

Jello's brand of protest Ex-Dead Kennedy blasts U.S. involvement in gulf

"If you can't annoy somebody,
there's little point in writing."
- Kingsley Amis

Damn it all anyway! Jello Biafra puts out an anti-war record and they finish the war (or stop firing the guns, anyhow).

What if they gave a war and finished it before anyone could protest?

A guy (whoops, a person) just doesn't have a chance to do any good protesting lately—all the big events are either too far away or are over before one has the chance to get angry.

Then again, there is a host of general social yuckiness in which we wallow every day that calls for constant vigilance and redress, offering endless opportunities for comment and criticism.

Since the breakup of the Dead Kennedys, former lead singer Jello Biafra has released a number of "spoken word" albums that combine his warped humor with vicious satiric wit.

He also has been involved in several musical collaborations and a film project and has become a media figure since the obscene "obscenity" trial concerning the Dead Kennedys' Frankenchrist release and its poster insert by Omni favorite H.R. Giger.

The question of protest was nearly and neatly made moot concerning the recent war in the gulf, yet that has not dulled Jello's rage.

With the release of a single called "Die For Oil, Sucker," Jello has made it OK to protest again. George Bush may have gotten over the "Vietnam Syndrome," but Jello has not heard the news.

With a rhythmic, rhymy cadence, Jello unleashes his fury in two selections taken from one of his numerous live readings.

Available on vinyl and cassette, the title reading is a vituperative blast against the gulf war that presents Jello at his most brash, framing the question: "Which would you rather sacrifice? Your hot car or your life? Die for oil, sucker."

On the flip side is "Pledge of Allegiance," which ties together the flag-burning controversy with the non-issue from the last election regarding the recitation of the pledge in the classroom.

Here is Jello at his finest, railing against "psychopathic Pentagon gangsters," referring to the American public as "sedated tabloid robots" and asking, "Burn, baby, burn: If the communist countries can do it, why can't we?"

Toward the end of the selection, Jello does offer a few positive alternatives for avoiding war, but the overall tone is one of angry criticism.

Jello does get out of hand with

the fifth column album review

the rhetoric here and there and provides a feast for conspiracy theorists, but the listener can surely allow for some "protestic license" in the midst of current global events.

Along with the words of this single comes a trademark Alternative Tentacles poster full of Winston Smith-style clip art gathered into a collage of readings and graphic visual images.

For another side of Jello, one might sample some of his recent musical collaborations, such as the "Last Scream of the Missing Neighbors" LP on which Jello sings with longtime labelmates DOA.

Once Canada's premier thrash band, DOA has slowed down quite a bit over the years and gotten "powerful" like so many other aging punk bands.

With "Last Neighbors," though, DOA is re-energized, pouring out solid blasts with titles like "Wish I was in El Salvador," "Attack of the Peacekeepers" and the side-long "Full Metal Jackoff."

Then Jello joins DOA for a lack-luster cover of "We Gotta Get Out of This Place," a move mirrored on last year's DOA album, "Murder."

With a move to Restless/Enigma Records and a dreadful cover of "Midnight Special," DOA fell back into the gloopy grown-up punk groove, far from the days of the belting-out thrashers who used to visit Omaha's Howard Street Tavern.

For "Murder," DOA resurrected some of the old members like Dave Gregg, but the group needs to dive all the way back into its past, when people could slam to every song.

Back to Jello — those in Lincoln interested in hearing him in person will get an opportunity on April 18 when he speaks in the Nebraska Union.

"Get off your butt before your butt's blown off."

-Jello Biafra

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Courtesy of Citadel Press

Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert in "It Happened One Night."

Capra movie a success

Gable rewarded in film

In 1934, Clark Gable pulled a bit of a no-no and asked MGM big man, Louis B. Mayer, for a raise. Gable's successes found him as the leading man in Hollywood's star system of the 1930s. Gable argued that since he was making money for the studio he deserved a larger cut.

Mayer was outraged with Gable's request and packed him off to Columbia studios for loan out. Mayer forced him to star in a do-nothing little picture called "It Happened One Night," a film directed and co-scripted by the then little-known Frank Capra.

"It Happened One Night" was chosen by Mayer because the film was slotted to be a silly picture with little hope of any success at the box office.

"So quietly did the picture open, it failed to merit the usual second-week holdover at Radio City Music Hall — a black mark against future business," said director Frank Capra in his autobiography. "The Name Above the Title." "Then it happened, all over the country — not in one night, within a month. People found a film longer than usual and, surprise, funnier, much funnier than the usual." At this point, Columbia was a "Poverty Row" studio, with little claim to fame. The one asset it had was a young Frank Capra. Columbia couldn't interest any star in the script by Capra and Robert Riskin. Myrna Loy, Constance Bennett, Margaret Sullavan, Miriam Hopkins and Robert Montgomery all turned down roles in the film.

With a grumbling Gable in their

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Gray Faces by Michael Stock

pocket as a reluctant leading man, Capra and Riskin lured Claudette Colbert from her four-week vacation from Paramount, promising her double her Paramount salary and that the picture would be finished within a month.

The pairing worked like magic. The quick patter of lines between Gable and Colbert in "It Happened One Night" is every bit as quick and electric as pairings of Powell and Loy and Tracy and Hepburn.

Colbert's role, as the runaway spoiled heiress desiring to wed against the wishes of her father (Walter Connolly), is a role of uppity perfection. Gable's cute, condescending banter is beyond reproach, highlighting his role as the somewhat sexist, always endearing reporter with an attitude.

"Your ego is absolutely colossal!" Colbert quips.
"Yep. Yep. Not bad... How's yours?" Gable retorts.

Capra's script effectively utilizes the on-screen electricity between Gable and Colbert, particularly in the rib-tickling scene of the two crossing a river. Gable throws Colbert over his shoulder and wades across the river. Colbert squeals one of her patented screwball squeals of delight that she became so famous for in the '30s.

"You know this is the first time in years I've ridden piggy-back!" Colbert squeals.

"This isn't piggy-back," Gable snaps.

"Of course it is... I remember distinctly my father taking me for a piggy-back ride."

"And he carried you like this, I suppose? Your father didn't know beans about piggy-back riding."

"My uncle's mother's brother has four children and I've seen them ride piggy-back," Colbert responds defensively.

"I bet there isn't a good piggy-back rider in your whole family. I've never known a rich man yet who could piggy-back ride!" Gable snaps.

"You're prejudiced."
"You show me a good piggy-backer and I'll show you a real human. Now you take Abraham Lincoln for instance — a natural-born piggy-backer. Where do you get off with that stuffed-shirt family of yours?" Gable snaps again.

"It Happened One Night" ran off with the top five Academy Awards for 1934, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Screenplay for Capra, Best Actor for Gable and Best Actress for Colbert. The film's success also garnered important gains for both Capra and Columbia — turning Capra into a vital asset, and Columbia into a major film studio.

And Gable got his raise, too.

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Laquan

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begins with embarrassing recordings of various important politicians saying "I cannot recall" in the Iran-Contra hearings. The lyrics go on to attack the Keating Five, the national debt and U.S. involvement in Panama. Lyrics include "1990 and still flying Jim Crow/Using Willy Horton to frighten whites on election night/A thousand points of light, right?"

The last song on the album is "Puddin' Pie," a six-minute vulgar track designed to provoke censors

and shock the hearer into paying attention to the last line, "Whenever you go for puddin' pie, I suggest you use your prophylactics."

Rounding out the record are tracks "Tear Your Soul Out," "Let the Vibes Flow," "Witness the Drift," and "Lyrical Theory."

Laquan notes inspirations ranging from the Bible, the Koran and the Torah to the Black Panthers, Malcolm X and Dostoyevsky.

Those who don't mind hearing ethical platitudes and political commentary in rap will probably enjoy the good danceable beat contained on "Notes of a Native Son."



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