

THE SUNDAY NIGHT

black & white





Writing - Photography - Illustration

Contributors CHOPPER NYK - Chris Bianco - Donald J. Finley
Mason Chennells - Spencer Afonso - Steve Carino

Directors Marc LeSage - Ryan Joseph Little
Editor Roland Wardrobe



a red-hot hoochie-coocher

CONTENTS

Trigger Happy Speed Equipment
CHOPPER NYK 4

Do You Remember?
Donald J. Finley 12

Solo Smoker
Steve Carino 16

Small Town Fiction
Chris Bianco 22

Mike Diana the Boiled Angel
Mason Chennells 34



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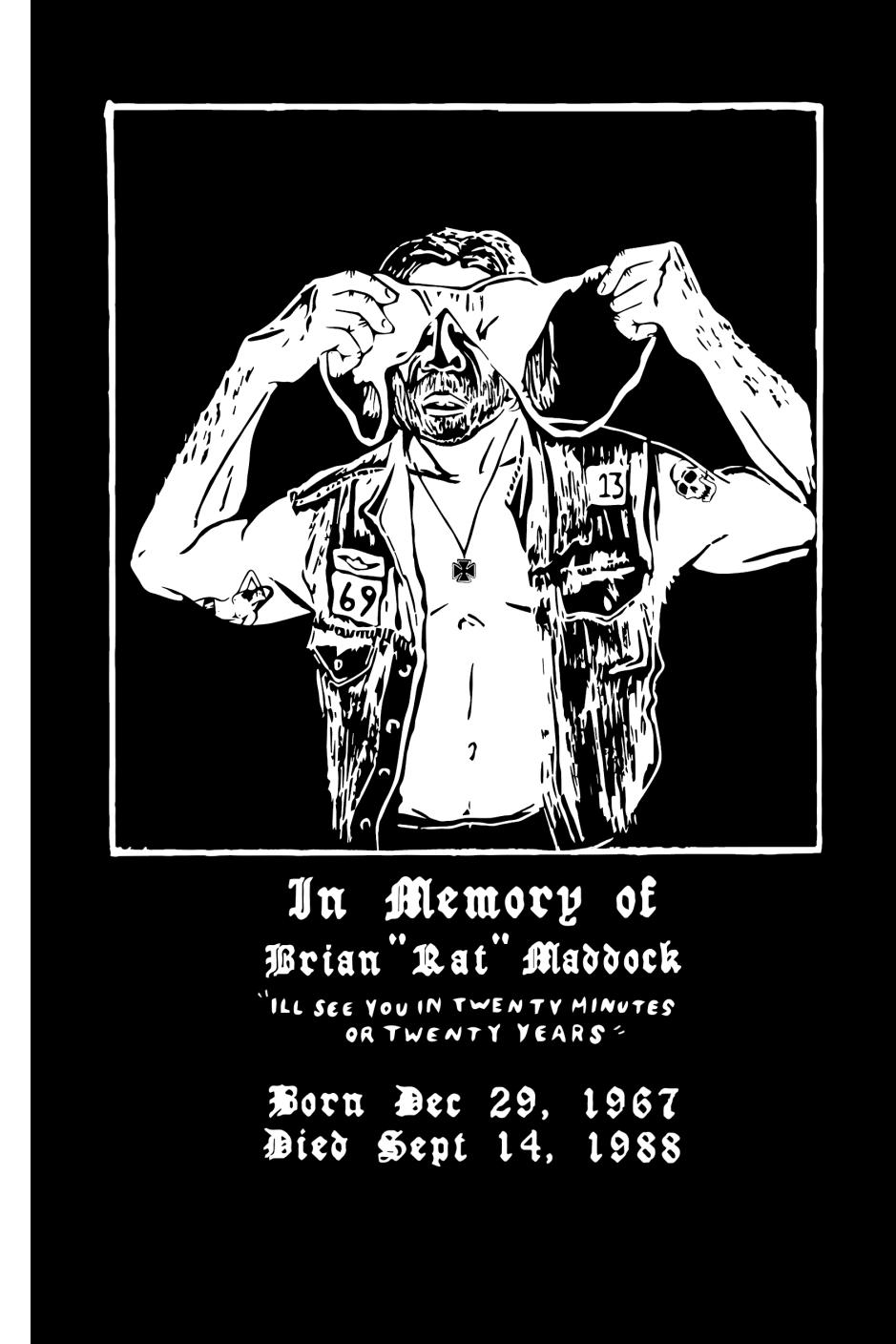


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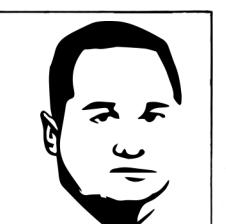
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Tina B. Dupler, 40
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Robert Dallons, 50
Oklahoma City.



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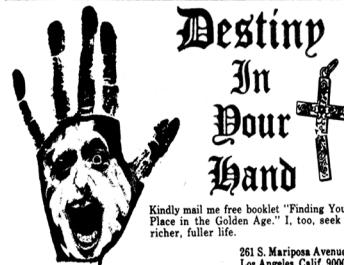
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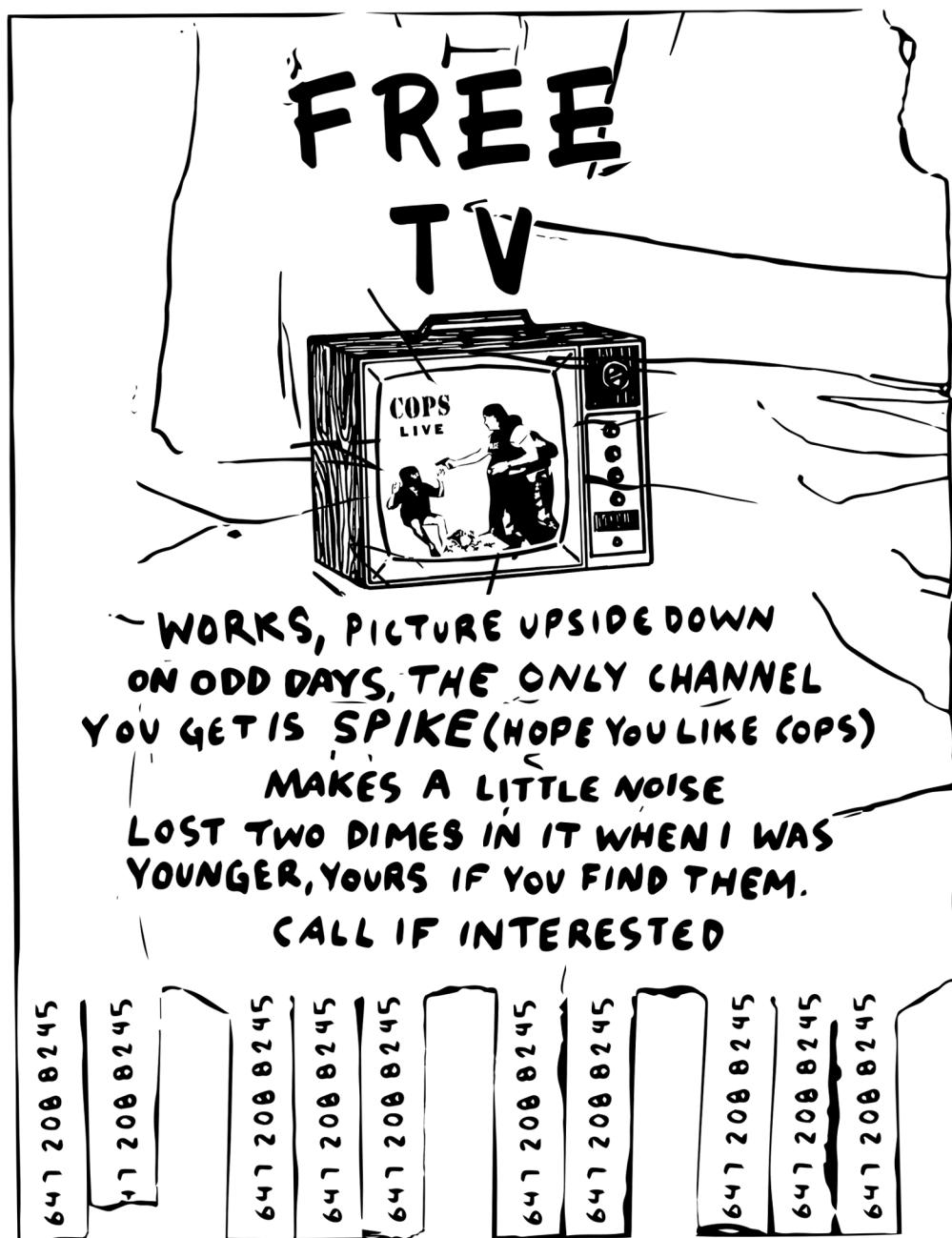
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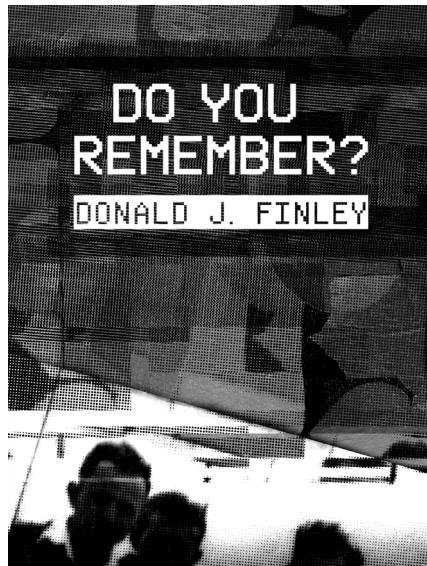


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PREFACE

Heard W.O. Mitchell (*Who Can Hear the Wind*) on the radio the other day, giving a reading at an author's convention at Harbourfront. It was about an English teacher (presumably W.O.) giving a lecture on writing to a bunch of students. If you want to be a writer, he said, sit down and write. An hour or two or three a day, every day. And don't ask what about. Write about the first thing that comes into your head. Don't worry about who's going to read it, or what they will think about it, or about you. Nobody will ever read it. Including you. You're not writing to have anybody read it. You're writing because you're a writer, and that's what writers do. They write. They write because they want to write. Or because they have to. Don't worry about whether it will work or not. If it will, it will. And if it won't, it doesn't matter. And don't worry about style, or errors, or corrections, or plot, or anything. Just write.

So I thought that's what I might try to do. I'm doing it on the computer instead of by hand because my hand gets tired and shakes. Maybe it was last night's Scotch. I'm not doing it on the computer so it can be printed and easy to read. Nobody is supposed to read any of this stuff, and that means you. Me too. So here goes. And it doesn't matter what any of this will tell anybody about me, because none of it will tell anybody anything.



Donald J. Finley
35 Wynford Heights Cres., Apt.1004
Don Mills, ON M3C 1K9

March 26, 1999

Dear Diane and Wally,

Re: DYR

It occurred to me, no that Wally has a computer with all the bells and whistles, and can send faxes and e-mails and download kiddie porn, that we, the three of us, should open a DYR file, standing for "Do You Remember", to reassure ourselves that what now seem like dreams of people and things in the long ago, once upon a time were real.

For example, I can remember the cookies Gramma used to give us – this may have been before your time, Diane – when she and Pop lived in the flat at 1182 Queen Street West, at the corner of Northcote, near Gladstone, and the telephone number was Lakeside something or other. Our father paid their monthly telephone bills, ranging from \$2 to \$3. I happen to know this, because I have the cheque stubs Dad kept in a metal box he hid in a secret place in Bedford park. They were store bought sandwich cookies filled with pineapple jam, shaped and embossed like wicker flower baskets, and they were my favourite cookies in all the world. How she must have skimped to buy them for us, for their only income was the old age pension of \$20 each a month.

What a silly idea this is. But I have opened a DYR file anyway, just for the fun of it, so that we can recall the little world we lived in when we were young. May I suggest that any contributions be limited to one or two pages, and that they be sent to the other two of us. This may pose a problem for you, Diane, unless you decide to buy a computer and get into the 20th century before it's too late. I must get a new one, if for no other reason than to catch up to Wally.

Looking forward to reminiscences,

SOLO SMOKER

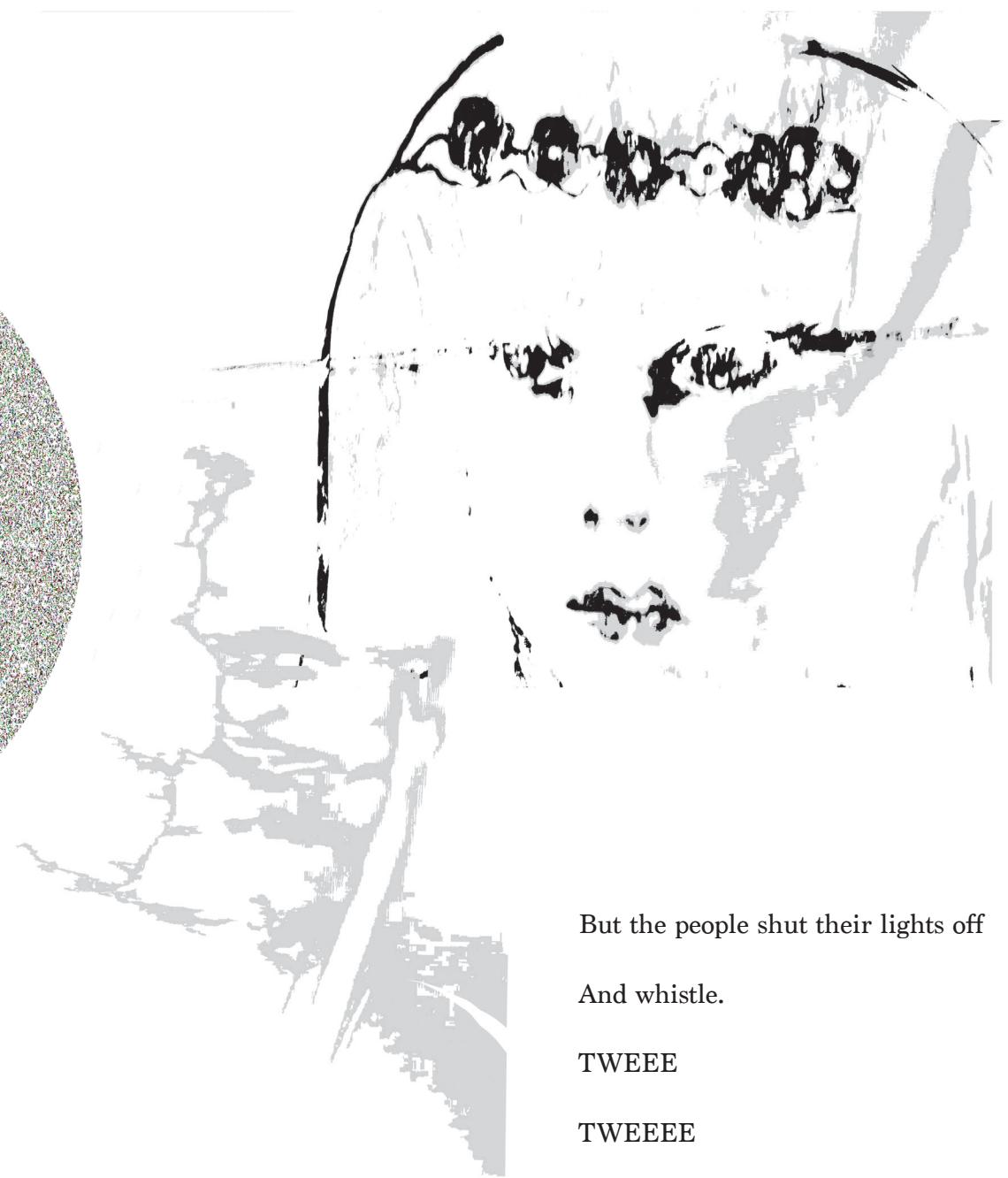
STEVE CARINO

SOLO SMOKER

STEVE CARINO



I consider myself
The mascot of the neighbourhood.
Dogs bark for me.
Squirrels come to see me.



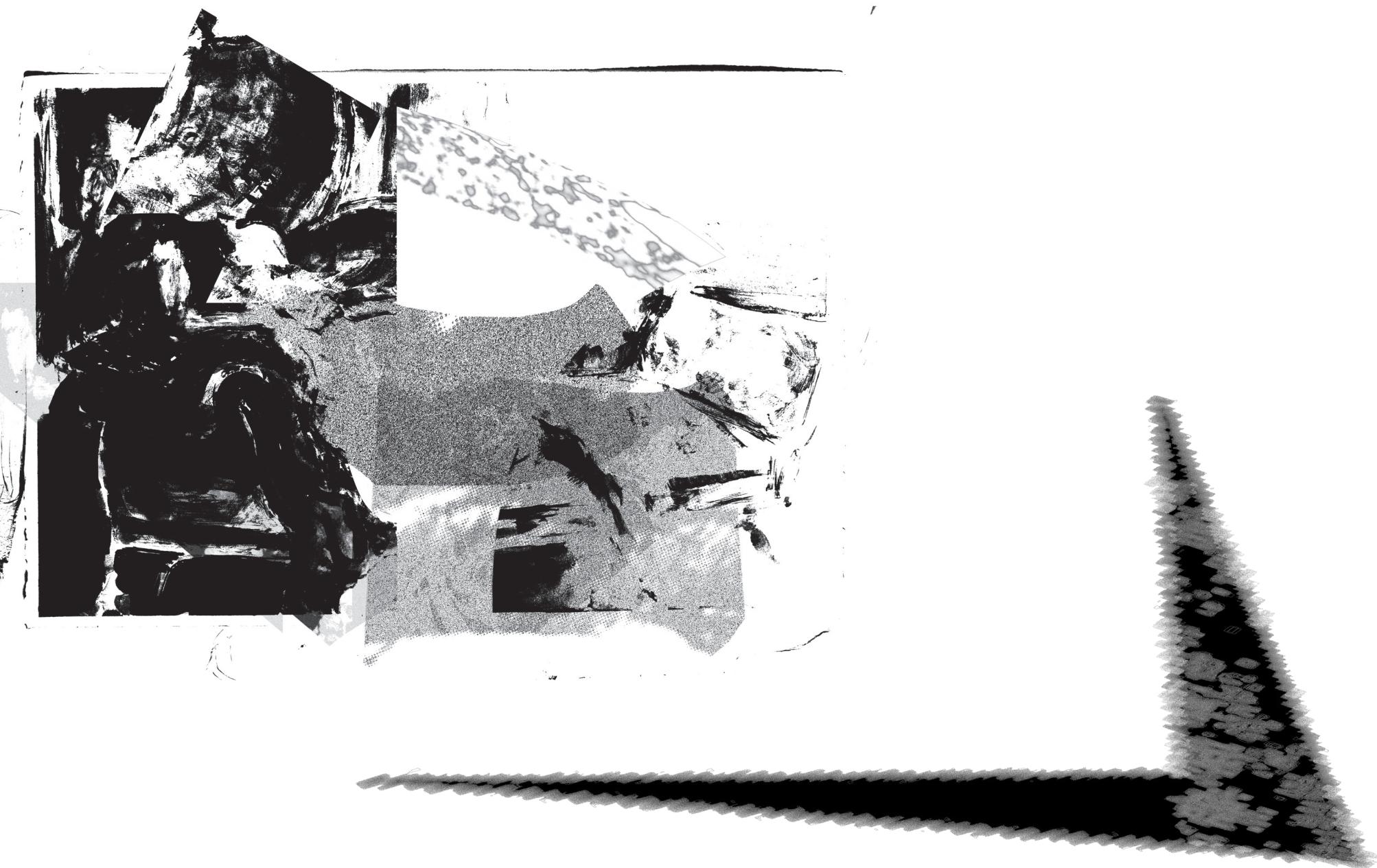
But the people shut their lights off
And whistle.
TWEEE
TWEEE

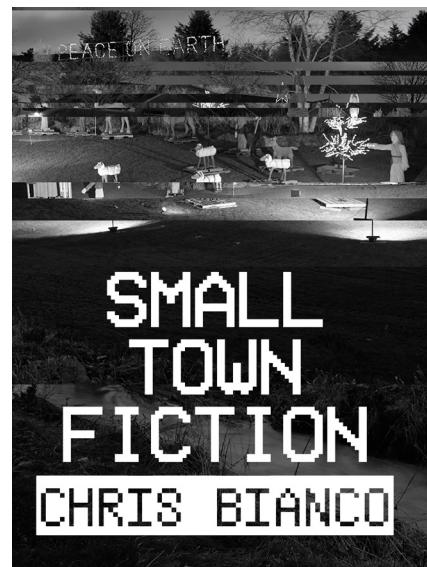
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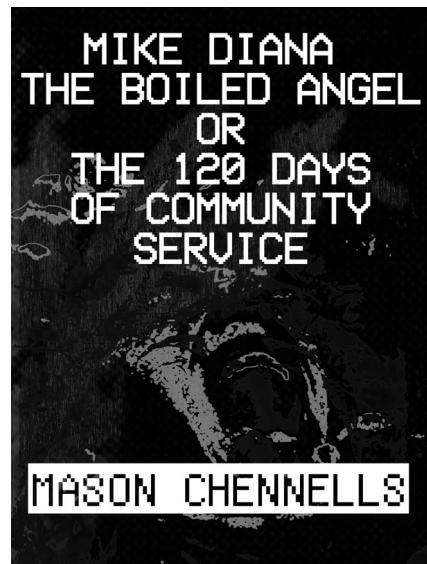


31



32





We live in a strange time, us creative types.

Some weeks ago, I became acquainted with the story of Mike Diana, an American underground cartoonist who had achieved notoriety for being the first artist found guilty of artistic obscenity, setting a precedent for a law that had eluded the most provocative of creators. Even William S. Burroughs had escaped further prosecution during the firestorm of controversy that surrounded his legendary novel Naked Lunch. A man who wrote about sexual deviancy and bug powder had made the leap from pornographer to artist, while some decades later, another man who drew decapitated children and outrageously stylish gore was unable to continue his work to the point where he had to stash his drawings in his car just to keep at it.

The work that Diana was arrested for, the self-published comic zine Boiled Angel, is a work that I myself have never read fully. Only small bits and pieces have surfaced on the internet, although I'll admit that I only dug as far as I wanted to. I not so much like Diana's work, but rather admire the audacity and creative freedom the man has given himself. I look at guys like him and wish I could let go and be so free with my craft, a trend I continue with other artists and writers I find myself begrudgingly fascinated by. Maruo Suehiro with his disturbingly realistic illustrations of stomach-churning erotica, R. Crumb with his taboo-revelling comic strips about misogyny and existential horror, and of course, Mr. Burroughs with his phantasmagoric prose and paranoidiac's commentary on the American way. For ages, these guys rose to the top of their

crafts and became legends in their own right, even if only to small devoted followings. But what happens when the freedom train stops, all because of one guy and his comic zines being intercepted at the wrong place and wrong time by the wrong people?

I should quickly point out the difference between this case and another infamous zine lawsuit. While Diana's comics were in fact disturbing and grotesque, they were very much reflective of the kind of subject matter that had inspired it. Just look at, say, S. Clay Wilson, a contemporary of Crumb's whose work mostly involved sex and violence to a fault. Just like the other heroes of the underground comix movement of the 60s and 70s, Wilson's work was obscene, extreme, and far beyond the boundaries of taste. And yet, he is still highly regarded in the world of sequential art for being so. Diana has even said that he tried to bring in his own collection of comics to show that what he was doing wasn't anything new, something that could've led to him not being found guilty by the jury. Now, on the opposite side of the spectrum, probably one of the most notorious zines in history is Peter Sotos' *Pure* #2, which led Sotos to be arrested for possessing child pornography... allegedly. Sotos isn't a pedophile, from what I understand; just someone who really has no regard for decency. Getting into this controversy is difficult because of the lack of hard facts, plus the overall ugliness of *Pure* and its three issues. I've never heard of a zine being discussed with such contempt, which is why I tend to stick with reading articles about Sotos' self-published work.

The difference, I believe, between these two cases is that Sotos was a sicko who didn't give a shit and willingly wrote articles praising serial killers and Nazis who had managed to

escape being tried for war crimes, allegedly. Diana, on the other hand, was continuing a tradition that had begun some decades prior while also expressing his problems with religion and the conservative Florida landscape he found himself suffocating in. I'm not saying you should go look up Diana's work (just a simple google search and you'll get bombarded with a disgusting amount of weirdly-shaped phalluses), because certainly you'll understand why he was arrested if you see even a small bit of it, but I'd argue that, like pornography, it has its audience and reason for being made, regardless if you think it shouldn't've been made regardless.

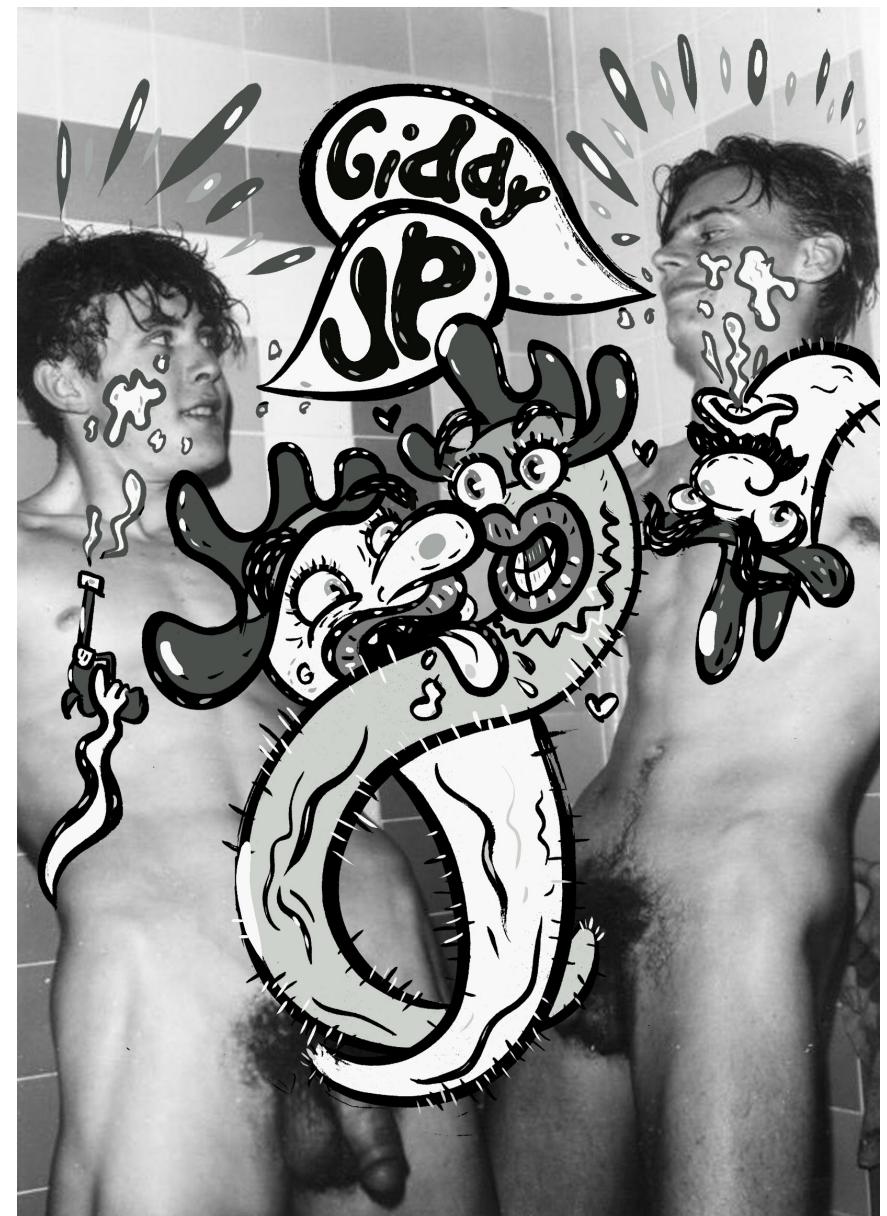
Now that I got that out of the way, I'm now going to discuss what Diana's work, specifically his comics in *Boiled Angel*, has made me wonder about the state of transgressive art. Firstly, I declare myself a writer of transgressive fiction, so writing and reading about extreme and ugly things is nothing new to me. However, as I delved into the details of Diana's legal battle, the outcome, and how the jury took only FORTY MINUTES to find the guy guilty, I started thinking about something I call 'the golden age of obscenity.' Hear me out: it starts with James Joyce's *Ulysses* causing uproar regarding its publication in the Little Review, and ends with the FBI's attempt to bring down the distribution of the pornographic classic *Deep Throat*. Between these two events, everything from comic books to literature to film to music was being cracked down upon by the moral busybodies of those decades. The beat generation went up against those who declared their revolutionary prose 'un-American,' while Elvis Presley gyrated his hips into history by bringing sexuality to rock 'n' roll. And who can forget the EC Comics heyday, when masterpieces like *Tales from the Crypt* were declared the sole factor in making children homosexual psychopaths?

This golden age was a time of unbridled creativity and rampant barrier-breaking. Obscene art has of course existed before and after this period, but nothing was as high-profile and memorable as those days and the works that it produced. Bookworms still gush about The Catcher in the Rye, comic nerds still curse Frederic Wertham and his Seduction of the Innocent nonsense, and rock music has survived trends and dips in popularity ever since it first challenged the musical tastes of the masses in the 50s, continuing to do so in the 60s and 70s also. Transgressing the norm seems to have helped birth popular culture.

We look to these works and praise them, while those who are inspired by them and take them further down the paths to their logical conclusions seemingly get shot down for it. Sure, no one would dare to say that a Carcass record deserves to stand alongside Are You Experienced?, but surely the most gnarly of death metal and grindcore had to have started somewhere, and that somewhere started somewhere even farther from that, and so on, and so forth. We look at erotica and think nothing of the old works like the Marquis de Sade's Justine or John Cleland's Fanny Hill, but suddenly, when deciding to use fairytale characters like in Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's Lost Girls to explore sexuality and history it's suddenly declared pornography and that it shouldn't be considered art like those other works. It seems people like to think that they know what constitutes garbage from work.

To bring this tirade full circle, I believe Mike Diana was carrying on artistic traditions being carried on from the works of S. Clay Wilson and R. Crumb and the guys behind EC Comics. Diana used gore and perversion to express his problems with religion, making him none more than an artist

with something to say. It's like trying to defend Pasolini's Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom: no one'll admit it's a good movie, but they won't deny it's artistic merit. I believe Boiled Angel has merit. Mike Diana didn't do anything wrong, and it wasn't anyone's place to silence him and his art. Disturbing and grotesque as it may be.



Inside Covers - Spencer Afonso

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