

Reviewers analyze rock critic, comic kid

BOOKS from Page 6

Bangs actually did produce a wonderful piece of vinyl in his lifetime as Lester Bangs and the Delinquents. The album is occasionally available as a cutout and contains the sum of his influences. It's primitive, enervated and often childish, like the music Bangs loved best.

In 1982, at 33, Lester Bangs flushed out his system, purging himself of drugs and alcohol, and getting the occasional decent night's rest. He dropped some weight and began to write more self-consciously. Friends said he looked better than he had in years. His system weakened by a cold and his metabolism relaxing after a life of abuse, Bangs died in his sleep on April 30, 1982, because of an infinitesimal ingestion of drugs. Six months before this, an amount that small wouldn't have gotten him through the first two minutes of the Stooges' "Funhouse."

The boy who used to stay home from school faking the flu and stand on his bed screaming Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" while cranking a

John Coltrane album, died a little more like a "girl" than he would have liked, but the endless reams of print he left behind avenge his frail death perfectly.

If he could just have hung on long enough to hear Sonic Youth and Big Black, maybe Rolling Stone wouldn't look so much like Vanity Fair today.



Courtesy of Universal Press Syndicate

By Joseph Bowman
Staff Reviewer

Bill Watterson, "Calvin and Hobbes"

bes: **Something Under the Bed is Drooling** (Universal Press Syndicate)

As I was strolling along one day, I passed by a shiny new book sitting all by itself on a small gray table. I opened it up and read and read. I laughed, then I read and read some more. With each page my smile got wider and wider until I was afraid that my face would split, and the delight I felt kept going on and on.

The new "Calvin and Hobbes" compilation, "Something Under the Bed is Drooling," is available at bookstores for \$6.95. This enchanting bundle of joy is the second book in the "Calvin and Hobbes" collection.

For all of you poor slobs who have no idea what you're missing, "Calvin and Hobbes" is the present-day equivalent to Winnie the Pooh (minus Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga, and Roo) with a little Doonesburian wisdom thrown in. Bill Watterson, the author, has somehow captured the heart of childhood magic.

Calvin, a Dennis-the-Menace type who never repents his truly rotten

nature, pals around with his stuffed tiger, Hobbes. In Calvin's world, Hobbes talks, walks and reads, and his school desk transforms into a spaceship that daringly avoids deadly frapray bolts from the nasty gorklons and blazes through the skyways on freem drive at warp million. His teachers turn into evil toad monsters from Jupiter demanding to know, "What is 3 + 4?" But Spaceman Spiff, even as he eyes their diabolical instruments of torture, bravely refuses to betray the free galaxy.

With its originality, humor and offbeat charm, "Calvin and Hobbes" has transcended the mere comic-strip genre, and critics are taking notice, lining up to hail acclaim on the tiny, scheming little tot and his stuffed, rag-eared pal.

"A wedding of idea and art rarely seen these days, a feeling that words can enhance art, and art can do the same for the written — that a carefully wrought blend of these ingredients can create a degree of enchantment which bespeaks genius," Oliphant says in his foreword.

The author keeps in his vest pocket

a boy who never grew up. No one else has seen this boy, but Watterson swears it's true. He talks to him every time he writes a cartoon so he'll get the perspective just right.

Somehow this boy and close friend of Watterson's managed to find his way to never-never land, and that's where he lives when he's not talking to Watterson. So, while the rest of us drearily plodded through freshman English, he battled pirates, aliens and dinosaurs. He tells Watterson tales of a world all mystical and imagined, a world much more interesting than our own. Since Watterson keeps this boy close to him, he's always inspired, and he never forgets to wonder. The boy in his vest pocket keeps never-never land alive and well for us, just in case we ever discover that we want to go back.

Of course, we were all there once, but we just forgot what it was like as we grew older. Watterson didn't forget, and that's where his genius lies. So, if you're looking for a little trip to childhood, it's a short walk to wonder: only as far as the nearest bookstore.

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