

In 1983, Lach, a leather-clad, blue-jeaned acoustic guitar player moved to the center of the New York folk scene in Manhattan's West Village. At the time, Folk City and Speakeasy were the main venues for folk acts, but Lach was too rock 'n' roll for that scene, so he moved to the East Village.

In August 1984, Lach opened the Hidden Fortress--an underground,

illegal nightclub--on Rivington Street in New York's Lower East Side. Located on one of New York's worst crime-infested blocks, it was a barren, cavernous room with concrete floors, a makeshift bar in the back, and a platform stage in the center. Most of the time, the stage served as a bed for Lach.

Soon to be named "the Fort," the 700 square foot loft became a magnet for folk singers weary of the folk scene. On Friday and Saturday nights, The Fort held open-mike sessions from 10 pm to 6 am. The performers shared a desire for social change, an appreciation of folk history, and an interest in staying up late and drinking beer. Their music was a blend of folk, bluegrass, blues, punk, and psychedelic rock. Acoustic guitars, melodies, strong rhythms and an emphasis on lyrical content did not mean traditional folk. It was folk music--but with an attitude.

The list of performers grew quickly and so did the folk/rock 'n' roll, street-trash audience. Lach dubbed it the "anti-folk" scene. Anti-folk was not so much a style of music, explains Roger Manning, but a dislike for the West Village folk scene. When "the Fort" closed down in August 1985, the anti-folk artists moved to the rock clubs in the East Village.

Since then the anti-folk movement has flourished. Lach has an album coming out on Goldcastle Records and his band, Proper id, can be found performing in sleazy clubs all over New York City. A magazine devoted to the scene--*XPoseur*--has appeared, edited by Kristen Johnson. *XPoseur* features articles, poems, and a folk hunk of the month, a tongue-in-cheek, nude centerfold.

With all this activity going on, it only

# FOLK WITH ATTITUDE

A new compilation album brings together the best voices of a new generation in Manhattan's Lower East Side.

By ALLEGRA



Front row (seated) left to right: Lauren Stauber, Evil Jim, Maggie Estep, Lach, Kristen Johnson, Alison Willow, the author (Allegra). Back row: Jennifer Blowdryer, Roger Manning, Charlotte Web, Billy Syndrome, Dena, Tom Clark, Kirk Kelly, David Huberman, Paleface, Joshua Whalen, Steven Gabe, Bobby Belfiore.

seemed natural for Steven Gabe of 109 Records to put together the first collective record of the artists, *White Trash Volume 1*, produced by Don Fury and Ron Katz, with Gabe as the executive producer. However, the latest release of 109 Records--the *Broome Closet Anti-Folk Sessions*, produced by Roger Manning--is by far the best compilation of the scene at present.

John. S. Hall, a slouching screamer with long, curly hair, starts off the record with a poetic rant. Hall, who always dresses in baseball cap and jeans, revels in the conflicting confusion of modern life. "Basically I put words together trying to characterize the overwhelming, deafening, suffocating, appalling, beauty that surrounds me," says Hall, who has five poems on the album. Hall is also a member of the rock band King

Missle, whose third album, *Mystical Shit*, was released on Shimmy Disk in February.

Paleface is next. Described by one of his friends as "a modern day Huckleberry Finn," he makes his debut on this album. "Things that happen overnight don't necessarily go away overnight," says the smiling Paleface, who expresses social paradoxes masked by humor.

Tom Clark--long-haired, leather-clad, motorcycle-booted--follows with some hardcore folk. Once part of a hardcore band in Chicago called Tar, Clark now has a solo cassette, *Acoustic Caffeine*, and a soon-to-be released album coming out on Paris-NY PNYN records. Bobby Belfiore comes next.

A cross between Dylan and early Jagger, Belfiore's passions are Jack Kerouac, garage rock, and watercolors.

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In fact, he's a well-known painter of East Village street life. His song on this album concerns the Tompkins Square police riot of 1988. Besides being a member of the Freedom Fighters, Belfiore fronts the New York-based band Medicine Hat.

Kirk Kelly, a James Deanish folk punk with working-class Irish roots, has an album on SST Records titled, *Go, Man, Go*, which is also one of the slogans of the Anti-Folk scene. Kelly describes his music as a cross between Jello Biafra, Woody Guthrie, Phil Ochs, the Clancey Brothers, and Batman.

Maggie Estep, tomboyish and petite, follows with a performance poem based around a confrontation with a drug dealer in the East Village. She describes her work as "something to listen to as you shop for a better world."

Next is Cindy Lee Berryhill who might be tall and blond but contrary to her San Diego roots is no sunshine girl. "Just do it once," she says. "If it's good enough, it's good enough." Her two songs deal with hang ups, taking chances, and "perpetual oosch as opposed to ooff." Her first album, *Who's Gonna Save the World?* came out on Rhino Records in 1987 and, in 1988, Rhino released her second album, *Naked Movie Star*, which was produced by Lenny Kaye.

Following Berryhill is Roger Manning whose "art cause it's made in Soho" is scribbled all over his "folk" guitar. "People work hard and end up with nothing. I ain't got nothin' either, but at least I don't work hard for it." With an album out on SST Records, Manning recently put out *Joe Folk and the Soho Valley Boys* on 109 Records.

Billy Syndrome starts side B with *Funky Stairway*, a banjo-oriented James Brown takeoff in which Syndrome's guitar serves as a drum. "Listen to it, bug out your parents," says Syndrome. And more mind-warping psychedelic madness can be found on his debut album, *Vicious Burger*, on 109 records (released in February).

The last performer, who also debuts on this album, is Suzie Unger, whose waist-length hair practically covers her guitar.

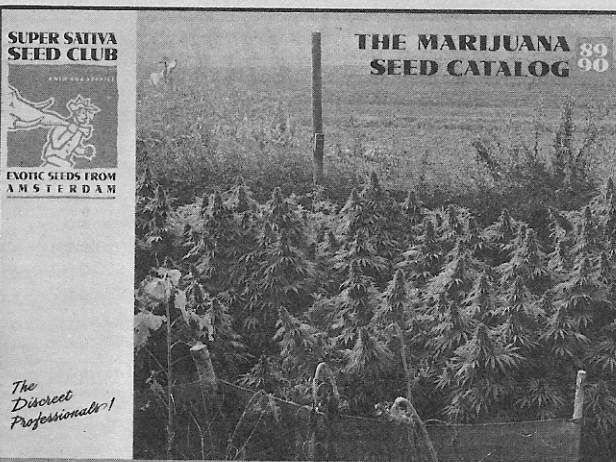
Folk music may be the oldest of traditions, but this folk has attitude in the now. For that reason, this bunch of performers should not be passed over.

(For more information, contact: 109 Records, 115 St. Marks Pl., NYC, NY 10009, (212) 529-2642; XPoser Magazine, 526 E. 6th St., Apt. #4 NYC, NY 10009.)

Side.



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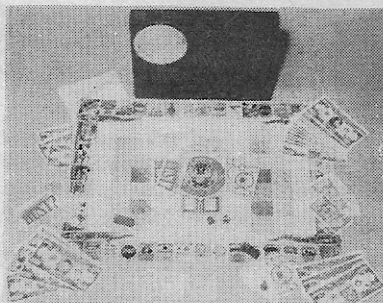
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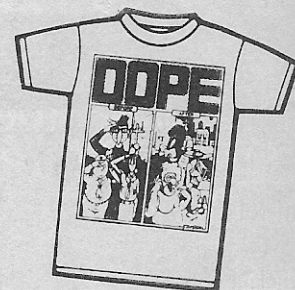
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