

HARVEY PEKAR'S  
**AMERICAN  
SPLENDOR™**

Bedtime Stories

DARK HORSE



MAVERICK™

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NEO-REALISM



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SPAIN ★ STACK ★ COLLIER



# **HARVEY PEKAR'S AMERICAN SPLENDOR™ Bedtime Stories**

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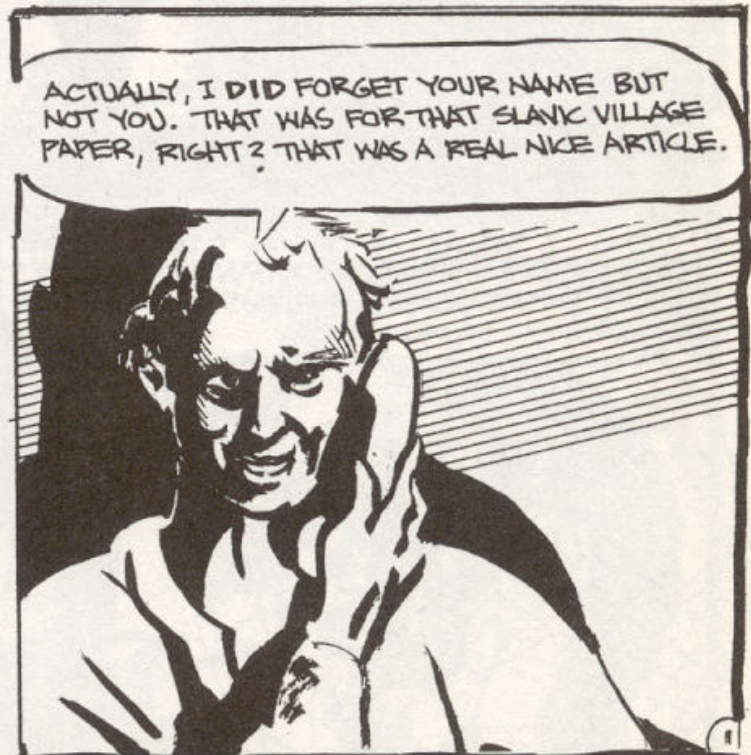
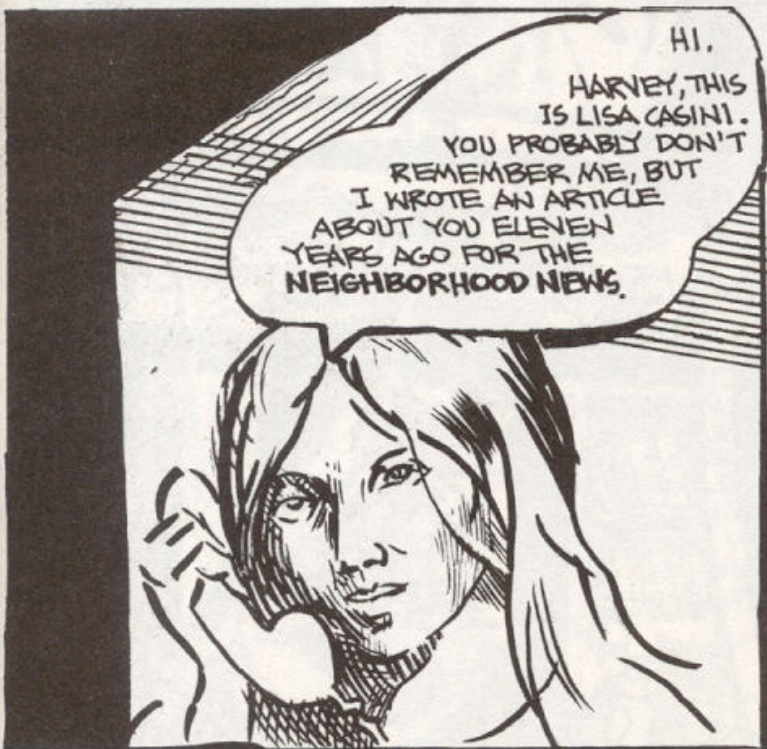


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# INTERVIEWING THE INTERVIEWER

STORY BY HARVEY PEKAR • ART BY FRANK STACK • © 1999 BY HARVEY PEKAR





THANKS. I CALLED ABOUT A WEEK AND A HALF AGO, BUT YOU WEREN'T THERE. I TALKED TO JOYCE.

SHE MUSTA FORGOT TO TELL ME.

WELL, SOMEONE GAVE ME AN ANTHOLOGY OF YOUR WORK FOR A PRESENT, AND THAT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE DOING AND MAYBE WRITING ANOTHER PIECE ABOUT YOU FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS. IS THAT OK?

SURE, IT'S FLATTERING. I ACTUALLY HAVE SOMETHING NEW T' TELL YA, TOO.

THE MOVIE? YOUR WIFE WAS TELLING ME ABOUT IT.

YEAH. I SIGNED AN OPTION T'DO A MOVIE WITH THIS COMPANY, GOOD MACHINE. I'VE SIGNED OPTIONS BEFORE, BUT THIS REALLY MIGHT GO SOMEWHERE.

GOOD MACHINE'S A VERY WELL-REGARDED OUTFIT. THEY'VE MADE ART FILMS, LIKE "THE ICE STORM" AND "EAT DRINK MAN WOMAN."



I CHECKED, AND FROM WHAT I CAN TELL,  
IT'S ONE OF THE BEST, MOST HONEST  
FILM COMPANIES AROUND.



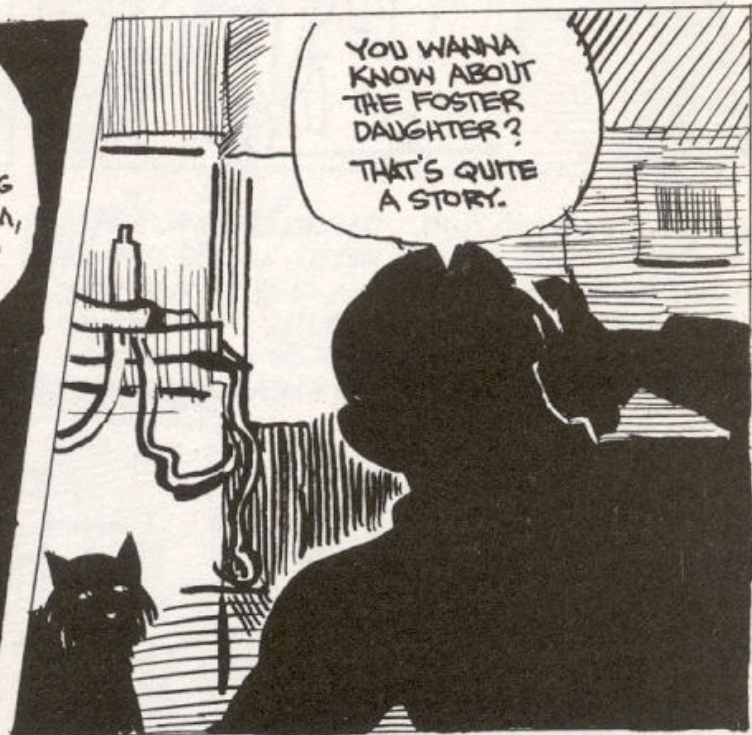
THAT'S GREAT. YOU MUST BE EXCITED  
ABOUT IT.



WELL, IF IT COMES OFF, IT COULD HELP ME  
A LOT. SEE, ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I GOT A  
FOSTER DAUGHTER. SHE'S ELEVEN YEARS  
OLD, AND I'M SIXTY. MY EXPENSES HAVE GONE  
UP TREMENDOUSLY SINCE THEN. I'VE BEEN DOING  
ALL KINDS OF FREELANCE WRITING TO COVER THEM,  
GETTING UP BEFORE 5 O'CLOCK TO WRITE \$15.00  
RECORD REVIEWS BEFORE I GO TO WORK.



YOU WANNA  
KNOW ABOUT  
THE FOSTER  
DAUGHTER?  
THAT'S QUITE  
A STORY.



SURE.

WELL, ABOUT  
A YEAR AGO,  
THIS GUY I  
KNOW MET  
ANOTHER GUY  
WHO SET UP IN  
FLEA MARKETS  
ON WEEKENDS.  
HE SOLD COMIC  
BOOKS, AND HE  
WAS A CARTOONIST  
HIMSELF.

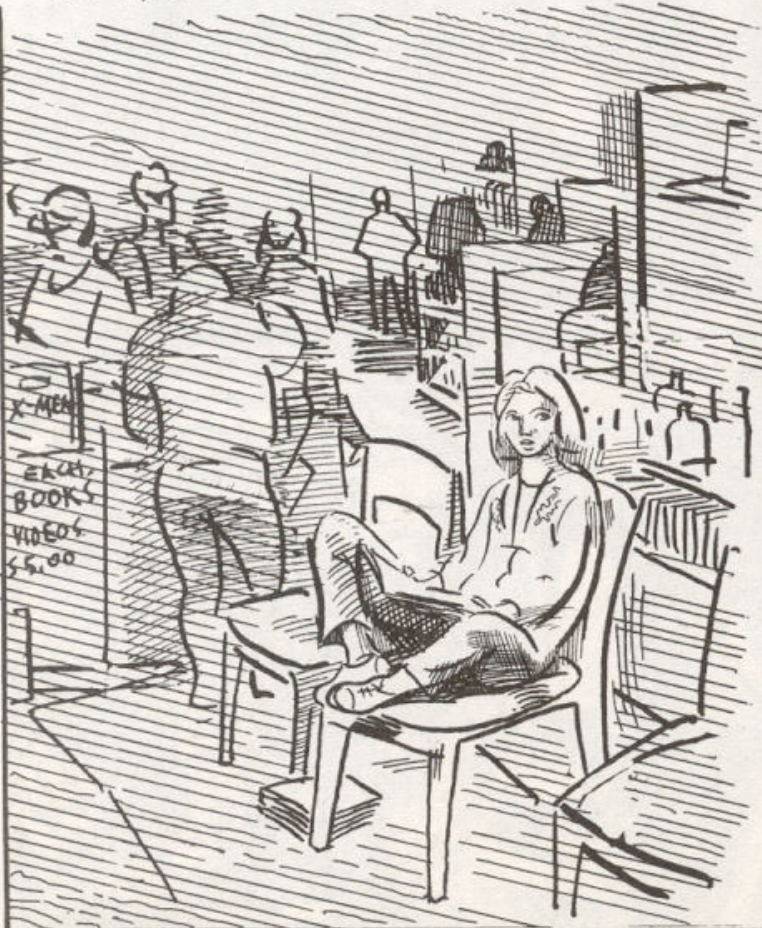




SO WHEN MY BUDDY TOLD THE FLEA-MARKET GUY ABOUT ME, HE WANTED T'GET SOME TIPS FROM ME, ABOUT WRITING AND GETTING PUBLISHED. HE CAME OVER TO MY HOUSE WITH HIS DAUGHTER, WHO WAS NINE AT THE TIME AND LIVING WITH HIM, TO SHOW ME SOME STUFF HE'D DRAWN.



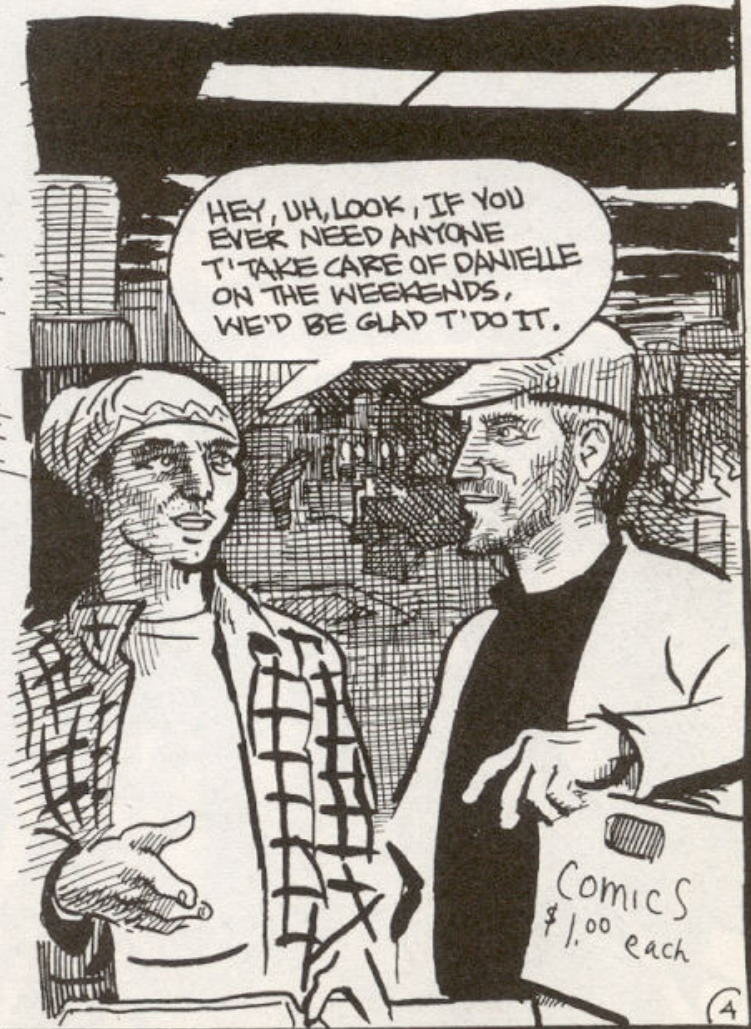
NOW, THE LITTLE GIRL, DANIELLE, WAS HAVING A ROUGH TIME. HER PARENTS WERE DIVORCED, AND SHE WAS GOING FROM ONE TO THE OTHER. WHEN HER FATHER WAS WORKING AND COULDN'T FIND ANYONE TO TAKE CARE OF HER, HE'D HAVE T'TAKE HER TO THE FLEA MARKET WITH HIM.



MEANWHILE, HIS DAUGHTER HUNG OUT WITH MY WIFE. SHE WAS INTERESTED IN JOYCE'S ARTWORK AND COMPUTER. THEY HIT IT OFF JUST GREAT. SHE EVEN SAID:



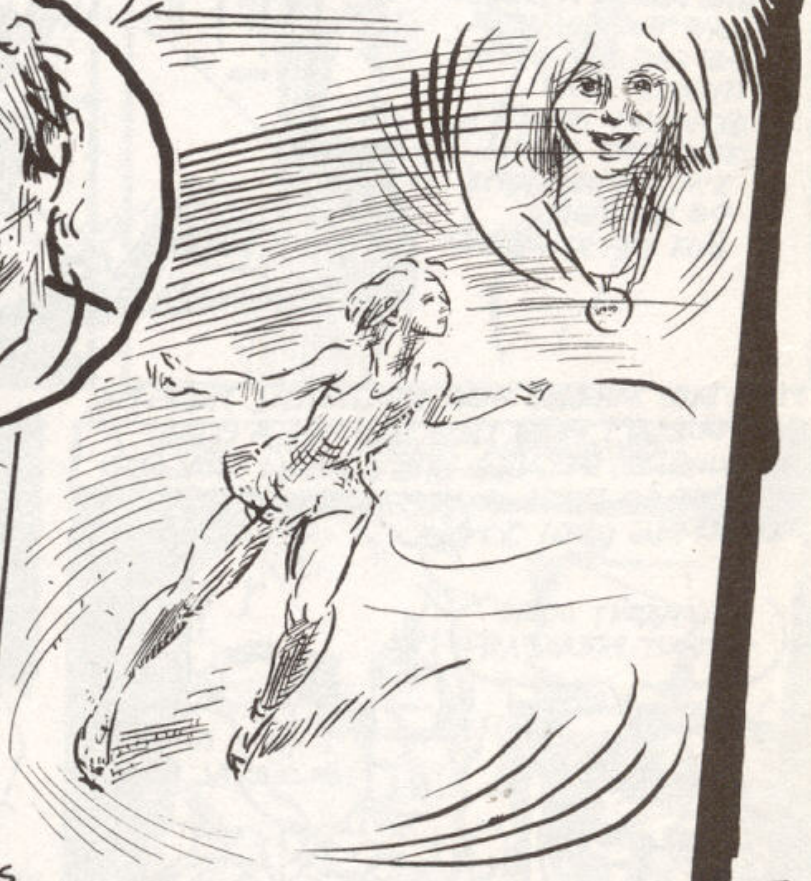
MY WIFE WASN'T EXACTLY HAVING AN EASY TIME THEN, AND I COULD TELL SHE ENJOYED DANIELLE'S COMPANY A LOT, SO I SAID TO HER POP:





THAT WORKED IN PRETTY WELL WITH HIS PLANS, ESPECIALLY SINCE SOMETIMES HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH DANIELLE WHEN HE WAS WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND, SO FOR ABOUT A YEAR WE TOOK CARE OF HER EVERY WEEKEND.

IT WORKED OUT GREAT. JOYCE DID EVERYTHING WITH HER. SHE TOOK HER TO MOVIES AND PLAYS AND WORKED WITH HER ON HER SCHOOL STUFF. SHE EVEN GOT DANIELLE INTO FIGURE SKATING, AND DANIELLE TURNED OUT TO BE REAL GOOD AT IT. SHE WON A MEDAL AT A COMPETITION.



AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, DANIELLE WAS SUPPOSED TO STAY WITH US ALL SUMMER, BUT MEANWHILE HER GRANDPARENTS ON BOTH SIDES WERE VERY HAPPY ABOUT HOW SHE WAS DOING WITH US. SO WAS HER FATHER. SO WAS JOYCE, WHO LOVED HER. SO EVERYONE PREVAILED ON HER MOTHER, AND SHE AGREED TO LET US BE DANIELLE'S FOSTER PARENTS IN AUGUST OF 1998.

HOW'S IT BEEN GOING SINCE THEN?





IT HASN'T BEEN THAT EASY. DANIELLE'S REAL BRIGHT, BUT SHE HAS CONCENTRATION PROBLEMS AND THEY CAUSE HER DIFFICULTIES IN SOME SUBJECTS, ESPECIALLY MATH.

SHE WAS AT A SPECIAL CAMP THIS SUMMER, AND SHE DID GREAT THERE. NOW SCHOOL'S ABOUT TO START AGAIN. I'M HOPIN' SHE'LL DO BETTER, BUT I'M WORRIED.



PLUS, SHE MISSES HER BIOLOGICAL PARENTS. SHE DOESN'T FEEL LIKE SHE HAS A PLACE ANYWHERE, BECAUSE SHE'S BEEN DRAGGED AROUND SO MUCH. SOMETIMES SHE QUARRELS WITH JOYCE.



YOU AREN'T GOING WITHOUT BREAKFAST?

I HAD A BOWL OF CEREAL!

WE'RE TRYING TO DO THE BEST WE CAN BY HER, SO THAT TAKES MONEY. THAT'S WHY THIS MOVIE DEAL IS SO CRUCIAL. I'D JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP HOPE OF BEING ABLE TO RETIRE FROM MY FILE CLERK JOB SO I COULD WRITE FULL TIME, UNTIL IT CAME ALONG.



WHAT ARE THE CHANCES IT'LL GET MADE, GET FINANCED?



WAY BETTER THAN BEFORE. GOOD MACHINES GOT AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION. PEOPLE TRUST 'EM.



PLUS, THE GUY THEY WANT TO DIRECT "AMERICAN SPLENDOR--THE MOVIE," OR WHATEVER IT'S GONNA BE CALLED--HIS NAME'S CHRIS SMITH--JUST WON A SUNDANCE AWARD. SUNDANCE AWARD WINNERS ATTRACT INVESTORS. ONLY THING IS, THE GUY WON'T COMMIT TO DOING IT, AND THAT MAKES ME NERVOUS.



WHAT ABOUT YOU, THOUGH?  
WHAT'VE YOU BEEN DOING?



I GOT MARRIED, AND THEN  
A YEAR AGO I GOT DNORCED,  
AND I HAVE A SIX-YEAR-OLD  
DAUGHTER.



I MEAN, YOU WORKIN' ANYWHERE?



A LOT OF PART-TIME STUFF. I'VE ALWAYS  
WRITTEN FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS.  
MY FRIEND'S THE EDITOR, AND SHE LETS  
ME WRITE JUST ABOUT ANYTHING...



THEN I'VE BEEN WORKING CONSTRUCTION.  
MY FRIEND SKEETER'S GOT THIS  
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY--BUT  
IT'S NOT WORKING OUT THAT  
GREAT. HE'S ALWAYS  
YELLING AT ME.

I TOLD JA  
T'USE A LEVEL!  
NOW THIS  
CUPBOARD  
IS CROOKED.







WHAT KINDA STUFF  
DID YOU DO BEFORE--  
WHAT KINDA JOBS?

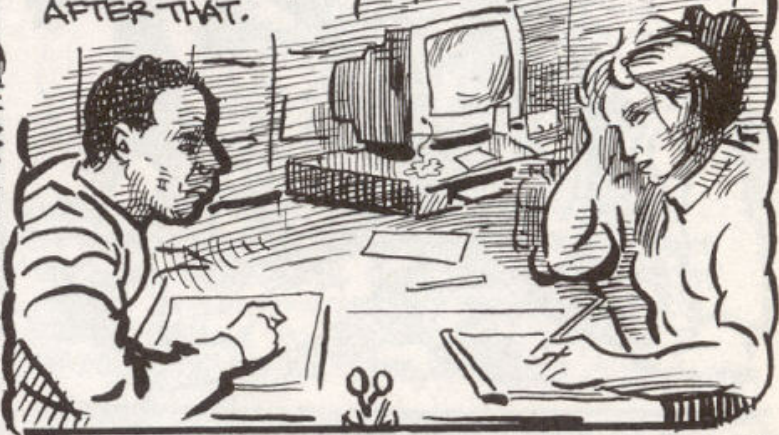


OH, I'VE DONE A  
FEW THINGS...

...I HAD A JOB AS A CHILD-CARE WORKER  
AT PARMADALE--THIS HOME FOR TROUBLED  
KIDS: I LIKED WORKING WITH THE GIRLS,  
BUT EVEN THOUGH I WAS THERE FOR  
TWO YEARS, I COULD NEVER GET  
ADJUSTED TO SHIFT CHANGES.



I WAS AN ASSISTANT EDITOR AT A PLACE  
THAT PRINTED OFFICAL CITY CODES AND  
REVISIONS TO STATE LAW. I HATED THAT  
JOB--IT WAS SO CLIQUEISH. MARRIED  
COUPLES WORKED THERE--MY BOSS  
ASKED ME OUT, ON THE COMPUTER,  
FOR A DRINK. HIS WIFE HAD A JOB  
THERE TOO, SO I TOLD  
HIM NO. HE WASN'T  
TOO NICE TO ME  
AFTER THAT.



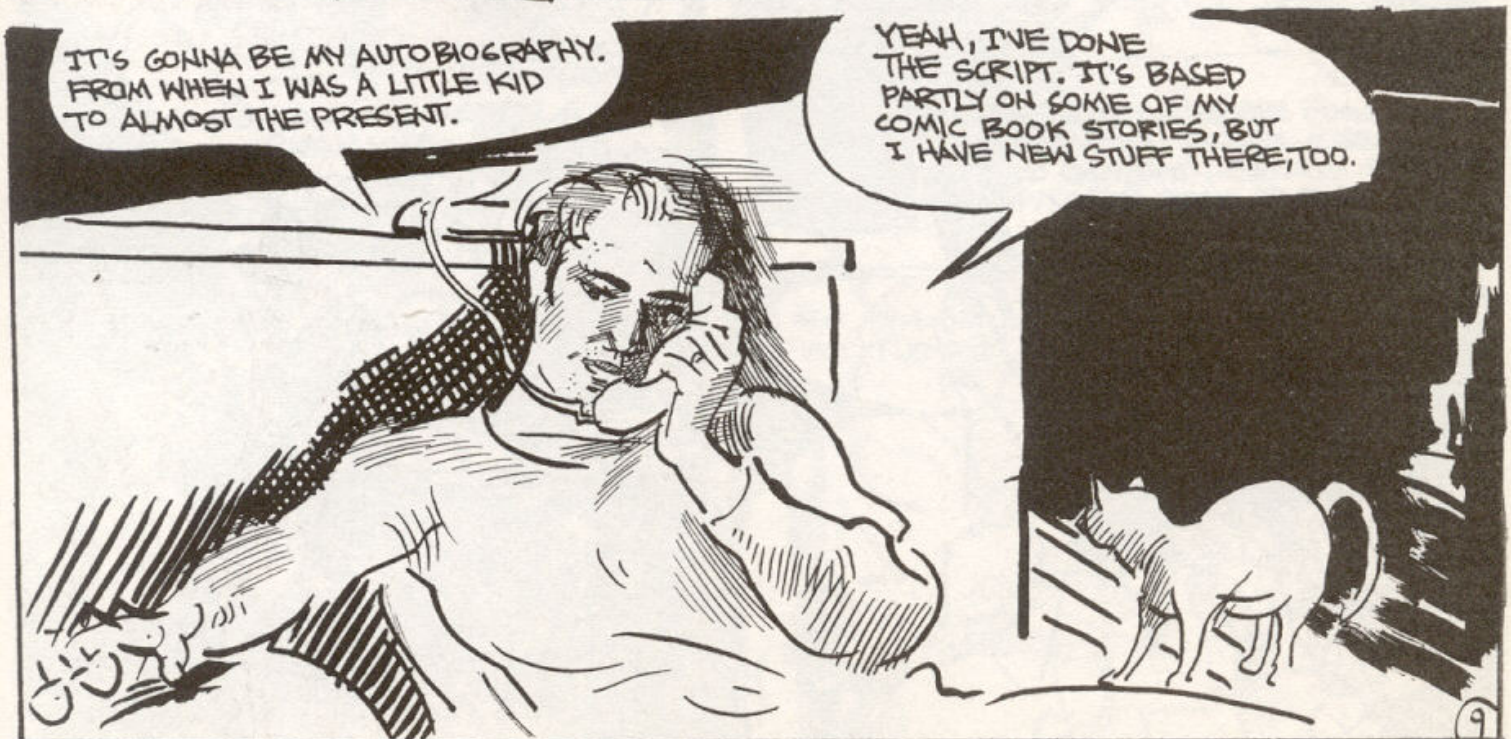
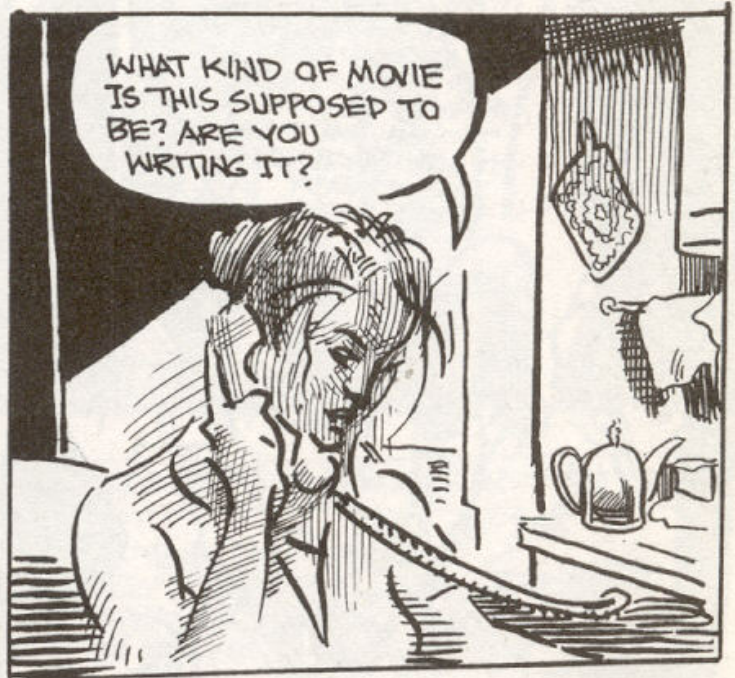
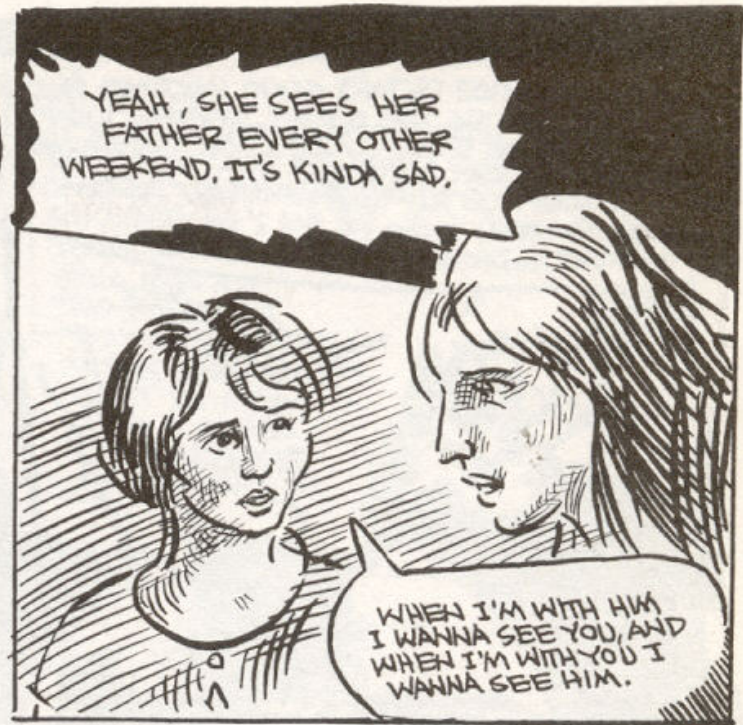
THEN I WAS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER FOR  
CITIZENS TO BRING BACK BROADWAY IN  
SLAVIC VILLAGE. WE'D DO STUFF LIKE  
GET AFTER FACTORIES THAT POLLUTED  
AND GET SLUM LORDS  
PROSECUTED,  
ORGANIZE  
CRIME WATCH  
MEETINGS.



THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR  
ARE UP ALL NIGHT PARTYING,  
THROWING FIRECRACKERS!









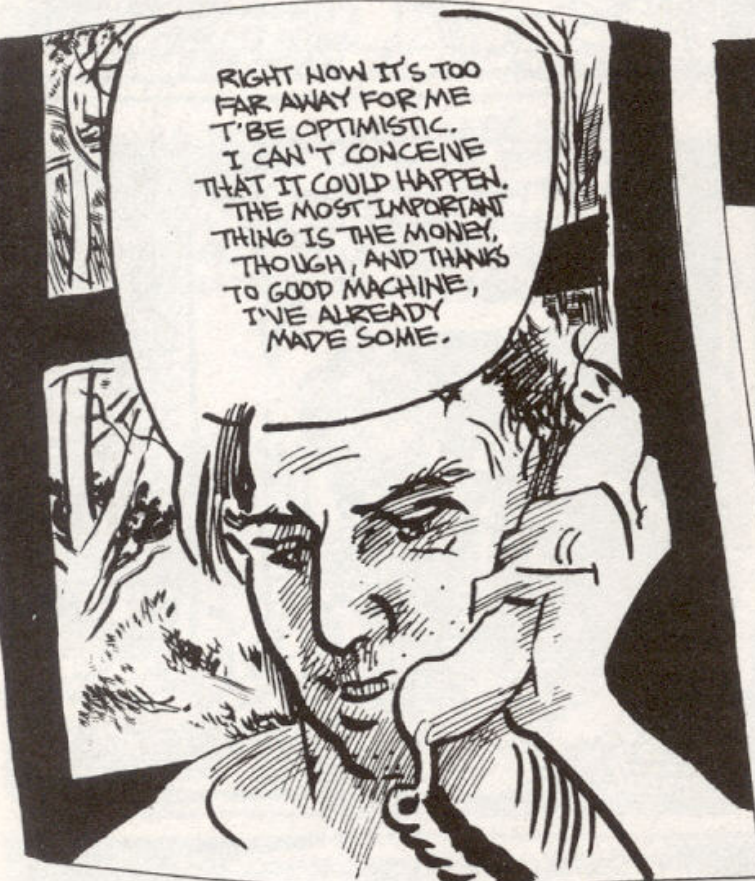
WHAT'S NICE IS THAT GOOD MACHINE PAID ME FOR WRITING THE SCRIPT, BEFORE THEY'D FOUND OR EVEN LOOKED FOR INVESTORS. THAT'S VERY UNUSUAL. ALMOST ALL THE TIME GUYS LIKE ME DO SCRIPTS ON SPEC.



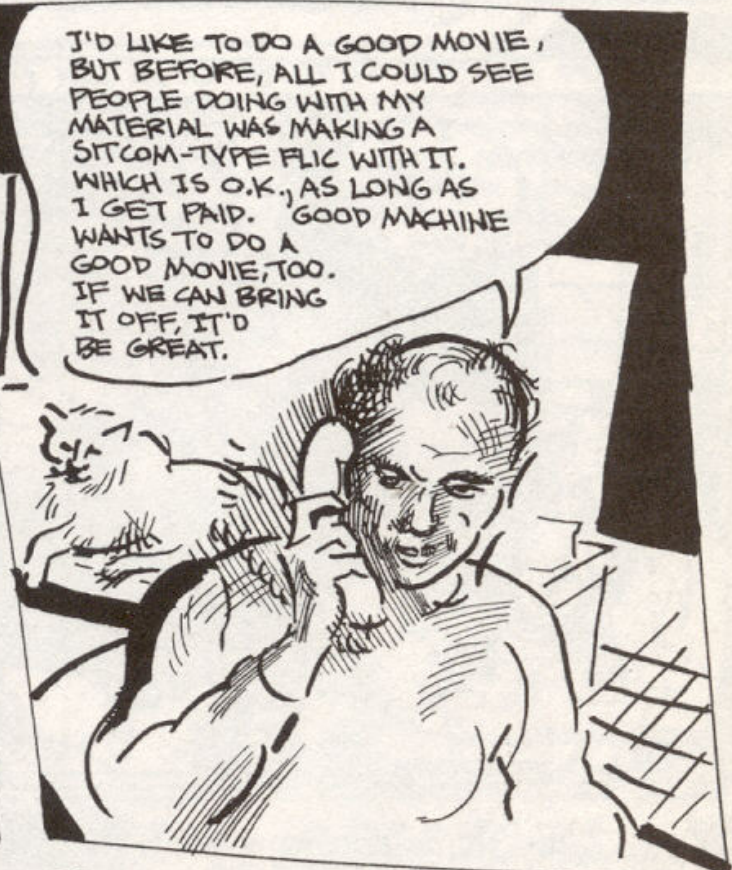
ARE YOU OPTIMISTIC?



RIGHT NOW IT'S TOO FAR AWAY FOR ME. I'BE OPTIMISTIC. I CAN'T CONCEIVE THAT IT COULD HAPPEN. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THE MONEY, THOUGH, AND THANKS TO GOOD MACHINE, I'VE ALREADY MADE SOME.



I'D LIKE TO DO A GOOD MOVIE, BUT BEFORE, ALL I COULD SEE PEOPLE DOING WITH MY MATERIAL WAS MAKING A SITCOM-TYPE FLIC WITH IT. WHICH IS O.K., AS LONG AS I GET PAID. 'GOOD MACHINE' WANTS TO DO A GOOD MOVIE, TOO. IF WE CAN BRING IT OFF, IT'D BE GREAT.

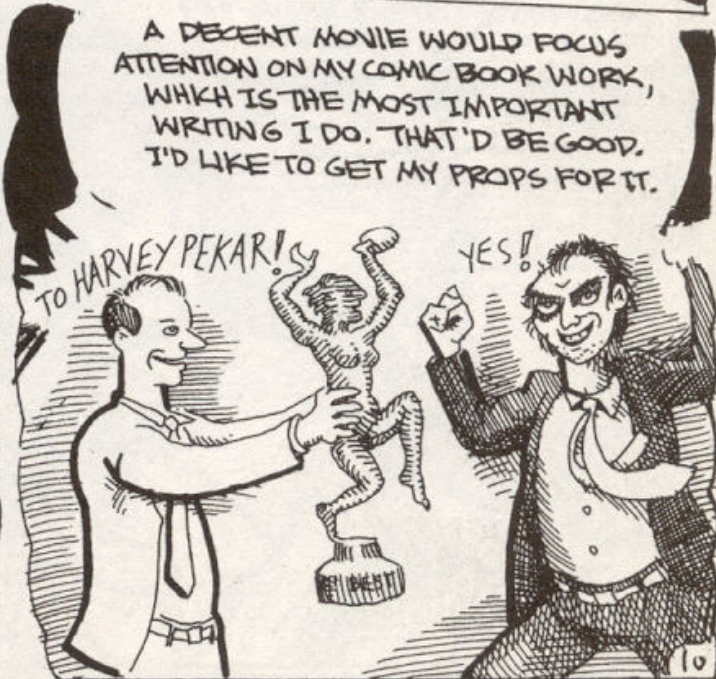


IF A GOOD **AMERICAN SPLENDOR** GOT MADE, IT'D HELP ME GET MORE MONEY AS A FREE-LANCE WRITER, INSTEAD OF FIGHTING WITH EDITORS OVER SEVENTY-FIVE-BUCK ARTICLES.



NO, DON'T TAKE THAT OUT! HOW 'BOUT...

A DECENT MOVIE WOULD FOCUS ATTENTION ON MY COMIC BOOK WORK, WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WRITING I DO. THAT'D BE GOOD. I'D LIKE TO GET MY PROPS FOR IT.



YES!



YEAH, IT COULD BE GREAT, BUT  
NOW IT'S LIKE A DREAM. I HOPE  
I CAN HOLD ON LONG ENOUGH T'SEE  
THIS PROCESS THROUGH.



IT'S SO WEIRD, Y'KNOW, YOU'D THINK  
SOMEONE LIKE ME, WHO'S GONE THROUGH  
CANCER TREATMENT, WOULDN'T BE BOTHERED  
AS MUCH AS I AM BY WHAT MOST PEOPLE  
THINK ARE LESSER PROBLEMS. BUT THEY  
STILL BUG ME  
TOO MUCH. IF  
YOU'RE MISERABLE  
AFTER A CERTAIN  
POINT IN YOUR  
LIFE, I GUESS  
YOU'LL ALWAYS  
BE MISERABLE.



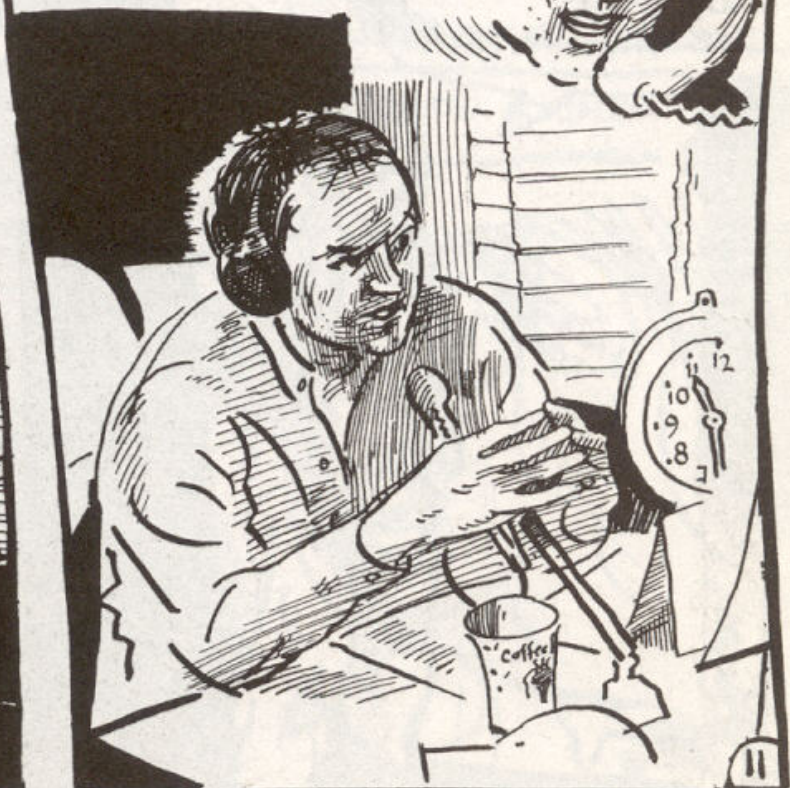
HARVEY,  
HARVEY

OH, MAN, THEY'RE YELLIN'  
FOR ME TO COME UPSTAIRS.  
LOOK, D'YOU MIND IF I  
CALL YOU BACK  
T'MORRA?  
COULD YOU  
GIMME YOUR  
NUMBER?



THE NEXT DAY, FIFTEEN MINUTES INTO THE CALL...

ANOTHER THING I'VE BEEN  
INTO LATELY IS DOIN' THIS  
COMMENTARY ON WKSU,  
THIS PBS STATION IN KENT...





MAN, IT'S GREAT! THEY LET ME TALK ABOUT ANYTHING. I CAN ATTACK NATIONALISM, ORGANIZED RELIGION...

OH, HARVEY, TODAY I'VE GOTTA CUT YOU OFF. I FORGOT, I HAVE TO GET READY TO GO TO A JOB INTERVIEW.

THAT'S O.K. I'LL CALL YOU BACK T'MORRA. WHAT KIND OF JOB ARE YOU APPLYING FOR?

I'M NOT QUITE SURE. IT'S AT ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL. I SAW THE AD IN TODAY'S PAPER. IT SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A MARKETING POSITION.

Marketing Representative

DATE

SPEAKERS

EVENTS

RECORDS

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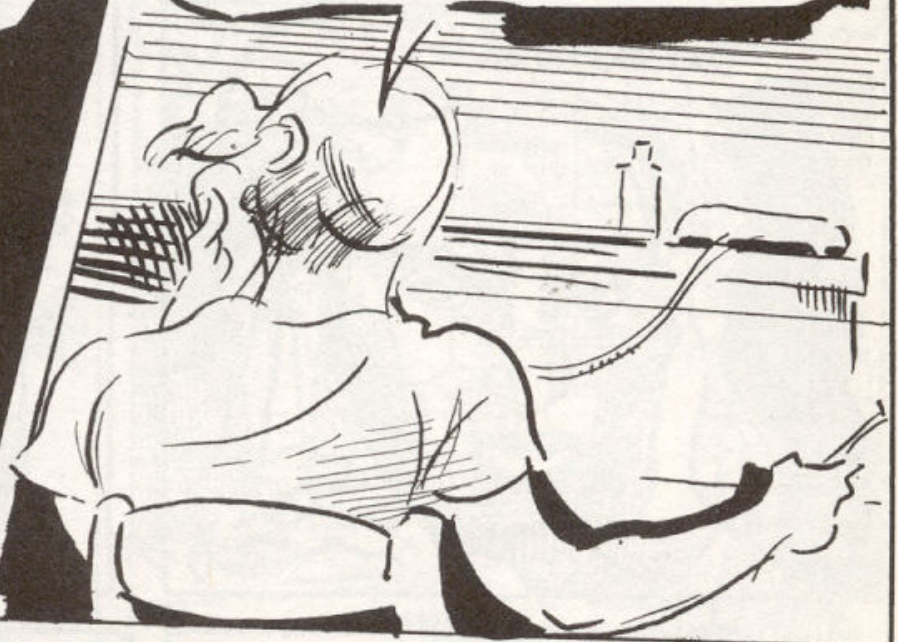
THEY MADE US GO INTO A DARK ROOM TO WATCH A VIDEOTAPE. THE WHOLE THING SEEMED CREEPY TO ME, SO I GOT UP AND LEFT.



HMM, YOU'RE IN A TOUGH SPOT, I CAN GURE SEE THAT. AT LEAST I'VE HAD A STEADY JOB, AND YOUR CONCERN FOR YOUR DAUGHTER--



YEAH, I NEED A REAL JOB-- SOMETHING WITH HEALTH BENEFITS.



THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING OUT THERE. YOU'RE A COLLEGE GRADUATE, RIGHT? I BET YOU GOT GOOD GRADES, TOO.



I AM AND I DID, ACTUALLY.





AND YOU'RE A GOOD WRITER. I SEEM TO REMEMBER YOU TELLING ME YOU WON SOME KIND OF PRIZE FOR AN ARTICLE ABOUT YOUR GRANDMOTHER FROM ITALY.



WELL, YEAH, BUT--



THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES FOR A WHILE, THEN ENDS.

--THAT WAS NO BIG DEAL.



WHYIN'T I CALL YOU IN A COUPLE DAYS AND WE CAN WRAP THIS STUFF UP.



TWO WEEKS LATER:

LISA--IT'S HARVEY. I GOT A PICTURE OF MYSELF THAT'LL PROBABLY BE O.K. T'USE WITH THE ARTICLE.

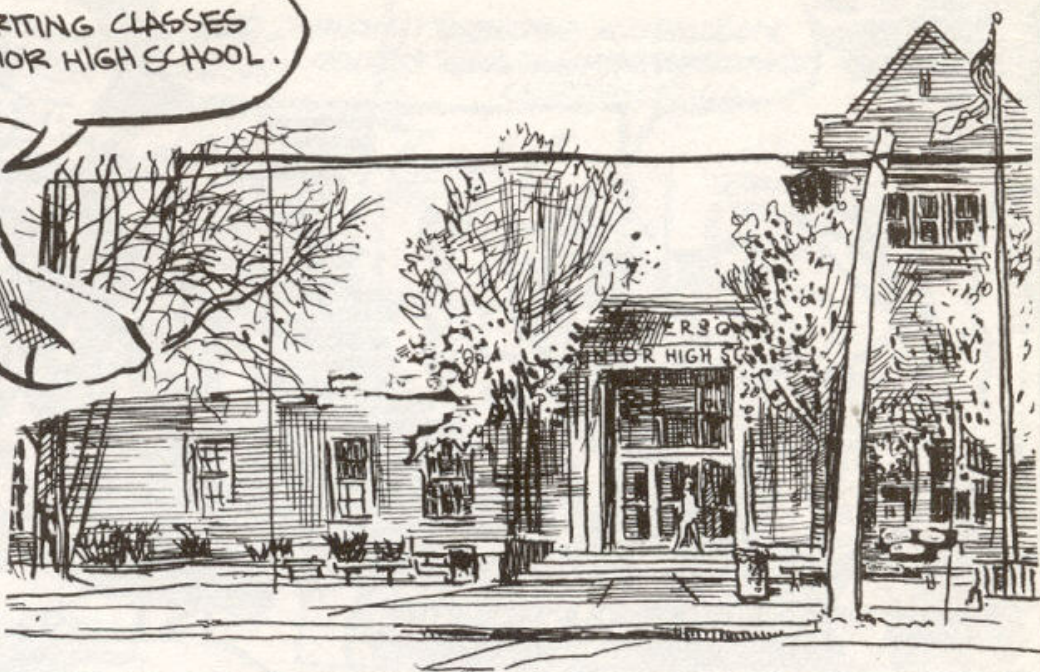


UHH... I PHONED YOU A FEW TIMES T'DAY, BUT YOU WEREN'T IN. YOU GET A JOB?





UH-HUH. I'M TEACHING WRITING CLASSES  
IN AN EAST CLEVELAND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.



EAST CLEVELAND? WOW! THAT WAS QUICK.  
HOW'D YOU GET THE JOB?



I SAW IT ADVERTISED IN THE PAPER AND  
WENT OVER FOR THE INTERVIEW. THEY  
HIRED ME RIGHT THERE.



NO OFFENSE, BUT THEY GOTTA BE  
DESPERATE. THE SCHOOL YEAR'S  
STARTIN', AND THEY CAN'T FIND  
ENOUGH PEOPLE THAT WANNA  
TEACH THERE. YOU KNOW  
BY NOW THOSE ARE  
SOME TOUGH SCHOOLS!





I KNOW. A SPANISH TEACHER QUIT  
TODAY AFTER ONE PERIOD.

ESTE ES MOTHERFUCKER! HA HA!  
I AHREADY HOBBLE ES PAGNOL

CHINGA  
SU MADRE

YO TINGO,  
YO MAMA

HASTY  
MAÑANA!  
BABY  
SMICKER

HAW!  
HEE

I'D GIVE THESE KIDS PENCILS TO WRITE  
WITH AND THEY'D BREAK THEM AND  
DROP THE PIECES ON MY DESK.



YOU'RE NOT TRAINED AS  
A TEACHER, RIGHT? I MEAN  
YOU'RE NOT CERTIFIED,  
OR WHATEVER IT IS  
YOU'VE GOT TO BE.



NO, I'M NOT AN ENGLISH MAJOR.  
BUT YOU CAN TEACH FOR TWO OR  
THREE YEARS WITHOUT  
BEING CERTIFIED.



SO, ARE YOU  
GOING BACK TO  
SCHOOL?

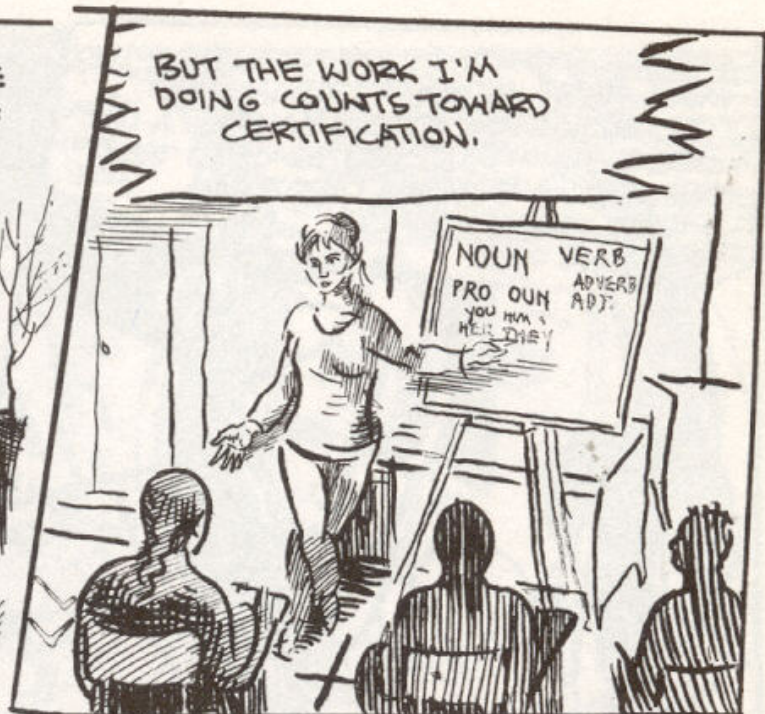




I WAS THINKING ABOUT IT, EVEN BEFORE I GOT THIS JOB, BUT I'VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET THE TIME.



BUT THE WORK I'M DOING COUNTS TOWARD CERTIFICATION.



IT'S ROUGH, BUT IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GET CERTIFICATION, YOU'LL AT LEAST HAVE A PROFESSION. AND YOU DO LIKE WRITING. YOU PROBABLY LIKE WORKING WITH KIDS, TOO, UNLESS THEY'RE TOO SCREWED UP. YOU COULD TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SYSTEM AFTER A WHILE.



YEAH, I'M GOING TO STICK IT OUT.



I HAVE NO CHOICE,



A FEW WEEKS LATER.

LISA -- IT'S HARVEY, I'M JUST CALLIN' T'SEE HOW THE JOB'S GOIN'.





WELL... I QUIT. IT JUST GOT T'BE TOO MUCH. THEY WEREN'T GONNA HAVE TEXTBOOKS FOR A FEW MONTHS. A LOT OF KIDS, NOT ALL, JUST IGNORED THE TEACHERS AND WERE DISRUPTIVE. FIGHTS WERE ALWAYS BREAKING OUT.



TRADE SEATS W/ME

THIS SHIT IS BORING!

GIVE ME YOUR LUNCH MONEY. HE GOT IT AWREADY

YEAH, I'M TALKIN' TO YOU, MO'FUCKER.

SO WHUT?

THAT HURT



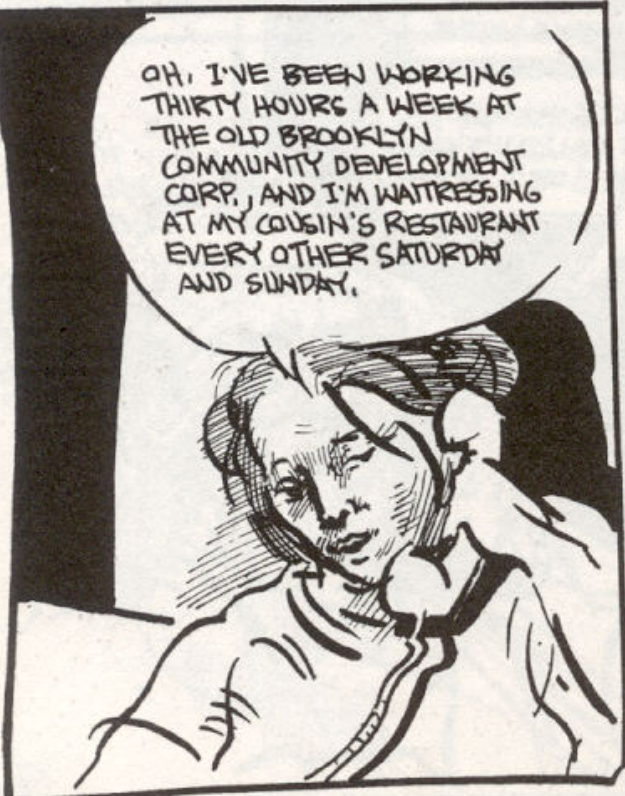
MY SHOULDER STILL HURTS FROM WHEN I GOT SLAMMED AGAINST A LOCKER BY THE CROWD DURING A FIGHT.



SO WUDDYA GONNA DO?



OH, I'VE BEEN WORKING THIRTY HOURS A WEEK AT THE OLD BROOKLYN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP., AND I'M WAITRESSING AT MY COUSIN'S RESTAURANT EVERY OTHER SATURDAY AND SUNDAY.



IS THAT OLD BROOKLYN JOB LIKE WHAT YOU WERE DOIN' AT CITIZENS TO BRING BACK BROADWAY?







YEAH, IN  
A GENERAL  
SENSE. IT'S  
KIND OF  
INTERESTING  
AND THE  
PEOPLE  
ARE NICE.

WELL, THAT'S GOOD,  
I THINK WORKING  
REGULARLY'LL HELP  
PUT YOU BACK ON  
AN EVEN KEEL.

IT MAKES YOU  
FEEL LIKE YOU'RE  
BACK IN THE  
MAINSTREAM  
OF LIFE AGAIN.



UH-HUH, ONE THING THAT'S NICE IS THAT I  
GET OFF WORK EARLY ENOUGH SO THAT I CAN  
PICK UP MY DAUGHTER FROM SCHOOL, I WAS  
TALKING WITH THEM ABOUT WORKING  
FULL-TIME, BUT THEN I WOULDN'T  
HAVE AS MUCH TIME TO SPEND  
WITH HER. ON THE  
OTHER HAND, IF I  
WORK PART-TIME,  
HOW AM I GONNA  
ADVANCE? SO IT'S  
A TRADEOFF.  
I'M NOT SURE  
WHAT TO DO.



UH-HUH, I CAN  
SEE THE DILEMMA  
THERE.



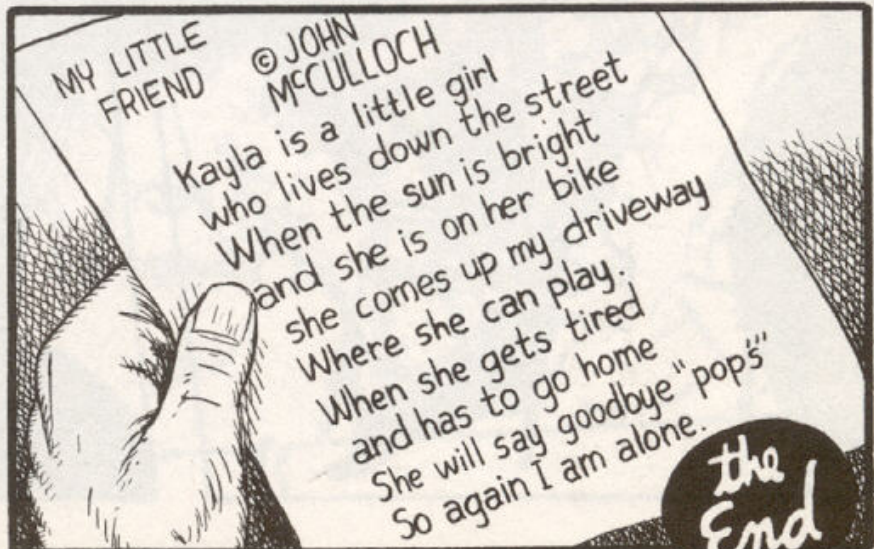
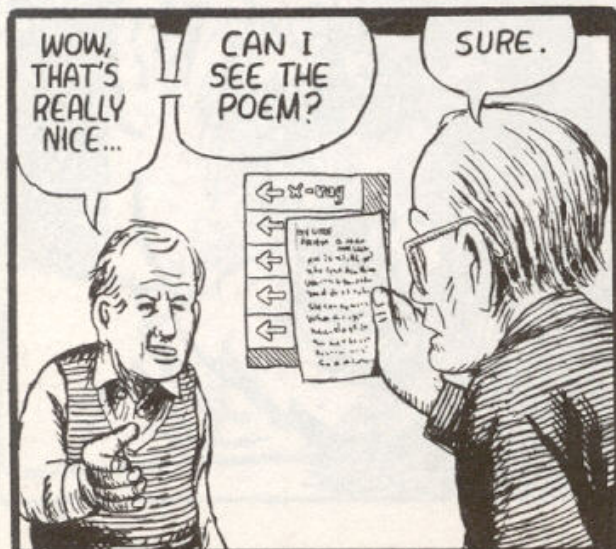
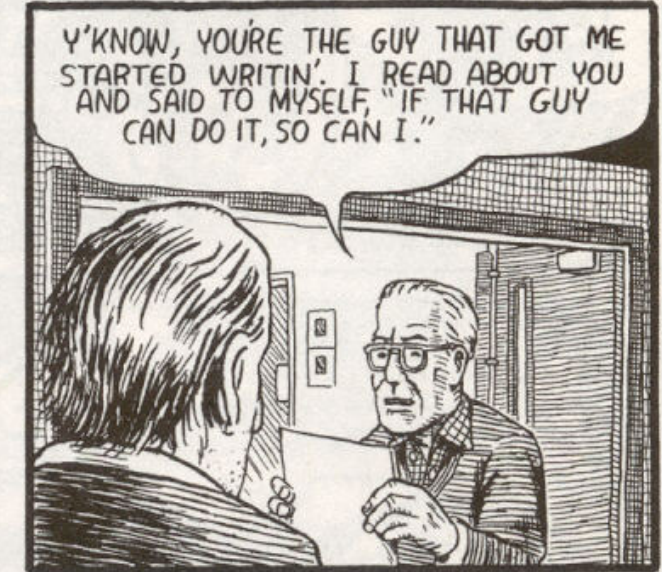
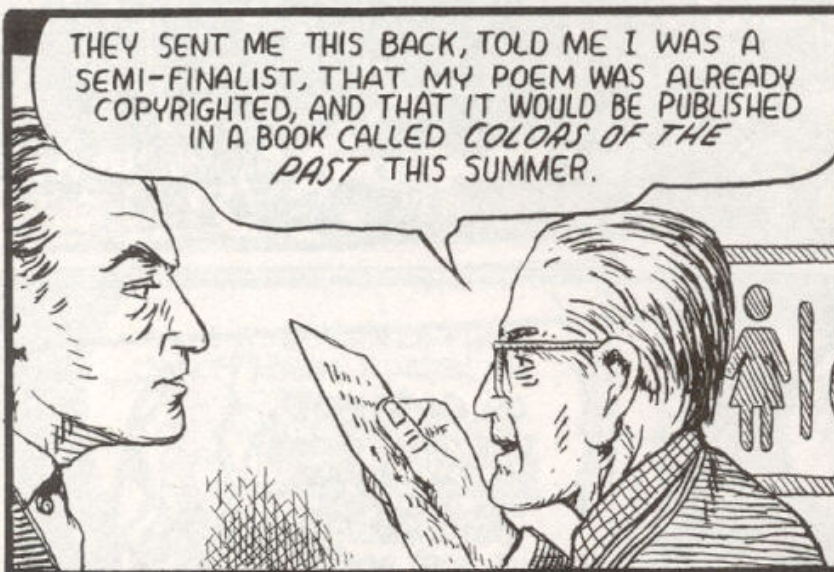
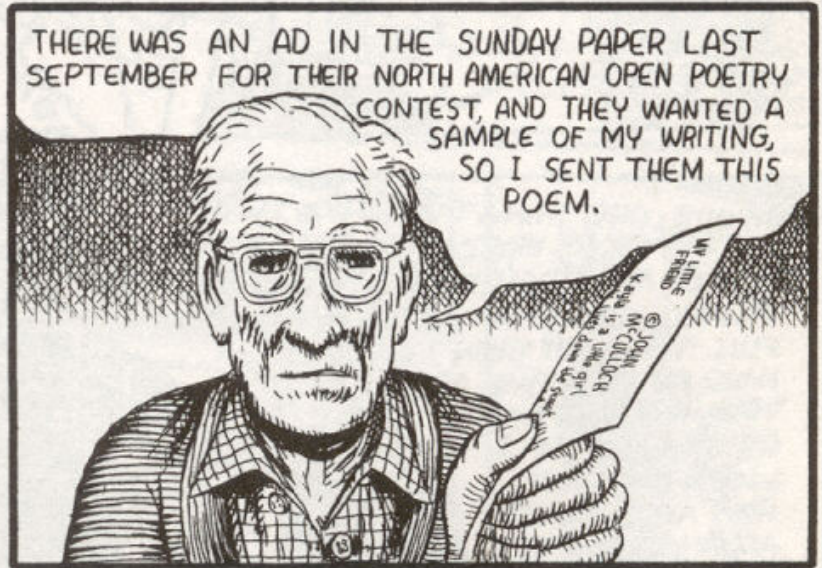
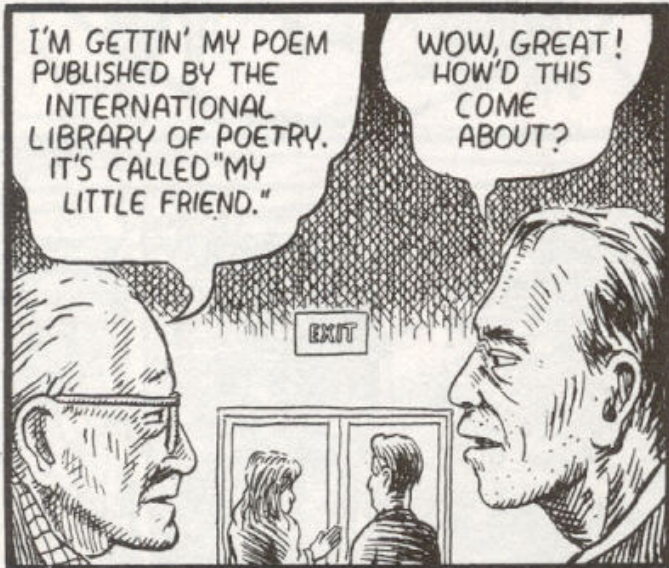
OH, GOD, GOD,  
I'VE GONE THROUGH  
SO MUCH CRAP  
SINCE I WAS  
YOUR AGE--GOD  
I JUST HOPE  
YOU WON'T  
HAVE TO.





# "Pop's" Little Friend

Story by Harvey Pekar copyright © 2000 by Harvey Pekar  
Art by David Collier





The last comic strip I did, about Lonnie Johnson, I put in a quote from B.B. King. Well, that worked out so good that I'm gonna start this one off with another one from B.B., about T-Bone Walker, the father of electric blues.

Story by Harvey Pekar  
Art by J. Sacco  
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# T-BONE

Here's what he said:

WHEN I HEARD T-BONE WALKER PLAY ELECTRIC GUITAR, I JUST HAD TO HAVE ONE... I WENT COMPLETELY NUTTY.



T-Bone was born in Linden, Texas, in 1910. He came from a musical family and as a kid used to lead Blind Lemon Jefferson around in the street.



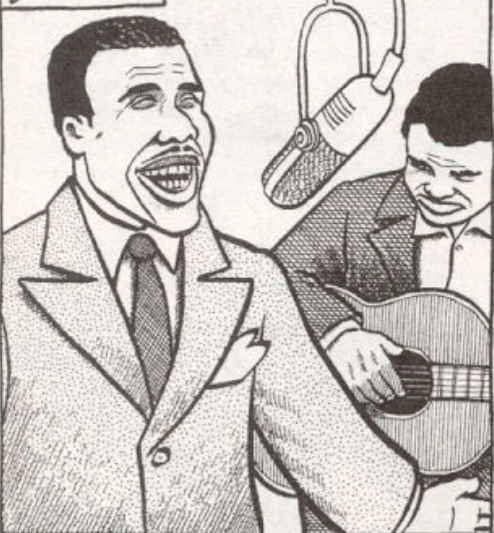
T-Bone learned to play a bunch of stringed instruments. Initially he specialized on banjo, although he recorded on guitar in 1929. As a teenager he sang, played, and danced in the street, and in the summer played with Dr. Breeding's medicine show.



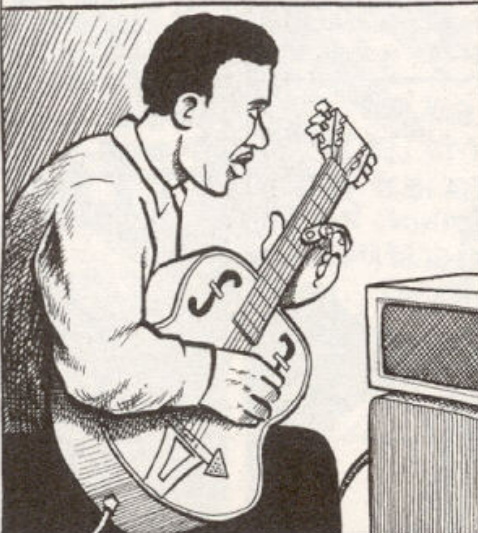
In the mid 1930s, T-Bone went out to Los Angeles looking for work. He got a job as a dancer, and as part of his act in the Little Harlem club, he would grab a table in his mouth and whirl it around.



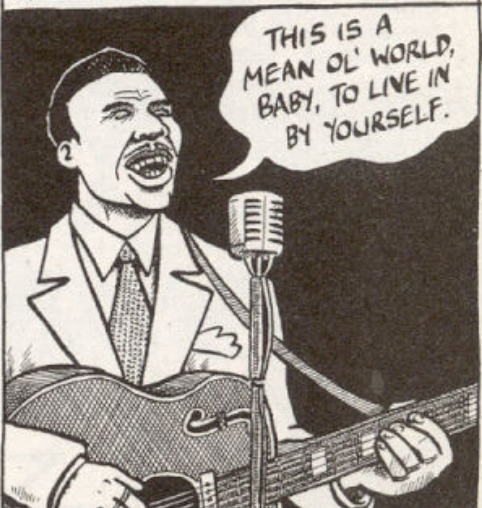
By 1939 T-Bone had caught on as a singer with Les Hite's band, and in 1940 cut a hit record, "T-Bone Blues," with him. However, someone else played guitar on it.



T-Bone had been listening to the work of an old friend, Charlie Christian, though, who was popularizing the electric guitar with Benny Goodman, and he set out to master it.



By 1942, when he signed a recording contract with Capitol, T-Bone was playing brilliantly. His first recordings with them, "I Got a Break Baby" and "Mean Old World," were excellent. He was a sensation in clubs.

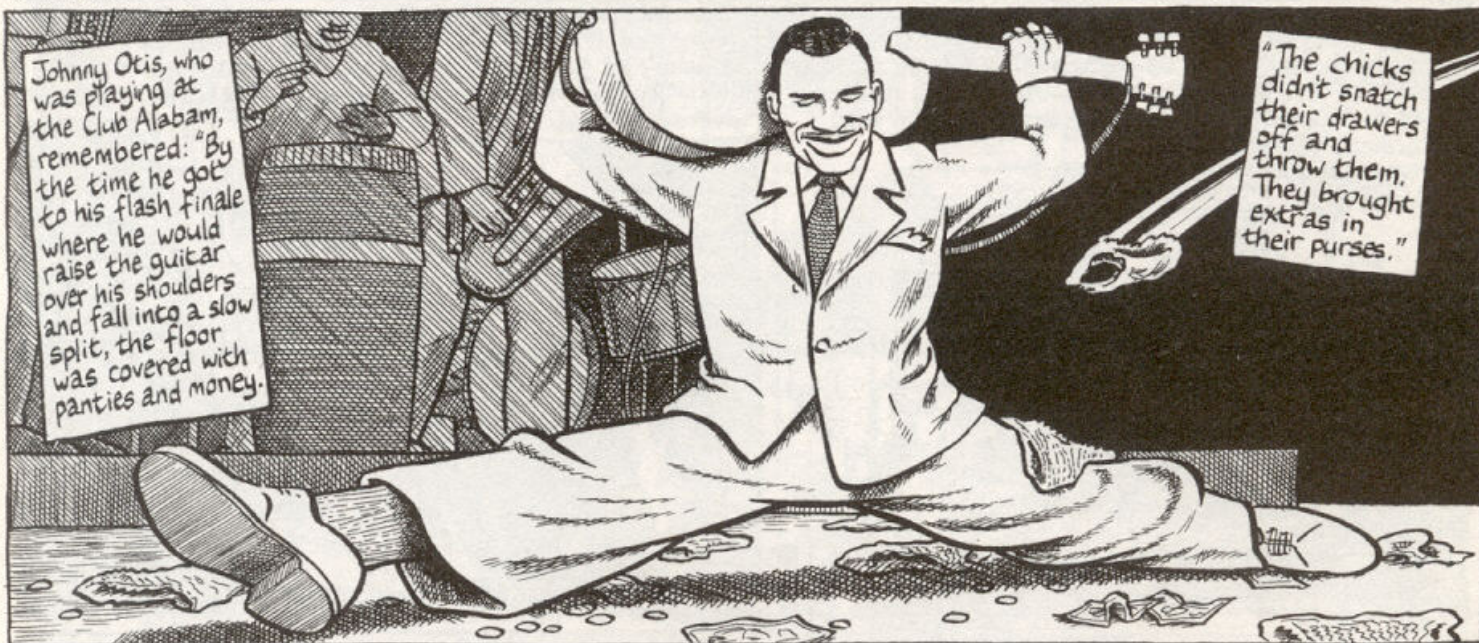




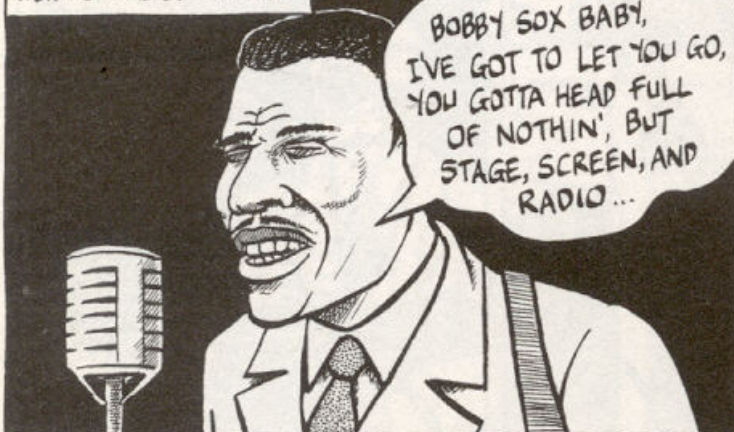
Dancer Phace Roberts recalls the impact he had in L.A.: "You'd see the chicks crossing the floor, climbing the bandstand, and handing Bone money. When he went into the splits, they'd kneel beside him, putting (bills) inside his pockets or guitar."



And here's Cleanhead Vinson on T-Bone: "T-Bone comes out in his white suit with big diamond rings... strikes up his guitar, v-room, v-room... He couldn't get through the first song before purses started flying. 'Play my song, Mr. T-Bone!'... 'Take all my money!'... then he'd start to really pluckin'! And then everything went: shoes, rings, bracelets, everything... They threw anything they could get loose."



The 1940s were T-Bone's decade. He made hit after hit, singing with conviction and humor, and playing wonderful Christian-influenced solos. Check out "Stormy Monday" and "Bobby Sox Baby." What an influence he had--on B.B. King, Albert Collins, Tee Wee Crayton, Lowell Fulson, Gatemouth Brown. And Chuck Berry, who copped his stage manner as well as musical ideas.



T-Bone cut a lot of great stuff after 1950, but by then he was overshadowed by the rock n' rollers, whose styles he'd marked. He retained enough of his popularity, though, to keep touring until the year before he died, in 1975, leaving a bunch of admirers. One, bassist Billy Hadnott, said: "T-Bone was a lovely cat and an easy guy to work with. He just oversported himself. All the harm he did, he did it to himself. But he was an artist. He was wonderful. I sure miss him, man."





# BO DIDDLEY

STORY: HARVEY PEKAR

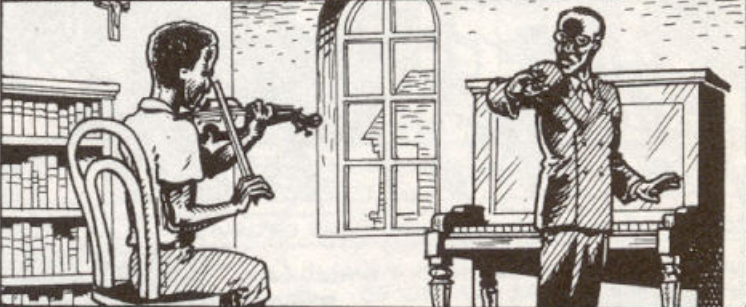
ART SPAIN '99

©1999 HARVEY PEKAR & SPAIN

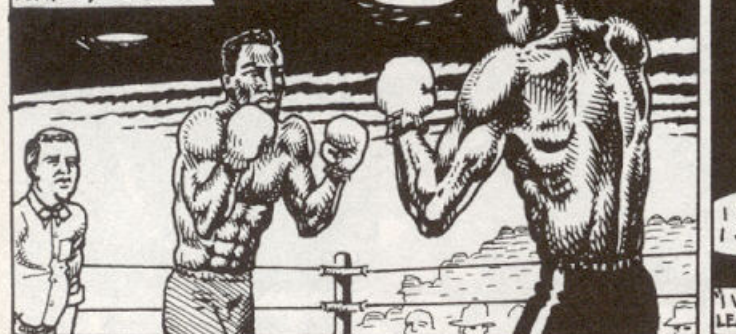
BO DIDDLEY'S IN THE PANTHEON IN THE ROCK'N'ROLL HALL OF FAME, AND HE DESERVES TO BE. BUT WHAT I DON'T QUITE GET IS HOW HE GOT HIS PROPS FROM ROCK CRITICS AND FANS. THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS, BUT IN GENERAL THESE ARE SOME REALLY IGNORANT PEOPLE, AND OFTEN PROUD OF IT. THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIS HUGE RANGE OF ABILITY, DON'T WRITE ABOUT IT, AND HE HASN'T HAD A STRING OF BIG HITS LIKE CHUCK BERRY, SO WHY DO THESE ROCK PEOPLE MAKE A FUSS OVER HIM? IS IT JUST BECAUSE OF THE DRIVING RHYTHMIC FIGURE ON "BO DIDDLEY"? BECAUSE THAT'S THE ONLY THING MOST OF THEM KNOW. BUT HE IS A REMARKABLE MULTI-TALENTED ACHIEVER, A SCHOOL OF MUSIC UNTO HIMSELF.



HE WAS BORN ELLAS MCDANIEL IN MCOMB, MISSISSIPPI IN 1928, BUT MOVED TO CHICAGO WHEN HE WAS EIGHT. HE FIRST STUDIED CLASSICAL VIOLIN WITH PROF. O.W. FREDRICK AT THE EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH. WHEN JOHN LEE HOOKER'S "BOOGIE CHILLIN'" INSPIRED HIM TO PLAY GUITAR, HE ADAPTED SOME VIOLIN TECHNIQUES TO HIS NEW INSTRUMENT. AS A TEENAGER HE PLAYED ON THE STREET WITH DIFFERENT BANDS, AND LEARNED TO BUILD GUITARS AND VIOLINS AT FOSTER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL. LATER, HIS SKILLS SERVED HIM WELL WHEN HE DESIGNED GUITARS AND PRODUCED HIS OWN RECORDS.



MCDANIEL GOT HIS NICKNAME, "BO DIDDLEY," AT ABOUT FIFTEEN WHEN HE STARTED BOXING. HE BELIEVES IT MEANT SOMETHING LIKE "BULLY," BUT ISN'T SURE. INTERESTINGLY, THERE'S A ONE-STRINGED INSTRUMENT USED IN RURAL MISSISSIPPI CALLED A DIDDLEY BOW. BO DIDDLEY'S MUSIC IN FACT CONTAINS BOTH OLD DOWN-HOME FOLK AND EXPERIMENTAL (HIS ELECTRIC GUITAR-PLAYING) ELEMENTS.



AFTER A WHILE BO DIDDLEY GOT HIS BANDS OFF THE STREETS AND INTO LOCAL CLUBS. WHEN HE WAS TWENTY-SIX, HE MADE A DEMO RECORD WITH HIS OWN EQUIPMENT: "FIRST I WENT TO YEE JAY AND THEY- EWART ABNER - RAN ME OUT OF THE PLACE, SAYING..."



"I WENT ACROSS THE STREET TO CHESS LEONARD, AND PHIL SAID, 'HEY, THERE'S SOMETHING NEW HERE, AND THEY GAVE ME A SHOT'."



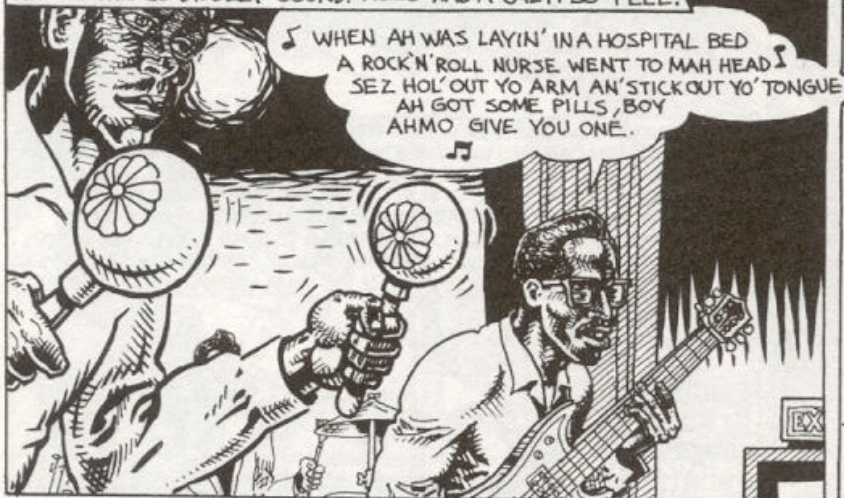
BO DID DOOWOP STUFF: "YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU" (WITH THE FLAMINGOS) AND "I'M SORRY." HE DID BRAGGING SONGS: "I'M A MAN," "500% MORE MAN," USED A KID'S FOLK MELODY: "BO DIDDLEY." WHATEVER HE SANG, HE MADE IT HIS, WITH HIS STRONG, UNIQUE VOCAL STYLE.



NOW, THE THING ABOUT BO DIDDLEY - HE'LL PUT ANYTHING IN HIS MUSIC, ANY KIND OF INFLUENCE, EVEN CLASSICAL, LIKE HIS ARCO AND PIZZICATO VIOLIN-PLAYING ON "THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE," WHICH IS BLUES. BO DIDDLEY DOESN'T PERFORM A WHOLE LOT OF TWELVE-BAR BLUES, BUT HIS WORK IS FULL OF BLUES FEELING, AND THERE'S A GOSPEL INFLUENCE IN HIS MUSIC, TOO. IT'S MIXED UP WITH SPIRITUAL, SANCTIFIED RHYTHMS AND THE FEELING... I HAVE A FEELING OF MAKING PEOPLE SHOUT. NOTE HIS USE OF GOSPEL-DERIVED CALL-AND-RESPONSE PATTERNS.



HE MADE WEIRD, UNCLASSIFIABLE RECORDINGS, LIKE THE FLAMENCO-INFLUENCED INSTRUMENTAL, "AZTEC." BO'S MUSIC HAD AN AFRICAN/AFRO-CUBAN INFLUENCE, TOO. JEROME ARNOLD'S MARACA PLAYING HELPED DEFINE THE BO DIDDLEY SOUND. "PILLS" HAD A CALYPSO FEEL.



PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE WORK IN BO'S BAND: THERE'S SOME COMPLEX INTERPLAY GOING ON. BILLY BOY ARNOLD TURNS SOME FINE HARMONICA WORK ON SOME OF HIS STUFF.

BO USED COLORFUL, EVOCATIVE LYRICS, LIKE ON "WHO DO YOU LOVE?"

AH WALKED FORTY-SEVEN MILES A' BARBED WIRE  
AH USE A COBRA SNAKE FO' A NECKTIE  
AH GOT A BRAND NEW HOUSE ON  
THE ROADSIDE  
MADE FROM RATTLE SNAKE HIDE.



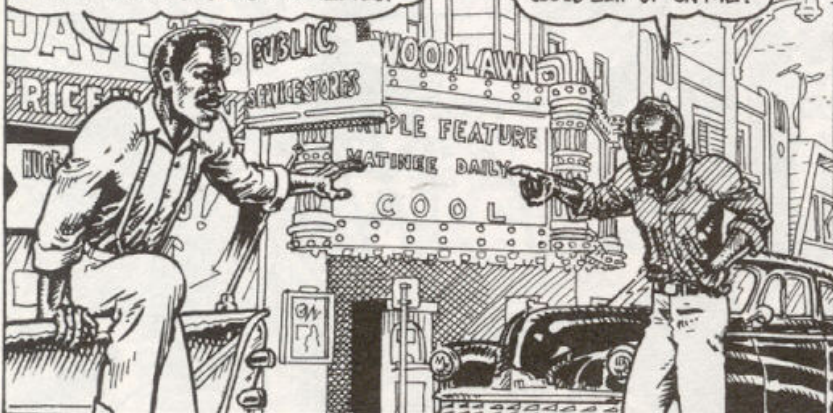
HIS GUITAR WORK WAS VERY ADVANCED, AS HIS TREMOLO EFFECTS INDICATED. DIG HIS VOCAL-INFLECTED PLAYING ON "MUMBLING GUITAR." HIS LOWER-REGISTER WORK MARKED THE PLAYING OF A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE, LIKE DUANE EDDY.



AND, MAN, BO DIDDLEY HAS NEVER GOTTEN THE CREDIT HE DESERVES AS ONE OF THE FUNNIEST CATS IN MUSIC. CHECK OUT STUFF LIKE "BACKGROUND TO A MUSIC," "TWO FLIES," "YOU AIN'T BAD," "AFRICA SPEAKS" (WITH ITS FAKE AFRICAN SPEECH), AND TUNES WHERE HE ENGAGES IN THE DOZENS.

YOU GOT THE NERVE TO CALL  
SOMEBODY UGLY? WHY, YOU SO  
UGLY, THE STORK THAT BROUGHT YOU  
IN THE WORL' OUGHTTA BE ARRESTED!

DAT'S AWRITE, MAH MAMA  
DIDN'T HAVE TO PUT A SHEET  
OVER MAH HEAD SO SLEEP  
COULD SLIP UP ON ME!



MOST OF THE STUFF I'VE TOLD YOU ABOUT BO DIDDLEY IS NOT KNOWN TO IGNORANT-ASS ROCK'N'ROLL FANS, INCLUDING A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WRITE ABOUT THE MUSIC AND ARE CONSIDERED EXPERTS. BUT, HEY, ALL YOU GUYS WHO WRITE FOR "ROLLING STONE" AND "SPIN" AND THOSE OTHER JIVE-ASS RAGS, I'M NOT TALKIN' ABOUT YOU—I'M TALKIN' ABOUT THE GUY STANDING NEXT TO YOU.





# THE GOOD TIMES ARE GONE





# STUPID CAPITALISTS!

STORY by **HARVEY PEKAR**  
ART by **JOSH '2K**

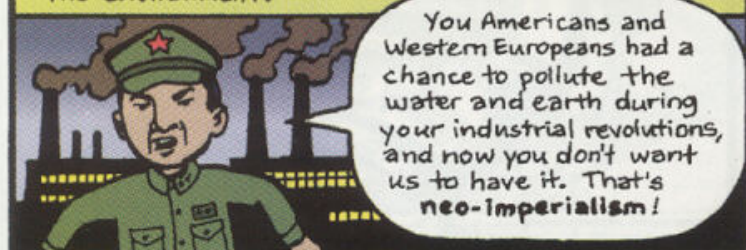
**I** was watching **Jesse Ventura** on TV today. He said he thought **Donald Trump** would make a successful President because he's been a successful businessman. He's made a lot of money.



**Check it out.** In tropical areas like Brazil and Madagascar, they're cutting down all the trees. Once the trees are gone, the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere decreases worldwide. Rainfall decreases. Regions become arid. The Sahara desert is spreading. Following these droughts have been famines. Starving people are not productive.



The situation's bad enough in the post-industrial United States. It's even **worse** in poor nations trying to build an industrial base, where nobody cares about the environment.



Actually, that's a classic case of cutting off your nose to spite your face. If global disaster hits, **poor countries** will suffer most.

There's got to be a **massive** international effort to reverse environmental degradation. Rich nations must aid poor ones, because what happens in, say, Brazil affects people everywhere.



Actually, creating a profitable business venture and running a successful national economy **aren't** the same thing. Businessmen have been notoriously short-sighted about even their own best interests.

And nowhere is this more obvious than in their opposition to environmental improvement. They are systematically laying waste to their number one resource-- the **Planet Earth**.



Despite what **Rush Limbaugh** says, there's **been** global warming and this has played a role in the increase of natural disasters. There was more money lost due to floods, hurricanes, etc.

**entire decade** of cataclysms are not economy. could create which might result authoritarianism, aforementioned



Then you got these **morons** who think the free enterprise system's gonna solve everything, that when capitalists see that it makes sense for them to clean up the environment, they'll do it.



I got news for you--when that happens it'll be **too late**. It could take **centuries** to reverse the effects of the ecological damage that's already been done.

Capitalist businessmen aren't going to lead a cleanup effort. Can you imagine coal and oil companies doing something like that? It's up to everyone else to save the planet from morons who are **too greedy** to see what's good for themselves.

It's time we started looking **beyond** laissez-faire capitalism for answers!



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