

Alternaville

Life on the left in Nashville, Tennessee

I Always Suspected They Were Mutants!

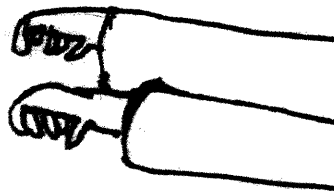
There's a haunted house downtown that I'm really looking forward to visiting. I'm not a big fan of slash 'em up anythings, and frankly mazes just stress me out. But when I saw the message on the SoBro wall about nuclear accidents and a quarantined Tennessee, I knew I had to find out what was really going on in the mutant-infested Nashville of the future.

In some ways, my enthusiasm for a science-fiction version of the land of my birth is related to why I decided to create *Alternaville*. Dirty or clean, aristocratic or genetically mutated, I love this town. I've got family buried in at least four area cemeteries (some dating back to the 1700s), and lots of live family, too. I've habitated many elsewhere, but my husband, two daughters, and I have graced the suburban Davidson County landscape with our redneck presence for 10 years or so. (One time Metro Codes made us get rid of an old car. Right now we're the only people on our street with a "Vote No on 1" sign.) What else? I really like old buildings—they're mystehistorious. I like tourists, too. They're so happy and interested.

That's not to say this is a Nashville travel guide. I'm more aimed at affirming and promoting the liberal sociocultural interests—my interests—that don't always get much attention around here, at least not in an affordable fashion. Our first issue is heavy on the music and film, 'cause that's what I had. But there'll be some poetry and art next time, with a healthy and hopefully helpful dose of leftist holiday planning tips and resources.

If you're interested in writing for *Alternaville*, feel free to drop me a line at alternaville@yahoo.com. Mutants and zombies are especially encouraged to apply.

Your friend,
Ashley



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Next Time I Swear:
Local Resources for
Socially Responsible
Holiday Shopping

Rock 'N' Roll Q&A Ashley interviews Cathy, who used to be big in Baltimore

Did you move to Nashville to make it in the music business? Absolutely not. I came here to grow old gracefully as a musician, when I realized I wanted to leave Maryland after I separated from my ex. I believe the rule should be that as an artist/musician you should come here AFTER you have already succeeded in the music business on a regional level. If you get here too soon in the game, you will be intimidated by the thousands of professionals that are already here and playing for free. But don't wait till you are 35 either. Half of them have already succeeded and are climbing down the ladder (which means they are over 30 and can play/write circles around you with their little pinky). The other half are small town heroes (29 and under) and people who made it to the callbacks for Nashville Star. Let that be a barometer. If you are not already as talented as the winners of Nashville Star, don't move here. If you do, hopefully you will have a second career to fall back on, like in the healthcare field. We need more nurses, not singer/songwriters! We have yet to see a Nashville Star winner with a hit country album (usually someone who has already lived here for a decade or so, and Lambert doesn't count. Underwood doesn't count either. She was on American Idol).

After
I saw Cathy
Marchal Zebron
perform at Brown's
Diner this summer,
I had to learn
more!

If so, then what happened? I guess this question does not apply to me because I didn't move here to make it. I was more ambitious when I was just starting out back home, but then I read some Deepak Chopra books and surmised, "To hell with this." My life has been virtually stress free ever since. Now if it did apply to me, I suppose I would tell you that I played writer's nights downtown and did some side gigs supporting other songwriters and artists. I joined a music organization or two. I saved some money and recorded some of my songs at one of the many basement digital studios. I went to Doak Turner's house one Sunday afternoon (the day that I went, Big Kenny was there [i.e., Big & Rich]. Maybe he was looking for the perfect writing partner. Do you think he found him?). I took some classes at the Blair School of Music. I have done some time playing on the road, so I didn't even try for one of those gigs. Besides, they don't pay very well—side musicians are very disposable in this town. Though opportunities occur often, you must know where to find them and be prepared when they arise. Overnight success is rare in the music business. I've heard from other transients that a person needs to live in Nashville for at least seven years before they can say they are from here. I'm from Maryland. (continued on page 3)

A View From West and East of Nashville

Over-Exposed and Commercialized: Handle Me With Care?

By Peter S. Cruttenden and Perry Talley

There's been a buzz around Nashville these days as to whether the public should boycott musicians who shamelessly use their music to sell everything under the sun, the moon and the stars. Well, we have some thoughts on that very subject.

During an interview in 1965, someone asked Dylan if he would ever promote any commercial products. He sardonically replied, "Yeah, I think that I'd like to advertise women's underwear."* And almost 40 years later, there was Dylan providing his music and image for a Victoria's Secret commercial. On one level, who could blame him for cavorting around Rome in the company of beautiful women dressed (or undressed) in lingerie? On the other hand, Dylan's contribution to the world of high fashion was nothing less than crass commercialism while lining his ever-bulging pockets. (Doesn't he ever know when to stop touring?) Yet in all fairness, Dylan has not been the only musician to make a devil's bargain with Madison Avenue.

Over the past few years, we have seen music of The Beatles ("Revolution") and The Troggs ("Love Is All Around") hawking sweat shop-produced apparel for Nike and The Gap, respectively. Moreover, the music of Led Zeppelin, Nick Drake, and The Cult have helped sell foreign and domestic cars. Eric Clapton, in all candor, nicely reworked "After Midnight" for a Budweiser advertisement. While the "new" version of "After Midnight" was great, it certainly didn't improve the taste of Budweiser one iota.

At the same time, Alice Cooper (School's Out) sells school supplies; while the music of Roky Erickson and the 13th Floor Elevators ("You're Gonna Miss Me") is now heard on a Dell computer television commercial. Imagine the idea that those highly compensated advertising whiz kids on Madison Avenue have resorted to using a self-admitted space alien to propel us into the high-tech stratosphere. Lastly, the music of Donovan ("Happiness Runs") is the background music for a Cheerios commercial.

What we have noticed and which is truly baffling, at least to us, is that with the exception of Alice Cooper and Donovan (where happiness runs in a circular motion—Cheerios are, of course, circular) is that these songs have absolutely nothing in common with the products that they are purporting to sell.

We will leave Donovan alone in that the Cheerios commercial is stylishly psychedelic; sort of Madison Avenue intersecting with Haight and Ashbury. We won't necessarily beat up on Alice Cooper, since Alice has been—in the view of one of us—laughing all the way to the bank since 1974. And poor Nick Drake, with his career trajectory, probably couldn't get himself arrested even in his heyday. Hopefully his family has been taken care of since the untimely misuse of his music.

As for The Beatles and Nike, we reserve our venom for Michael Jackson, who prostituted the Fab Four in order to pay off his attorneys, his kids, and his little boy-toy plaintiffs, past, present, and future. However, we both seem to recall a TV commercial in 1966 for Old Gold cigarettes which featured someone whistling the Lennon-McCartney song, "And I Love Her."

And speaking further of The Beatles, we hardly need to mention how Paul McCartney sold his soul to the Boston-based Fidelity Investments to

be their pitchman for selling Fidelity's retirement products to aging baby boomers. Needing even more talent in order to market to those LSD relapse-laden ancient mariners with long hair (or at least those with badly receding hairlines and ponytails) who still think it's 1973, Fidelity has purchased the services of Rick Derringer, formerly of The McCoys. We are of the opinion that Rick Derringer has the right to make a couple of bucks in his golden years (however, in wake of the Bush Administration's attempts to privatize social security accounts, we hardly think that having our financial adviser telling us to "Hang On Sloopy," gives us much comfort for retirement). Suffice it to say that we'll take social security, thank you very much, Mr. President.

As for McCartney, as you all know, given his marital problems, his own retirement plan is in great jeopardy. We're not about to take retirement investment advice from a company whose main advertising foil is about to lose \$300 million due to his less than prudent personal judgment. Yes, Paul, the cottage on the Isle of Wight is about to get too dear.

The ultimate question is why do these musicians shamelessly allow themselves to be used for the sake of the almighty dollar? In the view of one of us, the reason lies in that this demonstrates the bankruptcy of the lost art of jingle writing, whereby Madison Avenue is forsaking all of that creative musical talent currently inhabiting Music Row. On the other hand, one of us believes that the public is so incredibly gullible that it will just have to have a product if "hip" or once "hip" music is part of its marketing. But what we both agree on is that greed is driving this engine.

Whether the reader should boycott such musicians is up to you; and one should never heed the advice of a couple of partisan hacks like ourselves. But we feel (and hope that you do as well) that it's truly sad the musicians who were once seen, in the words of the Jefferson Airplane, as "outlaws in the eyes of Amerika" and the music they wrote and performed as the "forces of chaos and anarchy" have been swallowed up in the cogs of the machine, à la Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*. But unlike Chaplin, these folks have willingly and gladly jumped into the cogs of the machine, embarrassed their craft and made a lot of money in the process.

Lastly, we are hopeful that this shameful tide will subside, or at least turn. We truly believe that we will never see the day when there is a television commercial for Loreal featuring a beautiful woman leaving her home after coloring her hair, accompanied by Billy Bragg crooning, "Greetings to the New Brunette."

In the interim, if you feel like you just might want to boycott anything that Toby Keith is involved with, that would be fine with us. Just let us know; we'll join you directly.

**We would like to express our appreciation to Jon Richstein, a true Dylan fan in every sense of the word, who kindly shared his extensive knowledge of Dylan with us in connection with this article. However, he truly doesn't share our rather less than kindly view of Bob. That responsibility is ours.*

Perry Talley works for a television station in Nashville and is the host of One Part Harmony on WRVU-FM. Peter S. Cruttenden is employed by a law firm in Washington, DC, and is a graduate student at the American University.

Paul McCartney: Fidelity Investments

Why do musicians shamelessly allow themselves to be used for the sake of the almighty dollar?

Eric Clapton: Budweiser

Donovan: Cheerios

What do you think? Email alternaville@yahoo.com.

ASHLEY'S ONE-LINE ALBUM REVIEWS

Beck, *The Information*: Everything *Odelay* is new again—and I loves it!

Num, *Life, Death and the Absurdity of Being*: Lovely, mellow, and in some instances entrancing, this is my favorite Scottish export since Belle & Sebastian.

The Decemberists, *The Crane Wife*: Some might say it's more conventional, but I find this album thoughtful and mature, albeit less fanciful than previous albums—hmm, maybe that's what "more conventional" means.

Rock 'N' Roll Q&A (continued from page 1)

What kind of music do you play/perform? I've been known to play lots of rock styles, acoustic rock, hard rock, prog rock, rhythm & blues and a little bit of country/americana. Funny I decided to pick Nashville, huh? L.A. is more my style, but the rent and gas are so much cheaper here!

What are your songs about? The three primal urges: desire, anger, fear, and heliocentric philosophy (I'm a tree hugger and a puppy patter—a cyberhippie if I may give myself a moniker).

Have you ever been in a band elsewhere, like say, Baltimore, maybe? I was in charge of my own band, Zebron for a couple of years, but most notably I worked with Crack the Sky (prog rock) and Paul Reed Smith's group, Band of a Thousand Names. My first band out of high school was an all-female hard rock group, but there's enough fodder about that adventure to constitute another news article. Okay fellas, stop picturing "Behind the Music," the Go-Gos episode.

Where did you get that cool guitar? What kind is it? I own several guitars, but I will assume you are referring to "Excalibur." The rest of you would recognize it as a Gibson Flying V. It has a vintage sunburst finish, not chrome like Lenny Kravitz's. It was purchased in Maryland and was hanging on a rack up near the ceiling dusty and being overlooked. Lord knows how many years it was there, waiting for someone to come along and give it some love and a good home. It called out to me and I answered, "Yes! You are THE ONE!" I didn't have enough money for it, barely half. My father paid the difference and promptly issued me an I.O.U. for the balance. He has since passed on, but my mother likes to remind me that she still hangs on to that piece of paper. Why? Silly me. I still owe half.

Do I have to be a tourist or country music singer to wear a cowboy hat? Absolutely. Have you ever seen the secretary of state or a surgeon wearing a cowboy hat? Would you take him/her seriously if he wore one while he was doing his job? (As I ask this question, a particular Texan in a position

Let Us Get You on Our Wavelength

All the local writers in this issue have music shows on WRVU 91.1 FM, the Voice of Vanderbilt University. Check us out!

Alphabet with Ashley
Tuesdays from 6-8 a.m.

Cyberterranean with Cathy
Wednesdays from 8-9 a.m.

College Music 101: Now and Then with Walt Thursdays from 6-8 a.m.

One Part Harmony with Perry
Sundays from 8-10 a.m.

of authority pops into my head.) Think of it in these terms: Did you buy the "Goofy" baseball hat when you took that vacation to Disney World? (Yes.) Did you feel comfortable wearing it as you stood in line for three hours to ride "It's a Small World"? (Definitely yes. Everyone else was wearing the Donald Duck or Mickey Mouse, your hat was the coolest of them all.) Now, would you feel just as comfortable wearing your Goofy hat to a business meeting with your boss and her/his bosses, or standing in a long line at the county clerk's office? I think you get the idea...

What would be your dream venue/gig in Nashville? Playing with what other bands? The gig where I am inducted as a member of the Grand Ol' Opry, after my album with Bela Fleck gets nominated for a Grammy for album of the year. And it's not country. And it's the Ryman, not the Opry Mills location. The Ryman is the real deal. Oh, and Bela proposes to me on stage. Am I getting carried away? Is he already married?

So I hear you are playing at Brown's Diner in November. Tell us more! I can't say that I am, but any gigs that do pop up, I post on my Myspace page (www.myspace.com/zebron). Soon I will enter the world of commerce and begin selling mp3 versions of my tunes online. Don't cha just love technology?!

Any last words? So kids, don't forget: a person who wants to be a successful musician/recording artist will also have 1) a law degree, 2) a business/marketing or economics degree, 3) ITS certification, 4) oh yeah, musical talent and some serious style to go with it. And we just can't emphasize enough: 5) capital, lots of capital (whether it's your mom, your stock options/trust fund or your pimp. Those EPKs can get a little pricey).

Are you interesting? We'll interview you!
Email alternaville@yahoo.com.

Wings of Desire

In 2003, MGM released the DVD version of the 1988 classic *Wings of Desire*. Like many DVD releases, it includes commentary from the filmmaker and one of the stars (in this case, director Wim Wenders and actor Peter Faulk) and a making-of documentary. Unlike many commentaries (often hilariously criticized in the “Commentary Tracks of the Damned” feature of the AV portion of The Onion website [www.theonion.com]), Wenders and Faulk don’t dip into pretension or self-aggrandizement and provide honest commentary of the making of the film without using film jargon or delving too deeply or boringly into each individual shot.

Hollywood remade *Wings* as *City of Angels*, but don’t hold that against this film. Even if you hate subtitled films, still search for it—you will not be disappointed. Although you may find the early mood of the film dour, you will ultimately find it uplifting and life affirming. Bruno Ganz (*Downfall*) plays an angel in Berlin who begins to feel dissatisfied with his lot. He finds himself falling in love with a human and developing a friendship with an ex-angel turned human. Peter Handke wrote poetic dialog (Wenders admits in the commentary that he had spent so much of his time in the U.S. before moving



DVDs Worth Seeking Out

By Walt Colt

back to Berlin that he felt uncomfortable with his German), and Wenders convinced master cinematographer Henri Alekan (80 years old at the time) to come out of retirement to shoot the majority of the picture in black and white. If you have ever seen this film or his other masterpiece, Jean Cocteau’s *Beauty and the Beast* (please don’t confuse it with the Disney animated film), you’ll understand why: you might not see more

breathtaking photography in a movie (save perhaps *Baraka*, the subject of a future column). Finally, like Cameron Crowe and Martin Scorsese, Wenders always features interesting music in his movies and he doesn’t disappoint with this one. A fan of The Birthday Party, he used both offshoots of the band, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds and Crime and the City Solution, in concert sequences as well as avant-garde arrangements with synthesizers, strings, harps, and chorus for the background music.

If you cannot find this DVD through such channels as the local video store or a mail-order DVD service, you can check out this film through the Nashville Public Library.

ASHLEY’S ONE-LINE MOVIE REVIEWS

La Science des Rêves (The Science of Sleep): Quirky, fragile and human, beautifully creative, funny and sad—I don’t know if I’m describing lead actor Gael Garcia Bernal or the movie!

The U.S. Vs. John Lennon: I already belong to the cult of John, and my husband pointed out that this “preachin’ to the choir” documentary might be a better DVD rental than movie theater event, so we went to see *The Science of Sleep* instead (did I mention how quirky, fragile and human, beautifully creative, funny and sad Gael Garcia Bernal, I mean the movie is?).

HIDDEN TREASURES of the Nashville Public Library

I recently rented a 1978 film which few people have heard of or remember: *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. This ambitious but ultimately misguided foray into fictionalizing the classic Beatles album starred Peter Frampton and the Bee Gees, and featured a lame plot intertwined with rock stars of the day doing their take on various Beatles songs (Aerosmith’s “Come Together” received a lot of airplay for a while). (Note: No Beatles appear in this film, but several were probably injured in the making of it.)

I first saw *Sgt. Pepper’s* in the movie theater when I was about 10 years old. I was a Beatles fanatic, and my excitement and anticipation were enormous. However, the film was so bad that I immediately forgot about it for more than 25 years, until a friend told me it was available at the library. I enjoyed revisiting the adventures of Billy Shears and Co.—but what I really want is to get my hands on a copy of *Magical Mystery Tour*. Roll up!—Ashley

