

Musical identity exacts price

Bite-sized pieces of salvation in between a steady diet of urinal cakes and banal flakes. Ramshackle turntables. Lights in corridors blazing out in unprecedented glory; always there, shining their radiance upon whoever is seeking refuge from the commonplace deluge.

In a land of consumeristic uniqueness the foxhunt is always on. We train the dogs to sniff fresh blood and ingest the kill before anyone else has a chance to savor the sweetness. Everyone wants to be different but there aren't enough pelts to go around.

Don't even try to tell me that I'm the only person who ever scoured the Antiquarium to find music so awful that no one could stomach it but me. "Holy crap, they have Rutabaga Bob featuring the Hairy Nipples and Orthopedic Short Cut Bean's Jalopy Eskimo Pie Vacancy!"

The pilgrimage for an identity, the search for your own private Idaho band. Why is it that we seek out music to consider uniquely ours, then evangelize it to anyone who will listen — and upon realizing that everyone now perceives it as wonderful, get pissed off even though it was our endless preaching that caused the whole quagmire in the first place?

We should take action to prevent frustrated leaps from 10th story windows and set expiration dates for pop culture trinkets; the point of no return when no one else is allowed to make the sprawling leap onto the bandwagon. "Last call for punk! Sorry, we stopped letting people listen to Jane's Addiction yesterday."

How many thousands of you were the "first one" in your school/neighborhood/tax bracket/NAMBLA group to own "Nevermind"? C'mon, let me see the hands. While we're at it, let's spice up the Venn Diagram by subdividing people who claim to



Aaron McKain

"Does bad music make bad people or do bad people simply ruin everything? Music is a war for territory."

have been listening to NIN since "Pretty Hate Machine" and cross reference that with individuals insisting that they rooted for Mr. Pink four score and seven years before Pulp Fiction. Ah, the bubbling, muddy, richness of conflict comes swimming to the surface.

Now the latest Rosetta stone of undergroundism is Phish. I remember a DN column last year, "A really cool secret," in which some girl's big brother passed the Phish legacy on to her like he was the Keymaster ushering in the reign of Gozer with a fez and the secret handshake of the Water Buffalo Lodge. I like Phish, and I'm not trying to smear them with verbal shrapnel, but c'mon. Their CDs are as hard to find as listless audience silence during a taping of Saturday Night Live. They've become one of the biggest concert draws of the 1990s. To do that takes a helluva lot of fans. To have fans you have to have people, and the law of averages says that most people are insufferable clownfish that you

don't want around in the first place.

The real fun starts when the "fans" come together and realize that their "really cool secret" actually has millions of subscribers; that rather than being a tightly knit elite group consisting of people just like you, it's actually polluted by facets of society that make you more than a little queasy.

The Holden Caulfield battle royale begins as we witch hunt for the true phony bastards. The holier-than-thous will sit around the campfire tossing incendiary glances at the Johnny-come-latelys using that ever so precise litmus test of devotion, the lip sync, to test the mettle of their fellow man. Tied-dyed McCarthyism will be waged as they search out the scapegoat who gets a panicked look in his/her eye when trying to figure out what song is being performed in the Name That Tune Spanish Inquisition Home Game.

Nothing makes the new thing suck harder than everyone digging it.

Does bad music make bad people or do bad people simply ruin everything? Let's nip this Phish thing in the ass right now and just duke it out. I don't even want to hear any of the "I liked 'em first." When you're a Jet, you're a Jet. Let's rumble. A big, greased up, wet T-shirt, monster car, deli meat decathlon, where the contestants have to distinguish between Golgi Apparatus and Classical Gas and the loser has to go back to listening to Bon Jovi.

Me? I'll be sitting on the sidelines mesmerized by the new Mr. Bungle. No son, disco didn't suck.

And for the love of sweet baby Jesus, don't turn Tarantino into a fraternity slogan.

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The N Stands For Knowledge

by James Zank

WANTED

Name: Television

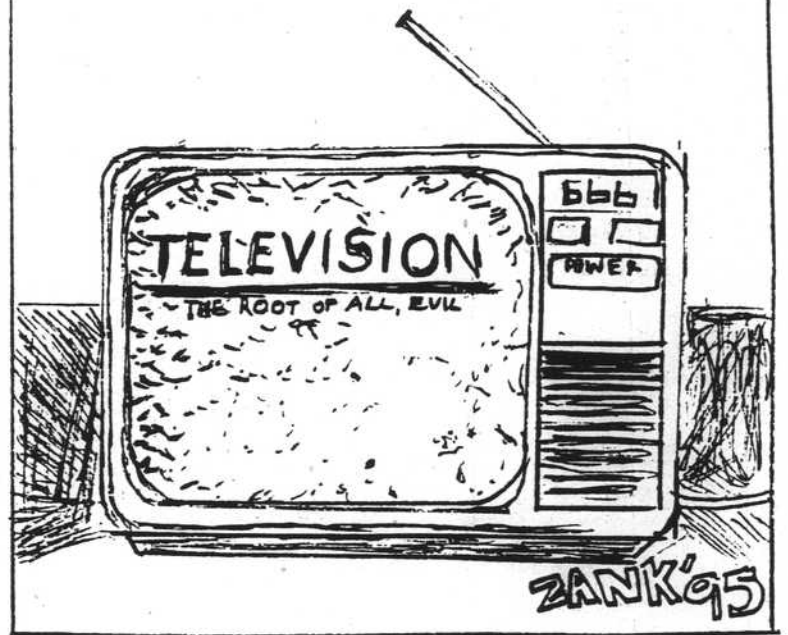
Age: Estimated to be between 50 to 60 years of age

Aliases Used: "T.V.", "The Idiot Box", "The Boob Tube"

Wanted for: Accessory to murder, the economic failures of the 1980's, wanton destruction of numerous Grade Point Averages, the creation of the MTV generation, the Gulf War, "The Beverly Hillbillies" (an international crime against humanity), info-mercials, and the creation of the Western consumer culture.

Known Accomplices: O.J. Simpson, Ronald Wilson Reagan, Barney the Dinosaur, Ted Turner.

Suspect is disarming, occasionally crass, loaded with potential, and is to be considered extremely dangerous in the wrong hands. If citizens should see this suspect, they are discouraged from approaching and encouraged to read books and think for themselves.



Quilt can't cover social stigma

I didn't expect to cry that day. Somehow all that journalistic cynicism and objective thought went right out the window the more time I spent talking to volunteers and walking around the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt.

I tend to be critical of things I consider empty symbols or icons. Earlier this semester, I blasted ribbons representing AIDS and breast cancer. I still think all too often the people who wear them take the easy way out. I would rather see people becoming more conscious of an issue and incorporating it into their own lives.

But I underestimated the emotional power of the Quilt. Maybe I think of it differently because even though it's a symbol, it asks nothing of the viewer other than to remember and respect the people it represents.

Even though most of us have grown up with AIDS at least in our teenage years, we missed much of the epidemic's early days.

The day I visited the Quilt, the only people allowed inside the auditorium were press and area high school and junior high students. That generation, to me, should be the most aware of AIDS.

The disease burst onto the national scene before they ever headed into a sex ed class, and will continue with them for the rest of their lives. But these students, like me, don't know how painful the early 1980s were for people living with AIDS.

Although Ronald Reagan has been out of the presidency for more than seven years, his reputation remains with us. I hate Ronald Reagan. I hate him for the extreme fear that led him to suppress any knowledge of a growing epidemic.

Even after all this time, with HIV and AIDS at the forefront of domestic and international health issues, the lost time cannot be regained. I bring up Reagan not to criticize him for that time, but because history is doomed to repeat itself.



Krista Schwarting

"AIDS needs to be, not a political issue, but a human one."

And from the looks of the students I saw at the exhibit, it looks as if doomsday is on its way. In their words and actions, I saw gross disregard for the people represented in the quilt panels and those they left behind.

With all the love and effort apparent in the panels, you would think it wouldn't be asking too much to stop and think about a disease which has left such a mark. But obviously, growing up with knowledge of AIDS doesn't make for any more compassion and understanding than my or any previous generation.

What the Quilt has attempted to foster is greater understanding of the breadth and depth of people affected by, living with, or dead because of AIDS.

The Quilt came into being in 1987 and was displayed for the first time at the march on Washington D.C. by gays and lesbians demanding recognition of their rights. It came into being because of Reagan's ignorance and hypocrisy.

Even Reagan's friend and biographer Lou Cannon notes that his response was delayed and inadequate. In what now seems a smaller-scale version of the Holocaust, he ignored the issue

when the numbers of those dying were relatively small but growing.

One of the reasons the trend was so easy to ignore was the demographics of the people who were dying. Mostly gay men living in New York and San Francisco, they had little if any political clout.

Why was he so frightened he couldn't even mention the disease until 1985, when it became clearly apparent something deadly was going on? He didn't want to upset conservative elements, people who wanted to dismiss AIDS as the wages of sin for people involved in homosexual activity. And all this time, people continued to die.

They died by the hundreds and then thousands, without the benefit of government money for research.

More importantly, his mentioning it early could have taken away the stigma remaining with AIDS to this day. The students I saw the other day may actually know the fastest-growing group of people with AIDS is heterosexual women, but what we continue to hear about is the disease moving among gay men.

So the stigma remains. AIDS needs to be, not a political issue, but a human one. There are people behind all the facts and statistics most of us have heard repeatedly. Over 30,000 of them are represented in the Quilt that made me cry. I believe what it will take to stir more of us to action is knowing or at least relating to someone infected by the disease.

It was a panel at the end of the display, almost hidden in a corner, that got to me. It commemorated someone from New Orleans, I city I still consider a second home. Sections of it represented different sites across the city, places I enjoyed and things I'd seen. In the end, it was the fact that the man it represented died when he wasn't much older than I am now that made me cry.

Schwarting is a graduate student in broadcasting and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

