

# WHISKY PLUS #1

*one dollar*

**KARAOKE REVIEWS  
WHY POP MUSIC  
IS HORSESHIT  
BACHMAN TURNER  
OVERDRIVE  
STUFF LIKE THAT**





# WHISKEY PLUS

## Hey there.

What's up? Thanks for checking out the first issue of Whiskey Plus. Unfortunately, lackluster design skills and a limited printing budget have left me with little space, so this introduction is gonna be brief. Basically: Whiskey Plus is a zine about music. Yes, that's pretty vague, but like I just said two fucking sentences ago, space is limited. Jesus.

This particular issue touches on mostly goofy subjects, sort of like another zine I do called You Idiot, but all of the articles in some way still are related to music. Future issues will continue to have articles in the same vein, but they'll also have more "standard" music magazine stuff like album and show reviews, interviews; things like that.

So: if you're in a band or if you run a label, or if you're just some kid sitting at a computer producing MP3s of you playing your flutophone over cheesy drum loops, send me your stuff. Odds are, I'll review it.

Also, unlike the other fanzines I do, this one will accept ads, assuming anyone out there actually wants to buy one. They'll be cheap, so just write or shoot me an email if you're interested. If I can sell a few of them, I'll be able to make future issues of Whiskey Plus 32 pages instead of 16, and the circulation can swell to 1000-2000 instead of the pitiful 500 we're currently stuck at.

Cool. Anyway, hope you like the issue, and remember to send me stuff to review. Look for the next issue in a couple months. If you're interested in a subscription or joining the Whiskey Plus mailing list or anything like that, just shoot me an email at the address below.

Later  
-Nate

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"whiskey plus music equals what can only be called happiness" -- Sarah Vowell

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# THIS IS POP MUSIC

## A LOOK AT THE BILLBOARD CHARTS



### Shit, I'll admit it:

these days, I'm so out of touch with pop music that the average Total Request Live viewer would look at me like I'm a freak freshly emerged from years chained up in a city sewer. "You don't know who Maroon 5 is?!" they'd sneer with disgust, dismissing me as an invalid before walking off to play with their cell phones and eat McGriddles on the city sidewalks.

This, however, was not always the case. As a teenager, I would spend enough hours soaking in MTV from the couch to be familiar with not just the current hits of the day, but also the current hits of tomorrow: those artists nestled within the Buzz Bin, waiting to be let free to soar, soar, soar. And, later, I would be stuck at enough jobs with degenerates who listened to the local top 40 station to be sullenly aware of the existence of plenty of the day's top artists.

But nowadays, with no MTV and no KDWB, I am shamefully out of the loop, an ignoramus with no grasp of What They Call Music, volumes one through eighteen. And so, to correct this embarrassing character flaw, I recently scoured the Billboard charts and checked out the various artists perched atop them. Sure, I presumably wouldn't like any of them, but that didn't mean I shouldn't familiarize myself with them, so as to arm myself with ammunition for potential pop-culture conversations at parties and things like that.

So, then, here is a look, or a glance I guess, or maybe just a rolled eye, at The Most Popular Music in America. (*Caveat one: I started this article a few months back, abandoned it, and then finished it up recently. So, some of the charts examined are from different times, but the songs in each period really weren't that much different. We're not talking about a shift from renaissance to baroque or anything; for*

*example, Hoobastank made an appearance on the charts during both periods. Caveat Two: Keep in mind, this is not an examination of the overall health and relevance of various musical genres—merely a look at those artists who have whored their way to the top of the heap. I am not familiar with the underground scenes of today's Country and Christian and Ringtone artists, so perhaps they're up to cool stuff. But I have no desire to dig that deep for this article—for now, we just examine the hitmakers)*

### MODERN ROCK TRACKS

When I hear the phrase "modern rock", I picture a scene from the early 1990s. In a boardroom fifty floors up, a phalanx of suited record executives are sitting with their bottled waters, listening attentively as a presenter makes gestures towards a chart and says things like "Gentlemen, this 'modern rock' genre is poised to explode. And we believe the youth demographic will respond to Schlepprock with frenzied intensity". Afterwards, full of smug grins, they all shake hands and say things like "We need to distill the slacker ethos", and at least a couple of the suits mutter to themselves as they leave "Modern rock... I like the sound of that". Maybe a cackle or perhaps a "Mwa-ha-ha!" is heard echoing down the hallway as the players file out.

To simplify, "modern rock" seems more like a product than it does an actual genre of music. Sure, maybe that's not literally true; maybe the phrase *wasn't* coined by a greasy market researcher after studying reams of focus group results ("interesting... they respond to the word 'modern' better than they do to 'fresh'"). But it sure seems like it was.

Just like "X-treme", it's something no sane person uses in conversation, but yet advertisers and marketers employ it relent-

lessly. Would a press kit for a post-grunge band circa 1994 use the phrase "modern rock"? Of course. Would an "alternative" radio station owned by Disney remind you that you were tuned in to "the best modern rock"? Absolutely. And would a guy sitting next to you in a bar say "Me? I listen mostly to modern rock". No way, unless he was a jackass.

Regardless of its origin, I figured the bland terminology—"modern rock", and its siblings "alternative", "progressive music", etc etc—had been unceremoniously retired by now. By the late 90's, modern rock music was no longer a big enough sell, and those same ghoulish record executives were by then saying things like "Nu metal.... I like, I like" upon leaving meetings.

But evidently, despite its seeming exodus from pop culture terminology, Billboard still uses the phrase "modern rock". What does it mean nowadays? Since there is no way the type of music peddled as modern rock in the early 90's would still be on any sort of chart, the definition of the phrase has presumably expanded. And, given that Billboard has no categories for "Radio Punk" and "Indie Rock" and "Watered Down Emo Shit", I'm assuming this section encompasses all of them. And I assumed right! Fuck yeah.

### Green Day - Boulevard of Broken Dreams

I like Green Day, and although this is not exactly one of their more amazing moments, I like this song too. I've noticed this band tends to choose weird songs for their singles, ignoring stronger tracks (this was especially evident on *Insomniac*). But hey- they're number one on the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks, so what the fuck do I know?

### Crossfade - Gold

The number two band on the charts, however, I am not familiar with. Based on the band's name, my initial impression is a nagging suspicion that we might be wading into



Nickelback territory with this one. More revealing is the song name—for some reason that sounds like a totally nu-metal sort of title to me. That's just a guess though; I suppose Cold is a pretty common word.

After actually listening to the song, I am struck with the somewhat startling realization that it is perhaps WORSE than Nickelback. Like NB, it is as if you took grunge and metal and poured them into a colander to remove the handful of redeemable qualities those genres possess. Then you dip a wah-wah pedal into the distilled remains and voila, you have your sound. But unlike Nickelback, Crossfade doesn't make you smile. It's just bad, overproduced dreck, not bad, overproduced dreck that transcends its dreckiness to become unintentionally humorous. (Although, to be fair, I did crack a smile when the singer said "like a drug that gets me hiiiiiiii-iiiiiiii-iiiiiiigh").

Billboard should make a new chart for this nonsense. "Today's Version of Cock Rock" or maybe "Shit You'll Never Admit to Liking Five Years From Now", and give these jackasses the king of the hill award. Utter, utter crap. If this is modern rock, I want to return to prehistoria, where I can be chased around by wooly mammoths and struggle with fire, blissfully freed from wandering wah-wah solos and inane lyrics like "It always seems to get to me / I never really wanted you to go / So many things you should have known / I guess for me there's just no hope", growled by grown men. Fucking UGH, bro. Ugh.

**I remember** awhile back we were listening to one of these sorts of bands on the radio and Zack brought up an interesting hypothetical. "What would be worse?" he asked "Being the guy who has to record bands like this every day in the studio, or being the guy who has to do the sound for bands like this every day at a club?". (Granted, this is one of those questions like "would you rather freeze to death, or burn to death?")

Zack sided with the club experience being the worse option. "Cuz then" he explained "you have to deal with all their shithead fans". While this is true, I would still lean towards the studio being the worse experience. There, you have to listen to inexcusable songs like Cold being crafted beat by beat, every riff played multiple times, the singer belting out lines like "That hate that greed that bleeds me become the speed that feed me" over and over and over again. Plus, you're actually helping create the music, so you're a co-conspirator in a sense, which is a little worse than the sound guy at a club. But either way-- what a terrible job!

## ADULT CONTEMPORARY/ ADULT TOP 40

### Hoobastank - The Reason

Other than the occasional, unintentional fleeting second while navigating my way through the muck on the FM dial, I haven't heard anything resembling "Adult" music since I was probably 12 or 13, and stuck in the backseat of one of my friend's parents' cars.

These brutal formative experiences left me with a nauseating reaction to this genre, and I have steered as clear as fucking possible in the years since. Not only is the music (generally faint strings and THUD electronic drums along with what I like to call "oversinging") miserable, but the thoughts that come along with it are equally wretched. Like: is this what happens when we get old? Do we suddenly say "Hmmm.... Phil Collins isn't that bad, actually!" Basically, the adult contemporary genre is an unholy mixture of muzak-ish string arrangements and existential dread.

So anyway, when checking out this section, I assumed the top single would be something like Lionel Richie or Michael Bolton or perhaps Mr. Collins. But low and behold, the chart topper for the Adult Top 40 is fucking Hoobastank. Yep, Hoobastank, proud possessors of the worst name in music, so bad that I've never read an interview with



them where a question along the lines of "Why is your name so fucking bad?" wasn't posed.

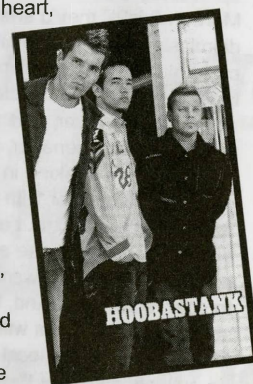
Seriously, how do you come up with "Hoobastank", and *stick with it*, even after sobering up? I picture these guys sitting around a table stoned out of their gourds, slurping on pepperoni pizza, trying to come up with a name for their recently-conceived shit band, and someone uttering the fateful words "How About Hoobastank?" which is met by a chorus of "Shit, that's it!" and "How has no one else thought of that?!" That much, I can picture. But after they get signed to a major label and are recording their debut album, don't you think one of them would be like "Guys.... Hoobastank.... Are we sure about this?"? You'd imagine they'd realize, "Yeah, that's kinda weak" and then look around the studio for a new name, when finally one of them examines the mixing board and sees a dial they like: "Crossfade! That sounds badass!". You'd think that would have happened. But no, they stuck with fucking Hoobastank.

I've only heard one Hoobastank song and I remember nothing about it other than it not being good. However, based on my faint recollection and what I've read about them, I assumed they performed some sort of unholy hybrid of stoner rock and rap metal. So what the hell were they doing perched wobbly atop the goddamn Adult Top 40 chart? It was time to crack the mystery.

The intro to this song is typical of the post-grunge/weak-metal school of things—the guy nails the Nickelback/Creed/Crossfade sort of voice, and the plodding tempo is common to the genre. It's not stoner rock or rap metal, as I had expected, but it makes sense, and when you hear the singer belt out "I'm sorry, that I huuuuuuurt you", you see how the band is positioning itself: as a rock group not afraid to share their feelings. A Limp Bizkit with some heart, basically.

But it's the chorus, not the intro, that is the key to understanding this song's presence on the Adult chart. I expected it to suddenly explode into a Korn song, everything rocking out as the singer yells "Boom-ba-wip-ba-wippa-boom-ba" or something; essentially the payoff for the weak, mellow verse. A mosh-ready part would allow the song to be enjoyed by both bros, and the bros' girlfriends. Nonsensical chorus for the former, syrupy verse for the latter.

However, the chorus for "The Reason" is very restrained, not Korn-ish at all, and as I listen to it I can totally picture a Contemporary Adult driving home from work on the freeway and not changing stations when this song comes on. So there you go: mystery solved.



### Finger Eleven - One Thing

Another Modern Rock song by a terribly-named band, this one starts off with gentle guitar plucking that brings to mind some bearded, joyful looking guy sitting on a log in a forest, surrounded by squirrels. Then the bass drum kicks in and you think: hmmm, what is going to happen next?

I paused the song. Given that I have no fucking idea who Finger Eleven is, or what sort of music they play, roughly four different things could occur at this point in the song, all of which would make sense with the intro. They are:

1. The guitar stops, or twists into feedback, and the bass drum continues for a measure before a thunderous snare hit snaps down and the singer roars "ARE - YOU - FUCKING READY?!" or "FEEL... MY.... FISTS!!!" or something like that. This serves as a "naw, we were just fuckin' witchoo with that intro. We ain't no pussies", and the song continues along as a mess of drop d tunings and howlings about being Cold (metaphorically, of course).





2. The song continues along in the same vein as the intro; rapid hippie mush with jangly guitars and lyrics about butterflies, or maybe "rollin' along" or something.

## “THAT HATE THAT GREED THAT BLEEDS ME BECOME THE SPEED THAT FEED ME”

3. The song kicks it up a notch, but doesn't pull a complete 180 as in possibility #1. The overproduction becomes more apparent as bass and a few layers of guitar join a generic rock beat, and the singer wails something like "whoaohhhhhh yeaaaaah-ee-eahhh" before settling on his junior-high-school-level poetry of choice. The song continues on firmly in the vein of This Issue's Band Used to Illustrate Shittiness, Nickelback.

4. Turntable scratches suddenly appear and the song floats along like some crappy pop-reggae song. 311 or some shit like that; you know what I'm talking about.

So what happens?

**25 seconds:** I unpaused the song. The singer says, in that voice that sounds like their face is scrunched up and they're about to cry, "Restless tonight. Cuz I wasted the light". It is not yet apparent what the song will twist into, if anything.

**50 seconds:** the song is picking up—bass has entered and the guitar is now strumming rather than finger-picking. We are now firmly in category #3, although a change to option #1 is not out of the question at this point.

**1:28:** The singer now says "Even though I know/ I don't want to know. Yeah I guess I know/ I just hate how it sounds". And then the pre-mentioned slightly-more-rocking-but-still-lame part occurs again, and I realize that's what they're passing off as the chorus. Yikes.

**2:50:** More and more and more of the same. #3 is now obviously the correct answer. This is a really, really lousy song. If I was the sort of person who would name my band "Finger Eleven", I suppose these are the sort of songs I would come up with.

## HOT COUNTRY SINGLES AND TRACKS

An interesting thing about country music, at least the modern incarnation of it, is how many people go out of their way to express their displeasure for it. How many people do you know, when asked what kind of music they're into, reply "Everything but country"? Quite a few, I'm sure, even though it's a bullshit simplification.—I doubt many of these people actually dig every genre sans country. "Sure, I love polka. Muzac, too". Right.

This rep as the Worst Genre of Music

may or may not be deserved. While I certainly wouldn't want to listen to drivel like Tim McGraw, I can't say with absolute certainty whether such a listening experience would be worse than swallowing an album by the likes of Creed, or, well, Nickelback.

Part of the reason I'm not sure is because I really haven't paid attention to the genre of country music in a long, long time, and don't have a clue what it's been up to. My assumption is that for the most part it is still planted firmly in the Garth Brooks school of things, rather than, you know, Hank Williams or Ernest Tubb or what have you, but who knows? Maybe the country hits of today are homages to the field's early days, mixing in elements of southern folk music and tackling issues relevant to the working class.

Maybe pigs can fucking fly, too, as the saying goes, but nevertheless a quick look and listen at Billboard's "Hot Country Singles and Tracks" can settle the matter. We'll attempt to divine the answers to a couple nagging questions: What Does Today's Popular Country Music Sound Like? is number one. Assuming the answer to this is "Shit", we will tackle number 2: "Is it Worse Than Crap Like Creed and Nickelback"?

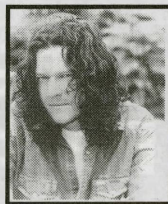
### Blake Shelton - Some Beach

As I write, the song "Some Beach" by someone named Blake Shelton is perched atop the Hot Country Singles and Tracks chart. I have never heard of him before, so I'm not

sure what his deal is, but my hopes are held somewhere less than high.

Some Beach ends up being not quite as bad as I would have expected — not as hideous as the Achey Breaky Heart school of things — but still falls short of being a wise way to spend three minutes and twenty five seconds of your life.

I guess that overall, the song makes me feel like this: I'm in a bar for the first time, the sort of bar I don't usually go to,



and I'm looking around, soaking it in as I sip on a budwesier. "Hmmm", I think. I will never go to this bar again, but being there is different in a way that is not terrible. I will finish my beer, tip well, and nod at the bartender on the way out, thinking optimistically "That could have been much worse". (However, if anyone asks me about the bar I'll sneer and say "That place sucks!!")

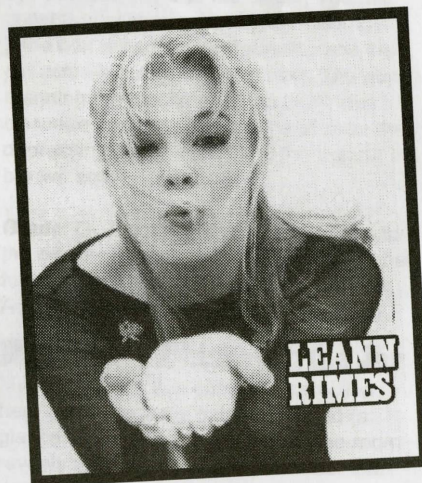
### LeAnn Rimes

#### Nothin' Bout Love Makes Sense

My only encounter with a LeAnn Rimes song was a couple years back when I was stranded in Iowa, waiting for a greyhound to drag me away from Ames. I had been awake for a very long time and had to kill another six hours before the bus arrived, so into the local movie theatre I stumbled. As I rubbed my eyes and waited for some action movie to begin, I was treated to a song by Ms. Rimes called, if I remember correctly, "Oooh, Life Goes On".

It was probably the creeping sleep deprivation, but something about the song depressed me terribly as I sat alone in the theatre, completely dark and empty save for a couple in their sixties two rows up, crunching on some popcorn together. I woke up, a little, and paused still as I cocked my head in thought and pondered LeAnn's words.

The song was supposed to symbolize perseverance over life's difficulties, displaying a "bring it on you swine, I can take it" mentality as evident in inventive lines like "shame on you if you fool me once, shame on me if you fool me twice".



But it instead leveled me with a strange sense of despondency and I was glad when it was replaced by an upbeat number sung by an animated popcorn box. I felt ashamed to be affected by such a ridiculous song; anything with lines like "And you're still thinkin' you're the Daddy Mac / You should've known better but you didn't and I can't go back" should not typically spark introspective thought and weird, sudden pangs of confusion and



panic. Granted, it probably wasn't the lyrics; just the general mood of the song and stray lines caught like "I can't go back" that coupled with my spreading delirium and impending return to minneapolis put me in a foul state of mind. Either way, my bleak mood was probably the exact opposite reaction she—or, her handlers, I suppose—intended.

But so what? The song *did* elude an emotional response from me, and although my existential ponderings in that theatre seat were due mostly to factors outside of the music, that's a good thing for a song to do, regardless of the songwriter's intent.

The existence of Ms. Rimes' latest tune, Nothin' bout Love Makes Sense, which currently hovers at #9 on the Hot Country Singles and Tracks chart, cannot be justified in the same manner. This one is a much worse composition in the sense that it elicited absolutely no reaction from me, other than stray, cynical thoughts like "Niiiiie rhyme". I mean, the other song had pretty shitty lyrics, but this one's even harder to try to squeeze any meaning out of. Check it out: "Like a cloud full of rain shouldn't hang in the sky / Ice shouldn't burn or a bumblebee fly.... The way that we dance, the reason we dream / That big Italian tower, well how does it lean?"

Although if viewed side by side on a strictly musical sense, the compositions are probably equally worthless, "Oooh Life Goes On" gets the nod in the overall scheme of things. Defenders of awful bands always say something to the effect of "Well, it doesn't matter if you think Skee-lo sucks—his music means something to me and that's all that matters", and you know what? They're sort of right. They're mostly wrong, yes, but they are sort of right. (if I was penning lyrics to a Leann Rhimes song, here I would write "And sometimes, it's the sort of stuff that count" Can't you picture it? A nice, slowly descending melody. Yeah)

Ok then! The answers to our questions are:

1. Shit, more or less.

2. Very close, but not quite. See, it's easier to ignore country music while you're listening to it; shit-hop nu-metal bullshit gets up in your face with wailing high notes and dudes yelling "back the fuck up, biitch" and so on.

## HOT RINGTONES

What are ringtones, you ask? Well, executives of major corporations have streaks of drool running down their chins over them. It's the sort of thing they love: selling you something they've already sold you before. You can buy a single song online for \$1 nowadays, but a eight second clip of the same thing to use as your cellphone's ring—three bucks! And worse sound quality to boot!

This technology will only be of interest to me when any sound clip can be used, and suddenly all over town on crowded busses we will hear "Answer ya FUCKING phone" and stuff. That will be awesomely chaotic.

But for now, these all look like generic mainstream singles, the same stuff that is plastered all over the other charts. No need to review them here. In fact, I'm getting sick of listening to all of these stupid songs so I think it's time to bring it home.

## CONCLUSION: A LOOK BACK

What conclusions can we draw from all this? Mostly broad, vague ones like "today's music is horseshit". However, a glance at another feature on Billboard.com called 'Rewind' offers some perspective.

Showing the top 100 songs from 15, 10, 5, and 1 years ago, the feature reminds us that popular music has by and large sucked for a very long time and in fact was much worse during various periods.

I wish they had a 20 year option because I'm sure 1985 would be extraordinarily embarrassing looking, but 1995 and 1990 are still interesting to look at, and offer hope. For example, in 1995, the top 10 list included two songs by Boys II Men. In 2005, it contained none. This could be considered progress.

In looking at the old charts, I would guess that for about 60% of the songs on there, no one today would admit to ever having liked them. Stuff like Sheryl Crow and Dr. Dre—sure, ten years later people still listen to those songs and display those CDs in their collections. But is anyone going to stand up today and say "Yeah, I liked that song 'Turtle Power' by Partners in Kryme"? I doubt it, even though enough people liked it 15 years ago to send it flying up the charts.

I imagine the same thing will happen in 2020. Some people will still listen to Green Day, but is anyone going to defend Crossfade and Finger Eleven? Not fucking likely. And there's nothing wrong with that.

**"Yeah, I liked that song 'Turtle Power' by Partners in Kryme"**



# STALE SMOKE & MISSED NOTES: karaoke reviews



**I'm new to the neighborhood and have never heard of the Vegas Lounge before, but Sal knows the place from picking up drunks there all the time. He recalls a recent incident as we walk up.**

"We're twenty minutes into the ride and the guy tells me he doesn't have any money. So, I'm like 'well, what are you going to do about it?'. He has me bring him to this grocery store; he runs in and shop-lifts 20 steaks, and then has me take him to the Vegas Lounge. 'I can sell them here and get your money' he says. He goes in, and comes out twenty minutes later with twenty bucks. The fare was like *fifty bucks*" We walk in silence for a beat, and then he says "I hope that guy's in here tonight, man" And with that we enter the Vegas Lounge, a well lit suburban-looking joint that was, as the white banner outside had promised, having a karaoke night. To the strains of off-key Santana belted forth from a middle aged man staring at the floor— "in the laaaand of milk and honey", he sings—we find ourselves a seat at the bar and order a round. For the next few hours we sit back and drink heavily and watch karaoke and this is what we see.

## Crash Test Dummies Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm

This was the funniest thing I saw all week, and quickly became a situation where I was laughing out loud, uncontrollably, trying futilely to hide it. First off: why the fuck would you pick this song? Presumably the person had heard the tune before, in which case he was surely aware of its lumbering tempo and somber mood, and yet still thought "Yeahhh.... that will go over great in a room full of intoxicated people!"

Granted, the guy was clearly bombed himself, wobbling all over the place, which could have explained his poor song choice. But I don't care if you've been doing shots of rubbing alcohol since 8am: you should still know better. He couldn't claim ignorance, either; he definitely sort of knew how "MMM MMM MMM MMM" went, so it wasn't like he jabbed his finger at a random song in the binder and said "lemme do that one".

Any familiarity he had with the tune did little good anyway, as his sense of

melody and inflection and timing had plainly been decimated by the booze. It was a train wreck: as soon as he started singing, the lyrics on the TV colored up quickly, way ahead of him, forcing him to slur out the rest rapid fire to catch up before the screen changed. So it tumbled out like this: "Oooooonce? there was? This.....kid-who-got-into-an.....accident?"

All of the verses were a mess like this, but I figured he'd redeem himself once the chorus hit, since that little bit of the song is perfect for someone who's tanked and fading: all you do is go "Mmm mmm mmm mmm". Hell, you could probably find someone passed out on the floor, sprawled on their own puke, unaware karaoke was even going on, give them a kick and stick a microphone in their face and they'd still nail it. "Mmmm. Mmmm. Mmmm. Mmm." It's pretty easy. But this guy just couldn't get the timing right. "Mmm .....mmm mmm.....mmmm" he'd say, gently swaying back and forth beneath the disco ball.

**Grade:** A. This one was awesome.

## Some Piano Ballad About Aching and Loss

Again! Two in a row! Why on earth would you choose a song like this? A dismal piano ballad with lyrics about pain never stopping and aching and stuff like that? Yeah, let's stand in front of scowling men doing shots of Jagermeister and belt out that one!

The person who decides to do this, a petite girl clutching a notebook, is a competent singer, a few leagues above Mr. Crash Test Dummy, but that offers little solace. She starts whispering and it is literally uncomfortable to watch, casting a very strange mood over the place. This is not drinking music, there is no doubt about that. The absence of guitar and the girl's sleek, whispered voice make background conversations obvious, so everyone quiets down out of respect and stares at their beers, ner-

vous coughs escaping as lyrics about tear-drops falling and hearts shattering slowly creep down the television screen.

I am on my second beer of the bar and fifth of the evening, but not quite at the "it's all good" worldview, so it is still an embarrassing moment, where you feel sorry for the person and just wish it would end. And then, as I see the phrase "32 Bar Musical Interlude" appear on the screen and think "No fucking way", the karaoke machine suddenly breaks, mercifully stopping mid-note, perhaps unplugged by a sympathetic friend of the singer. The bar collectively exhales, but before we know it the box is back up and running and the girl *actually starts the song over*. The guy manning the machine for the night tries to dissuade her, but she insists and soon the depressing piano keys clang throughout the bar yet again. Unbelievable.

**Grade:** D-. A notch above an F only due to the bravery it requires to get in front of a bar full of people and sing something like this. Admirable, but it only counts for so much.

## Metallica - Whiskey in the Jar

My suspicion is that either the selection here at the Vegas is painfully limited (a glance at the song binder across the room reveals that it does look a bit thinner than most) or that these people are inept at choosing songs. Don't they know how this works? Wouldn't they want a tune that'll cause the whole room to cheer out at the first note? One that will cause everyone in attendance to sing along merrily, the collective roar hiding any vocal deficiencies the karaoke singer might have? But no: they keep selecting un-hummable, un-danceable, and for the most part un-recognizable tunes. I'm not sure how this works—how does one simultaneously hold the thoughts "I want to do karaoke!" and "I think the best



choice is an eight minute long Radiohead song with no chorus and a four minute instrumental section!"? Puzzling.

Take this song. I mean, if you're going to pick a Metallica tune, why not go with a thrash one off of Kill 'em All that will get people pumped up, yelling along like maniacs? Hell, a predictable one that even non-metallica fans know like Enter Sandman would be OK too. At least that would get a reaction. But Whiskey in the Jar? That's just ridiculous. (Admittedly, you could argue that a traditional version of this song would be an OK choice for a bar setting. Fine. Go ahead: make that argument. But this version doesn't cut it).

The singer of it is a skinhead who ends up performing a half dozen songs for us throughout the evening, each time interjecting lame monologues and liberally using profanities. This time he says "Is it *really* whiskey in the motherfuckin' jar?" during one of the solos. Later, he will turn to the crowd and say "we ARE the motherfuckin' champions!" and "Motherfuckin' piano man, y'all!" You can tell he expects everyone to whoop and holler at the spontaneous vulgarity, but conversations continue and blank stares are held. We are not motherfuckin' impressed.

**Grade:** D. Boring song, annoying execution. He does get points for enthusiasm, though, cocking back his head as he belts out "Musha rain dum-a-dum-dum-a-da, yeah!!!"

## Dixie Chicks - Some Song

I must admit, I was expecting a different scene here at the Vegas. I figured it would be more downbeat and surly, with the lurking possibility of physical confrontation or at the very least low-grade hostility manifested in scowls and mutterings. But it's turned out to be a pleasant bar, and the chasm of age difference between the varied groups doesn't seem that obvious. Looking around, you could easily picture the older blue collar folks being pissed and surly that their local watering hole has been taken over by rowdy college kids roaring crappy songs. Likewise, you could imagine the younger crowd here smirking at their elders, and viewing the whole place as a joke or a novelty — "Dude, we went to this dive bar last night, it was ghetto, bro", that kind of thing. But both attitudes are pleasantly absent, as everyone here is laid back and mingles together well. A definitely friendly vibe. For example, there is a woman up front robotically butchering some Dixie Chicks song, but no one boos or heckles, and there is a polite smattering of clapping upon completion.

This is not always the case with karaoke. I remember this one time last summer when I was at the Country Bar and Grill and there was a totally hammered office-worker-looking guy there singing christmas songs. It was the middle of June, 90 degrees out at 7pm, and there he was, santa cap plopped haphazardly on his head, grinning widely as he crooned, oddly and off-time, "Haaave... yourself? a merry? little christ—mas" The song ended, he handed the mic back and

said "Merry christmas, everybody", looking completely earnest. I got a chuckle out of it, but the rest of the bar (which consisted primarily of three frat-boy-types in their early 30's at the table behind me) seemed to be very ticked off. "It's NOT christmas" one of them muttered angrily. Soon after that the guy massacred "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?" which really ticked off the group, and for awhile the sense of an impending physical fight was palpable in the air. They actually wanted to *beat up* the guy over a poor rendition of CCR.

He should have ventured out to the Vegas instead—people here would clearly whoop it up at christmas songs right now.

**Grade:** D+. I wasn't really paying attention, but this was pretty standard fare.

## Some Twangy Country Song

The woman sitting next to Sal is a nurse, with three kids, going through a divorce. She is looking for a man. Not in a one night stand sort of way, but more of a let's-begin-a-long-term-commitment kind of thing. The night is still sort of young, but she has found no takers so far. "Right, like I'm going to say 'I'd love to support your three kids, lady'" Sal tells me. "I can barely support myself!"

Nevertheless, he continues the conversation as he carefully tries to extract the information he is looking for; namely, Can She Score Pharmaceuticals Through Her Job? This requires small talk, and he reports back to me on how it's going. "Our friend Dara here wishes she could sing" he says.

He peers up at the karaoke, where a middle aged woman is singing an unanimated version of some twangy country tune, and says "Man, I want to sing some Journey but I gotta be more fucked up" He pauses in thought and then his hand fishes into his pocket and pulls out a Xanax. "That should do it" he says, popping it and returning to the beer in front of him.

I realize I am a combination of these two factors when it comes to karaoke: I wish I could sing, and I need to be fucked up in order to do it. The two together would be ideal, but either by themselves would suffice. Depressingly, only the latter is a realistic option: drinking eight white russians is easier than teaching yourself proper vocal techniques, I have learned.

Sal asks if I'm going to sing anything, and I answer honestly: "Yeah, if I have 10 more beers or so I'll probably sing something". That's about what it would take. Anything less than that and I will still view things realistically: I cannot sing, but not in a wow-this-guy's-so-bad-it's-funny way; just a middle of the road tuneless-ness that isn't any fun to listen to. I'm doing the place a favor by refraining: anything I can sing isn't going to be good, and it isn't going to so bad it becomes good. So why bother? After 10 more beers however, all bets will be off. It is already 10:55 so that does not look likely, but who knows?

**Grade:** D-. Eh.

## Cyndi Lauper - Time After Time

Now *"these"* girls can sing. There's three of them, each with their own mic — one of the Vegas Lounge's cool features is multiple microphones — and after hearing a row of tuneless renditions of boring songs, they are stunning. Me and Sal watch, transfixed, as they nail harmonies and effortlessly reach all the high notes. They look at each other with complete earnestness as they sing "Time after time", eyes wide, as if they are in 1985 and filming a video for the song. And the best part is, one of them actually looks like Cyndi Lauper.

**Grade:** A- Excellent singing, not an A only because Girls Just Wanna Have Fun would have been, although more obvious, a far superior choice for a karaoke bar setting. Way more upbeat, and everyone would have been singing along which would have looked pretty funny. But, then again, I guess that would have opened the door for some of the creepier characters in the shadows of the bar to hit on them ("So... you girls just want to have fun, huh?"). I guess they knew what they were doing in picking this song. An A it is.

## Jimi Hendrix - Purple Haze

So far, there's this same group of people that's performed gang-vocal versions of predictable choices like Stayin' Alive and Dancing Queen. Now they are doing Purple Haze, complete with the standard air guitar gestures and head bangs. Yawn. We turn our attention elsewhere.

The bartender here seems like a pretty cool guy. We ask him if the Bukowski movie filmed in Minneapolis last summer used the Vegas for anything. We know they filmed in at least a few northeast bars and this one looks like a likely candidate. He shakes his head. "I know they used Nyes and a couple other ones around here. But not this one. I like Bukowski, though". He tells us about the time not too long ago when he loaned out all of his Bukowski book to some customer at the bar. "I never got them back!" he says, indignant as he wipes the bar in front of us clean.

Reminded, Sal retells the story of being scammed by the steak guy. The bartender actually knows who he's talking about. "Don't worry, we don't buy meat from that guy anymore" he assures us "I got really sick off some crab".

"But does he still come in here?" Sal asks, clearly hoping to confront the guy. The bartender shakes his head "Naw, I haven't really seen him around here in awhile".

Sal shrugs. "It's a small city" he tells me "And I was sober when I picked him up — I remember what that guy looks like". I keep expecting the scam artist in question to suddenly enter, a gunny sack full of pork chops slung behind him, instigating a triangular argument — you ripped me off, your crab got me sick, calm down and have some pork chops — but it doesn't look like he is going to show. Perhaps it's for the better. The warm, jovial vibe here seems like



an anamoly and I'm digging it.

We order another round and the bartender tells us it's on the house. Fuck yeah.

**Grade: C.** I don't mean to sound grumpy, but this one just seems too obvious or something, and the air guitar stuff is just stupid looking.

## Kid Rock - Early Mornin Stoned Pimp

If you gave me a piece of paper and a pen and said "Draw me a picture of a Limp Bizkit fan", I would probably come up with a poorly drawn version of the guy now up front singing Kid Rock. I don't mean that as a snarky insult—it is possible to enjoy Limp Bizkit and still be a decent human being in other areas—and I don't even know if this guy likes them. All I'm saying is, if you asked me to do that, that is what I would draw.

As for this song, well, it's pretty goddamn terrible. The guy sings way too loudly, like he wants to make sure everyone catches the lyrical intricacies and metaphors nestled within passages like "I might be a little small ho But I aint no god damn midget So stick it up your ass where the sun don't shine", and he has absolutely no stage presence either. Head down, shoulders tense, a robotic bob back and forth.

I've never heard the song before, but evidently it achieved moderate success as there are flickers of recognition buzzing throughout the bar. Like, when he shouts "You're lookin' really gay like fuckin' Billy Ray Cyrus" I spot a couple guys mouthing along. **Grade: F.** Fuck this.

## Whitesnake - Here I Go Again on My Own

The alcohol served to us is beginning to do its thing; I'm starting to lose track of time—it leaps from 11:10 to 11:55 in what seems like a minute, and it's venturing into the territory where I will be in rough shape at work the next day; this is also incidentally the same territory where this bit of knowledge doesn't bother me. "It's all good! I'll just chug a bunch of coffee!" I think cheerily, dismissing the issue.

Likewise, the singers up front, who a half an hour earlier delivered a reasonable performance of Highway to Hell, are now stumbling through Whitesnake, slurring and missing words, swaying randomly to the beat. One of them is about half way on the way to being outside in the parking lot vomiting violently next to a stranger's car; the other is looking more like 75%. These levels are not in sync, so the singing is completely off, with the one guy always being two words ahead or behind of the other. It sounds like this: "Here I Go Again on My Own Again My Own The Road I only Road Know Drifter Alone The Ro-o-oad" This is good stuff.

**Grade: B+** Although their timing is off, they've picked a good point in the evening: everyone is at the right level of drunkenness, just before things start to taper off or

spin into violence or bitterness or blackouts or what have you. The collective mood is still good. Drunkenly delivered Whitesnake would have been unbearable three hours ago; three hours from now it could be a number of things but would probably suck. However, right now, much like that proverbial perfect pile of porridge, it's just right.

## Toby Keith - I Love this Bar

Back when I was working on my fifth beer, I was happy to realize that my initial suspicions were wrong and the Vegas didn't outright suck. Now I've hit number eight and I'm amazed by the place. I'm struck particularly by the little things I've noticed after sitting at the bar for awhile. For instance, the place fully and wholly embraces its

# "I AIN'T NO GODDAMN MIDGET SO STICK IT UP YOUR ASS WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE"

main product, having nearly every inch of wall space covered with beer-related-items. That's it: stuff about beer, and nothing else. No menus, no NASCAR posters, no clocks or fire alarms (that I can spot at least), just beer. All of it is presented nicely, too. One faded red Budweiser poster is placed in a gigantic, regal frame that looks like it belongs "in the fuckin' sistine chapel" as Sal puts it.

Some guy does a plainly delivered version of "I Love This Bar" and I simply shrug instead of sneering or whatever I'd usually do upon hearing that song. Fair enough: I like this bar too.

**Grade: D.** It's still Toby Keith.

## Prince - Some Song

Another thing I like about the Vegas is its comically long last call. Plenty of bars around town are vicious in this respect: "Let's clear it out!" some gigantic guy begins booming at 1:40, like it's his house and he's furious that all these strangers are hanging out smoking and using his glasses. But here, at the Vegas, the good natured bartender has been asking people, one by one, directly "last call—need anything?" for the last 30 minutes or so. I have secured two drinks since he first announced it.

At this point, it is 1:45, I'm bombed, and a guy who looks amazingly like Malcolm McLaren is trying to get through a Prince song. "I don't know / the fucking words/ to this song" he sings as an introduction, before tunelessly destroying it. A couple of the Cyndi Lauper girls grab the remaining mics and save things a bit, but their harmonies are no match for the jagged edge of his randomly spat vocals.

Unlike the Whitesnake song, this is bad but not in a good way. "Man" Sal complains "I actually like this song. He's totally ruining it". I can't help but wonder if maybe the guy isn't actually as drunk as he looks and is merely trying to assume the role of the "crazy, wacky guy who is wasted and does not give a fuck about you, or society for that matter". If so, he fits the

part but I have seen the role played much better many times before.

This question, of whether the guy is actually drunk or merely slipping into a pitiful role he tragically assigned himself years ago and is now unable to shed, is of interest to me. See, minutes earlier, the singer began a game of chess with a serious, studious, sober looking fellow directly across the bar from us. As the drunk (or-is-he?) dances ludicrously and sings Prince an octave too low, his opponent puts hand to goateed chin and stares at the board in utter concentration. I am fascinated by who will win. The guy currently at the board is clearly stone cold sober, so if he loses to the lunatic on stage he'll look like a pretty shitty chess player. The singer clearly has the upper hand: if he wins, he'll look like a tragic rock and roller

type — people will point and whisper "can you *imagine* how good he'd be if he'd sober up?" — and if he loses he can laugh and knock over the chessboard and hoot "I'm fucking wasted, of course I lost!" and he'd have a point.

Me and Sal decide to up the ante by offering a free drink to whoever wins. "Hey!" we yell across the bar, but the guy doesn't hear us. Suddenly, the lights go up for last call and the match is shelved in the ensuing confusion.

**Grade: F Minus.** There is nothing redeemable about this. The girls help out a little bit, but that shouldn't count towards his grade. You know?

## Johnny Cash - Ring of Fire

Sal is now sufficiently fucked up and closes out the evening with a well-sung version of Ring of Fire, but unfortunately forgets the intro he had been planning ("This song is about STDs", which really would have been a funny sentiment to end the evening on). However, it's still good. One of the girls who sang Cyndi Lauper earlier joins him for the end of the tune, and the harmonies are sweet.

Last call is officially over, and people are getting pushed out steadily by the workers. We're instructed to 'clear it out' and so everyone marches wobbly out the back doors, those of us who sang and those of who just watched. We all stand outside in the parking lot together for a minute or two, people climbing in cars, barking nonsense, lighting smokes. We're all half-hesitating, waiting for something to happen. But nothing happens. The music is over, the doors are closed, the bottles of booze tucked away, and now it's time to stumble home up the icy streets, Whitesnake stuck in our heads.



# SONGS CALLED FUCK YOU

## A CLOSER LOOK

### CAM'RON - "FUCK YOU"

I was listening to some of these Fuck You songs on the bus a couple days ago and this one did not go over well with the passenger sitting next to me. I guess the headphones were on loud or something because I spotted a definite frown immediately after the lines "He want you to lick his balls/ But, yo, his dick is small" were delivered, and I don't think it was a coincidence. Soon after that couplet, the song degenerates into "Fuck you, fuck you, fu-u-u-u-uck you! FUCK YOU! Fuck you, fuck you, fu-u-u-u-uck you! FUCK YOU!", and there's minimal instrumental stuff going on so it probably sounded like I was checking out a particularly brutal self-help audio book or something. The person got up and left, I think a stop or two earlier than they usually do.

Later in the day, I was listening to this song again at work, locking myself in the bathroom stalls for fifteen minutes at a time, scribbling notes onto post-its for later transcription. After returning to work I realized I left behind one, maybe two of these notes, so some coworker surely found them and had to decipher gibberish like "fuck you 'fucking transit worker' - use/tie in, or maybe the fucking fuck line?"

As for the song, it's the sort of generic rap that I'm not a big fan of, but they do say Fuck You quite a bit, which counts for something in the context of this article.

Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 51

### THE FRISK - "FUCK YOU"

Beginning with a bass line that sounds like Dead Kennedys circa Fresh Fruit, this tune has a decent verse, but sort of loses it with the chorus. Basically, all the music stops and the singer says, you guessed it, "Fuck you!". If he did this just once, at the tail end of the chorus, it'd be alright. But four times per chorus

is, I dunno, a little excessive, especially because the music stops every single time with him. My thumb tilts slightly downward for this one.

Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 12

### FUNERAL ORATION - "FUCK YOU"

Funeral Oration is another band I've heard the name of forever but never actually checked out, partly because they have such a goddamn stupid name. But surprisingly enough, this is pretty good and catchy. The chorus is hummable, which is a welcome thing after you've been listening to songs called Fuck You for an hour.

See, most of these bands play generic-but-not-altogether-terrible-I-suppose hardcore music, with the chorus delivered nearly the same every time: Fuck! You! Fuck! You! Fuck! You! Sometimes the emphasis is on "you", sometimes it is on nothing, but it's always meant to cause the crowd to pump their hands twice in the air; once for fuck, once for you. After hearing five different bands do essentially the same exact thing in regards to this, Funeral Oration's chorus is a welcome surprise. While not inventive in the grand scheme of things, it does have a better delivery than the simple Fuck! You!

That being said, I'm not going to go out and buy their album or anything, and it's doubtful I'll ever be in the mood to play this song again. But right now, when put up against this competition, it seems pretty alright.

Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 6

### THE FEEDERZ - "FUCK YOU"

Here's what we've got: A long, weird guitar intro gives way to a plodding tempo and overly-screamed vocals, with the occasional Man or Astroman? solo thrown in. None of those elements are generally good by themselves, but all of them together is sort of like shitting in your puke and then pissing on the result.

After listening to this song, you think "What the hell was the point of that?". Even when I hear a song I hate, I can generally understand why the band recorded it. Not this one.

Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 5

### FANG - "F.U.C.K Y.O.U"

Employing a baffling recording technique common among certain hardcore bands in the mid to late 80's, F.U.C.K Y.O.U places the drums prominently in the front of the mix, shelves the guitars to background duty, and essentially dispenses of the bass entirely. I personally prefer a guitar-heavy mix most of the time, and occasionally I can stomach it if the vocals are out front. But having the drums be the focal point, no way. It just sounds stupid. No offense, drummers.

As far as the song itself, I dunno, I would have loved this when I was 14, but now I'm a little lukewarm towards it.

Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 16 (although, they never actually come out and say it, they just spell it. It brings to mind a mildly interesting legal question-- could this song get played on network television? In the legalese of what defines unacceptable profanity under FCC guidelines, does it state anywhere that one cannot spell certain cusswords? Or is that a loophole that no one has yet exploited? When Bono of U2 said the word "fuck" on television, he was fined a hefty sum. But if he had said "F, U, C, K" would he have left the suited regulators snarling in defeat? Who knows?)

### DAMAGEPLAN - "FUCK YOU"

Not really a big fan of this sort of thing-- galloping double bass drum, silly guitar solos, drop-d tuned riffage, gruff, guttural vocals, you know, stuff like that.

The singer says Fuck You in a pretty good way though, really drawing out the 'You'. The rest of these songs sound like the band is titling their tune "Fuck You" purely as a gimmick, and their singing betrays this. But Damageplan, they at least sound like they mean it when they say it.

Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 28

### DIE TRYING - "FUCK YOU"

It sounds like these guys were a total pop-metal band (or "hair band", I guess I guess is the more common term) in 1987, and then disappeared



for, oh let's say 15 years before reuniting in 2002. Their goal was to hit it big that time around, so they incorporated "post-grunge/alternative metal" stylings that were so big in 2002. But they also stay true to their roots by retaining the fashion sense and aspects of the singing style from their late 80's incarnation. So it ends up being a weird mixture, holding on to a terrible past while grasping for a terrible future.

That's just what it *sounds* like, mind you. I'm sure they're actually 22 years old and look like members of Good Charlotte or something. Either way, boy, does this song stink something awful. Driven by one of those riffs that is so cheezy it actually makes you smile (literally; I smiled when I heard it), this song really does sound like a bizarre mix of the two aforementioned genres. The worst part though is the whiny singer, who you can picture pushing his hair back over his shoulder as he says "Fuck You, this doesn't matter". And then strutting around the stage nodding during the instrumental part.

Maybe I'm full of shit, though. I tried to find a picture of this band to see if my guess was correct (it wasn't; they look nothing like a 'hair band' and in fact do look relatively close to something like Good Charlotte), and in this search discovered a record review that described their sound thusly: "Searing fast guitars with visceral, hurried and intense vocals backed by pounding, hypnotic rhythms". Hmm, I guess you'll have to hear it for yourself and see which description is more accurate (as a sidenote, the same review compared Die Trying's vocals to early Elvis Costello, which is funniest goddamn thing I've heard all day. I'm sure in some other review the guy wrote something like "Fred Durst's mesmerizing, relentless, and un-mechanical vocals bring to mind early Otis Redding").

**Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 5**

### **PORNSTORE JANITOR - "FUCK YOU"**

This song, which appeared on the wittily-titled album "Porn Again", and was released by the esteemed Scooch Pooch record label, is surprisingly enough nothing special. The delivery of the chorus is in the exact same generic-hardcore style outlined earlier, and the lyrics aren't as deep as you might expect. But—Pornstore Janitor does have the highest average of Fuck Yous per minute, yelling it out 26 times in 32 seconds. And that should count for something.

**Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 26**

### **RIVER CITY REBELS - "FUCK YOU"**

The majority of the River City Rebels' "Fuck You" is generic, overproduced 90's punk rock. These guys would fit in fine on a bill with Dropkick Murphys, US Bombs—bands like that. It's nothing terrible, but it's nothing great either.

The story, however, does not end there, for the River City Rebels decide to throw in some ska twice during this song. That right there immediately knocks the song down from "terrible/not-great" to "you idiots".

Seriously: ska? Plain old ska music is one thing, and I'll write about it in a later issue. But ska-punk, which is what the River City Rebels would be considered, is a whole nother beast. See, the problem with it is, you're taking two

the 'horns variety' for the ska part, and the 'hardcore variety' for the punk part. For example, bands like Operation Ivy, American Steel, the Clash, even Rancid wouldn't fall into what I consider Ska-punk. A, because none of them used horns (or if they did, they were used sparingly), and B, because none of them played outright hardcore punk. All of those bands used up-stroke guitar strumming in a way that wasn't unbearable, so when they came to a part that could pass for horn-less ska, it was a smooth transition and didn't seem all that bad.

River City Rebels apparently don't understand this at all, at least not in "Fuck You", because they ram the two genres together, and it sounds comically forced. Hardcore... hardcore.... hardcore.... Horns! Compare this song to something off of American Steel's first record and you'll see what I'm talking about.

The only band I ever heard that came close to pulling off the hardcore-to-horns-and-then-back-again-on-a-dime was Against All Authority. And they didn't quite pull it off, because you still rolled your eyes at the ska parts and waited patiently for the normal stuff to come around again.

Anyway, yeah: this song is ska-punk of the worst kind. Avoid.

**Number of times "Fuck You" is said: 6**

## **FUCK YOU, THIS DOESN'T MATTER -DIE TRYING**

disparate genres and ramming them together like some kind of half-assed surgery. You have distorted upbeat guitar rock, and then suddenly, boom out of nowhere are horns, terrible horns. It doesn't work, and it ends up sounding just as forced a banjo solo in a speed metal song.

Now, keep in mind that when I say ska-punk, I am referring specifically to





# REVIEWS OF THE MUSIC MY COWORKER LISTENS TO WHILE I'M HUNGOVER

## It was one of those days

where you stop yourself and realize you've been staring at a stapler for two, maybe three minutes. Where you catch your reflection in the "Smile!" mirror management has affixed to the cubicle wall and see that your eyes are sunk half shut, red and ghoul-ish. The noise — all the beeps and rings and inane snippets of conversation — surrounds you, making the headache throb a bit more urgently. And in the forefront of all the chaos, somehow able to cut through everything else, is your coworker.

My coworker, for now, is a bizarre 42 year old man named Edward. Although I sit four feet away from him for eight hours a day, five days a week, I can't pinpoint what makes him seem bizarre to me. He's a jovial man, not mean to those around him, and doesn't possess any of the typical characteristics that I despise in a person. He quotes Larry the Cable Guy all the time ("Get 'er done", 10-15 times a day) and that sucks, but it's not enough by itself. It troubles me, why I have no ready explanation for cringing every morning upon sitting down next to him.

I suppose part of my mild dislike comes from hearing snippets of his conversations. There's a number of examples of him saying weird things — telling a story about his wife falling over in the bathroom and bleeding all over the place, laughing as he tells it — but something he said literally one minute ago, as I wrote the previous paragraph, is a good example.

See, someone brought in bagels this morning, and one of the more straight-laced, conservative workers here just stopped by to grab one. As she was leaving, Edward said to her "The happiest guy in the world is the guy who's carrying two coffees and a bagel".

She paused, asking "What?", and he repeated himself.

"Is that a joke?" she wondered, confused, and as he explained — "Yeah, think about it—if I'm carrying a coffee in each

hand, then the bagel is..." — she understood the dynamics of the joke and said "No—no—I don't want to think about it" walking away briskly, surely off to tell her cubicle-mate in horror what has just transpired. Edward seemed unphased, laughing to himself at his wit.

After she scurried off in disgust, I wondered "What the fuck is this guy thinking?" I could see him rattling off the remark to a "dude" kind of person, of which there is an abundance of here, although they probably wouldn't laugh either as it is, no matter how you examine it, a stupid fucking joke. But to tell it to the quiet, conservative woman in her mid thirties who coats her cubicle walls with biblical passages? Did he really think she was going to break out laughing over that?

The more I think about this incident, the more I realize that I may never again be able to eat a bagel, one of my favorite foods incidentally, as it will conjure up terrible, terrible images of my coworker, naked and flabby, brandishing one on his member as he cackles "Get it? Get it?"

Still: awful jokes, Larry the Cable Guy references, laughing about his injured wife—they all add up, and it does make sense that I don't enjoy sitting next to this guy for 40 hours of my week. But I realize now what the main factor is in fueling my dislike: his radio.

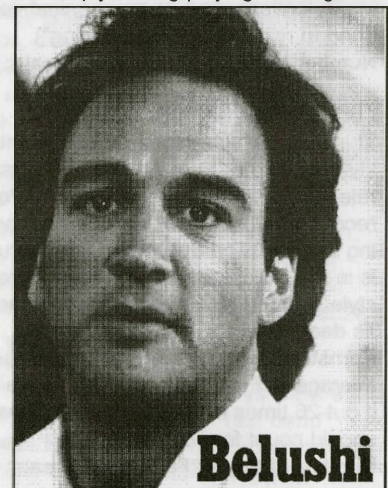
Edward is busy working for most of his shift, so I only hear him talking for maybe 30 minutes out of the day. But his radio is on the entire time I'm here, a continual background sound that I am unable to ignore. It's awful, and yet it in a way it leaves me full of awe, amazed at the asinine garbage that's pumped out over the airwaves, somehow able to thrive and attract advertisers and loyal listeners.

Now, you might say "Look, prick, if you're such a whiny little bitch about your coworker's choice of radio stations, why don't you get your own goddamn radio and drown him out? Huh, fucker?" Good point. Well, I *did* have a radio, up until a few weeks ago, but then I accidentally snapped off the antenna and

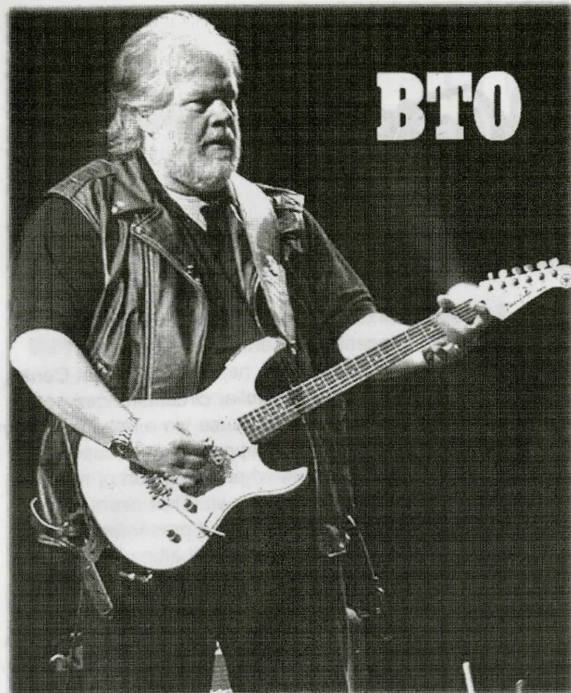
now it simply hisses static, mixed with the occasional stray word that makes its way through. And yeah, generally, listening to "CHHWWHAHHWHAHHWA Iraq CWQAAWWAAAA american idol" etc etc is preferable to the Eagles, but I would probably be forced into a straight jacket and shoved into the freight elevator if my coworkers noticed I was listening to static for eight hours at a time. So my radio remains off, and instead I must listen to Edward's. And here are some reviews of what I've heard out of it so far this morning.

## Bachman Turner Overdrive Taking Care of Business

When I hear this song, this is what I think of: a terrible movie from the mid-to-late 80's starring some b-level celebrity like Jim Belushi. About halfway through this shitty film, the wacky, party-lovin' star is rising up the ranks of a Fortune 500 company he somehow stumbled into, and we are treated to a musical montage that showcases his rapid corporate-ladder-climbing. It consists mainly of a series of goofy shots showing him hi-fiving business people, flirting with a secretary, and close-ups of older, staid executives shaking their heads in wonderment as he shimmies down the hallway. There is no dialogue during this scene, which may run as long as five minutes. There is simply a song playing: "Taking







care of business! Every day!" The scene ends with our hero planting his feet on his desk, throwing his hands behind his head and leaning back with a shit eating grin, a wondrous view behind him that shows just how far up the skyscraper he has climbed. "Every day!" the song concludes, along with a trio of snare hits, and the old craggily boss walks into the office and says "Mr. Beezo, may I have a word?" Other songs commonly used in such montages (which, it should be noted, seem to have fallen from favor since the 80's) are "I Need a Hero" and "Money (that's what I want)", the latter of which could go over the exact same scene of yuppie triumph described above.

So basically, the song is not very good. Also, funnily enough, I wrote the above paragraph simply as a generic example of a musical montage, not recalling an actual scene from an actual movie. But I just did some quick research on the internet and discovered that there's a movie called "Taking Care of Business" from 1990 that starred none other than the loveable Jim Belushi. It has something to do with him being mistaken for a rich guy, and I'm *sure* it has Taking Care of Business in the soundtrack, so it's certainly feasible that my example actually happened, and isn't just a hypothetical. Goddamn.

## Local DJs Discussing Sports

I thought I'd have heard tons of unpleasant classic rock songs today that I could review, but Edward has now decided to tune into the local sports station instead. This is worse—I'll take Steve Miller or Boston

over forty five year old shitheads angrily discussing football any day. Music is easier to ignore.

I don't mind football, which is what the "morning crew" is discussing today, but I sure as fuck don't want to hear people talking about it. Who gives a flying shit what some braindead disc jockey has to say about a game that was played earlier in the week? I mean, really: it's a GAME. That's all it is. Maybe fun to watch, sure, but do we really need to talk about it? Much less argue about it, fume about it, cry about it? And when I say "talk", I don't mean a passing "good game yesterday" conversation—these guys on the radio are spending HOURS dissecting this shit.

Mostly, they engage in literal Monday Morning Quarterbacking. "Here's what I want to know" says the angri-

est-sounding member of the morning crew. "When they were down there, inside the twenty, and they throw it to Johnson for the TD, Michelson was standing right there. *Right there.* So why" —here, he drags out the word 'why' and pauses— "was he looking to the left? WHY was he looking to the left?" No one has an answer for him. No one knows what to make of this seeming scandal that he has uncovered.

They're an angry bunch this morning. Edward tunes into them on a fairly regular basis, and I've noticed their moods swing wildly, hilariously, depending on how the Team did the previous Sunday.

Like this: two weeks ago, their consensus was that the team was comprised of losers and overpaid whiners, coached by a helpless freak who, if there was any justice in the world, would be beheaded on the fifty yard line and then gutted by the team mascot, his entrails dragged around the field as the poor, suffering fans screamed in approval.

That was two weeks ago. But then, miracle of miracles, the team somehow managed to pummel their opponents and advance to the next round of the playoffs. The mood of the morning crew did a hilarious reversal next day, praising the players' valiant efforts and marveling at Coach Genius. "I've been saying this all season long" one of the DJs lied "this team is a powerhouse. A powerhouse!" Interspersed with their giddy commentary were songs they had written and produced, goofy little ditties with lyrics like "nothing's going to stop us now/ we're going to the super bo-owl". It

was a joyous time.

That was last week. Yesterday, predictably, the team was cut down in the second round of the playoffs like a bunch of weaklings, trudging home to ponder an offseason full of What Went Wrongs. In accordance, today's broadcast sounds like the crash after last week's foolish binge, with the morning crew, of course, back in full "what a terrible team we are cursed to have" mode. They are surly, bitter bastards, whining and complaining, calling for the resignations of half the team's management. "This is what I've been saying all year. This team is fundamentally flawed, and if they don't make some major moves in the offseason... well, we're going to be in the cellar for years to come". I break a smile at this comment. Am I the only one who remembers what this hack said last week? He should be laughed off the airwaves, but something — maybe the assuredness of his tone — allows him to get a pass.

Fuck! I hate this nonsense; grown men talking about other grown men throwing around balls. At a previous temp job I was forced to listen to Rush Limbaugh every day, drifting over from the cubicle of the 65 year old woman next to me, and it sucked, but I actually preferred it to this Inane Sports Discussion. Although Rush was a cretin, at least he talked about issues that I occasionally cared about, and held an opinion on. With sports radio, I have no opinion. I simply don't care. I could give a shit what the quarterback threw the previous day, what the coach decided to do, what so and so said at a press conference. To me, all of it equates to a group of angry, vocal people discussing their lawns all day. Actually, more like a group of angry people discussing how someone else mowed their own lawn. "Here's what I want to know: why didn't he *start* with the ditch? Why didn't he *start with the ditch?*!" Granted, lawn-mowing isn't a spectator sport, but either way: the event is over, and was of no significance in the first place. The game is finished. The lawn is mowed. Move on.

But enough of all that. Edward doesn't go back to the classic rock station, so there are no more songs to review today, just hours and hours of sports discussion. It's fairly repetitious, and to write more would be pointless. Cuz really, if I'm saying "It is stupid for people to talk about sports", isn't it even dumber for me to talk about the people who talk about sports? Probably, I suppose. So I'll knock it off now.



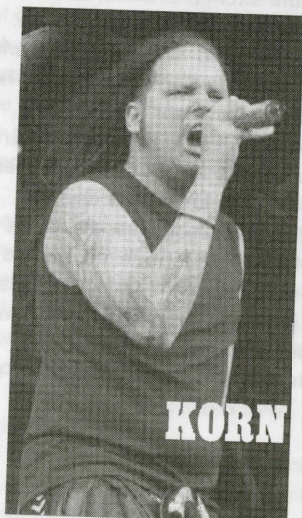
# A REVIEW OF A KORN SHOW I SAW YEARS AGO

## "I feel fucked up" he announced,

halfway slumped over the steering wheel. Aleisha and me nodded in agreement and then he repeated himself. This seemed to signal that his declaration was one of concern, not triumph. The scene had taken a turn for a worse.

Here was the deal: we had just smoked two blunts of relatively high grade marijuana and I was so out of my gourd I had been staring in open mouthed fascination at the hairdo of a driver in the next lane over for close to two minutes straight. Aleisha and Julien were even further gone, as they had been popping prozacs like candy, saying it catapulted the high to a more awesome level. We were at a stop-light in suburbia, our driver was about to pass out, or have a seizure, or something, and we were in no condition to understand what was going on, let alone do something. And Korn was on the stereo, loudly.

The light flashed green, Julien swung the wheel to the right, cars honked, and suddenly we were in the far end of a mall parking lot. He slumped forward, twisted, and then collapsed backwards into the back of the van and tore his shirt off. He was sweating like a hog and his eyes were glazed. He opened his mouth, a small little O, but nothing came out. Aleisha and me leaned in close, still fucked up, and it felt like an Indiana Jones movie where he was about to say something supremely important, like where the nazis had hidden the diamonds or something.



"Water" he said finally. As Aleisha tended to him I bolted from the van and ran across the parking lot towards Snyders. I was so gone, the Korn song was stuck in my head and it felt like I was participating in a music video for

it. Across the parking lot I ran, and in the background were squealing guitars and Jonathan Davis howling "Something takes a part of me/ Feeling like a freak on a leash".

After what felt like twenty minutes, I reached the other side of the parking lot and burst into Snyders, feeling somewhat like a freak on a leash. "Do you have water?" I yelled to no one in particular.

It was a girl I went to high school with, behind the counter. I froze, confused, my sluggish brain thinking something like "but... this isn't... high school..." I stank, absolutely stank of pot, and I stared at her open-mouthed, like a moron. After flashing me a look that mixed up equal parts bemusement and pity, she pointed at a cooler full of water bottles in front of me.

After successfully navigating the more-complicated-than-expected purchase of the bottle of water, I ran back to the van. Julien poured the water on himself and breathed heavily, finally sitting up and saying "Damn". The panic slowly subsided.

Ever since, the music of Korn reminds me of that incident. This has happened with numerous other bands for me, where I hear one of their songs in a certain situation, and from then on the song is forever linked to it. For example, Phil Collins, I only hear in dentist offices. "The Heat Is On", I only hear when I'm watching a car commercial. Thus, I equate the music of the former with drills and drooling, and the latter with SUVs roaring through crisp winter landscapes. Korn, I will forever associate with blunts and rattling panic.

So, a few weeks later when I was sitting at my house, stoned from a blunt, and someone offered me a free ticket to go see Korn, the choice was obvious. "Sounds cool" I said. Something interesting would probably happen.

It was the first show I ever saw in a stadium—the first show I ever saw in a building that could hold more than about 700 people, actually—and the concept struck me as immediately ridiculous. Squeezing myself into a little blue seat, I stared down past the sea of fellow concert goers, and saw the stage, a tiny little strip encircled by lights. "That's it?" I thought, incredulous and glad I didn't spend anything, although it's not like I would have spent money to see Korn even if I was given a front row seat, or a lawnchair on stage or whatever. One of my companions

pointed out the jumbotron to me, but the concept still seemed ridiculous.

I had been here, at the Target Center, in remarkably similar circumstances—stoned, in attendance via a free ticket from someone who stopped by my house—two months earlier when some sort of monster truck rally was in town. That event had been much better, as it presented at least a modicum of action (albeit mostly motor bikes leaping over less-than-intimidating mounds of dirt as opposed to the dinosaur-shaped car-eating things we had expected), and you could actually see the action. Here, it amounted to watching little dots shake around on stage while shithheads beat each other senseless on the floor below.

It was pretty silly and I felt out of place, but the concert became much worse as the effects of the blunt faded away and my suddenly sober eyes awakened fully to the surroundings. No longer could I stare at people in the crowd, and t-shirt slogans, and support beams and things like that, and be captivated. Now I had to concentrate on the concert, and it seemed like a colossal waste of time and energy.

I only recognized one song—"Freak on a Leash", of course—and the rest blurred together into an indecipherable mess, broken up only when the lead singer started playing the bag pipes towards the end of the show. Not in a "kick ass!" way, but more like "Wait, what's going on? Where'd the guitar squeals go? Oh, the bagpipes. That's what that is. Oh". Then the jumbotron showed the singer running around backstage and at first I assumed this was lead-up to the encore, but then it became apparent that the incident was unscripted and he was really just running around randomly. Once the Jumbotron operator realized this, the screen went dark, the show ended, and everyone filed out of the arena.

Stuck in line, I looked around and tried to do a rough head count by counting the people in my section and then multiplying that by the number of sections, but it was a hopeless exercise. There were just too many people there.

"Well, that pretty much sucked" I said to one of the people I came with. "Yeah, it did" they said, nodding. "It totally did".



# WHAT THE FUCK?

## ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

**THIS ISSUE: OASIS**

**The band Oasis, that gang of arrogant jackasses** from England who tried to pawn themselves off as the 90's version of the Beatles, released a song called Champagne Supernova about ten years back. Clocking in at over six minutes, the song was about..... see, I have no idea how to finish that sentence. The song doesn't appear to be about *anything*. There are shitloads and shitloads of bands that supposedly have "Deep" lyrics that I don't understand and merely shrug off, but I can usually at least see how someone could divine meaning from them. But Champagne Supernova, I do not get. If you walked up to me and said "Check it out, this one time I got really stoned when I was 12, here's what I wrote" and showed me the lyrics to Champagne Supernova, I'd look at you and say "You were pretty fucking stupid for a 12 year old and you obviously cannot handle marijuana".

But .... well, maybe I'm just an idiot who lacks the ability to comprehend stirring poetry of this type; my eye into the lyrical word is poor of sight, so to speak. Probably not, though—more likely, Oasis are just morons. But just in case I decided to see if I could ascertain the meaning to this song, specifically the following lines, the most cryptic, seemingly inane of the lot:

**"Slowly walking down the hall/ Faster than a cannonball"**

Now, again, I know that some people like abstract lyrics and prefer stuff you can attach your own findings and meanings to, but really: What the fuck does that mean? Logically, one reads it and thinks "well, if you're faster than a goddamn cannonball, it would not stand reason that you're also "slow"." To try to impart any meaning from the lyric, you have to stretch your imagination and wade a little into the shallow pool of pretentious poetic punditry: "See, what he means is, uhhh, that energy, and... love... are infinite, and therefore unlimited in scope and speed, man. So you might be faster than a physically fast thing, like a cannonball, but..... uh...." See? Even if you really put yourself into vapid, hash-addled-hippie mode, it's still a fucking leap to make sense of this stuff. I've endured plenty of Pink Floyd analysis sessions and stumbling oratories about the deep meanings of Phish and stuff like that, but usually I could at least nod in vague agreement to those (albeit with the help of a few bongloads). But not this Oasis nonsense.

Where to turn, then? The most logical step seemed to be Oasis-related message boards, those last refuges for people who are still willing to identify themselves, at least online, as Oasis Fans. To be honest, since the band has long since slid into irrelevance, I wasn't sure if things like "Oasis Message Boards" even exist anymore. But then again, the internet is a big fucking pit, with a lot of shit in it.

Indeed. No sooner than a cursory search was entered did I find my way to a message board community specifically centered on divining the meanings to popular songs. And, low and behold, there was a specific area set aside for Oasis, and within that another for Champagne Supernova. Cha-ching.

The fans gathered there offered different interpretations of what was swimming around Noel Gallagher's head when he composed the ditty in question. All of them were thought provoking. It seemed like all of the die-hard fans took something a little different from the cryptic couplet.

One Oasis fan named Fanko opined the following: "I listen to this song right every time I get high. It's the best song to listen to, to help you get even higher. I believe this song is about potheads like myself who like to get high all the time. People that don't smoke always say that potheads don't ever do

anything. But where were they when we were getting high? What could they possibly be doing that could be better than getting high? This song to me is clearly about loving to get high and livin' it up"

That never even occurred to me, but it makes perfect sense. Another responded a bit later: "the hall could be the thing where u walk towards the light, and he's walking towards it slowly but it coming at him so fast, im writing each meaning as im listninmg to the line, so thats my view probly a loud of bollocks. P.S I applaud u Fanko never thought of listning to it while i was high, i occasionally do weed and it more important that moist stuff i do, great song the Gallaghers are legends."

Interesting theory. Interpretation #3: "this song(and wonderwall)totally kick!! this song is amazing..i love how it means nothing..i tend to write poetry that means nothing..but in the end..its a great song by a great band!!"

On a different site, a super fan offered a lamer but slightly more coherent answer: "'Slowly walking down the hall, faster than a cannon ball' seems to be a clear reference to someone who isn't seeing things from a clear perspective (someone who takes unnecessary risks even when he should know better). Someone who is on drugs would view someone who is actually walking very slowly as walking very fast."

Well.... *maybe*, I guess. Still pretty inane, and I prefer to think it was about 'loving to get high and livin' it up', but this answer could definitely be legitimate and raise the lyrics up to the level of "terrible" instead of "terrible and completely incomprehensible".

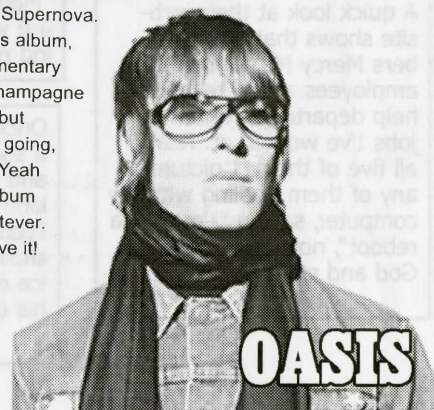
**"i occasuionally do weed and it more important that moist stuff i do"-oasis fan**

And then, just when I was beginning to think the song might actually mean something, I stumbled across an interview with Noel Gallagher wherein he explains the real deal: "Some of the words are about nothing. One is about Bracket The Butler who used to be on Camberwick Green, or Chipley or Trumpton or something. He used to take about 20 minutes to go down the hall. And then I couldn't think of anything that rhymed with 'hall' apart from 'cannonball'. so I wrote 'Slowly walking down the hall/ Faster than a cannonball' and people were like, 'Wow, f , man'. There's also the line 'Where were you while we were getting high?' because that's what we always say to each other."

See, I knew it would be nonsense. And, while we're at it, how about the title itself? What the hell does that mean? One fan thought "I would imagine that by saying a champagne supernova, it's a very beautiful way of describing something with alternate images. I can't remember what device that is... but get my drift? basically an explosion of champagne.. (literally) or an outburst of joy / celebration.. etc.. "

Nice try, but not quite. Noel explained in the same interview that one time he was hanging out at a friend's house and "While I was around there we were listening to a Pixies album called, I think it's... Supernova. As we were listening to this album, we were watching a documentary about where they make Champagne in France. You may laugh but it's true. I was there drunk going, 'Champagne Supernova? Yeah man'" There is no pixies album called Supernova, but whatever.

Anyway, there you have it! Riddle solved.





# EXCESS WRITING THAT WAS CUT FROM THIS ISSUE

**Due to: Space constraints, irrelevance, and general stupidity**

But "Oooh, Life Goes On" did act as a catalyst of some sort, and I imagine not all songs in that situation would have. For example, had the theatre instead cued up "Holy Diver" by Ronnie James Dio at that exact moment, I probably would have just stared at the wall and thought "Man. I'm tired" until noticing I was drooling on myself.

...weird 8 minute long songs with no melody or discernable lyrics, with three minute instrumental sections where the singer stares blankly at the annoyed crowd, probably realizing what a terrible choice he has made, trying to sway to the beat, mic at his side, knowing instantly that it is futile since there is no beat and it is not a danceable song. he stares at us, waiting for the vocals to come back. we stare at him, waiting for the song to finish so some wild and crazy character will leap on stage and belt out ACDC or some shit like that

That mistaken notion - that they were a mediocre punk bad who would not overall irritate the average listener, but also make no lasting impression upon them - was shattered (well, broken) when I finally heard one of their songs. We were sitting in a motel room on a day off from tour, and the song (Seein' Red) came on

A quick look at their website shows that the members Mercy Me all look like employees at the technical help department of temp jobs I've worked at. Really - all five of them. I picture any of them fiddling with my computer, saying "I'm gonna reboot", not singing about God and stuff.

Let me be a Monday Morning Quarterback for a second and say that if I was in the studio for the recording of Monday Morning Church, I would have pulled Mr. Jackson aside and said something along the lines of "Man, knock it off" or "What are you doing? You're wasting everybody's time"

Once upon a time we played a show in ann arbor michigan and spent the night at a very kind-hearted young punk who lived in some suburban area and showered pizza and natural light ice on us as we cycled through his extensive DVD collection

The woman next to me coughed like she was dying. A deep, phlegmy rasp, it was followed usually by a hearty laugh. I wouldn't say "cackle", but it was pretty damn close to a cackle. She tottered on her stool and looked at me and slurred "are you alright?" "Yeah. "Are you 21?" "Yeah. She cackled again.

The number two single is a song called "Blessed Be Your Name" by a group that decided to call themselves "tree63", which sounds more like an AOL screen-name chosen by some guy who frequents the "forties forum" than it does a musical group.

3. Alan Jackson - Monday Morning Church  
Now, THIS fucking stinks. I feel like a degenerate listening to this, even just once.

I say "Handlers" only because I assume all teen-pop artists are crafted and controlled by anonymous adults who are simply selling a product, trying to extract dollars from a certain demographic's pockets. Right? Right. Check out what her handlers are coming up with. Here's some sample lyrics

If I ever started a Ska band, which is about as likely as me starting my own Investment Banking firm, I would definitely name it Skabraham Lincoln.

In case you don't know, the block party is a sure sign of downward trajectory for any previously popular band. The assembled crowd will patiently gnaw on hot dogs while you plod through your pathetic new songs, finally bursting into applause when you play the one hit that they Recognize, the harbinger of your 15 minutes of fame 10 years earlier, the song you've played like 20,000 fucking times and now despise. Ha. Although, to be fair, playing block parties once a month would be a much better job than what most of the populace has.