

# arts and entertainment

The Santa Barbara International Film Festival begins today running through this Sunday. *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam* will show in a special pre-screening today at 11a.m. at the Granada Theater. Special guests UCSB Professor Walter Capps and director/producer Bill Couturie will speak after the film. *Dear America* will rescreen Sunday at 12:30 p.m. at the Fiesta. Admission: \$5. For Festival info. (805) 963-0023.

A while back I was talking to a friend about the pressure for draft registration. "That all doesn't matter," he told me, "cause when they actually say it's time to go everyone'll be 'no way man, I saw Platoon'."

Learning from our mistakes may be the eternal defect of the American Dream, yet those who have lived through the worst may still attempt to save the rest of us from being doomed to repetition. Thus painfully necessary education comes from *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, a movie that aims for the heart, but goes by way of the stomach. This imperative HBO documentary uses a format that is at once innovative and basic: real letters written home by Vietnam soldiers in the field, narrated over stock news and private footage shot throughout the war.

Straightforward, innovative, basic, and super powerful, *Dear America* is a lot like rock 'n roll. Force across the message, scare 'em if you have to, just make them feel it, wake 'em up. Vietnam was the rock 'n roll war, a place where an idyllic landscape of dreams crashed head-on with the ugly reality of American firepower in the most God-awful explosion of pure pain and total confusion you can imagine. Only this movie lets those who were there tell us what we could never in our worst nightmare fathom. *Dear America's* human power lies in its ability to transcend just the Vietnam war and investigate in it the insane extremes of man's totally controlled ability to fuck himself up.

The movie works so perfectly because of its chemistry. The letters are read by some of Hollywood's top actors, many of them as young as the soldiers had been during the war: Micheal J. Fox, Sean Penn, Matt Dillon, Kathleen Turner, Robin Williams, Judd Nelson, Robert DeNiro, Charlie Sheen, Kevin Dillon, Tom Berenger and Willem DaFoe are among the many stars.

It's the actors' being able to give such true voice to each letter because the words are real, narrating over vivid footage that is too

d e a r A m e r i c a

## LETTERS

## HOME

f r o m V i e t n a m

real, often of the same people, places and times being talked about. Pack in bits of music — Hendrix, Dylan, Stones, Creedence, the Drifters and the Doors — into a searing background sound that defines the time and the mood, and you have a combination that

They're not all just kids though, they're soldiers and many of them are ready to fight, ready to die. "Morale is high, Mom, but there's so many of the V.C. we just need more men!" The contradiction is brought home as President Johnson does send more,

### SPECIAL RELEASE

by Jesse Engdahl

brings it's message home so hard and deep you will be affected and educated, shocked and amazed.

"I'm now sitting on the beach," says the opening letter, as we see a gang of young boys frolicking in the waves to the strains of "Under the Boardwalk." Cut to battle footage, helicopter gunners strafing the jungle with machine guns, soldiers dragging buddies into holes as they fearfully look over their shoulders for incoming, Creedence's "Fortunate Son" blasting along with the M-60's and mortar explosions. Can these be those same boys; is this the same station?

"Thanks for the letters Mom. When I read them, for a minute I get to be a normal person who doesn't worry only about killing people or being killed." Yet we watch one kid after another clowning for the camera, young, tan faces smiling and joking. It looks like fucking Del Playa, like a goddamn fraternity volleyball match!

and more, and more. "You should see my men fight. They were going after wounded men no one else would go after...you shoulda seen...it'd give you goose pimples." Now we get to see the bravery in the face of madness. The letters move along chronologically, telling the unbearably long story of our involvement. The statistics flash across the screen, how many went in each year, how many didn't come back. Hearing so many voices, we can feel each number having its own name, its own story.

Cronkite relates the President's vow to defend freedom at any cost, and his promise that the war will soon be over. "You know, this is an 'in' war. One of the hippest things in the whole world. I've read where officers were quoted as saying 'This is the only war we've got, don't knock it.'" We see the economic power, the industrial strength of hundreds of thousands of bullets being made, the assembly lines rolling to "And

The Beat Goes On." And the line of boys goes on, keeps going out to die as the endlessness of it all sets in.

As the body count goes up, General Westmoreland admits that the war will be a long one, and the anti-war movement grows as soldier morale sinks. "You can't tell the good guys from the bad here," as we see the soldiers trying to search every person, every village. Some they burn (in the infamous Zippo Raid) and we see that no matter how madly destructive it seems, how arbitrary, too often these men feel justified. "Is my leg gone? I know it's bad, I was holding it on... I just couldn't Nape that villige, I hate to call in the Nape, kill all those children..." from a commander whose men couldn't believe his meanness or his bravery. If he'd called in that Napalm, some of his men would be alive, he'd have his leg, and all those kids would be dead. *Dear America* gives sickly vivid reality to the word "dilemma".

For the pain experienced, the vengeance committed. MyLai: "I saw groups of old men, women, children grouped in front of a ditch so when they were shot down they would fall back into the hole," testified one Marine. And the P.O.W.'s celebrating their fourth and fifth and sixth Christmases in Hanoi, praying along with thousands of fighting Marines for peace.

You watch Kent State, Cronkite sounding like a surreal ghost actually telling us how National Guardsmen fired on students in Ohio as we watch the newsreel footage, Morrison howling "no one here — gets out alive." Your disbelief will be broadsided as a Marine relates "We just heard that was by far the most shocking incident since the war began... my God, what about us?"

There are moments of incredible joy, when Nixon sends home the entire 3rd Brigade in the first de-escalation. The homecoming scenes were the most uplifting shots I can imagine, followed by those who had to stay, to kill and die, the faces looking harder, older, less human and more desperate while Marvin Gaye sings "What's Going On?"

"Dear Aunt Fanny: This morning one of my men turned to me and pointed a hand filled with cuts and scratches at a plant with soft red flowers and said 'That's the first thing I've seen that didn't have thorns on it.' The plant was representative of Vietnam. It is a country of thorns and cuts, guns and marauding, of little hope and of great failure. Yet in the midst of it all, a beautiful thought, gesture and even person can rise among it, waving bravely at the death that pours down upon it. Someday this place will be burned by Napalm, and the red flower will crackle up and die among the thorns. Yet that flower will always live in the memory of a tired, wet Marine."

## UCSB DRAMA SEES THE JOKE

by Lane Shefter

"Christopher did a wee wee on the fireworks!" and the audience of *Joking Apart* almost did in their seats. This tritely amusing two-hour English comedy premiered in the UCSB Main Theater on Thursday and the production was plenty full of wit, humor, a uniquely talented cast and brilliant direction by Albert Takazauckas (recipient of the Obie award for his depiction of David Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*).

*Joking Apart* contains a rare facetiousness, with banter reflecting a rather Monty Pythonish humor in dialogue that bounces like a tennis match. Its style, while certainly not natural or particularly dramatic, and makes no pretensions of being so, blooms instead through its overblown characterizations. So what is this play, which does nothing more than present a collection of larger-than-life lives, trying to say about this world of superficiality it creates?

Michael Walsh and Allison Gendreau portray the ever-generous, exuberant, chatty couple Richard and Anthea, in whose garden the play is set. Richard is overly bright and cheerful, and Anthea is attractive, intelligent, and full of personal effervescence. Their two best friends are Sven (Jere Stormoenven), and Olive (Erin Fiedler), the irritating, pompous, businessman and his over-weight, doting wife. Sean Mason and Kristin Baer portray Richard and Anthea's next door neighbors, Hugh, the wonderfully oblivious and sweet preacher, and Louise, his nervous, uptight, overly-emotional wife. All of these couples provide a contrast to each other rather like that of a fun-house mirror. Each brings out chunks of what the others are missing, yet the pieces put together do not make a whole — they remain somewhat distorted, becoming more like caricatures as the play progresses.

These strangely-bent personalities are products of



Jeff Mills, Allison Gendreau, Michael Walsh on the surface of jokes.

superficiality. Cloistered by their safety, their blanket existence is inherent in their dealings with their own problems. The actors' depictions of their roles are unfailingly constant throughout the twelve year time period covered, (in fact none of the characters ever changes). Even though time is passing, nothing is ever solved, no problem is ever allowed to the surface long enough. When they do enter conversations they are laughed away or joked about. Ironically, the only thing that does change in the course of the production are the costumes they wear — a tribute to their totally material existence.

Jeff Mills plays the dark enigma of a character Brian, who futilely in love with Anthea jumps from one relationship to another with an odd mixture of desperation and disgrun-

tlement. His one monologue in the play, while perhaps overly dramatic center stage and slightly long, is nevertheless enlightening. It fills in gaps of information on the past as well as gives us insight into his character. And yet, not even this moment can be taken seriously because (his girlfriend) Mo threatens to puke behind him every five minutes during the process of his speech, an example of how all serious subjects are dealt with.


Genevieve H. Anderson gives admirable performances in her numerous roles. Her characters are the only ones who seem to lack this pervading artificial style, who don't really fit in. Anyone who is unlike these characters — who wants to deal with realities and problems — is out of place in their overdone world.

After Sven has a serious realization about his life and solemnly exits, the other characters break out laughing, and encourage us to do the same. The very serious subject of Louise having to be on stimulants at the end, is laughed off with the antics the drugs force her into, like playing the tennis court fence like a harp! No one bothers to find out what is really wrong.

So "joking apart," some serious issues are constantly touched upon underlying all the pleasantries — and then pushed out of the way. In this production, in their effort to be a comedy, I felt they were glossed over so much that they were somewhat lost all together. Their problems only burst forth briefly in many mini climaxes, before being snubbed out by an all-consuming farcical tone. The "joking" in *Joking Apart* is obviously the culprit and the cure, all in one. The play is full of telling lines, like when Olive says she doesn't read the paper because "there's too much going on in the world without having to think about it as well." We realize the humor in this, but also the sad fact that this is what everyone thinks here — it is the epitome of this play.

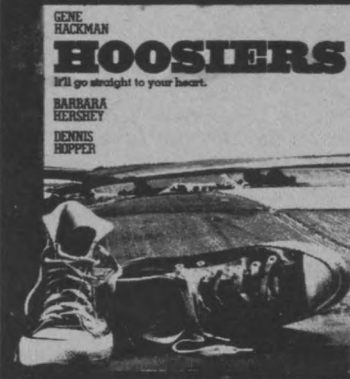
*Joking Apart* plays today through March 5 at 8 p.m. in UCSB's Main Theatre.





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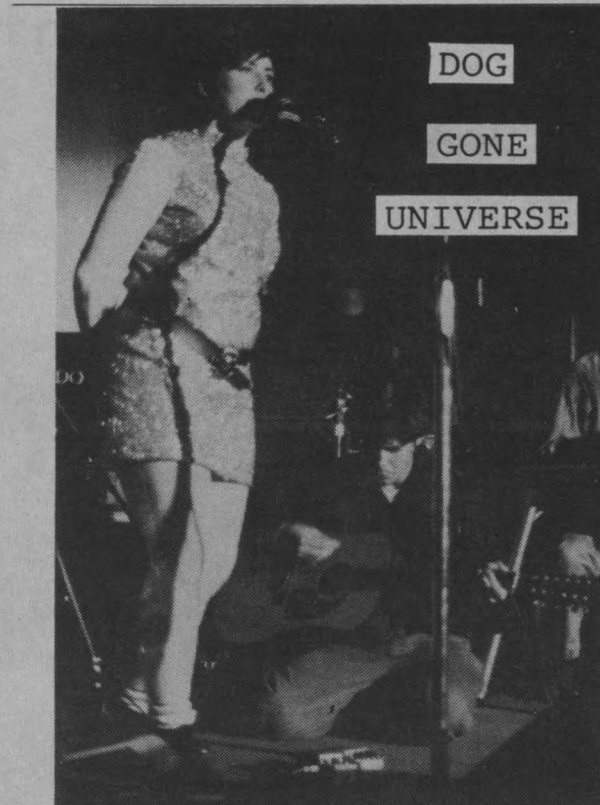
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by Andrew

Sometimes expectations are a sure fated death to a gig. Anticipation ought to be that heavy, desirous suspension of emotion that leads to that exultant release of mental tension. But alas, Waldo was more than just the dog-faced boy, indeed we were faced with a real dog Thursday night at Borsodi's. Okay, so maybe not so canine, and trust your fearless Nexus reporter, but I was pretty scared. The Chinese water torture antics were a dribble and were merely tortuous. Loud screeching and banging on pots and pans would have been a better entertainment value. Realizing, of course, the limitations of the setting and production quality, divided by the experience of the performers, equaled one hell of a disappointment compared to Waldo's rock-solid debut album of oddities that felt more at home in Ripley's Believe It or Not. Mary Ellen in her finest form could not help the ailing sinking feeling of despair as the audience was induced into spits of nausea. Boredom was rife and the only mercy was the thought that the show would, God willing, end ... period.

But enough of my gut wrenching emotions, let's get down to the gritty truth of it ... loud noise was the mainstay of the menu. Members of the audience were alternately ready to kill the performers just as easily as they would like to have killed themselves. The end result of this all was that no-one was as amused as the people who got in for free. Not much more can be said except that the rock'n'roll experience was only heightened by Tom Grimley on gee-tarrs and Devin Sarno, sociopathic bass player who empathetically oppressed the evening into a solemn neo-religious experience. Who else but a dee-jay from KCSB would have the audacity to charge money for this sound-as-tripe-simulation. Note, not stimulation, as the gist of it all was a good night's sleep to dream thoughts of Alice Cooper meets Kitaro in the outer limits.

Which brings us, of course, to the Universal Congress of... The Congress was a mild placebo in the world of jet set, crystal meth stimulant rock, and this only served to add to that heady brew of standard intoxicated boredom.

**CONCEPT**  
by Doug Arellanes

The scene inside the Graduate was odd indeed, and FIREHOSE knew it. "It's real nice to be playin' in the building the hippies burnt down," bassist Mike Watt said.

And out in the audience the aerobically fit pre-pubescents slammed into each other painfully, repeatedly, without regard for their expensive Aca Joe and Banana Republic outfits.

Near the stage, a small but dedicated group of FIREHOSE fans cheered, danced and waved fists at the energetic band. Sure, the vocals were lost in a muddled mix. Sure, the crowd couldn't give a shit.

The best thing about FIREHOSE, aside from their fuggit attitude, is their rhythmic section. Watt and drummer George Hurley locked into such tight grooves that no matter what the songs' tempos were, the urge to shake that thang (or to shake yer hair BonJoviously) was damn near irresistible.

FIREHOSE didn't make any kind of history Monday night, but I was sufficiently awed that I left before the Untouchables played. I didn't want to hear any more music.

When I got home, my roommate told me Husker Du broke up. For the past couple of days, we've been playing a lot of Husker Du, lamenting the state of rock'n'roll.

"Rock and roll is dead," he told me in a somber tone. If it isn't dead, I thought, it's certainly comatose, hooked up to ten thousand compact disc players and sending out brain signals in 40-minute free rides. Trouble is, FIREHOSE doesn't play 40-minute free rides.



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**GRANADA**  
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Broadcast News (R)  
5: 7:50, 10:30  
Sat & Sun also 11:45, 2:30  
Doesn't play on Thursday

Frantic (R)  
5: 7:30, 10  
Sat & Sun also 12: 2:30  
S.B. Film Festival Thurs  
Frantic at the Fiesta IV

Last Emperor (PG13)  
6:20, 9:40  
Sat & Sun also 11:45, 3  
No passes, group sales or bargain rites

**PLAZA DE ORO**  
349 Hitchcock Way, S.B. 682-4936

Hope & Glory (PG)  
7:30, 9:45  
Sat & Sun also 12:30, 2:50, 5:10

Cry Freedom (R)  
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Good Morning Vietnam (R)  
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Sat & Sun also 12:45, 3  
At Granada on Thursday

**RIVIERA**  
2644 Alameda Padre Serra  
S.B. 965-6188  
Man of the Spring (PG)  
7:10, 9:25  
Sat & Sun also 12:40, 2:45, 4:50

**FIESTA FOUR**  
916 State St., S.B. 963-0781  
Moonstruck (PG)  
6:15, 7:30, 9:45  
Sat & Sun also 1, 3:05  
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Satisfaction  
6, 10; S&S also 2  
Thurs only 7:45

For Keeps (PG13)  
Fri not shown  
Sat at 4; Sun 4, 8  
MTW 8  
Thurs not shown

Unbearable Lightness of Being (R)  
6, 9:15, S&S also 2:30

Shoot to Kill (R)  
5:30, 7:45, 10  
Sat & Sun also 1, 3:15

**PREVIEWS**

Vice Versa  
Friday at 8  
Fiesta II

Switching Channels  
Saturday at 8  
Fiesta II

**GOLETA**  
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A Night in the Life of Jimmy Reardon  
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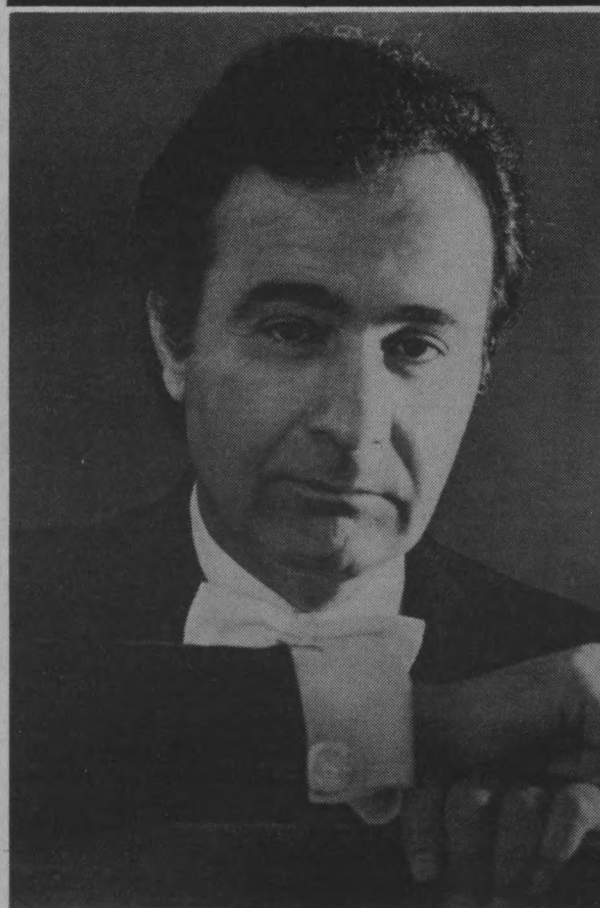
**FAIRVIEW**  
251 N. Fairview, Goleta 967-0744  
She's Having a Baby (PG13)  
7:30, 9:40  
Sat & Sun also 1:30, 3:30, 5:30

Shoot to Kill (R)  
7:20, 9:30  
Sat & Sun also 1, 3, 5:10

**CINEMA**  
6050 Hollister Ave., Goleta 967-9447

Ironweed (R)  
6:45, 9:30  
Sat & Sun also 1:15, 4

Moonstruck (PG)  
5:10, 7:30, 9:50  
Sat & Sun also 12:50, 3  
No passes, group sales or bargain rites



Varujan Kojian is the principle conductor of the University Symphony Orchestra.

by Ben Lipkowitz

**THE EVENING**

The University Symphony Orchestra, in a program showcasing the talents of the student conductors and principle conductor Varujan Kojian, gave a well-balanced concert of nineteenth and early twentieth century music in UCSB's Lotte Lehman Concert Hall last Wednesday evening. The orchestra played differently for each conductor, highlighting his personality and approach. The overall impression of the performance was an attention to music rather than technique or execution.

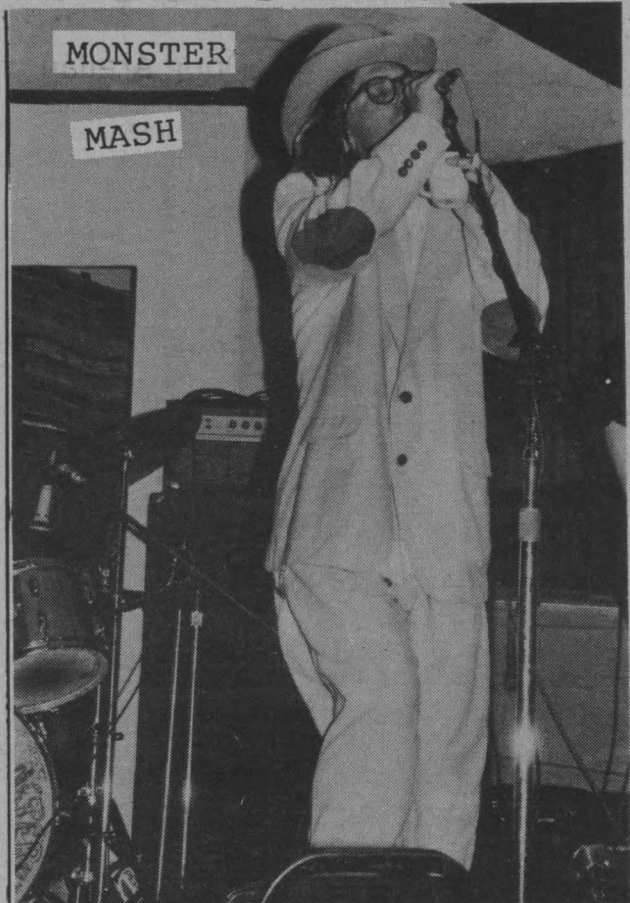
The program began with a performance of *Prelude a L'Après-midi d'un faune* (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun), composed in 1894 by Claude Debussy (1862-1918). The well-known, impressionistic piece is a perennial favorite with concert-goers. The piece was slower than is normal, but the tempo and the gradated performance by James Forward captured the mythological atmosphere of this work with beautiful playing from the opening solo flute and the rest of the wind section. The unique sound and power of suggestion of this piece come from the rich wind section of three flutes, English horn, and four horns, replaced by trumpets, trombones and timpani. Debussy also calls for two antique cymbals to add the trance-like quality.

The orchestra followed the mist of the Debussy with strong, corporeal *Eighth Symphony*, popularly known as the "unfinished," written in 1822, by Franz Schubert (1797-1828). Schubert seemed satisfied with the work as it stood, and bro off the third movement after some preliminary sketches, leaving a torso of a



# CERT MOUTHS

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by Brent Anderson

Borsodi's may have a reputation as a sleepy '60s throwback coffeehouse, but in relation to the often stodgy Santa Barbara club scene, it is fast becoming a mecca of adventurousism into the world of alternative rock. Saturday night's soiree featured some proud billings, as a sparse but appreciative crowd swayed to the soulful croons of X frontman John Doe and then got stomped on the head by the humorously hardcore Thelonious Monster, who proceeded to rock the place's rustic moorings to the hilt.

Watching John Doe in the film "The Decline of Western Civilization" (which played Friday night in I.V.), giving himself a tattoo and talking about the state of the punk rock environment he was a part of provides a notable contrast to the Doe that's currently haunting small rock venues like Borsodi's. Back then, X was the identity for its members — an engaging,

original band that was wild but professional; a genuine embodiment of the time's new vision and energy that set itself apart with a female singer and a noticeable absence of punk kitsch. X is still producing today and John Doe has the same keen eye and unpretentious, affable air about him, but his solo performances reveal a more mellow and introspective side of the man.

The slower program was almost too appropriate for the intimate confines of Borsodi's. Strolling up to the stage armed only with a small acoustic guitar, his "rock" guitar (an acoustic with knobs) and his "assistant" (a beer), Doe proceeded to spin a few country yarns, share some thoughts in a song about his newly acquired role as a father, throw out social barbs and give some new twists to a few old X numbers. With command of a wonderfully distinctive voice

he truly captivates, despite the simplistic means, drawing you into a comfy void that's tough to leave. Even the leather toughs and mounded up hipsters in the audience seemed to feel a certain magnetism in the music, and Doe reflected the enjoyment right back.

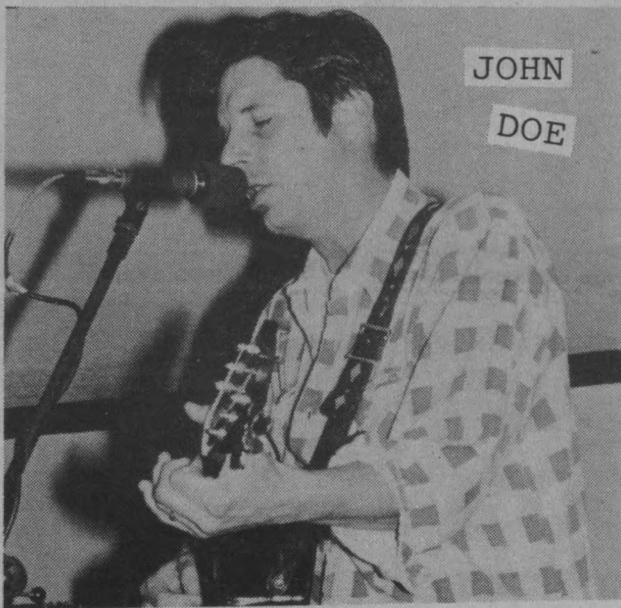
Then we get to Thelonious Monster. Where to start when faced with a band like this? A bunch of guys that raise thrift store fashion to a high art (baby blue fake leather sportscoats?!). A band that bitches among itself onstage, that would curtly tell the audience to take a flying leap into somewhere unmentionable then goad for more applause. A band paced by a singer who does Michael Stipe contortions and mumbles better than Michael Stipe. A drummer whose tongue wags more than Gene Simmons'. A progressive, punk, hyper-rock, throw in a few '70s power chords musical melange that gleaned their name from a jazz legend and crank out some damn fine music.

The Monster is one of those enigmas in the often mislabeled and misunderstood "underground" scene — a band who has established solid ground for themselves and, as lead man Bob Forrest proceeded to

point out, has a record that "the critics like" but nobody buys. Thriving on adversity but not relying on it, they're a strong bunch of jokers that keep you on your toes and quickly endear themselves.

Their vinyl laurels and lively reputation may have made it here before they did, but Thelonious Monster lived up to the advance notoriety Saturday night. Finally reaching the stage at about 11:15, after the cafe had built up its requisite stifling amount of cigarette smoke, the band, with the help of temporary lunatic Keith Morris (for all you Circle Jerk fans), set off to punishing the speakers and spurring on the cadre of pogoers that had been itching to get off their butts. They ripped through a few numbers off their LP, next Saturday afternoon, and a fast-paced Aerosmith favorite before surrendering the mike to Morris' raspy screams for a song, giving a brief moment of inimitable pleasure for the few slandering pinheads rebounding near the stage.

Aside from the fleeting moments of mindless aggression, the involving musical barrage steamed on, laying into a five minute Monster-meets-ZZ Top medley and more originals before finishing out only too soon. Definitely an E-ticket that begs for another ride.



# EVERCHANGING MOODS

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movements. Conductor William B. Lumpkin secured a powerful performance from his ensemble, although it seemed a bit segmented and lacking in overall scope and flow.

After intermission, Daniel J. Laubacher conducted "The Unanswered Question," (1906) of American, Charles Ives (1874-1954). Ives made his money in insurance, becoming a millionaire and composing on the side. His father was a local bandmaster.

## UCSB SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

As a youngster in Danbury, Connecticut, he was fascinated by the clash of sounds of two bands approaching from opposite directions with different music. This led Ives to experiment with polytonality, before similar efforts by Stravinsky and others. The Unanswered Question has a tonal background, and a somewhat atonal foreground.

The offstage trumpet, intoning the question of the meaning of life, provided a welcome contrast to the dissonant clashes of winds and pianissimo strings. The placing of the trumpet away from the main body of instruments, emphasized the solitude of the individual when pondering the question. The playing was clear overall, but towards the end the cello section missed a cue and momentarily upset the balance of the work.

The final piece was Les Preludes (1848), by Franz Liszt (1811-86), best known as a virtuoso pianist. The University Symphony's regular conductor, Varujan Kojian,

led a brilliant performance of this bombastic work. Kojian's style was characterized by clarity, brilliance and energy. The percussion and brass were especially highlighted. The strings played with gusto, but were occasionally out of tune. This was the type of piece to raise the blood level of those who revel in brilliant orchestration and effects.

Also noteworthy last week was an Esperia

Foundation presentation of harpsichordist, Albert Fuller, at the Music Academy of the West. Fuller played a program by Frenchman, Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764), and was assisted by Anthony Martin, (baroque violin), and Anne Briggs (baroque flute). Fuller's sense of style and character, and his spoken introduction to the pieces charmed the audience.

Thursday evening at the Lobero Theater provided an exceptional night of music making. The Emerson String Quartet (based in New York) gave a brilliant and humorous account of Franz Joseph Haydn's (1732-99) Quartet Op. 76 #3. This piece is known for its slow movement which uses the theme Haydn composed for Austria's national anthem "Deutschland Uber Alles." A contemporary work by John Harbison, his Quartet #2 was given a passionate, spine-tingling reading. The evening concluded with a vigorous rendition of Schubert's Quartet in G Major, D. 887.

**Celebrates Thursday!**

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**A.S. Program Board Presents**

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## Do You Know . . .

That A.S. Program board is a student-run organization that provides most of the entertainment on campus — including major concerts, Pub and Comedy Nites, films and videos, special lectures and Extravaganza?

## Do You Know . . .

That this page comes out every Thursday to inform the students of all the A.S. Program Board Events happening every week?

## Do You Know . . .

That tonight is the last Pub Nite of the Quarter, with special guests Crucial DBC?



**TONIGHT  
in the Pub  
8:00 p.m.  
FREE! FREE! FREE!**

*Dread Rock & Ska!*

## Do You Know . . .

That tomorrow at 12 Noon there will be a Storke Plaza Showcase featuring Alice Fell?

## Do You Know . . .

What's coming next quarter?

- Pub Nites
- Comedy Nites
- Extravaganza — May 22
- Helen Caldicott — April 4
- Animation Film Festival
- Casino Night
- And much, much more

For a hot time — get involved with ASPB!

## Special Notices:

Congratulations to the Franklinets on winning the SAMS Rock-a-like Lip Synch Contest on Feb. 27, 1988 from A.S. Program Board!

Extravaganza is coming May 22! Sign ups for committees to help plan this awesome event are in the ASPB office — 3rd floor of the UCen. All interests are welcome. There will be special committees for concerts, advertising, sponsorships, production, etc. — Come check it out!