

# Square Pegs

hammered out by John Kissane

Insomnia. Fever. Tremors. Nausea. Pain, deep somewhere. And encircling all of it, running through your head like an endlessly repeating children's song, the Siren-call of the fix that you've been aching for.

The Polemic is the needle, oh bright, wonderful needle, bringing to you that heroin-sweet liquid of John Kissane's words. God, the rush: it's like coming home again.

I'm back for one last semester (God willing and the creeks don't rise), and Phat Daddy J's going to use his inimitable arrogance, irascibility, and fabled vocabulary to hit your vein.

All right, fine, okay, so maybe I'm exaggerating just a tad. But come on: I'm a nineteen-year-old guy; we're supposed to have inflated self-images. Nothing wrong with using an accepted stereotype to excuse failings, right?

Wrong, and that's what this column is about, in a way. Yep, that old dead horse of nonconformity. You know, I shouldn't have to write a column about this. I got the message back in 10th grade, reading Emerson. I ain't exactly the smartest Hydrox in the box, but I get it. I don't know what the hell's up with some of you people. It's an obvious point, like "racism is bad." Well, whatever. Maybe I can't say new things about nonconformity, but maybe I can at least state the case for it in new ways.

"If you don't rate, just overcompensate," the band Offspring tells us on the song "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)" It's about a white guy who, lacking self-esteem, latches on to the most superficial elements of stereotypical young black guys. That's an attempt to conform.

Or an Uncle Tom, some black guy trying to be whiter than Martha Stewart; that's conformity too. Conversely, the black who tries to speak in Ebonics, that "language" of the grammatically-challenged, so as not to be called an Uncle Tom, is also a conformist.

I'm talking about the Catholic atheist who goes to church every Sunday to be seen. I'm talking about the Jew who used to go to Temple weekly but now goes to a Christian place so as to fit in with the other members of his gated community. I'm talking about the lesbian who fantasizes about women but refuses to act on her nature because her friends hate "queers." I'm talking about the German who, in the second World War, vocally supported Nazism but in his heart despised it.

Nonconformity isn't about being weird for weird's sake; that's just another form of conformity. John Kissane doing nude cartwheels in Besser Tech is not taking a stand against conformity, it's just scary.

Nonconformity means being true to the best part of your nature. It's about having the integrity to maintain your individuality, no matter the consequences. It goes from something as small as telling your best friend, who loves *Independence Day*, that you think the movie's stupid and meretricious to something as large as refusing to give names to HUAC, that anti-communism search-and-destroy organization of days past.

Now, there are certain elements of our natures that shouldn't be exercised in everyday life. If something drives you to take an ax to the head of any person you encounter, you should check that impulse. It hurts me to write this, but it's wrong to kill random, something-possibly-approaching-innocent people. Of course, if you run into a specific, guilty person, let fly.

If you're friends with a smug, self-indulgent columnist who spouts off every paper with irritatingly smug statements, tell him his stuff sucks and kick him in the kidney. Of course, this is just hypothetical; you probably don't know any columnists like that.

Show the world your true colors. If someone doesn't like you, it's either because he's dumb or you are. Either way, it's good to find out in the beginning, 'cause in the long run, there aren't secrets. Everything comes out one way or another.

So let this column be for you...let it be...hmm...oh, I've got it! Let this column be a psychological laxative, flushing from your system the barriers and facades you've constructed.

That metaphor was an exercise in nonconformity. Who else would come up with that one? Pure John Kissane, baby; pure John Kissane.

# Christmas all year long

By GINGER DAVIS  
GUEST WRITER

Dear Santa,

Now that Christmas has come and gone, presents have been returned, and cards and letters from people who really care (but only enough to write once a year) have been pitched along with the tinsel and tree, I need to talk to you about Christmas.

Perhaps you agree with me that we are being exploited by this well-intentioned holiday. This is probably evident from the glowing plastic likeness of you, and the trendy white reindeer that litter yards across the nation (confession: Santa, I'd like nothing better than to gather up all the white metal reindeer in town and hang them from the same sign that the little deer in the "Big Buck Contest" are hung from). Christmas has turned into a well-wrapped guilt trip. Writing people because, God forbid, they might send you a card after you put them on the drop list, donating pocket change to charities you usually ignore, calling relatives you heard from since—well, last Christmas—and choking down the dreaded fruitcake.

So this year, I have a rather unusual request. It may sound naive and overly-optimistic (I know, optimism! From me, of all people!), but here goes. I want to live in a world where this



holiday isn't needed because you call and write loved ones *all year long*. Where you fill your socks with candy and leave them for family members *for no reason at all*. When there are no bell-ringers in December, because we donate money *all year round*. Where fruitcake is outlawed and big family

dinner is a regular occurrence.

I realize this is a lot to ask, especially since it would put you back on the job market (and at your age, it would be tough), but please think about it. And perhaps, some figgie pudding, and a cup of world peace while you're at it?

## Chinese culture at ACC

By JAMIN TREVARRO  
STAFF WRITER

A film series called "A Reflection on Chinese Culture" is being offered this semester by the Association of Lifelong Learners and the ACC Student Senate. Three films will be offered and all are free and open to the public.

The three films, *To Live*, (January 19), *Pushing Hands*, (February 2), and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, (February 16), are made by Chinese directors and actors.

**"One point two billion people have a very large economic impact on the rest of the world."**

Matt Dunckel  
ACC instructor

After viewing, the audience takes part in a discussion on the films and culture with Dr. Bart Boyer, ACC English instructor, and Matt Dunckel, ACC Social Science instructor. "I think with a greater awareness of a culture beyond our own, there comes an under-

standing, a way of reflecting one's own situation by observing another's," Dunckel said.

"One point two billion people have a very large economic impact on the rest of the world," he added.

The first film in the series, *To Live*, was the dramatic life story of a man named Fugui and his family against the political backdrop of the Communist takeover of the 1940s. The audience sees how the political strife of the '40s, '50s and '60s affects the everyday lives of the working-class townspeople. The citizens gave their hearts, souls and lives to Chairman Mao, yet they always seem to suffer regardless of who's ruling them, whether it's the Reds or the Nationalists. The movie is subtitled.

The dialogue is sparse, easy to understand, and the actors play their characters from the heart. You never feel as if you're merely "just watching a movie;" it's more like watching scenes from real life, experiencing a friend's triumphs and torments.

The films are highly recommended, whether you're a foreign culture buff or just a film addict; they work on both political and personal levels. All presentations begin at 7:30 p.m. at NRC 101.

## Sharp Metal Objects

by Jeff Williams

Vanilla Ice  
"Hard to Swallow"  
Republic

★★★★☆

Think back...back to Junior High School. Do the words "Ice, ice baby" jog any memories? If they do, well here is a blast from the past, sort of.

Vanilla Ice, an overnight sensation with his single "Ice, Ice Baby," went against the grain in the early 90s by being a white rapper in a genre dominated by black men. But just as quickly as he gained popularity, his music became cliched and he faded into history.

Now the Ice Man is back with "Hard to Swallow." This is not the Ice from the good old days though; this is a very angry Ice Man. His lyrics are backed by heavy guitars reminiscent of Korn or Limp Bizkit. The album was even produced by Ross Robinson who has worked with Korn and Limp Bizkit in the past.

While the lyrics may be totally different than Ice's old stuff, that doesn't necessarily mean that they are any better. Aside from his rants about his childhood on "Scars" and the remake of "Ice, Ice Baby" (now titled "Too Cold") there are few high points on this album. He sings mostly about getting high and "----ing the industry."

Bottom line: The guitars may be Korn, the lyrics may be screamed, but this is still just a white boy rapping...badly.

Also notable:

"Psycho: Music From and Inspired by the Motion Picture"  
Geffen

★★★★☆

Includes songs featured in the movie by Danny Elfman and also includes songs by Rob Zombie, Pet Shop Boys, and Girls Against Boys.

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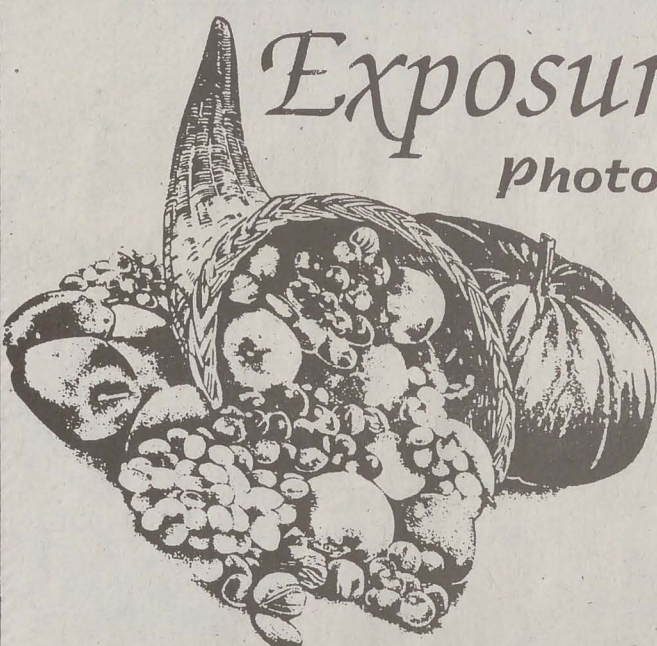


PHOTO PROCESSING  
WITH NEXT DAY  
SINGLE PRINTS

"Pushing Hand"

Reflections  
on  
Chinese  
Life and  
Culture

"Eat, Drink,  
Man, Woman"

February 2 & 16  
NRC 101  
7:30 p.m.

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