

Reader

Steve Esmedina wrote his first story for the *Reader* in July 1973; his last story appeared in September 1994. He wrote about popular music and film, mostly in the late '70s and early '80s. Esmedina died on June 24, 2001. In this issue, his closest associates remember him.

Blubbo's WORLD



Steve "Blubbo" Esmedina

Blubbo, oh Blubbo, where do I begin? You're dead, gone, laid out rotting in a casket somewhere in the ground; and if that's just your body, your corpse, your shell, God, I hope so, because, surely, your mind, your spirit — glorious, wonderful, twisted, sad...the essence of Esmo, a nickname

they say you hated, but you never told me — is still out there somewhere. And maybe if you're not too busy making excuses with some Higher Power for your life, you are reading these words and chuckling and shaking your head like you used to do when something amused you.

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

This memorial issue was prepared before the terrorist attacks of September 11.

Blubbo's WORLD

Story continued from page 1

Drunk on 163

And I did used to amuse you, didn't I? We amused each other. I missed your funeral because no one told me you were dead until

a week later, but I'm kind of glad because I would have cried, and I don't like

to do that. I hate things that are beyond my control, and there's nothing I can do to change the fact that I can never talk to you again, never hear your voice over the phone from the "ghetto," as you liked to refer to the old house in Southeast you shared with your mother and older brother.

Hell, I just pulled out my old Rolodex and there you are: Steve Esmedina, 910 South 37th Street, San Diego, California 92113, (619) 262-1590. I'll have to remember to scratch you from my Christmas-card list. That was the only contact we had, that and an occasional phone call—the last one must have been two years ago—that brought back vivid mem-

amuse each other. But it was more than that—we were bound by mutual admiration and this very weird sense that we truly understood each other, as puzzling as we may have been to most anyone else.

Death at a young age is always doubly sad, and 47 is young. I don't care what anyone says. Of course, you always predicted you would go early, and none of us doubted you because you had epilepsy, you didn't take care of yourself, and by the way, Steve, you shouldn't have doused yourself in that cheap cologne every time we went out. I can still smell it.... Now, why do I bring that up? It's funny how when someone dies, the memory brings



You were a great guy, and you were a good friend. In fact, you and I were best friends when I was at my craziest and you at your glory. I was 21, a late bloomer who was discovering the world and all its delicious vices. I had started my own magazine, *Kicks*, covering the San Diego rock scene. Suddenly I was hip, I was cool, DJs announced my name when I walked into a nightclub, and I loved it, I ate it up. I was reckless, I was wild, I was young. You, four years older, had established yourself as San Diego's premier rock critic, writing a column each week in the *Reader* that everyone in our little world devoured. Many hated you, many admired you, all knew you.

I looked up to you. You were a brilliant writer, much better than I was, much better than I would ever be. You used words like a seamstress, stitching them into intricate, colorful patterns the rest of us could only marvel at. We were journalists; you were a poet. It was 1979, and I had just launched *Kicks* ("San Diego's Only Rock 'n' Roll Magazine") on a \$7000 budget I had amassed by working as an usher at the stadium and the Sports Arena while attending San Diego State University. My life was music, and the magazine was styled after *BAM* magazine up in the Bay Area, a localized version of *Rolling Stone*. We made quite a splash when we first published in August, and at the end of the year the *Reader* named me one of San Diego's 50 People to Watch in 1980.

I met a whole new class of people: Jim Mullin, Jim Holman, Howie Rosen, Neal Matthews, Paul Krueger, Jeannette De Wyze, and you, Blubbo. They were all quirky but seemed so much smarter than the other people I had known, so much more curious. They were interested, and that made them interesting.

I forgot how we first got together, but I remember vividly the nights we'd spend hanging out—you, me, and Mullin. You had your own pad then, in the old Wilson Apartments at the corner of Ninth and A, near the old El Cortez Hotel, and since you didn't drive much—I think you had a car back then, an old American beater of undetermined make, but you were timid behind the wheel—I would always drive downtown to your house. You lived upstairs, Mullin lived downstairs, and we'd generally pile into his old Peugeot headed for either

We'd generally pile into his old Peugeot headed for either the Skeleton Zebra Club in the old Douglass Hotel to see the Penetrators or the Rick Elias Band, or to the Spirit in Bay Park, across from Kelly's Pet Hotel, run by fast-talking Jerry Herrera.

ories of the old days when we "hung," and you still sounded the same, you still were the same; it was I who had changed, but even though I married and had two boys and you stayed where you were—and as you were, so people tell me—deep inside we were still very, very much alike, Thomas K. Arnold and Blubbo. Long after we had ceased hanging out together, we still had the ability to

out minutiae. We say publicly, "He was a great guy and a good friend," but we think about cologne, or the time I passed out driving drunk along 163 in the old Mustang coming home from some party, and I woke up just in time to prevent a crash, but you never said a word, never even tried to wake me. You were along for the ride, ready to accept whatever might happen.

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the Skeleton Zebra Club in the old Douglas Hotel to see the Penetrators or the Rick Elias Band, or to the Spirit in Bay Park, across from Kelly's Pet Hotel, run by fast-talking Jerry Herrera, loathed by many of the bands he booked for being cheap, but always a good friend to you and me.

Sometimes we'd join up with another of our friends, Cameron Crowe, the former rock critic for Rolling Stone who is now a famous director. He was back in San Diego, attending high school, undercover, for a book and movie that would be called *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. The three of us would often wind up in the parking lot, looking at the stars, talking about life and how the music would lift us up and make us feel part of something big, something we couldn't quite describe. The Skull Club, the Spirit, later the Zebra Club, also downtown — these were great clubs, ground zeroes for San Diego's burgeoning "new wave" scene. All my life an outsider, I felt at home here; I still didn't blend into the scene, but at least I was there, with Kicks as my safety blanket and you as my sidekick, my friend, the rock critic despised by many musicians and fans but adored and worshipped by others — including me.

You were short and fat and dressed all in black, and you had this ridiculous-looking fake-leather jacket that you loved and wore night and day. It had come from the thrift store where your mother worked, as had so many of your garments. You had terrible hair, even by the standards of the time, a coarse mop of black and gray swept over from one side of your head to the other, like a sideways pompadour toupee. You were funny looking; we jokingly called you "Yoda," after the *Star Wars* character. And yet, you had a cherubic, almost beautiful face and the neatest expression when you recounted your background — Mexican mother, Filipino father, with an older half brother and two half sisters and a wild niece, Monique, beautiful and lost. I wonder whatever became of her? I wonder if she knows you are dead.

I don't know how we

became such close, fast friends. We were young, watching and chronicling and longing to be a part of this new music scene that, to me, still marks the moment of San Diego's rebirth, long before Horton Plaza and the Gaslamp and the trolley and North

City West and the cruise-ship terminal and all the other symbols of "San Diego becoming a true metropolis" that came later. The punk scene was New San Diego's first angry cry, a rite of passage that never got the recognition it deserves. You and I were late

bloomers who spent much of our time lamenting unrequited loves — both for girls with the same first name — and trying to get laid. Or going out and "pulling," as you would call it, with a sparkle in your eye, equal parts imp and lech. We were like awkward

puppies, trying to be cool, striving for acceptance, and in the end the only people who truly accepted us, it seems, were each other. I admired you for your talent, and you looked up to me — or at least you told me you did — because I went out and started my

own magazine and for a while there made it work. You'd call me "My liege" or "The King," and that fed my developing ego; I'm sure you knew it, or maybe you really felt that way. Or maybe it was just your way of expressing gratitude for my admiration, which I'm sure

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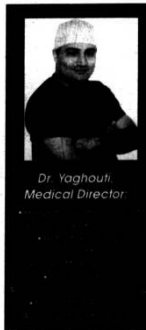
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you felt as well. Regardless, we filled a mutual need. Does that make any sense? It does to me, looking back, and I'm sure you would say the same thing.

However it was my first met, I wanted you to write for Kicks. You were a marquee name, and I wanted to make this magazine work. So you did some reviews, and they were so much better than anything else we were running, but you seemed to have a little problem meeting deadlines, didn't you? I would call you to ask where your story was, and you'd say, "Just about done," and then I wouldn't hear from you for a few days. I'd drive down to your apartment in the Wilson Apartments, storm up the stairs, my anger building, and hammer away at your door with my fist. You'd let me in, and I'd be screaming and yelling, but you'd be nonplussed as always — you were a human shrug, Steve, a shrug and a sigh, that's how you went through life — and then you'd sit down behind your old typewriter in your smelly, dark living room and bang out the rest of your story. That was our formula: I don't think you could have written something otherwise.

That was when I got in. Sometimes you weren't home, or at least you weren't home, or at least you weren't home. Once I was so mad after pounding on your door and getting no response that I ripped back to my car and came back with a pen. I still see myself writing, "Esmo, where's my fucking story?" on your whitewashed door in blue ink. You never bothered to erase it; maybe you saw it as underscoring your lethargic defiance.

One time you were really late, and I had been drinking somewhere with Mullin. Apparently you owed him a story for the *Reader* as well, we began knocking on your door — it was night, time — and got no response. We went back into Mullin's apartment, beneath yours, and began pounding on the ceiling with a broom handle. Again, no response.

I don't recall who was the first to suggest it, and looking back I still don't see how it could have come to this. But somehow, our anger transmogrified into concern, and we convinced our-

selves that you were dead. Mullin was always a bit of an alarmist — back then, he used to estimate the number of weekends he had left in his life before he would be too old to party and bemoan the steadily dwindling supply — and he was flitting about like a moth around a light bulb. We began casing your apartment, looking for a way in — which wasn't easy, since you were on the second floor. Finally — and I still don't know how he did it — Mullin found an open window, got to it, and crawled in. I was outside on the sidewalk, keeping watch. I heard a scream, and then you and Jim emerged from your front door. Mullin was still hopping around excitedly, but he had a sheepish look on his pointy face; you were as calm as always. Then Mullin got mad and I got mad, and we both stood behind you and your little typewriter, watching you type until finally Mullin had had enough and went downstairs to bed. You and I each had a beer — one of the few times you had anything digestible in your apartment — and I remember saying over and over, "We thought you were dead. We really thought you were dead." Well, I'm not, you shot back.

I believe one reason you and I were so close was we both loved like a woman, but the women we loved didn't love us back. I remember the long conversations we had about your dream girl, the true love of your life, a beautiful blonde who had dated briefly and made love to a few times, who then uttered those dreaded words all men hate to hear — "Let's just be friends." In her mind, that was that, but in yours it was the beginning of a long, torturous journey to get her back. Of course, you never did, but that was part of the rite, part of the ritual — the more she rejected you, the more you loved her, pined for her, yearned for her, drank yourself to oblivion over her, and talked your friends to death about her. I would listen and commiserate because I was there too.

The conversations would typically start with us

being out at some club, usually the Spirit, eyeing some girls. "Let's pull," you'd say excitedly. Sometimes we tried, most times we didn't; I don't think we ever once scored while we were both out. Then we'd go back to my place and drink some more and you'd start singing either (1) "Oh my sorrow," from the British rock band the Marmalade's "Reflections of My Life," or (2) "Like the river flows to the sea, to the sea," from "Unchained Melody." You'd get very emotional and tearful: "She is my goddess. My goddess. Oh, Thomas K., what am I going to do?" Then you'd get defiant: "Well, fuck her. She'll come back. One day, she'll come back and realize she needs Blubba. But you know what I'll say? Fuck you. Fuck her. FUCK HER!!" I'd nod sympathetically, vowing to do the same should my unrequited love come around, as I knew, just knew, she would, she must.

I'd go to the bathroom or to get another drink. When I'd come back I'd find you snoring on my couch. Remember Earl Coleman? "He began his professional career with Jay McShann (1943) and Earl Hines (1944). In 1945 he traveled with McShann to the West Coast, where his singing was heard by Charlie Parker; 'This Is Always,' which Coleman recorded with Parker in 1947, became a jazz hit. Thereafter Coleman performed only intermittently, working on his own and with various leaders, including Gene Ammons (mid-1950s), Gerald Wilson (1960), Don Byas (1962), and Frank Foster (mid-1960s). In 1968 he moved to Los Angeles to work as a freelance musician. He has recorded with such distinguished accompanists as Fats Navarro and Max Roach (both 1948), Art Farmer and Gigi Gryce (both 1956), and Hank Jones (1956, 1977)."

— Xrefre, a Web reference engine

Coleman is mentioned in many jazz encyclopedias and discographies, and I remember looking some of them up 15 years ago when Coleman came to San Diego for a gig. It's not that I was a big jazz fan. It was because

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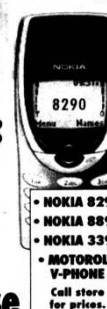
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continued from page 8
former sideman to Charlie Parker, Earl Coleman, who died in 1995, spent several months living on your couch.

Surely you remember this better than I. My memories of how this came to pass are hazy. I seem to recall that Earl Coleman came to San Diego for some show, maybe part of the old San Diego Jazz Festival, and you wrote it up for the *Reader*. You and Earl got to talking — and drinking.

You went home, and Earl went with you. He ended up staying for several months.

I remember several times picking you up or bringing you back to your pad at the Wilson Apartments, and this slight, sneaky old black man would be lying on your couch. At first you were amused, but after a few weeks your patience wore thin, and I remember you telling me he didn't seem to have anywhere else to go. You were supporting him — you, who even at your peak could barely afford to feed yourself. We made jokes — there was a *Saturday Night Live* skit about a pesky dropper-in titled "The Thing That Wouldn't Leave," and that was Earl.

Eventually Earl did leave, but I don't remember whether you kicked him out or whether he left of his own volition. I can't see you kicking anyone out, even if they no longer amused you. It would have been more like you to go somewhere else and just leave Earl there.

Some people said your mom held you back. You were the baby, and she pampered you, protected you, to the point where she did everything she could to prevent you from leaving the nest. And she certainly was the larger-than-life figure in your life; you used to refer to her as "Moms," as though there was more than one of her.

But I wonder. Lots of mothers lay guilt trips on their kids and don't want them to stray far from home. I think your mother was a factor in your return to the "crib," as you sometimes called your ghetto home, and though we never talked about it, I believe she made the inevitable easier. "The path of least resistance" is a phrase that comes up when

I think of you, Blubbo. Living with your mother was safe and sound. You were shielded from the outside world, the worries and the cares of having to make a living, of having to fend for yourself. It was make it or break it time, and you couldn't deal with that, so you went back to the womb. You really did live in Blubbo's world, but that world wasn't real. Staying in the real world would have meant less time to spend in Blubbo's world, so why venture out?

You didn't talk much of the *Reader*, aside from occasional snippy comments about Mullin and Holman — mostly Mullin, about his fastidiousness and insistence that you meet deadlines. "I thought at first he was just a [Blubbo slang for homosexual], but man, that guy knows how to pull," you marveled once not long after we first met. "Mullin. How come a guy like that gets laid, and I don't?"

After you moved back home to your mother's house in the ghetto, I didn't see you as much. Part of it was my typical white-boy reluctance to travel to points Southeast at night, particularly after my first visit, when I got lost and passed by several bands of roaming young men who came into the street and waved and gestured as I drove by. Part of it, too, was that I had trouble accepting this sudden change in living arrangements, from Independent Blubbo to Living With a Junkie to Back Home with Mom in the Ghetto.

You rarely answered the phone yourself; it was either your older brother Bobby, the proverbial "rolling stone" who was more lethargic than you, or your mother, whom you clearly adored. Whenever I'd call and she'd answer and I'd identify myself as "Thomas K. Arnold," you would come to the phone and with a chuckle tell me your mother had said it was "Arnold K. Smith," a twist on the fallen financier C. Arnold Smith. It got to be a joke between us, and I do believe your mother was in on it.

I only met her in person once, on my first or second visit to your "ghetto pad," as you called it. She was a big, hefty woman, already in her 70s, who looked like everyone's

grandma — she wore a white shawl over a sweater, a long dress of unremarkable fabric and color, and her hair was gray and white but mostly white, wavy, just past the ears. I don't recall much of her face because she wore glasses and it was dark, but from the glimpse I caught of her that one moment I remember thinking, "Yes, this is Blubbo's mother."

I had driven to your address on 37th Street before it was fully dark and remember scouring for house numbers on a street where all the houses looked pretty much the same, 1920s or 1930s vintage, stucco and wood frame, two wood porches, gables and windows facing the street. Nice homes, at one time, but now in a prolonged state of neglect, with peeling paint, exposed wood, and yards overgrown with weeds, some dead, some alive. Picture the street scene in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or *Halloween*, overlaid with a screen of grainy gray, a lightning bolt, and then all the nice houses and neatly manicured lawns thrown into a state of disarray. Typical of the ghetto, any ghetto — ghettos aren't built, they become.

Inside, the house matched its exterior. Shabby, cluttered, dusty — but not unclean. Unkempt — like you, Blubbo. Furniture covered with slipcovers or bed-sheets, stuff everywhere, an old person's home.

Your room was upstairs, a flight of worn wooden stairs with a worn wooden railing, and here's where unkempt became unclean. The white walls needed painting; the walls and especially the door frames were smudged and grimy. I was by no means a neat freak, especially back then, but I felt like bringing a bottle of 409 just to lighten up the place. Your bedroom was cluttered and the bed unmade, strewn with clothes. I don't remember much more, like what pictures, if any, you had on the walls, because we were late for some function and I wanted to get out of there as fast as I could. I heard footsteps in an adjoining bedroom and saw an older man walking into the hall. You introduced him as your brother Bobby; he shook hands, Bobby not looking me in

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the eye, and he went on his way. "So this is the guy who always answers the phone," I thought to myself. "What does he do for a living?" I asked. "Nothing," was the response. "Like me."

I don't recall how we drifted apart, but we did, the way even the best of friends inevitably do. After 19 months I passed Kicks onto a friend and signed on as Gary Puckett's manager. I found new friends in radio, which I had started to cover for the *Los Angeles Times*. My Mustang blew up, and I took over my parents' 1965 Chevy Impala, at the time not yet hip. You never drove, and my new friend, John Duncan of KPRL, had a mid-night-blue Corvette, and you and I saw less and less of each other.

You lost your gig at the *Reader* and moved into a condo with this weird gothic girl who was on SS. I think she was a junkie. You'd have terrible fights; you weren't sleeping with her, but she was whacked out, and you were drinking more.

You started stumbling and falling down a lot. You

went to the doctor and were diagnosed with epilepsy. Visiting you in your hospital bed, tubes in your arms, I got real mad because everyone was saying you were a drunk, and I, who had been with you most nights, knew you didn't drink any more than I did. Of course, that wasn't saying much—I did pass out behind the wheel one night, remember? But I never drank in the day, and I don't recall you doing so either. I never considered you a heavy drinker, and I felt vindicated when you were diagnosed with epilepsy because it confirmed my belief that your problems walking and standing up stemmed from something else besides booze.

You continued to write for the *Reader* in various capacities, but you never really got it together after you lost your column. That was when we started hanging around less; I always had to pick you up and bring you back home unless I brought you back to my place, and if I did that, there was still the problem of what to do with you in the morning.

Our friendship migrated to the telephone and then slowly drifted away to less and less contact. Friendships have a way of doing that. But even during our increasingly infrequent phone conversations, you were the same. You shared my joy when I finally got my girl; you never got yours back, but you eventually found someone as well. I wish it all would have worked out for you, Blubbo. I wish you could have gone on to experience the joys of family, of making babies. You would have been an excellent father; you would have read to your children and played with them and really talked to them and understood them.

You would have told them marvelous stories. You would have amused them, and they would have amused you.

— Thomas K. Arnold

Thomas K. Arnold was a regular contributor to the *Reader* from 1981-1997. He is currently director of special projects and editor at large for *Video Store Magazine*.

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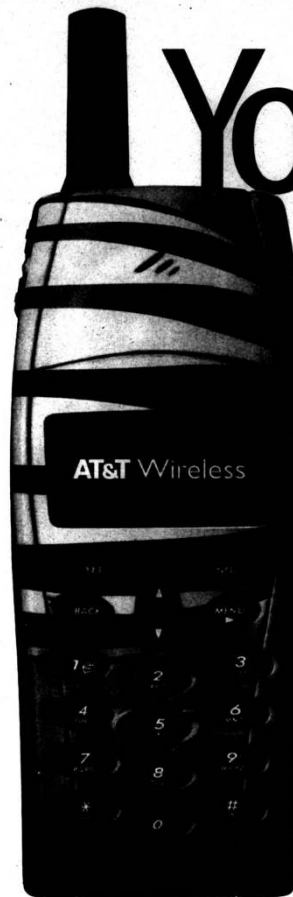
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The Shadow Knows

In late January 1954, Dick Tracy found an infant abandoned in a tree. For more than a week the comic-strip detective searched for the mother. Suddenly, "as if dropped out of nowhere," a Mrs. Catchem appeared. She claimed the baby was hers: "Check the hospital. You'll see I'm the authentic mother!"

On page A-14 of the *San Diego Union*, on February 2, 1954, the day Steven Esmolina was born, Dick Tracy was still grilling Mrs. Catchem. "You express fanatic love for your baby. Yet you left him in a tree! Why? Why?" "I...I...can't tell you!" Steven, or as his birth certificate called him, Esteban, weighed eight pounds and three ounces, measured 21 inches long, and was brought into the world at Mercy Hospital by Dr. J. Wanless at 6:15 p.m. While Steven was taking his first breath, the evening TV lineup was just starting—*Nutsy the Clown* on Chan-

the police captured an injured pet falcon owned by Daniel C. Peterson, who lived on Niagara Avenue. The mayor's wife, Mrs. John D. Butler, explained to the *Union* that before her marriage she'd never voted because she "traveled with an ice show."

It was a day without particular omen or portent, but Steven's mother, Guadalupe Esmolina, was worried nonetheless. According to one of Steven's four sisters, he was born with kidney problems. According to another, something was wrong with his lungs. Perhaps there was



Steve Esmolina with mom date

She never talked about it. It was something that she'd never bring up. But she never forgot. I think in some ways Steve suffered most from Isabel's death. He was born 13 years later, but her death had the greatest impact on him."

A few days after Steven's death, after his sisters had been in and out of the Esmolina home down on 37th Street, the house where Steve lived almost all his life, someone left a box of photo albums on the front porch. The albums looked almost new; someone had taken good care of them. Not far from the albums stood a statuette of the Virgin Mary, her blue robe covered with thick dust. In the back yard, weeds grew five, six feet high, obscuring the plum, orange, and lemon trees. A crack ran along the house's foundation. Wooden steps to the back door were rotted through. A half-dozen windows were broken.

"To me this place was like a mansion," Marco Curiel stood, not long after Steven's death, in front of the house on 37th Street. Curiel knew Steven since the two met in fourth grade at St. Jude's Academy, a few blocks from the Esmolina home.

"A two-story house. It was and still is the biggest house on the block. One of the biggest in the neighborhood. I lived in a one-bedroom place with my mom and my four brothers. We were poor. Coming to Steve's house was like my renaissance."

Curiel is a broad-shouldered, thickest man who played defensive back at St. Augustine High School. He's now principal at Memorial Academy on 28th Street. Gang-bangers loitering in front of Memorial tend to scatter when they see Curiel approach.

"We used to call them *pachucos* back when Steve and I were coming up. There have been gangs in this part of the city forever. Over here in Shelltown where Steve lived, the big gang was Los Hermanos, and I guess you could say Steve was involved with them. He at least had friends who ran with them. In this neighborhood you got a hard education real fast. You got your ass kicked. You learned how to take a beating. On one corner there might be a brother who had a thing about Mexicans. On another corner there'd be some crazy *pachuco* who decided he just didn't like the way you looked."

"Steve and I were always good Catholic boys. We went to St. Jude's. I think we met through a Christmas gift exchange or something, and we became friends. And

"There's a boy in this room who runs home and tells his mommy when he has problems at school."

nel 4, *Laurel and Hardy* on Channel 2, something called *Your San Diego* on Channel 10. Over on Eighth Avenue at the Broadway Theatre, folks were buying tickets to see Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*. Over at the Cabrillo, Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin were starring in *Sailor Beware*.

The temperature was in the low 50s. A weak high-pressure system was moving in from the southeast. Earlier in the day, because farm work was scarce, 3000 Mexican peasants stormed the U.S. border at Calexico. In North Park, 39-year-old William J. Riley, a former city fireman, bilked an "ailing 53-year-old widow" out of \$8700, her life savings. In Ocean Beach

a problem with both. Guadalupe at any rate was anxious because 13 years earlier she'd lost a child, Isabel, age three, to diphtheria.

"Robert, our oldest brother, brought the diphtheria home from school," remembers Helen McSpadden, Steven's oldest sister. "There'd been a diphtheria outbreak at Robb's school. So we all had to go to the hospital for observation. Little Isabel came down with it and died. She was only three. We were all so little, none of us remember her."

Rosemary, the sister closest in age to Steven, says, "Our mother never forgot Isabel. I don't think you can ever forget something like that. Losing a child,



it was odd because we were two very different people. He was this nerdy kid who hated, absolutely hated, any kind of physical activity whatsoever. And I was athletic, good at sports. I had girlfriends. I guess you could say I was popular. There were guys, you know, who'd say, 'What are you hangin' out with him for?' I didn't care. Steve was my buddy. 'You have to understand. Here in the neighborhood... One of the guys we knew used to huff gasoline. By the time he was in high school he practically didn't have a tooth left in his head. Other guys joined gangs. They just lived for the moment. And here was Steve, you know, who had a reel-to-reel tape recorder in his bedroom and he used it to do make-believe interviews with the Beatles.



Esmolina family home



Steve's fourth birthday party



That bedroom. The upstairs bedroom with the big window facing the street. That room was Steve's kingdom. That room was Steve's lens on the world. Not only did he have a reel-to-reel tape recorder, but he also had his own record player, which was extremely rare back then. No other kid had all that. Steve's family had resources. No other little Mexican kid was making make-believe interviews with the Beatles."

Little Mexican kid? Rosemary, the sister only eight years older than Steve, said the Esmolina family had no ethnic identity. ("Our dad was Filipino," she said. "And our mom was Mexican. But her family had been here in the States

forever. One of her grandmothers was from England. When we moved to 37th Street in the early 1950s, I'd say the neighborhood was pretty much Anglo. There was some Mexican. Some Filipino. But mostly Anglo. None of us kids grew up speaking Spanish.")

But Curiel said, "I always thought of Steve as a Mexican kid. And he knew a lot of Spanish vocabulary. Sometimes he'd ask me questions, like, 'Marco, what's that thing Mexican moms say when something bad almost happens?' Ave

"He always went home for lunch. He'd walk home from St. Jude's. And once he didn't do his homework. We had this teacher, a big stereotypical 'evil nun.' She was going to make Steve stay at school during lunch to finish his homework assignment. He said, 'I gotta go home. My mom's waiting for me to eat lunch.' The Evil Nun didn't care. Well, when Steve's mom heard what happened she came to school and really let the Evil Nun have it. Unlike my mom, Steve's mom wasn't



Marco Curcio

"The next day the Evil Nun stood up in front of our class and said, 'Students, I'm not going to say his name, but there's a boy in

this room who runs home and tells his mommy when he has problems at school. And you know what? When he grows up he's going to be a sissy. A sissy who wears dresses.'

"I could see Steve kinda

own questions. He played it to me over the phone, and I could tell he was really getting off on the fact that he had tricked me, that I had

"Like I said, Steve had resources. He loved movies. His sister Rosemary worked at a movie theater down town, and she used to let him in for free. He went to see *In Cold Blood*, which wasn't something your average little Hispanic kid would do. He loved that movie. He came home and he actually made a comic-book version of *In Cold Blood*. He drew it himself. He even wrote the dialogue. He and I used to make our own comic books. We had our own emblem we'd draw on the corner — 'EC Comics,' meaning Esmedina Curiel."

The girl...



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Comics. It was our way of dealing with things that we couldn't deal with in the real world. Steve created his own action hero called the Cougar. In Steve's comic books, the Cougar would go up against the Evil Nun. And the Evil Nun didn't stand a chance against the Cougar.

"This way of handling conflict through comic books, Steve probably took it further than I did. And I

think he was like that his entire life — more an observer than a participant. Even when he was a little kid. He would sort of hang back and observe. He was like that into high school and for as long as I knew him.

"So, comic books were important. Steve was the only kid in the neighborhood who could afford a subscription to *Spider-Man*. I know it's easy to dismiss

comic books, but in fact they were very well written. The English was certainly a lot more sophisticated than what we heard being spoken around us in our neighborhood. I know comic books helped develop my English vocabulary. And now we find our hero sequestered in his lair. *Sequestered? Lair? What's that mean?* That's how we learned a lot of words. Steve especially had a tremendous vocabulary. Even in elementary school he'd come out with things like 'Call me by my proper moniker.'

"I know the *Union-Tribune* said his nickname, his moniker, so to speak, was 'Blubbo.' But here in the neighborhood, those of us who grew up with him never called him that. When he was in elementary school, he had a really big head, so that's what we called him, Big Head. Or, in Spanish,

Cabezón. Later on, in high school, Big Head was abbreviated to just Big. We'd say, 'Hey, what's up, Big?' "It was in high school that I and my friends started buggin' Steve to hook us up with his sister Rosemary. She was cute. I don't know what happened to her."

Rosemary, now 55 years old, is still lovely. She lives in the Bay Area, not far from her handsome twin sons, Britt and Bruce, whom

Steven had her name after characters in the *Green Hornet*. Rosemary was the last of the four Eamedina sisters to leave home.

"I'm pretty much the only sister who was around Steve a lot when he was little. Everyone else was gone. Married. They had their own families. They loved Steve, but they had their own lives.

"Steve was a happy little kid. Definitely spoiled. He was the baby of the family. Very close to our mom. We girls had a different relationship with her. We were, I guess, just girls. On Steve, Mom focused her attention. I think it was because he was sick as a baby. Because of Isabel, Mom was very protective of him. She treated him with kid gloves.

"I think my clearest memory of Steve is of him running around the house dressed as Zorro."

(His sister Helen said, "I'll always remember him as a little boy, running around the house dressed as Zorro." His sister Yolanda said, "I remember he'd run around the house dressed as Zorro. He saw that movie and fell in love with Zorro. Our mom had someone — an aunt's friend — make a Zorro costume for Steve. He ran around in that little mask and cape, jumping on the furniture, brandishing a little sword, making up everything with little 2's. Mom didn't seem to mind.")

Rosemary also remembered that Steven "loved that movie *El Cid*. I was working at a movie theater downtown, and I let him in free to see it. He went crazy. I don't know how many times he saw it. *El Cid* starring Charlton Heston. Steve was only six or seven years old and he memorized all the dialog, word for word. He could recite the entire movie *El Cid*. He was definitely a smart kid.

"I don't know why he didn't go further. He had the potential. Mom rented a piano for him. He had a guitar too, and he'd sit in his room and strum it. He also had a trumpet that he used to mess around with, trying to play like Miles Davis. I think maybe my mother held him back. Her wish was his command. He did whatever she said."

His sister Helen recalled

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that in "1964 or 1965, whenever it was that the Beatles first came to San Diego, our mother took him to see them. She came back filled with enthusiasm. She said, 'You know, those Beatles are great!' And we were all floored. Our mother? At a Beatles concert? But Steve wanted to go, so she took him. Their relationship was like that. Very close. And I think she held him back. She was very controlling. I think there were opportunities he didn't take because of her. She was afraid for him. She knew that writing, that show business, were very tough, and she didn't want him to get hurt."

Standing in front of the Esmedina home, Mark Curiel considers the dusty porch.

"I used to be so excited when I came over here to play." Curiel makes his way to the back yard and sighs when he sees the tall weeds.

"Where's the plum tree? I remember eating so many plums from it. They were so sweet."

He pauses. He turns

and studies the broken windows, the rotting stairs.

"I don't know why Steve didn't go further. We were close through high school, and even after high school we kept in touch. I know he didn't like to smoke pot. He said it made him indolent, which was a pretty strong thing for him to say because he wasn't the most physically active person in the world."

"And as for the drinking, I wasn't really aware of it. Not in terms of it being a problem."

(Rosemary says that in 1978 or 1979 she went in Steven's room and noticed "a lot of liquor bottles," and it was only then that she began to wonder if he had "a problem.")

"But coming up in the 1960s, there were a lot of drugs around," Curiel remembers. "Everyone was experimenting. Everyone was overdosing it with everything. Steve was maybe experimenting with overdosing with alcohol. I don't know. I don't know why. I don't know if loneliness was the reason. You know, when you grow up a nice

Catholic boy, there's a whole bunch about sex that you don't learn until later in life. When Steve was in his early 20s he had a girlfriend, Gail, a beautiful blonde. A dream come true. And it was with her, in his early 20s, that he said he finally came sexually alive.

"But maybe he didn't want to leave home. Maybe he didn't want to see a big, scary world. Maybe he was

together, the conversations we had, I was able to start imagining something else. I started to have an idea of the world outside this neighborhood. The interesting thing is that Steve introduced me to a life he didn't choose for himself.

"So, that's how I'll remember him. As a very generous guy."

Curiel grows quiet. He stares some more at the

"Our mother? At a Beatles concert? But Steve wanted to go, so she took him."

content with what he knew, with living in this neighborhood, with his music and his room. The interesting thing is that Steve in a lot of ways introduced me to the big world, to the world outside this neighborhood. Growing up here, in my family, we were so poor. It was impossible to see any further, to imagine a life outside it. Through my contact with Steve, through the music he made me listen to, the movies we saw

weeds. He clears his throat. "You know. You know. When I was a kid, there were a lot of times when I was so hungry. My mom provided the bare basics, but nothing more. For lunch I might have a baloney sandwich. Two slices of bread. One slice of baloney. That's it. That was lunch. I was hungry a lot. And, you know, back when we were at St. Jude's, Steve was just a little kid, and he was aware of that. Of my being hun-

gry. And in a very quiet, casual way, he'd help me out. He'd buy me milk. Or in the mornings they used to sell cupcakes at St. Jude's, and in this very easy, no-big-deal way, Steve'd say, 'Hey, Marco, let's get some cupcakes.'

"So, you don't ever forget something like that," Curiel says. In his pocket he jiggles the keys to his big white SUV parked in front of the Esmedina house. "Even 40 years later, you don't forget something like that. Which is why I'll always remember him as this very generous guy. My buddy."

Curiel turns to leave. He gives the back yard one last glance.

"What tortured Steve? What were his demons? I'll never know."

The photo albums on the front porch offer no clues. They show large happy family get-togethers. One album in particular, a white one, follows Steven's life from three months old to when he was 11 or 12. This white album chronicles mostly Steven's birthdays, which were large

affairs. See him at 4 years old dressed like a cowboy, sitting astride a pony his parents apparently rented for the party. See him at 8 blowing out the candles on a large cake. At all these parties the cakes were enormous and elaborately decorated. Steven always looks directly at the camera and smiles.

It isn't till you come to the last page of the large white album that you notice something a little odd. You notice finally that all the dates and notes jotted beside all the photos are written in Steven's hand. He must have compiled the album, gathered up all the various pictures of himself and his birthday parties, when he was 13 or 14 years old. And on the very last page Steven has mounted a snapshot of himself as an infant. Beneath the photo, in ball-point pen, Steven wrote, "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? Only the Shadow knows."

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Blubbo's WORLD

Student Steve

During the early '70s, the war in Vietnam created upheaval at universities across the country. UCSD, where I taught, was no exception. Dissenters organized rallies in Revelle Plaza, committees of students met with deans to

protest scientific projects that might aid the war, and once we participated in a candlelight march that started on upper Torrey Pines Road and ended at Cove Park, where one of the speakers whipped the crowd into a frenzy by quoting e.e. cummings: "There is some shit I will not eat."

In addition to the antiwar frenzy, the university admitted many multiethnic students whose academic

backgrounds were below the University of California standards. The theory behind this experiment was to integrate general students with those who were science and premed oriented.

Among other subjects, I offered two courses in Western civilization—the 19th Century, at Revelle College, and the 20th Century, at Muir College. Invariably, I taught Freud's Civ-

ilization and Its Discontents and selections from *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The enrollment for this particular contemporary course was at least 125 students.

I had hardly begun my first lecture on Freud's life when an uproar emanated from the back of the lecture hall, where additional folding chairs had been added to accommodate the crowds. Suddenly these chairs were kicked and overturned and shouts of "PIG, Pig," "He's the Man and you're the Man" filled the air. Paper airplanes or paper balls were tossed at my head. Many of the multiethnic students stamped out of the room screaming, "You're the Man." Then as now "The Man" stood for authority, the police, and in this instance, they shouted at me, "You're the Landlord." With knees turned to the podium and tried to make my way into the hall where chaos reigned.

At the door, his head lowered, stood a young man dressed in black



Eleanor Wagner at class party, c. 1970

Esmedina flashed me a glance of unadulterated admiration.

struction worker's shoes, black pants, black shirt, and a jacket styled like a Navy peacoat in rough salt-and-pepper-colored material, frayed at the cuffs and collar. His skin was cinnamon color, his hair black, and he was slightly shorter than I. He kept his eyes down as he said, "This way." I followed him to a side exit and he walked

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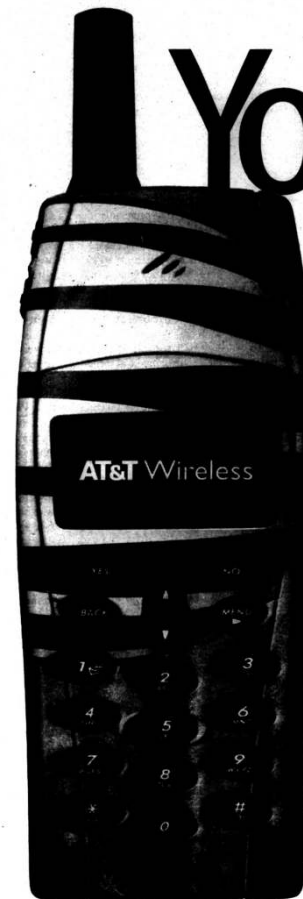
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I did just that. The next time the class met, and with thundering heart, I described my childhood in a New York ghetto. From there, I launched into Freud's early years, when he was often humiliated and accused for being an outsider. My voice broke several times as I spoke.

I suggested that anyone who felt like indulging in this exercise would find it useful. The names were not to appear on the papers and the students had to stay in their houses and not go out or watch TV. I said, "You'll find that some sentences and paragraphs will leap off the page and you

More than 20 students were intrigued by this volunteer exercise of writing the first things that came into their heads, and they left their papers for me in a box in my office. I almost went blind reading one paper whose sheets were filthy, stained with coffee cup rings, edges crumpled. Worst of all was the handwriting. Tiny, unsteady, on word colliding into the next, many crossed-out lines, many chicken scratches. Turning over the page, one sentence struck me. "I DRINK SO I CAN BE

Steve turned, went into the box that held the free association papers, and dug out the untidy mess held

He wrote on Solzhenitsyn. The writing was somewhat ornate, but the project was detailed, thoughtful, well organized. I wrote him a personal note thanking him for his efforts.

"I hate Henry James," he screamed, standing as upright as he could, though he was tottering. "*Portrait of a Lady* is crap. And his long, convoluted sentences make me sick. He denies happiness to all of his characters. He refuses to give them contentment."

I don't know whether he graduated from UCSD, but a year or so later his writing turned up in the *Reader*. He wrote about jazz and rock music, and occasionally he wrote a music review. At Christmas parties he either didn't attend or fled after I greeted him.

Hurry

"Of course I will. Anytime soon." From my purse

"I will. I will call," he repeated with awe. "I mean, it's great." I pressed my hand over his.

When I heard he had died, these lines from the 17th-century dramatist

— Eleanor Widmer

Eleanor Widmer reviewed restaurants for the *Reader* from 1974 to 2000.

them contentment."

Esmedina rocked on his heels. I wondered whether he would fall on his face and what I would do if he did.

"Yes, the students hate James," I said. "I should have assigned 'The Beast in the Jungle' and called it a day."

"How come?" he finally asked. "How come it's so easy for you to say you made a mistake! Once with Freud and now with James."

"Family characteristic," I replied. "My father always did, when he was

a restaurant, my boss gave me an assignment to write about a heavy-metal concert held at the Sports Arena that featured a group named Poison. I knew nothing about this kind of music with its electrical instruments and outrageous songs. I started to protest when a voice behind me said, 'You'll do great. Write it as you see it.'"

Behind me stood Steve, Esmedina in a perfectly laundered white shirt and snappy dark trousers. His eyes were laughing, his lips curled in a joyful, heliose-

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sterilizes my mind."

I gave the same invitation for the first few years I knew him, and each time Steve gave the same response, with some juicier variations interspersed from time to time. I made the phrase my own and used it for years with other music fans and obsessed associates who hadn't an inkling of the original context. The phrase, though, carried its intention, as there isn't much likelihood of mistaking a sentence such as "Robert Musil sterilizes my mind" as a nuanced recommendation.

He hadn't the time for imprecise prose that buttressed dubious art with an insulating layer of vaporous abstraction: what Steve wanted to do was to find music where the musicians "got the heat to the meat," cooked and thrived, in those rare instances where the usually exclusive strands of inspiration and technique, clarity and poetic verve conjoined in a sustained ecstasy of creation, and then to speak to these creators and their best work in a language that was equal to the

genius he felt privileged to witness. Like the musicians he admired, he wanted to "get it right," in his deft prose, in the knife-like sharpness of his sentences where he considered and conveyed the terms and power of the sounds, the throb and bristling vibration of slamming, visceral improvisations that stripped each moment to a raw nerve of sheer sensation and made you witness all the joy and aggravation of being alive with senses. Whatever he reviewed, he made what he liked seem as though it mattered in the gravest sense.

He and I were arguing at his house in East San Diego one night about the merits of Crim Crimson, and I had gone on the attack, dismissing them as British aesthetes who were hoodwinking their audience with the pretense of erudition and experimentation, a point Steve contested rather well. "What I know is that I may not understand what these guys are up to musically, any more than I understand Ornette Coleman or Albert Ayler when they punish their instruments, but

it's something that I've never heard before out of the thousands of records I've heard, and I respect the hell out of it. It is what it is, and it does not pretend to be anything else, and does not pretend at all that listening to it will make you a better person. Fuck yeah, I'm going to talk about these guys every chance I get, I will always make a case for them... Lemme hold a smoke, will ya, Burke?"

The compromise over where we'd hang out together was to meet at Mesa two or three times a week—depending on the number of classes either of us had signed up for in our shared effort to stay off the job market—an irony not lost on Steve since the campus had an architectural style that was ugly as a bad haircut. "This place sterilizes my mind," he said more than once. A squirrel cage had better design value, and it's not unfair to insist that the environment was soul-killing for anyone having to live long stretches of a day in its midst.

"Burke, let's go to the library," he'd say, gathering

up his stack. "I wanna hear some of these jams."

This was the Cue for whoever was hanging around to head out to the campus library, where students could listen to audio-reserve albums intended for music appreciation courses inside small rooms that were about as big as the phone booths you see in black-and-white movies. There were two chairs and an institutional record player bolted to the table. The tone arm was heavy, and you would swear you heard the stylus carve a hole to the other side as it dragged along the spinning disc. I was leery of more damage to my already sullied albums and once mentioned this to Steve.

"It'll save us time," he said, signing his name to a form at the library's audiovisual desk to secure an available listening room. "We can listen to both sides at the same time."

We'd cram others in there, up to five long-haired guys into a room meant for each other in the gig and groin trying to slip albums in and out of their

sleeves as we readied the music to be sacrificed on the cruel, cold turntable.

Someone lit a cigarette, and the room filled with smoke, gray and grim in dull light. The tone arm was set on the record, and the hisses, pops, and scratching terror that preceded the first notes of the first track on side one was a reassuring sound. "Rambin' Gamblin' Man" came on, a teenage hit by Bob Seger from my life in Detroit.

"You still think Seger is better at this kind of singing than Steve Marriott?" Steve asked. "I mean, you think he kicks his ass..."

"No one better than this guy," I said. "I mean, face it, Brit betters a good facsimile of the blues and soul and all, but Seger is from Motown—Detroit—he's closer to the source, he played the same clubs, and I think he's better by default..."

"Well, yeah," said Steve. "I like Seger too, but not better than Marriott. The shit he did with the Small Faces, especially *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake*, and still later with Humble Pie, the

Rockin' the Fillmore set, doesn't sound anything like what Seger has been doing. Seger is more, more..."

"More corny," said Richard, someone in our Mesa crowd who was a confirmed Anglophile. "I mean, Seger has nothing on what Marriott has already accomplished, I mean there's a world of difference that how these guys sing..."

"How these guys sing is all black music anyway," I said. "and Seger is better at that than these Brits who get it off of records they copy..."

Bob Seger was screaming his way through the next song, and the room filled with even more smoke when I lit one of my mom's Virginia Slims, mashed and unrecognizable from my coat pocket. Steve lit a Kool. Richard took a drag from his Camel unfiltered and shook his head.

"You can't say that," he protested. "You hear a kind of music anyway you hear it, anywhere it happens, a musician has no control over that. It's what they do with it that counts, that..."

"Put on Jethro Tull," someone else said. "I wanna play some *Thick as a Brick*."

"Ah," said Steve, "an old controversy that won't go away, the album as work-of-High-Art. Steve's tone was perfectly effete and dilettantish. 'Why don't we do some debate in the *School Papers*, a point-counterpoint about whether art rock is a blessing or a curse for rock music?"

"Put on Tull, man, I want you guys to check something out..."

"Fuck, that album sucks dick," I said, "though some parts are okay, but one album as a whole song? Dubious. Jethro Tull are a terrible band..."

"Martin Barre is a great guitarist," Steve insisted, "and Clive Bunker is one of the best drummers in rock. The British own rock-and-roll drumming..."

The tone arm came up, a zipping sound filled the smoky air. Steve beat every-one to the turntable and slapped on an Anthony Braxton record. Saxophone mayhem filled the air, meaning baritone notes squalling against bass and drums that sounded at the moment like a clutch of kids let loose in a band room with big, heavy hammers.

"This motherfucker jams," Steve said.

"Put Seger back on," I said. Steve waved me off.

"Burke, I think you ought to write up the day side of our art-rock debate. Talk about Seger all you want..."

"Maybe..."

"Maybe, shit, do it..."

"Okay, okay, but let's play some Mountain. Take this shit off..."

"Put Tull on. I want to show you something in the

lyric sheet when Anderson says what the point of it all is, just when the drums come down and the guitar goes Irish/Scottish..."

"Burke," Steve said, "you got your harmonica on you?"

"Yeah..."

"Let me see it for a second. I feel a jam coming on..."

I pulled a crusty Marine Band harmonica from my coat and gave it to Steve, who put it to his lips and banged out a rotten version of "The Work Song" by the Butterfield Blues Band. It was a harmonica showpiece I'd been playing for a few years at that point, and Steve liked to blast away on one of my harps when he had experimental jazz tearing up the air around him. He handed it back to me.

"That was my 'free' improvisational interpretation of 'The Work Song,'" he said. "Whereas T. Navin Burke, as a player, is an

impressive formalist in his ability to interpret faithfully the intention of a composer's notation. I much prefer to use the melody as only suggestions of where to ven-

ture on a sortie and view each tangent and ruinous texture as a creation coming from another kind of beauty."

Braxton made growling sounds through his mouthpiece as Steve and I laughed and Richard and the fourth guy left the room for the classrooms and day jobs that awaited them. A noticeable stream of smoke rushed out the door with them.

"T. Navin Burke" was how I signed my articles in the *School Paper* for a while, in a young man's effort to seem smarter and grayer, and this throat-clearing appellation assured Steve for years. He called me T. Navin Burke in referring to the staff box of the imaginary music journal we wanted to start and kept it alive as an in-joke. Still other times, it was out of the blue, unexpected, a tap on the shoulder.

After Steve had established his voice and his eminence as a San Diego music critic, he and I stopped talking to each other as much as we once had. Our lives diverged, with mine con-

sisting of sobering up and learning how to do most things over again for the years it took me to foul up matters with a cruel, demanding thirst. I still read Steve's column, and there was one I read with interest because the photograph was of blues harmonica player Charlie Musselwhite, a particular favorite of mine who'd been a large influence on my own playing.

Steve, essaying forth on Musselwhite's importance as a blues harmonica innovator, changed course in the last couple of lines in his piece and wrote, basically, that Musselwhite's time had passed and that the job of brilliant harmonica work belonged to younger players such as T. Navin Burke.

"I figured it was a good way to get you to call my ass," he said on the phone. "I mean, you're busy and shit, but c'mon, gimme a call, Burke."

So I called him, picking up again on the habit of getting him on the phone in the late night and talking for hours, thousands of hours, for the better part of

three decades, into the dis- tance, it seemed, of the following morning, with the TV on, sound off on my end, Steve on the other end of the phone line playing blistering bebop or a solo disc by a P. Funk bassist. The subject matter was the same as it had been when we first met in Makarushka's class: music, music, writers, women, current and past loves, movies, literature, literature, and the need for writers to get off their inflated sense of themselves and get the heat to the meat, the motion in the emotion.

"How's the poetry?" he'd ask. "Fine," I'd say, "wanna hear a new piece?"

I'd hear crumpling paper on the other end. "Sure," he'd say, "although I'd rather be reading you croud a phony art-mon-gering poseur, because that's where your best shit flies..."

"Well, yeah, but that was something I did, and now..."

chance he could about writing reviews again, even though I'd made a deluded decision at the time that I would commit my writing life to creating my own art, not assessing someone else's. Steve had an answer for this: "Bullshit," and after I'd railed at him about the importance of my being connected to my work as a means of processing my experience of the world and a host of other egocentric rationalizations I'd been seduced by, Steve would say "Bullshit, motherfucker," and would bring up Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Carlos Fuentes, forging a conversational trail that passed through the city at night, two guys yacking up a giddy philosophy amid the static of stars and salt air.

I miss the talks. ■ —Ted Burke

Ted Burke wrote music reviews and features for the *Reader* during the early '70s. He was included in the 1996 anthology *Small Rain: Eight Poets from San Diego*, published by D.G. Wills Books. He works currently at Warwicks in La Jolla.

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Steve Esmedina had the biggest head I had ever seen on a human being. He also had the biggest heart — one that became more corroded over time, leaking pain and despair. The droll demeanor, the sniping wit, the cacophony of demolition that was Bighead grew weaker and nastier, his huge heart awash

with some temperamental toxin. I think he was more afraid of not making it as a writer than he was afraid of dying.

That big head of his was filled with ideas. But it was also teeming with bitterness. He knew he had talent, but his anger prevented him from cultivating his abilities. He could write

fascinating pieces, concisely analyzing the arcane dynamics of his favorite jazz artists or running wild with praise for the movie directors he worshipped. Yet his caustic nature left you wondering if Steve was really serious or simply spoofing. That bitterness was the seed of his own demise and laid waste to a beautiful, raw talent.



When I enrolled in journalism classes at Mesa College in 1973, Steve was already ensconced as a music critic for the school paper.

I remember visiting Steve at his Logan Heights home in the early '80s. He was a mess. I hadn't seen him for a year or so, having been away at college. We corresponded, but the letters were infrequent. I had no idea how ill Steve had become. No longer was he the rotund raconteur in the thrift-store blazer, his prematurely gray hair chopped into an anti-fashion style, his impish eyes glowing. Now, he was sickly and shrunken and pale. I hugged him and cried, frightened by his closeness to death. Those who had been around him then, who knew his habits, mocked me. Their sympathies had run dry long ago.

Our paths first crossed ten years earlier. When I enrolled in journalism classes at Mesa College in 1973, Steve was already ensconced as a music critic for the school paper. Hoping to get onto the staff myself, I submitted a stuffy review of the latest Jethro Tull album. Steve found my English-major prose stilted and silly, but I landed a spot on the staff nonetheless. Not versed in the terse, trendy style of Steve's favorite music critics, I was denied a role writing album reviews. Instead, I was given the position no one wanted: city editor. On one slow news day, Steve suggested we create our own news. He convinced another

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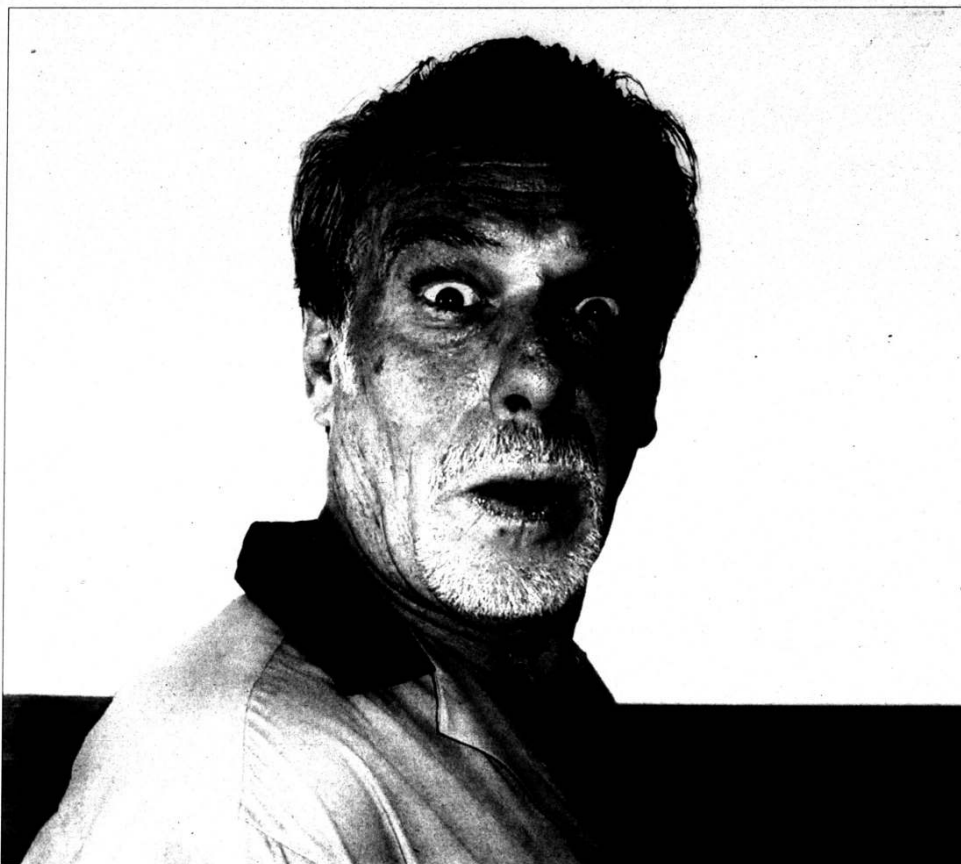
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gullible staff member to run across campus naked, from one restroom to another. We had an instant streaking story for the front page.

On another occasion, we received a review copy of a new Lou Reed LP, *Rock and Roll Animal*. In a listening booth in the Mesa College library, we rocked out, cranked it up, and spouted lines for a review of this, the greatest rock album of all time. All in the sterile academic confines of a community college research facility. Steve had chosen Mesa partially because of his love-hate relationship with "white dudes." City College was closer to his home, but something about the suburban blankness of Kearny Mesa was much more appealing to him.

King Crimson was one of Steve's favorites, and in between classes at Mesa he allowed me to borrow their latest LP. At home, I scratched the vinyl on the turntable of my ancient stereo, and I replaced the album with a new one. Those who knew Steve better than I laughed and shook their heads. No one abused his records more than Steve. Scratches and gouges were simply "alternate percussion," he liked to say. When I first visited Steve's house, which he shared with his mother and an ever-changing cast of relatives and hangers-on, I was treated to the sight of his record collection: stacks and stacks of naked vinyl and empty record jackets surrounded by empties and

clothes and fast-food residue. At the forefront were his stalwarts: raunchy Redd Foxx, Blowfly, and Rudy Ray Moore. His passion appeared to be jazz, but much of his time was spent traveling back alleys and dark corners, avoiding groups who were popular and seeking out the new, the unknown, the future stars, always dipping in and out of the shadows, just out of reach. In those days, the first thing we did when visiting someone's home for the first time was dig through the records. The tag line was: *You can learn an awful lot about people from the kind of music they listen to.* This really meant: *How much of the music I like does this guy like?* Anything outside the current sphere of cool was anathema at worst and material for derision at the very least. And you can also learn much more about someone by the way he treats his music collection.

We were certain that Steve's disregard for the condition of his LPs manifested itself in other areas of his life. In those days, we liked to drink, and we drank like idiots. Even though we didn't need the money that badly, we still sold our blood downtown, had our fill of the free donuts and orange juice, and then went out drinking in dingy bars south of Broadway. We fancied ourselves junior Charles Bukowski, depraved, dragging our sad brazenness from dive to dive, always ending where we started: alone.

Steve could write. Back then, his work was published regularly in both the *Mesa* paper and in the *Reader*. His imagination was fecund, and his ability to turn ornate phrases was amazing. Unfortunately, his disdain infected much of what he wrote, and it was an act of conscious restraint on his part to keep that negativity in check when cranking out music and movie reviews. He was not completely successful, and his reputation as a cranky critic grew. He took delight in the hate letters he received, written by music fans whose sacred cows were sliced at Steve's hands.

Deadlines for Steve were always someone else's problem. His ire colored his perceptions. He used that anger to cancel out his irresponsibility. He felt he was destined for something larger. Fame. Fortune. White girls. We were certain that writing infamy was imminent, and, as dumb as we were, we still knew we had to write something big or go nowhere. After meeting a movie producer who spoke to a Mesa College film class, Steve and I decided to write a screenplay. Now that we had this Hollywood connection, we were going to go for the gold. The plan was for us to write constantly, together. I moved into Steve's house in Shelltown for a few weeks, and the result was a dim sketch we named *Blood Boredom*. It was all about gangs before gangs were cool; it teemed with

foul language and violence. Sam Peckinpah was a hero of Steve's, and from him we borrowed the blood. Martin Scorsese's film *Mean Streets* was another of Steve's touchstones, and we drew blood from that source as well. The boredom was generated from our clumsy neophyte screenwriter prose and not from the angst our characters were supposed to embody. We even had the thing bound with a hard cover. The pages now are yellow, but the attitude remains. The characters speak with anger and vengeance and disdain. The dialogue is common. The plot is thin. And the main character dies a senseless, violent death.

We received a rejection letter from the movie producer in September of 1974. By that time, I was going to school in San Francisco and Steve was studying at UCSD. Steve wrote to me frequently, keeping the screenplay dream alive. The rejection was typed on stationery from one of the producer's biggest successes, *The Last Detail*. As rejection letters go, this one was kind and personal. Genuine advice was given, and receiving this letter was taken as a success in itself. A real producer was writing to us, two unknown, unproven, grandiose talents from America's Finest City. He told us, "I have read *Blood Boredom* after holding your screenplay for an insultingly long time. My apologies. Real talent, such as yours, deserves better." Amen. But

would selling a screenplay have saved or changed Steve's life?

The next month, Steve wrote to tell me he was still reworking *Blood Boredom*. With trademark attitude in place, he closed the letter saying, "Next week I'm going to send you the first completed draft of *Sangria de Mi Barrio*, the new title of BB. I figure if we make it sound really ethnic and provincial then some asshole humanitarily inclined Hollywoodian will think he's got a new genre on his hands."

I took a souvenir from that collaboration episode. Steve was forever collecting items from thrift shops. Part of his treasure included a bound set of Catholic prayerbooks and a matching catechism. He sensed my curiosity and gave the books to me as a gift. I was not sure what it was all about, since way back then I was not yet a Catholic. Steve tried to enlighten me, and I realized that he was fighting the church, also. So many battles he waged; collectively these struggles destroyed him. He always placed himself on the periphery. The spite he held for those not like himself was tangible, and it kept him anchored outside. But beneath so much scathing attitude was that messy, yearning heart of his.

He fought other institutions as well. In literature courses at UCSD, he struggled with the assigned readings. His mind demanded

something more immediate. He wrote to me in the fall of 1974, "The point I'm trying to make is that I really think 19th-century American writing, which is thrown in my face as God-like, is really pompous and overweight and BORING!!!! Modern writing, especially Latin-American, strikes notes in me that I never thought existed. When I read a line like 'One of my weaknesses is gossipology, although I'd add in my defense that only certain superior forms of gossip, such as history, hold any interest for me.' I CREAM!!!! That was from Cortazar. These guys know what it means to feel superior/inferior with everyone you know. They know the ambivalence of the educated mind. They know that smugness is deadly. So they gnaw at their own erudition, their own sense of accomplishment, their own smugness in a way that might be taken as a wee bit 'smug.' They realize the contradictions, the obsessions, the repetitions, the futility of ponderance and yet they ponder, they repeat, they are obsessed, they contradict. They move on and stay in the same place LIKE US!!!! I don't care what the scholars think. They should build a time machine and go back to the periods they love so much and leave modern art to modern minds. End of lecture."

Steve continued working on the screenplay, and his letters offered more

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thoughts on his desire to become a writer. I was studying journalism and creative writing at San Francisco State, and he was immersed in literature at UCSD. My letters to Steve were soaked in wine; his were driven by beer and adorned with despairing return addresses. From one marked "Ennui Associates," Steve wrote, "Have you ever wondered about my propensity for pseudo-self-effacing self-pity? Don't mind me. It's my way of maintaining a semblance of rationality about the ridiculous, fucked-up entanglements of this life which doesn't even belong to me yet. Do you remember the first time you thought, 'Gosh, I wanna be a facile writer someday?' I do. It was cold, darkness, all black. Here is the crux of my dilemma: I can see things clearly but I am afraid to apply them to my art. That's why I waste time writing criticism. I can perceive but not conceive. Oh, the shame of it all!"

And as that big head churned, Steve crawled low. He disguised that desire in his letters among raunchy bellowing and pretend misogyny. Later that fall, he sighed, "Perhaps it's just me. How can I expect a meaningful relationship with a woman in these days and nights of liberated libidos? I am not needed. But then again, I must learn to shelve my undue cynicism. Maybe that's what's keeping me from realizing my sundry dreams. If I'm so intelligent,

then how come no woman loves me? Can a person control his life? Can he chart the course? Is there hope?" A few days later, he wrote again, avoiding the subject of women entirely. But he still reflected on his future. Critic, writer, and ultimately, he said, "Yes, I dream of being a film director day in and day out."

So ironic, this whole sad business. Steve wanted to be loved, he wanted to be esteemed. He pursued those things that lead to notoriety or fame. And the hope was always there, for the name alone, to attract women — not necessarily the man behind the name. How we stumbled and shouted and chastised the world for being unfair, all the while drinking ourselves comatose to squelch the pain. Heads and hearts disjointed, unformed, askew.

Yet in the midst of this emotional chaos, it appeared that Steve also craved substance. And meaning. His letters are abundant with dismissals of the mundane and the hypocritical. As punctuation to his rambling eviscerations of music, movies, and relationships, Steve offered focused statements attached to clear examples that appeared to stand for things he truly believed in, things he felt were worthy and honorable. In December of 1974, he wrote me about a childhood friend who recently joined McCHA. Steve always struggled with identity, forever self-deprecating, for-

ever vacillating, forever unsure of politics. He used his mixed-blood Filipino/Mexican status to justify standing on the fence or sitting off to the side. The McCHA group was going to confront the Mesa College cafeteria staff, and Steve's friend asked him to cover the event for the school paper. Afterward, Steve unloaded, "I feel weird," he wrote. "On one hand, I must admit that this farmworkers' cause is a good, humane one, but on the other hand, I JUST DON'T GIVE A FUCK!!! We don't exist in a climate that is especially conducive to political blood-brotherhood. And the ethnic reification process truly annoys me. Why am I a 'Tio Taco' if I choose the kind of wine or beer or lettuce I want to? Why should I care? What if I decided to be like Jean Genet and give my life over to bigger causes... would my 'people' not call me names, ridicule me... isn't 'La Raza' just another equivalent to 'My Country 'Tis of Thee'? What is this shit? Am I just a selfish bastard? Is my reactionism justified? As far as I'm concerned, the biggest joke about this country is that everyone gets to have it their way... don't like waving a red, white, and blue flag?... then go wave a red, green, and white one and feel real, red good. Then go stop buying Gallo wine... buy Annie Green Springs, and feel real good."

And the following week, he zeroed in on more essentials: "You must read Yukio

Mishima's Spring Snow. The guy knew how to die, which is much more important than knowing how to live. You see, he created a body of art that was completely his; then, by adhering to some ridiculous Samurai Bushido code, he killed himself. Great! That way it sounds like he was MAKING A STATEMENT instead of just copping out. Brilliant strategy. Maybe Mama Cass deliberately got to be a fat pork-chop boar to make a statement on how obesity causes heart attacks, even in the most famous fartsos. Many times it was difficult to tell when Steve was serious and when he was kidding. Occasionally, he would send me tone concert reviews of bands he knew I liked, later to inform me that he had never actually attended the shows. It was a curious mix of not wanting to hurt my feelings along with stabs of envy. It all issued from his wounded heart.

That heart eventually got him the girl. By the spring of 1975, Steve was writing frequently about his love affair with Gail. She was white, from the alien realm of Mission Village, young, beautiful, and — gauging from Steve's epistles — thoroughly taken by him. His brooding and bitterness were toned down. After a lengthy lament about a former girlfriend, he wrote, "But who cares! I have Gail. Sweet, lovely, moody as hell Gail. Everything I dreamed of and more... more hassles, more

introspections, more complaints of ingratitude. She's going to go on the pill for me, and I have been made to feel as if it is a magnificent sacrifice unparalleled. To which I replied... I can always use Trojans... not good enough... only 80% effective. So what does she want me to do... cut my balls off? I appreciate everything she does for me, I love her dearly, I respect her perspicacity... but dues-paying went out with the Cub Scouts for me." The new domesticity in his voice was tempered, though, by that letter's concluding sentence: "I am becoming more skeptical and more misanthropic, boring and boorish every day. Where will I be in five years? Hell, five months! Fuck! Five days... minutes... seconds..."

In late winter of 1974, Steve wrote me from UCSD. His typewriter at home was broken, and he was using a pay machine at the university that was fueled by quarters. When his money ran out, he finished the letter in longhand. "I read some of Gail's poetry the other night," he said. "Not bad. It was intelligible and there were a couple of good lines like, 'Cab driver / drop me off at the asylum / round the corner / I just went insane.' I still think poetry is prose in search of punctuation and verbs, but Gail has more on the ball than I ever could have considered possible." He still talked about the screenplay revision, and always he touched on liter-

ature, film, and music, dropping names and ripping his way through culture with rusty scissors. When all was shredded, there stood Steve, searching for something acceptable, something meaningful, something worth his while. And the object of that search was forever elusive.

A letter from the following spring contains sad ironies. He laments, "This morning I woke up with a throbbing in my gut and the certain knowledge that I would die any year now: a semi-fever is basking my body, and I'm sure I'll be sick by tonight... I guess it's my fault as I slept with the window open all night, and you know how cold cold cold it's freezing in this hotel... accidental suicide someday? Maybe." Later, in the same playful missive, Steve asks, "Can vitamin C help a wounded heart? I feel shitty in every sense of the word. I think I'm going to start taking care of myself from now on... methodize my role as a human being while still leasing this lemon call life... (excuse me)." He followed with lyrics from his all-time favorite, Bryan Ferry, the former Roxy Music front man: "With every goddess a bed down / every idol a bring down / it gets you down / red the search for perfection / your own predilection / goes on and on and on."

That summer, I was set to enter the service. Steve was the only friend who didn't accuse me of mak-

ing a grave error. He was still attending UCSD, but more out of habit than anything. In April of 1975, he wrote, "School is boring. The people at UCSD are despairing to habitate amongst. If success doesn't arrive soon I have several options: (1) Join an institution that will provide ready steady work, like yutu; (2) Get a menial job and resign myself to mediocrity; (3) Become an alcoholic or drug addict thereby providing everyone with a reasonable excuse as to my downfall; (4) Invest in a bottle of Sleep-eeze."

The sad ironies continued in his next letter. After describing his aimless, irritating activities at a party, during which he drunkenly disparaged most everyone he encountered, Steve added, "Anyway, Gail got estereceenely pissed off at me even to the point of telling me 'GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME YOU INSANE BASTARD!' Wow! I felt like committing myself. Of course, I guess I asked for it." The rest of the letter was devoted to film: short reviews, poems to Tobe Hooper and Dirk Bogarde, analyses of the directing styles of Schlesinger, Polanski, and Arthur Penn. But he slipped in strange digressions, reflecting on a year-old tarot-card prediction and declaring a new substance abuse strategy: "I hate alcohol," he said. "I think I'll just go back to sniffing lacquer. I never fucked up when I sniffed paint. It just zonked you out." He jumped back into cinema and deposited this haunting interlude: "San Diego's dearth of a movie scene is killing me. Most of the new movies I've seen this year have been shit or ephemeral gloss. How can I wait two more months to see *The Passenger* or *Day of the Locust*? The arid climate for arts... I mean, LIVING art, not canvassed cadavers... proves that San Diego is as worthless as Cincinnati or Butte or Providence or Taos... think of dying in San Diego. What a legacy. I'd rather die anywhere else but here. That will be the ultimate test of success or failure for me."

Soon his letters contain fewer references to music and movies and more commentaries on

death and fate. At the end of April, he started off with the description of a horrid, fatal accident. "Life never seemed so negligible," he began, "nor death so ineluctable as it did last night. I saw a poor asshole crash into a pole at 90 miles an hour. Gail and I were en route to downtown when about half a mile up Friars Road we saw a huge mass of metal explode. We stopped to investigate as all self-serving *metches* would. There were several cop cars there already. Apparently, they had been chasing this guy for a while. The guy's car was squashed into one huge scrap heap. Stewen across the road we saw the guy's head smashed up as well as his bloody torso and severed limbs. After we had been there for about ten minutes many cars started to pile up, and the audience grew to sidewalk capacity. What surprises me is that I was hardly affected by the sight of death in my presence. I wonder — am I jaded beyond hope, or am I nearing total apathy about life? The pole, by the way, didn't even have a dent in it. Oy vey... high-life ecstasy?" The ruminations wound on, and then he focused on his love life. "On this side of heartbreak," he said, "I believe I am nearing the penultimate stretch with Gail. It's just a feeling, mind you, but she appears to be rapidly tiring of me. Either that, or she is just merely used to me. I would pray that I am simply imagining things. But I don't have the energy. I think I am a nice change of pace... a surprise... an exotic desert... good for a month or two and then easily dis-

posable. Boooooooo. Hooooooo. Please, God, whoever you are, don't let her dump me... who else will pump me...?" He concluded with a series of gossipy one-liners before his quarter ran out and the typewriter clicked off. In his sprawling hand, Steve wrote a postscript: "In the next bulletin I'll detail my tarot experiences. I'm doomed, according to my introductory reading."

Ultimately, the head/heart dynamic spun out of orbit. Visceral breakdowns were on the horizon. Esophagus, liver, organic destruction. The letters never varied in their themes. Over and over... music, books, movies, women. Presented with dark highlights, exaggeration, bleak stretches, embroidered with anger and frustration, filigreed with sourness. A few months later, he wrote me overseas: "I, too, have been drinking a lot. At the beginning of this month I decided to put all my empties in a big box to see how many I could collect in a month. I've got three six packs of Olde English, four vodka bottles, two Thunderbird bottles, and a bottle of Plum Velvet. Here's how it usually goes: start off depressed, go to store and buy booze and Pall Malls (my brand now), drink for a half-hour, feel great, start getting depressed again, feel sick, start over the next day. Oy vey."

It all seems so inevitable. Steve was issuing fatal predictions in his letters for years. Occasionally, he spoke of turning it around, of changing his ways, of tending to his health. Mere words. Spoken many times to reassure a girlfriend. Part of the script. Buying a little time.

Even the last scene of *Boredom* etched out the confines of his vision, as eerily as a prediction from the thrift-shop copy of *Nostalgia* that lay near melted candles and urine-filled 40-ounce beer bottles lined up next to Steve's bed. Kiki, the hero of the screenplay, is driven into a corner. In the barrio there are no options, and violence is a daily inevitability. The plot is as trite as Steve's life was tragic. The last scene:

Three vatos pounce on Kiki while he is running. One of them pulls out a knife and stabs Kiki several times. Kiki falls to the ground. The vatos disappear into the crowd.

Medium-close shot of Kiki lying on the floor, eyes open. His mouth is twisted grotesquely.

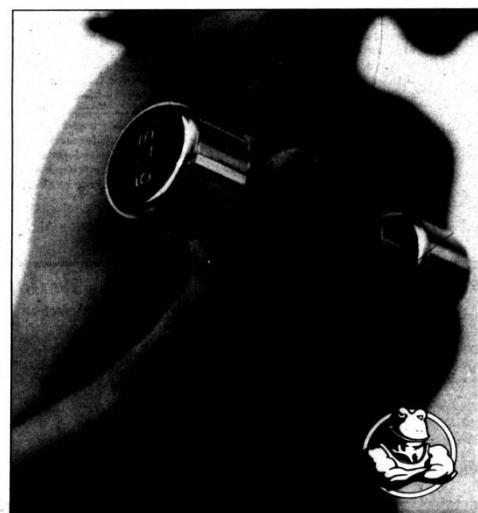
Fade slowly...

Steve would have loved the story to end here, on a grim note. But he deserves better. He would deny this, opting instead for the grotesque, the violent, the absurd. But he deserves better. Yes. The ineluctability of death. Always a fascination for Steve. In how many cinematic episodes, sitting in darkened theaters or protected by the cloying comfort of his living room, did he study scenes of violence with dispassionate approval? So many movies, so many slow-motion ballets of murder and vengeance and gratuitous destruction. It all started after seeing *Ben Hur*. "The greatest movie of all time!" he said time and again. The critic. Blubbing passing judgment again. He was wrong about the negligibility of life. His tortured heart,

bound by attitude, would not allow him to speak otherwise. His letters were riddled with bravado and boast, and he spent years crafting a persona that defied penetration. Even when he typed on his new typewriter in red all-capital letters, "I WILL BE YOUR FRIEND FOREVER," it was certain that his crafty head, shaded by some diabolical purpose, would compromise that sentiment eventually. But the heart was still there, struggling to flicker and shine, as Steve waited for the success that eluded him, waiting and fading. Good-bye, Bighead. ■

— David Zielinski

David Zielinski wrote for the *Reader* in the early '90s; he teaches composition and literature at Imperial Valley College.



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Blubbo's WORLD

Stumble, Stumble, Thump, Crash

Jim Mullin is editor of the *Miami New Times*. He held the same position at the *Reader* from 1977 to 1986.

"I remember exactly when I met Steve. It was at the annual *Reader* Christmas party in 1976, at the old location of the Athens Market restaurant. That was when they announced that I was the new editor for the paper. I remember that there was one writer at the party that I sought out and two writers who sought me out. Immediately after the announcement was made, I was rushed by Steve and George Varga. They cornered me and absolutely bombarded me with questions about music, what I thought about music, music stories, the paper's music coverage. They fired all kinds of questions at me.

"Steve was already working for the paper then, so I had read his stories and was familiar with his work. The story of his that really affected me—it still sticks in my mind after all this time—was a piece he had done about his high school graduation. It was very funny and so disrespectful, but at the same time it had so much heart and warmth in it. It was a wonderful story. So when I became editor, I already knew these things about him.

"One of the things I liked best about Steve was that as a reviewer, he would take strong stands and express strong opinions. It's surprising, but that's not something all reviewers will do.

It can be a problem, getting a reviewer to take a definite stand on something. But not with Steve. And his taste in music was very broad.

"As quiet and shy as he could be sometimes, he could also get into these huge shouting arguments about music or about almost anything else. He had strong opinions, and he really didn't care what anybody else thought. If you disagreed with him, well, you were just wrong."

For a variety of reasons, most of them self-generated, Steve was notoriously bad at meeting copy deadlines. For several years he lived in a downtown apartment on Ninth Avenue, directly above Jim. Those times when Steve's deadline would come and go, Jim would take out a broom and bang the handle on his ceiling until the story finally appeared.

"It was a little frightening living downstairs from him. When he'd drink, I'd hear him up there. It would be quiet for a long time, and then I'd hear this stumble, stumble, thump, and then a crash, like a body hitting the floor. It was really terrifying, imagining what was going on up there. I'd rush up the stairs and start pounding on his door, practically breaking it down, to make sure he was all right. I tell you, it was honestly frightening."



As valuable as Steve's contributions to the paper were, Jim says, he was eventually replaced as a weekly contributor. There are limits to the patience of even the most agreeable editor.

"One of my most vivid recollections of living near Steve involved a woman. Not a staff member, but someone associated with the *Reader*, who was about 20 years Steve's senior. I came home one night, and I started to open the door to my apartment, I looked in, and there was Steve locked in this make-out embrace with this woman. They were kissing, passionately entwined, her blouse was unbuttoned and in disarray, right there on my couch. This woman was 20 years older than Steve, and they were going at it in my apartment. I quietly closed the door and beat a hasty retreat. We never talked about it."

—Linda Nevin

Blubbo's WORLD

Better on the Music Page

Two earlier endings...

The drawback to asking Steve Esmedina to write a movie review in my stead, ostensibly to give me a break, was that it would then fall to me to edit it. A drawback, first, because of his habit of testing the limits of a

deadline, and second, because the further he pushed the limits, the more he needed editing. For me, as for others in my position, it was always a question of weighing what Steve had to offer (a lot — person-

ality, pugnacity, taste, humor) against what he would exact in toll. I can't be sure what ultimately tipped the balance, but memory tells me it might have been the review of *Slap Shot*. Memory again must tell me, because

the printed version will not, that the opening line ran something like, "Slap Shot should have been called Slap Shit." This dipped well below my journalistic standards for opening lines. Anyway, I stopped asking him. And I had no reason to repent, on other grounds, when he later committed the gaffe in print of mistaking the British pop star Samantha Fox and the American porn star Samantha Fox for one and the same person. (The Foxes looked nothing alike, even from the neck down.) Better on the music page, I would have said, than on the movie page.

Somewhere in that span of time, my working conditions at the paper improved greatly (while my need for substitute reviewers diminished) when I no longer, all by my lonesome, had to gather the weekly info of which movies were playing at which theaters. I now was afforded an assistant. Esmo became the first to hold that post, despite his patent unsuitability to it. An agreeable phone manner, for talking to total strangers, sometimes uncooperative or rude ones, was the primary requirement. Esmo's phone manner, to the contrary,

For all his barrio slang, his attachment to the seedy and seamy, and (in later years) his surrounding cloud of eau-de-rotdgut, there was a sweetness about Steve, and a shyness, and a sensitivity.

was so hugger-mugger that I could be sitting four feet away when he was talking and could not make out a single word. For all I could tell, he might have been laying fifty on a pony. This was the time I knew him best, when we would have the chance to talk during work, occasionally have dinner or drinks afterwards. (I couldn't share his enthusiasm for

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TRULY • YAKIMA

Terrence Malick; I could for Linda Haynes.) Deadlines still mattered, however, and he again dipped below journalistic stan-

dards the night that some ill-advised combination of ingested substances caused him to have a seizure on the job, and be rushed to

the hospital. That turned into a late, late night. Shortly thereafter, or maybe shortly before, he had had to be fished out of a swimming

pool, floating face-down. Esmo had problems. Some-one more dependable took his place.

If specific memories

of him gravitate to rough spots, my general feelings gravitate illogically toward warmth. For all his barrio slang, his attachment to the seedy and seamy, and (in later years) his surrounding cloud of eau-de-rotgut, there was a sweetness about Steve, and a shyness, and a sensitivity. He would not thank me for saying so, but he might chuckle. He chuckled often. He had a gift — along with his other gifts — for making his colleagues want to encourage him, help him, save him. (I saw close at hand how hard his one-time editor, Jim Mullin,

tried.) He had a greater gift for self-destruction. The final ending did not come as a shock. Some months before, I had heard he was at death's door, in need of a new liver. I mobilized myself to visit. But when I spoke to him first on the phone, the crisis seemed already to have passed. He just needed to take better care of himself. He would bounce back. I postponed my visit. I lost track. — Duncan Shepherd

Duncan Shepherd has been the Reader's movie reviewer since 1972.



Last Ride

I never asked Steve Esmedina why he didn't drive a car. Except when he rode in mine, I don't recall even seeing Steve Esmedina in a car. He would just show up. At the stadium. At the Belly Up. Downtown. I never questioned him because

I didn't want him to feel that he couldn't call anytime and talk to me like this:

ESMO: Hey, E. It's Blubbo.
ME: I can tell.
ESMO: We're workin' tonight, right?
ME: Right.
ESMO: OK. I know you white boys don't like to come down here to the ghetto, so I'm not going to ask you to pick me up. I think I can get to the gig. But if I can't get back, can you bring me at least part of the way?
ME: Part of the way?
ESMO: Yeah. Maybe, like, to Tower Records or something. I think my brother can meet me there.
ME: We'll work it out, Esmo. Don't worry about it.

Flat out, I liked Steve Esmedina. He was witty, obnoxious, intelligent, stupid, provocative, and kind. Favorite singer: Tom Jones. Pet peeve: Being rec-

ognized in public. He drank too much, asked too little, died too young. If he knew you were coming, he might clean his room. And sooner or later, he would get around to telling the truth.

I met Esmedina in the spring of 1977, shortly after taking an advertising job at the San Diego Reader. Esmedina was a music writer there. We discovered a common interest — dredging pop music's trivia stew for obscure facts — and appreciated each other's ability to recall this useless information. We created a game to channel this effort. It could be instigated with something as simple as the pointing of a finger during the workday ("Who was the lead singer of the Beau Brummels?" "Uh... Sal Valentino!") or carried out in lengthier sessions at house



Top: Chris Davies; Bottom: San Diego Reader, October 18, 1979

parties and beer bars. Over time, I came to believe there were two Steve Esmedinas. You might encounter the laid-back "Blubbo" — sloppy, crass, ready to laugh, usually funny, sometimes not. If he thought your girlfriend had a nice ass, he might just say so, leaving you to sort out whether or not the comment was something to laugh about. But then Blubbo would focus — especially when guided by the written word — to the brink of eloquence, where his opinionated prose was delivered with disarming clarity. It was hard to figure how one set of characteristics begot the other. I was caught off guard at times, even embarrassed, by Esmo's free-swinging approach, but his honesty bore a wicked charm. "I hated his reviews," says local musician Chris Sullivan, whose band struggled for attention in San Diego during the late '70s. As bassist for the Penetrators, Sullivan recalls chiding

Esmedina in letters to the editor, urging him to explore the fledgling punk/new wave scene gaining momentum in local clubs. "Esmedina was playing it safe in those days, reviewing Journey, REO Speedwagon, whoever was in vogue," Sullivan says. "He liked the poppish,

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softer stuff. I kept sending him letters saying, 'You gotta come out, you gotta show up.' Give him credit — he took my dare."

Sullivan met Esmedina for the first time during a Penetrators gig at the Spirit Club in Bay Park.

"He had a 'So, there' attitude," Sullivan says. "He was like, 'You've been sending me letters at the Reader, so I'm here. Show me something.' We slowly won him over. I guess he saw a new approach there. Steve eventually took that extra step, and rather than just buyin' off the shelf, he went to 'swap meets' and 'garage sales'; in a sense, lookin' for bands and trying to discover stuff."

Early in 1979, Esmedina wrote in the "Reader's Guide to the Music Scene": "More than a few observers (including myself) will insist that the Penetrators upstaged the infamous Ramones last December." Later that summer, he characterized the band as a "brazen, exciting rock and roll band, with a galvanizing presence." And in October of the same year, the Penetrators hit the front page. Beneath the headline "Two Dollar Tour," Esmedina chronicled his tag-along trip with the band "on a six-day junket up the California coast."

"For the last year, since witnessing the Penetrators nearly upstage the Ramones in concert at San Diego State, I have tried to goad, per-

suaude, and plead with people to take seriously my estimation of them as the best San Diego rock band," Esmedina wrote in the opening paragraphs.

"My mother urged me to bring ample provisions, eat at least two meals a day, and stay away from drugs and liquor. Concerned female friends advised me to keep a close eye on my funds and moral virtue," he continued. There is little in anyone's recollection to suggest that Esmedina honored these concerns. There were tales of martini swills in Los Angeles, sleeping in the sand at Pismo Beach, and bad burritos in Sacramento.

"Every time I looked at him," says Sullivan, "he'd have this Peter Lorre type of smile on his face. Kind of an all-knowing guy with a little nod, smoking a cigarette."

According to Sullivan, Esmedina hit the rock-and-roll lifestyle full stride in San Francisco.

"We were up there in North Beach with the strip shows," he recalls. "For some reason, Dan McLain [the band's drummer] knew Carol Doda, the famous burlesque queen from the '50s. She was an older gal that owned a club. I remember sitting on the street corner with her having a drink. Esmo was there. But when we went for the sound check, he wandered off. I don't know where he went."

Guitarist Chris Davies



Chris Sullivan

concur.

"There was this big deal about Esmo going to these secret places, some kind of show or something, possibly pornographic, that we wouldn't be able to handle. We didn't even want to know what it was."

"When he showed up again," Sullivan says, "he had that smile on his face. I didn't pursue it."

With the Penetrators' cover story, Esmedina centered himself in the local scene of "modern" rock. His opinion was one to be reckoned with, if not always.

Guarantor Chris Davies

politically incorrect opinion." "He told me James Taylor was more 'punk' than a lot of the punk rockers," he says. "I didn't know if he was jive or what. I remember thinking, 'If I thought that, I sure wouldn't say so.'"

Esmedina's enthusiasm for bands like the Penetrators fueled a backlash within his readership. As the '70s became the '80s, he became the subject of constant diatribe in local letters-to-the-editor columns.

"He started getting hate because he wrote about us so much," Davies says. "There were people who didn't think we [the Penetrators] were that good, and they thought there was a connection there that wasn't revealed, so they assumed it was corrupt. There were punks that didn't like us or him. I think there were a lot of people who liked having that little scene to themselves."

Esmedina was quickly given to his own defense and often sparred with his critics from his weekly column.

"I would say more about the Penetrators," he remarked while highlighting an upcoming show at the La Paloma Theater in February 1980, "but with all the money, gold, sex, and drugs they've given me for plugging them, I don't really need to anymore."

Fed up with the public squabbling, Dan McLain shot a letter to *Kicks* magazine in April 1980. "All

these crybaby letters written to Kicks and the Reader are starting to get to me," he countered. "Steve Esmedina has nothing to gain by bringing attention to the Penetrators. It certainly doesn't mean that because he likes the Penetrators he's going to ignore other bands."

"There was probably some jealousy there," Sullivan says now, adding that he feels letters were "contrived." "I think some of them [other bands] thought if they wrote in and attacked him, he might come and write better things about them. Steve was always somebody's abuse receptacle. It didn't seem to fade him."

Esmedina's long association with the *Reader* was divided by periods of coming and going. He would disappear from the music pages for a time, surface briefly somewhere else, then return to the forum that best stirred his broadening interest in music. In 1989, I began contributing photography to his music reviews, and the eclectic assignments Esmo generated filled my files with an array of contemporary treasures: George Clinton. The Rolling Stones. Maria

McKee. Joshua Redman. Buddy Guy. Vinnie Golia. Pink Floyd. But working with Esmedina required the addition of some footage to what had always been an amiable friendship.

If we did not arrive

together at a venue, we met at the entrance to discuss the evening's objectives. I learned not to call out to him while we stood in crowds. His observations had offended many over the years, and an inadvertent slip could draw an unruly response. Once inside, we went separate ways. Esmo preferred to hang back on the edge of the crowd, squeezing a wad of paper and pencil I rarely saw him use. I needed to position myself near the edge of the stage, usually in front of the artist's most ardent fans. The camera equipment I shouldered never failed to attract attention, and I must have had this conversation a hundred times:

LOCAL INEBRIATE: Hey, you work for the *Reader*?

ME: Yeah.

INEBRIATE: That's cool, man. Hey — who is that asshole that writes that shit in the music section? What's his name? Esmedina?

ME: Esmedina. Steve Esmedina.

INEBRIATE: Yeah, well, tell Esmedina that he's full of shit, man! He uses so many big words. I can't even understand what he's talkin' about!

ME: Well, if you can't read it, why do you hate him so much?

INEBRIATE: Cause he's full of shit, man! He doesn't like anything. He doesn't even like Springsteen! Can you imagine not liking Springsteen?

After the show, we would reconvene to discuss what we had seen. Again, I had to be mindful of who was around us, but now for different reasons. Esmo's blood alcohol level was sometimes on the rise at this point, and he was capable of some pretty sharp edges. I recall standing in the middle of the dance floor at the Belly Up Tavern, the audience milling toward the exit following a sold-out show by Maria McKee. When I asked for his thoughts, he rolled his eyes and blurted a list of the singer's physical attributes, along with details on applying himself to several of them. With my eyes darting around for someone who might have taken offense, I suggested it was time to leave.

The tension Esmedina

exacerbated between himself and his public followed him everywhere, and in 1994, prior to a Rolling Stones show at Qualcomm Stadium, I may have witnessed its zenith.

Esmedina and I had gone together to obtain our credentials at a media center set up by the band's management. Photographers are carefully scrutinized at events like these, and Esmo waited patiently while I received my instructions. From the side I noticed a group of three or four people moving briskly toward us, and I recognized the point man as Ken Leighton, who at that time was a publicist for the Belly Up Tavern. Even before he stopped walking, he engaged Esmedina over a recent review of a show at the Belly Up. With other media types in the area taking notice, a heated discussion erupted. Esmedina stood his ground. He spoke in short, clipped sentences, delivered with the funny head swing that surfaced when he was pressed. I knew both of these guys, and I waited for one to say something to

cool the belligerence. Finally, I grabbed Esmo's arm and told him I needed to get down to the photo area. "What the hell was that?" I asked, once out of earshot. Esmedina didn't look at me. "Fuck him" was all I heard.

In the years that followed, for reasons I never fully understood, Esmedina faded from the music pages and communication between us began to dissolve. There were some phone calls, mostly for laughs. Occasionally he would send over a CD that he wanted me to check out. He sent me a picture of Tish Hinojosa once, with a sticky attached. He had jotted "Your favorite Chicana" on it. Then, nothing. Last June 26, my phone rang. Oddly, it was Ken Leighton. Steve Esmedina had passed away.

Two days later, I drove to a small chapel on the grounds of a cemetery south of Highway 94 to attend a memorial service. Walking past a handsome portrait of Esmo placed near the entrance, I sat down at the back of the room. The crowd was small, with family mem-

bers gathered in front. We listened while Mike Thomas, a longtime friend, recalled his relationship with Blubbo. To my left, a friend stared at the podium through sunglasses. On my right, a local musician wept openly. Thomas struggled at times, and I appreciated his doing what the rest of us could not.

As we filed out of the room, what remains of Esmedina's immediate family — four lovely sisters —

greeted each of us and made sincere efforts to discover what role we had played in their brother's life. We asked questions about Steve's final days, then listened to what we did not want to hear. He had been hospitalized for much of his last year, finally succumbing to massive liver failure. We were not surprised.

Saddened, but not surprised. Later, I drove back through the cemetery gates

and headed home. I made note of the fact that mine was the last car to leave. I have no idea what Blubbo expected to encounter after death, but evidently he got his ride. ■

— Randy Hoffman

Randy Hoffman is a local musician, writer, and photographer and a native of San Diego. His association with the San Diego *Reader* dates from 1977 and continues to this day.

RESEARCH STUDIES



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Blubbo's WORLD

In His Own Words

Excerpts from Steve Esmedina's writing in the San Diego Reader

July 12, 1973

Yes Is More Than Just a Word

The critics who have consistently maligned Yes have a hard time justifying their disdain in reasonably musical terms. Usually their criticism stems from the nebulous belief that "Yes are merely trying to show how clever and brilliant they are."

Perhaps it is old fashioned of me, but I do not regard attempts at brilliance as distasteful, especially when they are successful. This is particularly true with Yes who are certainly rock's most sophisticated stylists.

January 8, 1976

Best of 1975 Issue

Steve Esmedina, Reader Contributor

Best Albums

- Country Life/Siren, Roxy Music
- Death And The Flower/The Kohn Concert, Keith Jarrett
- New York Fall, 1974/Five Pieces, Anthony Braxton
- Natty Dread, The Wailers
- Still Crazy After All These Years, Paul Simon
- There's A Trumpet In My Soul, Archie Shepp
- The Last Record Album, Little Feat
- Northern Lights-Southern Cross, The Band
- Follow My Mind, Jimmy Cliff
- Atlantic Crossing, Rod Stewart

Worst

- Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy, Elton John
- Born To Run, Bruce Springsteen
- The Hissing Of Summer Lawns, Joni Mitchell
- Man-Child, Herbie Hancock
- By Numbers, The Who
- One Of These Nights, The Eagles



Leadership Qualities

As one critic put it, Mingus "writes louder than he plays."

Mingus and his latest quintet superbly they are individually, and collectively. They performed last Friday at the Back Door. The same quintet also performed at the Back Door. The same quintet also performed at the Back Door.

Esmedina review of Mingus concert, April 8, 1976

Best Concerts

- McCoy Tyner, Back Door
- Little Feat, Sports Arena
- Mahavishnu Orchestra, Golden Hall
- Weather Report, Civic Theatre
- AWB/Kokomo, Sports Arena
- Joe Farrell, George Benson, Civic Theatre

I wish I had gone — Toots and The Maytalls, Balboa Stadium

Worst

- Skipped them — Elton John, Jethro Tull, The Eagles
- I should have — Aerosmith, Herbie Hancock, Graham Cent

- trul Station
- How Could You Be So Good On Record And So Lousy In Concert — Jeff Beck, Golden Hall
- Vice-Versa — KC and The Sunshine Band, Sports Arena

Special Awards

- The Rock Criticism Finally Pays Off Award: Bruce Springsteen
- Runner-Up: Patti Smith

Businessman Of The Year:

- Clive Davis, President of Arista Records
- Anyone who can have Archie Shepp, Anthony Braxton, Cecil Taylor, The Breckers, and Mal Waldron on the



From the San Diego Reader, July 16, 1992

same label with Barry Manilow, Patti Smith, Bay City Rollers, and The Outlaws is either an artistic pervert or an economic genius.

The Pundit Kool I've Said

A Mouthful Award: Jon Landau, the rock critic whose declaration that Bruce Springsteen was the "past, present, and future of rock and roll" got him a position as Springsteen's manager, thus requiring that his beaming mug be plastered on the pages of Time, Newsweek and other periodicals.

The Bye-Bye Birdie Award

For Sublime Vulgarity: Ken Russell, for turning The Who's Tommy, "the twentieth-century's greatest work of art" (hu?) into a two hour rococo pig sty; a fitting fate for the first rock opera.

Stop In The Name Of Love

Award: Diana Ross,

who after such a smashing debut as an actress in Lady Sings The Blues succumbed to a ranting variation of the same role in Mahogany.

Trend Of The Year:

Disco-decadence. At last Muzak became a recognizable force on the pop charts. By adding a barely funky beat, people such as Barry White, Van McCoy, MFSB, Percy Faith, and The Silver Convention got Muzak out of the office and onto the dance floor.

Maybe This Year:

Roxy Music, The Wailers, Archie Shepp, and Anthony Braxton will make their way to San Diego's Bryan Ferry will get his Tuxedo on the cover of Newsweek; Peter Townshend, Neil Young, and Mick Jagger will collaborate on an album, Rock's No Fun Anymore, But It's All I Know; Talented local bands like United

States Monsters, Grace, Glory, Harlequin, Horsefeathers and Doodson Watermelon will get the widespread attention they deserve.

April 8, 1976

Leadership Qualities

Since the Fifties, Charlie Mingus has remained one of the more intriguing anomalies of jazz.... Mingus and his latest quintet performed last Friday at the Back Door. The same qualities inherent in his best records...surfaced in abundance live.... That ensemble watchfulness is probably Mingus' greatest talent. He has the uncanny ability to compose and arrange so determinedly that each player is prepared to overcome each other's flaws. Although he lacked the innovation displayed in the recent Back Door concerts by Elvin Jones and Anthony Braxton, Mingus provided a more-than-average amount of inspired musical democracy in his writing and leadership. In this case, more-than was enough.

June 24, 1976

Medium Kool

George Wein's "Kool Jazz Festival"

The biggest obstacle was the location — San Diego Stadium. It is doubtful that there is any way to fully appreciate music in this Grand Canyon setting. The nearest \$8.50 seat was situated many yards away, and even the six-screen set-up offered little relief for strained eyes.... As for Nancy Wilson, it's a puzzle that she was on the bill at all, for her affiliations to jazz or soul seem cosmetic at best. She sang fashionably "cool" songs like "If I Ever Lose This Heaven" and "All Is Fair In Love" with the dryness of a Las Vegas headliner appearing on The Merv Griffin Show. If Wein wants to tout her as a musician, he should team her up with Michel Legrand, Bobbi Humphrey, Donald Byrd, and Tim Weisburg and have a "Kool Schlock Festival."

July 22, 1976

Feel Good, Look Good, Smell Good, Be Good

The passersby, the loiterers, and the commuters standing at the bus stop rarely pay attention to the Horton Plaza evangelists, not even to jeer; thus, the

shrill efforts to turn back the people flocking to hear Reverend Eikerkotter, better known as Rev. Ike, lecturing on "Health, Happiness, and Prosperity," fell on indifferent ears.... The success of Ike's performances, here and elsewhere in America, is evidence that he needn't be concerned with heretical or ethical dilemmas. As an entertainer, he is a peculiar sort of genius. Seeing a young lackey bring silver chalice

of water to him every 15 minutes, or hearing him tell a little girl who has given him a homemade key ring for his Rolls-Royce that he needs "six more, darling," or watching the crowd pledge hundreds of dollars to him in order to have their promise placed on his "special altar in Boston" is certainly an affecting experience. How it affects, exactly, depends on one's sense of religious propriety. But when he

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maxes the show by getting the whole hall to chant "Money, Money, Money, Money" in the form of a devotional mantra. Reverend Ike shows himself to be an emissary of God before whom any atheist could bow down.

March 17, 1977

Disposable Noise

The Ramones made their debut in San Diego last week at the La Paloma and the Back Door. Although the audiences seemed more than willing to accept them for what they are, the San Diego *Union's* rock critic, Robert Laurence, regarded them with the moral indignation usually reserved for snuff films and political terrorism. He called their material "ugly, hostile songs that exalt the violence that plagues Manhattan." ... A few minutes before they were scheduled to perform at the Back Door, The Ramones could be seen

leaving the parking lot in an old white car, deliberately causing the concert to run late. When asked how they reacted to the intense criticism they've received, bassist Dee Dee Ramone stuck his head out the window and remarked, with the brevity of one of their songs, "If people don't like us here, to hell with us."

April 7, 1977

Hockey Muck

In keeping with the stupidity of Nancy Dowd's script, *Slap Shot* ought to be re-titled *Slipshod*. The thing can easily be dismissed as a Three Stooges comedy modernized by blood, nudity, and wall-to-wall obscenities. But both Dowd and director George Roy Hill obviously see it as a "metaphor" for a couple of the more frequently denounced traits of the American Way: the obsession with winning and the thirst for vicarious violence. Both of which, of course, translate into "macho."

March 2, 1978

This Week's Concerts

Monday, the hard-rock band Nazareth headlines a show at the Civic. Their heavy metal bashing is typical, neither better nor worse than the run of similar bands. However, their abominable lead singer Dan McCafferty screeches like a cross between Robert Plant and Lucy Ricardo. The show has slight potential in the form of second-billed Jay Ferguson. With Spirit and Jo Jo Gunne, Ferguson maintained the image of the forever grasping, never entirely successful rock journeyman. Now that he's on his own, it remains to be seen if he's gotten any closer to rock's brass ring.

March 23, 1978

READER'S GUIDE TO THE MUSIC SCENE

On Friday, soul singer Johnny

Taylor performs at the Slave Market. Taylor is one of the few holdovers from the Stax-Volt era who retains that style, even when flirting precariously with disco. He never was an imposing figure on the order of Otis Redding but his slick stage presence and gritty vocals conjure up memories of a gusty form of black pop music that seems to have become an anachronism.

June 1, 1978

Wednesday, the youngest of the almost criminally successful Gibb brothers, Andy Gibb, performs at the Sports Arena. Gibb's brother, Barry, has a midas touch and it appears to have rubbed off. The littlest Bee Gee has had three monster hits in a row. On the basis of those records, though, it's impossible to think of him as anything other than a panhandler grasping tightly to his brother's cuffs. His latest, "Shadow Dancing," sounds suspiciously like a medley of his first, "I Just Wanna Be Your Everything," his second, "Thicker Than Water,"

and bits and pieces from the despotic "Saturday Night Fever" album. I suppose that those with an insatiable desire to see the Bee Gees can stimulate their hunger with Andy while they anticipate the big boys' grand summer tour.

May 22, 1980

Roger McGuinn and Chris Hillman have a place in rock's short but grand history book as the co-creators of the Byrds. I always respected McGuinn and Hillman for being experimental during rock's infancy (the Byrds were among the first established bands to toy with Indian music, avant-garde jazz, and various styles of country music), but I never was infatuated with them. In recent years, neither of these two have come up with anything of substance, but they are worthy of attention for their past efforts. They'll be at the Catamaran next Wednesday. Also at the ever-busy Catamaran this week: Jose Feliciano, a nimble guitarist and likeable bon vivant, Friday and Saturday; and heavy-metal

rockers, Bratz, Sunday.

December 4, 1980

Country swing will be represented at the Bachanal on Tuesday night by Asleep at the Wheel, a group whose skill I admire but who I salute only on an intellectual, not a visceral, level. My aversion is strictly personal and doesn't reflect on the group's talent.

June 8, 1989

Of Note Ray Charles

To this day, Charles remains a polished but highly charismatic and dynamic performer. Even though his music stretches beyond the boundaries of elemental blues, it is inherent in even his frothiest pop material. The late Michael Bloomfield, a sad figure whose expertise on the subject could be relied on, once remarked that Ray Charles (along with B.B. King) was "the last word" among blues musicians. Charles has stiff competition, of course, but his position in the upper echelons has long been secure. He will be at Humphrey's on Friday night.

September 7, 1989

Of Note Cure

But the Cure's work is so unmodulated that after cursory acquaintance, the paucity of fresh ideas negates the intended effect. Rather than being hypnotic oracles, the Cure can easily come off as desultory bores with one-track minds. They'll attempt to mesmerize the local faithful Tuesday night at the Sports Arena, with Shelleyan Orphan opening. ■

Blubbo's WORLD

Blubbo Adrift

In the Reader's scuffling days, Steve Esmolina was the staff's Doc Holliday—erudite, enigmatic, and bedeviled by self-consuming tendencies that seemed rooted in debilitating, unspoken discomfort. For as long as I knew him, he relied on friends, colleagues, and deadlines to keep him propped up and functioning.

Esmo was a glorious paradox, a riddle that I never tried to solve. As a writer, he disgorged caustic essays on music-as-art into the beaks of readers too hungry to turn away. Away from the typewriter, he assumed the guise of a phlegmatic troll given to wato street slang and scatological musings. Unable or unwilling to reconcile his Shavian intellect with his self-image of a bemused Sancho Panza, Esmo publicly exalted himself with often brilliant wordplay, privately pickled himself. Even in his 20s, Steve's personal doomsday clock always seemed a tick away from midnight.

Like many people, I first met Esmo through his early-'70s work in the Reader. I was a year out of col-

lege, and Jupiter Records, my store in Clairemont, was a drop-off point for the weekly. I eagerly awaited each issue, delighted that a free paper had arts writers of the quality of Esmolina, Duncan Shepherd, and Jonathan Saville.

In 1975, I wrote a strongly worded letter to the editor in response to a disparaging remark Saville had made about rock and roll, after which I was asked to "audition" for occasional freelance work by reviewing Doug Kershaw's concert at Straighthead Sound, on El Cajon Boulevard. Soon afterward, I joined the Reader's loose-knit team of freelance music writers, which included Esmo, George Varga, Frances Thumm, Ted Burke, and others. I

think we were paid \$5 for a record review and \$10 for a full-length concert review. Obviously, we weren't doing it for the money.

Long before 1979, when I moved to L.A. to pursue a songwriting career, Esmo had assumed the popular-music critic's chair at the paper. When he was "on," as he so often was during the '70s, his writing was exceptional. I believe that if he'd been healthier of mind and body, more ambitious, and worked in a major media center like L.A. or New York, Esmo would've been ranked with Greil Marcus, Robert Christgau, and Lester Bangs. For my simoleons, he was better than any of them.

I was most impressed with the breadth of his musical knowledge and his use of language. Too many people don't appreciate that one can gain something of value from reading a well-written critique, even if one disagrees with the thesis or finds the subject matter esoteric. Even when I differed with Esmolina, I laughed my way through his broadsides and nodded at his point-making because the writing was so damn good.

Still, he could be maddeningly inconsistent. At his best, Esmo combined a deep, historical understanding of the subject (which could be music, film, even sports), a droll wit, an elegant writing style, and a



At his best, Esmo combined a deep, historical understanding of the subject... At his worst, he finger-tapped diffuse, disposable thoughts.

social vocabulary cut with an earthy sensibility. At his worst, he finger-tapped diffuse, disposable thoughts merely to accommodate a deadline and to appease a harried editor.

One was struck by the profound unhappiness underlying those tossed-off carplings, which served more to illuminate the writer's inner disquiet than to edify the reader. From week to week, one never knew which Esmo would surface in print—the profound or the profane, the trenchant analyst

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When Esmo was disposed to share his vast knowledge, the reader was the beneficiary. But he had no governor on his critical engine. He could be wincingly arbitrary, and when he disliked individuals or entire genres, he swatted them like flies and further pissed off his detractors by serving his bile in finely turned cruetts that sent readers scurrying for their dictionaries.

The scornful Steve definitely had his favorite targets. He dismissed almost all country-music artists as "Okie Bobs," called Jackson Browne and most of his ilk of singer-songwriters "whiners," and was not above *ad hominem* attacks that some perceived as racist, sexist, or simply elitist. But he was so confident of the unsalability of his position that he practically dared the reader to counterpunch. Esmo's was a strong voice, and after the *Reader* initially split into two sections, it made perfect sense to lead off the "events" section with his column.

In late 1980, as I was reaching the upchuck point with life in Hollywood, I got a call from the *Reader's* then-editor, Jim Mullin. He wondered if I'd be willing to return to

the paper as music critic/editor. When I asked about Esmo, I was told that Steve had failed to heed several ultimatums about deadlines and such and that he was being relieved of his duties. If I didn't want the job, it would go to someone else. For a few years after returning to San Diego, I had only sporadic contact with Esmo, although I'd hear reports from reliable sources that described a man who, in disturbing ways, had cut anchor on life.

Viewed as a point on a timeline, Esmo's involuntary abdication coincided with the ascendancy of the Reagan De-evolution and the acceleration of America's cultural dumbing-down, a process that hit warp-speed in our lowbrow military town. Years before Regis and Kathie Lee and "reality TV," before the politeness-cops-making-arrests-on-video shows and primetime pro-wrestling, before America dumped buckets of human chum on daytime "talk" shows to prove that the Missing Link was not missing but had gone forth and multiplied, there was mounting evidence that people had little time or taste for erudition.

People didn't want to see unfamiliar words, or to think, or to gain historical perspective about something as nonessen-

tial to daily survival as an art form. They resisted the challenge to question their own assumptions and took umbrage if a writer dared to contradict the directives of corporate media that sedated them with infotainment and gossipy sound-bites. What people wanted from their "critics" were point-and-click assessments in plain-yogurt language that any NFL nose tackle could understand. Most important, they wanted their critics' thumbs to point

What people wanted from their "critics" were point-and-click assessments in plain-yogurt language that any NFL nose tackle could understand.

in the same direction as their own — personal validation by perceived consent. The '80s must have been an impossibly hostile environment for someone like Esmo, who was tilting at his own internal windmills.

Nevertheless, later in that decade I asked the *Reader* publisher if I could approach Esmo about doing some music writing. I wanted to start a special section devoted to local music (it finally happened but was short-lived), and I also thought it was time

to get more voices into the music coverage. I thought that if Esmo hadn't completely short-circuited, we could give him a forum for his views and his talent. It wasn't easy to locate Steve, but eventually I was able to shoehorn him into a small stable of freelancers that included Mike Keneally, Buddy Blue, and Alan Reder. As before, there were wide fluctuations in the quality of Steve's submissions, but I was glad to see his byline on a regu-

league than a friend, and while I respected Esmo, I wasn't interested in living on the edge of existence and couldn't relate to someone who did. I also didn't feel that it was my place to pry or probe into his personal matters. Mostly, we kept our exchanges cordial and nonspecific.

Although I hadn't had any contact with Esmo since the early '90s and sometimes wondered if his downward spiral were reaching the point of no return, I was surprised when I learned of his death and saddened by the reports of his grim final months. I silently reminisced about the "good old days" of working half a week on a review that paid a sawbuck, of savoring Esmo's pithy comments, laughing out loud at his barbed asides, marveling at his talent. And I enjoyed the memory of one incident that in many ways captured the essence of this complex person and the often absurd way in which he dealt with life.

In 1983, the *Reader* held its Christmas dinner-party at the Gloriaietta Bay Inn in Coronado. Some of us who were involved in the planning and/or the evening's entertainment spent that night at the hotel. To save money, a few of us shared a suite. At about 1:00 a.m., an inebriated woman who was

not part of the sleepover group collapsed onto a chaise longue on the suite's small balcony to await sobriety.

It was a difficult wait for all. A less-than-sober Esmo spent the wee hours in a chair beside the woman, patiently, quietly, relentlessly hitting on her, either oblivious to or completely accepting of the fact that at regular intervals she was hurling omelette-size portions of vomitus into the artificial-turf flooring on either side of him.

When Esmo finally tired of that futile pursuit, he came inside, sat in the dark at the foot of my bed, and sang Christmas carols for the benefit of everyone in the suite. At the conclusion of each performance, several sleepy/annoyed/sarcastic voices would mumble in unison, "Great, Steve." This went on until Steve finally exhausted his holiday repertoire and left, at about 3:00 a.m.

In a more nostalgic frame of mind, as I think about Esmo's best work, of what he contributed to the *Reader* and to local music discourse, I can't think of a simpler eulogy: "Great, Steve." — John D'Agostino

John D'Agostino was a music writer and editor at the *Reader* between 1975 and 1990.

Blubbo's WORLD

Blubbo vs. the Kaypro

I'd see Steve most often when the *Reader* was in its original home, a splintery firetrap at the corner of State and Market Streets. After the *Reader* moved

out, the Marine Corps used the raggedy shell for a mock assault, storming the halls and lobbing smoke grenades in the old editorial and production offices. Steve would stride down the echoey hall and swing into the editorial workroom; but if he found a woman there, he would suddenly cast down his eyes, smile that little tight-lipped, dimpled Buddha smile; and say a near-inaudible "hi." Painful shyness could stop him in his tracks, as I recall.

We'd joke about things, play word games with each other. He'd sometimes sneak in a comment that began, "Well, you white peo-

ple..." or make a vague reference to his gangster friends in Shelltown when he was in school, how he was the only one still walking free. Nonsense, of course. Then he'd start to work with sighs and groans, as if setting down on paper the ideas in his head was the worst torture.

A typewriter was an annoying necessity, but Steve considered a computer the work of the devil. For quite a while after all editorial copy had to be prepared on disk, someone had to be recruited to input Steve's copy every week. The troops finally rebelled, and Steve was told he would at last have to

hang around the outskirts of the digital revolution. It was a small enough skirmish; the computer in question was a Kaypro, even easier to use than most word processors of the day. It looked like an oscilloscope with a keyboard and two slots for floppy disks, not much bigger than a 12-pack of beer.

The afternoon of Steve vs. the Kaypro... did I volunteer to teach him? I don't remember. He took his place in front of the machine. I can picture his face: open, wide-eyed — perhaps not eager to begin, but at least willing. The way people look when they're getting a fresh start at something, and this time they're determined to beat it.

I explained the basics. "You turn it on here. This disk contains the computer's programs. They make the computer work. It goes here. This disk is for your story. It goes down here. The keyboard is just like your typewriter, except for some of these keys over here. We'll learn them as you need them. You type, and the story goes onto the screen and onto the disk at the same time. Here, you try it." He handled the disks as if they were crawling with salmonella. As if the machine would burst into flames when he put them into the drive slots. So far he hadn't said a word, but I took that as a good sign. I left him alone.

The next half hour consisted of long periods of silence, interrupted at first with hopeful sounds — a disk popping into a drive, one click of the keyboard. Then more silence.

Another key click. Silence. A slow click, click, click, click, I thought, "Hey, Steve, we did it!" But then began the muttering, sighing. "I made a mistake. How do I correct it, again?" Another long, long silence. Soft cursing, sighing. "What is this key, again?" "How do I get a copy of this?" "It just disappeared off the screen! Damn! Can I get it back?" After 30 minutes, with perhaps two or three sentences on the screen, his voice was a whine, his face thunderclouds of frustration. Click, click.... "Why do I have to do this?" Long, long silence. Papers shuffling. Muttering, cursing. His chair scraped the floor. He was gone.

When you read Steve's work in the paper — a treatise on Sun Ra and his Arkestra and why we all should be listening to him, or a long fan letter to crooner Tom Jones and his wonderful pipes — you don't hear the cursing and moaning. I came to believe that even though his opinions reached a wide audience through the paper, he hated the mechanical necessities. That he would rather call his readers together at a bar and have a loud, pie-throwing discussion about Sun Ra or Tom Jones. And if you disagreed with him, well, tough. There should be more of Steve's writing around, but I guess that just wasn't meant to be. — Linda Nevin

Linda Nevin has worked at the *Reader* as a writer and editor since 1978.

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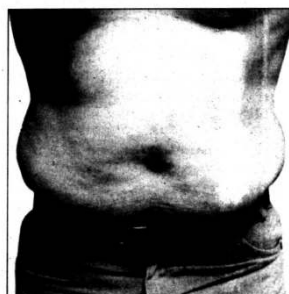
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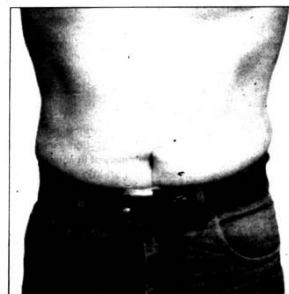
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GONE TOMORROW



Blubbo's WORLD

A Critic Looks at a Critic



Steve's compulsion to right the wrongs of bad taste drove him to the devastating metaphors he always had at the ready.

It must have been hundreds of years ago, that time of simplicity and innocence. It was before the electronic revolution had shackled us all in front of our screens. In those days, the *Reader's* writers composed on antediluvian

mechanical contrivances called typewriters, and they physically brought their copy down to the office. Writers, editors, and production people actually saw each other face to face.

Of the paper's various locations

in those years, my favorite was an elegant little building on Kettner Street, where the ambience was so attractive that on occasion I even wrote my reviews there. It gave a pleasant infusion of adrenaline to be typing away,

against deadline, amid the noisy bustle of the whole newspaper shebang, as though I were a hard-bitten journalist out of *The Front Page*, with a broken cigarette hanging from my lips.

Often enough, while engaged in this playacting, I would encounter Steve down there. He would show up with his contribution to the "Music Scene" section, looking pretty much the worse for wear, as though he had been dragged out of bed at some uncomfiable hour of the mid-afternoon. Hunkering down at a type-

writer adjacent to the one I was using, he would make finicky last-minute changes in his text. We sat side by side in a companionable silence punctuated by the clacking of the keys.

When he left the desk to try to find the restroom (its obscure location was a peculiarity of the building), I would sometimes take a look at what he was writing. He was a meticulous writer, changing a word again and again to get the right nuance. His subject, which included virtually every kind of popular music as well as jazz, was opaque to me. I called it all rock

and roll, and to me it all sounded the same. Not to Steve. He worked hard to define the special character of each musician, with a short, vivid formulation. "The Alleycats are impassioned, concise, and stylized, but not campy," he would write, after trying out a half-dozen other possibilities. A core description of someone as "a very warm, amiable alto saxophonist," which tells a lot in a little, came about only after a lot of tight-lipped paring.

A professional critic has to put up with a lot of bad stuff, and only the few saints among us can resist the delight of skewering, with a phrase some artist who has made us suffer.

There was no malice in Steve, but he knew how to convey his dissatisfaction. There was the youngest of the almost criminally successful Gibb brothers, about whom Steve opined "it's impossible to think of him as anything other than a punchdriller grasping tightly to his brother's cuffs." About a composer-performer of limited talent the reader would learn that "his music serves the same function as elevator music and office 'white noise': it provides just enough surface sound to heighten such pleasurable activities as ironing clothes, mopping floors, and whispering sweet

nothings." Sometimes his contempt was so total that he couldn't bring himself to waste words ("a simple yecch will suffice"). Sometimes he thought the artist's failings were substantial enough to deserve precise analysis: "The pasting together of redundant harmonies, sinister, monster-movie chords, and quick-burst piano glides is too arbitrary to be sustaining." But when the performer had acquired an undeserved popularity, Steve's compulsion to right the wrongs of bad taste drove him to the devastating metaphors he always had at the ready.

"There is no soulfulness or invention to her singing. She delivers a chic blend of pop, Latin music, jazz, and soul wrapped up in thick, overdressed arrangements and smothered with sentimentality.... This pretty singer will sing her pretty

(and pretty boring) songs at the Catamaran, Tuesday night."

On the other side, if he liked a group he would praise it generously, finding a personal source of happiness in its virtues. And he didn't require that every artist be a genius. He enjoyed being able to write a review that began "The most heartening achievement of this exquisite record is the return, after a nearly five-year absence from the studio and the limelight, of the master alto-saxist, Ornette Coleman." But he also could happily say, about another sax player, "He is by no means great, but he entertains and soothes, and sometimes that is enough."

In short, a critic with rigorous standards, but at the same time a sweet human being, Steve in fact was at his very best as a writer when his humanity—and his own personality—had greater scope

is all the greater for the small scale of the events. Steve himself was no world traveler. "The farthest north I have been is Marin County, the farthest south is Ensenada, the farthest east is Yuma, and the farthest west is the South Mission Beach jetty." He was very much a California writer, and a fine one. Do you know a livelier vignette of Los Angeles' Chinatown than this one? "For walkers, Chinatown could easily be Tijuana North. We half expect a kid to approach us and ask if we want to buy *chilet*. There is a surreal quality to the neighborhood. It's both authentically foreign and strangely familiar. If every storefront had fresh paint, if the sidewalks were glistening, if the brooding statue of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen were polished, you might think you were entering a new addition to Disneyland."

And how about this wonderful piece of Cali-

punk rock? You really know how to play? He shakes his head. "This punk rock no music. I know music because I play organ for twenty years. But I like songs, melodies. This punk just sound like shit. And damn kids never buy drinks! One beer for ten people sometimes!"

Then we have Steve's zestfully satirical description of the opening band that precedes the Penetrators to the stage at this club: "The first song is about cheating girls. The second song is about cheating girls. The third song is about cheating girls. The fourth song is about...cheating boys! These three thin young men from Santa Barbara, who look like runners-up in a malnutrition contest, have a message, and it seems to be that girls are 'creepy little creeps' and 'smelly little rats.' We all agree that without their die-hard legion of friends and family, these chaps wouldn't have made it out of a garage."

The most touching moment in this story, and my final example of how exceptional a writer we've lost, has Steve and the Penetrators camping out on Pismo Beach to save money (they are on their way to Sacramento, where an evening's work is going to earn the five-man band \$48). After drinking and eating and drinking some more, until three in the morning, the band members and their girlfriends finally bed down in sleeping bags or in their freezing cars. As for Steve, "I have a soft, silken mattress. I place an issue of someone's Los Angeles porno paper down on the fine, smooth sand as a bottom sheet, and use the latest *Rolling Stone* for a blanket. As I turn on my stomach and taste sand, McClain offers a good-night salute. 'Hey, Steve, there's a couple of copies of the *Reader* in one of the cars if you need a pillow.'"

I think of him like that, out with his admired musician buddies in the California night, warm from beer and tequila, wrapped up in literature, and happy. I'll miss him. ■

—Jonathan Saville

Jonathan Saville has covered art, theater, and classical music for the *Reader* since 1972.

"The first song is about cheating girls. The second song is about cheating girls. The third song is about cheating girls."

fornia on-the-road landscape writing? The tail end of summer is beautiful. Framed by the rear window of Sullivan's car, the skies are clear, clean, aqua blue, the hills and cliffs are camel backs, perfectly sculpted; the highway to Santa Barbara is free of speed-freak crazies. Looking to my left, all I can think of is how gorgeous the ocean is, a flawless, curved piece of painted glass.... And then, with a finely calculated rhythmic bump, he twinks us back from this upwelling of aesthetic joy to the flat commonplace of our highway culture: "We pull into a Santa Barbara gas station to fill up."

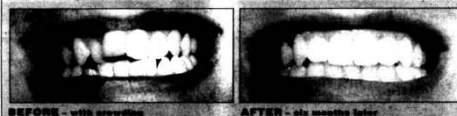
Do you think it's easy to write like that? Believe me, it's not. It's also not easy to record and shape a fragment of dialogue so as to convey a whole character and a whole situation with what seems like unedited naturalness. Here is a bartender in a Chinatown nightclub rattling on at the band members as he pours a tequila shooter: "You guys

for expression. Typical of the man was his *Reader* cover story about a San Diego rock group he accompanied on a tour to a few gigs around California at the end of the '70s. He loved this band, and decried the injustice of the marketplace that kept them from a bigger reputation, but at the same time he knew how to bring out all the pathos and absurdity of what was ironically billed as "the Penetrators' World Tour '79." Those who knew Steve got a wry familiar picture of him as he shared "the travels of this impoverished caravan.... It is almost midnight and we are sitting outside a Sacramento Taco Bell, trying our best to savor one of the few semisolid meals we've had in three days.... The amorphous mash of beans, cheese, tortilla swims before my eyes, and combined with my inebriated frame of mind, inspires me to wonder, silently, 'What in hell am I doing here?'"

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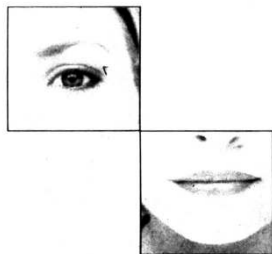
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Blubbo's WORLD

Cut to the Heart

Perhaps the best tribute I can pay to Steve Esmedina, my departed *com-padre* and fellow music critic, is that his legacy truly lives on.

Today, 25 years after first having read his work in the then-fledgling *Reader*, I still vividly remember the essence of many articles he wrote, specific lines from his eloquent critiques, and some of the phrases he coined, such as "tuneless Okie Bob jams" to describe a misbegotten country singer and "grotto mouth" to describe an overwrought young local jazz singer (who shall mercifully remain nameless).

Blubbo, to invoke his favorite nickname for himself, was the first music critic whose writing I encountered after moving to San Diego as a teenager in late 1975. The *Reader* was a very young, slim, and modest publication in those days, but Steve's writing carried immediate weight. I began writing freelance music reviews for the *Reader* in early 1976 and recall thinking at the time that it would be a good challenge to measure up to his qualitative standards. I was correct.

We first met in late spring of 1976, and he initially struck me as surprisingly shy and quiet for some-

one whose words spoke so loudly on the printed page. We gradually became friends of a kind. Since he didn't have a car and I didn't drive, our longest conversations usually took place by phone and often covered the latest albums by our favorite artists or our newest discoveries, good, bad, and wretched.

We shared a mutual passion, circa 1976, for blue-eyed Scottish soul singer Frankie Miller, Sun Ra, the Ramones, Little Feat, Nina Simone, pre-"Birdland" Weather Report, Procol Harum, Sarah Vaughan, Graham Parker, and the two Jameses (Brown and Taylor), among others.

As in his reviews, Blubbo rarely mined words in person. His catholic tastes impressed me as much as the depth of his knowledge and his ability to craft words in a manner as artful as it was unaffected. He had an almost unerring knack for discovering worthy new artists early on, from Patti Smith and the band Television to budding progressive jazz dynamos like Anthony Davis, Mark Dresser, and James Newton.

He was fearless in his writing, a trait that earned him devoted fans and outraged detractors, the latter of whom frequently wrote the *Reader* to express their disdain; question his intelligence, hearing, and parenting; and generally froth at the mouth at his alleged offenses (one of which included dismissing Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart as rock's answer to the Virginia Slims ad models).

When the Southern California punk and New Wave scenes began, Blubbo was one of their staunchest supporters, almost single-handedly drumming up local interest in such



myself editing his film reviews, which were good enough to run almost verbatim.

When Mark Dresser started his Music Forward series in Del Mar and Rob Hagey launched the La Jolla (later San Diego) Jazz Festival, both in the late '70s, Blubbo used his Reader column to light a fire under this city's jazz audience.

fledgling bands as X, the Alleycats, the Penetrators, and others. And when Mark Dresser started his Music Forward series in Del Mar and Rob Hagey launched the La Jolla (later San Diego) Jazz Festival, both in the late '70s, Blubbo used his *Reader* column to light a fire under this city's jazz audience, which was even more minuscule at that time than it is now.

By the late '70s Blubbo and I had also become contributing editors for *Kicks*, a local music monthly, for which we each wrote columns (his on R&B, mine on jazz). When I briefly became editor for *Kicks* in its final incarnation in 1981, I found

Sadly, this was not the case later in the decade, when — after becoming pop music critic for the *San Diego Union* — I successfully lobbied my editor at the time to have Blubbo do some freelance work for the paper. I had been unaware that his downward spiral had begun, but the increasingly erratic quality of his writing quickly became as apparent as his inability to meet deadlines. His brief tenure as a *Union* freelancer ended the same day we published his interview with jazz bass great Charlie Haden, who, not without just cause, immediately threatened to sue the paper for libel.

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I'm sad to say I had less and less contact with Blubbo in the years that followed. But I still fondly remember how, at my request, he used his position at St. Vincent De Paul Thrift Shop to obtain a used bowling ball for me to give as a going-away present to a friend departing on a yearlong ornithological expedition to the jungles of Costa Rica. As I recall, Blubbo appreciated the humor of this gesture considerably more than the gift's recipient.

Along with many others, I deeply regret Blubbo's passing. I continue to savor his impassioned, insightful writing. And I still fondly recall his ability to instantly cut to the heart of the matter, as he did most memorably at a downtown dinner we both attended in late 1980 at the Old Spaghetti Factory, following a nearby solo concert by James Newton.

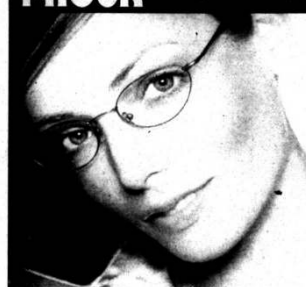
Perhaps because one of the people in our party was a teacher, the dinner conversation eventually turned to the poor quality of school lunches. After silently enduring as much debate on the topic as he could stomach, including a spirited argument over the size of individual portions of food given to students, Blubbo finally spoke up. "The issue isn't the size of the portions of food," he said, rolling his eyes. "The issue is shitty food."

When the raucous laughter that ensued finally subsided, another topic of conversation began. Blubbo's first words on school food were the last that needed to be said, and he approached his writing about music in the same no-nonsense manner.

So adios, *compadre*. I'll think of you when I'm enjoying good music, or enduring the aural equivalent of mediocre school food. ■
—George Varga

George Varga is the pop music critic for the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and *Copley News Service*. He was a music freelance writer for the *Reader* from 1976 until 1981, during which time he also did a three-month stint as the *Reader's* events listings editor ("and hated every minute of it").

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Blubbo's WORLD

Slow Death

"Call me Blubbo."

With this Melville-like utterance a 20-year friendship was formed between Steven No-Middle-Name Esmedina and me; it was a friendship that would endure until his death on June 24, in this Year of Our Kubrick, 2001.

He stayed in his room and allowed his fierce intellect to turn in on itself.

So Blubbo it was, then. Actually, I'd always heard him referred to around town as Esmo, but he later confided that he hated that particular appellation. To his real friends he was Blubbo. For obvious reasons. He was large; he contained multitudes. And they were all wrapped in endless folds of flesh. He was a Mexipino version of Orson Welles, Freddy Fender gone to seed, Yoda on Sterno. My wife was once thrown against him at Disneyland on an amusement ride and later told me it was like landing on the biggest, most comfortable waterbed in the world, all bouncy, warm, and



Steve Esmedina, c. 1995

cozy, a Pillsbury Dough Boy come to life. "There wasn't a bone in that body," she said in amazement. (When I later passed along her comment to him, he corrected her, "There's one—small it may be, but a mighty bone it is!") I was confused, however, when he began to address me as Blubbo, not long after we became friends. "Hold on, why are you calling me that?" "Everybody's Blubbo," he answered, as if stating an obvious universal Truth. It was, I quickly learned, his world, and

if you wanted to live in it, you accepted his Blubbo Theory of Relativity. Everybody's Blubbo in his own way; I am Blubbo as you are Blubbo, goo-goo-goo-joo.

So many mixed emotions raced through my mind the day of his death—grief, in the enormous emotional void; anger, at the complete needlessness of his death—yet all these were essentially preempted because he had been chronically foretelling his death ever since I first met

him in the spring of 1981. "I'm doomed," he would repeatedly moan. "Only when I'm gone will they appreciate my true genius and finally get off my crutch." After having heard this song and dance for the millionth time, I would reply, "Well, I guess there's only one way to test that theory." He would then look at me with those gimlet eyes and utter with all the disdain he could muster, "Midcult."

It was a friendship like no other I've ever known. To be sure, every friendship is unique. The special chemistry between any two individuals cannot be replicated; it is *sui generis*. But then so was Steve. He was as unique a person as I've ever encountered, and though I was as close to him as I've been to anyone, I knew only a part of him. I knew of, but couldn't help contain, the demons that possessed and then finally consumed him. Had he been able to believe more in himself, been able to push himself instead of going into a kind of hibernation the last 20 years of his life, Steve Esmedina could have been one of the finest American cultural critics of his time. Instead, he stayed in his room and allowed his fierce intellect to turn in on itself. But during those two decades, I was able to spend a great deal of time hanging with him, carrying on hourlong conversations with him on the phone, influencing him, and being influenced by him, and he helped shape my view of things as much as any one person ever has.

Before I moved to L.A. in 1996, I talked on the phone to Steve two or three times a day for 15 years. I valued his opinion, trusted and relied on his judgment, and constantly sought his take on those essential things that make life worth living—movies, music, literature—the arts. He was a bomb, he be de man, the Dr. Know It All of da Hood, the Ghetto Guru. He knew. That his writing style was as elegant as anything published in the *New Yorker* or the *New York Review of Books* made this just one of the many contradictions of the late, lamented Blubbo.

Writing was what he did, who he was. It was understood that if I were to loan him a book, I would

get it back with copious Blubbo commentary in that easily recognizable and nearly indecipherable scrawl of his. He simply could not write well. His prose style was something he created as effortlessly as walking or breathing. Probably with less effort, actually. It was a style that utilized his formidable intellect in a rigorous and disciplined examination of the chosen work, woven together in a breath-taking command of the language that was so dazzling it could circumvent any possible dispute with his thesis. If I disagreed with him and wanted to take him on, his mastery with the spoken word was always so in evidence, the best I could come up with was a meek retort like, "Well, that's your opinion," and I'd be lucky to escape with my wits intact. But he loved the give and take of intellectual discourse, whether about movies or music, politics or the tragicomedy of the opposite sex and its misty intersection of love and lust. Steve was a throwback to an earlier time when the art of conversation was prized. He would have been at home in a salon during the reign of the Sun King or in a gentlemen's club in Restoration England or in the agora of Periclean Athens—there would have been Blubbo-brothers holding court, delving into the mysteries and forms of that particular branch of philosophy known as Aesthetics.

It was a matter of life and death for him. Although Steve was nominally a good Roman Catholic, and a former altar boy, I think Art was Steve's true faith, a religion he could really believe in an empty, uncaring universe. The greats, were to be championed and revered, the heretics and apostates—those purveyors of artistic mediocrity—were guilty of bad faith and to be sought out and condemned. Bad works of art (and bad critics, he despised obnoxious fools like Dave Marsh) were personal transgressions to Steve, sins against God and Blubbo, and the blasphemous perpetrators must be caught and held accountable. And so, just like his greatest hero, Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, the Cid, this round knight of South 37th Street would mount his

Onivet steed and sally forth to do battle. Yet he could be as articulate in defending his favorite pop culture trash like the Spice Girls or Howard Stern as he was in defending the avant-garde jazz of the Art Ensemble of Chicago or the writing of Sinclair Lewis.

His was the most original mind I have ever known. He could reduce a complex work to its essence in a brilliant one-liner. His pithy, incisive writing style, so uniquely his, could be so illuminating. In conversation, he could be dazzling. After every one of our marathon phone calls, I felt exhausted, as if I'd dropped acid. He could expand your horizons with a logic that skewered most commonly held assumptions as you entered his Blubbo Unified Field and had your mind bent. Like a latter-day Menckens, one of his heroes, he could provoke you to see things in an alternate context, to argue, defend, and reassess your own precepts. Received wisdom was always a phrase he uttered with derision and contempt. No recycled thinking for our Esmo. If he thought *Citizen Kane* was one of the most overrated films of all time—it was!—even Blubbo Orson's best jam; that, of course, would be *Amersohn*, thank you very much—then Our Man Esmedina would be compelled to shine that light, ring that bell, to testify! And if he preferred the raw energy and emotional purity of *Please Please Me* and *The Beatles' Second Album* to the psychedelic contrivance of *Sgt. Pepper*, then he would cry out in the darkness like the hero in "The Emperor's New Clothes," proclaiming eternal vigilance against the mindless forces of philistinism and conventional wisdom; a knight-errant battling pretense and white elephantiasis. Whether exploring the universe of James Joyce or *Leave It to Beaver*, it was all the same to Steve; if it gave him a bone, then it was a good jam.

There was, as I say, quite a distance between Esmedina in print and the genuine article. But dichotomy was rampant in the soul of St. Steven—his longing, his despair, the tenderhearted soul masked by those many

outer layers of cynicism, his abject doubt and self-loathing. "I'm really a prepie, trapped in the body of a fat Filipino," he would lament. He was missing a gene somewhere when it came to ambition. His career goal was not to write the Great American Novel or to be the generation's preeminent man of letters. No, not for our Steve. He confided to me on more than one occasion that all he wanted out of life was to drive an ice cream truck or operate the Ferris wheel at an amusement park. And he was serious. But I digress.

I first became aware of the name Steve Esmedina in the pages of the UCSD student newspaper, the *Triton Times*, in 1975. His review—no, essay, for it was a meditative contemplation, really—about Terrence Malick's directorial debut, *Badlands*, was a revelation, college newspapers not noted for such sophistication. His *Badlands* piece was so graceful and elegant, so assured, it seemed to have come from the pen of an established East Coast literary lion. Around the same time, Steve began writing for this very publication and he and Duncan Shepherd soon became the most quoted (and argued about) writers in San Diego. In the 1970s, the music column in the *Reader* was a coveted forum. It seemed like the best gig in town. Steve's weekly column would spotlight a music act that was coming to San Diego. His contentious and opinionated writings provoked scores of outraged partisans, but few questioned his facility as a writer or his exhaustive knowledge. So when a mutual friend introduced us in 1981, I was intimidated. He was something of a local legend, the shining star of the San Diego music-journalist firmament, of which I was a minor figure. Besides, if he was anything like his writing, I would be minuscute inside of five minutes.

To my profound relief, he seemed neither imperious nor supercilious but friendly enough and even a bit shy. The three of us went to see Albert Brooks's *Modern Romance* and for much of the movie found ourselves the only ones laughing. Not long after, Steve

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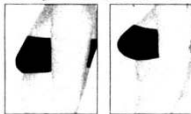
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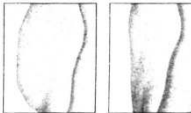
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and I went to the Ken Cinema for a screening of Terrence Malick's majestic second film, *Days of Heaven*. After the screening, we repaired to a Japanese restaurant, and over bites of sushi, we engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of shared interests. Although the intellect was clearly there, it was never on show; he never felt the need to issue advertisements for Blubbo. Instead, he was open and generous and remarkably witty. His writing never did him justice in that regard. During a lull in the conversation, he looked at me and asked, as if it was the most natural question in the world, "Ever have a girl go poopoo on your chest?" "Uh, no," I responded, and he proceeded to discuss other topics. But as I choked on my sushi, I realized there was a lot more to this complicated character than I could imagine.

At that time, Steve was living in Cabrillo Square, a high-rise apartment complex at the edge of downtown. His roommate was a

rather bizarre creature whom he had dubbed Moona, after the vampire-like hostess of a popular Saturday-afternoon sci-fi matinee on Channel 10 during the '60s. He had recently stopped writing his column because of health problems. It seems he had developed epilepsy, and he recounted a story about a day at the *Reader* office when, during an attack, he'd stood up on a desk and done a swan dive into his typewriter. He was on hiatus, taking a break from the grind of a weekly column, and writing the occasional music review for the *Reader*. We discovered that he had shared the same childhood—we had both grown up watching those projected shadows on the screens of the glorious, vanished movie theaters of downtown San Diego—the Fox, the California, the Spreckels, the Plaza, the Balboa, the Mission, the Broadway, the Orpheum, the Aztec. We had read the same comics, studied the same books, watched the same TV shows, listened to the same radio

stations. But he had me on the music; somehow he'd managed to listen to every rock and roll album ever released, and he was equally knowledgeable about the even vaster world of jazz. And he remembered everything.

We hit it off immediately, and I began hanging out at his pad. It was fortuitous for me. I had just lost my job at a video store for being a smart-ass college boy, and when my landlady found out, I was on the street in no time. I was living in my car, still hanging around UCSD and writing art-section reviews for the school paper when I met Steve. Graduating two and a half years earlier from the UCSD visual arts department with a filmmaking/film history degree, I was not prepared for the real world and reality was biting me on the ass with a vengeance. I was trying to figure out what to do, how to pursue a film career, how to get enough money to put gas in my car, and where could I crash tonight? Steve extended an

open invitation to use his couch, and during a dark period of my life, he provided me with a haven. That was one of the most endearing things about my friendship with Steve. No matter what trouble I was in, I always knew there was a couch I could crash on at his house and a willing ear to listen to my troubles. Throughout the years, as my fortunes rose and fell, the knowledge that despite the vicissitudes of capricious fate, I always had a place to stay at Steve's meant the world to me.

We both had an assured knowledge of movies, an assurance that came from having digested thousands of films and thought about movies at such an early age they had entered our genetic code and become part of our DNA. Just as knowledgeable about film as he was about music, Steve had seen everything and brought that same critical facility to bear in his film analysis. We discovered a shared passion for many of the same filmmakers—Malick, of course, Resnais, Godard, Sturges

(both Preston and John), Dreyer, Wilder, Hawks, Scorsese, Peckinpah, Butch, Hitchcock, Welles, Griffith, Fuller, Wise, Aldrich. Again, he saw no difference in high or low art in the movies he liked. He could appreciate the precision of Ozu or the ambiguity of Antonioni with the same passion as he embraced the raunchy ghetto humor of Rudy Ray Moore as Dolemite. He liked Scorsese more than I did, never shared my enthusiasm for David Lean, and as anyone who knew Steve can tell you, he revered Anthony Mann's *El Cid* as the greatest movie of all time. "Can a man live without honor?" he would ask, quoting from the film, just before he would pass out. Like Blubbo, I, too, had seen the film at the grand Fox Theatre and had fallen under its spell as a youth. A better film by far than the other, more celebrated, Heston epic, that lumbering tale of the Christ, *Ben-Hur*, *El Cid* is a vigorous piece of filmmaking that was the most rousing epic of its time. It was Steve's

touchstone, the jam of jams, his own cinematic grail. Although he was more Sancho Panza than *Cid*, Steve saw himself, I think, as the last knight-errant, seeking honor and romance in a world that had lost its way and no longer honored the code of chivalry that so informs *El Cid*.

He seemed genuinely surprised (and even embarrassed) that I could recite his reviews from years earlier. Sometimes they would be pleasant memories for him, such as when I quoted line after line of his *Badlands* review; sometimes he would squirm with the unpleasant feeling of having been found out. When I challenged his disregard for the Beatles with a flippant dismissal, "As one who never cared for the Beatles..." he grinned sheepishly, admitting he'd been in a bad disposition toward the Fabes ever since seeing the wretched disco movie musical adaptation of *Sgt. Pepper* and the equally godawful touring adoration *Beatlemania* ("Not the Bea-

ties but an incredible

psychedelic simulation"). In fact, I discovered Blubbo had been Beatles-obsessed in childhood, buying the albums, the fan books and records, even a prized pair of Beatle boots. At the tender age of ten he had ventured to the California Theatre to see *A Hard Day's Night*, braving hordes of screaming teenaged girls. At one point, during the incessant hysterical shouting toward the screen, young Master Steven turned to one of the screaming Beatlemaniacs, who was his elder by a good five or six years, and asked, "Do you really think the Beatles can hear your delirious rantings?" "Oh, shut up, little boy," came the response as she continued her hormonal caterwallings at the unresponsive images on the screen. Nevertheless, *A Hard Day's Night* remained one of his favorite movies, and I was always impressed that in an age before VCRs, he had committed every line of dialogue in the movie to memory and could recite it on the spot. We cemented our friendship by harmonizing on Beatle songs late into the night, especially Lennon's splendid hymn to teenage angst's unrequited yearning, "No Reply."

Another shared passion was Neil Young's "Thrasher," as poetic a song as has ever been written. Steve had seen Young with Buffalo Springfield and sang the damn thing in the only known performance of the Disposable Diapers. But the fact that he had so totally understood the song, the majesty of the lyrics' imagery and metaphors, amazed me. There was never a trace of pretense in his enthusiasm; it was always genuine and organic. One thing his writing never adequately captured was his passion. When he liked something, he was a partisan, an advocate, a true romantic in affairs of

the art.

We quickly hatched a plan to write a screenplay together. Although I had written several shorter scripts during film school, this would be my first attempt at a feature script. Steve was the pro. He had already turned out a couple of spec scripts with friends. He decided it should be based on our lives, what was happening then and there, a snapshot of the times. It would encompass the theme of Young's song "Thrasher" and examine a group of friends in a particular place—San Diego—in the first year of the Reagan era. The title was borrowed from the Beatles' songwriting James Taylor song, "Her Town Too." He had admired Fellini's *I Vitelloni* and the French director Claude Sautet's *Vincent, Francois, Paul and the Others* for their depictions of friendship and their sensitive capturing of the milieu of the protagonists, and we set out to create a group of artistically talented twentysomethings about to hit the Big Three O and study their dreams and aspirations as some chose to leave San Diego and pursue their destinies and the rest decided to stay and succumb to the soft life in America's Finest City. I have never had, before then or since, a writing partner, so I cannot compare working with Steve to working with anyone else. But it was pure creative joy to work with him. The give and take as we hammered out the script made the drudgery of putting thought to paper an exhilaration. I still vividly recall Steve could be incredibly supportive and was a great booster of talent. Though his print persona might seem otherwise, if you were his friend, he would be most generous in his praise, and that encouragement and enthusiasm was a gift he gave to many of his friends.

Another instance where the man deviated from the writer was his sense of humor. Though there were humorous passages in his writing, they were generally filtered through that sober, analytical prose voice of his and never suggested the wicked humor of himself. He was the funniest motherfucker I ever knew. His deadpan delivery com-

bined with carefully calibrated shocking remarks was a Blubbo trademark. He loved to be the contrarian; he reveled in any opportunity to poke fun at sacred cows. His irreverence always derived its force by containing insights of stinging truth expressed in a laconic delivery. For hours, he could riff on a topic that only he and I would care about, like the film career of Jack Elam or the pretentiousness of long-forgotten writers like James Gould Cozzens, or his unique plan to reform the country—a monarchy? His take on the absurdity of life was a never-ending source of inspiration; he was like some great jazz comic, endlessly jamming. His penchant for mischief once got him in trouble at the *Reader* when he submitted a movie review of an imported film from the Philippines entitled *The Sour Taste of Lemon over Menudo*. It was an insightful review of a sterling piece of Filipino filmmaking that existed only in Steve's twisted imagination. His editors were not amused.

While cowering the script with him, I came to learn that Steve possessed a sense of dread. He was convinced he wouldn't live to 30, which was only a few years away. Though I tried to argue with him about this doom-and-gloom outlook becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, it was ingrained in his personality. "Life was better before I came along," he would state, and I would get enraged at this. But his despair seemed bored into his soul. I found out there had been a girl; isn't there always? She had taken his heart, made off with his dough, and left him longing for an early grave.

Apparently, there had been two other long-term relationships in high school and college, but this one he fell hard for. Her name was Louise, and always felt he was trying to work out his relationship with her in the script, trying to make some sense of what had gone wrong with the love of his life. It was during one of our writing sessions that I stumbled across another explanation for his heart of darkness. Arriving at his pad, I found Steve had taken some acid and was tripping.

Hardly the wisest move for someone with diagnosed epilepsy, but there he was, so I tried to be calm and comforting to ease his trip. He began to cry, telling me Esmedina wasn't his true name, that his real name was Steven Nural. In a highly unusual arrangement, his biological father had lived in his house posing as his "Uncle Thut" and had helped raise him while the man who was ostensibly his father went off on long absences, frequently traveling back to the Philippines. His mother never told him of his father's identity, until his sudden death by cardiac arrest in the family kitchen, dropping to the floor in front of 16-year-old Steve. It was the double blow of witnessing his beloved uncle's death and the subsequent revelation by his mother that Thut had been Steve's real father that sent him on a psychic spiral that would remain at the very core of his emotional pain. This was the only time he ever brought this up, and I never mentioned it to him again. But I'm convinced it was a psychic wound from which he never recovered.

After a few weeks of writing our script, Steve announced we'd have to change locations. He was going back to the ghetto to live with his mother. I helped him pack and move, but I had a sense of foreboding. Moving back home when you're an adult is always fraught with much baggage; it's far too easy to lapse into an adolescent codependency with parents. Which is what happened. He moved back home, and for the rest of his life that would be his fixed abode. He had a complicated relationship with his family. Clearly, he was so far above their level of comprehension and understanding in matters of intellect that it must have been extremely lonely for him. He was devoted to his mother, a big, gruff woman whose own cynicism and cutting wit so strongly shaped Steve's character that I used to refer to her as The Explanation. Since he was the baby of the family, born long after his brother and sisters had grown, he was pampered to a probably unhealthy degree, and despite his mother's acerbic side, she was willing to

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grant him carte blanche, just as long as he was at home and under her watchful eye. He adored his brother Bobby, a ne'er-do-well who loved to gamble and party and spin tall tales. One of Steve's earliest memories, he once told me, was of Bobby's coming home and telling Steve about a party where Frank Sinatra had told him to break up a fight between Bart Lancaster and Tony Curtis. Bobby was a swinging Errol Flynn-like rogue, a hipster Dark Knight of the night, and Steve idolized him and emulated his wastrel ways as he grew older. And, of course, there was Steve's strong positive self-image. The two most fucked-up races in the world are Mexican and Filipino, and I'm both."

Yes, our Blubbo was a complicated customer, and I realize that just about anything you might care to say about him would be true. One word that might come to mind is that current bugbear, "racist." It is quite a loaded term in this politically correct world, and whatever the word means, I suppose Steve was one. He certainly was aware of race; he suffered for it and used racial epithets freely. Black, Latino, Jew, Arab, Asian, and Anglo were all targets of his racial profiling. I lost count of all the times I heard him say, "The white man is the devil." But he spared no one. He was an equal-opportunity racist, although, actually, I always thought he was more Don Rickles than Tom Metzger. I'm convinced he loved the shock value of tossing out forbidden racial slurs in polite society. "What's wrong?" he would innocently inquire. "That's just the way us ethnic folks talk in the ghetto." I always felt Steve freely acknowledged his own racist bent to make his listener confront his own latent racism and hypocrisy. I know Steve had endured his own racial taunting from the cops, boys in da hood, strangers on the street, "Chico" or "Panchito" or "Gordo" were some of the names heaped upon him through the years, and I'm sure as a kid they must've stung. But his own macho, streetwise self-image literally took a pounding one day at Otto Square, the nearby shopping center in

Shelton. I'd warned him that his mouth would get him in trouble, but he always assured me he knew the ghetto, he knew how to handle it. One day, when I called to see about a writing session, I was told Steve was in the hospital. Apparently, one of the hobo watch sellers at Otto Square didn't share Steve's advanced views on racial epithets, and when Steve declined the seller's offer of a watch by telling him to "Fuck off, nigger," umbrage was taken and Steve received a punch that punctured a lung. When I visited him in the hospital, he would only acknowledge that his assailant must not have been from the hood and so didn't know better than to mess with Blubbo.

The irony is that Steve was immersed in black culture, from Miles Davis to Dr. Dre. He'd read and admired Stanley Crouch, Cornel West, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison; knew the music of the Motown and hip-hop nation inside

Steve and I actually got up one night at the old Spirit Club on Morena Boulevard and sang.

out; loved raunchy black comics like Rudy Ray Moore; was enthralled at the grace of Nat King Cole; and had once allowed a forgotten black singer, Earl Coleman, to stay at his downtown apartment for over a month and came very close to writing Coleman's biography. In fact, in print, Blubbo was an outspoken liberal, denouncing the apartheid government of South Africa and what he saw as vicious Reaganomics that struck hardest at minorities and the disenfranchised. And yet, how to reconcile these admirable sentiments with the story he told me of wanting to join the Klan as a youth, only to be heartbroken when he found out they didn't accept Mexicans? As I say, he contained multitudes.

We continued writing during that summer of 1981, weaving our personal experiences into the script, living our lives and turning our experiences into art. A girl whom I fancied preferred instead the company of the guy who intro-

duced me to Steve; our friendship was broken, but hey, he got the girl and I got Blubbo. It was a fair exchange, and it all went into the script. We were writing not just a movie but, in an eerie, prescient way, plotting the course of our lives. My character struggled and finally broke free of the soft life of San Diego, making the move to L.A. to seek his destiny in the film industry. Steve's character stayed behind in America's Finest City, unwilling or unable to take the risk of leaving home. The film ended at a funeral, where the remaining group of friends, now scattered, reassembled to say a final good-bye. I had never been able to complete a feature script before, but thanks to the encouragement and partnership of Steve, I finally overcame my doubts and finished the screenplay.

Around this time, director Robert Wise was screening Orson Welles's *Magnificent Ambersons* at SDSU. I

the series "Hollywood Film: The Collaborative Art."

In the fall of '81, I found an apartment in Mission Hills overlooking the airport. Though I now had my own place, I was still in touch with Steve constantly. Even before I had a phone installed, I would walk down the hill to the pay phone at the Union 76 and spend hours jammin' with him. God, was he a one-man revival of the lost art of conversation. I mean, he could go for hours, he was the marathon man of Ma Bell. And we talked about Schopenhauer and Clyde Crashcup, movies and women, music and politics, the future and the past. Thanks to Steve, I heard about an opening at the *San Diego Union* for a freelance music writer to supplement Bob Laurence's music reviews. I got that gig and was now respectfully ensconced in my new pad, working for both the Museum of Art and the *Union*. I had managed to turn things around and was eternally grateful to Steve for being there when I needed someone to believe in me. He wrote a wonderfully crafted piece in the *Reader* highlighting the film series, and on opening night, he was the one who I wanted to impress, whose reaction I valued the most. In the next few years I brought to *San Diego* some of the legendary talents of Hollywood film history: Frank Capra, Billy Wilder, Jack Lemmon, Ernest Lehman, Haskell Wexler, Stanley Kramer, Jack Nitzsche, and Steve was there for all of them, and when San Diego native Tony Bill came down and wanted to sneak out during a screening of his hit production, *The Sting*, to cruise around his old haunts, it was the three of us in the back of his limo—Mr. Bill, Mr. Mike, and Blubbo—riding around downtown, relieving our formative San Diego years.

Yet over the course of time, the fire that had once burned in Steve's eyes grew dim. No longer did he talk so much about moving to New York to pursue a writing career or about our long-held plan to move to L.A. to pursue a career in screenwriting. In fact, the idea of moving out of his mom's house seemed to grow more

and more remote. The foreboding I had when helping him move back to the crib had been justified. He had returned to the womb and had essentially disengaged from the world. Oh, sure, he still wrote for the *Reader* and had a monthly column in *San Diego* magazine for a while, but by the time his 30th birthday rolled around on Groundhog Day, 1984, it seemed as if Blubbo hadn't seen his shadow and had returned to bed to hibernate. He still read voraciously, listened to music, saw all the movies in town and on cable, still picked up his copies of *Mad* magazine, *Playboy*, and the *National Review* (he did a lot of writing style). But for all practical purposes, he had managed to return to childhood, free from the stress and pressures of adult responsibilities. He would still look out at the world (and find it wanting), but he did it from the comfort of his inner sanctum, his Blubbo Fortress of Solitude. And an impenetrable fortress it was.

His bedroom was on the second floor of his house, and upon entering his room a sight of unforgettable horror greeted the unwary visitor. Piles of garbage covered the floor, making navigation across the room a delicate proposition at best. Scratched-up vinyl record albums were strewn across mountains of newspapers, magazines, drawing pads. Half-empty packs of cigarettes littered the floor, which was tastefully garnished with the occasional bottle of vodka, all festively decorated with scores of writing tablets amply illustrated with his Thurbereque drawings of sultry

sexpots having their carnal way with Blubbo the Stud. Steve was no slob; he was so far beyond slovenliness that a new category would be needed to classify his Ubermessiness. This compost heap, this mountainous range of refuse was his refuge, where he spent all his waking hours when not watching TV downstairs. His bed was completely buried underneath all this, and so he slept, literally, on top of this crap. Oh, sure, he might roll over and crush the occasional LP, but hey, he could always buy another copy at Off the Record, and besides, it was probably scratched up anyway. His response to my gentle questioning of his hygiene was always the same—"I don't let my possessions possess me." Overwhelm, yes, but not possess. For someone who made his livelihood writing about music, he had the cheapest sound system imaginable. "How can you hear anything on this crudely second-hand piece of shit?" I would ask. "I just turn it up," he would answer, as if it were the dumbest question in the world. His TV/VCR set was just as shoddy. He would record movies at the slowest speed on the cheapest tape, but he seemed content. Remembering Blubbo's First Commandment—"Thou shalt not go on my crutch"—I never brought up his sanitarium-challenged living quarters. It was his universe, after all, I was just visiting.

As the decade progressed, I was still trying to save enough money to move to L.A. when I met a girl, fell in love, and we got married. I landed a PR job for a student-exchange organization, and it seemed

like I was in danger of growing up. But no such fears attended Blubbo. He was a constant—fixed, immutable. Years later I would find out that it was around this time that Steve was first diagnosed with liver disease. Although I knew he liked to get fucked up, I had absolutely no idea of the extent of his alcohol consumption. He kept it private. I should have realized something was amiss when he was rushed to the hospital with a bleeding esophagus in '89. Looking back, I can't believe how blind I was about his drinking, but he was so secretive about his

Williams and *The Addams Family*. I think Steve stopped writing for the *Reader* around this period—too many missed deadlines. But I was preoccupied with my own struggles, trying to start a career in an industry that had seemed to stop caring about making movies for anyone over 25 (years or IQ). My marriage collapsed and I plunged into an abyss that I have yet to crawl out of. I don't recall hearing much about Steve's problems, emotional or physical. He was still great fun on the phone, but from what I gather, those years were a time of dissipation and decline for him, hanging

Why had Steve turned down the scholarship that he'd been awarded to Harvard?

health that I took him at his word and never connected his health problems to his drinking. In public I never saw him drink to excess. But apparently, during those epic phone conversations we used to have, he was doing more than just listening to Roxy Music and playing with his beloved toy Godzilla monster, the Blubbo version of a teddy bear.

In 1996, my wife and I were finally able to move to Los Angeles. I did not enjoy the same relationship with Steve after that move. Our conversations still continued, but not as many and not as long. Bobby had died, and the two elder Esmedinas were ailing. The house, which had always been dark, even in broad daylight, now seemed more than ever a cross between Tennessee

around strip clubs, enjoying the attentions of the ladies.

When I would call, he'd talk about familiar things—movies, music, politics—the usual essentials. We were both thrilled that Terrence Malick had finally made his third film, *The Thin Red Line*, after a 20-year hiatus. Steve and I were transfixed by the enormity of Malick's accomplishment. The first time I saw the film, ostensibly an adaptation of James Jones's WWII novel, I was as confused as everyone, but on second viewing I realized what Malick had done, and I soon recognized this was at once Malick's most flawed film, yet by far his greatest accomplishment. Although a simple story—a hill on Guadalcanal has to be taken—Malick's concern is all war—

that war at the heart of nature that defines human history. The movie is told from the point of view of a collective consciousness. I became obsessed by the film and saw it over 20 times. For me, it was a work of art comparable to that of Milton or Dante. The myriad voiceovers on the soundtrack that had at first seemed so confusing now seemed simply understandable. This film was told from God's point of view, and this is what it must be like for the Creator to hear the unspoken thoughts of men about to die (and, in one extraordinary scene, the thoughts of a dead Japanese soldier).

It was a studio-financed film that asked the big questions about the meaning of life, a film that as far as I'm concerned can rank with some of the greatest works of art in Western civilization. Steve, of course, got it on the first showing and promptly proclaimed it Malick's masterpiece. When I got to meet Terrence Malick at a Directors Guild of America dinner, I sheepishly approached him and conveyed my profound admiration. He was very soft-spoken, almost serene, his Texas accent reminding me of Lyle Lovett's speaking voice. Immediately, I raced home to call Steve and relay the great news. But while I was babbling, Steve was sitting on his terrible secret he'd long kept from me. He was dying.

It was at the beginning of 1999 that Steve was hospitalized for what became the beginning of the ter-

minal phase of his liver failure. A minor stroke followed, and at some time during the spring, Steve lost the use of his legs and was forced to use a wheelchair. I would go down and visit, but despite his recent setbacks, he still seemed jovial and never revealed the extent of his disease. In the summer of 1999, I was in Canada working on a film called *A Storm in Summer* for Showtime. Robert Wise was directing it—it was to be his 40th and final film—and he had insisted that I be his assistant. While shooting in Vancouver, I called Steve with the news that his one-time goddess Nastassja Kinski had been cast in our picture, and he should come up to visit the set. It was then that I finally discovered how much deterioration had taken place and how much pain he was in. He told me it had been so terrible he'd wanted to die, and for Steve to confess that made me realize how serious it was. When I returned to L.A., I raced down to San Diego and found that Steve had been placed in a hospice in El Cajon and was not given much time to live. Yet he seemed in relatively good spirits when I arrived, and I managed to take him for a drive to a nearby record store, and for a brief moment, Blubbo was in his element, all was right with the world.

When Mr. Wise was injured in a fall, I became the overseer of the postproduction of the Showtime film. Unable to visit Steve, I was pleased to learn that

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he had gone home and seemed to be on the mend. This would be a pattern repeated throughout the next year and a half. After each stint in the hospital, he would return home a little weaker. Sometimes I'd drive down and we'd go see a movie; other times I'd arrive at his home and he wouldn't want to get out of bed. And then Steve's mother died and things became bleak. He stopped taking phone calls and I didn't know what was going on. This dragged on until this spring, when he took another turn for the worse. This time he didn't go home.

In December of last year, I landed a job working on the Academy Awards, handling media relations. It was a great gig but very time consuming, and I didn't realize how bad Steve was getting. I was even trying to get him to come up — I'd get him into the Oscar show, which was being held on the same weekend that Charlton Heston was appearing in person at a screening of *El Cid* at the

American Cinematheque. But Steve, in the final stages of his liver failure, was in no condition. After the show was finished, I drove down to visit him at a rehab center on Euclid Boulevard, and he seemed as down as I had ever seen him. He pleaded with me to get him out of the place; his roommate was a screaming psycho, and he just wanted to go home. But he was too far gone, and he soon found himself back in Paradise Valley Hospital.

When I went down in May, it was a difficult encounter. He was speaking incoherently, as if he were talking in his sleep, and I realized there wasn't much time left. The liver was shutting down, and the toxins were flooding into his blood. One day, I called to find out how he was doing, and his nurse told me he had developed a life-threatening infection. His liver had finally been eaten away; his kidneys were shutting down. I got a call from one of his sisters, and she said he was about to go. I drove

down the next day but stopped by a friend's place in PB for a brief hello. I lingered too long, and by the time I arrived, Steve had been dead for about 35 minutes.

Coda

A week after the memorial service, I spent my Fourth of July going through boxes and boxes of Steve's *objects d'garbage* at the now-empty house. I was hoping I might find some lost writings, a novel perhaps, maybe some short stories, something that could be published posthumously. After all, he'd had 20 years in which to indulge his need to write; there had to be something. And yet all I found were scraps of writing, fragments of unsent letters, nothing of significance. There was a reference to a pair of novels he'd written, "Death Fears Me" and "So Many Asholes. So Few Bullets," but I could find no trace of any manuscripts themselves. I found scattered copies of some *Reader* articles he'd written, but nothing col-

lated in any kind of order. I found some prized books, ranging from *The Confessions* of St. Augustine, to Jerzy Kosinski's *Painted Bird*, plenty of well-worn copies of *Playboy*; massive amounts of pornographic cartoons he scribbled in his last few years, but nothing of his writing.

I spent the night on the couch of the empty house, knowing it would be the last time I ever would do so. It brought back many memories of nights spent in the past, and I knew I'd never have that kind of friendship again, the kind where you could call someone one day or night and he'd be there for you, the kind where you speak in a shorthand that only you two can understand, the kind of friendship that we shared. The next morning, three of Steve's sisters stopped by and we talked about what a sad waste it all had been. Still trying to understand why, what it was that made him give up on his life, I sought an answer to a question that had always bother-

ed me. Why had Steve turned down the scholarship that he'd been awarded to Harvard? "Oh, that was Mom," came the reply. "She didn't want him to go back East. Why do you want to go there? You won't be able to make it. So she talked him out of going to Harvard."

I sat there, stunned. Although I knew Steve's mom had always been overly protective, I had never realized it had such destructive consequences. "Steve was the baby and she spoiled him rotten. We all did. She didn't care what he did, just as long as he was doing it upstairs in his room. She didn't think he could handle it back East, that the pressure would be too much for him. That's why she talked him out of taking the *Reader* position too."

"What *Reader* position?" "Steve had been offered a job as editor of the *Reader*, but Mom didn't think he'd be able to handle the pressure, so she convinced him not to take the job. She just didn't think he was up to

it, and she didn't want to see him fail."

"Do you think that was what caused him to turn to drink?"

"I think it was that and Uncle Thur's death. Right after Thur died, Mom told Steve that Thur was his father, and I think that's when he began drinking." I couldn't believe what I had just heard. As his sisters went on to talk about other family matters, I heard little of it. I sat there in silence, as if a body blow had slammed into my chest. Without putting too precious a spin on it, I felt as if I'd found the answer to the question that had bothered me since we had first become friends all those years ago, and now *Rosiebud* was revealed. Not a sled, just an overprotective mother, probably unaware of just how gifted her son truly was, trying to protect him from failure and instead denying him the chance to test himself in the forge of adversity. The law of unintended consequences is a bitch, handing out death sentences

in the name of love.

I'm sure there were many other reasons as well for his despair — failed romances, low self-esteem, the gulf between his intellect and his surroundings, the crisis caused by his father's unspoken identity — but this revelation seemed the key to this whole fucking tragedy. Steve's identity had been so intertwined with his mother — they shared the same cynicism, the same gruffness, even the same penchant for dispensing nicknames — that her refusal to allow him out of the nest must have been a source of conflicted anguish for him. I cannot pretend to even begin to understand.

And to think what it must have been like for him, during those last years, knowing he had brought it on himself, scoffing at the doctors' warnings. What thoughts must have tortured him during those bleak hours, alone, bedridden, and in agony. I can only imagine what hell he must have been suffering.

As I ruffled through the rest of the papers strewn about his room, I felt like getting drunk. Christ, what anguish must have eaten away at him. Alone, in his room, with that intellect of his. I found scraps of paper he had written, berating himself for his cowardice, castigating himself for the roads not taken. And then I found a photograph of Steve that broke my heart. There he was, going to his senior prom with his high school sweetheart. There was no trace of the overweight, ill-dressed man-child that I had known for all those years, but rather, a dapper young Steven Esmedina, elegant in top hat and tails, ready to take his best girl out on the town. He has the confidence of youth in this photograph, the world was still his, waiting to be taken by storm, and by God, he looks like he was ready for the challenge. There was something in that photo, something in those eyes I had never seen — a confidence, a sense of hope. I wish I could have known

him then. I wish I could have told him to be strong and make his way in life, to believe in himself. I wish there was something I could have done for him. I wish there was something I could do to ease the anguish in my own heart for the long, slow death of Steven No-Middle-Name Nunal.

When I hear King Crimson or Robert Palmer or Traffic or Art Blakey, or when I watch Soderbergh's *King of the Hill* or Terence Davies's sublime *The Long Day Closes*, Blubbo will be there. I shall think of Steve when I listen to the Stones and recall those times we went to the stadium to see them. I shall think of Steve when the Chargers score a touchdown and recall how nervous he was during their march to the Super Bowl — he got up and left our living room so he wouldn't jinx their chances. I shall think of Steve when I listen to *Kind of Blue*, because he was the one who told me it was the best jazz album of all time. I shall think of Steve when she was dying.... I heard people talk

know he would have liked and feel the sadness of not being able to share with him. I shall think of Steve at 3:00 a.m., when I feel alone and wish there was someone to call and open up my heart to. I wish I could say, Hey, Blubbo, your man Bryan Ferry is on tour, are you gonna go? Or, Hey, what about that new Buffalo Springfield box set? And, of course, I shall think of Steve when I watch the films of Terrence Malick. Before Steve's final decline, I was burning a CDR for him that contained the philosophic voiceovers from *The Thin Red Line*. The spiritual yearning, the desire for transcendence — these, too, were a part of the Steve Esmedina that I knew, a part not easily shared with many others, and as I listen to those haunted voices offering up their thoughts to the great unknown spirit, I think of Steve and hope my friend's troubled soul has found peace at last.

"I remember my mother when she was dying.... I heard people talk

about immortality but I ain't seen it. I wonder how it would be when I died. What it would be like to know this breath now was the last one you were ever going to draw? I just hope I can meet it the same way she did, with the same calm. 'Cause that's where it's hidden, the immortality I haven't seen.... Your death that captures all.... You, too, are the source of all that's going to be born.... Maybe all men got one big soul, where everybody's a part of it. All faces of the same man, one big self. Everyone looking for salvation by himself. Each like a coal, thrown from the fire.... Are you righteous, kind? Does your confidence lie in this? Are you loved by all? Know that I was, too. Do you imagine your sufferings will be less because you loved goodness, truth? This great evil — where did it come from? What seed, what root did it grow from? Who's doing this? Who's killing us? Robbing us of light and life. Mocking us with the sight of what we might have

known. Does our ruin benefit the earth? Does it help the grass to grow or the sun to shine? Is this darkness in you too? Have you passed through this night? One man looks at a dying bird and thinks there's nothing but unanswered pain. That death's got the final word — it's laughing at him. Another man sees that same bird and feels the glory.... Where was it that we were together? Who were you that I lived with, walked with? The brother, the friend. Darkness and light, strife and love — are these the workings of one mind? The features of the same face? Oh my soul, let me be in you now. Look out at the things you made. All things shining." — Mike Thomas

Mike Thomas has written for the *San Diego Union*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *L.A. Reader*. Founder of the San Diego Film Society, he currently lives in L.A., where he works in the movie industry.

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Blubbo's WORLD

Get Out and Get Drunk

"T he greatest rock and roll song ever was 'No Time to Live.'"

That was Steve Esmedina almost six years ago. I suppose you could make a case for almost any random quote from almost anyone being prophetic after the fact of his or her death, but I did kind of choke on this opening line of "My Dinner With Blubbo," an interview I did with Steve in 1995.

Steve called himself "Blubbo," though I never could, while most of his friends — and I like to think I was one of them — called him Esmo. Why Blubbo? Well, you could say Esmo had low self-esteem, sure you could; and it wouldn't make any difference to him back then and even less now. I think it had more to do with Esmo's habit of calling things the way they were; a habit that endeared him to some and alienated him from those who preferred their bubbles — silly as they might be — intact. A case that springs to mind, though not the most egregious, was his dismissal (in 1989) of Jefferson Starship as "make-out music for sentimental hippies." He then pointed out that "Miracles" by that band had replaced "We've Only Just Begun" as wedding music for "newlywed dirghabats." Or references to Bruce Springsteen as "Bossy Bruce" and lumping him in that category of "gas-station attendants posing as rock stars (i.e., the Blasters — John Cougar, ...)." The above dates from a 1989 "Of Note" about the Bacchanal appearance of local heroes the Beat Farmers, in which Esmo straggled heretofore, "I'm still waiting to hear something, anything, that can be construed as noise, trailblazing, important."

Observations such as these were occasions for readers to write in describing the critic as "A genetic miscreant." To which Esmo replied that night in December '95: "Does it bother me? No, because they cannot argue with the truth. All that knoweth the truth shall listen to

me." Pretty much serious, he went on to add, "Hey, the only thing George Bernard Shaw ever did was when he wrote 'A Critical Credo,' he said, 'I hear they're starting a critics club. What a joke! By the very nature of the beast he must want to slaughter, chop up, throw to the dogs those who offend him and follow slavishly those who exalt him.'" Esmo stuck the period on that one by lifting a bottle of Michelob to his lips as if he were only commenting on the obvious. Esmedina didn't soft-focus his lens when looking at himself either. So he invited everyone to call him Blubbo. "Cuz that's what I am," he shrugged. "I'm Blubbo."

I think this was followed by a discussion of Village Voice critic Robert Christgau's theory of the human race being broken down into two categories, the way people are divided by, say, cat people and dog people. Christgau's model was one of creeps and assholes. Everyone is one or the other, and Esmo and I congratulated ourselves that we had pretty much avoided the creepdom. I maintain to this day that Steve Esmedina was not a creep.

Leafing through the transcript of that interview, much of which never made it into print — and now, in the wake of his death, leafing through his old reviews — Blubbo seems to rise from the printed page to bestow an elegant full moon on pop culture's faithful.

Steve came down on rap and hip-hop back in 1989, not as a frightened suburban white boy, but as a Filipino homey living in the god-damn ghetto, where he was also cremated recently. He called it "...that malingering genre/disease," establishing his bona fides by adding: "I used to enjoy hearing my ghetto brethren swap 'the dozens' (inults in rhyme) and was even gratified to hear the jive banter artfully manip-



Blubbo wearing O.J. Simpson mask

Millions of chicks were swooning, fully prepared to ruin their lives for an errant drop of this guy's sweat.

ulated into something approaching street poetry by the likes of the Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, Reverend Ike, and Rudy Ray Moore. I would never have imagined that there would come a time when such garbage would metamorphose into a multimillion-dollar half-industry. Since viruses are in vogue, the once-dreaded Barry White-Bee Gees-Donna Summer disco has come to seem, in retrospect, positive, vital, even virtuous."

The above was in his review of Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch. About Marky himself (dapper on the cover of last July's *GO*), he wrote, "This ingenious thug cannot sing, can barely pronounce in comprehensible phonetic fashion..." This was at a time when millions of chicks were swooning, fully prepared to ruin their lives for an errant drop of this guy's sweat or commit suicide in the attempt, all the while unconsciously preparing to forget about him to make room in their diaries of infantile erotica for the Backstreet Boys, and later, Ricky Martin.

But rock, hip-hop, and R&B were only a part of Esmedina's world. He knew more about movies than I thought possible for anyone to know (other than his friends Duncan Shepherd and Bill Richardson — the latter sitting next to me, weeping at Esmo's memorial service). But again, this body of knowledge may have been dwarfed when it came to what Blubbo (all right, Blubbo) knew about jazz.

Writing about Miles Davis, Esmedina said, "In life, Miles Davis was vilified as often as he was exalted; he simply refused to behave. He made light of his nickname, the 'Prince of Darkness,' but the epithet suited his needs and purposes." Substitute Miles Davis for Steve Esmedina, "Prince of Darkness" for "Blubbo," and I think it works. Reading further in that same piece, the conceit might continue. "Throughout his career, Davis was second-guessed, lampooned, and derided so much that he often twisted his taciturnity into sour, ugly bragadocio. And during the last decade

of his life, the once-young punk seemed to have degenerated into a spoiled curmudgeon." Who is Blubbo really writing about here?

Writing about music is a nearly impossible proposition in the first place; it is transmitting the ineffable into language. To call it a challenge is a gross understatement. Few serious writers attempt it (I don't mean the happy blurb machines that make up the music press corps of *Entertainment Weekly* and their ilk); fewer writers succeed at producing first-rate work on the subject of pop/rock/folk/R&B/country, etc. It gets even narrower in the ink-stained alleyways of jazz. Esmedina was as good on the subject as Nat Hentoff was. I would often circle phrases in Esmedina's columns and reviews that articulated, for me, some elusive reality in the primary material.

Case in point. I once tried explaining to a friend, who thought I should be crazy about Stanley Jordan, why I was both so impressed and so frustrated by that guitarist. I couldn't make my case comprehensible. Weeks later, Esmedina did when Jordan came to town:

"Jordan's mastery is undeniable," he wrote, "but it is generally in the service of the mundane (oft-repeated jazz and pop standards) or the negligible (his banal compositions). The results are tantalizing but ephemeral. Perhaps if Jordan played with partners of equal caliber to provide ballast, his stuff would not seem so much like hollow glamour-mongering." Yeah, I thought. That's it exactly. I was learning from Esmedina long before I started writing in the same pages, and though I'd written an

unpublished novel about my own experiences in rock and roll bands, I wouldn't consider myself a "music writer" for some time.

It was in 1992 when I was asked to write a piece for the music section. I was in a local band, and the idea was to review the audience from the musician's point of view. A funny enough concept, but since we had such a small audience at the Spirit Club on that night, I basically reviewed the other band members and myself. It was funny, and I was asked to write more stuff. The paper at that time had talents like D'Agostino, Stampone, and, of course, Esmedina. The invitation was attractive and daunting. But I figured if it was some kind of Italian rock-write mafia at the *Reader*, with my last name, I had a shot.

My reviews of local and national bands were so informed by Esmedina's style that I read them now and realize to a large extent I was doing Esmedina.

I had lines like "The

percussion sounded like a 55-gallon drum full of broken glass and household appliances tumbling down a flight of stairs." Or, "The guitarist was in the tertiary stages of Stevie Ray Vaughan syndrome." I was trying to write like Blubbo. Mean-spiritedness had nothing to do with it. This band had begged me for publicity, and when I heard them, their mediocrity was an affront, a waste of my time and yours. Blubbo would probably have skewered them with more wit — and I'm not just saying that because he's dead. I'm saying it because it's probable.

During "My Dinner with Blubbo" I asked him, "Why aren't you more famous?" And then I mentioned another rock critic writing in these pages at that time who also wrote for *Entertainment Weekly* and had a gushy hack/bio of a rock star on the best-seller list. Esmo said, "She works at it. I do not know how to do that. I don't understand the energy involved in letting the rest

of the world know what you think. In the pages I write for, I've been given freedom. I cannot talk about music as if it were always something that reflected my problems. I don't care about what some pedestrian music writer did with her sister when she was a kid. Make it interesting. Make it fun. Make something up!" No doubt much will be made in San Diego music circles about similarities

The last time I saw Blubbo was in Paradise Valley Hospital. He thought he was dying. We all thought he was dying. He thought he was dying. We all thought he was dying.

The last time I saw Blubbo was in Paradise Valley Hospital. He thought he was dying. We all thought he was dying.

between Stephen Esmedina and Lester Bangs, and I won't deny them. I knew Esmo, not Bangs, but, yeah, on the page they were in the same class. Same class as Christgau and Marcus and Meltzer, better than Crowe, Marsh, and Hilburn, just in a different market.

die. This is wrong." I took it out on the nice Filipino nurses and got the name of the doctor on the floor and kept calling for two hours until I got him to put a morphine patch on Blubbo. I knew what kind of agony he was in because I suffer from the same dis-

ease. I lay in a hospital bed with a swollen liver, spleen, and pancreas trying to erupt out of my torso like a trio of toothy, bloated aliens.

A couple of days later, I spoke with him on the phone. He sounded great. He was feeling all right and was about to be discharged. He said, "I can't wait to get out of here and relax."

"Ah...jeez, ah...that's not what you shoot for, Esmo."

"Don't call me Esmo." "Okay. I'll talk to you later." That was our last conversation.

Stephen "Blubbo" Esmedina's old friend Mike Thomas, working in television in Hollywood these days, came down and gave the eulogy. He cried, he got mad, he laughed too. What he had to say constituted the service, and I think Steve would have been moved and amused — touched that this guy and Bill in the back pew couldn't keep from crying because something was now gone in their lives beyond retrieval. My grief was constituted by large

amounts of fear, because, as I said, I've got what Steve had, went along that road, looked down, freaked, and turned back. Another big element to go with my loss and fear would have to be annoyance, because with Esmedina out of the way, the music is just that much safer for mediocrity.

On the way out of the Sally Lynn Chapel that day, to the strains of some horrible shit by Edith Piaf or someone none of us could figure out and Esmedina would have hated, Mike Thomas said, "I can just hear him saying, 'Lame jam.'" I laughed and thought, "Yeah, I can hear him saying that." But it wasn't the service that was lame; Thomas made it what it should have been. It was Esmo's death that was a lame jam. And on the heels of that thought came another one: "I'm still learning from the guy."

— John Brizzolara

John Brizzolara has written for the *Reader* since 1990.

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Blubbo's World

Blubbo's Secret Tongue

In front of my open garage, Monique Esmedina and I sit on the cold pavement. The fountains in her eyes seem to have shut down again, and moments of bitter silence are repeatedly punctured by sobs.

After more than three weeks of trying to locate the peripatetic "Moan," I'd nearly given up. Today I had decided it was time to finish sorting through the last of the stuff that her uncle Steven had returned to me, his remarkable soul imprinted on every piece. And now... Allah Akbar! Here comes his niece!

I deem him one of the greatest beings alive in our time.... We shall never see his like again.... His name will live in the annals of history.... Torn between two civilizations.... This controversial figure who became a legend in his own lifetime.... The most extraordinary man I ever knew.... He was a poet, a scholar, and a mighty warrior.

Steven Esmedina would, were he here today, insist on reading the above tributes at least two times before composing himself to offer comment. Finally, he would give his response: as always, precise, concise, fearless: "Thanks, Alex. What are... words spoken in the trailer for the film *Lawrence*

of Arabia?" Once again, Steven Esmedina is our champion. In addition, he'd think it's pretty damn fucking funny that those bloated accolades had found their way here to begin with, into a piece about his own bloated, funkybad self. Well, I've got news for you, Blubbo: those raves might just as truly have been written about you! Parts of it, at least. I mean, a word or two... all right, how about "torn"?

On a summer night about 24 years ago, I first encountered Steven Esmedina on the dance floor of the popular North Park lesbian bar Diablo's. My friend Ginger had begged me to accompany her and two of her girlfriends, insisting that it would be a fabulous experience with absolutely no problems. Somewhere across town, a similar group of ladies were certifying their friend Steve as their own mascot on a trip to the same destination.

Red lights were everywhere. It was much larger than I had expected. There was only one couple actually



Steven either hit a bump in the road or lost his way when he approached Hustlertown.

that?" I asked. "Incredible. And the looks on the faces of those chicks... the whole scene, the whole situation! Fucking unbelievable... so fucking..."

"Poignant," he declared, precisely, and I would have high-fived him, but I don't think high-fiving had been invented yet.

Having read and admired both his and Duncan Shepherd's criticism for many years by that time, I was happy to meet Steve in person, and he seemed pleased that I was a fan. We spent a while talking of our shared admiration for Shepherd, as well as several other regular Reader contributors. Perhaps our most emphatic agreement on that perfect summer night was that neither of us would ever be capable of forgetting Revelation in Red, a superb tableau, described by at least a one noted critic as "poignant."

I didn't run into Steven again for several years. Early in the '80s, though, his niece Monique began to work at the Guild Theatre, which I managed.

She would tell me wonderful stories about her uncle, during times when her tongue took the odd vacation away from its new residence in the throat of my older brother Tom. The more I learned about Steven from Moan, the more I admired him. We seemed to like a lot of the same stuff.

I was flattered that he enjoyed the musical duo that Troy Dante and I had started. When he interviewed us, he hadn't yet realized I was his niece's boss, nor that we had met several years before. When I began describing a

certain scene, bathed in red, a single dance... it clicked. "That was you! Yeah! Oh, I've dreamed about that scene... that amazing bitch... that goddess... was so..."

"Poignant," I offered. We became friends.

Since 1965, he was able to recite the entire "Dracula's Return" side of the album *Famous Monsters Speak*. That's 22 minutes in a Lugosi accent, word-perfect and never missing inflection or pause. I could toss him a random line from the script, and he'd pick up and carry on the narrative until I'd have to stop him, each of us satisfied. I was satisfied also in that I had another friend who, having fallen in love with monsters during the Great Golden Revival of the late '50s, lived to watch his love grow. Steven was thrilled that I had saved most of the magazines and many of the other artifacts from my childhood's "dark side," and it was gratifying to observe the reveries they inspired in him.

When Playboy hopped into our lives, we didn't trade one for the other. Hell, we had lots of money. Bring 'em on: *Help, Mad*, and on and on through the decades. It seems clear now that Steven either hit a bump in the road or lost his way when he approached Hustlertown. I imagine his conflicted heart being given a choice: Hang out here for a while or find the straight road home. For young Steven, alone, this would be a tough decision to make. He would leave it to Beaver.

"I do not like whiskey, but I do like tea. This does not mean that I wish to stop people drinking whiskey, so long as they do not want to stop me drinking tea."

—Peter Cushing, 1954

Few things pained us off as superbly as censorship, and no one defined our view as simply and as civilly as Peter Cushing, one of Steven's favorite actors and my all-time movie hero. We were in our mid-30s when we realized that new restrictions were being placed on the content of adult motion pictures. The government didn't think anyone should be allowed to let their own adult eyes witness certain acts of adult behavior on movie screens,

on television screens, or originating from videotape. This decree was retroactive. Steven and I saw ourselves, even as we tiptoed through the foyer of middle age, being legally forbidden to view many of the images we legally had been able to see half a lifetime ago. Yes, our all-time adult classic, *The Devil in Miss Jones*, was still on the shelves. It was still, by definition, "hard core." But now, the fruits of Justine Jones's labors (banana, for example) are very carefully diminished.

Allow me to pull Peter back: I had a cellar, which, over many years, I had stocked with a substantial amount of... unadulterated whiskey. When I told Steven about this, he was delighted, and I was more than happy to let him borrow from the cellar. Years passed, the Government continued to dilute whiskey with increasing amounts of tea, which made me pissed. I found some comfort in the security of my now-rare, untainted stock.

Even that comfort died, however, when it became impossible to locate several of the choicest examples of my collection. One in particular (I'll call it *Esmogiveitback Vol. 1*) I was sure he had borrowed for several years without returning. Throughout the years, Steven would assure me with concerned, even comforting sympathy that *Esmogiveitback Vol. 1* had never left my home in his hands.

Three years ago, a chance encounter with Monique around the time of Steven's scary hospitalization provided the longed-for conclusion to an annoying mystery. Commenting on the remarkable similarities she noted in the cultural tastes of her uncle and me, she asked me if I had ever experienced the singular delight of *Esmogiveitback Vol. 1*, a discovery of her uncle's, which, over the years, had become the talk of the block and an essential accessory for any successful soirée.

Monique is sitting, hugging her knees tightly to her chin as if she is trying to become a ball. Teardrops are still noticeable on the pavement around her, and they're trying to transform into tears of sadness and rocking back and forth to the beat of a heart. A startling giggle as her head turns

toward me, an infant smile while she speaks.

"So did you call him on that one? Bust him? Did you get it back?"

I think I'm glad I left it alone. To Steven and me, the more some things increased in their legal or cultural toxicity the more we needed to locate and trap them. This was a special hot potato; less a transgressive artifact than a source of some essential nutrient. And he must have realized that he needed it more than I did; some part of it could help inspire him when he embarked on his Last Adventure.

Monique is crying again. "He was my friend! The finest man I've ever known..."

Monique begins to share several pieces of herself and of Steven. The beauty of her face, too, becomes legend in a very grateful heart.

In school, she tells me, Steven had been the class clown, the witty scholar, the coolest friend. At home he felt helplessly controlled and emotionally starved. Monique was only five years younger than her uncle. Having no father at home, Monique examined little Steve's résumé and offered him the position. He'd take it on one condition, he replied: he wanted to be her brother too. He knew that would be near because he had his own brother who was a lot older (15 years), and Steven loved him more than anyone, so now Monique would love him that much too.

Steven and Monique grew close and would remain so. When grown, she had a habit of changing residences as if competing for a world record. Every time they lost contact, though, Steven knew she'd be popping in soon. He was never wrong.

Steven did have a pervasive problem that he was powerless to put right. Today some people call it negative body image.

Certainly he was aware of his intelligence, his amiability, his literary skills. But he loathed the physical package that enveloped them. At some point, he resolved that he would always be fat and short and foreign-looking and decided he preferred being called "Blubbo."

I passed him off by refusing to call him anything but Steve or Steven or Esmo, the last of which he once granted me his official permission to use in public, as long as it was either preceded or followed by hailing him Tongue of Tongues. Within a day, Steven had forgotten all about the conditions, and I wasn't about to remind him.

The Glorious Squiggle Days were in the mid-'90s, and Steven understood why I would come to call them that. They were glorious only in their supreme revelation of the horror behind the mask of beauty, and they would have been so much less than glorious had my girlfriend Squiggles not been such a delicious centerpiece.

Here was an intelligent, attractive lady who had been a fan of Esmo for many years, and the fact that I actually knew El Steve must have earned me a bonus point or two in the decency department.

Steven was a frequent visitor to the home Squiggles and I created, and she would look forward to his sporadic presence. They soon became enraptured with one another; his affection being seasoned with no small amount of robust lust.

Her fascination with his literary talent led her to select his criticism as the topic of a paper she was preparing for one of her classes at UCSD. To augment her research, Squiggles borrowed my own scrapbook of Collected Esmo, which became essential in the construction of her dissertation. He was able to say hello to a period of unexpected pride; I was never allowed to say goodbye to the collection of my friend's writings, which I spent several years putting together.

Steven once invited Squiggles and me to accompany him to a Tom Jones concert he was to review. I snuck a tape recorder into the show. At one point near the end, Squiggles asked Steven, "Have you ever heard a voice like that?" I can understand her candor without issue more easily now, when I replay the tape, noting that I am not present. Taking a powder, probably.

"Truly, he is the King of Kings," Steven replies, honestly. It was a phrase he would use at the close of his

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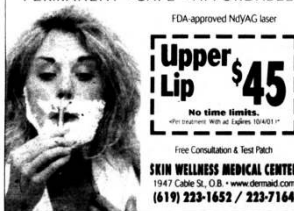
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review of the concert, attributing it to me! It was also a sort of in joke, a way to usher into print the title of one of our favorite films.

Fuck me, sweet Esmo. After that supreme evening, things started to get ugly. Steven's urge to write began to hide from him. Squiggles and I broke up. (The true details of the split, Steven swore, would make enthralling fiction.) With her, sadly, went my treasured collection of Steven's writings, in a folder I had labeled "Esmolings."

But 1996 wasn't done with us yet. During the same month, Steven's beloved older brother (Monique's father) died, as did my own older brother, whose death had been the happy home of Monique's tongue, over a decade before. Then my dear friend Ginger died, she who had steered me to Diablo's (and Steven) so long ago.

The only retrievable loss in this mess would be the collection of Steven's writing. I missed the legendary cover story about his travels with the Penetrators (a work of importance not only to the band

but to the San Diego music scene, then and now), and I longed to laugh again at the other gem in which he described one deserving performer (MC Hammer) as a "worthless fuck." Among the writings was one article Steven would have given anything to have wiped from the world's memory and his own. It contained a faux pas concerning a female performer's identity that was so unlike the encyclopedic Esmolina, that I often felt a sort of unkind, sadistic need to verify its astonishing existence.

I was aware of several stages of grief, and in regard to the lost Esmolings, I skipped past Shock and Anger and headed straight to Bargaining. If Steven would allow me to borrow and photocopy his own files, I'd make him an all-on-one-tape compilation video of several short subjects I had created, including my latest (and which was to remain his favorite), *White Pussy*. So... as to his files...

"I never saw that shit," he told me in his casual, final-as-fuck manner, break-

ing my heart.

I made him the tape anyway. For the first of several times. Overuse would require frequent replacements of *White Pussy*. Tongue of Tongues actually does have some value, biographically. Implications will be examined (following a peek back at the garage) in a fashion that is not for all tastes.

I reach down for her hands and help Monique up. We walk away from the open garage and into the sunlight, and on perhaps the most gorgeous day this year has yet seen, we make an attempt to understand, even a tape recorder and still camera. He refused. Later he'd started using cameras and recorders for a different kind of act. Only that kind.

Steven had called a truce between his mind and his body. The two would join in a race against the clock to mount a reunion/farewell tour. The location would be his bedroom. The show would last days or months or years or until the money ran out or somebody pulled his plug. The show would be pay-to-play; guest stars he could recruit from strip clubs or escort services. He'd pay. They'd play. What a way to go!

Headfirst Steve dove into his Stetson. He fell hard for one of his "guests" in particular, and she encouraged him and made him believe that she truly loved him, just him. No one else mattered. She assumed his surname in their ongoing production. She bled him of vast sums of money. Then she left, having given him the gift of a broken heart. His shadow, strong and sardonic, watched Steven Esmolina drift... down.

Three years ago, Monique and I would visit Steven on what he insisted was going to be his last bed, at an El Cajon hospital.

His self-image and his deteriorating health weren't going to help him open any doors. He was, however, proud of his tongue and its superb technique. One memorable afternoon, for my amusement, he paraded around my living room shouting some sort of Esmo Mantra/Manifesto (in tongue?) in the key of Steve:

"I AM NOT AN ANIMAL! I AM A HUMAN BLUBBO! FEED MEEEEEE! I AM A FAT UGLY FUCK WHO HAS BEEN BLESSED FROM ON HIGH WITH THE TONGUE OF TONGUES! IT NEITHER TOILS NOR SPINS YET IT IS FED! IT WILL BE FED! FEED THEN! THE TONGUE OF TONGUES! FEED BLUBBO IN RIGHTEOUS SERVICE OF WOMANKIND! ALLAH AKBARI!"

Maybe you had to be there. Maybe not. I was on the floor in laughter for a long time. Later that day, I begged him to repeat this act for my own sakes, whom or what we can most easily blame. An unhealthy upbringing? Too many chemicals?

"It was the fucking vodka," Monique decides, for now. The presence of Steven Esmolina's shadow, a part of my daily life for weeks now, is like the unspoken gloom that followed the man everywhere. The inferiority complex was his shadow. He seemed to welcome it. He befriended it, confident that if he and that shadow ever stopped getting along, all he'd have to do is turn off the lights. But ultimately, he *smashed* those lights, and everything is deeply, dreadfully dark.

He correctly assumed that his body (which had never been as friendly as his shadow) was shutting down. He had always been in love with feminine beauty. To put it correctly, Steve was a major homophile, obsessed with sex in all its forms.

He was a devoted student of any kind of intimate physical interaction between woman and man. Or woman and woman. Woman and animal/vegetable/minerale soup ladle. He yearned to learn and looked forward to arranging some exciting field trips.

His self-image and his deteriorating health weren't going to help him open any doors. He was, however, proud of his tongue and its superb technique. One memorable afternoon, for my amusement, he paraded around my living room shouting some sort of Esmo Mantra/Manifesto (in tongue?) in the key of Steve:

spot in an outdoor picnic area where Monique and I would delight in his gradual improvement. The big red felt letters spelling ESMO on the backrest cracked him up, and he would never remove them.

Nor did I ever alter the black velvet Dracula cape with red lining that he had given me a year or two earlier. I bring it down to the garage to show Monique, who is stroking the red ESMO on the well-used wheelchair. I start to tell her how much the cape means to me... and how much her uncle meant to me and to so many others. I tell her about the last time I saw him. His dearest friend, Mike Thomas, called from L.A. to let me know that Steven was hospitalized again and that, again, this was extremely grave.

I pulled out my laserdisc of Steve's favorite movie, *El Cid*, and recorded onto audiotape his favorite musical cues. I grabbed a portable player. Off to El Steve.

The nurses at the hospital told me he was becoming unresponsive; he was in fact deeply asleep. Quickly there was music to his ear (the right one, at least). And, of course, he woke up, smiled, and chatted for 20 minutes or so. He found it very difficult to speak, so I did most of the chatting.

"I want you out of this place tomorrow, Esmo." "Blubbo."

"No way. Blow yourself. And learn to talk, if you don't mind."

"I'm gonna die here." "Blubbo!" I lied. "You tried that one last time."

I'm glad I saw him one last time. Monique had been away and had missed it, and the hurt still grows. Mike Thomas came down from Los Angeles and spoke at the funeral. A more shaken, lonely person would be difficult to imagine. As would a more moving, compassionate, beautiful speech. I can't recall ever hearing a more perfect testament to personal value, priceless loss, and the value of friendship. Michael had been Steven's relative through the blood of the soul. For Michael, the incalculable worth that the living presence of his friend had held for so long had become finite at some level now; all the memories and

inspiration were overpowered by the cruelty of Final Loss. On that afternoon in the chapel, he defined Brotherly Love.

He would soon experience a new, unexpected pain.

Michael came back into town the following week to help sort through Steven's effects; that useful, mournful task started to turn into a nightmare. He uncovered the reality of Esmo's Jizzneyland and was shocked to confront the extent of his friend's obsession with carnality during the final years.

I was saddened and ashamed when I drove over one morning to join Michael at Steven's empty house. The single consolation I attempted that day was an honest product of the cheapest truth: that Steven had taken some care to conceal the malignancy of his seamer side from his friend Michael. This was the side that Steven gloried in: outraging the norm. In this one area, Esmo knew he had gone berserk, and he respected Mike too much to expose his rabid foam.

I like to think that Steven respected me too, but I'll have to accept that he did so in a different way. For years he had delighted in my willingness to be a target for the foam. He would bring me a steady supply of his trophies: photos, photographic negatives, audio recordings. Souvenirs from Jizzneyland. They documented his growing delight in womankind and womankind's manufactured delight in him. One

particular 60-minute cassette, an on-the-spot bit of audio verité, essentially demonstrates the number of different ways in which one certain female can invoke the names of God and Steven in the same moaning/ecstatic phrase. Two, maybe three recognizably different ways seems to be her creative limit.

To understand that Steven loved the attention he received amid this transparent mechanical bullshit is to understand why. It might have been similarly pitiful also had he denied his hungry, fabled body the pleasures it craved.

Mike Thomas, bearing a new sting over the bruise of his personal loss, suggested that I take away the remaining Jizzneyland archives.

Among them I noticed a duplicate of one particular color shot that Steven had delivered to me two years earlier; a photograph in which he took enormous pride.

A very beautiful young lady stares at the camera, her palms and knees sinking into a thick, dark comforter. She is smiling joyously; the fact that she's mislaid her clothes hasn't hit her yet. The male figure lying on his stomach somewhat behind her is recognizable through general form and head of hair as none other than El Steve. His face is buried in some task and obscured, but there can be little doubt that his soul, at least, is cracking a big, wide smile.

My sympathy, concern, and admiration for Mike Thomas still increases. That dreadful morning, before we had exited the haunted silence of Casa Esmolina, Michael shared his view on tragedy: How tangible the importance of life had become, how much clearer the worth of time itself, how urgent the need to live in that knowledge, which was as real as death. And life.

I know that Michael will keep that creative part of Steven's spirit and use it to amplify his own.

The sun is setting, and Monique tells me she's going up north and will come by when she returns in about two weeks. We're about to hug. I miss her already. I tell her what she already knows:

that Steven had always loved and treasured her. Through a new sheet of tears, she turns the tables. Her liquid eyes, her endangered smile, the whole day and this whole experience are now inviting me to collapse.

"Bill, he always said how lucky he was to have found you. Someone who was just as twisted as he was — Oh shit... I didn't mean... I mean..."

That saved me. A more perfect compliment from Esmo is unimaginable. I hope the bitch isn't lying.

She's soon gone, and I'm about to close up the garage. I go to grab a few of Steven's juvenile porno collages in the hope of discovering some hidden meaning. That task can wait. It can wait forever. I glance

again at the ESMO wheelchair. His spirit is with that too. I picture him ripping through his house months or years ago when no one else was around, shouting, "I am Blubbo! El Steve!" Then, a final "Allah Akbar!" rolls off the Tongue of Tongues, and Steven Esmolina rides on into history.

Bless his beautiful, giving, twisted, poignant heart.

— Bill Richardson

Bill Richardson has performed as José Sinaatra since 1983 and is currently portraying John Lennon and Freddie Mercury in the musical *Heaven Rocks*.

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Calendar

Silence Disciple

Cabrillo's Story

'Were his first students in the United States," says Abel Silva, speaking about his teacher, the esteemed French mime, who is perhaps the only mime that many of us, if asked, could name: Marcel Marceau. Silva, who lives in Pacific Beach, studied with him in the 1980s at the University of Michigan, where a short-lived American school of mime was established by the master.

"And he said to us that first morning, 'Okay, get up and do your stuff.' And one guy from New York started doing a mime and it was awesome. But Marcel stopped him in the middle of it."

"This is not mime," he said. "This is clown." He taught us mime's whole history. He broke it all down. From him we learned that a clown performs from the outside; a mime performs from the inside. Now we are his disciples all over this country."

Silva, a South Bay native who teaches mime to both children and adults, says his earliest ambition was to use language to tell stories, funny ones. As a fifth-grader at Lauderbach Elementary School, he was the designated class clown. ("I had good timing.") His reputation for clowning grew at Castle Park High School. When he got to Southwestern College, he says his "ultimate goal" was to become a stand-up comedian, and his theater-arts professor, William Virchis, encouraged him to try. "He would give me five minutes on Fridays to do my stand-up and would grade me on it." Eventually, thanks in part to Virchis's critiques, Silva was hired to do his routine at the Comedy Store in La Jolla.

What were the subjects of his routines? "They were bland, nothing interesting," says Silva, who credits Marceau with helping him to develop his true talent, which is to tell stories using both words and gestures. Marceau helped him choose his rightful subject matter, too. "It was Marcel who encouraged me to look into my Native-American ancestry for my material. I've lived in New York and L.A., but Marcel



Abel Silva

was the one who told me to go back to my roots. That's when I came back home and started to do research." Combining the research results with what he had long been told by his parents, Silva determined that he was descended from members of five tribes of "Mission Indians" who intermarried with Europeans, including Spaniards, Portuguese, and Germans. Records show that his relatives were among the first families to settle in Old Town. Silva felt vindicated by these facts. His peers had doubted his claims to a

Native-American heritage when he was growing up. "When I was a little kid, anyone who believed the stereotypes used to say to me, 'Hey, you're not an Indian. You don't hunt buffalo. You don't live in a teepee.' I was kind of bummed by that. When I was developing my material, Marcel asked me, 'What did your ancestors hunt? What did your dad show you to hunt when you were small?' I told him that when I was five years old, my dad took me out to the Silver Strand and showed me how to catch a grunion. The

grunion is our buffalo." And a character named "Running Grunion" is Silva's "Bip" — Bip being the name of the signature Marceau character whose face is painted white and whose costume is a striped shirt, short jacket, and stovepipe hat topped by a flower.

"Marcel compared Running Grunion to Bip. Bip goes traveling by train; Bip goes to a party. Running Grunion goes fishing. It's the same thing."

Well, analogously speaking, it is Running Grunion wears no white face paint. "I wear my regular brown skin," says Silva. As for his costume, it's Native-American clothing consisting of a "shell" made from the fur of a rabbit indigenous to the region.

This weekend and next, at the Cabrillo National Monument, Running Grunion narrates the story of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo's landing in 1542. What was later named San Diego Bay. The production was directed by Silva's former professor, Virchis, of Southwestern.

Running Grunion offers a present-day perspective on the event and acts as a mediator between a fictional Native American woman who was living in the area when the expedition arrived and a fictional priest and sailor who accompanied Cabrillo.

Asked if it's difficult to play a role that requires him to alternate between two worlds — ours in the 21st Century and Cabrillo's in the 16th Century — Silva says, "Being half European and half Native-American, I already am in two worlds. That's how it always is for me. That's what it means to be mestizo. People have been taught that the two sides are supposed to be separate. I'm trying to bring them together."

— Joanne Schinto

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Calendar Local Events

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HOW TO SEND US YOUR LISTING: Contributions must be received by 5 p.m. Friday the week prior to publication for consideration. Do not phone. Send a complete description of the event including the date, time, cost, the precise address where it is to be held, (including neighborhood), a contact phone number, and a phone number (including area code) for public information to READER EVENTS, Box 8803, San Diego CA 92108-0803. Or fax to 619-881-2401. You may also submit information online at www.sandiegocalendar.com by clicking on the events section.

BAJA

"Mexico in the 20th Century" is the theme when the Orquesta de Baja California performs Mexican classical music at 8 p.m. tonight, Thursday, September 20, at the Tijuana Cultural Center. Tickets are \$17 U.S. Find the center at Paseo de las Flores and Main Street in the Zona Rio. For more information, call 011-52-66-87-9600. (TIJUANA)

A Fire Challenge, the 25th annual Baja International Chili Cookoff hosted by L.D. Housing is slated for Saturday, September 22, from noon to 6 p.m., at the Quinta Papagayo Resort. Teams from the U.S. and Mexico will compete. The annual salsa contest runs concurrently, and there will be live entertainment, folk

loric, arts and crafts, dancing, and more.

The \$10 fee includes chili sampling, five food and beverage coupons, and entertainment. Find the event at kilometer 108 on the Tijuana Ensenada Road. For information, call 818-795-4818 or 011-52-61-79-4159. (TIJUANA)

A Demolition Derby is promised on Sunday, September 23, at 9 a.m., at Campo Romero Manzo, Mesa de Olay. For tickets and other details, call 011-52-66-82-8488. (TIJUANA)

Langosta for Lunch! Head to Puerto Nuevo for a "Lunch in Lobster Village" when Baja California Tours hosts a guided outing on Wednesday, September 26. The \$52 fee includes transportation, lobster lunch at El Patio de la Langosta, and shopping in Rosarito and Tijuana. For reservations, call 858-454-7166. (PUERTO NUEVO, TIJUANA)

The Papagayo Flyers, presenting a traditional ceremony with dance and music, return to the Tijuana Cultural Center with performances through September. Shows begin at 1, 3, and 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday and at 1 and 3 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. Find the center at Paseo de las Flores and Main Street in the Zona Rio. For more information, call 011-52-66-87-9600. Watch the flyers for free. (TIJUANA)

Omnimex Films, see All Access—featuring content footage of B.B. King, Carlos Santana, Sting, and others—when it screens Tuesday through Friday at 5, 5:30, and 9:30 p.m., as well as at 11 a.m. on weekends, at the Ohman Theater in the Tijuana Cultural Center. Dolphin is shown Tuesday through Friday at 2, 4, 10, and 8:30 p.m., with an additional screening at 2 p.m. on weekends. The center is located at Paseo de las Flores and Main Street in the Zona Rio. For more information, call 011-52-66-87-9600. (TIJUANA)

Zona Rio. For more information, call 011-52-66-87-9600. (TIJUANA)

OUTDOORS

Rapid Rides and Nights everywhere on the earth, 12 hours each, are only one noticeable consequence during the time of equinox, either autumnal (fall) or vernal (spring). Another consequence is that the sun at equinox always rises from a point on the horizon due east and later sets due west. You could calibrate a compass this way if you had access to a true (unobstructed) horizon. Another very subtle consequence is that at midlatitudes like ours, morning and evening twilight periods are shortest during equinox. From San Diego, the duration of twilight this week is about 80 minutes; last June it was about 100 minutes.

Late September signals the beginning of Santa Ana winds, which may continue intermittently through the winter. Early Santa Anas are often responsible for coastal San Diego's hottest and driest days of the year. Recently about 62 percent of the days at Lindbergh Field with 90 degree readings or higher have occurred during the months of September and October.

The desert like days are a consequence of air from a high pressure area centered over Nevada or Utah moving across Southern California's coastal mountains toward a low pressure area offshore in the Pacific Ocean. West of the mountains the air sinks as it rushes toward the coast, heating by compression about 5-12 degrees Fahrenheit for every 1000 feet of descent. During a full-blown Santa Ana, gale-force winds rake the foothills downwind of the mountain ranges, and San Diego's coastal communities often

experience temperatures that are among the nation's highest.

Escaping the Heat of this season's first couple of Santa Anas will not be easy—if you can't be inside air-conditioned buildings, at any rate. Along the coastline, where temperatures may reach the 90s, taking a dip in the surf solves the problem.

Inland, the furnace-like heat is moderated only by increases in altitude. Head for the high places of the county—the mile-plus heights of the Palomar and Laguna Mountains, for example. Climb either of the county's loftiest peaks: Guaymas Peak (6512') in Guaymas Rancho State Park and Hot Springs Mountain (6537') on the Los Coyotes Indian Reservation. Atop these promontories during a Santa Ana wind episode, the thermometer registers about 25 to 30 degrees lower than in the lowlands. Since the early phase of a Santa Ana sweeps away at atmospheric water vapor and air pollution, hazy, hazy mists in every direction may be yours to enjoy.

What's New Out in the Blue? Join naturalist Kathy Reading for a look at the many plants with medicinal qualities growing in Blue Sky Ecological Reserve on Saturday, September 22. During this slow-paced 1.5-hour long walk (bring and plan to carry water), "The Natural Beauty of the Canyons" provides the theme when naturalist Charles Hud leads an easy walk focusing on the plants and animals calling the canyon home on Sunday, September 23. Both outings begin at 9 a.m. Find the park on Esplanade Road, one-half mile north of Lake Poway Road. For information, call 858-679-5469. Free. (POWAY)

See the Waterfall during a four-mile hike planned by C&D on San Diego River Park on Saturday, September 22, from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Call

858-634-2275 for directions and reservations. Fee: \$10.00. (SAN DIEGO)

For the Birds, head out to Tecolote Canyon Open-Space Park on the fourth Saturday of each month, including September 22, for a one- to two-hour bird walk starting at 9 a.m. at the Tecolote Nature Center (5180 Tecolote Road). Bring water and binoculars and wear comfortable shoes. Commonly seen species: red-tailed and Cooper's hawks, Cassin's kingbirds, and common yellowthroats. Free. For information, call 858-581-9961. (CLAREMONT)

Clean Up Loma Alta Creek with volunteers on Saturday, September 22, between 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Volunteers are encouraged to wear comfortable clothes and bring shoes. All necessary equipment will be provided. Free.

The second annual Environmental Faire takes place between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the Oceanic Amphitheatre. Over 30 state and local environmental agencies and non-profit groups will be on hand to provide information. For information about either event, call 760-334-5807. Free. (OCEANIC)

Trekking the Refuges, view the migratory waterfowl and wildflowers of the South San Diego National Wildlife Refuge where the series hosted by the Chula Vista Nature Center continues on Saturday, September 22, at 8:30 a.m. Free. To make the required reservations and obtain directions, call 619-409-5903. (SERRA) (SERRA)

Walk Back Over 100 Years when Urban Safari leads a three-mile walking tour of University Heights on Saturday, September 22, from 10 a.m. to noon. The fee is \$10. For reservations and directions to the starting point, call 619-944-9255. (UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS)

You Won't Be Asked to Act Your Age—organizers of the Waldbour joint planned in Balboa Park on Saturday, September 22. Expect a light-hearted one-hour event including a playground, Frisbee throwing, bubble blowing, and roses to smell—the fun starts at 10:15 a.m. at the Balboa Park carousel (at Park Boulevard and Village Way). Plan to stay on afterward for silly jokes and ice cream (or other refreshments). Free. 619-231-7463. (BALBOA PARK)

Full Officially Begins at 4:04 p.m. on Saturday, September 22—a good enough reason to throw a late-afternoon equinox party or barbecue. Technically speaking, at 4:04 p.m. the sun will be shining straight down on the earth's equator—in this particular instance, on a spot in the Pacific Ocean south of Hawaii. The autumn season will continue for three months until the sun "moves" to its farthest southerly point in the sky, winter solstice, December 21.

Sing Around the Campfire during the family campfire planned at Blue Sky Ecological Reserve on Saturday, September 22, from 6 to 8 p.m. Organizers promise songs, a demonstration by the Canine Search and Rescue Team, stories, hot chocolate, and marshmallows to roast.

To reserve a spot, call 858-679-5469. There's an easy one-mile walk to the campground, find Blue Sky on Esplanade Road, one-half mile north of Lake Poway Road. A \$1 donation is requested. (POWAY)

Star Party, check out the heavens when George Varga sets up a telescope for stargazing in Mission Trails Regional Park on Saturday, September 22, from 7 to 9 p.m. Find the park at One Father Junipero Serra Trail. 619-668-3275. Free. (MISSION TRAILS)

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monthly hour-long guided stroll to the desert garden at Saturday, September 22, at 10 a.m., starting from the park's visitors' center. Free. 619-235-1100. (BALBOA PARK)

Matigatos Lagoon Festival, the field day is set for Sunday, September 23, at the Matigatos Lagoon. Storyteller Running Grunion (a.k.a. Abel Silva) and Native American musicians will perform on flutes, drums, and rattles at 10 a.m. Nancy Conner of Sky Hunters will discuss regional birds of prey from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and native plant grower Las Pintas Nursery will be offering plants for sale. Free. For information, call 760-431-2879. (LA COSTA)

A Duck Hike is planned in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve on Sunday, September 23. Participants may spy wildlife during this moderately paced four-mile walk to the waterfall and back. The outing starts at 5 p.m. at the kiosk at the intersection of Camino Ruiz and Park Village Drive. Wear hiking boots and insect repellent, and bring water. Free. 858-484-3279. (LOS PEÑASQUITOS)

Walk Back to Time, explore Old Escondido West during the historic walking tour planned by the Escondido Citizens Ecology Committee in conjunction with the Escondido Historical Society on Thursday, September 25. The outing starts at 6 p.m. at Draper's and Damons'. Call 760-739-8703 or 760-743-8207 for details. Free. (ESCONDIDO)

It's Early in the Fall, but good good activity is possible when Audubon Society leaders head to Linda Lake on Wednesday, September 26, from 8 to 11 a.m. A vernal pool blower was spotted last winter, and tricolored blackbirds breed there in season.

To reach the spot, take I-8 to Highway 67. Go south on 67 and take the Riverfield Road exit. After exiting, turn left on Woodside and go to the end of the road, where the park will be visible. Continue as road curves to the right and then to the left for about one block. Then turn left into the parking lot, and meet there. Picnic tables, water, and restrooms are available. Tax taking. Free. 619-280-7710. (JACKSON)

DANCE

Decades of History Are Woven into Art in repertoire of the Ballet Folklorico de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez. Direct from the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, the group hits the stage at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido with a performance tonight, Thursday, September 20, at 8 p.m. Tickets range from \$15 to \$45. Find the center at 540 North Escondido Boulevard (at Valley Parkway). Call 800-988-4253 for information and reservations. (ESCONDIDO)

"Caring for the Children," this dance benefits "for health and wellness for Rosa Parks Elementary School" is slated for Friday, September 21, at 7 p.m., at the Weingart/City Heights Library Performance Annex. Tickets are \$8 for one or \$15 for two. Find the annex at 3795 Fairmount Avenue; call 619-594-5104 for more information. (CITY HEIGHTS)

The Circulators Square Dance Club has a beginners' class at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, September 21, in the Recital Hall (2130 Park American Plaza). The first class is free; thereafter, pay \$2.50 per week. Call 858-277-7499 for information. This is the final week of open enrollment. (BONITA)

Twine Time, dance to music by the Old Twine String Band and calling by Graham Hempel during the con- tinuance on Friday, September 21, at Trinity United Methodist Church (3030 Thorn Street). Dancing begins

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Jessica Andrews and Billy Gilman
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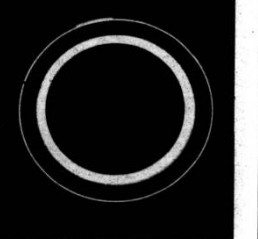
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Calendar LOCAL EVENTS

at 8 p.m., following beginners' instruction at 7:45 p.m. Admission: \$6. Wear soft-soled shoes. For more information, dial 619-283-8530. (NORTH PARK)

West Coast Swing Dance Party. Pattie Wells' Dancecenter hosts dancing on Friday, September 21, for singles and couples of all ages. The DJ plays music for dancing from 9 to 11 p.m.; swing lessons start at 8:30 p.m. Find the center at 1255 West Moreno Boulevard. Call 619-275-3533 for information. Admission is \$5; free for first-timers. (DAY PARK)

Attention, Ballroom Dancers! The big band sounds of the Swingtime Orchestra at the Kimball Senior Center on the fourth Saturday of each month, including September 22, from 1 to 4 p.m. The first hour features dance instruction by Russ Mupfel. Find the center at 1221 D Ave.

enue. Admission is \$5. Call 619-336-6760 for information. (NORTH CITY)

Learn West African Dance Moves to the pulsing beat of live drumming in a noncompetitive class for students of all levels started on Saturday, September 22, at 11 a.m., at Coast Athletics (613 Westlake Trail). Beginners are welcome. The fee is \$15. Call 618-793-0178 for information. (CENTRAL)

Time to Clap. The Raylin Clappers Club meet every Sunday from 5 to 10 p.m. at the Rectal Hall. Beginning through advanced levels and dances are offered. The fee is \$4 for nonmembers. 619-444-2166. (NORTH PARK)

Have a Swingin' Good Time when the Rockin' Swing Dance Club convenes on Tuesday, September 25, at the Portuguese Hall (2618 Avenida Portugal, just off Rosecrans). Beginners' swing dance lessons start at 9:30 p.m.; from 9 p.m. until midnight. The cover is \$6. For information, call 619-291-3775. (POINT LOMA)

Must Be the Season of the Square. The Seaside Writers open their beginning square-dance classes to the public on Tuesday, September 25, at 7 p.m., at Garrison Elementary School (333 Garrison Street). Classes are open — at no charge — through September 29. For information, call 619-283-8530. (NORTH PARK)

GETAWAYS

Folk Dances of India will be presented by the Janavak National Folk Ensemble for the Mingqi International Museum next Thursday, September 27, at 7:30 p.m., in Sherwood Auditorium at the Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla (700 Prospect Street).

The approximately 20-member troupe of dancers and musicians — hailing from Ahmedabad, Gujarat — will perform dances including Oppana, Bansi, Thali, Tip-pam, Kalaripattu, the Gond Dance, Ghuma, and Gharia. Tickets range from \$25 to \$50. For reservations, call 619-239-0003 x116. (LA JOLLA)

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SEA

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Fall Film Festival, see three great movies on three consecutive evenings at Saint Paul's Cathedral. The roster includes *The Trip to Italy*, *My Dog Skip*, and *October Sky*. Screenings begin at 7:30 p.m. Friday through Saturday, September 27-29. Find the cathedral at 2728 Sixth Avenue (at Fifth and Nottweg). Admission is free. 619-283-7261. (MCOTOWN)

A Voice for the Underdog: Asian-American Experience is promoted during the second annual San Diego Asian Film Festival, running September 27-30 at the Hazard Center Mann 7 Theaters. Organizers showcase films made by Asians or Asian-Americans on a variety of subjects and some "that have nothing to do with Asian issues." Screenings begin on Thursday. *Scratch* begins on Thursday. *Scratch* is a film about a young man who is a member of the 200th Century. The "real life story" of Michael Jordan is presented in *Michael Jordan in the Mix*. Expect a "larger than life tribute to a larger-than-life figure." See the film through October 7. Ticket prices and showtimes: call 619-238-1233. (MILWAUKEE PARK)

Robes H. Fleet Science Center, travel in time in *China: The Panda Adventure*. The film is set in 1936, based on the true story of Ruth Harkness, an independent woman who traveled to the forests of China to follow in her late husband's footsteps and achieve his dream of bringing the first giant panda to America. See this film through the end of the year. Did you know there are 50,000 known caves in the U.S., and every state has at least one? *Journey into Amazing Caves* takes you into some of the earth's alien, hidden realms, guided by two cavers seeking their own unexplored frontiers. The latest MacGillivray Freeman Films offering follows "extreme scientists" Hazel Barton and Nancy Ausubach as they seek organisms that might hold new medical applications. Caves continues through November. He doesn't know how to swim or ice skate, but Michael Jordan has often been called the greatest athlete of the 20th Century. The "real life story" of Michael Jordan is presented in *Michael Jordan in the Mix*. Expect a "larger than life tribute to a larger-than-life figure." See the film through October 7. Ticket prices and showtimes: call 619-238-1233. (MILWAUKEE PARK)

House of David divides of biblical text. Learn about "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the House of David Inscrption" when Ben Royster speaks for the Archaeological Institute of America on Friday, September 21. Royster is the guest curator for the Bowers Museum's exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls and House of David Inscrption. Join the group at 7:15 p.m. at the Lemon Grove Community Center, 3146 School Lane. Free for information, call 619-465-3841. (LEMON GROVE)

Concerned About Neighborhood Safety, planning, community development, and smart growth. The American Planning Association hosts a workshop on "Safe and Place-making on a Budget" on Friday, September 21, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at City of Carlsbad offices (1635 Faraday Avenue). The fee is \$85 general, including breakfast, lunch, and workshop materials. For space availability, call 858-614-5054. (CARLSBAD)

Cats Experienced Spiritual Significance in specific places, a stone, a river, a grove of trees. Learn about this ancient outlook when Barbara Bagan and Len O'Brien present "A Contemporary Cats' World View." The program begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Zoo's Otis Center (left of the main entrance). Free. 619-299-1244. (MILWAUKEE PARK)

The Correlation between Cruelty to Animals and Violence against Humans will be explored when psychologist Randall Lockwood speaks on Friday, September 21. This evolv-

ing information has been used in legal proceedings involving juvenile violence, domestic abuse, serial killings, and other forms of violence. Hear the talk at 5:30 p.m. at the Bar Center, 1333 Seventh Avenue. Admission is \$35. For information, call 619-231-0781 x1129. (DOWNTOWN)

Master Furniture Maker Sam Maldorf, hailed as a "Living Treasure of Carlsbad," plans a talk in conjunction with the exhibition of his work on view at the Oceanwide Museum of Art on Saturday, September 22. The gallery talk begins at 7 p.m., highlighting Maldorf's sense of form, design, and commitment to the woodworker's art. Admission is \$30 for nonmembers. Find the museum at 704 Pier View Way. To make the suggested

reservations, call 760-721-2787. (POCANS)

"Poland, Prussia, and Vienna" are the subjects for a lecture and discussion planned by the Glabrosters of North County on Saturday, September 22, at 1:30 p.m., at the San Diego City Credit Union (at El Camino Road and Garden View Road). Admission is \$2. For information, dial 760-931-9374. (CARLSBAD)

Medical Astrology is the subject when astrologer Lee Lehman speaks for the National Council for Geocosmic Research on Saturday, September 22, at 11:30 a.m., at the Kearney Mesa Parks and Recreation Center (1370 Armstrong Street). Lehman is known for her herbal medicine work and medical astrology background. Admission is \$20 for nonmembers.

SEA

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Calendar LOCAL EVENTS

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(DOWNTOWN)

Open Poetry, sign-ups begin at 7:30 p.m. and open readings run from 8 to 10:30 p.m., on Monday, September 24, at Twigs Tea and Coffee (4590 Park Boulevard, at Madison), 619-296-0616. Free. (UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS)

Music and Dance of Iran is highlighted during programs beginning at 6 and 7:30 p.m., on Monday, September 24, in Smith Recital Hall at San Diego State University. Tickets are \$10 general. Call 619-594-6031 or 619-594-6020 for further information. (SDSU)

"Mesa Festivities" are on tap when Hill Country celebrates the release of her book *The Nine Modern Day Moons and a Bodypart: Ten Days to Creative Inspiration and Fellowship* with a reading on Tuesday, September 25, at 7 p.m., at Earth Song Bookstore (1440 Camino Del Mar). For information, dial 858-755-4254. (DEL MAR)

Badenov will examine "how to break through resistance, procrastination, time-shortage, avoidance, and lack of focus in relation to engaging in creative activities" on Wednesday, September 26, at 7 p.m., at Bridge Way Bookstore (at Rancho Santa Fe Road and Encinitas Boulevard). \$5. Dial 858-730-0050 for more information. (ENCINITAS)

Who Was the First Cat to Have an Obituary in the New York Times? It was an honor accorded to the Scottish Fold cat known as Norton, whose life was celebrated by writer Peter Gethen. The author visits Warwick's Bookstore on Tuesday, September 25, at 7:30 p.m., to sign

and discuss *The Cat Who'll Live Forever: The Final Adversities of Norton, the Perfect Cat, and His Imperfect Human*. Find the store at 7812 Girard Avenue. Free. Call 858-454-0457 for more information. (LA JOLLA)

Self-Improvement is on offer in Susan Gilbert's *Land of I Can*, which she'll sign and discuss her book at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, September 25, at Borders Books and Music (159 Fletcher Parkway). Free. Call 619-593-5119 for information. (LA CAJON)

Author Duff Brenna signs and discusses *The Altar of the Body* on Wednesday, September 26, at 7 p.m., at Esmeralda Books and Coffee (1555 Camino Del Mar, suite 307). Free. For information, call 858-755-2707. (DEL MAR)

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Author Ed Dowdowski will discuss and sign his book *How You Can Become a Millionaire: Your Lifetime Guide for Building Wealth and Achieving Financial Independence* on Wednesday, September 26, at 7 p.m., at Barnes and Noble. Find the shop in Grossmont Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Drive, 619-467-2870. Free. (LA MESA)

Expressions Unlimited, open-mike jam sessions convene on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, including September 26, from 8 to 9 p.m., at the Malcom X Library (5148 Market Street, at Euclid). All forms of spoken word and artistic expressions are welcome. Free. Call 619-527-3405 for information. (ENCINITAS)

The West Coast Arts Annual Pacific Review features a reading featuring San Diego poet Ted Barker. Host/author writer and "radical thinker" Raymond Federman, Southern California poet Conner Jacobs, San Francisco author Jonathan Knapp, and Chicano poet R. Emilia Paredes. Events begin at 7 p.m., next Thursday, September 27, in Casa Real, Arts Center, at San Diego State Uni-

versity. Free. For more details, dial 619-594-5318. (SDSU)

SPORTS

Set for Soccer: The San Diego Sockers host the Utah Freeze on Friday, September 21, at 7:05 p.m., in the San Diego Sports Arena. Tickets range from \$8 to \$25. Call 619-225-9813 for information and tickets (also available through Ticketmaster, at 619-228-TIXS). Listen to the game in English on KSDO (1130 AM) and in Spanish on KURS (1040 AM). (SDSU)

The Boys of Early Autumn, the San Diego Padres host the San Francisco Giants in Qualcomm Stadium September 21-23, with games at 7:05 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

The Falls head to Colorado to meet up with the Rockies September 24-27. Games begin at 6:05 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and at 12:05 p.m. on Thursday.

Tickets range from \$5 to \$26, available by calling 619-297-2373 through Ticketmaster (619-228-TIXS). The games are broadcast in English on KOGO-AM (600) and in Spanish on station KURS-AM (1040). For additional details, call 619-280-INFO. (MISSION VALLEY)

Run to Bonifait for the McMillan Mile and Corey's Kid Run, slated for Saturday, September 22. Race-day registration starts at 8 a.m., with the adults' event stopping at 9:20 a.m. and the kids' beginning at 9:50 a.m. To reach the spot, take Highway 805 to the E Street/Bonita Road exit, follow Bonita Road approximately three miles. For information, dial 619-479-5975. (BONITA)

The Season Draws to a Close at Cajon Speedway, with racing in the sportman, Grand American midsize, bomber, and pony stock divisions planned on Saturday, September 22. The first race starts at 6:45 p.m., with qualifying runs starting at 5:15 p.m.

The 3/8-mile track is located next to Gillespie Field. Take I-8 to Highway 67, and use the Bradley exit. Drive left for two blocks to Wing Street, then right one block to the track entrance. Adult admission: \$8 (week ends) and \$9 (week days). For those 6 to 12, free for kids under 6 with an adult. For information, call 619-448-8900. (EL CAJON)

Rumkin's Ranch, equestrian roadrunner and naturalist Don Parrell leads a run in Duley Ranch on Saturday, September 22. This one-hour run "will be at a pace you can handle over hills and through meadows of exceptional beauty." Parrell stops for water and for flora and fauna identification.

How can you resist this invitation? The adventure begins at 7:30 a.m. in the main parking lot (La Honda Drive, at the La Honda Drive). Call 760-839-4680 for more information. Free. Bring water. (DISNEYLAND)

Have Yourself a Tasty Little Ride, take in 30 miles of Kenning Hill, crest, and some of San Diego's bridges found along the way with Knickerbocker bicycles. The ride, set for Saturday, September 22, starts at 8 a.m. at Midway Town Center (park behind the Blockbuster, 3900 West Point Loma Boulevard). Bring money for a \$100 lunch. Call 619-298-9381 for information. (SPORTS MENA)

Kayak It, Y'all. If you harbor any interest in kayaking, this is the weekend for you. Kayak demo day is set for Saturday, September 22, at Bahia Point. Free demonstrations run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., with kayak clinics available 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. On Sunday, September 23, the Aqua Adventure Kayak Center (1548 Quivira Way) hosts Kayakfest 2001 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Orga-

nizers plan races and contests, demonstrations, and fun. For more information on either event, call 619-523-9577. (MISSION VAL)

Hardcourt, Clay, or Grass? Bring your racket and take your pick when the La Costa Resort and Spa hosts Tennis Fun Day on Saturday, September 22, at 1 p.m. Guests may play tennis at all three of the resort's (asphalted) courts, watch a celebrity pro-am exhibition match, and partake of tennis instruction. Free. Find the resort at 2100 Costa del Mar Road. For more information, call 619-406-5268. (LA COSTA)

Walk to Cure Diabetes, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's 5k and 10k walks are slated for Saturday, September 22, beginning at 8:30 a.m. in Balboa Park and Canon Park (at Canon Road and Carlsbad Boulevard). On-site registration starts at 7:30 a.m., with the walks stopping off at 8:30 a.m. For details, dial 858-279-9156. (BALBOA PARK, CARLSBAD)

(Weekends) Over-the-Line, have you ever tried playing softball while seated or connected with a pitched ball from a wheelchair? Athletes of all ages will use the challenge when the 23rd annual World Championship Wheelchair Over-the-Line Tournament takes place on Saturday, September 22. The three-player team will play from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the asphalt at the 24th Street Marine Terminal (take the Mile of Cars exit off I-5 and head south).

Admission is free for spectators. Day-of-event registration for teams begins at 8 a.m.; there is no fee for first timers. Questioned? Call 619-525-8247 for answers. (MISSION VALLEY)

When the Hackle Hike Toward Bicycle do this less-than-widely known spot with the San Diego Bicycle Touring Society riders on Sunday, September 23. The 35-mile ride starts at 8:45 a.m. at Dove Park (8175 Regents Road at Nobel Drive), traveling up Del Dios Highway.

and back along the coast. Free. 619-279-2664. (UNIVERSITY CITY)

Chargers vs. Cowboys, the San Diego Chargers head to Dallas to meet up with the Cowboys on Sunday, September 23, at 10 a.m. For information, call 858-435-1944/858-7060; regular season ticket information: 857-CHARGERS.

Polo Time, the San Diego Polo Club hosts Pro-Am Classic/John Colburn Cup finals on Sunday, September 23. Preliminary matches begin at 1:30 p.m., the featured polo match at 3 p.m. The traditional half-time divot-stomp starts at 4 p.m., when guests are invited to take the field and replace the divots.

General admission is \$5. The club meets at 1555 El Camino Road. For information and reservations, call 858-481-9217. (RANCHO SANTA FE)

Strangely Precocious The "Shake, Rattle and Roll on 56" event for the San Diego September 23, are billed as a celebration of "survival...if you're reading this, you've survived someone else's idea of a party."

The start is found at the west of Highway 56 at El Camino Real and Carmel Valley Road (just east of I-5). For information, call 760-736-1001. (CARMEL VALLEY)

Hunter/Jumper Regattas from all over the world will demonstrate their prowess, skill, and agility during the Del Mar International Horse Show, running September 27-30 at the Del Mar Arena. Organizers expect 300 riders and horses for the competition.

Double saddle match races begin at 7 p.m. on Friday, September 28. In this event, the competitors race on identical courses, and the first horse to reach the finish line is the winner (free). Saturday, September 29, features the Del Mar International Grand Prix at 7 p.m. (\$8 and \$10); the Junior/Amateur Jumper Classic will be on Sunday, September 30.

Daily horse show hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free except where noted. Call 619-793-5555 for further information. (DEL MAR)

Paddle Around Lake Sutherland during a kayak tour planned by Mark and the San Diego River Park next Thursday, September 27. The two-mile tour starts at 4 p.m. and will include a peek at an Indian site and perhaps some wildlife. To make the necessary reservations, call 858-674-2275 x5. (RAMONA)

SPECIAL

Top Dogs, more than 500 canine athletes are expected to compete in the Annual Padded/United Dog Agility Association Grand Prix of Dog Agility World Championships, taking place September 20-23 at the Del Mar Horse Park. Events include agility courses, jumper courses, flyball, and freestyle.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 8:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. Admission for spectators — of the human variety only — is \$5 Thursday through Saturday and \$8 for adults on Sunday; free for those under 6. For information, dial 888-244-5489.

Leave your paws at home, and get off to a head start on the wild west. The Bureau of Land Management hosts its Adopt-A-Horse and Burro Program September 21-23. The "colts, see the show, and adopt" event offer arrive at Mountain Valley Ranch for viewing at around noon on Friday. With adoption held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

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Go Home, the 12th annual fall home show runs September 21-23 at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Organizers promise 300 exhibits with products and services for the home, plus a feature called "Style" containing interior design vignettes and seminars emphasizing home furnishings and interior design.

Show hours are noon to 8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$8 general; free for those under 12; admission is \$3 for those 15 and older on Friday. For more information, call 858-350-3718. (DEL MAR)

Changeling The seventh annual San Diego Festival of Beers is slated for Friday, September 21, from 6 p.m. to midnight at Columbia and B Street, more than 100 microbreweries will there will be live music. Tickets \$15 tickets for 6 tastings, \$20 for 12 tastings. For information, call 858-672-3972. (DOWNTOWN)

Track Show, Byzantium hosts a vintage bead and lamp-work trunk show and sale on Friday and Saturday, September 21 and 22, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Find the shop at 2607 Congress Street, 619-497-1848. Free. (DEL MAR)

Celebrate Bonita, a parade, crafts, booths, and entertainment are all promised when Bonifait takes place on Saturday, September 22, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Find the fun along the Bonita Road commercial district. For information, call 619-472-8520. (BONITA)

A Time to Tour, COVA's 2001 "open studios" events take place on September 22 and 23. Organizers of the self-guided tours of 42 artists' studios (including the artist's studio to the participating studios) is \$20 for two people. For catalog outlets and other information, call 619-234-0928. (SAN DIEGO COUNTY)

French History Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is considered one of the most important and systematic studies of American institutions. Discuss a selection from the work with the Great Books Reading and Discussion Group on Saturday, September 22, at 2 p.m., in the third-floor conference room at the San Diego Public Library (820 E Street). 619-440-5625. Free; new comers are welcome. (DOWNTOWN)

Dinner Workshops, the Vista Historical Society hosts this fund-raiser on Saturday, September 22. Expect tours of the historic buildings and current businesses along the renovated Main Street, entertainment, and a catered pasta dinner. Events begin at 3:30 p.m. Tickets \$20 per person. For reservations and information, dial 760-630-0444. (VISTA)

"A World of Discovery" is the theme for the 11th annual International Friendship Festival, running September 22 and 23, at the El Cajon Civic Center (280 East Main Street). Organizers promise ethnic food and crafts, live entertainment, a fine arts exhibit, power show (starting at noon each day), and activities for children and teens.

Festival hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, dial 619-441-1753. (EL CAJON)

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SANDIEGOREADER.COM Calendar LOCAL EVENTS

Plant Matters, the Point Loma Garden Club hosts its plant and craft sale on Saturday, September 22, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Masonic Hall (1711 Sunset Cliffs Boulevard). On offer: plants, nature crafts, and garden-related artifacts. Admission is free. Call 619-222-5207 or 619-224-4777 for information. (POINT LOMA)

Stamps United The fourth annual California Rubber Stamp Festival is scheduled for September 22 and 23 at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Rubber stamps, a rubbermaking supplies, con- tents, stickers, papers, papermaking supplies, and more will be offered by the rubber stamp and accessory manufacturers on hand. Classes and demonstrations are planned as well. Show hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$5 per day, or \$6 for a two-day pass. For more details, call 341-574-8000. (DEL MAR)

Pick Me, Squeeze Me, Make Me Wine, Iella Marie Winery hosts this festival on Saturday, September 22, from 2 to 6 p.m. Participants will enjoy a grape stomping, fista food, music, contests, wine tasting, tours, and more. Find the winery at 2612 Mesa Rock Road. The fee is \$35. To reserve a spot, call 760-796-7357. (ESCONDIDO)

Let's Get Psychical a psychic, tar and metaphysical conference is scheduled at Alexandra's BookStore from noon to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, September 22 and 23. Tarot, palmistry, numerology, and other psychics will be featured; pay \$20 per reading. The shop is located at 5545 Midway Drive, suite G, 619-298-3422. (SPORTS ARENA)

Roam-O-Rama

A Guide to Unexpected San Diego and Beyond • By Jerry Schad

Sunset Cliffs Natural Park extends for some one and a half miles along Point Loma's ocean-facing side. The northern part covers only the cliffs that separate Sunset Cliffs Boulevard from the ocean. The remainder of the park includes a half-mile-long strip of coastline, plus some hillsides sloping upward toward the campus of Point Loma Nazarene College.

The natural erosion of the sea cliffs here proceeds at a geologically galloping pace — thought to be dozens of feet per century. Elaborate retaining walls designed to dissipate wave energy have been installed to keep Sunset Cliffs Boulevard and nearby

homes from being undermined. The wider south end of the park is actually quite trampled and eroded due to many causes; among them encroachment on park land by playing fields and parking lots used by the college, and improper drainage. Nonetheless, you can spend a pleasant hour or two following the small, informal network of trails starting at Ladera Street and Cornish Drive. They can take you up and down the hillsides and out to the tops of the low cliffs, just above where the ocean waves splatter against water-worn boulders.

Near sunset on clear days, a golden glow settles across the ocean and cliff faces, and Sunset Cliffs Park becomes one of the best places to celebrate the day's end. At nearby Cabrillo National Monument you can't usually do this most of the year, since the monument closes too early in the afternoon.

Exploring tidepools is another favorite activity at Sunset Cliffs Park. Starting in October and ending in March, extreme low tides occur during afternoon hours — not in the wee hours of the morning, as in the spring and summer. During episodes of neg-



Sunset Cliffs Park shoreline

ative tides that is, ocean water levels lower than the mean lower low tide, much of the intertidal zone is uncovered. Over the next two months, negative tides will occur during the afternoons of October 13 through 19, November 1 through 4, and November 13 through 18. Use the steep steps at Sunset Cliffs Boulevard and Ladera Street to reach the intertidal zone below. The tidepools there aren't the best for gazing at marine life, but it's fun to pick your way along the rocky shoreline beneath the banded cliffs. Sunset Cliffs Park is great for kids, but little ones must be watched carefully. Most of the cliff edges are unfenced, and it's possible to slip on the hard-packed, eroded soil.

Go Fly a Kite, head to the beach recreation center (1800 North the Strand) for Kite Fest 2001 on Sunday, September 23, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For information, call 760-966-7114. (OCEANSIDE)

"The Voyage of Cabrillo" is a fictionalized account presenting differ-

ent viewpoints of the 1542 encounter between Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's crew and the Native Americans living in the San Diego area. Abel Silva narrates, while other cast members represent the views of a priest and sailor accompanying the expedition and a Native American woman.

See the program at 12:30 and 2 p.m. on Sunday, September 23 (and again on Saturday, September 29), at the Cabrillo National Monument. Admission is included in the regular park entrance fee of \$5 per vehicle. 619-557-5450. (POINT LOMA)

Get a Creativity/Humor Workout and take in a "program of playful exercises designed to spark your humor and creativity" led by Jacqui Lowell. Admission is included in the regular park entrance fee of \$5 per vehicle. 619-557-5450. (POINT LOMA)

FOR KIDS

Back to School, comic ventriloquist Lynn Trimble presents *Buty's School Adventure* through Sunday, September 23, at the Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. Millie Patterson and Weaver's Tals perform *Rumpelstiltskin* September 26-30. Performances begin at 10 and 11:30 a.m. Wednesday through Friday and at 11 a.m., 1 and 2-30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Find the theater near the Aerospace Center. Regular admission is \$3 for adults, \$2 for children under 12. For more information, call 619-485-5945. (BALBOA PARK)

Wear a Nifty Disguise and meet Lily when the resourceful and lovable rodent star of the Kevin Henkes books visits the story time starting at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, September 21, at Borders Books and Music (11160 Rancho Carmel Drive). Free. Call 619-418-1814 for information. (CARMELO MOUNTAIN)

"The Crane's Gift" is on tap when the Monument Preschool Story Time starts at 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 22, at the Japanese Friendship Garden. Visitors will hear this fairy tale about how a mysterious woman came to a small Japanese village and wove the most beautiful cloth ever seen. Afterwards, children will decorate an origami paper crane to take home and have a snack too. Admission is free for those under 6. \$3 general. To make the required reservations, call 619-232-2721. (BALBOA PARK)

Fishes in the Ponds, Lake Cuyamaca will be stocked with 2000 pounds of Mojave trout and 1200 pounds of whitebait trout prior to the kids' fishing derby slated for Saturday, September 22. Fishing and registra-

tion start at 6 a.m., and all fish must be weighed by 12:45 p.m. Free. The headquarters for the Lake Cuyamaca Recreation and Park District is found at 15027 Highway 79. Call 619-447-8123 for information. Fishing licenses are not required for this event. (LAJOLLA)

The Wild Rumpus Begins at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 22, at Borders Books and Music. Roar your terrible roar, gnash your terrible teeth, and roll your terrible eyes during this pajama party, which will include a visit by one of the Wild Things from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Borders, 159 Fletcher Parkway, 619-593-5119. Free. (EL CAJON)

Bunny Tales are on tap at Borders Books and Music on Saturday, September 22, at 3:30 p.m. Put the Bunny with you for stories including his own (written by Dorothy Kunhardt). Guests *How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney, and Margaret Wise Brown's *Rainy Day Bunny*. Find the store at 1072 Camino del Rio North, 619-295-2201. Free. (MISSION VALLEY)

Watch Out for the Apple! See Snow White and the Seven Dwarves when

the San Diego Actors Theatre presents "Children's Classics" on Saturday, September 22. The program includes *Beauty and the Beast Part III*, *The Giving Tree*, poetry, and songs. The fun begins at 11 a.m. at L'Auberge Del Mar Garden Amphitheater (1540 Camino Del Mar). Call 619-268-4494 for information. Admission is \$4 per person. (DEL MAR)

Have Your Picture Taken as an Engineer when the San Diego Model Railroad Museum hosts family day activities on Saturday, September 22, from 1 to 4 p.m. Expect art and crafts, face painting, and refreshments. Activities are included in museum admission. For more information, call 619-696-0199. (BALBOA PARK)

Corral Reef Construction Company, who do people refer to coral reefs as "rain forests of the sea?" Children in grades one through three will find out during this class planned at the Birch Aquarium Museum on Saturday, September 22, at 9:30 a.m. Activities include building a coral reef. The fee is \$20. The aquarium is located at 2300 Expedition Way. For the required reservations, call 858-534-7336. (LA JOLLA)

Theater Arts Workshops for children four to nine years old are conducted by the San Diego Actors Theatre on the fourth Saturday of every month, including September 22, at L'Auberge Del Mar Garden Amphitheater (1540 Camino Del Mar). Workshops run from noon to 1:30 p.m., and reservations are required. The fee is \$10. Dial 619-268-4494 for registration. (DEL MAR)

Framed! Make a photo frame during the preschool craft time planned on Monday, September 24, at 10:30 a.m., at the Zany Brainy stores. Find the stores at 1530 Camino de la Reina (619-291-9500), 10661 Westview Parkway (858-547-8700), and in Grossmont Plaza North, 5475 Grossmont Center Drive (619-466-6731). Free. (MISSION VALLEY, MIRA MESITA, LA MESA)

Learn to Lead a "Ridiculously Cool Life" when authors Super Clea and Keva Marie visit Borders Books and Music to sign and discuss *Hey, Day!* next Thursday, September 27, at 7 p.m. Find the shop at 1072 Camino del Rio North, 619-295-2201. Free. (MISSION VALLEY)

MUSEUMS

(Art museums are listed in the Reader's Guide to Art.)

Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, the museum's activities include locating, collecting, documenting, and preserving historical gas-, steam-, and horse-powered equipment related not only to agriculture, but to the general development of America. The collection is made up of equipment used in lumbering, mining, oil drilling, and construction industries. In addition, the museum has a blacksmith and wheelwright shop, a country kitchen and parlor, a steam-operated sawmill, and 1/3-scale train. Find the museum at 2040 North Santa Fe Avenue. For further details, call 760-941-1791. (OYOTA)

Bonita Museum and Cultural Center, the museum highlights the history of the Sweetwater Valley from the mid-1800s, with historical photographs, artifacts, tools, and farming implements; the district's 1951 fire engine, and bound copies back to the 1930s of the *Chula Vista Star News*.

Find the museum at 4035 Bonita Road. Dial 619-267-5141 for additional information. (BONITA)

Chinese Historical Society and Museum, the museum is located in a building originally built in 1927 for the Chinese Mission. Adjacent to the building is an Asian garden, including a statue of Confucius, a waterfall, stream, and a large Chinese gate. Find the museum at 404 Third Avenue (at J Street); 619-338-9888. (DOWNTOWN)

Chula Vista Heritage Museum the museum features glimpses of Chula Vista's past; exhibits feature lemon packing crate labels, photographs of downtown Chula Vista, doors and adobe blocks from the original Star newspaper building, and relics from the Chay Watch Company. Find the museum at 360 Third Avenue. For further information, call 619-420-6916. (CHULA VISTA)

Creation Museum, a museum contrasting the evolution and creation world views is found at 10946 Woodside Avenue North. For more information, call 619-448-0900 x231. (DANTE)

George White and Anna Gunn Marston House, this historic home sits on five acres of landscaped grounds with a formal English Romantic garden. Built for civic leader and department store founder George Marston and his family by San Diego architects William Hebbard and Irving Gill, the Marston house design is in keeping with the early 20th-Century American Arts and Crafts period, which emphasizes simplicity, function, and natural materials. The museum is located at 3525 Seventh Avenue, 619-298-3142. (HILLCREST)

House of Pacific Relations, International Cottages are open every Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. to present the history and traditions of 30 ethnic groups. Select cottages are also open on the fourth Tuesday of every month, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Children Around the World videos are shown in the Hall of Nations on the fourth Tuesday of every month. 619-538-0000. (MILWAUKEE)

J.A. Conley Museum, an eclectic collection of items — inuding displays on microfilm, photographs, and beaded purses — is featured at the museum. The grand attraction,

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READING

Holler If You Hear Me: Search for Tupac Shakur



Book, Books, 2001; 240 pages \$24.00

FROM THE DUST JACKET: Five years after he was gunned down in Las Vegas in a drive-by shooting, rap artist Tupac Shakur (1971-1996) is even more loved, contested, and celebrated than he was in life. His posthumously released albums, poetry, and movies still top the charts; he inspires countless plays, articles, and websites by fans and critics alike. Who was Tupac and why does he matter so much to us?

In *Holler If You Hear Me*, "hip-hop intellectual" Michael Eric Dyson, acclaimed for his writing on Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., as well as his passionate defense of black youth culture, turns his attention to one of the most enigmatic and enduring figures of our time. Through original interviews and reporting, Dyson offers us a wholly original understanding of the controversial icon who has been called the black Elvis.

Dyson explores Tupac Shakur's childhood and the influence of his mother Afeni Shakur, showing how her history as

a Black Panther connects black nationalism of the '60s and '70s with hip-hop culture today. For the first time, we understand fully the importance of Tupac's early education, his experience in the theater, and the role of mentor Lella Steinberg in shaping his music. Dyson examines Tupac's achievement with an assessment of hip-hop's artistry and the role that "authenticity" plays in rap culture. He also examines the themes that pervade Tupac's life and music in the context of African-American culture and America at large. He sheds provocative new light on such issues as: self-destruction and mortality among black men; the surprising role of religious and spiritual beliefs in rap culture; and the ways negative attitudes towards women are shaped by cultural cues and social history. Through these themes Dyson takes the full measure of our adoration and disdain for "ghetto saint" Tupac and his generation.

To create his portrait of the artist, Dyson interviewed people who knew Tupac, or have reflected seriously on his legacy, including Afeni Shakur, Quincy Jones, Toni Morrison, John Singleton, Jada Pinkett Smith, Maxine Waters, Samuel Jackson, Stanley Crouch, Reverend Al Sharpton, Big Ray Dee, and Johnnie Cochran, among many others. Dyson holds up Tupac as a mirror in which we see our wishes for, our desires of, and our fears about black male genius. His search for Tupac will thrill those who already love the artist and enlighten those who seek to understand him and his legacy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Michael Eric Dyson was born in 1958 in a Detroit, Michigan, ghetto, son of a teacher's aide and an employee of Kelsey-Hayes Wheelbrake and Crum Company. He graduated magna cum laude, with a BA in philosophy from Carson-Newman College in 1982. In 1993, he received his Ph.D. with a major in religion, from Princeton University. On the day that we talked, I asked Professor Dyson on what subject he did his dissertation. He said, "I did it on a comparison of heroism, and the uses of heroism with Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. I looked at the use of heroism among African-American com-

munities to foster moral aspiration and to allow black people to critique the larger society by the heroes they choose."

Professor Dyson has taught at various colleges and universities and is now Ida B. Wells Barnett University Professor and Professor of Religious Studies at DePaul University in Chicago. About what he teaches, he said, "I do a course on the radical legacy of Martin Luther King. I do a course on critical race theory and philosophy. I get a chance to range around in whatever kind of courses I want to teach. And that's nice. I'll end up teaching a course on black icons, religious and moral icons, and then I'll do a course on hip-hop culture."

A licensed Baptist preacher since 1979, Professor Dyson is invited to preach in churches around the country. He also appears as a guest on a variety of television and radio shows. Dyson is author of *I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.; Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X; Between God and Gangsta Rap; and Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line*. He lives in Chicago with his family.

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR: I asked Professor Dyson, "How did you get interested in hip-hop?"

"Well, I was a teen father, and growing up—I so speak—with my son made me want to understand the music that was already playing a huge role in black pop culture. I wanted to be able to not only keep my ear to the ground but be able to interpret for him the lyrics and the meanings of the messages and the music. And first of all, I just liked the music. I just like a lot of what's going on in there—the honesty, the level of emotional and spiritual investment, and the willingness to tell the truth in political—or should I say—politically incorrect terms. So that's very attractive to me. And probably being a poor black boy from Detroit allowed me to identify with many of the ghetto-centric narratives of these hip-hop artists as well."

"What do you think makes this music and its trappings—the clothes, the language, the attitude—so attractive to bourgeois white kids?"

"I think that the sense of rebellion that's expressed there is quite striking. I think the sense of alienation from one's environment is a universal theme that's struck in hip-hop but that resonates far beyond its boundaries. I think many white kids get a chance to tour the suffering of the poor black ghetto without having to endure the immediate consequences if they were there in person."

"Somewhat like white students' 'Panther touring' in the '60s."

"Exactly. Kind of cultural and racial voyeurism may be going on there. In both the good and bad sense, I guess. It allows a safe distance from the immediate events, but a kind of interpretation of those events in those terms of some folk who live there. Plus, I think they just dig the music. It's cool, it's hip. It's the thing that defines the cutting edge, and I think all of that together makes it attractive."

Holler If You Hear Me offers many photographs of Tupac. I asked Professor Dyson that Tupac certainly was an attractive young man, that he had a sensitive, lovely face, that the girls and the women must have gone mad for him.

"Oh, absolutely. He was quite a charmer in that regard. As the actress Peggy Lipton [whose daughter Tupac dated] said to me, he was an extraordinary young man who was well trained in the art of social grace at a certain level, but also a person who was able to keep that street authenticity thing going, so I think that Tupac bridged many worlds in his own short career."

Shakur was born in 1971, just after his mother, former Black Panther Afeni Shakur, was released from a Bronx prison where she was being held on a bombing charge (she was later acquitted). The rapper never knew who his father was. For a time, Afeni, who kept a vigil at Shakur's deathbed, was addicted to crack. Her son wrote about this in his 1995 Grammy-nominated "Dear Mama." And even as a crack fiend mama / You always was a black queen mama."

I asked the professor about a phrase he uses, "thug authenticity." This "thug authenticity," Dyson writes, was an impor-

tant aspect of Tupac's understanding of himself. Dyson quotes Tupac from an interview taped in 1995 when Tupac was in prison. Tupac explained that the thug life is "not an image; it's just a way of life; it's a mentality." He explains that mentality further by saying that the thug life is "a stage that we all go through. It's just like that for white kids and rich kids. They get to the military academy or ROTC, or they take all the risk, energy, and put it into the armed forces. And for a young black male, Puerto Rican, or Hispanic person, you've got to put this in the streets; that's where our energies go." Dyson also quotes from outtakes of an interview Tupac did with Snoop Dogg for MTV. "It's not thugging," said Tupac, "like I'm robbing people, 'cause that's not what I'm doing. I mean, like, I'm not scared to say how I feel. Part of being [a thug] is to stand up for your responsibilities and say this is what I do even though I know people are going to hate me and say, 'It's so politically un-correct,' and 'How could you make black people look like that?' Do you know how buffoonish you all look with money and girls and all of that? That's what I want to do. I want to be real with myself."

Professor Dyson explained: "I think that this quest for the real, for what's authentic, distinguishes Tupac. Many people have been consumed with it, but it was really his desire to live the life he sang about in his songs that distinguished him, because he was obsessed with keeping it real, and that landed him in trouble many times, but it also endeared him to the hearts of his followers."

Tupac's body was covered with tattoos. Dyson describes them. Besides "Thug Life" across his abdomen, "PAC" appeared on his right bicep and "Nefertiti" on the left. "Outlaw" was tattooed—"tatted" in hip-hop parlance—on his right forearm, and a serpent with a crown of thorns flanked on his right biceps. "Playaz" was inscribed on the nape of his neck. "Fuck the World" ran across his trapezoids, the same phrase, this time in script, ran across his shoulder blades. On the lower sides of his back were

"Laugh Now" with a mask of comedy and "Cry Later" with a mask of tragedy. A German cross with "Exodus 18:11" stretched over his back. And "50 Nigga" covered his sternum.

I asked Professor Dyson what, for Tupac, this scarifying of his body signified.

"I think it was about marking the flesh as an emblem of his solidarity with his homeboys. And it was about giving a visual representation—'Let my voice speak, let my body speak.' And I think it was a way of testifying through the flesh about the love he had for his thug life companions and the commitment he bore to represent their message to the world. As I try to argue in the book, Tupac had deep religious feelings. He was quite conscious about what, for instance, the tattoos meant and what they would mean to the larger world."

"This quest for the real, for what's authentic, distinguishes Tupac. It was really his desire to live the life he sang about in his songs."

On the September Saturday night that he was murdered, Tupac was in Vegas, where he and his companions had attended the Mike Tyson-Bruce Seldon heavyweight match at the MGM Grand. Tupac leaned forward in the passenger seat of a black BMW 750. The 750 was the lead car of a ten-car motorcade making its way along Flamingo Boulevard. BMW's driver was Ruge Knight, cofounder (with Dr. Dre) and sole head man of Los Angeles-based Death Row Records. Tupac had a recording contract with Death Row. The destination was Knight's nightclub, its walls painted red to memorialize Knight's connections to the Bloods. A white Cadillac pulled up next to the BMW and two of the four men inside the Cadillac lept out onto the neon-lit boulevard and began shooting. Four bullets entered

(continued on page 2)

through October 2001, is an exhibit on the development of the automobile. The display includes an 1885 Benz, described as "the first car ever built." Each of the over 20 vehicles on display reveals a large step in the progress of the automobile.

Find the museum at 4253 Park Boulevard. For more information, call 619-296-3112. (COUNTY REGISTRY)

Marine Corps Recruit Depot Museum, housed in a historic building, the museum features live permanent galleries with artifacts, uniforms, vehicles, weapons, and photographs depicting Marine Corps history. The museum is located in Building 26 at MCRD, not inside Gate 4, off Pacific Highway. 619-324-6038. (MIDWAY)

Personage Museum of Lemon Grove, vintage photographs, books, decks, cafeteria menus, and other school paraphernalia are on display in "From Barn to Cyberpace."

Lemon Grove Schools Evolve. The current Lemon Grove School District has its roots in the town's once thriving orchards. William Hurst, an early pioneer on the local fruit-growing industry, offered his barn in 1893 as a schoolroom, and a district was born. See this show through Sunday, March 11, 2001.

The work of marine and aviation painter Richard DeRosier is on exhibit through Saturday, December 22, as part of the museum's ongoing "Noted Regional Artists Series." The Lemon Grove artist is known for his "super realistic" paintings of U.S. military history, and he's currently painting a six-part mural in the chapel of the Veterans Memorial Center in Balboa Park.

Find the museum at 7715 Church Street. 619-460-4353. (LEMON GROVE)

Kreuthen H. Fleet Science Center, "Explor@Zone 3," the newest round of exhibits from the Exploratorium

in San Francisco, boasts more than 30 exhibits designed to make science, math, and technology engaging and fun. These interactive exhibits involve learning about hearing, speaking, seeing color, electricity, and magnetism and continue on display through June, 2002.

A range of topics including communication, problem solving, and gender stereotypes are explored in "Psychology: It's More Than You Think." Over 17 interactive experiments are included in the exhibit, addressing fundamental questions about how people behave, learn, and develop. Debut in through Friday, January 4, 2002.

"Origins of Exhibitions" include "About Faces" (through 2001), "About Faces," and "Skyscrapers." The permanent exhibitions present a variety of hands-on exhibits illustrating scientific principles. Explore the various methods of transmission and stor-

age and retrieval of information, such as lazers, flashing lights, waveforms, and more. For further information, call 619-238-1233. (BALBOA PARK)

San Diego Automotive Museum, vacation, migration, and the cars that ruled the road in the Golden State are examined in "California, Here We Come!" The most rustic road included in the exhibit is the Old Klamath Road, originally built in 1912 of wooden planks nailed to crossties. The primitive road carried drivers across a six mile stretch of sand dunes between Yuma and San Diego. Other featured highways include El Camino Real, Pacific Coast Highway, and historic 101. Make this trip through Sunday, September 23.

More than 80 automobiles and motorcycles from horseless carriages to future prototypes are included in the museum's permanent collection. Find the museum near the Starlight Bowl. 619-231-2886. (BALBOA PARK)

San Diego Historical Society Museum, created in 1905 when an irrigation project backfired, the Salton Sea has had a "boom and bust" history. Developers in the 1950s and 1960s built this desert area "California's New Mediterranean," envisioning a tourist haven. The sea's salinity levels have increased dramatically in recent years, driving away many of the tourists and boaters. "In Search of El Dorado: The Salton Sea" features black and white photographs by Christopher Landis, digitally reproduced by Nash Editions. See these haunting works through Monday, December 31, also includes ships in bottles.

The museum features permanent exhibits documenting the history of San Diego's waterfront and the building of the West Coast by sea, including exhibits concerning the old San Diego Coronado ferryboats, the tuna fishing industry, and the military. The museum fleet consists of the 1863 bark *Sue of India*, the 1898 San Francisco ferryboat *Berkeley*, and the 1904 Scottish steam yacht *Medea*. There are also nautical exhibits, ship

Pan American Plaza. Call 619-234-2544 for information. (BALBOA PARK)

San Diego Maritime Museum, examples of ships from the 14th Century to the present are included in "Masterpieces in Miniature: A Precious Collection of Tiny Yachts." Nearly 50 tiny and elaborate models are included, ranging in size from three inches to three feet. The exhibit, continuing through Monday, December 31, also includes ships in bottles.

The museum features permanent exhibits documenting the history of San Diego's waterfront and the building of the West Coast by sea, including exhibits concerning the old San Diego Coronado ferryboats, the tuna fishing industry, and the military. The museum fleet consists of the 1863 bark *Sue of India*, the 1898 San Francisco ferryboat *Berkeley*, and the 1904 Scottish steam yacht *Medea*. There are also nautical exhibits, ship

carpenters, model building, ships in bottles, woodcarvers, and a complete research library.

The museum is located at 1306 North Harbor Drive, along the Embarcadero at the corner of North Harbor Drive and Ash Street. 619-234-9153. (DOWNTOWN)

San Diego Museum of Man, spiritual paintings, vivid sequin banners, papier-mâché, wood, and iron sculptures are included in "Voodoo: Spirits in Italian Art." The exhibit features a variety of objects relating to the voodoo religion, which evolved from a mixture of African religions and Roman Catholicism. See the show through Sunday, January 27, 2002.

Skeletal remains reveal fascinating stories from the past in "The Bones Don't Lie: Stories from the Grave." On view through January 27, 2002. The exhibit explores everything from bone recovery and identification techniques to uncovering evidence of nutrition, disease, and trauma, to the use of skull and bone imagery in popular culture. The exhibit includes hands-on learning and interactive displays.

Rare rock art from eastern California is explored in "Echoes of Antiquity: Rock Art of the Volcanic

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MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

Smalls. In "Hit 'Em Up," Tupac had crowded, "I fucked your bitch, you fat motherfucker." (The Notorious B.I.G. weighed 300 pounds-plus.) Smalls had threatened revenge against Tupac. And perhaps Tupac's murder was that revenge. Perhaps not. Some claim that Knight had Tupac killed because Tupac threatened to leave Death Row. Others suggest that the men behind Tupac's murder were the Crips, one of whose members Tupac, and his entourage had roughed up on what for Tupac was that fateful Saturday night. Whoever was behind Tupac's murder, Biggie Smalls was not to be forgotten. In March 1997, some six months and a few days after Tupac's death, the Notorious B.I.G. was gunned down in Los Angeles.

Did Professor Dyson have his own theory about who killed Tupac and why?

"Well, you know, I think ultimately in one sense his death was almost inevitably, tragically, coming. There was talk about Tupac, having engaged in something, the night he was murdered, with someone who turned out to be a Crip. I think that, unfortunately, trying to live it, keep it real, pushed him over the edge and blurred the line between art and reality. And in led

(continued from page 81)

Tupac's chest, apparently entering at the point where "Thug Life" was tattooed. Many theories exist as to why Tupac was killed. One theory has it that Tupac's murder was a battle in the war between West Coast rappers, represented by Suge Knight and Death Row, and East Coast rappers, represented by Sean "Puffy" Combs and his New York-based Bad Boy Entertainment. Tupac earlier had claimed to have been sexually intimate with the wife of Bad Boy star Biggie (the Notorious B.I.G.).

How would Professor Dyson describe the difference between the regard gangsta rap fans show Tupac and Sean "Puffy" Combs? "Well, I think Tupac definitely was viewed as much more authentic and real. Puffy is seen as entrepreneurial and making a market out of selling ghetto style to the world. But I think Tupac was viewed as doing it for real. He wasn't just in it for the money. He was in it for his commitment to thug life and what that really meant. So no amount of money could stop him or cause him to sell out or refuse to speak to his constituents, and I think that distinguishes him from Puffy."

I said that when I see Puffy on television or read an interview with him in *The New York Times* that he seems to me to be simply a self-indulgent mama's boy.

"And Tupac, by contrast," said Professor Dyson, "was quite a serious person. He was capable of reading broadly and widely and taking that learning as the basis of his narratives, the stories he told, and what he communicated, and I think that was very, very powerful."

Did Professor Dyson ever imagine how Tupac might have done had he, like Dyson, been able to go to Princeton? "Well, he certainly had the brain for it. That's absolutely true. That is a funny question, imagining Tupac at Princeton, because some might argue that, 'Well, you know, Dyson was there, and that was close enough for us.' So in terms of rising from that ghetto condition and keeping an orientation that might be marked as ghetto — or at least inclined to be empathetic to the inner city — is always a hard sell in those arenas."

On the pulpit, did Professor Dyson talk about Tupac? "Oh, absolutely. I talk about hip-hop culture in general, Tupac, in particular, because Tupac was obsessed with God. And he was able to tell a story that was extraordinarily important to not only black kids but to people who were suffering and people who were engaged in the process of living their lives against the limits, and

I speak about him. I quote him often. I repeat what he said, 'Somebody help me, tell me where to go from here, because even though cry, but do the Lord care?' And so I use him as a basis of thinking about the question of the odyssey, which is the question of suffering and trying to justify God's ways before human beings."

The job question, straight up. So, you know, I certainly appeal to him in a very serious way."

I said that I thought it would be difficult to address the issue, in gangsta rap, of disrespect toward women, the "bitches and ho's issue."

"Exactly. It is. But, you know, it's necessary to try to make it complex, and also to bring it back home by suggesting it didn't start with Tupac or Biggie or Snoop Dogg. This is an old, just ancient, Western — indeed, global — tradition of despising women and putting them down. And that's not to excuse whatever they do. It's to say, 'Put it in a larger context and figure out how we can cut this out across the culture. At least they're honest about it.' We have these other quarters of America where corporate life and church life and educational institutions are just as pervasively sexist and misogynist as any other."

"Wouldn't black middle-class church folks feel somewhat alienated from someone like Tupac?"

"Oh, sure, sure."

"I would think they would feel annoyed when you mention Tupac from the pulpit."

"Absolutely. You're reading it very right. People will think, 'Why would you go into talking about something as crass and base as this?'"

"Or," I said, "talking about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s love life." (Which Dyson did in *I May Not Get There with You*.)

"Exactly. Or even comparing King to Tupac. It's a rough way to go there. And some people are quite turned off by that, and others find it at least refreshing, to a certain degree. So I take my hits and keep moving."

— Judith Moore

Highway 94 and Fortgate Road. For information, call 619-595-8030 or 619-478-9777 (GAMMY).

San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park commemorates the clash on December 8, 1846 during the Mexican War between the U.S. and

Spain, isolated by sailors and volunteers from San Diego, and California militia. A narrated slide show screens throughout the day, telling the story of the war in Mexico and California. A self-guided tour reveals the events of the battle and profiles the leaders of the forces and

also describes the lives of the Indians indigenous to the valley. The museum is found at 13800 San Pasqual Valley Road. Call 760-737-2201 for additional details. (530000000)

Villa Montezuma, built in 1887 for internationally celebrated architect and

William Heath Davis House Museum, and to be the oldest surviving structure in the new town area of downtown San Diego, the house is at 1925 K Street (at 20th Street). Call 619-238-2211 for more information. (GAMMA) (GAMMA)

Horn in 1856. Guided walking tours focusing on the history and architecture of the Gadsden Quarter depart the museum each Sunday at 11 a.m. Find the museum at 410 Island Avenue (at Fourth Avenue). 619-238-4692. (GAMMA) (GAMMA)

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Difficult Mackey and Spanish Fluff

The rest of the program was made up of Spanish music, and rather trivial Spanish music at that.

SummerFest presented two more works by composer-in-residence Steven Mackey, on two programs of diverse content.

The newly reconstituted Borromeo Quartet performed Mackey's *Ars Moriendi*: *Nine tableaux* on the art of dying well, which the composer describes as "a personal diary of my experience with my father's death, which I regard as among the richest, most profound experiences of my life."

Jonathan Saville

There was a rare instance of a contemporary composer's commentary on one of his works actually being pertinent to the work itself. The moving narrative of the father's death, printed in the program notes, helped to illuminate the daunting musical episodes of the composition, from the initial representation of labored breathing and rapid heartbeat to the final moment in which life left the body. Furthermore, the richness and profundity of the experience Mackey writes of were carried over fully into the music, and through the transcendently beautiful performance of the Borromeo Quartet were available to any listener willing to listen with an open mind and heart to Mackey's uncompromisingly difficult musical language.

If his language is difficult, making no concessions to an audience's traditional expectations in regard to tunefulness, tonality, form, and ingratiating sounds, it is nevertheless a stunningly expressive language, and Mackey's powers of invention relentlessly hold the mind fascinated. In fact, I think the purely musical values of this work are sufficient in themselves to evoke a rich and profound experience in the listener, without the aid of the highly detailed program notes. I would have preferred to imagine my private pictures and meanings, guided by the work's title, but not constrained by a point-for-point program. Most listeners hearing Richard Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* — another piece of program music about dying — respond to the emotional drama without needing a moment-by-moment scenario. Like Strauss's work, Mackey's (where any transfiguration takes place only in the son's mem-

ory of his father's life and death) is musically strong enough to stand on its own.

Mackey's *Troubadour Songs*, in which he and his electric guitar joined the Borromeo Quartet, struck me as a somewhat less perfected piece. The quality of sonic invention was as high as in *Ars Moriendi* and the writing for the instruments had the same exquisite finesse, but I found it hard to perceive where the work was going, formally and emotionally. Repeated listening would no doubt help (although there are no recordings of these Mackey compositions, and we are unlikely to hear them in concert again any time soon).

Once again, as in Mackey's *Physical Property* (performed on an earlier SummerFest program), I felt uncomfortable with the electric guitar. Some of its interventions sounded like a harpsichord — appropriate enough for a meditation on old-fashioned storytelling, but the effect would have been stronger with a real harpsichord. Other effects, such as the often repeated downward glissandos, seemed mere devices, with no particular expressive meaning. In his program notes, Mackey revealed that he intended the electric guitar as a symbol of adolescent rebellion — but that idea too seemed extraneous to the piece as we heard it, where the atmosphere throughout was one of nostalgia and melancholy.

Over the last few years, the Borromeo Quartet has made a powerful impression, and those of us who had begun to think of the group as one of the foremost string quartets of our time were distressed last season to learn that fully half their personnel would be leaving. I am happy to report that the replacements — second violinist William Federscheuer and violist Ma Motosuchi — are every bit as good as their predecessors, and (most important of all) play with the same passion and meticulousness that have characterized the Borromeos from its beginnings. One could hear the result most clearly in the breathtaking performance of the Debussy Quartet in G Minor, where the group's flawless coordination and interpe-

tive unanimity made for a musical experience of luminous beauty, at once extrovertedly Romantic and delicately introspective.

On the same program, listeners had a chance to hear the difference between an established ensemble, who had rehearsed a work to the utmost polish and expressiveness, and an ad hoc group assembled for the festival, and indeed for a single performance. The Borromeo's Debussy was as good as that work gets; the Schubert C Major Quintet, which ended the program, was very good indeed, but anyone who knows this great work has heard it played more compellingly. The problem was not with the splendid musicians — violinists Adele Anthony and Gil Shahan, violist Paul Neubauer, cellists Ralph Kirshbaum and Felix Fan. But these musicians did not know the Schubert, or each other, in the way that comes only from long acquaintance. Of course, that is a commonplace occurrence in SummerFest, but more often than not the performance has come together anyway, professionalism, inspiration, and the challenge of risk-taking over-riding the lack of extended rehearsal. In the Schubert Quintet, that was not quite the case.

Ars Moriendi was curiously placed right in the middle of a program titled "A Night in a Spanish Garden" and "An die Musik."

Sherwood Auditorium (La Jolla Chamber Music Society)

Ars Moriendi and *Troubadour Songs*: Debussy, Quartet in G Minor; Schubert, String Quintet in C, D. 956; Falla, Suite cancones populares; works by Albéniz, Malars, Rodrigo, C. de la Sierra, Granados, and Sarasate.

Serenata al alba del día (accompanied by guitarist Pepe Romero). Shahan and his wife, Adele Anthony, then went on to a bit of flamboyant fluff by Pablo de Sarasate (with Newman once again at the keyboard), *Navarra*. All three musicians played so spectacularly, and had so much obvious fun doing it, that their performance was irresistible (although few listeners would want to hear any of these pieces again).

The two other performers prominent on this program were Pepe Romero and soprano Sylvia McCar. Romero played short works by Albéniz,

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Bipolar Workout

Edgar Allan Poe disliked, to the point of loathing, "any literary work too long to read in one sitting."

Enter the *Guardian*, a new musical based on Ferenc Molnar's play *The Guardian* (1911), is an innocuous bawdy that not only misses opportunities inherent in the original, it also misses half the point.

The Actor and his wife, the Actress, have been married six months. Though hype claims that "onstage and in life they're the perfect man and wife," he's certain she's looking elsewhere (his evidence: she's playing Chopin's autumnal "Nocturne in E-flat op. 9, No. 2" on the piano, ergo, the bloom from their marriage is gone). So he'll test her. Send her acres of roses, then dress as a Russian guardsman and woo her. Now, supposedly, he's a great actor—his Coriolanus has no peer, he swears—but could he fool his wife, even for one minute?

In Molnar's play that question becomes as important as her alleged infidelity. What's real becomes as fluff as what is true. Much of the comedy, in fact, comes from the Actor's split ego, the artist and the male. If he plays the part convincingly, if he's as good as he says, he could seduce his wife and lose her. But then if he can't fool her—or if she's acting too—then he isn't that great a thespian. Either way he loses.

The *Guardian* is more an intricate design than a play. The new version, premiering at the Globe, omits much of the design after its first number. The song is a hoot. The Actor and Actress sing "Tonight Was Like the First Night" spent and swoony. But what made their earth move? You can't tell if it was recent lovemaking or their just-completed stage performance. After this moment, one of the show's best, Scott Wentworth's book drops the acting subplot, and comic opportunities as well.

Wentworth also made a change that trips over its own feet. In the original, Molnar has a third character. He's a Critic and—oh, Ferenc, you cheeky monkey!—Molnar broke the stereotype and made him a sympathetic human being. Wentworth won't go there. He changes the Critic to a playwright and makes much of the musical about the playwright's dilemma: how will he write his script? How bring them together? How end it? Although Fred Applegate gives an assured, unfussy,

and always funny performance as the Playwright, the shift of focus from the couple to the writer threatens to gut the musical of immediacy.

The score—by Craig Bohmler, with lyrics by Marion Adler—is imitation Sondheim: staccato riffs and sudden, steep intervals. The songs fit their places in the proceedings, though few linger beyond their singing.

One that does brings down the first-act curtain with aplomb. In "True to Me," the Actor and the Actress debate their situation. Two voices rage. For those who saw *Jane Eyre* at the La Jolla Playhouse or on Broadway, the singer is unmistakable. James Barbour has become one of musical theater's reigning stars. He handles his songs with majestic ease and, in "True to Me," gets a bipolar workout that dazzles. Barbour's voice is so strong and clear and elastic it even transcends the Globe's tinny mike system on the outdoor Festival stage. Everyone else sounds like they're performing in the bell of a tuba.

His voice creates a problem, though. It is so musical—singing and speaking—when he dons the garb of the *Guardian*, how could the Actor's wife not recognize him straight away? Much of the play revolves around what she knew and when she knew it ("The sophisticated will take it one way," Theresa Helburn wrote of the original, "the romantic another, and this, I believe, is Molnar's intention"). Barbour is so distinctive that all the world's disbeliever, suspended willingly, couldn't erase his obvious presence.

When it premiered in 1911, *The Guardian* fizzled. In 1924, the Theatre Guild revised the show and opened it with the Lunts—Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne—in the leads. Imagine the style they gave the production!

Enter the *Guardian* calls for the Lunts, with operatic voices. Barbour and Fred Applegate combine singing and acting. Susan Hanson, though strong vocally, makes the Actress just a petulant diva and no springboard for the role's hundred nuances. Late in Act One, she even signals that the Actress recognizes her disguised husband—a single-eyed tale, played front, that eliminates suspense.

Scott Bradley's set toys with illusion and re-



James Barbour, Susan Hanson in *Enter the Guardian*

Enter the Guardian, book by Scott Wentworth, music by Craig Bohmler, lyrics by Marion Adler, based on *The Guardian* by Ferenc Molnar
Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, Simon Edison Centre for the Performing Arts
Directed by Michael Donald Edwards; cast: James Barbour, Susan Hanson, Fred Applegate, Trey Holman, Joan Ryan, Vicki Van Tassel, Jamie Torrellini; scenic design, Scott Bradley; costumes, B. Modern; lighting, Robert Jerald; sound, Paul Peterson; choreography, Dan Mojica; musical direction, James Valerich
Playing through October 13; Tuesday through Saturday at 8:00 p.m. Sunday at 7:00 p.m. Matinee Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. For information call 619-239-2255.

Quoth the Raven, one-acts based on stories by Edgar Allan Poe
Sledgehammer Theatre, St. Cecilia's Playhouse, 1602 Sixth Avenue, San Diego
Directed by Brendon Fox, Scott Feldsher, Michael Severance, Matthew Wilder; cast: Francis Gerke, Dana Hooley, Francis Thumm, Elizabeth O'Hara Yager, Lettie Cook; lighting, Jennifer Setlow; sound, Fox Hucks, Kneer Jerk Rocton
Playing through September 30; Thursday through Saturday at 8:00 p.m. Sunday at 7:00 p.m. For information call 619-544-1484.

ality. We're backstage of a vast, opera-house-like theater. Solitary work- and ghost-lights sculpt shadows. Flats slide on and off. Fragments of productions past painted on the backs include a male and female, nude and semi-nude, as if painted by Aubrey Beardsley on LSD. It's hard to tell how long that show ran. Enter the *Guardian* doesn't inspire thoughts of longevity either, though James Barbour performs his duties unforgottably.

If Edgar Allan Poe were a runner, he would have loved the sprints. He disliked, to the point of

loathing, "any literary work too long to read in one sitting." He was after a "unity of impression," he wrote in "The Philosophy of Composition," and if "two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed." Though he would have hated intermissions, Poe thought like a playwright, and his short pieces, which flow like dramatic monologues, beg for live performances. Sledgehammer Theatre is staging four of Poe's works. Though the results are mixed, two are definitely worth checking out.

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LAMB'S
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Inventive director Scott Feldsher turns "The Power of Words" into a SETI-like eavesdropping on heaven. The earth has "lately perished," and we hear voices from "Alderaan" through speakers. At first they're just cracks of electric energy, laughing. Later they become distinct. Otonos is a spirit "new-begged with immortality," and Agathos acts as a guide. Words, says Agathos, resonate beyond themselves. They become a creative physical power, "an impulse in the air." And even though words get destroyed, words can speak them, "with a few passionate sentences," back "into birth."

Feldsher makes hearing the voices difficult. He creates, in effect, a semi-privileged moment. Fox Hucks's eerie, spiky sounds and Francis Thumm's music—performed on piano strings, waterphone, and steel drums—intrude on the angelic dialogue and the power of its words. Dana Hooley and Thumm cast disembodied voices across the darkened stage, as we hear, or almost hear, answers that could save us all.

"The Tell-Tale Heart" was one of Poe's favorites. Although San Diego newcomer Francis Gerke does fine, focused work as the tormented torturer, you can't help but wonder what Fox would have thought of Brendon Fox's direction. Fox puts a comic rinse around the paranoid speaker and shies away from the story's Gothic elements.

Few things in theater ring more hollow, these days, than imitation postmodernism. Michael Severance's screwball staging of "The Cask of Amontillado" has those elements—clownish woman playing a man, stumbling parody of the story, tone-deaf tonalities—plus strange lapses into dead air. The result is an unfocused jumble. It's as if Severance hadn't a clue, so he pretended Poe didn't either.

The only positive in the "Cask" staging is Jennifer Setlow's expressive lighting, which was first-class all evening and among the best I've seen at Sledgehammer.

Quoth the Raven concludes with Poe's primordial fable, "Silence." The Demon describes a simple scene: a weary man sits on a gray rock near the Congo and gazes upon a desolate world. The Demon's biblical language elevates the event to an apocalyptic allegory, and the Demon's final laughter ripples through the night.

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Susan Hanson & James Barbour
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ter and moves in graceful fits. Of the four, Wilder's staging of "Silence" has the least obvious "meaning." You can't just sum it up and get on with your life. Instead, it invites you to put its pieces together and, if they don't fit, to try again. It's also a meditation on its title and the eloquence that can abide in unknowing. ■

THEATER LISTINGS

Theater listings and commentary are by Jeff Smith. Information is accurate according to material given us, but it is always wise to phone the theater for any last-minute changes and to inquire about ticket availability. Many theaters offer discounts to students, senior citizens, and the military. Ask at the box office.

The Boys in the Band

Volumes have been written about Matt Crowley's "out-of-the-closet" gay comedy-drama: how it's dated, pervasive low self-esteem, etc. "The play that started it all," the first drama to look closely at gay life, had such a profound impact that pundits ever since, to elevate their own status, have tried to shoot it down (and hundreds of playwrights have turned its structure into formula). For Diversionary Theatre, director Tim Irving, side-stepping opinions, and the play's stereotyping traps, and treats the 33-year-old script as a revealing period piece, a sad/funny portrait of gay individuals 14 months before Stonewall. Little has been written about how the play unfolds. It's a crashed party. With some of his best work to date — and with a savage, raw nerves-exposed, chilling performance by Michael Douglas (Humbert) — Irving has caught the rhythms and mood swings of an evening that doesn't go according to plan. Sharp detail — little touches, like hair creeping past short, vicuna sweaters, moans by Donovan — and strong ensemble acting create a vivid sense of lives



The Gypsy Princess

lived in real time. The production evokes an era, the "liberated" '60s, in which many Americans never felt free, even behind closed doors. Glib pick.

DIVERSIONARY THEATRE, THROUGH

SEPTEMBER 29; THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

DAY AT 7:30 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 2:30 P.M.

Comedy Conundrums

The Improv comedy troupe performs the first Friday of every month at the Comedy Center in Normal Heights. CREATIVITY CENTRE, 4716 30th STREET (JUST NORTH OF ADAMS AVENUE), NORMAL HEIGHTS. FIRST OR SECOND FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 8:00 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-280-5177.

Death Bites the Stage

HTT Productions new interactive comedy-mystery, written by Beth and Scott McMillin, is set in Texas: "You survived a massacre. Larry Tyler is looking for your underwear... and there's a dead body in the next room." SHIRLEY'S KITCHEN, 7868 EL CAJON BOULEVARD, LA MESA. OPENED END OF THEATRE. SATURDAY AT 7:00 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-561-8873.

Diva

The La Jolla Playhouse presents the world premiere of Howard M. Gould's "teaching comedy" about a Hollywood diva and the men she's in her web. NEEL KELLER DIRECTS. LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE, MANDEL WEISS CENTER FOR THE ARTS, THROUGH OCTOBER 14. TUESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 7:00 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

The Circle

South Coast Repertory Theatre opens its new season with Sonnet Street Musicians' comedy about one generation's inability to learn from another's misadventures. WARNER SHOOK DIRECTS. SOUTH COAST REPERTORY THEATRE, THROUGH OCTOBER 7. TUESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUN

Better the Goodwin

Reviewed this issue. LOWELL OWENS FESTIVAL THEATRE, 51 NORTH EDISON STREET FOR THE PER FORMING ARTS, THROUGH OCTOBER 13. TUESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY AT 8:00 P.M.

Fault Line One-A-Act

The Fault Line Players present "Your cabaret plays for only eight dollars!" — *Smythe and Jones and the Road to Icarus, Franklin's Windows, Golden Boys, and Art Struggle.* THE FAULT LINE THEATRE, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 22. FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M.

First Date

For late-night audiences, 6th @ First presents Michael Conley's comedy about gay lovers going on their first date. Jim Henderson directed. 6TH @ FIRST, THROUGH OCTOBER 6. FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 10:30 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-488-9210.

Four Play

Carlsbad Playmakers presents New Village Arts — a new professional North County theater group — doing four short plays from the Actors Studio Drama School. Mark Stephan directed. CARLSBAD CULTURAL CENTER, 3057 MONROE STREET, CARLSBAD. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, AT 7:30 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 760-739-3383.

Fuddy meen

Every morning Claire finds a stack of Word Search puzzles on the night stand. "I love search-a-word puzzles," she says. "Don't I?" She can't remember. A while ago, her brain "searched." She has psychogenic amnesia. She begins each new day from scratch. Her world looks like a vast search-a-word puzzle, and her pined tip just broke. Alice tumbles into Wonderland. Claire awakes in Dysfunctionville, where everyone she wishes they had her sense, fuddy meen. The title is kudos for the "funny mirrors" of a founhouse — asks can people change? The playwright hasn't a clue. He'd rather write a warped, entertaining show, which he does well, than face the questions it raises. The North Coast Rep's scenic design wiz, Marty Burnett, turns the stage into aggras and di-agonals, a melange of crazy angles that resembles a completed search-a-word puzzle. Director Sean Murray's assembled a savvy cast. Dan



Chicago

Gruber's hilarious as Richard, who fits from jekyll to Hyde, and back. Sandra Ellis Troy makes Gertie a host. She talks in "stroke speak," which is like getting e-mail in the wrong format. And K.B. Mercer is touching as Claire, the instant innocent, who wakes each morning to a bad dream.

Worth a try. NORTH COAST REPERTORY THEATRE, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 23. THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 7:00 P.M. MATINEE SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

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Heaven Rocks
Jason Mereshon's musical comedy takes us to rock-and-roll heavens, where "all those lived-fast, died-young music greats have entered the pearly gates." CARIBBEAN THEATRE, 2901 HWY 166 BOULEVARD (AT ROSECRANS, IN THE QUALITY INN, POINT LOMA, OPENED END OF THEATRE. FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, 8:15 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-523-5555.

The Gypsy Princess

San Diego Comic Opera presents Emmerich Kalman's nostalgic look at old Vienna, as a young prince falls for a cabaret singer. CASH DEL PRADO THEATRE, BALBOA PARK (VILLAGE PLACE EXIT OFF PARK BOULEVARD), SAN DIEGO, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 23. FRIDAY AT 8:00 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

Hold Please

Annie Weisman, who wrote *Be Aggressive*, has a new play opening at the South Coast Rep. Four women in a large corporation answer incoming calls and counsel each other. Mark Rucker directed. SOUTH COAST REPERTORY THEATRE, SECOND STAGE, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, THROUGH SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21. TUESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY AT 7:45 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change

The longest running off-Broadway musical revue satirizes "sex, love, dating, and marriage." It starts with youth and ends with old age, moving from the cup of despair using called "Single Man Drought", to a marriage ("Wedding Vows"), to senior singles meeting at a funeral ("I Can Live With That"). Directed with flare by Sam Woodhouse and choreographed with scintilla fluidity by Javier Velasco and backed up by the odd but effective combination of piano and violin, the San Diego Rep's version is a light-hearted, albeit lightweight, crowd-pleaser (they should move the show next door, to the Lyceum Space, and run it all summer). Most of the show's 18 vignettes are generic. I can relate to that story and the characters are little more than their situations: either lagging behind, or too far ahead, of love's eight ball. Some of the show's most interesting moments cut against the norm, as when Deborah Van Valkenburgh croons a country ditty in three-quarter time, "Always a Friendless," and concludes maybe it ain't such a bad thing. Through quiet insistence, expressing his talents without fanfare, Steve Cameron has become a local headliner. He doesn't have marquee looks, even wears a scruffy beard for the show, but can convince you, every person he plays is real. This includes a sensitivity-challenged stud ("Why? Cause I'm a Guy"), a father adopting his child's language, and a even flexing San Quentin convict determined to show a restless couple that marriage isn't a life sentence. (Note: due to popular demand, the Rep has extended the show's run several times.)

Worth a try.

SAN DIEGO REPERTORY THEATRE, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30. THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. MATINEE SUNDAY AT 3:00 P.M.

It's My Party (and I'll Die If I Want to)

HTT Productions' new interactive mystery takes place at Ted Sterling's birthday party. But ask his wife Ted hasn't been all that sterling, "and now he must pay!"

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Calendar THEATER

HOLIDAY INN, 2435 JEFFERSON, OLD TOWN, OPENED RUN, SATURDAY AT 7:00 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-561-8073

Joy and Marie's Comedy Italian Wedding
The Culy Theater hosts "not-so-funny" Italian wedding. Joy and Marie tie the knot. CULY THEATER, 338 WEST SEVENTH AVENUE, DOWNTOWN, OPENED RUN, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, AT 7:30 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 800-944-JOY

Joy and Marie's 25th Anniversary Party
Dillstar Productions presents a sequel to its interactive dinner-theater show *Joy and Marie's Comedy Italian Wedding*. (Note: the show plays one Friday a month.) CULY THEATER, 338 WEST SEVENTH AVENUE, DOWNTOWN, OPENED RUN, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, AT 7:30 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 800-944-JOY

A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Culy Theater stage Shakespeare's comedy of mistaken identity and mischievous immortals. 15 N. 1st St. (Downtown), directed by Old Globe Theatre. SIMON, EDSON, CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, THROUGH OCTOBER 27, TUESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 7:00 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

National Comedy Theatre
ComedySportz changed its name, but its methods (and madness) remain the same. Improvisational comedy, making up funny stuff on

the spot, is difficult enough. Years ago, however, Keith Johnstone thought it'd be more exciting if done competitively. He got the idea from pro wrestling ("where Terrible Turks mangled defrocked Priests, while mums and dads yelled insults and grannies waved their handbags"). National Comedy Theatre, an offshoot of Johnstone's TheatreSports (artistic director Gary Kramer says the two compare like "rugby and American football"), resembles an athletic event more than an improv. Teams wear uniforms and compete on AcroTurf. The night I caught the show, three San Diego comedians played a "challenge match" against players from the San Jose franchise. Using suggestions from the audience, they played "Timonall Symphilly," "Shakespeare," "Blind Line," and "Freese Tag," with judges awarding points to the best scenes. Klunkers and groaners got booed, quick wit, rewarded (it. It made for a lively, often quick-funny evening. And Gary Kramer is one talented comedian.

Worth a try.
Wagon Theatre, 3172 NOD STREET, MISSION HILLS, OPENED RUN, FRIDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SATURDAY AT 3:00 P.M. AND 8:00 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 813-295-4999

Otherwise Engaged
The Fry Theater stages Simon Gray's outlandish comedy about Simon Finch, under whose serene facade lurks a frighteningly isolated individual. Ryan Bevel directed. 419 PENNY THEATRE, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, THROUGH OCTOBER 21, THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 7:00 P.M.

Quoth the Raven
Reviewed this issue. SLEDGEHAMMER THEATRE, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

A Raisin in the Sun
Community Actors Theatre stages Lorraine Hansberry's classic drama about three generations of the Younger family, their dreams and conflicts. Jenne Hamilton directed. COMMUNITY ACTORS THEATRE, THROUGH OCTOBER 7, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

Shear Madness
Mystery dinner theater mimics the meal. The longest-running musical in American theater history is set in a unique hair salon in Mission Hills. In an upstairs apartment, someone sits exorbitant prices. Mystery dinner theater mimics the meal. The longest-running musical in American theater history is set in a unique hair salon in Mission Hills. In an upstairs apartment, someone sits exorbitant prices. Mystery dinner theater mimics the meal. The longest-running musical in American theater history is set in a unique hair salon in Mission Hills. In an upstairs apartment, someone sits exorbitant prices.

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Divi

The Pavilion
The Globe Theatres stage Craig Wright's comedy-drama about Peter and Karen. They meet, for the first time in decades, at their 20th high school reunion. Craig Noel directed. CASSIDY CARTER CENTRE STAGE, 5100 EDISON CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, THROUGH OCTOBER 20, TUESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 7:00 P.M. MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

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not found in nature — maybe on Mars — Diane Thrasher's a scream as Petals, who never met a situation she didn't yearn to control. Gerry MacKinnon, William Frederick, Megan McLeod, and Crystal Verdon (whose middle name should be "Talent") keep the show rolling, even when the script lulls.

Worth a try.
MISTERY CAKE, OPENED RUN, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-544-1600.

Sign of Four
OnStage Playhouse presents the mystery-melodrama, in which Sherlock Holmes investigates the disappearance of the Agre Treasure. Director James M. McCulloch switched graders for most roles. ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE, THROUGH OCTOBER 6, THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. MATINEE SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M.

The Soprano's Last Supper
Dillstar Productions presents an evening with the notorious Baritone family: gambling, dinner, dancing, and good old mobster fun. CULY THEATER, 338 WEST SEVENTH AVENUE, DOWNTOWN, OPENED RUN, FRIDAY AT 7:30 P.M. NOTE: THE SHOW PLAYS TWO FRIDAYS PER MONTH. FOR INFORMATION CALL 800-944-JOY

The Taming of the Shrew
The La Jolla Stage Company opens its 22nd season (and a new theater), space with Shakespeare's comedy about sewing warblers in Padua. Tim Heitman directed. LA JOLLA STAGE COMPANY, THE STAGE, 500 N. LA JOLLA AVENUE, LA JOLLA, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, THROUGH OCTOBER 21, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M. NOTE: PERFORMANCES ON SEPTEMBER 28 AND 29 WILL BE AT THE ELLEN HANSEN THEATRE, 1000 N. LA JOLLA AVENUE, CLAYTON AT 8:00 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-455-1111

Shogun: Wedding Anniversary, or, Who Wants to Murder a Millionaire?
Let's get this straight: Basil and Petals Wilcox-Smythe will renew their wedding vows on their 25th anniversary! Her, call me daff, but do they even like each other? And who invited Brenda Socrates, cosmetics mogul and Petal's worst enemy (or is she?), to the festivities? And Basil and Petal's strange son and his pal Marcello... what is that about? Not to mention lat-free and Spenes, below: buffed-out executive coordinators (Petals likes them, like "Gee, a funeral"). Turns out these folk aren't just ten kinds of whacko. The phones are down, a storm's outside, and they're suspect in a multiple homicide. Each has enough motivation to make you question not who — but who didn't — do it. Mystery: Cafe Dancer Theatre's latest has a relatively loose script and a cast adept at comedy and singing. In all, James P. Smith, one of the funniest people in San Diego, again brings suspense in multiple roles (audience, be warned): What's your witty? This guy's a pro. Her hat on a trapeze

Tamara's Tamarind
The music's great. It's by Arthur Seymour Sullivan. The lyrics, by William Schwenck Gilbert, are comic genius. And Lam's Players perform both with skill, color, and panache. *Tamara's* (the title comes from a song in *Pirates of Penzance*) begins at a break-walled rehearsal. Through a long flashback, it tells the story of Gilbert and Sullivan's collaborative, highs and lows. The format enables Lam's to stage comic excerpts from *Pirates* (1871) to *The Grand Duke* (1896) — and permits Jeanne Roth to padlock O'Leary's art-quality costumes. The cast, led by David Cochran Heath, is the outrageous Gilbert, and Doreen Ellis, as the obnoxious Sullivan, is quite strong, especially John Polhemus, born to do "patter" songs in a number of roles. The music, and lyrics are rich, but the book, by Ian Taylor, is shallow. C-S, 68.

Worth a try.
LAMB'S PLAYERS THEATRE, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 23, THURSDAY AT 8:00 P.M. FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 7:30 P.M. SUNDAY AT 4:30 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-465-SHOW

Triple Exposure: A Highly Caffeinated Comedy
Hugh Butterfield's done his lounge act at the Triple Express Coffee-



The Wisdom of Eve

mostly, with their producer, Richard D'Only Carte, and each other. Even with gobs of exposition, we never get near G. nor S. (just a rehab of the basic ad-tributes, but little depth, or how possibly the greatest musical collaboration team of all time functioned together). Backed by indelible Ciss O'Bryon on piano, the production's worth seeing, even though the book, at best, is one note.

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TheatreSports
A cross between improvisational comedy and *Family Feud*. Improv, making up a funny scene as you go along, is tough enough. Add competitive scene-making, with the audience awarding points to the winning team. Parties might balk at the ad-ventures of comparisons, but TheatreSports' "game show" is a host. The 90-minute evening uses various formats. The show I caught had "Team Sports" — two pairs of players competed, taking suggestions from the audience, and "Get Ready Theatre" — live "directors" invented scenes, using their four-in-a-row. The winner got a banana, the loser a "forked." Some at-tempts went nowhere (I repeat: im-prov is tough). I did it in my, as hindsight reveals, cawlow youth.

Worth a try.
LAMB'S PLAYERS THEATRE, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 23, THURSDAY AT 8:00 P.M. FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 7:30 P

The Reader offers \$25 for news tips published in *Blurt*. Call us at 619-235-3000, ext. 456, or e-mail your tip to chickens@ix.netcom.com

"When we're under attack...it is disrespectful to go out and play music." An insider with decades of experience in San Diego

and irresponsible." Not so fast, says Bob Hughes, co-owner of Sets 102. Using the name Robert, Hughes is also Sets' afternoon DJ. "We provided extensive coverage in the morning. In the middays and afternoon we had two reports an hour." Hughes said as a former

blurt the inside track

radio thinks it was wrong for 92.1 and Sets 102 to not air nonstop news coverage on the day of last week's terrorist attack. All the other English-speaking FM stations in San Diego carried nonstop news coverage last Tuesday. Sets and 92.1 balked at giving up music for news.

"Even if everyone else was reporting on [the attack], it is still your public duty to use the public airwaves to serve the public," said the insider. "For them to play music was disrespectful

White House correspondent from 1969 to 1971, he was uniquely qualified to help deliver the news last week. "I was the Washington correspondent for Metro-media." He filed news reports for Metromedia's chain of progressive rock stations. "I covered the early Nixon years."

Hughes said he knew the subject. "I had direct, first-hand knowledge about the Pentagon. I worked there." He thinks the other stations may have gone

overboard. "It was 24 hours of 'We don't know much,



SETS 102'S HUGHES DEFENDS HIS MUSIC

—Ken Leighton

"I gave an awful lot of energy to bands and I didn't make a penny off them," said Lou Niles about his decision to abdicate San Diego for L.A. five years ago.

From 1988 to 1996 Niles worked behind the scenes in local music, giving advice and support to Boilemaker, Gregory Page, and Rust. Officially he served as manager to local band Inc, which once was signed to Atlantic.

Niles, 34, left San Diego

five years ago out of frustration. "I moved to L.A. after years of saying, 'This band is great,' but the industry would say, 'Oh well, they're just friends of yours.'"

As host of the local music Loudspeaker show on 91X from 1990 to '96, Niles said he was an early champion of Jewel, the Rugburns, and Sprung Monkey.

He works as an independent record promoter and as a prop man on movie and video sets. "I just worked on a Hooverphonic [band] video. We went to the desert in Arizona. Here's big-time L.A. Lou Niles moving fake rocks and cactuses in the desert to make ends meet. But at least it's industry-related."

For more than two years Niles worked at the independent label Ultimatum. His 14th eight months he was a VP. Niles was responsible for signing the Incredible Moles Leroy. Ultimatum eventually released Moles' CD *Electric Pocket Radio* earlier this year but after months of delays and behind-the-scenes struggles.

A musician close to Moles said the recording sessions went significantly over budget and broke many

deadlines.

"I would have to blame the label and Moles' management more than Moles," said Niles. "Instead of standing by me, Ultimatum put me in the middle. They made me the bad guy. They didn't back me up when they were the ones putting heavy pressure on me to get the obvious radio hit out of Moles. I was trying to balance between doing my job and letting the artist create. There was a point he went around me and went to my boss. My boss painted the picture that I was the one who was being too hard."

The upshot is that Moles Leroy is still with Ultimatum while Niles left in September 2000. "I am in a situation now where, in a word, I'm broke and using any spare pennies to put into Rochelle, Rochelle (a band Niles is now backing).... Hopefully my good-guy attitude won't be my demise."

Niles notes that it is not uncommon for music industry types to manage

local talent.

Radio DJ Al Guerra took on Sprung Monkey, Casbah owner Tim Mays has assisted the Paladins and Uncle Joe's Big Ol' Driver, and promoter Bill Silva manages Unwritten Law and singer/songwriter Jason Mraz.

Niles said the relationship of blink-182 and manager Rick Devoe is unusual because blink is a successful



ULTIMATUM'S NILES SIYAS

band still managed by its first manager, a guy who did not have music industry connections.

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SAN DIEGO READERS' CHOICE
Calendar
MUSIC SCENE
blurt
continued

Got High.
Mike Halloran, 92.1 program director, said he ran a network news feed for two hours that morning but then played music with local updates the rest of the day.
"We told people what they could do on a local level, as in where they could go to donate blood, time, or money to help in the relief effort," said Halloran.
"Locally we did what needed to be done.... All the Clear Channel stations were carrying exactly the same thing.
KOGO morning newsmen Jeff Prescott anchored the same all-day news feed that was carried by local Clear Channel stations.
"I think it was ludicrous that Clear Channel had 11 stations carrying exactly the same programming. That pretty much tells San Diego whether there is a Clear Channel monopoly here or not," said Halloran.
Halloran said even though they played mostly music last Tuesday, he made

certain that some artists and songs didn't air that day.
"One of the songs we would not play was 'Bodies' by Drowning Pool," he said of the song with the chorus, "Let the bodies hit the floor." He also made it a point not to play music by the up-and-coming band Burning Airlines.
"Every song you play takes on a different meaning in the face of a national tragedy."
Regarding Afroman's "High" song, Halloran responded, "Obviously they were not listening that day. We did not play 'Because I Got High' that day and have not played it for some time."
—Ken Leighton

The San Diego Music Memorabilia Exhibition at downtown's Hard Rock Cafe is free and runs September 16 through October 31.
Prices for 1980 albums continue to skyrocket. Recent confirmed sales include \$800 for the Fingers' first EP, \$250 for the Executives' *Let Set EP*, and \$700 for the Cardiac Kidz' *Get Out*. It takes \$400 to pick up an LP by Rosie & the Originals.
"For whatever it's worth," says Bart Mendoza (local collector, rock writer, and lead guitarist for the



Shambles), "I have sold some of these for that [price] recently, so I can confirm genuine interest, especially from Japan. It'll be interesting to see what happens when more people catch on. How many of these might still be out there? Ultimately, that will decide the true rarity, but until they settle down, I think we're going to see some record bids on discs that were once extremely common around here."
Online auction sites and magazine ads (*Goldmine*, *JISCovers*) confirm sales such as NE1's 1-2-3 for \$30, Manual Scan's *Plan of Action* for \$200 (Mendoza previously was in the band Manual Scan, but he isn't the one who quoted the

\$200 price), the Penetrators' *Untamed Youth* for \$120, the Trebles' *That's You* for \$15, and a 45 RPM single by the Injectors fetched \$250.
—Jay Allen Sanford
CD review: Buckfast Superbee, *You Know How the Song Goes*, Walking Records WROZ 2007.
Hey—you GOTTA buy this CD. Gotta! And why's that? 'Cuz a portion of every sale is donated to Walking Records' Hope Through Music Foundation for distribution to various spinal cord research centers throughout the country. "Various"? Which ones? I don't know. Does it matter? It doesn't. The Peabody-

Rutabaga Center for SpineWork & Lawn Furniture (if such a joint exists) would be just as jake think we should y'know buy it...musically speaking!
(1) "Mushman" has a fine & fabulous opening riff...you'll dig it.
(2) "Fix You"...ditto.
(3) "Old Man TV"...ditto.
(4) "Feel Like Math": great title!
(5) "Junkie" is a quite realistic, quite naturalistic tune "about" heroin "diction."
(6) Under 50 minutes. (Under is always better than over.)
—Richard Meltzer

CONTRIBUTORS
Jennifer Bell (editor), Rob Atkins, Russell Reader, Kristers Collier, Ed Decker, Dave Good, Randy Hoffman, Ken Langston, Richard Meltzer, Jay Allen Sanford, Pat Sherman, Eugene Zimmerman
as the Dew Drop Inn Laboratories/Cord Division. Just as.
But why do ya really

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Blood-Filled Room

"It's a quality that has nothing to do with training or technique. It's dragged crying and spitting from the bottom of the soul."

My old friend McGonigall turned up the other day with his lovely consort. We go way back, McGonigall and me. You don't even want to know how long. He still looks great, though. That's what a lifetime of house painting will do for you, along with a number of bad things. Actually, McGonigall paints fancy restaurants in the middle of the night: that's his thing. And he does a bit of computer graphics on the side. But he's always had a gift for the arts: poetry, painting, what have you. A working-class kid from East Vancouver, he seemed to just have been born with a particular sensitivity and set of talents. In his 20s, McGonigall even danced professionally with a prominent Vancouver company. He's always been alarmingly fit, but that choreographer died him in. I think he's still seeing a chiropractor on account of it, and swabbing walls at age 50 doesn't help either, I feel certain. McGonigall met his first wife in that dance company. Their youngest daughter is now training with the Winnipeg ballet.

It doesn't seem so long ago that McGonigall, his wife, and two little girls bought a sailboat in the south of England and sailed through France into the Mediterranean, setting up in the marina at Palma de Mallorca. It was there that McGonigall fell hard for Spanish culture and its music, in particular. It was hard to keep McGonigall away from Spain after that, and in 1982 he was in Seville for a good long while as a contractor on the Expo site. I think it must have been there that his affection for flamenco grew into a lifelong passion.



El Camaron

this to say about duende:

Some artists have it, others don't. It's a quality that has nothing to do with training or technique. It's dragged crying and spitting from the bottom of the soul — a very brief moment of pure communication that takes you out of time. That moment is part of Spanish culture: the audience waits for it in flamenco as they do in the bullfight. The artist becomes what they are singing: they are there, but at one moment they disappear; they are not there — it's beyond words, impossible to describe. You are totally taken up by it then. It's that powerful.

The origins of flamenco are open to speculation. There are clearly Arabic and Jewish influences in the music, most evident in its melismatics, which

involve melodic ornament or grace notes and, in particular — with regard to flamenco — the singing of more than one tone to a syllable. I should imagine one might easily find evidence, as well, of the Arabic *maqamat* (melodic modes), any given one of which (*maqam*) has a distinctive scale, based around 24 quarter notes, as opposed to the 12 semitones of Western music. To put it all more assembly, if you've ever heard Hebrew prayer or the call to prayer by the *muezzin* in Islamic countries, you will have heard some of the roots of flamenco.

But it is with the Spanish Gypsy — the *gitano* — that flamenco is most closely associated, and specifically the Gypsy clans in Andalusia, in the parched south of Spain. Although not exclusively in the province of Gypsy culture, especially nowadays, it is in the Gypsy milieu that flamenco flourished, much in the way that the blues is a product of black culture in this country. In fact, one could think of flamenco as a kind of Gypsy blues, even containing a beat cycle of 12, like the 12 measures of the blues, and largely improvised like the blues.

The conventions of flamenco, with its repertoire and forms of expression, were pretty much consolidated in the 19th Century in Spain, and it was from the mid-19th Century through the early 20th that the music enjoyed its golden age. Flamenco is *low* music, like the blues. It's late-night music, played in bars, courtyards, on street corners, at fiestas. Flamenco comes in two basic flavors, but with all manner of variations: there is the *cante chico*, a lighter or more festive flamenco; and the *cante jondo*, or

deep song, with which we associate the great flamenco singers and their impassioned outpourings. None of the recent flamenco singers has any-

thing like the emotional force of El Camaron de la Isla, who died in 1992, at age 41, of a heroin overdose in his home village of San Fernando, near Cadiz. All of Spain went into mourning at the news of his death, even the Basques. It was a remarkable expression of collective grief. El Camaron (given the nickname because of his bony frame that was likened to the local shrimp — *camarones* — of the small peninsula island he came from, his real name being José Monge Cruz) is considered part of the Nuevo Flamenco movement, a development of the late '60s, after rock had done much to push traditional Spanish music into the background. Nuevo Flamenco incorporated elements of jazz, salsa, Brazilian music, blues, and even rock to revitalize the genre.

As has happened with all sorts of traditional world music, this hybridization with popular music has had, at best, mixed results. But flamenco, at least with performers the level of El Camaron and his equivalent (and frequent accompanist) on guitar, Paco de Lucia, seems to have preserved the purity and intensity of the older music and complemented it with some interesting new flavors. There are very able and successful Nuevo Flamenco performers like the Gypsy Kings from the south of France, but they are of a different kind than El Camaron and the raft of other superb Gypsy performers from Andalusia, performers who often come from a dynamic tradition of flamenco artists.

The three discs listed will give you a good taste of Nuevo Flamenco, and the three-CD collection of El Camaron is truly magnificent. His voice has a beautiful roughness, and his manner of phrasing shows limitless invention. All the savage feeling of flamenco is in these performances, and one really does begin to have a notion what it might be like to hear this giant in a small *café cantante* and experience something of that ineffable quality *duende*.

Camaron, *Antologia* (Mercury 532 929-2)
Paco de Lucia, *Fuente*
(Vol. 1 Imp 923 903 923)
El Sonido de Flamenco (Music Club 50059)



Gipsy Kings



Paco de Lucia

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 Olé Madrid and Biggs Productions present **Olé** on Friday. Reading at a Gaslamp landmark, this Friday Olé-style cabaret will quench your thirst with memorable ambience and an array of cutting-edge electronic rhythms and pulsating club grooves.

The Casbah
 2501 Kettner Blvd., 619-232-4305
 Step into this legendary venue and watch bands in style. Thursday, 9/20, it's Clem Snide and Steve Wynn. Crooked Fingers, Jim White and Jack's Broken Heart play on Friday, 9/21. Saturday night it's Embrocado, The Looms and The Lovies. Plastic Mold, Non Fiction, Trueman and Good for You are playing on Monday, 9/24, and on Tuesday, 9/25, it's B-Movie Rats, The Weeklings and The Mites.

The Playhouse
 4746 El Cajon Blvd., North Park
 619-264-8802
 The Playhouse provides live entertainment every Friday and Saturday. This weekend Jackie Jay and Spoon Thieves kick off Friday night's lineup, followed by Tall, Seven Train and Brick Bass. Saturday, 9/22, Mandala, Doves Machine, G-13 and Harmony 24 are layin' down the tunes. If you haven't stopped by the Playhouse yet, it's about time you checked it out.

4th & B
 345 B St., Downtown 619-231-4343
 Every Saturday is **Club Ultra** from 10pm till 4am. R.O.B. and Miles Line are performing at this weekend. Ultra has turned into one of the most popular club nights in San Diego. Make sure you don't miss out.

Club Montage
 2028 Hancock St., Midtown
 619-264-8080
 Thursday night is Karma from 10pm till 4am. You can get in free with a current industry pay stub, and once you're in you'll save some dough all night long with \$2 cocktails. Karma is now all house, all night long. The party begins with down-tempo, jazzy and deep house, and gets progressively harder as the night goes on. The Thursday, 9/20, Adam Webb and Miles Line are spinning.

Captain's Quarters
 1403 Rosecrans St., Point Loma
 619-223-2750
 Monday is **Steak Night** at Captain's Quarters. Sit out on the huge patio and enjoy a steak after a thick, juicy night. If it's not your thing then come in Wednesday for Fish Night. If you don't appreciate good food for good prices, stop by and participate in Thursday's **Paid Tournament**.

AMF
 1403 University Ave., Hillcrest
 619-264-2081
 At AMF, the drinks are affordable and the **Steak Night** menu. Come see why people return again and again.

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1. Press the 4-digit extension above the category that interests you (for example, 4001 for upcoming concerts).
2. At the next prompt, press the digit code that is next to the performer you wish to hear. (Performers without codes currently do not have recordings.)

FREE LINE
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Makina Loca (922), Siets de Corvino (864), The Gospel Revolvers (Southbound 5 (975), The Barrio Four Band, Red and the Pistons, Lady Star & the Revolver (Lasso Band (977), The Hangan Brothers (933), James Harman (910), Big Jay McNeely (609), The Brothers from Another Planet (397), The Million Dollar Playboys (607), Bob Reeves, Randy Phillips (966), Scazz (709), Del Rey (810), The Sick Dog Combo (583), Line Sunday (993), Brother Yusuf (978), The Hot Club of San Diego (978), Lee and Virginia Cortina (835), Andy Calhoun, the

Sierra Good Band, Rev, the Radio Blues, Poppy Watson (941), and San Pablo (447) and Del Rey (810), Sunday, September 29, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Adams Avenue (between 35th and 36th Street), Normal Heights. 858-492-8076. For performer bios and showtimes, visit www.gohere.com/adamsave

"The 20th Annual Adams Avenue Street Fair" featuring GoGoGo Allstars (734), Power Tied (429), the Streetwalkers (434), the Shambles (454), Pink Floyd, Doves, Gregory Page (866), Arpa Marlin (718), Billy McNeely (414), Lee Alvarado (548), Eve Scazz (763), the Bazzers (485), the Pridelines (762), the Igner Thomas Quartet, the Calabazas Latin Jazz Society, Unleashers, Serie de Corvino (864), Orquesta Nacional de Musica, the Blues Brothers, Tamek Country & the Blues Doctors (932), Shale (913), Jimmy Voss & the Blues Allstars (930), the San Pablo Quartet (641), Fred Heath & the Shakedown, Robin Hood (916), the Joe Marshall Quartet (445), Alan Singer, Jason and June (200), Allison Lunsdale, Agave (Sunday, September 30, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Adams Avenue between 35th and 36th Street), Normal Heights. 858-492-8076. For performer bios and showtimes, visit www.gohere.com/adamsave

Rich Springfield (379), Vigna Coates (concerts in the Park, Sunday, September 30, 2005 Willow Road, Alamo. 619-220-8497 or 619-445-5400).

Shelton, System of a Down (465), Remembrance (455), Blueberry, and the One (San Juan, Sunday, September 30, 2005 campus, College Ave. 619-220-8497).

OCTOBER
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

Yusef and the New Black, Shale, and Steven Wall (2335 4th & B, Sunday, September 30, 345 S Street, downtown. 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343).

The Damned (502), the Searles' Uppers (791) and Pleasures Forever: Come On and Get On, Sunday, September 30, 3100 Ocean Front Walk, Miramar Beach. 858-488-1780.

NOVEMBER
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

Edible from Chile: Jose Jay's Caffeine, Thursday, October 4, 9 p.m., 1754 Bacon Street, Ocean Beach. 619-220-8497.

James Taylor (226) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 5, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

DECEMBER
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

Church, Sunday, October 7, 7:30 p.m., 2083 Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, Ocean Beach. 858-489-2746.

Baby Schindler and the Billy: Come On and Get On, Monday, October 8, 3105 Ocean Front Walk, Miramar Beach. 858-488-1780.

JANUARY
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

FEBRUARY
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

MARCH
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

APRIL
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

MAY
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

JUNE
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

JULY
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

the Gnomes, and Tommy Castro (888) Coos Amphitheatre, Friday, October 12, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

The Young Dukes (428) Baby to Town, Friday, October 12, and Saturday, October 13, 9:15 p.m., 143 South Calles Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-6140 or 619-220-8497.

AUGUST
Bosom Buddies and the Ugly Ducklings: 4th & B, Monday, October 1, 345 S Street, 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Steve Micks (580) Coos Amphitheatre, Wednesday, October 3, 2005 Entertainment Circle, Chula Vista. 619-471-3600 or 619-220-8497.

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The Hatched Brothers Jose Sinatra and the 'Bey Dante Inferno The Skit Roper Combo Brother Yusuf
Bastard Sons of Johnny Cash Lou and Virginia Curtiss Peggy Watson Lisa Sanders The and the Zydeco
Patrol Wozniak The Revolutionaries 24: Ramon Phillips Rhythmix The Dardos Dick Sniley
Daniella Lopez and the Messes 'Hot Club of San Diego' Julie Briscoe y sus Hermanos KEV Mary Ulin
The Gospel Revolvers Scarach Stam Backs & his Groove Palunkas Marcho The Deere Johns
Bob Reeves Southbound 5 The Free Stars Brothers from Another Planet Rod and the Pistons
The San Diego Cajon Playboys Lady Star and the Bustin' Loose Band Andrew Galahar
The Million Dollar Playboys Radio Flare The Bernie Pearl Blues Band Siamese Cool Call Band
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Jazzfunknab
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Reggie Smith
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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
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800-988-4253, 760-839-4100, 619-233-9797.
The Backstreet Boys (A33) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Swirlin' 306 (The Local) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Sonic (First United Methodist Church, San Diego, October 21, 2000, 4:00)
First United Methodist, 619-233-9797.
The Fred Anderson Trio (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Trevi and **Remy Zero** (595)
see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 21, 2000
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 21, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Ellis Paul (890) and **Susan Warner** (405) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 21, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 21, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Red Piazza & The Mighty Flyers and **Eric Sardines** (969) (4th & B Street, October 19, 2000, 8:00 p.m.)
4th & B Street, October 19, 2000, 8:00 p.m.
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Blonde Redhead (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Steve Palko (815) (The Cabaret, Friday, October 19, 2000, 2001)
The Cabaret, Friday, October 19, 2000, 2001
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Terry Riley, George Brinkley, and Kristina Blunt (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Yessie W. Dore (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.



Spyns Gyn, September 20, Humphrey's Concerts by the Bay

Teal and Tricky (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
George Benson (604) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
The Drunk Murphy (481) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Mark & The Tiger Army (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Frankie & The Bopcats (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.

South Coast (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
The Anniversary (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Jaguars (354) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
The Widows (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
New Found Glory (304) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Trii (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
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619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Watermark (877) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
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619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Neil Diamond (616) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Donna Krall (645) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
Kevin Burke (864) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
The Pogues (283) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000
619-233-9797 or 619-233-9797.
The Mother Hips (619) (see Amphitheater, Saturday, October 20, 2000)
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ANNUAL 33 CHRIS TORRES BAND WIDE BAND
Saturday, September 22, 8 p.m.
Chris Torres Band
619-233-9797

TANGO DANCING
Tuesday, September 25, 7 p.m.
Tango Dancing
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WEDNESDAY TUESDAYS
Wednesday, September 26
Wednesday
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FISH AND THE SEAWEEDS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22
TOMCAT COURTNEY

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
HOOCHIE COOCHIE MEN

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EXTENSION 4002
ALTERNATIVE

371. **Abie Minded Poets:** Victor's Restaurant & Bar.
372. **B-Movie Kato:** The Cobalt.
373. **Buckin' & Muskrat:** Attar.
374. **Brickbat:** Back By Back.
375. **The Briefs:** Comes Bar and Grill.
376. **Brothers From Another Planet:** Dream Street.

377. **Channel One:** Dream Street.
378. **Cyber's Blue:** Victor's Restaurant & Bar.
379. **Cover Space:** Back By Back.
380. **Crooked Fingers:** The Cobalt.
381. **Dreamers:** Comes Bar and Grill.
382. **The Doves:** Back By Back.
383. **8 Ball Rock:** Comes Bar and Grill.
384. **The Endurocks:** The Cobalt.
385. **Film Noir:** Dream Street.
386. **Five Years Later:** Epicure.
387. **Flam:** Epicure.
388. **Frequency Organization:** Jeff's Inn (La Mesa).
389. **Friday:** Jeff's Inn (Escondido).
390. **The Ghost Town Deputies:** Dream Street.
391. **Gladiators:** Blind Motors.
392. **Goats:** Jeff's Inn (La Mesa).
393. **The Gungame Invasion:** Westside.
394. **The Good Chics:** Poppy's Sports Bar and Grill.
395. **Good For You:** The Cobalt.
396. **Government Grooves:** Martin Ranch (Encinitas).
397. **Honey Buckers:** Ice Lee's Lounge.
398. **Hot Monkey Love:** Dream Street.
399. **Joe Smackley:** Dream Street.
400. **Living Legends:** Epicure.

401. **The Lobster Tank Divers:** Bob's Whiskey Dive, Jeff's Inn (La Mesa).
402. **The Lovers:** The Cobalt.
403. **Critters Ruggler's:** Back By Back.
404. **Loose Ends:** Jeff's Inn (La Mesa).
405. **The Lurkers:** The Cobalt.
406. **Loving Dead:** Jeff's Inn (Escondido).
407. **Lovely Shave:** The Kensington Club.
408. **Mary's on Fire:** Epicure.
409. **Max Flapping Jet:** The Kensington Club.
410. **May Pole:** Dream Street.
411. **Megawatt:** Dream Street.
412. **Mission Infiltrate:** Epicure.
413. **The Minors:** The Cobalt.
414. **Movers:** Comes Bar and Grill.
415. **My Radio:** Comes Bar and Grill.
416. **No Violence:** Back By Back.
417. **Home Town:** Blind Motors.
418. **The 187's:** Comes Bar and Grill.
419. **Oldies:** Blind Motors.
420. **Our Man Army:** Comes Bar and Grill.
421. **Valentine:** Dream Street.
422. **PHB:** Comes Bar and Grill.
423. **Pigeon John:** Epicure.
424. **The Pleading Seven:** The Cobalt.
425. **The Price of Dope:** Victor's Restaurant & Bar.
426. **R.D.G.:** Dream Street.
427. **7 HBB:** Jeff's Inn (Escondido).

428. **Saturday's Child:** Back By Back.
429. **Southern Culture on the Skids:** Back By Back.
430. **Squid Your Kite:** Dream Street.
431. **Solitude:** Dream Street.
432. **Superunder:** Ice House.
433. **Syrinx Decay:** Poppy's Sports Bar and Grill.
434. **T.S.O.L.:** Comes Bar and Grill.
435. **Three Against One:** Comes Bar and Grill.
436. **The Thunders:** Chaser Cocktails.
437. **Thrash:** Chaser Cocktails.
438. **Time Sluts:** The Cobalt.
439. **Traverse:** The Cobalt.
440. **Trick West:** Epicure.
441. **Triple Crown:** Dream Street.
442. **Wish You Were:** Chaser Cocktails.
443. **Wine:** Back By Back.
444. **The Woodlarks:** The Cobalt.
445. **John Wilder:** Jeff's Inn (Escondido).

446. **Steve Wynn:** The Cobalt.
447. **EXTENSION 4003**
ROCK

448. **The Abuse:** Comes Bar and Grill.
449. **Animal 32:** Ice Lee's Lounge.
450. **The Atomic Punk:** Comes Bar and Grill.
451. **Baby Delaney:** Ice's Place.
452. **Bandwits:** Ice Lee's Lounge.
453. **Barstender's Bible:** The Cobalt.
454. **Baywatch:** Back By Back.
455. **The Big One:** Poppy's Sports Bar and Grill.
456. **Big Previews:** Dream Street.
457. **Big Rig Delaney:** Ice Lee's Lounge.
458. **Blind Lads:** Second Wind (San Marcos).
459. **Booms:** Surf N' Saddle.
460. **Bottomland:** Poppy's Sports Bar and Grill.
461. **Bottomland:** Poppy's Sports Bar and Grill.
462. **The Classic Rockers:** Punk's R.I.
463. **Compass:** Steam Boats Chicks.
464. **The Dams Dirty Apex:** Victor's Restaurant & Bar.

465. **The Day After:** The Cobalt.
466. **The Experience:** Jeff's Inn (La Mesa).
467. **Fast Crises:** Victor's Restaurant & Bar.
468. **The F'n Champs:** The Cobalt.
469. **Full Access:** The Pine Valley House.
470. **The Full Circle Band:** Ice House.
471. **GT350:** Comes Bar and Grill.
472. **Goodbye:** The Cobalt.
473. **Hard's Olive:** Dick's Last Resort.
474. **Hammerhead:** Epicure.
475. **The Hammerhead:** Comes Bar and Grill.
476. **Hot Rod Lincoln:** Ice Lee's Lounge.
477. **Horrorama:** Comes Bar and Grill.
478. **Identity Crisis:** Dream Street.
479. **Jack's Broken Heart:** The Cobalt.
480. **Kat U Up:** The Cobalt.
481. **Let's Get It:** Comes Bar and Grill.
482. **Let's Get It:** Comes Bar and Grill.
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Sept. 23
ONE MAN ARMY
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Sept. 24
THE ABUSE • DAEMOS
ATTEMPTING TO KILL MYSELF

Sept. 27
THE PROCLAIMERS
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Sept. 28
TRIPLE CIRCUS • SEVERELY MISUNDERSTOOD
THE WIDE BAND • RICKSIA

Sept. 30
THE REVELATIONS
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MIXMASTER MIKE
SWOLLER MEMBERS

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44 DOUBLE D • 11 O'CLOCK TICK TACK

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BOB SCHNEIDER • IKE RILEY

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Calendar MUSIC SCENE

UNDERGROUND DANCE CLUBS

If you would like to have your underground dance club or event included, fax information to: 619-441-1800, attention: Scott Ellis, e-mail: scott@calnet.com, or call: 619-235-3000 ext. 261, night or day by 5:00 p.m. Friday, the week prior to publication. The listings are free.

Chive: Fridays, 101 Paralled, Melanias, downtown music, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., 508 Fourth Avenue, downtown, 619-232-4483, info line: 619-441-1800.

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Club 101: Fridays, 101 Paralled, Melanias, downtown music, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., 508 Fourth Avenue, downtown, 619-232-4483, info line: 619-441-1800.

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www.pajamar.com/schedule
Club 911: Fridays and Saturdays, Top 40, house, and trance, 2000+ capacity multi-level venue, 18 and up, Red Mill Entertainment Complex, 1340 Broadway, El Cajon. Recorded info, 619-441-1800.

Club Retro: Tuesdays, DJ Dementia and Esoterica spin the best of '80s and '90s new wave, synthpop, industrial dance, and more. The Brain Bar, 3796 44th Avenue, Hillcrest, 619-298-2233, www.pajamar.com.

Club Rio Nile: Saturdays, on first dance floor, DJ Mike and Junior spin top-40, old-school, and more, second dance floor, hands-on music with DJ Peterson alternating with live band. Mages, 4943 Home Avenue, San Diego. Recorded info, 619-903-7480.

Club Tropics: Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, too cool to be left out, guests spin top-40, Latin, old-school, and reggae. Wednesday, October 31, Halloween spin, 281 Northside Road, San Marcos, 760-737-9402.

Club Ultra: Saturdays, super-hot guest DJs, a mix of hip-hop, R&B, and more, 101 Paralled, Melanias, downtown music, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., 508 Fourth Avenue, downtown, 619-232-4483, info line: 619-441-1800.

Club Vibe: Fridays, 101 Paralled, Melanias, downtown music, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., 508 Fourth Avenue, downtown, 619-232-4483, info line: 619-441-1800.

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NOTE

BY WILLIAM CRAIN

Punk rock inspired almost as many filmmakers as it did musicians. The best documentaries about the movement can be almost as exciting as the music. Even the worst are better than listening to aging hippies brag about dropping acid at Woodstock.

Last year's *Rage: 20 Years of Punk Rock West Coast Style* isn't a great film, but it does have some great moments. And just about all of them come when **TSOL** singer **Jack Grisham** is onscreen. Interviewed on a beach, Grisham is still boyish looking and more amiable than ever. At one point, he compares his experience in punk to that of a young kid who won't stop jumping on his parents' bed until he falls off and cracks his head. 80's slush before he has seen his face

he can go? It's a telling comment on the West Coast punk scene, which was younger and more violent than those in New York or London. It also says a lot about TSOL, a band that never looked before it leapt.

TSOL, (sometimes listed as True Sounds of Liberty) began in Orange County in 1978 and spent the '80s switching from political punk to hardcore to death rock to psychedelia to bluesy metal, adopting a different style on practically every release. Grisham even changed his name almost every time he wrote a new set of credits. He tells the makers of *Rage* that's because punk dismantled the cult of the rock star — it didn't matter who was on the record. That may have been part of the reason, but it seems more likely that Grisham was just having some fun. That playfulness is what makes punk still listenable and authentic after all these years.

TSOL: Cane Bar and Grill, Sunday, September 23, 7 p.m., 858-488-1780, \$12.



TSOL

One Man Army: the Briefs, and Los Vainos open.
To hear a sample of **TSOL**, call 619-233-9797, wait for the prompt, then punch in ext. 42081.

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The many faces of Tori
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Calendar MUSIC SCENE

Brian Karwin, contemporary, Sunday, 10 am to 1 pm, *Ned Leland*, jazz.

Mocho Marketplace, 1020 West San Marcos Boulevard, San Marcos, 760-740-2112, Friday, 7:30 pm to 10:30 pm, *Downbeat*, folk.

Nelms Bar and Grill, 300 Carlsbad Village Drive, Carlsbad, 760-728-4131, Call club for information.

The Rainforest, 755 Raintree Drive, Ramona, 760-788-1944, Friday, 8 pm to 10 pm, *Steel Wave*, contemporary.

The Roadhouse, 2102 Main Street, Big Bear City, 909-866-1111, Saturday, 10 pm to 1:30 am, *Natural Selection*, pop, dance.

Ron's Red Eye Saloon, 1448 South Mission Road, Fallbrook, 760-728-4881, Friday and Saturday, *Nite Express*, country.

Solana Beach Coffee Company, 437 South Highway 101, Solana Beach, 858-792-1553, Sunday, 11 am to 2 pm, *Tim Maguire*, jazz.

Surf N' Saddle, 123 West Plaza Street (between Santa Fe and Highway 101), Solana Beach, 858-755-9474, Friday, 10 pm, *Don't Know*, rock, jazz.

Tonika Bar & Grill, 87 Encinitas Boulevard, Encinitas, 760-833-3847, Friday, 10 pm, *Don't Know*, blues, rock, Andy Villa: blues, Brazilian jazz.

Wednesday, 6 pm, *Kate Messeri*, classic/Flamenco guitar or *Rafael Chaz*, Japanese koto music.

Valentine's, 11828 Rancho Bernardo Road, Rancho Bernardo, 858-451-1200, Friday, 6:30 pm to 10:30 pm, and Saturday, 6 pm to 10 pm, *Dennis Fennell and Company East*, jazz.

Victoria Station Pub, 315 South Highway 101, Solana Beach, 858-481-1950, Saturday, 7 pm to 10 pm, *Geste in the Big Celtic folk*.

Wildwood Restaurant, 1433 South Mission Road, Fallbrook, 760-728-4131, Call club for information.

Beaches

Blind Melon, 710 Garret Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-483-7844, Thursday, *Waka* bar with *Lighter*, rock, Friday, *Melton*, *Chadspoon*, and guests, Saturday, 4 pm to 7 pm, *Freddie*, 8 pm, *the Revolutions*, reggae.

Don't Know, 4 pm to 7 pm, *the Kinsey Report*, blues, 8 pm, *Cuddle*, Monday, *Lee Tyler & the Monks*, country, Tuesday, *Chet Cannon and Saturday Night Special*, Wednesday, *the Dime Store Poets with New Tada*.

Cane Bar and Grill, 3105 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach, 858-488-1780, Music is rock/alternative unless otherwise noted, Thursday, *Ball Rock*, *Three Against One*, *Suede*, *Chil*, *Revival*, and *GT 130* Friday, *the Atomic Punk*, *Yin*, and *Hurricane*, *Jenny*, Saturday, *Four*, Sunday, *TNOL*, *One Man Army*, the *Bricks*, and *Los Volans*, Monday, *My Rain*, the *Abuse*, *Professional Murder Music*, and

of NOTE

BY RICHARD MELTZER

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, led by the enigmatic Roy San Martin, has just entered *Billboard's* Top 200 Albums chart with *Kiss My Sweet & Sour Rat's Ass, Mama*, its 14th longplayer, clocking in at #179 (with a bullet!) following seven-day sales of 7,362 units, an increase of (where's my calculator?) 35.9 per cent over the previous week's retail transactions.

Adding to the jubilation is the fact that *Kiss My Sweet & Sour Rat's Ass, Mama* has jumped from #20 to #6 (with a bullet!) on the *Billboard* Heatseekers chart and, over at *Sound Week*, is #3 on the Alternative New Artist Albums chart and has crashed the Current Alternative Albums chart at #47.

Like wow.

Meanwhile, "Cooler than Toad Dookey (The Flea Fly Song)," the second single from *Kiss My Sweet & Sour Rat's Ass, Mama*, is receiving significant airplay on several radio formats—including Top 40, Alternative, AAA, AAAA, AAAAA, ABBBBBBB, and Hot A/C—across the country. A video companion to the track, penned by ace director Bimbo Markopoulos (David Byrne, Marle Osmond, the Foo Fighters), is on "Inside Track" heavy rotation on VH1 and receiving airplay on MTV2. According to *Radio Beat*, "Cooler than Toad Dookey (The Flea Fly Song)" is currently a Top 10 record at more than 50 Top 40 Adult and Modern Adult stations in the U.S. and Canada. "Protoplasm, Uh," the first single from the album, has already hit #1 on both the *Billboard* LSMT and the *Sound Week* Adult Alternative Retro charts.

Like double wow!



BIG BAD VOODOO DADDY

(To hear a sample of *Big Bad Voodoo Daddy*, call 619-233-9797, wait for the prompt, then punch in ext. 4677.)

BIG BAD VOODOO DADDY, *Humphrey's* Concerts by the Bay, Friday, September 21, 8 p.m. 619-220-8497 or 619-623-1010. \$36.

Blues Charters, blues, Friday, *Paul & Shirlene Nichols*, blues.

The Crescent Shore Grill (atop the Hotel La Jolla, 7953 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, 858-459-0541), Saturday, 8 pm, *the Malt*.

Wolfford/Holly Hoffmann Jazz Quartet, Wednesday, 7 pm to 10 pm, *Debut*, jazz.

Dream Street, 2228 Bacon Street, Ocean Beach, 619-222-8131, All shows start at 8 pm, *Moss*, is alternative/rock, Thursday, *Chanel One*, the *Ghost Town* Deputies, *Jim Sandwick*, and *Megared*, Friday, *May Pale*, *Volsider*, *Gila*, and *Film Noir*, Saturday, *Triple Cross*, *Spent Your Kid*, *Schulze*, and *Ed G*, Sunday, *Brothers From Another Planet*, *Hot*.

Monkey Love, and *Subside*, Tuesday, *Marquise Pagoudas*, Wednesday, *Big Ponder*, and *Rambs*.

Calico, 5660 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, 858-551-8610, Sunday, *Pan the Pans*, folk, Tuesday, the *Christopher Adler Trio*, jazz, Wednesday, *Forward Funk*.

Honey's Tavern (P.B.), 4650 Mission Boulevard, Pacific Beach, 858-483-8847, Friday, *Solent*, rock, Saturday, the *O'Brien Brothers*, Irish folk.

The Hyatt Inn, 1441 Quivira Road, Mission Bay, 619-224-1234, Wednesday and Thursday, 7 pm to 10 pm, and Sunday, 11 am to 2 pm, *Rock Jam*, jazz piano, saxophone, vocals.

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LIZA MINNELLI
MICHAEL JACKSON
SADE
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1130 Buenos Ave. • 619-276-3993 • Tix at club or TicketMaster

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SUNDAY • OCTOBER 21
3105 Ocean Front Walk • Mission Beach
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October 21

SPRECKELS THEATRE

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THE Alley
ENTERTAINMENT 7 NIGHTS A WEEK

Thursday and Friday • 9 pm
Rhythm Dogs

Wednesday and Saturday • 9 pm
The New Breed Band

FOOTBALL SPECIAL
\$1.00 WELLS & FREE HOT DOGS DURING THE GAME!

Sunday, Monday and Tuesday • 9 pm
Karaoke with David

HAPPY HOUR
8 AM-5 PM EVERY DAY!
\$2.00 WELLS & DOMESTIC BEERS
FREE FOOD 5-7 PM IN-5

Friday Potluck Noon
\$2.00 DONATION
Come and enjoy a great home-cooked meal!

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Our intimate 1,142-seat indoor theater was named
"Best Concert Hall in San Diego County"
-San Diego Reader

New Shows: Nov. 23, 2 pm and 7:30 pm
Richard Nader's Original Holiday Doo-Wop Reunion

Anne Murray
Wed., Oct. 3
7:30 pm
KPOP

Magic Theatre & Illusion Show
Starring Bradley Fields
Thurs., Oct. 4
7:30 pm

All Over Blues
The Muddy Waters Tribute Band
also starring Chris Thomas King
Sat., Oct. 6
7:30 pm

Herbie Hancock
With Michael Brecker and Roy Hargrove
celebrating Miles Davis and John Coltrane's 75th
Fri., Oct. 12
7:30 pm

For tickets, call our Box Office at (619) 440-2277 or visit our website at www.ecpac.com.
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September 22nd, 2001
We are going Global with the Funky House Groove DJ
Jim "Shaft" Ryan
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HARMONY

EVERY SAT NIGHT

Room Two: HipHop
SCOOTER
(Studio 64)

KINGSLEY
(thrusters/aubergine)

PLUS SPECIAL WEEKLY GUEST

Upcoming Mainroom Events
September 29: Mark Lewis
(ICU LA - Mixology & Perfecto Tour Worldwide)
October 6: Bee j
(Club Rubber)

PLAN B
145 Sunset Ave. Pacific Beach, Ind. 858-483-9921

WED
DJ Scott Martin
Spinning Hard House

THU
Club Lithium
\$2.00 U-Call-It's all night
Free Food & Free Pool / DJ's
Shawn Temple & Noel Reidy
No Cover w/Ad b4 10pm!

FRI
College Night
Drink Specials all night
Free Mexican Food Buffet
No Cover w/college ID.

SANDIEGOREADER.COM
Calendar
MUSIC SCENE

Java Joe's Coffeehouse, 1956 Bacon Street, Ocean Beach 619-523-0366. Friday, 9 pm. Morgan LaFey, folk. Monday, Wendy's open-mike night.
La Valencia Hotel, 1132 Prospect Street, La Jolla 619-454-0771. Thursday and Sunday through Wednesday, 6:30 pm. Barry Levich piano variety. Friday and Saturday, 7:30 pm. Kristi Rickett, piano.
Moondoggies, 632 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach 858-463-6550. Friday, Billy Madnight & the Chelone Cowboys, rock.
Pacific Beach Bar & Grill, 860 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach 858-272-7278.

Club Tremors, call club for information.

Shooters Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel, 3299 Holiday Court, La Jolla 858-633-5000. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, Jack Pollock, piano. Tuesday and Wednesday, Stephen Knight.
The Tavern, 1200 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach 858-272-6066. Tuesday, 10 pm. Wanda Ray, acoustic.
Tiki House, 1153 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach 858-273-9734. Thursday, live rock. Friday, Superblender, alternative rock. Saturday, the Full Circle Band, rock. Sunday, Chris Kelly's open-mike night.

Victor's Restaurant & Bar, 2702 North Mission Bay Drive, Mission Bay 858-490-3388. Saturday, the Revolution, Clyde's Ride, Spacemen Spiff, the Price of Dope, the Dunes.

Dirty Apes, Able Minded Poets, and Pysider.

Winston's, 1921 Bacon Street, Ocean Beach 619-222-6822. Thursday, the Wade Band, rock. Friday, Pysider, reggae, funk. Saturday, 4 pm to 7 pm. Myron & the Kampings, 8 pm. Clyde's Ride and Earthside, funk, reggae. Sunday, the Blonde Bruce Band, blues, and Standfast, Monday, Soulstorm. Tuesday, Tim Reynolds, acoustic. Wednesday, the Comango Invasion, alternative.

San Diego

Anthony's Star of the Sea, 1360 North Harbor Drive, San Diego 619-232-7408. Thursday and Friday, 5:30 pm, the Jaime Valle Bob Magnuson Duo, Brazilian Latin jazz.
The Blue Agave, 6008 Mission Gorge Road, San Diego 619-521-3194. Call club for information.

Borders Books and Music, 1072 Camino del Rio North, Mission Valley 619-295-2201. Friday, 8 pm. Andrew Hall, acoustic.

Brick by Brick, 1130 Buena Avenue, Bay Park 619-275-1156. Music is alternative/rock unless otherwise noted. Thursday, Crow Space, No Values, and Saturday's Child, Friday, Caters Buggin' with Backer and Montyphus Attar, Saturday, the Dawn. Wednesday, Brickbat and guests.

Chaser Cocktails, 3615 El Cajon Boulevard, North Park 619-280-9179. Friday, the Thumbs, Tilted, and Watch It Burn, alternative.
Club Hollywood, 1320 Fifth Avenue, downtown 619-232-2102. Call club for information.
Epitome, 8450 Mira Mesa Boulevard, Mira Mesa 858-271-4000. Music is alternative/rock. Friday, Living Legends, Pigeon John, and

Mission Infinite, Saturday, Homogrow, Tsumami Bomb, and This Camaro.

Rita's Place, 6179 University Avenue (at College and University), 619-582-6730. Friday, 9 pm, Kate of Kings and Baby Deluxe, rock. Sunday, 4 pm to 8 pm, the Blues Invaders, blues.

Four Palms Hotel/Showers San Diego, 8119 Aero Drive, San Diego 619-277-8888. Skins Lounge: Friday and Saturday, disco, funk, pop, and Latin music. Sunday and Wednesday, Ray Correa, variety.
The Garden Branch Brewery, 5010 Mission Center Road, San Diego 619-688-1120. Music is blues/wing unless otherwise noted. Friday, the Burger Men, Saturday, the Tone Kings.

Humphrey's Half Moon Inn, 2241 Shelter Island Drive, Shelter Island 619-224-3577. The Backstage Lounge: Thursday, 9:30 pm, Quiet Storm, jazz and blues. Friday, 9:30 pm, Jettie Underground, disco, dance. Saturday, Sher Cig, 9:30 pm, Viva Santana, classic rock. Sunday, 7:30 pm and 11:30 pm, Bill MacPherson and Nativ

Vibe, Tuesday, 8:30 pm, Rockula, classic rock.

The Imperial House, 505 Kalmia Street, San Diego 619-234-3525. Wednesday through Saturday, Scott McKicker, dance music.

The Inn Saloon, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard, San Diego 619-286-2101. Wednesday, 8 pm to 10 pm, workshop/concert with the San Diego Concert Jazz Band.
The Inn at the Park, 1167 Fifth Avenue, Hillcrest 619-286-0027. Monday, 6:30 pm to 10:30 pm, Rick Ross, jazz piano, saxophone, vocals.

Jolt's Joe's, 8076 La Mesa Boulevard, La Mesa 619-466-2591. Friday, Frequency Organization, Gonic, and the Experience, Saturday, Lasso End, Lasso Tank Drivers, and Ramblas.
Kelly's Pub, 6344 El Cajon Boulevard, College Area 619-286-9400. Thursday, the Memorians, pop. Friday, Evans, acoustic. Saturday, live music. Wednesday, Tommy Price, acoustic.
The Kensington Club, 4079 Adams Avenue, Kensington 619-284-2848. Thursday, Max Flapping, live. Friday, LiveLight Show and Shiner, alternative.
King's Fish House, 823 Camino De La Reina, Mission Valley 619-574-

Online Club Coupons!

The following nightclubs have valuable coupons in the Music Section of the Reader's Web site.
● indicates North County.

Blind Melons	2 for 1 cover
Brick By Brick	2 for 1 admission
California Express	Buy 1 card, second free
VIP Card	
'Canes	\$1 discount Saturday
Cannibal Bar	\$2 off admission
Club Hollywood	1/2 off regular cover
Croce's	Free cover with dinner
Dirk's Nightclub	Free cover
Dream Street	\$1 off cover
4th & B	2 free comedy tickets
● Jolt 'n Joe's	1 hour free pool
Juke Joint Cafe	Free admission Thursdays
● La Costa	1/2 price admission
Champions Lounge	
Martini Ranch	1/2 off martini
● McCabe's Beach Club	\$2 off admission
Moondoggies	\$1 off cover
Neimans	\$2 off Tuesday admission
P.B. Bar & Grill	2 for 1 entrée
Patrick's II	2 for 1 cover
Second Wind Navajo	No cover
Sevilla	\$2 off cover
Sham Rocks Shack	1/2 off cheeseburger combo
Tio Leo's Lounge	\$1 off club admission
Tsunami Beach Club	\$2 off VIP admission
Winston's	2 for 1 cover

SanDiegoReader.com

For information on advertising your club online, call the Reader's Display Advertising Department at 619-235-3000.

PHOTOGRAPHY BAR & GRILL
The Action

SATURDAY & SUNDAY BRUNCH
(served 9am until 1pm)
\$8.95 until 10am / \$9.95 10am-1pm
\$2.50 Bloody Mary & frozen Margaritas / Mimosa Special
4 LARGE... 8ft x 8ft screens
OVER 50...TV screens

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860 Garnet Ave. Pacific Beach (858) 2PB GRILL

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL
Sponsored by 912, Budweiser & Red Light with Guest DJ's, live broadcasts, lots of prizes & giveaways. Drinks & food specials throughout the game!

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Live Jazz
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Thurs.-Sat. 8-11:30 pm • No cover

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 **Barfly Trio** "Lounge Jazz"

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 **David Patrone** "Songs in the key of Sinatra"

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 **Gilbert Castellanos** Hammond B-3 Trio

Dinner reservations recommended.

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By the glass and bottle.
Open every day for lunch and dinner.
Late night dining until midnight Thursday-Saturday.
Happy Hour daily 4-7 pm (1/2-price appetizers and drink specials).

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Calendar MUSIC SCENE

1230. Friday, the Bay Area Brothers, blues. Saturday, Lucie's Night Out.
Leont's Coffeehouse, 1541 Adams Avenue, Normal Heights. 619-282-0472. Music is acoustic/folk unless otherwise noted. Thursday, 9 pm to 11 pm. Tony Turrentine acoustic folk. Friday, 8 pm to 10 pm. Judy & Co. pop. Saturday, 9 pm to 10 pm. Tyler Hillman. Sunday, 9 pm to 11 pm. Chelsea Rose. Wednesday, 9 pm to midnight. Streaming Audio. jazz.
Moments on Prospect, 1250 Prospect Street, La Jolla. 858-454-5218. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, live jazz.
O'Connell's Pub and Nightclub, 1110 Montana Boulevard, Bay Park. 619-276-5637. Friday, folk & the Seawards. funk, blues. Saturday, Tomcat Courtney & the Blue Dusters, blues.

The Old Bull, 1371 Adams Avenue, Normal Heights. 619-284-6094. Friday, Gene Warren, folk. Tuesday, Irish jam session. Wednesday, the Hunter Brothers, folk.

Pal Joey's, 5147 Waring Road, Allied Gardens. 619-286-7873. Friday and Saturday, Positive Approach, classic rock, swing.

The Playhouse, 476 El Cajon Boulevard, San Diego. 619-284-8802. Call club for information.

Poppy's Spirit Bar and Grill, 7986 Avenue Street, San Diego. 858-571-0796. Friday, 3 pm to midnight, the Big Idea, the Chris Torres Band, System Theory, Carry On, the Good Chime, and others.

Urban Grob, 1297 Park Boulevard, Hillcrest. 619-294-2020. Saturday, midday to 2:30 am, jazz jam hosted by the Night Souders' Group. jazz.

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Band, and the Wide Band, rock. Wednesday, Basins, Buzsach, and Big Rig Delano.

Tanto Muro, 4365 Executive Drive, La Jolla (Golden Triangle area). 858-597-1188. Wednesday, 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm, the Jaime Valle Bossa-Jazz Quartet.

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Good For You, Tuesday, B-Movie Band, the Windings, and the Mins. Wednesday, Rhoads, Street Valley, Kut U Up, and Goodbye, Blue Monday.

Crow's Jazz Bar, 802 Fifth Avenue, downtown. 619-231-4355. Thursday, the David Patrone Quartet, jazz. Friday, Halls Gentry's New, jazz. Saturday, Primo, Latin jazz. Sunday, Halls Gentry's New, jazz. Tuesday, the Shop Meyers Quartet, jazz. Wednesday, the Jerry Campbell Quartet, jazz. Thursday, the Jerry Campbell Quartet, jazz. Friday, the Jerry Campbell Quartet, jazz. Saturday, the Jerry Campbell Quartet, jazz. Sunday, the Jerry Campbell Quartet, jazz.

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Tommy Ann, jazz. Sunday, 8 pm to 11 pm. Steve Forward, Gilbert Castellanos, Bob Hamilton, Gurner Biggs, and Tim Proulx, jazz. Wednesday, 8 pm to 11 pm, the Alan Forster Quintet, jazz.

The Field, 544 Fifth Avenue, downtown. 619-232-8641. Sunday and Wednesday, live traditional Irish music.

Har's Cactus Ballroom, 801 Fifth Avenue, downtown. 619-234-3467. Friday, 7:30 pm, Jerry Melnick, jazz, solo. Saturday, the Jerry Melnick Trio featuring George Streetman and Phil Sterling, jazz. Sunday, the Jerry Melnick Trio featuring George Streetman and Phil Sterling, jazz.

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Parick's, 428 F Street, downtown. 619-233-3077. All music is blues. Thursday, the Big Mager Blues Band. Friday, Michele London, Saturday, Family Style, Sunday, the Classic Rockers, Monday, Rick & the Blue Allstars, Wednesday, Blue Four.

Parick's, 428 F Street, downtown. 619-233-3077. All music is blues. Thursday, the Big Mager Blues Band. Friday, Michele London, Saturday, Family Style, Sunday, the Classic Rockers, Monday, Rick & the Blue Allstars, Wednesday, Blue Four.

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Southern Culture On The Skids, Rally Up Tavern, September 26.

Friday and Saturday, 6 pm, Gordon Kohl, Kari Holmes, or Viki Frost. European and ethnic, accordion.

Island Sports & Spirits, 104 Orange Avenue, Coronado. 619-435-1456. Friday, Cope de Ville, blues. Saturday, Blue Rock, blues, rock.

Loew's Coronado Bay Rooms, 4000 Coronado Bay Road, Coronado. 619-424-4000. Cops Lounge. Friday and Saturday, 8 pm, the Jazz Trio. McP's Irish Pub and Grill, 1107 Orange Avenue, Coronado. 619-435-1280. Thursday, Big City, blues.

McP's Irish Pub and Grill, 1107 Orange Avenue, Coronado. 619-435-1280. Thursday, Big City, blues. Friday, the Offbeat, rock. Saturday, Barwell, rock. Sunday, 4 pm to 7 pm, Jay Harris, acoustic, 8 pm, the Acoustic, Monday, Steve Brewer, acoustic. Tuesday, Jim Moore, acoustic, folk. Wednesday, Gene Warren, folk.

McP's Irish Pub and Grill, 1107 Orange Avenue, Coronado. 619-435-1280. Thursday, Big City, blues. Friday, the Offbeat, rock. Saturday, Barwell, rock. Sunday, 4 pm to 7 pm, Jay Harris, acoustic, 8 pm, the Acoustic, Monday, Steve Brewer, acoustic. Tuesday, Jim Moore, acoustic, folk. Wednesday, Gene Warren, folk.

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Panda's, 9143 Campo Road, Spring Valley. 619-498-2284. Friday, Fast Cruise, rock. Saturday, Runaway Train, country rock.

The German-American Society, 1017 South Mollison Avenue, El Cajon. 619-273-7283. Friday, 7:30 pm, the Ray Barre 12-Piece Big Band featuring J. Dark.

Magnolia Hallway's, 6861 Magnolia Avenue, Sanier. 619-448-8550. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, American Made, country.

On the Rocks, 518 East Main Street, El Cajon. 619-579-5537. Friday, Saturday, rock. Sunday, Tommy Budd & Windy City, blues.

Plan Valley House, 2841 Old Highway 80, Pine Valley. 619-473-8708. Friday, the Bluebelles, blues, country. Saturday, Full Access, rock.

Vieja Casino, 5000 Willows Road, Alpine (off Interstate 8). 619-465-5400. Friday, 8 pm, Billy Watson, 10:15 pm, Tessa Russell & Coughlin, blues. Saturday, 9 pm, Denise Underwood, pop, dance. Sunday, 4 pm to 8 pm, the New Ball Game Society, jazz.

East County

Barbers Books & Music, 159 Parkway Plaza, El Cajon. 619-593-5119. Saturday, 8 pm, David Duplantier.

Dick's Nitelub, 7662 Broadway, Lemon Grove. 619-469-6344. Friday and Saturday, Serious Gaze, rock and roll.

Dan's Cocktail Lounge, 13321 Business Highway, El Cajon. 619-435-2444. Friday and Saturday, Emma Jennings, country.

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featuring
Mike Epps
Ricky Harris
Rudy Rush
plus
Melanie Comarcho
Honest John
& DJ Showtime

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 29
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Tickets: 619-570-1100 or at Concourse Bar Office, 3rd & B Street. (Blue Fish 10am-4pm) or **815-270-1055**. Ticketmaster locations including Home Records, Redwood, May, Rino Latino and select Warehouse Music locations. www.ticketmaster.com. Additional phone service charges apply.

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THURSDAY, SEPT. 20 • 9:30 PM
JAZZ & FUNK
Quiet Storm

FRIDAY, SEPT. 21 • 9:30 PM
DISCO & DANCE
Detroit Underground

SATURDAY, SEPT. 22
SANTANA TRIBUTE • 9:30 PM
Viva Santana

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Pyramid Tacos

Was a time I meandered through parts of India searching for me. Instead, I found chutney.

These days you need comfort food. Of course, up here at El Cajon and Montezuma, where I got off the number 15 bus, you expect, like, discomfort food: the usual rack of College Area greasebucket take-out. Then, yards from the bus stop, I spot a patio. Huh. It's outside the zigzag corner of a modern glass and stucco building. Place called Cafe Zia. Soon as you come in to the narrow, bright, hard stone interior, you take in wafts of spicy chicken smells. Dozens of chicken strips hiss and smoke away on the grills.

The place buzzes with university students and teachers, standing around waiting for their orders and sitting out on the patio.

The real comfort for me comes with one word: chutney. Checking the menu, I see it's included with pretty much everything. Paradise Webster's dictionary will tell you chutney is "a thick sauce of Indian origin that contains fruits, vinegar, sugar, and spices and is used as a condiment." Was a time I meandered through parts of India searching for me, like you were supposed to. Instead, I found chutney. Aah, chutney! The comforter, the sweetener, the thing that gave flavor to all those chapatis (Indian breads). Not like burning chili sauces, but gentle, forgiving. Almost like a jam, but a heck of a lot more interesting. Mango chutneys. Papaya chutneys. Don't even ask what it is chutneys.

TIN FORK
ED BEDFORD

So I'm looking to see what everybody else is ordering. Lots ask about the bagel sandwiches, tacos, and salads, but they all seem to end up ordering the wraps. Huh. I look at the menu. "Wraps, \$3.79." "It'll more than fill you, man," says this short guy with a big tall crew cut. But wait. I flip the page to the taco section. "Tacos, \$1.79," it says. Each one has a full three-line explanation. Like, "A Lot-a-Pineapple Taco: pineapple chutney consisting of pineapple, vinegar, garlic, serrano chili peppers, caraway seeds, and herbs and spices, delicately prepared with grilled onions, grilled potatoes, tomatoes, topped with mouth-watering chicken strips (marinated in a lemon sauce with vinegar and spices). Tofu may be substituted for the chicken strips." Other tacos have different fruit chutneys: "Giant peach," "Apple-a-Day," "Tropical Breeze" (this chutney is made up of pineapple, pears, papaya, and banana), and "tangerine-lemon." The "Hot-n-Spicy" is a chicken taco flavored with a Serrano chili pepper chutney. The "Not Frozen Yogurt" taco has straight yogurt over chicken with garlic, dried mint, cayenne pepper, and herbs and spices.

Man. South Asia meets Mexico! Three of those, about \$5.40, ought to fill the bill. Then I see the bagel sandwiches, with the same chutney-based choices for \$3.49. Or the wraps — ditto, except you get grilled potatoes instead of lettuce — \$3.79.

Calendar
RESTAURANTS

Or \$5.99 salads, chicken strips or tofu "on a bed of spinach, onions, tomatoes, and grilled potato," served up with half an onion bagel.

But the "Big Plate" is it. A sandwich, a wrap, or three tacos with grilled potatoes and a drink with a free refill. All for \$5.99.

"Which fills you up the most?" I ask Khaled, the young owner guy.

"They all do," Khaled says. "But I am an artist! Food is about more than filling up. It's the pleasure of the flavors, the pleasure of what you see. The pleasure of eating for good health."

Okay. Point taken. Still, I order the Big Plate with a Giant Peach taco, a Hot-n-Spicy taco, and the Not Frozen Yogurt taco. I check out the drinks. Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, green tea (hot or iced), or coffee. I go for iced green tea. (It would cost \$1.25 separately.)

When I waddle in for my free tea refill I notice Khaled's paintings and mosaics. They're on the walls, on the counter, and a kind of wavy mosaic wall turns out to be a fountain he's making. "I wanted to display my art," he says. "I have a degree from UCSD, Economics and fine arts. But art is my life. I hope to do my painting right on the patio. Kind of like performance art."

He hands me the iced tea. "Good buddy," I say, "you've already got performance art, right there on my plate."

and spicy, and the fourth, all bronze and brown, turns out to be the flat-sliced home fries. The golden pads under them are corn tortillas. The lettuce and tomatoes add green and red, and the mounds of chicken make them look like mini pyramids.

"Who'd've guessed?" I say. "Chutney tacos in Diego?"

"Well, I started out last year doing just organic gourmet health salads and sandwiches," Khaled says. "Didn't work. I kept looking at people lining up for their tacos across the road at Alberto's. So I figured, hey, if it works for them..."

He leaves me to it. And what a dream. Peach and chicken, tangy peppers and chicken, cooling yogurt and chicken, and those sweet-sauced potatoes.

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He hands me the iced tea. "Good buddy," I say, "you've already got performance art, right there on my plate."

The Place: Cafe Zia, 6886 El Cajon Boulevard, College Area (619-337-3373)

Types of Food: South Asian-Mex Californian

Prices: Tropical Breeze bagel sandwich, fruit chutney-topped grilled chicken strips, \$3.49; Giant Peach wrap with chicken strips or tofu, peach chutney, chili peppers, grilled onions, grilled potatoes, \$3.79; Not Frozen Yogurt taco with grilled chicken strips or tofu, yogurt, garlic, grilled onions, lettuce, tomatoes, \$1.79; A Lot-a-Pineapple salad, chicken strips or tofu on spinach with pineapple chutney, onions, tomatoes, grilled potatoes, and half an onion bagel, \$5.99; Big Plate, bagel sandwich, wrap, or 3 tacos with grilled potatoes and drinks, \$5.99

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"The Portuguese guys always buy the [used] whiskey barrels — the wine is good quality, except for the whiskey notes."

Carlos Lopez met Steve Petrelli five years ago. Lopez was 18, living on his own, and was starting college at Cal State San Marcos. It was driving by this place out there, and I saw this sign that said Beer and Wine Crafts. A couple of my buddies were like, 'Hey, did you ever try brewing?' We thought, 'Hey, as much as we drink, and what we like to drink...'

Crush
MATTHEW LICKONA

Sierra Nevada isn't cheap... Lopez stopped in to see Petrelli, who was at that time managing the San Marcos store for owner Audrey Eckblom. They talked shop. Lopez bought a kit, brewed a batch, and became a regular. "It costs you roughly \$20 to \$25 to brew five gallons," he explains. "I like Sierra Nevada and Sam Adams, and those will run you about \$7 a six-pack. So when I'm making it at home, a clone style of beer, I end up saving \$40 to \$45."

When wine season came around, Petrelli was like, "You know, as much as you're in here — you want a part-time job? I'm crushing grapes today, you interested?" Lopez helped out with the crush, returned a week later to press of the fermented juice, and took five gallons of wine home as part of his payment. The experience sparked dreams of one day owning a brewery or winery, so Lopez signed on part-time. He was already attending school and working as a busboy at El Bicocho and started soaking up information — from Petrelli and from the customers. He kept it up for several months and then left to devote more time to school.

That, it seemed, was that, until the spring semester of this year, in which Lopez had decided to enroll. He had also left El Bicocho, after moving up to waiter status and subsequently de-

ciding he wanted something different. He was still brewing off and on, and during one of his meetings with Petrelli (who had since bought the business from Eckblom), the man offered him another job, this time managing the store's Sante location. Lopez wrote up a business plan, Petrelli liked what he read, and in May, Lopez took over the store.

That was five months ago. Since then, says Lopez, "I've shifted it around, like, eight times; I wanted a brewer's corner."

As soon as we get those Euro-caves [wine storage units] out of here, I want to clean up the shelves and get a little area where I can set up acid-titration kits and stuff, so people can come in here and do [things like] a sulfite test [on their wine]. Displays are always cool; if you guys see you using an acid-titration kit and there's three other guys in the store, you've sold three of them."

The store retains something of the feel of a semi-private workshop — there is a sense of order, but it takes time for the outsider to discern. It helps to know what you're looking for before going in. It's a far cry from Eckblom's El Cajon establishment, which Lopez says was set up with schoolroom orderliness. And besides the jostling of merchandise, the change of store location took a toll on the customer base. "[Petrelli] lost a lot of people in the move," says Lopez. "The business has been building back up slowly."

He decided to move it over to Santee because there's no moratorium on liquor licenses here. Audrey had the idea for years to get a liquor license going. In Santee, we could set up a beer and wine import [business]. I could feature all the local winemakers, as well as exclusive import beers.

which are really good turnover. It would be a nice way to sustain ourselves in the off months when there isn't a whole lot of wine-making, and the summer months, when beer consumption is up but beer making is a little low." Lopez thinks a selection of bargain wines could also serve as a stylistic template to beginning wine-makers who weren't sure exactly what they were after.

There are plenty of beginners out there, he assures me, though he still gets visits from the old-school Portuguese and Italians who have been making home wine for daily consumption since forever. "The Portuguese guys always buy the [used] whiskey barrels — the wine is of good quality, except for the whiskey notes. They're not entering any competitions; wine is just part of their life. Which is not to say they aren't interested in fiddling with the process. Says Lopez, "Some guys put a chain inside the barrel and roll it around so that it scrapes up the inside of the barrel to extract more of the tannins and vanillins."

Many of the beginners' beginnings are coming at the end of something else. "There aren't a whole lot of younger couples making wine," grants Lopez, suggesting that young folks may not have the time to fuss over grapes and vines and fermenting juice. "Mainly it's retired gentlemen or older couples or people who have a vested interest in one day having a fully operational winery. The majority of them have their own fruit — older guys." Their vineyards usually run "a quarter acre or a little smaller. Sometimes it's guys who are just growing a really nice grape arbor."

"I get a lot of guys coming out of East County; it blows my mind how many people have little vineyards all over the place. There's been a lot of plantings in Jamul of late. A lot of them are fairly new. I haven't seen anything outstanding come out of there yet. And I get a lot of my customers from south of the border — the Valle de Guadalupe [near Ensenada], Tijuana."

For now, Lopez is waiting on ABC's decision on the liquor license, moving inventory around, making beer and wine, teaching the occasional class, visiting home vineyards to help out with crush and provide technical support, and generally enjoying the customers. "There's a great cultural mix in winemaking, which I didn't expect. I thought it would be mainly Italians, Portuguese guys, and guys who were fairly wealthy and old. But it's just about everybody and their mom." Case in point: Mike Calabro, whom I met on a recent Saturday visit to the shop. Calabro doesn't look the part of a retiring gentleman who wants to get back to the land; he works as a contractor, and he isn't retiring. He's done work for several of the Temecula wineries and hopes one day to run a commercial winery of his own. In the meantime, he buys and grows fruit from other wineries, makes wine at home, and ventures forth on the occasional pilgrimage to Santee.



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1994 *Journal of Management Education* 18(1): 100-106

Calendar RESTAURANTS

Dinner prices include soup and salad with an additive seafood dressing. Strip entrees are best. Try the coconut-stuffed halibut in pineapple cream sauce or a salmon liver's sampler of three different fish species, served "à la carte." The weekly specials can be risky: worked entrees run to old-fashioned "cannoneer American" fare. Full bar, with well-made "umbrella drinks," pitiful wine list. Champagne brunch buffet Sundays. Reservations get a view table. Noisy on Sundays. Moderate. —N.W.

SPORTSMEN'S SEAFOODS 1617 Quivira Road, Mission Bay, 619-224-1551. Fifty years in this restaurant fish market was a bona fide, part of San Diego's late lamented fishing industry. The same Sicilian fam-

ily still owns it, and still knows everything about fish and how to cook it. The menu is devoted to the "fruits of the sea" and includes a wide variety of seafood platters (shrimp, squid, clams, fish, fries, and salad). And, of course, a crispy-crunchy fish and chip platter. Eat outside on deck, contemplating the small ships on the bay. Open seven days, heartily dinner. Inexpensive. —E.R.

THREE BUNGALOW 4996 West Point Loma Boulevard, Ocean Beach, 619-224-3884, www.threebungalows.com. The very soul of Ocean Beach resides in Ed Moore's charming, comfortable historic "cottage," where the menu covers classic French bistro fare from pate to soufflé, including comfort food entrees like grandmother used to make. And like mother's the cooking is a little inconsistent. Skip the over-rated duck and head for the seasonal specials, the risottos, and, of course, the patio and seafood. When the peppery corn soup is on the menu, keep for it. A huge wine list at very low markups is a b-

cial blessing. Slightly dressy; reservations strongly advised. Expensive, but with affordable early-bird weeknight dinners. —N.W.

MIDWAY, OLD TOWN & MISSION VALLEY
ELAGAYE 2304 San Diego Avenue (at Old Town Avenue), Old Town, 619-220-0022. Reservations recommended. Wheelchair access difficult (steep ramp). You'll find upscale, unusual Mexican specialties in an intimate Spanish-style dining room or on a small heated balcony. The menu celebrates three great pre-Hispanic cuisines—Aztec, Mayan, Nahuatl—with discreet adaptations of France, Spain, and Italy. It's the history of Mexico on a plate! Among the highlights are the fire-dried Oaxacan moles (plus a south from Chiapas). Yucatecan style venison, local sea bass in

tangy jamaica (hibiscus) sauce, and a unique appetizer, *diagon calacotines*, ovals of blue corn mass topped with a sort of "mushroom" that grows on corn cobs. (In English it's called "corn smut," but it tastes much more than that sounds.) The bar stocks over 600 tequilas and makes a food-friendly on the rocks Margarita with fresh fruit juices. Moderate. —N.W.

GEORGIA'S GREEK CUISINE 3550 Rossmore Street, Groveview Square Center, 619-232-1007. This small, immaculate Greek restaurant serves food that will please anyone on a budget. Lunch is an especially good buy. All entrees, as well as sandwiches and appetizers, are prepared for takeout. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Inexpensive to low moderate. —E.W.

OLD TOWN MEXICAN CAFE 2489 San Diego Avenue, Old Town, 619-297-4330. This bustling cafe is noted for its excellent breakfast, served from opening to closing. Try also the not-so-rotated chicken, the carnitas,

or the fajitas. Open daily. Inexpensive to moderate. —E.W.

EAST COUNTY & STATE COLLEGE
BARNES BAR-B-QUE 2625 Lemon Grove Avenue (at Cypress), tucked in the back of Lippert Mart Square, Lemon Grove, 619-462-9206. The sign on the window reads "Soil Food 99 cents," inside is the homey side of good cheer and excellent Memphis-style barbecue. Pork gets star billing in a sandwich, it appears as tender chunks laced with smoke, on ribs, as luscious, multi-textured strips slathered with sauce that balances sweet smoke, citrus tang and a mild, persistent pepper BBQ sauce as a revelation, creamy yet substantial, swimming alongside rich bits of pork in a sauce that delivers a sweet molasses bite. Macaroni and cheese is gooey and generous, a mild counter to the murky, sour/salty

greens. On Fridays, you can get South-east fried catfish or red snapper, plus bush peas. Inexpensive. —A.M.

DULZURA CAFE Highway 94 at Dulzura, 619-468-5791. Breakfast and lunch seven days, dinner Friday through Sunday. Think *Grapes of Wrath*, Okies, the '30s. Dulzura CAFE is the real thing, serving big hot meals to weary westerners since 1910. The walls are cluttered with license plates, postcards, and other rustic charm. You can now camp overnight in their yard, or jack your RV. Inexpensive, open daily. —E.R.

THE LIVING ROOM COFFEEHOUSE 5000 El Cajon Boulevard, College Area, 619-286-8434. With deep-draft couches, Persian carpets, pictures on the wall, chunky wooden tables, and a tree-shaded patio, this Swiss-owned cafe is a student hangout with a lively notice board, a rental computer, and good cheap breakfast food in huge quantities. Try "The Works" sandwich, with bacon, ham, onions, tomatoes, pepper, cheese on top, potatoes, fruit, and bread. Later in the day, try their turkey lasagna with fruit and bread. Open daily. Inexpensive. —E.R.

LY'S GARDEN 6011 El Cajon Boulevard, 619-265-1885. Although the extensive menu offers Chinese as well as Cambodian specialties, it's best to order the Cambodian food. Be sure to ask for it for suggestions. Live crab and lobster as well as fresh oysters and shrimp available. Open daily. Inexpensive to moderate. —E.W.

THE MOUNT SIGNAL CAFE 1201 West Highway 98, Carlsbad, 760-557-1778. Open in Tula desert, west of Carlsbad, this 40-year-old restaurant remains in the era when Mexicans and Italians were rivals for the best bull fighters and bulls north of Mexico City. The center's mom, Maria de Jesus, who, hundreds know to be a "chefs," is a member of perhaps the only female bullfighting team ever, surrounded by hundreds of bullfighting photos, with a fine food presentation (homestyle) Mexican dishes. Keep an eye out for old maidens as you dig in. Open daily. Inexpensive. —E.R.

OWL CAFE 204 Main Street, El Centro, 760-362-5951. This classic American cafe is over 50 years old and still serves good hot-sticking food morning, noon, or night. Try breakfast special of pancakes, two eggs, and two bacon strips. For lunch, the French dip sandwich is full—include roast beef, liver and onions, and chicken fried steak. Open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Sunday. (Bar open until 2 a.m.) Inexpensive. —E.R.

SUNNY GARDEN CUISINE OF CHINA 3500 Concoment Center Drive, Chula Vista, 619-481-2388. This is a seafood restaurant (formerly Chang) with 18 chicken preparations at low cost, plus duck, chicken in lettuce cups, stir-fried smoked chicken with fried rice. The last two are appetizers. Good neighborhood restaurant in great surroundings. Open daily, lunch

The signs outside read "American-owned" and "Chuck puts it at the register." We're not in border country here, folks. But just ask for Elizabeth, a spunky black-haired Italian-American, who explains that the sign is a "joke" for the Border Patrol. For dinner, try the house-rolled ravioli or lasagna. At breakfast, "play" "traff" your own omelet" with onions, peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms, ham, sausage, bacon, or cheese. Potatoes and a smoking room add to the rustic charm. You can now camp overnight in their yard, or jack your RV. Inexpensive, open daily. —E.R.

TYLER'S RESTAURANT 576 North Second Street, El Cajon, 619-444-9297. Inexpensive and lovely. Tyler's offers a seven-page menu with Texas specialties available 24 hours a day. Big Texas breakfasts, great barbecue chicken and ribs, chili (no beans), grill, all you can eat catfish on Wednesday and Friday. Excellent bakery serves homemade pies. Go ahead, make a fool of yourself. Open every day, 24 hours a day. New branch 7848 El Cajon Boulevard, La Mesa, 619-466-9295. Inexpensive to low moderate. —E.W.

CENTRAL SAN DIEGO
ANTIQUE ROW CAFE 3002 Adams Avenue, 619-282-9750. Breakfast, served all day, offers at least 30 items. These include a variety of omelets, egg Benedict, French omelette, egg burrito, and biscuits and gravy. The portion is enough for two. Dinner offers burgers, Philly steaks, indoor and outdoor seating. Open daily. Morning hours vary. Inexpensive. —E.W.

CHICKEN PIE SHOP OF SAN DIEGO 2613 El Cajon Boulevard, 619-286-0136. You'll get lots of fried chicken, chicken and turkey pies, mashed potatoes, and desserts for \$1.99. Open daily. Inexpensive. —E.W.

KENNINGTON VILLAGE CAFE 690 Adams Avenue, 619-281-7546. This local, friendly cafe, a great favorite with the locals, is often filled with local politicians and folk from the nearby Kennington area. Try the "village breakfast" (three eggs, thick bacon, sausage, potatoes, onions, peppers, cheese, cooked tomato, and a half-pound Village Burger with fries, potato, and mushroom salad). Lighter standards include Caesar salad with grilled chicken, or a Polish sausage on a roll with sautéed peppers, onions, and cheese. Open

every day. Inexpensive. —E.R.

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and dinner. Inexpensive to moderate. —E.W.

TOMMY'S PIZZA 1164 North Second Street, El Cajon, 619-444-2676. This old-fashioned pizza house also prepares superb Italian sandwiches that include Italian roast beef, meatball, sausage, and various combinations. Call for hours. Inexpensive. —E.W.

TYLER'S RESTAURANT 576 North Second Street, El Cajon, 619-444-9297. Inexpensive and lovely. Tyler's offers a seven-page menu with Texas specialties available 24 hours a day. Big Texas breakfasts, great barbecue chicken and ribs, chili (no beans), grill, all you can eat catfish on Wednesday and Friday. Excellent bakery serves homemade pies. Go ahead, make a fool of yourself. Open every day, 24 hours a day. New branch 7848 El Cajon Boulevard, La Mesa, 619-466-9295. Inexpensive to low moderate. —E.W.

CENTRAL SAN DIEGO
ANTIQUE ROW CAFE 3002 Adams Avenue, 619-282-9750. Breakfast, served all day, offers at least 30 items. These include a variety of omelets, egg Benedict, French omelette, egg burrito, and biscuits and gravy. The portion is enough for two. Dinner offers burgers, Philly steaks, indoor and outdoor seating. Open daily. Morning hours vary. Inexpensive. —E.W.

CHICKEN PIE SHOP OF SAN DIEGO 2613 El Cajon Boulevard, 619-286-0136. You'll get lots of fried chicken, chicken and turkey pies, mashed potatoes, and desserts for \$1.99. Open daily. Inexpensive. —E.W.

KENNINGTON VILLAGE CAFE 690 Adams Avenue, 619-281-7546. This local, friendly cafe, a great favorite with the locals, is often filled with local politicians and folk from the nearby Kennington area. Try the "village breakfast" (three eggs, thick bacon, sausage, potatoes, onions, peppers, cheese, cooked tomato, and a half-pound Village Burger with fries, potato, and mushroom salad). Lighter standards include Caesar salad with grilled chicken, or a Polish sausage on a roll with sautéed peppers, onions, and cheese. Open

every day. Inexpensive. —E.R.

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50% Off Your Total Bill! 5-9 pm during BOHEMIAN NIGHTS Thursdays
With this coupon. Expires 10/1/01.
Live Guitar 6-8 pm
Specializing in Baja-style seafood favorites: fish & chips, an array of seafoods, fresh fish tacos, lobster and salads. Lunch and dinner daily.

THONG TEN QUAN 4608 El Cajon Boulevard, City Heights, 619-282-7015. Look for a mini mall with bright yellow signs, including "Karaoke Cafe." In this functional space next door to a sometimes loud karaoke bar, the basic menu — pizza, noodles, etc. — is cheap, fresh, and delicious, arriving with heaps of fresh herbs for do-it-yourself wrapping and garnishing. But there's a separate menu of house specials (you have to ask for it, or get the take-out menu and look for the section labeled "Menu

What Our Specials") on which you'll find unusual dishes from Central Vietnam that you're unlikely to encounter in San Diego restaurants. These include venison, goat, frog legs, and snails. Not everything will be available — the kitchen staff is picky about quality and price. Staffers speak very little English, but point-and-shoot works. Inexpensive to moderate. —N.W.

MAMA'S BAKERY AND LEBANISE 4217 17th Avenue, North Park, 619-448-0717. This informal little restaurant is more interested in quality than presentation, concentrating on the specialties they do well. Mama's offers

quick meals with a culinary tradition, definitely not "fast food," but with fast food prices and ease. Recommendations include the deliciously cheap flatbread sandwich in Mama's fresh-made ajil (soft flatbread). On cold days warm up to a bowl of fresh mousamas, or slow-cooked beans (farty fava and garbanzo). Try also spinach pie, falafel (crispy cheese, olive oil, and pita), and babu ghanoush (smoky puréed eggplant and hummus). Inexpensive. —M.N.

OLD MILL CAFE 1949 Olmos Street, North Park, 619-284-3804. The best kept secret in North Park looks like a Swiss chalet inside, but serves 1950s-

American eats in big platelets. Breakfast buffets should check out the pork chops with two eggs, potatoes, and toast, or biscuits and gravy, or the famous pigs in a blanket (three sausage links rolled in hot cakes with powdered sugar). The lunch and dinner menu is also good and cheap — for instance, golden fried chicken with vegetables and rice or baked potatoes. Inexpensive. —E.R.

RED SEA RESTAURANT 4717 University Avenue (Euclid), 619-285-9722. You'll find richly seasoned (and potentially very spicy) Ethiopian cuisine, served communally on a tray lined with

quick meals with a culinary tradition, definitely not "fast food," but with fast food prices and ease. Recommendations include the deliciously cheap flatbread sandwich in Mama's fresh-made ajil (soft flatbread). On cold days warm up to a bowl of fresh mousamas, or slow-cooked beans (farty fava and garbanzo). Try also spinach pie, falafel (crispy cheese, olive oil, and pita), and babu ghanoush (smoky puréed eggplant and hummus). Inexpensive. —M.N.

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Restaurant coupons and menus at SanDiegoReader.com

Restaurants with underlined offers have coupons on the Reader website. Once online you may select by cuisine or area. **O** indicates at least one North County location.

- Anthony's Fish Grotto **O**
Ashoka **50% off lunch or dinner**
Atoll at the Catamaran
Aubergine Grille
Bahia Cafe **Prime rib buffet \$12.95**
Beach Grill of Coronado **\$11 off breakfast entrée**
Big Jim's Bar-B-Q **Free pork or chicken sandwich**
Blue Crab **\$10 off Sunday brunch for 2**
Blumberg's Deli **1/2 off entrée**
The Boathouse **2 for 1 lunch or brunch**
Bollinger **Free dinner entrée**
Bombay Exotic Cuisine of India
Briams' American Eatery
Brooklyn Villa
Broken Yolk Cafe **\$2 off breakfast or lunch**
Buffalo Joe's **2 for 1 dinner**
Caffe Di Fiore **Free cup of coffee**
Cane's **\$3 off breakfast**
Cappo's Coffee House **Gourmet meal \$5.95**
Casa Machado **Margarita Sunday brunch \$7.50**
Casa Picante **Free dessert**
Casa Sanchez **Free appetizer**
Chateau Orleans **2 for 1 Cajun/Creole entrée**
Chiba Japanese Food & Sushi
Chiba Cafe
Crabby Bob's Seafood Grill **\$5 off lunch, \$10 off dinner**
Dick's Last Resort
D'Lish Xpress **1/2 off dinner**
Dublin Square
El Calfon
The Field **Free lunch**
The Filling Station **Free appetizer**
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Firehouse Beach Cafe **50% off dinner**
Forever Food
French Gourmet **50% off dinner**
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Giapocelli's New Deli **\$1 off any sandwich**
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Grant Grill
Greek Village **Free saganaki**
Gringos
Haji Baba **50% off dinner**
Hard Rock Cafe **Free dessert**
Henry's Pub
Hob Nob Hill
Hollywood Star Grille **50% off 2nd entrée**
Hornclover Grills **\$5 off dinner or brunch**
Il Forno Bistrot **\$10 off dinner**
Il Strano
India Palace
Jamar Restaurant & Lounge
Japasta **10% off dinner**
Jewel Box Bar & Grill **2 for 1 menu item**
Juke Joint Cafe **Complimentary dessert**
Karl Strauss Brewery Restaurants
Kenny B's Memphis Style BBQ
- Kiku Sushi **\$5 off**
Ki's **20% off dinner**
La Dolce Vita **30% off wine**
Lahana Beach House **\$11 off appetizer**
Las Cascadas
Lays Restaurant **50% off dinner**
Lotus Thai **25% off entrée**
Maloney's Tavern
Marrakesh **\$10 off Moroccan cuisine**
Mezzogiorno **Free pizza entrée**
Mikko **50% off sushi**
Montanas
Moonodogies
Neimans **O**
New Wharf Bar & Restaurant **50% off entrée**
North Park Deli **Free coffee**
Octopus Garden
Ole Madrid **50% off entrée**
Pacific Beach Bar & Grill
Palomino Restaurant Rotisserie & Bar **Free pizza**
Pampas Argentine Grill **Free appetizer**
The Parrot Grill
Passage to India **50% off dinner**
Pasta Espresso **\$4.75 pasta**
Raw Mana **\$5 off hip-hop sushi**
Redfish Grill **50% off second entrée**
Rock Bottom **Free appetizer**
Rolly's Bistro **\$3 off any buffet**
Roma Mia **Lobster or steak for 2 \$49.95**
San Diego Artisan Bakers **O**
San Luis Rey Diners **2 for 1 dinner**
Sanfilippo's **Pizza or lasagne for 2 \$10.99**
Saskia's **2 for 1 entrée**
Seau's Restaurant
Sevilla **\$7 off Paella Valenciana**
Shanghai **Mongolian BBQ dinner \$8.50**
Shelby's **\$14 off dinner entrée**
Star of India **50% off entrée**
Su Casa **25% off entire check**
The Surfside **1/2-price appetizer**
Sweet-N-Sugar Free **10% off any purchase**
T.D. Hays **20% off breakfast & lunch entrées**
Tamarind
Taste of Europe **O**
Taste of Italy **1/2 off entrée**
Taste of Thai **O**
Terrific Pacific
Thai Cafe
Trio Leos **Free dessert**
Toda! **10% off lunch or dinner**
Tofu House **1/2 off second entrée**
Torreyana Grille
Try Thai Cafe
Uno Chicago Bar & Grill **Free appetizer**
Vigilucius
Wild Note Cafe **O**
Yacht Club
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Calendar MOVIES

tends to raise her up rather than drag her down. Notwithstanding the trouperish contributions of Hector Elizondo (he's a Carry Marshall film, so there is performance a part for Hector Elizondo) and a non-singing Julie Andrews (now in the Prof. Henry Higgins role instead of the Eliza Doolittle), this dish of mild soul is for either very little girls or very old girls only.

CARAMEL MOUNTAIN, DEL MAR HIGHLANDS R; ENCINITAS R; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY R; GROSSMOUNT TROLLEY; HARBOR DRIVE IN; HORN TOWN PLAZA 14; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSIOW VALLEY 20; PALMA PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; POKAY 10; RANCHO DEL RE 16; TOWN SQUARE 14.

Rat Race — Half a dozen Vegas vacationers are picked at random, for the private benefit of those million dollars in a checker in their city, New Mexico. Trainee heartbreak *Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, sharing shell with *Scavenger Hunt* and *Minister Devil for Mystery*. The opening credits — an-



Our Lady of the Assassins

dated cutouts of the cast members with oversized heads — are cute and peppy; and the closing credits — actual cast members diving into the crowd at a car concert — are fun, too. In the between — with plenty of animal abuse for "dark" and "edgy" humor — is a doer, Brown Adams, John Cleeve, Wolfgang Goldberg, Gabe Gooding, Jr., Seth Green, Jon Lovitz, Brooklyn Meyer, Kathy Najimy, Amy Smart, directed by

filled: the lead singer of a Pittsburgh "tribe band" (not a cover band, thank you) gets tabbed to take over the duties of his idol in a British film band called *Strid*. In the genital fun-poking at unrecraticate corporate executives (when we hit the big time, to be replaced by unrecraticate and ungenial chiefs, sex, drugs, moral rot. (Nothing to deter the young males from the audience from continuing to fantasize.)

With Mark Wahlberg, Jennifer Aniston, and Timothy Spall, directed by Stephen Herick, 2001.

CARAMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; DEL MAR HIGHLANDS R; ENCINITAS R; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY R; GROSSMOUNT TROLLEY; HARBOR DRIVE IN; HORN TOWN PLAZA 14; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSIOW VALLEY 20; PALMA PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; POKAY 10; RANCHO DEL RE 16; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14.

Rat Race — A rock and roll fantasy fol-

Zhang Ziyi (strong opposition, rather) and very briefly (Don Cheadle, Brent Tanner) again directed, if that's the word, 2001.

CARAMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; DEL MAR HIGHLANDS R; ENCINITAS R; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY R; GROSSMOUNT TROLLEY; HARBOR DRIVE IN; HORN TOWN PLAZA 14; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSIOW VALLEY 20; PALMA PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; POKAY 10; RANCHO DEL RE 16; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14.

Rat Race — A rock and roll fantasy fol-

that's because, primarily, he takes up so much of the screen even in long shot, and secondarily because of our morbid fascination in searching for the differing sex object of *One Eyed Jack* inside the body of a whale. And in any case, he's not on screen for that long. That leaves us, for most of the way, with De Niro and Norton, and a by-the-numbers Frank photo whose main virtue is avoidance of excess. Comedy and fantasy director Frank O. Hines and *The Indian in the Cupboard*, is a confirmed movie to change his pace than to his past efforts. 2001.

CARAMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; DEL MAR HIGHLANDS R; ENCINITAS R; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY R; GROSSMOUNT TROLLEY; HARBOR DRIVE IN; HORN TOWN PLAZA 14; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSIOW VALLEY 20; PALMA PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; POKAY 10; RANCHO DEL RE 16; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14.

Two Can Play That Game — Relationship comedy starring Vicca A. Fox and James Van Der Beek. Written and directed by Maggie Greenwald. 2001.

CARAMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; DEL MAR HIGHLANDS R; ENCINITAS R; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY R; GROSSMOUNT TROLLEY; HARBOR DRIVE IN; HORN TOWN PLAZA 14; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSIOW VALLEY 20; PALMA PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; POKAY 10; TOWN SQUARE 14.

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Two Can Play That Game — Relationship comedy starring Vicca A. Fox and James Van Der Beek. Written and directed by Maggie Greenwald. 2001.

MOVIE SHORTLISTS

Call 444-FILM or the theater for missing information. Bargain showtimes are in parentheses.

CENTRAL

CLAIREMONT

Town Square 14

670 *Glenn Gould* (R) (58-274-1234)
American Pie 2 (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Deep End (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Jeepers Creepers (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Rock Star (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Shrek (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)

LA JOLLA

2700 *Glenn Gould* (R) (58-274-1234)
American Pie 2 (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Deep End (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
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Shrek (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)

DOWNTOWN

Gaslamp 15

670 *Glenn Gould* (R) (58-274-1234)
American Pie 2 (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Deep End (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
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Shrek (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)

LA JOLLA VISTA

670 *Glenn Gould* (R) (58-274-1234)
American Pie 2 (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
Deep End (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
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Shrek (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)

MIRA MESA

670 *Glenn Gould* (R) (58-274-1234)
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Shrek (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)

MISSION VALLEY

670 *Glenn Gould* (R) (58-274-1234)
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Deep End (R) (Fri. Sat. 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15)
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Horton Plaza 14

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Horton Plaza 14

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