



ENCORE

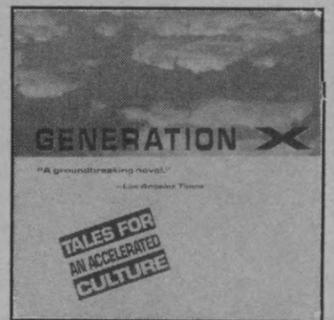
THE ARTS AND
ENTERTAINMENT
SECTION OF THE
DAILY NEXUS

For The Week of October 17, 1991

GEN ERA tion



Slacker



Generation X

a look at new works
defining our
misunderstood age

GAPS

Santa Barbara Scene THIS WEEK



THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



with this ad \$1 OFF ANY PIZZA



Jane Startzman, of the Ohio Ballet Company, spins like a top in "Wings & Aires."

Enough interviews in this week's ENCORE for ya? Next week, we look forward to questioning Angie Dickinson about why she wasn't included in the television's recent JFK miniseries. Marilyn just gets all the press. In the meantime, here are some local events worth

a look-see.

Film:

• *Robot Carnival*, a collection of nine animated chapters about (and possibly, for) robots plays at I.V. Theater on Friday, Oct. 18. Nine of Japan's most renowned artists worked on this, so either it's really good or it's really confusing. 9:30 p.m. and midnight.

Music:

• Imrat Khan and his son, Shafaatullah (what were you expecting, Imrat Jr.?), bring their family musical legacy to Campbell Hall Saturday, Oct. 19 at 8 p.m. A

master of the sitar and surbahar, Imrat Kahan has toured the globe with his classical style of Indian music. Tickets: \$14/\$8.

Dance:

• One of the most popular ballet companies in the country comes to Campbell Hall on Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 22 and 23. The Ohio Ballet Company has enthralled audiences with its showcase of classic works from the 20th century. The performances will include four pieces and the lighting design of master

Thomas R. Skelton. No cameras or firearms, please.

Theater:

• The Ensemble Theatre Company presents public performances for *Blue Horses*, part of its Storybook Theatre program. Shows are every Saturday for the next three weeks at 10 a.m., a time period to place the children's shows in competition with cartoons. Ah, a new wrinkle in the theatre vs. television debate. Tickets are \$3 for children and \$5 for adults and immature grown-ups.

Festive Feasting with Ham



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Listen to KCQR's Kelly Cox for more details Grand Prize Winner announced this Friday 5-10 pm



Sounds of Culture

Authenticity Highlights Music of Los Folkloristas

You don't realize how much you know about Mexican culture until you leave the West. I'm from a Mexican family and never really experienced culture-shock until moving to the Midwest this summer.

I lived in Detroit, Michigan. Detroit may have a neighborhood called "Mexican Town," but Disneyland has done a better job of cultural interpretation. By the end of the summer I was a salt-water fish dying in the land of the lakes, desperately needing some Mexican water.

On my drive back across this country, I stopped at the first seemingly authentic Mexican joint I could find: "Tres Hermanos" in Provo, Utah. The carnitas were OK but I knew I wasn't home yet. I could tell by the music piped into my red-naugahyde booth. The album must have been called *Hooked On Rancheros: Quaint Quasi-Authentic Music Put Over an Automated Disco Clap that Won't Offend Your Non-Latino Customers*. Is this really what BYU students think of as real Mexican music? Por Favor!

What's sad is that even many who grew up in the midst of Mexican culture — on the very land that once was within Mexico's boundaries — might still think of "La Bamba" as the highpoint of Mexican music. But that's far from true. *Los Folkloristas* is proof.

A group of seven singer/musicians/historians, Los



With more than 100 instruments in its repertoire, Los Folkloristas inspires the sorrowful happiness entwined in Mexican culture.

Folkloristas was described as "the most important group in Mexico today, and one of the most important in Latin America" by Mexico City's *Excelsior*.

Since 1966, Los Folkloristas has travelled throughout Latin America gathering folk instruments and learning the music and culture of the regions. The members study with village elders to master the instruments and songs — many of which they save from extinction by locating that "last old campesino" who still sings the music his grandfather taught him.

They have collected more than 100 instruments and use most of them in their performances. Amidst the standard guitars, violins, drums and flutes are unusual items such as a water drum from the Yaqui Indians of Northern Mexico. The drum is a large hollowed-out gourd which floats in a tub of water. When struck with a rubber-wrapped stick, the water

drum produces a deep bass resonance.

Listening to the rich music produced by Los Folkloristas inspires the sorrowful happiness entwined in Mexican culture. Sorrow for what has been lost in the process of "civilization". Happiness for the gratitude owed to Los Folkloristas.

Though the group is dedicated to preserving music from all of Latin America, Los Folkloristas' performance Sunday at Campbell Hall will focus on music from Mexico. It is music that speaks to the historical-self of any Latino person as well as to anyone who lives on the land that inspired its poetry.

Los Folkloristas will perform Sunday, Oct. 20 at 7 p.m. in UCSB's Campbell Hall. Admission for students: \$12/\$10/\$8. General reserved seats: \$14/\$12/\$10. Tickets are available through UCSB Arts & Lectures.

—Michelle Ortiz Ray

Cosmic Crazy Glue

Lily Tomlin Discusses the Bonds of Our Experience

By Pax Wassermann

Lily Tomlin, star of the one-woman film *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, sure has had a lot of opportunities to express herself. Besides portraying 13 characters (including herself, the actress) in the screen adaptation of Jane Wagner's prize-winning screenplay, Tomlin will be promoting the film in a series of sporadic talks, including one at Campbell Hall today at 4 p.m. Billed as "An Afternoon with Lily Tomlin," this free event was arranged by UCSB's Arts and Lectures, who will make passes available at the door beginning at 3 p.m.

Search is a kind of "Gulliver's Travelogue" of 12 distinct pop culture characters, woven together by the words of Trudy, a bag lady with an enlightened consciousness. Sound kooky? How about adding some aliens, contacted only through Trudy, who are dropping in to check on human evolution.

"When the aliens are looking for intelligent life, they decide at one point that it is just the tip of the iceberg, that we're much more complex than that," Tomlin explains.

She speaks of a "cosmic crazy glue" that binds us all, and says that one actor, "representing all these characters coming together, is part of the symbolism and metaphor of the movie itself."

The film, first successful in written form and then as a long-running Broadway play, has attracted a wide range of enthusiasts. Tomlin explains this success with interpretations she's gotten from fans: "Many (enjoy it) because it dignifies artisans, and others tell me it gave (them) a much higher opinion of (themselves). ... It's an unjudgmental embrace of the species."

Trudy, the film's narrator, befriends the aliens that are here to observe our planet "in puberty," giving an outside look on a world that has driven her mad. She was once a creative consultant to the head of Nabisco, and wanted to be the first to sell the concept of munchies to the Third World, culminating in "cracker consciousness." It was this account that pushed her into insanity, wandering the streets with her pantyhose about her ankles. "Trudy believes

that reality is nothing but a collective hunch," Tomlin says. "She talks about being crazy, but has the most consciousness of any person in the film."

The film is touted as "a social history, a living anthropological exhibit, that chronicles the heart and mends its bruises." Tomlin's aims are much more specific, hoping to combat the cynicism that she feels pervades our society.

"This piece tries to tack into what's higher about us, to make us think of what's higher in us, rather than what's lowest," she says. "There's so much in our culture that is sarcastic, cynical, brutalizing, vulgarizing, degrading ... that aspect of ourselves gets reinforced

over and over again, 'till I think we actually, totally believe it — that there's nothing redeeming about us."

The actress is attracted to "the commonality of our experience," translated well in a cast of characters that, though diverse in quirks, are identifiable to the audience. She questions, "How can a group of strangers get together in a movie house or theater and laugh and cry about the same things? Why is it that we're capable of the most magnificent and the most banal things?"

As to the description of the piece as "postmodern," she shrugs, "I don't know what that means (anymore). One week in the media I counted 360-something postmodern's."

FILM REVIEW

Tomlin's Search: Intelligent Life

This is a movie of sharing for the sharing-impaired — a movie of startling insights, captivating storylines and one extremely versatile actress. Even before the opening credits, the voice of Trudy The Bag Lady communicates that *The Search For Signs of Intelligent Life In the Universe* is no ordinary film.

On first glimpse of the narrator/guide, a lady with an inside-out wig, crayoned-on make-up, and "Post-It" notepapers on her coat sleeves, the audience realizes that this is an unusual, quirky and downright spectacular film — the kind that advertizes with posters telling passersby that the best thing that they can do this year is evolve.

Some people who go to see *The Search* ... will have already read Jane Wagner's screenplay. Some will have already seen Lily Tomlin's award-winning performance on stage. For those, this will not be a let-down; instead, a combination of memories and surprising additions.

In the play, Tomlin had one costume, two chairs, three stairs, a stool, innovative lighting and a sound man that should have won awards. One of the anticipations of the film is to see how Tomlin and Wagner,

The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe. Starring Lily Tomlin. Screenplay by Jane Wagner. Directed by John Bailey.

as the film's executive producers, manifest the characters, ranging from grandparents to prostitutes. The audience sees Agnes' grandparents in all their suburban grandeur, sewing machine and Bootsie the Tabby Cat included. Switching to the stage, Tomlin passes back and forth between two sides of an argument with incredible ease.

Tomlin sheds tears during the divorce of Lyn and Bob, grimaces as Agnes when she realizes that the only thing she has in common with her family is that they are all carbon-based life forms, and stifles with Kate's bad-haircut-induced boredom. Tomlin acts out twelve different characters in all, not to mention a small appearance as herself.

Trudy the Bag Lady, with her raspy voice and space chums will charm the pantyhose right down to your ankles. Her umbrella-hat dial sends the audience through the lives of some remarkable people; and guaranteed, when they leave the movie theater, they'll have goosebumps.

—Jenn Myers



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"A TERRIFIC HUMAN COMEDY. A GOOSE-BUMP EXPERIENCE"
—Richard Corliss, TIME MAGAZINE

"ASTONISHING...INGENIOUS CONSTRUCTION AND COMPASSIONATE WIT"
—Terrence Rafferty, NEW YORKER MAGAZINE

"A GLORIOUS SCREENPLAY, A BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE, A MOVIE MARVEL."
—Dennis Cunningham, WCBS-TV



Lily Tomlin

The Search
for SIGNS of
Intelligent
LIFE IN THE
universe

The Movie



MEET LILY TOMLIN - TODAY
4:00 - CAMPBELL HALL
BOOK SIGNING TO FOLLOW

FILM OPENS TOMORROW ★ FIESTA 5
2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30

GEN
ERA
TION
GAPS

It's no secret that the baby boomers are getting old. They're really getting worked up about things like retirement accounts and whether or not they get that occasional irregularity.

Now, episodes of "thirtysomething" aside, this does not make for scintillating viewing. So the powers that be are getting around to asking Really Big Questions, ones we're not used to hearing. They want

to know something we all want to know:

What do we want?

Aside from the obvious,

like the entire set of "Brady Bunch" episodes on VHS, nobody really knows. Least of all, ourselves, people of the odiously-named "twenty-something" generation.

Director Richard Linklater



knows this more than most. For more than six years, he worked to write, direct and produce *Slacker*, a hilarious, stream-of-consciousness take on 24 hours of life among the mostly college-aged bohemians of Austin, Texas. The problem is that the 29-year-old Linklater was so good at capturing people our age, he's now

put in an unenviable position: Telling people what we want.

Linklater has been traveling the country, trying to do (or undo) this, all the while promoting *Slacker* and its so-far limited art-house release. On Friday, it starts a run at the Victoria Street Theatre. And from his hotel room in Denver (*Slacker* was shown at the Denver Film Festival), Richard Linklater broke it all down:

ENCORE: What have people said about *Slacker* at Denver?

Linklater: This is the first time people here have seen it, so it's always interesting to get initial comments. ... It runs the gamut. Some people don't know what to make of the film, and a lot embrace it.

ENCORE: What about the people who don't get it? Who is not getting this movie?

Linklater: It's people of all ages. It's not like, "Oh, everyone over 40 doesn't like it," because I meet 65-year-old people coming up to me and saying they loved (the movie) and that it really captured something. I really haven't been able to figure it out. ... A lot of people really like the humor in it.

ENCORE: A friend of mine saw the movie and loved it, but is still wondering what it's about. What is *Slacker* about?

Linklater: That's always a tough one. (laughs) I was fortunate to do this thing so low-budget and so independent that I never really had to describe to anyone what it was about. ... But I think overall you could just say it shows a realm of activity that a lot of people live in, that doesn't really fit into society in any utilitarian way — that exists on the margins, way outside the mainstream — primarily by choice. These people have rejected the options they've been given. They're just trying to make their own way, to find something that corresponds to their desires in life, not what they've been programmed to do.

ENCORE: I had an interesting experience surrounding the time I saw *Slacker*. I read Douglas Coupland's book *Generation X*.

Linklater: Oh, right. I know Doug. We were on a talk show together. On CNN's "Sonya Live."

ENCORE: How did that go?

Linklater: It was pretty fun. It was our 15 minutes of people wondering "what are all these kids in their 20's doing? They're all living at home. They don't want to do anything." We were just explaining that this generation is, you know, a little different. People are willing to take time to discover what they really want to do with their lives. Sometimes it's better to make no choice than a bad choice,

one that screws up your whole life. ... I really liked *Generation X*.

ENCORE: If you're doing talk shows with Douglas Coupland, you sort of have the position now of spokesperson for a generation. And if so, whaddaya say?

Linklater: I say I don't want to be a spokesperson for a generation that doesn't want spokespersons.

ENCORE: Or spokesmodels, for that matter.

Linklater: It's all about the rejection of singular voices or someone speaking for other people. I don't want someone speaking for me. And I don't want to speak for other people. I want to do my bit, to put something out there and hope other people will see it. It's too simple. I don't really think like that. I mean, *Slacker* doesn't encompass an entire generation in that way. It's just the way some people live at a certain time. Where *Generation X* is, I think, much more of a generational statement, and pointedly so, with the definitions and all that, *Slacker* is kinda the inhabitants of *Generation X*.

ENCORE: Let's talk about the structure of the film, its absence of narrative, and how that relates to being raised on MTV. Was that your intention?

Linklater: I can't say where the idea really came from. It was just an idea that occurred to me like "Hey! I think this can work as a movie." ... I was always interested in anti-narrative, experimental film. But in a way I'm not surprised that people can watch it. I mean, on paper I could have described it to anyone in the film business and they would say, "Well, it's not going to work. There's no one thing here, there's no one thing, blah blah blah." But when you really do think of the generation that grew up from day one flipping through TV stations with short attention spans, creating their own narra-



"I don't want to be a spokesperson for a generation that doesn't want spokesmodels."

tives, watching five minutes of news, five minutes of "Star Trek" reruns, five minutes of something else. You kind of put these stories together and you're kind of willing to accept whatever limited information you get at a certain time, whether it be through a conversation or a TV show, or a song, you process that information in whatever way you can, so that it means something to you.

ENCORE: The various segments you put together are, even in terms of style, independent but seamless. I mean, you had Pixelvision, video, super-8 and whatnot. Actually, I'd heard a lot about Pixelvision (a now-discontinued Fisher-Price camcorder that records on regular audio cassettes).

Linklater: It was difficult to get Pixelvision video to film. I spent tons of time getting it, techni-

cally, but you work through it. I enjoyed the segment at the end, the experimental super-8 film. I just had an optical printer and blew it up myself.

ENCORE: Really? That's great. That segment was the most resonant, emotionally, for me.

Linklater: Really? I'm always surprised. It is for me too. I really like the ending. It means a lot to me, but a lot of people will go "I really liked the movie but I just didn't get the ending." Or, "Oh, it all fell apart at the end, this kind of home movie that doesn't mean anything." And I'm just like, God, I think that says more about them than the film. Doug (Coupland) told me that when he saw the end of *Slacker*, he cried.

ENCORE: Exactly what I did.

Linklater: Wow. People think *Slacker* doesn't have a lot of emotion, but I

think the characters are all sitting on a certain amount of emotion that is released in that last bit.

ENCORE: *Slacker's* a great calling card for Hollywood. Do you have any other projects you're working on?

Linklater: I thought of *Slacker* as an anti-calling card, but, yeah, certain projects I can see doing on bigger budgets. I still want the freedom to make films the way I made *Slacker*. Not having to answer to anyone, having the complete freedom to do whatever you want, but keeping it on a small budget so you don't bankrupt anyone.

ENCORE: Do you still believe in the American Dream?

Linklater: I believe in the American spirit. Not so the dream. I'm not so sure what that dream is. We're in a constant state of redefining that dream. I don't really like those dreams. It's time to get to the reality. ... Every generation has discovered that about America in their own way. The beatniks in the '50s said "It's a drag. We're wrong. Let's break with the status quo." And in the '60s they said "We are an imperialistic nation." (laughs) Our generation is going "Hey. We aren't the best nation in the world to live in by all these statistical reasons. We're underachievers. ... There's ways to change and be more human, but the powers that be are so entrenched, that you don't see that." And I think there is a sort of frustration. In the movie there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the institutions or the narrow boundaries of the political spectrum. It really doesn't encompass what people want. We're all going, "Hey, wait a minute. It isn't that simple." We're all thinking, "Hey, I'd like to live in a society where ..."

Fill in the blank: I'm not stepping over people in my street, where our infant mortality isn't so high ...

ENCORE: What was the moment you knew you were going to become a filmmaker?

Linklater: I was a writer before. I was writing plays. I was the kind of guy who won the writing awards, you know, that kind of thing. I was discovering a visual quality in myself, but growing up in Houston it took longer to think of myself as a filmmaker. It was a very lengthy process. I'm 29 now. I started thinking in cinematic terms about eight years ago.

ENCORE: What are your all-time favorite movies?

Linklater: That's always a tough one. I could sit down at this moment and say, *Wise Blood*, or *The Dead*. Who knows? I'm on a John Huston roll lately. For me *Raging Bull* was a seminal film, because I saw it when I was in high school, and it made me think about film. Up to that point, film was kind of this fun thing, escapist in nature. I saw *Raging Bull*, and I was totally confronted with my own obsessional quality, and my own paranoia. Just to see that dark psychology brought out in cinematic form was a complete revelation to me, and it was so beautiful — poetic and expressionistic and all that — and I was just like "Wow! Film can be this!"

ENCORE: I should hope that there are other movies on your list, like the Danny Bonaduce film *H.O.T.S.*

Linklater: Yeah! *H.O.T.S.!* That played on cable for years!

ENCORE: Exactly.

Linklater: The bodacious babes come down in the parachutes. ... It's not really that lurid. There's not that much flesh in it. I was at someone's house, and it was on at 1 a.m., and I was like, you know, "Get on with it." Great title.

ENCORE: And everybody says, "God, what an awful movie. I can't believe Danny Bonaduce would do that movie." But everybody's seen it.

Linklater: You know Danny's on tour these days with Keith Partridge, David Cassidy.

ENCORE: Doing spoken word poetry?

Linklater: David Cassidy's singing, doing his regular show, and Danny's doing a stand-up comedy routine. I kinda like David Cassidy. I think he's pretty cool.

GENERATION GAPS

Review: *Slacker* is uneven, but its deliberate uniqueness makes the film worthy.

The Cult of A Personality

A verbose film with a cast of amateurs, Richard Linklater's film *Slacker* seems destined for cult status. Plotless and with almost no action, *Slacker* follows a group of neobeatniks, wasters and plain-old weirdos as they live out their empty lives in the college town of Austin, Texas.

In a time frame of 24 hours, the camera drops in on the lives of various people, observes them for an average of two to five minutes, and then follows another, sometimes completely unconnected, character as he or she passes by. It is a game of cinematic tag reminiscent of Luis Bunuel's *The Phantom of Liberty*, though updated for our TV generation.

With a cast recruited by Linklater from the streets of Austin (which includes his friends and members of Butthole Surfers and Glass Eye), the director has created nearly 100 characters, each with their own strange quirks, some quite humorous and satirically well observed.

There are several conspiracy theorists, there is a man obsessed with the video im-

age and capturing everything on tape to make it somehow more "real," there is a female huckster trying to sell a jar containing what is supposedly a Madonna Pap smear. There is an old anarchist, who, when he discovers a man in the process of burglarizing his house, befriends him, appreciating the burglar's anti-establishment ideals.

Slacker is a unique film that is, for this reason, commendable. However, it does have its problems. Such a vignette-driven film suffers from unevenness; certain characters stick in the mind more than others, some have too much screen time, some too little. Other characters have dialogue that

seems to pander to a potential cult following, those who will gleefully repeat lines, removing them from their context to become in-jokes.

Credit must be given, though, to Linklater's cast, only a few of whom reveal the meticulous script underneath; they make *Slacker* seem improvisational, which is a real achievement. Linklater's direction involves a lot of dollies and steadicam work, resulting in the relaxed walking pace of the film and keeping our interest solely in the characters.

The question arises after viewing the film as to whether *Slacker* is really a celeb-

ration or a damnation of the people it portrays. For despite its satirical edge, the film's target audience is exactly the college and post-college crowd it sends up.

Slacker's characters have so much to say, but none of it is of any use; they are apathetic because they talk themselves into inaction. Be they "alternative," "fringe" or any other movement against the norm, films like this one attract an audience that, like the "slackers" themselves, is searching for something beyond what seems to be ordinary life. *Slacker* reveals the fallacy of this alternative lifestyle; there is perhaps even more despair, less meaning and purpose here than in "normal" life.

Many American alternative movies are like Western medicine: They treat the symptoms and not the cause, never suggesting a way out. In that respect they are just as bad as the system they are fighting against. *Slacker* flirts with this theme often; one begins to wonder if something is being said about nothing, or if it's really nothing at all.

—Ted Mills

BOOK REVIEWS

An original voice delivers twentysomethings from the dark shadow of the MTV age.

Generation X

Two summers ago *Time Magazine*, voice of the nation, came out with a cover story on, well, to put it bluntly — us.

We were dubbed the "twentysomethings," a word clearly originating in the mind of some graying ponytail.

I—and most people my age—gave an unorchestrated, yet synchronized groan. Great, not only were we walking on the soiled path left to us by those damned thirtysomethings, but now some marketing schlepp had decided to name us after them.

The surprising thing about the article, which was in fact written by a duo of twentysomethings, was that it was pretty darn accurate. And what the people interviewed had to say about our generation were things I identified with. It was the first time I could agree with statements about my/our experience.

But it was just one issue of *Time*, and soon the whole "discovery of a generation" was forgotten.

Though I never bought the title of "twentysomethings," I couldn't stop thinking about the article. I wanted to pursue it. I began to think about writing a book. And then one day this summer, I learned that some fucker had beaten

me to it.

His name is Douglas Coupland, and he just went ahead and wrote my story, and I suspect the story of millions of other Americans born between roughly '64 and '73.

I'd be angry at Coupland for beating me to my book, if his novel *Generation X* weren't so damn accurate.

But Coupland is right on.

Coupland's project started out as an idea he had for a sort-of "Preppy Handbook" for the twentysomethings. He started coming up with wackily apt definitions of syndromes suffered by our like. But as he went along, he learned something about us. He learned that we aren't easily definable. We weren't anything that could be neatly wrapped-up in a handbook—our story would be better told in a work of fiction.

Living our whole lives in the dark shadow of that media-hungry generation before us has left this group happy to sit in obscurity. It has made us ci-

Twentysomethings Speak

Definitions from Coupland's *Generation X*

Vaccinated Time Travel: To fantasize about traveling backward in time, but only with proper vaccinations.

Personality Tithe: A price paid for becoming a couple; previously amusing human beings become boring: "Thanks for inviting us, but Noreen and I are going to look at flatware catalogs tonight. Afterward we're going to watch the shopping channel."

Down-Nesting: The tendency of parents to move to smaller, guest-room-free houses after the children have moved away so as to avoid children age 20 to 30 who have boomeranged home.

Poverty Jet Set: A group of people given to chronic traveling at the expense of long-term job stability or a permanent residence. Tend to have doomed and extremely expensive phone-call relationships with people named Serge or Ilyana. Tend to discuss frequent-flyer programs at parties.

phers—a generation X. Coupland's three main characters have left the

world created by others to create their own world and contemplate their exist-

ences in the desert oasis of Palm Springs. There they work their McJobs ("Low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future jobs in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one") while they tell allegorical stories to each other and muse on life and nuclear annihilation.

It's largely a free-form novel—one that reflects the generational experience of growing up flipping the television channels from the "Partridge Family" to "Star Trek" and such.

It's a stream-of-conscious work that will not be enjoyed by people who truly want (and worse, believe they'll get) an entry-level job in a major multinational corporation that will allow them to buy a smart three-bedroom home in the suburbs with a garage to keep their Volkos clean while they take annual two-week vacations to Jamaica.

It will be appreciated by

the rest of us who were denied the smiling family dinners with Marsha and Greg telling about their latest problems and Alice picking up the dishes afterward. It will strike a chord in those of us who instead glued ourselves to the TV in order to escape the madness of realizing our families and our lives were not like that at all.

But this isn't some Let's-all-put-on-our-black-clothes-and-talk-about-how-our-art-reflects-the-pitiful-lives-we-lead book either. No. Coupland is very honest and even optimistic in the face of impending doom. The book has left every Generation Xer I know happily relieved to find out that someone else has been living in this dark shadow.

It's too easy to say that *Generation X* is our *On the Road* or another *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* because Coupland's book—like its people—shouldn't have to be compared to the past.

And this generation shouldn't have to ape history.

Moreover, with original voices like Douglas Coupland's around, we won't.

—Michelle Ortiz Ray

The mystique of a college rock town is uncloaked: Acid and polyester pom poms.

Party Out of Bounds

Rodger Lyle Brown hit upon the perfect title for his book *Party Out of Bounds: The B-52s, R.E.M. and the Kids Who Rocked Athens, Georgia*. The book chronicles the climb to stardom for bands who had their meager start in that Southern college town. Judging by the tone of Brown's book, we find that the road to fame and success was not so much hard work, but instead lots of acid, kegs and drag parties.

Bands like R.E.M., the B-52s, The Fans and Pylon started brewing in the chaotic town of Athens during "the mid-seventies: a nether world between

Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter, the downtime after Vietnam and Watergate, when the graduated and dropped-out student refugees from the sixties went back to the country to set up self-sufficient farms with a shotgun in the closet and a patch of pot in the nearby woods." People like Keith Strickland and Ricky Wilson (B-52s) hit some parties, made some friends and started a band. Every band in this book seems to have a similar tale. They play parties, get

popular and boom! They're famous.

For people who are genuinely interested in these bands, this book may leave them a bit dissatisfied. For people interested in reading about some legendary parties, this book is full of action. Athens, Georgia seems to have been a haven for lost souls needing to bask in the glory of unbridled, creative youth. "The B-52s said it was okay to be bored. All you have to do is find your mother's make-up kit and

slippers with polyester pompoms, hawk a little spit to rejuvenate a dead eyebrow pencil and your troubles are over."

Surprisingly, this small Southern town endured a lot of alternative behavior, countered mostly by clean-cut frat boys who every now and then would (mistakenly) stare down a gorgeous babe ... in drag. Brown does a notable job of making the reader feel like she or he were at the party watching the colorful people eat Cheez Whiz

as they danced around in outrageous costume.

However, he covers the world of so many people that the many stories feel crammed onto the pages. It's easy to lose track of relationships between early musicians. There are so many people floating around the book it's like being at the party tripping on the drug of choice and forgetting who you came with.

Perhaps if Brown had concentrated on one or a couple of people as they

waved in and out of each other's lives, their story would have gotten proper attention. Trying to connect every name to a band or a band member gets tiresome and confusing.

From cover to cover, Brown tries to present the tales from the point of view of Athens. The problem with the approach is that it covers about a decade, and the author does not do the town or its citizens justice in describing the turbulent times Athens saw—too many years, too few pages. Brown, though he lived in Athens during the wild and crazy days, sounds like he's done a lot of research and tried to waste very little of it.

—Kia Neri

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Macabre Palabra

Oingo Boingo May Have A Dark Sense of Humor, But They're Not Into Kissing Each Other on Stage

Interview by Dino Scoppettone

Led by morbid lead singer Danny Elfman, Oingo Boingo has been making its frenetic brand of dark dance music for over a decade. After a summer-long hiatus due to squabbles with their record label, the band is embarking on a short Southern California tour and preparing to cut a new album. **ENCORE** had a chance to speak with Boingo drummer Johnny "Vatos" Hernandez about the upcoming Santa Barbara concert and the current state of the band.

ENCORE: Where does the nickname "Vatos" come from?

Vatos: That came from back when we first started the band; it was kind of the start of the decade, and we were all giving each other nicknames. I used to introduce a song in Spanish, and they'd say "What the hell's he saying?" and I'd say, "I'm a vato, man." A vato is an instigator in a Chicano gang. I was the main rehearsal whip-cracker, so that's where I kind of got that from.

ENCORE: You've been with Oingo Boingo since the beginning. What direction has the band taken over the years?

Vatos: The directions have been pretty constant. It's a pretty creative situation, and I think that the albums are kind of a documentation of all the different moods and crazy things we're involved in.

ENCORE: Yet on the last album, it seems that the band had taken a more serious direction.

Vatos: That could be the case. The tunes seem to be of a bit more serious matter, but I don't necessarily think that we've lost our little spunk and kind of dark humor on things. I think it's a bunch of tunes that work together, and we've pieced them all together.

ENCORE: You talk about the dark humor, and that seems to be a pervading aspect of the band. Does the whole band see things this way?

Vatos: Oftentimes, being dark is viewed as something like "Oooohh, evil," and all that kind of stuff, but we've always kind of been on a mock-death type of thing. You conquer death and the darkness by making fun of it constantly, so that macabreish type of humor is not really dark to us. We're kinda cynical and kinda crazy, but I don't think it's that we're all Satan worshippers, or anything like that.

ENCORE: Do you often get that perception from others?

Vatos: Every once in a while that will pop up. Back in the early days that was kind of a question on everyone's mind, because they weren't used to anybody with such dark humor.

ENCORE: The band has billed the Santa Barbara concert as the Dia De Los Muertos show, and then later on, you have the Halloween bash down south. Do you guys get

more pumped up for these types of shows?

Vatos: Well, it's always a fun time for us, but I think we pretty much get amped up for everything. We're all coffee achievers, and there aren't any alcoholics in the band or anything like that, so we're just all pumped up.

ENCORE: It's been almost two years since the last original album came out, and now the band is experiencing some label hassles. What can you say about that?

Vatos: All that does is slow up the creative process. Unfortunately, this is a business, and we have to think of it that way. Having a record company that's really behind us, and helping us progress, and making sure we have enough publicity and videos ... that's really important. I don't think MCA (Oingo Boingo's former label) put out enough videos, enough publicity, that kind of thing. I think we're moving toward a more cooperative situation.

ENCORE: You talk about the videos and the publicity, but it's always seemed that Oingo Boingo has stayed away from mainstream, commercial publicity. Is the band looking to change that?

Vatos: I think that there's a lot more fans that are just waiting to hear the music, and it hasn't gotten the proper exposure. But we're not into kissing each other on stage and letting our hair grow long.

ENCORE: Do you have any hair?

Vatos: I've got a little bit of hair. Ever since Desert Storm happened, it's kind of ordinary to have short hair. I think there's a lot of people out there that need our music, people who are a bit too serious about themselves these days.

ENCORE: Obviously, it may depend on the new label, but when can we expect a new album?

Vatos: We'll probably start working on it in January or February, and it probably won't be out until spring. I'd say no later than summer.

ENCORE: Seeing as you've been away from the stage and the studio for quite a while, will it be hard for you guys to get back in the concert groove?

Vatos: No, we're pretty well-rehearsed. We've played these songs for a while, and we've been rehearsing for the last couple weeks. We're in shape, and everybody's doing okay.

ENCORE: What can we expect from the Santa Barbara concert?

Vatos: High-energy, driving madness. It's really cool that it's on a Saturday night. I think the band's just going to have a great time. There's something about having a vato loose on the town on Saturday night.

Oingo Boingo will be appearing at the Santa Barbara County Bowl Saturday night at 7. For tickets, call 964-2999.

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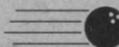
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FILM REVIEWS

Hollywood Scared Stupid

Ernest May Shine, but How Bad Can Tinseltown Get?

The Taking of Beverly Hills. Starring Ken Wahl, Matt Frewer and Harley Jane Kozak. Directed by Sidney J. Furie.



Ken Wahl

Whew! Who farted? That's what crosses the mind as one views the new action-romance-comedy *The Taking of Beverly Hills*. It's a sense that an embarrassing cinematic release of gas has occurred. Featuring the cute, Italian posturings of former "Wise Guy" star Ken Wahl, who does breathe some sitcomish charisma into his role, *Taking* is a film whose only accomplishment is a consistent badness.

It tells the stunningly soporific tale of a huge band of bad guys who stage a fake chemical spill on Rodeo Drive, evacuate Beverly Hills, and steal everything. What the bad guys don't know is that "football's hottest quarterback," Boomer Hayes (Wahl), got left behind in the evacuation and has teamed up with a stray bad-guy cop who's really good at heart (former Max Headroom, Matt Frewer). Boomer is none too happy because he's a sports guy and therefore finds criminal activity highly egregious, so he eventually declares a personal war on the whole slew of black hats.

A few well-placed one-liners about football provide a cheesy theme that runs throughout the film.

When Boomer leads a pursuing bad guy tank into a swimming pool, for example, he yells "Touchdown!" Not wanting to miss out on the witticisms, the bad guy comes back with the menacing line, "It's only halftime, quarterback, only halftime." These really stinky jokes continue right to the end of the film.

Though the laughs come entirely at the expense of the script, writers, actors and producers of this film, they do come occasionally. All in all, *Taking* can be recommended for those blind dates that go wrong, or simply as punishment for a friend.

Barring these two scenarios, you can feel safe in avoiding this film.

—Dylan Callaghan

Ernest Scared Stupid. Starring Jim Varney. Screenplay by Charlie Gale and Coke Sams. Directed by John Cherry.

Go spank yourself if you disagree. Get off your high horse if you think I'm wrong. Go drink a glass of orange juice after you just brushed your teeth if you think I'm crazy.

Go spank yourself, I say, because Jim Varney is actually one of the best comedians of our day, and you should believe it. He — on his weak-looking Cerritos Auto Square shoulders — can carry an entire movie, and proves it once again in the newly opened *Ernest Scared Stupid*.

Sure, he is the "Hey, Vern" guy. Sure, he is the guy who beat his minor late-'80s popularity to death. Sure, he is the guy who keeps starring in poorly received, low-budget pictures that become more and more aimed towards the under-seven age group. But ... but he's got more funny in his little finger than Dana Carvey's got in his entire leg. He's got more funny when he walks down the street than all your Joe Piscopos, Gilbert Gottfreids, Eugene Levys and Dan Ackroyds put together have when they all go slipping on a pile of banana peels and land in a swimming pool full of joy buzzers. He's as good as Pee Wee Herman, maybe.

And yes! Watch out, you Frenchies! He's a modern-day Jerry Lewis!

Ernest Scared Stupid doesn't have the surreal straight lines nor the manic, physical direction that the enormously funny *Ernest Goes to Jail* had. Indeed, this one seems aimed more at the kids than any of its predecessors. The acting is bad and the sets look cheap and the opening credits look like a Federated commercial. Just when the film doesn't seem like it's going to make it, Jim Varney's Ernest picks it up, places it shakily on his back and carries it to the credits.

Listen to the plot: Ernest accidentally uncovers a troll that's been sleeping underneath a big tree. The troll goes around and steals little kids' souls and then Ernest goes around and kills the troll's offspring with milk. He can only kill the final troll with unconditional love. Yes, it sounds like a great kids' movie that's also fun for adults ... and it is!

It's a goofy ride, like a spin in a Shriner's go-cart when the bars close downtown. But it's probably the best kids' movie since *All Dogs Go To Heaven*, and you should go see it.

—J. Christaan Whalen

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MUSIC REVIEW

Reign-Soaked Prince

Diamonds and Pearls
Prince and the New Power Generation
Paisley Park/Warner Bros.

I think the best thing about this album has got to be the funky holographic cover art. You turn it one way, Prince is looking down at a woman's hand across his chest. You turn it the other way, the hand moves, ever so slightly, and he's looking right at you, all sexed up. But he ought to be looking a little ashamed.

Not that the album's a total piece of shit. I even liked it. That is, until I spent the whole weekend listening to his other stuff. On his 13th official release, the olde purplemeister put out what would have been a very solid dance/pop mix, for anyone else but Prince. "Cream," the album's catchiest cut, is an infectious little sex ditty that sounds a helluva lot like a Bonnie Raitt song, albeit a good one. "Strollin'," the jazzy track that follows, reminds me of *Parade's* eclectic playfulness. But "Jughead?" What the fuck is that? Prince, a more than capable

producer, fails at a full-on rap attempt — despite the talents of rapper Tony M. — and gives us dance-club gaga better suited for a rum and coke and a cheap butt grind than the *Lovesexy* funk we've come to expect.

Almost entirely missing from the album — besides good songwriting — is the kind of inventive, emotional vocals that have characterized his best work, in albums like 1999, *Purple Rain* and *Lovesexy*. His vocals suffice, but hardly compare to earlier work, like "Condition of the Heart" or "The Beautiful Ones."

I remember when I picked up *Around the World In a Day*, Prince's follow-up to *Purple Rain*. Half betrayed by the publicity hype that surrounded his "last, great artistic statement," I found an album that I had to grow on, a risky departure from a commercially proven style. Now, with *Diamonds and Pearls*, we've got that same kind of hype, but for an album that uses the phrase "everybody in the house go hhoaa!"

In one of the record's lamest tracks,



Prince, with admirers.

the chorus echoes "money don't matter tonight, it sure didn't matter yesterday." Prince's earlier work may have suggested such an ideal, but *Diamonds and Pearls* leaves a lot to be questioned.

—Pax Wassermann

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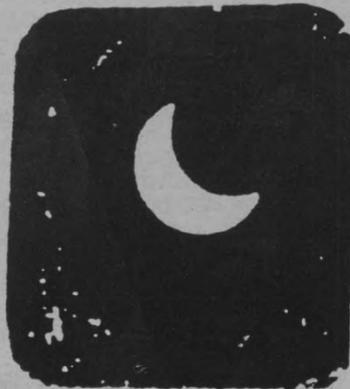
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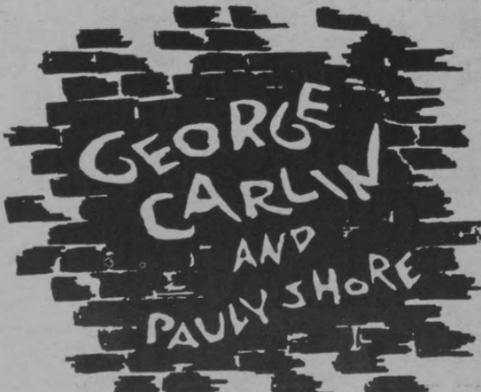


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