio can be seen through the versatility of their music. "Bittersweet" is an example of contemporary attitudes about relationships conveyed through harmonious rock chords and drums, while "Brother John" closes off their latest album in a mellow, acoustic manner that can put any listener in a philosophical mood.

On March 15 at 8:00 p.m., Big Head Todd and the Monsters will play the Ventura Concert Theatre.

—Michael Cadilli

Tonight was the big night. Doot and I struggled into our Spandex tuxedos, checked ourselves for ticks and got psyched up to see the new musical "No, No, Nanette" downtown. We left early from I.V. so we could grab a bucket of extra crispy chicken at the Colonel's for the ride.

Unbeknownst to us, as we walked into the dining area, a strong smell overcame us and we had to sit down. It was that smell, that glorious scent that forced my taste buds into a half nelson as they pleaded — no, begged to be satisfied.

Well, we did what any sane consumer does and ordered some buckets of

crispy dreams, and proceeded to enjoy them in the fine atmosphere. Naturally our conversation headed to the question of culture. I skillfully presented my argument, that culture is "the arena for interpersonal growth and appreciation."

Doot attempted to counter with his theory that "culture is a state of mind, a level of consciousness where the human species enters a realm of knowledge and wisdom that our forefathers and kinsmen plowed like a vast field of intelligent corn." So I threatened to eat all his chicken popcorn, and he wisely admitted the stupidity of his argument and agreed with

me.

Well, our conversation went on for some time before we realized that our Santa Barbara Civic Light Opera was soon to start.

Doot and I rode like madmen on our tandem unicycle to the Granada Theatre.

Well, doggonit, we saw "No, No, Nanette," with its excellent acting, humorous script and titillating tap dancing. And during intermission, while everyone else was sipping tea and eating scones, Doot and I sat in a corner enjoying our own little taste of culture.

—David Potter



Spicelab
Lost in Spice
Planet Earth Recordings

With a bubbly, drunken sense of belonging and a synthetic sensuality, Spicelab's *Lost in Spice* sends you wrapped in cellophane to your first encounter with galactic jazzzzz.

Yes, Spicelab's diverse musical training, which includes blues and jazz, emerges as the quality that sets their "space tape" apart from the others. Somehow, I can imagine John Travolta in a plastic disco suit, panting, "Let the spice flow, man!" But just before you whip out your laminated Bee Gees CD, Spicelab changes the flow and sets the pace to an ecclesiastical organ orifice with '80s alternative muffled amplification.

Then they go into the special-effect sounds of ambulance orgasms and laser beam screams. Sounds that bounce off the body yet engage the ear. Here and there they'll use the average techno beat, which always sounds like Star Wars hysteria or Tweety Bird on acid — take your pick. But Spicelab always allows other styles to break through

NEW JAZZ



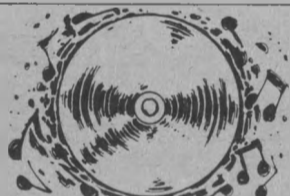
with a subtle beauty; a cosmic conga here and a wavering waltz there whirl by. The intro to *Lost in Spice* is a "Phantom of the Opera" in outer space,

Syncopated, serious and selective, *Lost in Spice* wraps up, as a creepy solstice spider sticks a fuzzy leg in your ear and delights in your open mind, whispering cyberpunk secrets and mumbling galactic grooves. Again, a lusty laser dance-trance sequence, with finicky phrases and frolicking fairy tales, tells of "The Spirit of Fever" with slow speeds to catch the X before you get

to Z.

A metallic male voice chanting "The Spirit of Fear" illuminates the illusion as the universe yawns and stretches in the mouth of the Milky Way. "The Last Supernova" employs tight tempos with record-skipping repetition against an organic orbit orchestra, with its tribal house influence and intense alternating stereo effects. As if we weren't "lost in spice" enough, Spicelab directs us toward foreign shores with musical motifs from the Orient and a bastion of bluesy beats amidst the new age entourage.

—Jennifer Chedar

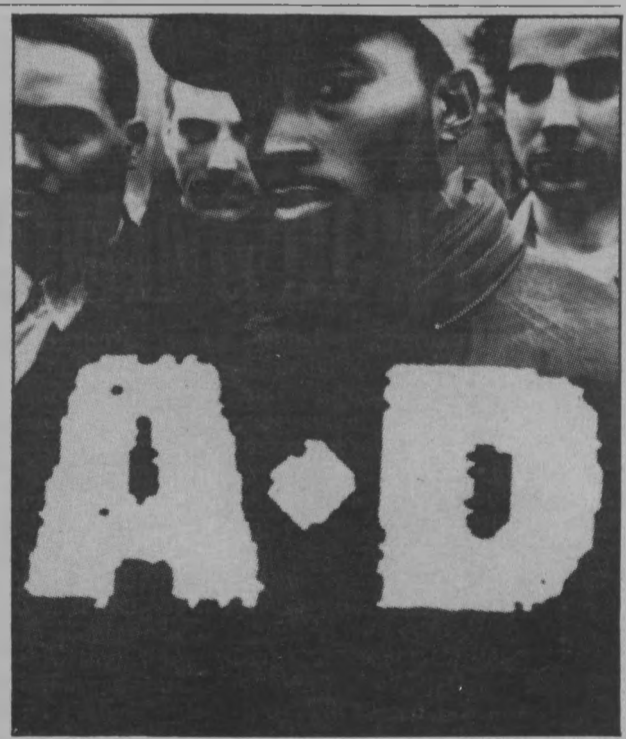


A-D
A-D
Rage Records

Throughout my life, I have been a fan of music that has true emotion and power. Basically, I have always liked bands that rock shit. In junior high it was Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. In high school, it was Jane's Addiction and Soundgarden. In the past few years, I have gotten heavily into hip-hop, which has been doing the most innovating and groundbreaking recently.

Like hard-core rock, hard-core hip-hop has that same vigor, fearlessness and fast-paced rhythm. Both hit you hard with beats, riffs and potency. Both tackle issues that are unpopular with mainstream culture, such as racism, governmental atrocities and violence.

I have always thought the ultimate groove could be found in the amalgamation of these two strong styles of music into one omnipotent force. Groups such as Proper Grounds, Rage Against The Machine and those on the *Judgment Night* soundtrack have tried this style. Unfortunately, none of these efforts has quite hit that perfect combination.



There is always either too much rock and not enough beats, or the group is not able to merge the two styles, which end up clashing and fighting for position.

Now there is another group taking a swing at the metal-hip-hop thing: A-D. Taking the standard four-man band approach, A-D is composed of several talented musicians. On guitar is Dave Tarcia, who can rip into some heavy riffs and bust some tasty blues. On bass is Aaron Keane, who has got some stinky-ass funk ability. Bringin' the bam bow is Mervin Clark, with the off-and-on

beat and straight-up pounding rhythms. Finally, there is the front man on the mic, Anthony DeMore, who has been rhyming since he was 15 and growing up in the Bronx.

Together they are ripping their own sound, some funky hard-rock shit with streetwise rhymes smoothly laid over. Personally, I would like to hear a little more emphasis on the beats, but I guess I get my answer on "Bucks-hots," where Anthony says, "We don't give a fuck about your formats. Critic, hear that."

—Matt Turner

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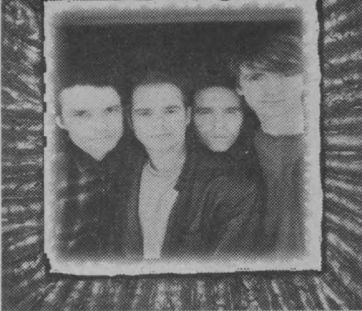
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ALL BOARD THE BEASTIES BASH

Now that they are through fighting for their right to party, the Beastie Boys are embarking on an effort to fight the spread of AIDS, of which the teen population is the fastest-growing segment. To raise some money and have fun too, a number of people have organized Board Aid, where various musicians and athletes will go up to Snow Summit Ski Resort, above Los Angeles, on Tuesday, March 8, to spend the day snowboard-

ing and educating.

Board Aid will attempt to raise awareness and educate people about AIDS and safer sex. Because snowboarding is the fastest-growing winter sport in the world, and teens comprise 90% of its enthusiasts, a snowboard event seemed appropriate enough.

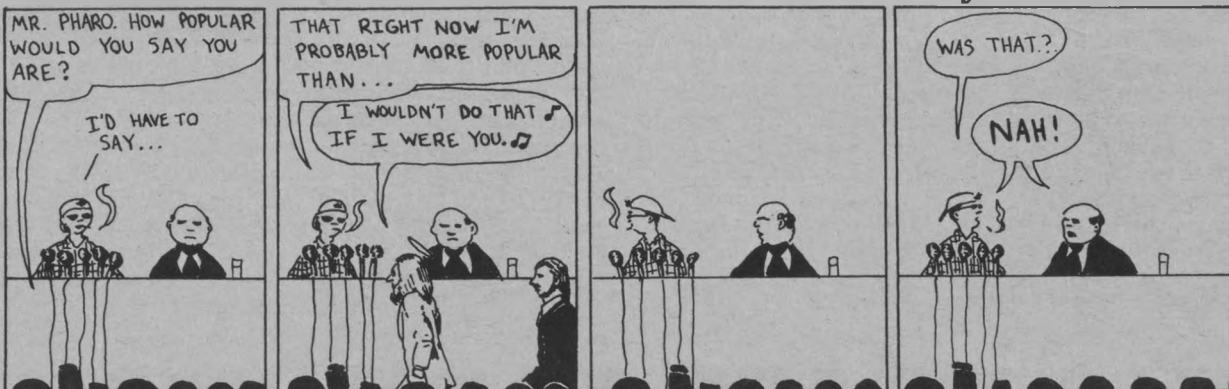
While the Beasties are hosting the event, there will be lots of other people in attendance, including Schooly D, Lucy's Fur

Coat, House of Pain, Ugly Kid Joe, Social Distortion, Ice T, Gin Blossoms, Dred Zeppelin, Del Tha Funky Homosapien, Cypress Hill, Anthrax, the Goats, Biohazard and Megadeth.

What better way to spend Dead Week than carving the snow up at Snow Summit and hanging out with those louts from Brooklyn?

Contact Ticketmaster for more information and tickets, (805) 583-8700.
—Martin Boer

ANDY PHARO



MR. PHARO. HOW POPULAR WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE?
I'D HAVE TO SAY...

THAT RIGHT NOW I'M PROBABLY MORE POPULAR THAN...
I WOULDN'T DO THAT IF I WERE YOU.

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NOW I NEED TO MAKE SOME ENEMIES.
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