

# NEXT LEVEL

Vol. 1, No. 2

## CREDITS

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The underlying point of Next Level Vol. 1 No. 1 was to advertise. This magazine I want to have a substance to it; a meaning and a purpose. However, without fostering the need to seek out such substance within all of you, the magazine would be lost.

Fortunately, it's looking good, and I can only promise improved content and writing and expanded perspectives and opinions. *Next Level* is not merely a music magazine, serving a supplemental role to BiBaBiDi, but indeed, a magazine with a purpose.

The nature of our current society and culture relies heavily upon intense networking. Being simply interested in music seems, in the long run, unfulfilling as it take completely out of the picture the fact that all sorts of art and thought and theory were working "behind the scenes" to develop that music. Nothing is independent. Let this magazine be seen as an embracer of that fact.

Go forth and explore. This is just one stepping stone.

//Nik Mercer//  
////////Feb.07//

# GAY AGAINST YOU

Glasgow's  
Gay Against  
You is (I hope) the  
best and most important of  
the Hardcore/Happy Hardcore bands  
from the UK. The duo certainly stands for the  
most in terms of developing scenes on the other side  
of the pond, and -- in my humble opinion -- has the most  
artistic and creative potential behind their work. That's to  
say, I guess, that they don't ever end up bugging me as so  
many energetic/hyper hardcore groups do.

(1) I definitely feel like  
you've a unique and cre-  
ative style, so I'm glad to be  
able to do this interview with you  
before you're completely booked.

Just the way in which they responded to  
all of my questions in this interview  
reflects their style and sound ...  
read on for their story be-  
fore they explode!

JOE: We like doing interviews over email because  
you can't tell we are lying because you can't tell that  
we look to the side or scratch or cough whenever you ask  
us a question.

LACH: Also we can rework our answers and are not just blurting out  
the first thing we think of, so it makes us seem cooler.

(2) I guess my first questions will be the simplest. I'm curious to know ...  
where you got the name, Gay Against You. It's bizarre, and I cannot  
figure out any reference, so please, explain it to us!

JOE: I love that people have come up with all kinds of  
apocrypha and theories as to our name - it's really  
great that everyone has their own take on its  
connotations etc. - we don't want to tell  
anyone they are

wrong, it's completely open to interpretation! The name was a mishearing of something my girlfriend Emma said, possibly the name of a special tea. People so far have described the name as: a challenge to homophobia, a piss take of another semi-well known band name, an attempt at a silly acronym, a sort of "fuck you" to everyone else (I like that one!) and many more. Keep them coming please!

LACH: We don't even really remember how it happened...it's a funny name because I have always thought that the best band names are the ones that sound offensive but actually don't mean anything and this one fits the bill almost perfectly!

(3) People have described your music with a wide array of descriptors. You're generally "unpredictable," but definitely edging on hardcore and noise, always resulting in a "big, happy mess." Additionally, there's been mention of parallels between your sound and others like Atari Teenage Riot, Les Savy Fav, and DEVO. So how would you describe your music and what would you say you're shooting for sonically with the band?

LACH: Hmmmm, it's kind of difficult, our records are, I think, very poppy but our live performance is totally shambolic and all over the place. I like that people might see us live and be surprised by our records and vice versa. I always hate going to gigs and watching people just get up and play their songs like they would rather be anywhere else and expect me to care.

JOE: I think a lot of people get the idea from our live shows that we are untrained and untalented musicians, yet I would hope the same people would at least be able to appreciate (if not necessarily like...) the musicality of our composed work. The other criticism we seem to get regularly is that our songs have no structure. Again, this isn't true; it's just that the structure we use generally dispenses with the constant repetition involved in most pop music. We see it as a sort of "condensed pop" - like all the

good bits you'd expect, except all happening only once, rather than ad infinitum. This is also why our songs are so short I guess. We shoot for making records that we would enjoy and we hope others would enjoy.

(4) Since I'm not from/living in the U.K., it's always hard for me to get a realistic idea of the music community over there. I do, however, get the impression that a lot of stuff happens in clusters, phases. There are a bunch of bands that jump on some stylistic bandwagon, and then hype and such builds from there. Would you say this applies to you (if it's true at all)?

LACH: Yeah! that's true to some extent but I think that its mainly to do with the way the commercial industry over here watches for scenes that reach critical mass of popularity, then sign all the bands involved and package it as the new thing, i.e. new rave. So it kind of looks like there are lots of bands hopping on a wagon but really they probably all were doing their own separate thing at the same time. Around here the music scene is pretty incestuous with lots of bands swapping members and mostly being friends, so it is hardly surprising that they all sound similar.

JOE: I think Lachlann is right, the NME etc. have this terrible addiction to claiming they invented every new trendy type of music and to refute their claims, they cobble together a load of stuff which is in someway linked (generally image wise actually, rather than musically!!!) and then called it whatever they have come up with. I think in reality things are much more fragmented. I think we jumped on the bandwagon of "we haven't been in a band for a long time, let's form our own one, since we live together already and see what happens." When you have that as an agenda, there's not really much that can go wrong!

(5) Tell me a little bit about ADAADAT Records, the label that released your record, Muscle Milk ... what sort of relationship do you have with the label, and how did you get connected with it?

JOE: I set up a show in Glasgow for Adaadat at the end of 2004. Me and some friends used to run an overambitious and rarely successful club night and the Adaadat showcase was one of the few events we actually managed to pull off.

It turned out the two guys behind the label, Bjorn Hatleskog and Angus Keith are both Scottish also. After playing that night, we became firm

a friends and we've done a bunch of stuff together since. I released an album under the name "Germlin" with them also and Lach has contributed tracks as "Yoko, oh no!" all the artists involved with Adaadat are pretty great! Hello to Edmund OMMM, Dan 100,000,000, Alex Silverlink, Topgear in Singapore and Ove-chan in Osaka!

LACH: Angus is naming his first born child after me! Bjorn defends himself with loafs of bread.

long break, which is great. We've done a bunch of remixes for other artists too although most haven't seen the light of day - one for Shit Disco, one for we are the Physics, one for Klaxons, one for the Matchsticks....next is Digiki I think, then Bruno and Michel are smiling.

LACH: Lots to do!!! I have a Yoko, Oh No! album which has been about a year in the making which is featuring collaborative tracks with Silverlink, team brick Le Couteau Jaune and others. I have also been making clothes and have become quite addicted to sewing stuff to other stuff.

(7) How did you two meet? Lach goes by YOKO, OH NO!, and Joe goes by GERMLIN, and both of you have -- to some extent -- individually released stuff under those monikers. So tell me where that stuff stands now ... are YOKO OH NO! and GERMLIN continuing side-projects of sorts or is that all over now?

LACH: Joe and I met in school when we were 16 or something and have been in a collection of ridiculous bands (Smart Arse Tiger, the Albinos, Saigon High Chair Pirates) this one being the pinnacle as yet.

JOE: and our solo stuff is brewing under, not finished. I know I personally have a whole lot more I want to do under the Germlin name but I also have records under the name "Mighty" and "Co Ags" and more.

(6) What plans do you have for the future of the band?  
Upcoming releases, tours, collaborations ...

JOE: we're touring the U.K. and hopefully Europe in June! Please see our MySpace page for details of shows and help us out with dates if you can.

we've got a bunch of new material that is very slowly coming together right now - a collaborative DVD with the artist ghost\_stories,

entitled 'bogus totem summer' and a split tape with the awesome chico y chico, entitled "The Wimpy Pumps," out

on Undereducated Records in the U.K. and P.E.A.R.L. in the

U.S., plus a full-length on Adaadat soon. Check

them out! I want to re-lease a new Germlin album soon also:

I've started doing solo shows again after

(8) You're from Glasgow, a place that doesn't get a whole lot of attention in the States. What kind of stuff's happening up there, musically, and can you give us some recommendations, point us in a good direction?

LACH: Glasgow is a funny place, we don't go down very well here, it's a bit serious. There are some great acts though: Molly's Seafoods, the royal we, Dannanana-kroyd and Dolby Anol to mention a few (the ones I can think of right now).

JOE: I like park attack, nuts and seeds nights, Christ 'zine. Yeah, I don't think we're very at home musically in Glasgow but it's probably for the best. Because everything here is so insular, you get a kind of microcosmic music scene, where bands and artists can be huge but only within the boundaries of Glasgow. Some "legendary Glasgow bands" only seem to exist in the city itself and sort of disappear once they leave.

(9) I ask this -- sometimes fruitlessly -- to most bands I interview, but it's interesting sometimes ... what kind of musical background do you come from? Or maybe the better question to ask here is how did you get



interested to begin with? Any records that changed your lives/perspectives or such?

JOE: I started learning piano at the age of about 7 I think. I'm classically trained to a fairly high standard on both piano and saxophone and I'd like to think I could bash out a tune on most instruments put in front of me, if fairly amateurishly.

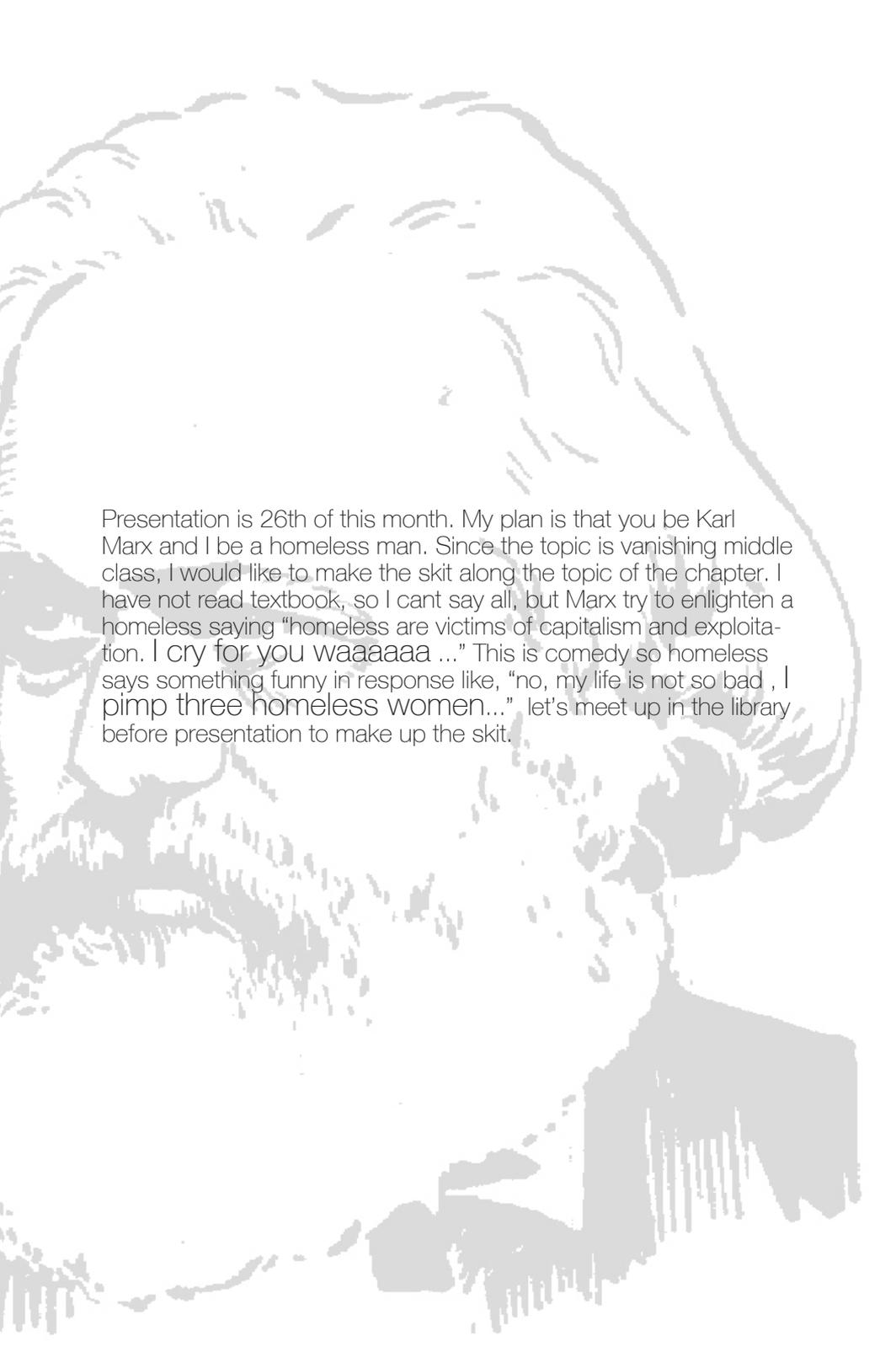
LACH: I'm not from a particularly musical background I tried to learn the bagpipes when I was a kid but I was useless. When I was 12 my teacher made me a mix tape with loads of techno on it (the Grid, Orbital, Underworld Tinman etc...) before that I just listened to what my parents liked, (Fleetwood Mac and Simon and Garfunkle). When I met Joe he made me learn guitar so I could play in his band and introduced me to loads of music.

JOE: I think the thing that changed the way I saw music, rather than a record as such, was discovering that people could make music without a band, or loads of instruments or whatever. I have to thank my high school music department for letting me potter around with an old Amstrad and Cubase for days on end! Being able to make music electronically totally changed my perspective and freed up the creative process for me, massively.

(10) How do you guys makes these songs!?! They're so spastic and chaotic, it's hard to imagine that there's some sort of procedure involved in the creation of them.

LACH: There's no procedure really, we bought this program from an old man. Every nite we fire it up, input the variables and set the constants, then leave it running while we sleep and when we wake up in the morning it's produced a song! Mostly they are rubbish but occasionally it comes up with an album worthy track.

JOE: sometimes I talk to the machine in a vague and probably egotistical hope of influencing its decision but this has so far proved to be fruitless, it does exactly what it wants.



Presentation is 26th of this month. My plan is that you be Karl Marx and I be a homeless man. Since the topic is vanishing middle class, I would like to make the skit along the topic of the chapter. I have not read textbook, so I cant say all, but Marx try to enlighten a homeless saying "homeless are victims of capitalism and exploitation. I cry for you waaaaaa ...". This is comedy so homeless says something funny in response like, "no, my life is not so bad , I pimp three homeless women..." let's meet up in the library before presentation to make up the skit.

It seems as though DENMARK may be the new Sweden of the world! The musical output from the country shares little in common with that originating in Sweden, however, the aesthetic and approach is there: no one in Denmark wants to stay there.

Recently, a substantial number of Danish artists and labels have been popping up. Last year it was Figurines with their stellar LP, *Skeleton*. I thought it would end there, but not so fast, the Danes are heret to stay!

I Am Bones is one of the most fantastic and awe inspiring one-man bands I've ever heard. Pavement-esque garage rock roots with a Swedish, light pop style to top it all off. I Am Bone's work is clean and sharp, but lacksidascal and loose enough to make enjoyable and new each listen.

Aeroplanes From Hell recollect the seminal C-86 bands with a bit of additional flare.

ALL of Rumraket's bands (an international line up) have this sort of post-IDM vibe to them. Contemplative electronic music for the most part, save for a few stellar finds including the oh-so-cute Taxi, Taxi! (a female dup specializing in lo-fi folk pop) and Grizzly Bear (Rumraket was the band's first label).

Check them all out and delve deeper.  
<http://www.myspace.com/rumraket>  
<http://www.iambones.dk/>  
<http://www.figurines.dk/>  
<http://www.myspace.com/aeroplanesfromhell>

"Japan is the Sweden of the world." Where does that leave Denmark, now?

# SCENES: DENMARK



# PINK GLASSES

Over the winter holiday, I decided to liberate a pair of rectangular, medium frame PINK reading glasses from my mother. (Let it be noted here that the glasses cost ONE dollar. And they weren't bought, but gifted.)

Glasses have always been an excellent accessory, and pink tends to be my accessory color of choice. A match made in HEAVEN. The lenses are like magnifying glasses, so I'm convinced that, were I to be exposed to direct sunlight for too long, small holes would burn through my pupils.

So, I removed the lenses.  
So, the glasses stuck.

As expected, many conversations & short dialogues ensued once I began to regularly don the spectacles. Unexpectedly, though, the glasses became more than a part of me, but an extension of myself, or an extension of my projected self, perhaps. Is that guy with the crutches ever noticed when he walks without them? Am I ever noticed when I walk without my hot pink frames? The enablers of sight enable me to be seen.

Let these collected conversations be an inspiration to all: wear silly accessories. I believe the clothes pins that many punks attached to their clothing in the late 70s were rather silly, too, yet they became uber-popular, chic, fashionable, and a sign—apparently—of a "unique" person. Clearly, I like my frames more. More importantly, though, do it to bring something out in yourself. Or to bring something out in others that may allow you to bring something out in yourself. Or rather, do it to bring something out in your environment; that'll change it all in the end.

## CONVERSATION. 1

("Waiting to be Seate

Waitress: ...

Nik:

W: ...

N: uh erm

W: ...

N: ... uh ... table for ... uh ...  
two?

W: ...

N: ... please?

W: [abruptly breaking her  
muteness] OH! So-rry! I was  
just looking at those GLASSES!

N: Oh yeah?

W: Yeah. They've got no LENSES!

N: ... yeah.

W: Two you said?

Awkwardness is accentuated with these glasses. At times, it's like having a smudge of mustard on your cheek while talking to your boss. Did he MEAN to put those glasses on today? Is he color BLIND?

In a compelling way, though, it's they who are blind to me. Seemingly, they represent me, but no one's drawn to me for the glasses only to complement me on my shoes.

## C.2—27

("Version 1")

Attendant/Clerk: So uh  
what prescription are those?

N: Hah, yeah they've no lenses.

OR

N: Oh, uh they're actually 'zero' prescription. I like to think of them as the placebo for eye doctors.

A/C: Oh, hah. Well they're cute.

N: Cute, yeah. That's why I chose them.

In particular, I always like how people pay particular attention to the fact that the PINK glasses are missing the aspect that's supposedly invisible: the lenses! Why would anyone wear GLASSES if they were missing the glass? In response, I say why would anyone wear glasses if they were missing the FRAMES?

## C.2—27

("Version 2")

A/C: Wow! Those are pink!

N: Indeed they are! Wow!

A/C: Yeah man, I like those! Wow!

Still, though, many people did notice the pinkness of the frames, although not a single person vocalized the notable color. The color's compelling, sure, but it seems that perhaps the concept of the glasses-less glasses is what makes people comment. Additionally, I've got to give the above mentioned clerks some slack: how many customers must they chit chat with? They probably get bored of the dead-end conversation that "How are you doing?" prompts. Am I trying to shake things up, then? The "power" and "stimulation" that these glasses provide extend much further than just myself!

## C.3

("Masquerade")

Man w/ Masquerade Mask:

[Sashaying up to Nik] Ho ho hoh  
hah oh, my ... those are nice.

Nik: Well, thank you.

M w/ M M: [Slowly removing his mask]

Yes, what prescription are those?

N: Oh, hah, well, I guess they're a 'zero,' right?

M w/ M M: Oh, yeah, these are also a 'zero,' I suppose.

N: [Awkwardly] Haha, yeah, well ... uh ... haha ... like your, uh ... your mask. Hah.

What I found especially compelling about my perception of the glasses was the fact that from day one, I wanted to see them crushed. I like to throw things away (I feel like there should be a -phobia for that), in an effort to never get in a rut of sorts. Maybe it's hopeless, maybe I'm bound to "solidify." I hope not, though, so I'll continue to treat my glasses with little sympathy.

C.4

("Birds")

Nik: [Whistling, walking down street around noon]

Birds: CAW! CAW!

N: Hmm, strange crows

Crows: [Diving down, attacking Nik]

N: [Bloodied in the face from constant barraging] Damned pink glasses! Shoo, you stupid crows!

NIK MERCER


 SCENES: NORWAY

As with Denmark, NORWAY seems to be a new Scandinavian/North European country of massive musical interest or potential. The nations share a lot, particularly a mentality that necessitates leaving in order to seek something bigger or greater or more. This often means coming to America!

Annie led the way with the release of *Anniemal* a few years back, but it's been a while since we've heard from other musicians and groups of the icy nation.

Datarock is old news for some, but absolutely worth checking out if you're into minimalist funk and still well remember the days the short-lived (but now revived?) dance-punk movement.

The Work definitely shares a lot with friend Annie, although this duo's a tad more aligned to the sensibilities and style of New Order and other legends of early dance electronic dance music.

Skatebård has been around for a while, but never really made a dent until his LP, *Flashes In the Night*, a sort of minimalist techno record that could easily be compared to Lindstrøm.

Hot! Hot! Hot! follows creates with a similar style, but their music tends to be loopier, lazier even. That's not to say it's not precise, minimalist, and ultra rhythm-oriented, but there's something especially organic about their stuff.

All are worth checking out, but don't stop here ... continue to delve deeper!

<http://www.houseoftelle.com/>

<http://www.powerblytt.com/>

<http://www.myspace.com/wearethework>

<http://www.myspace.com/skatebaard>

<http://www.datarock.no/>



THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO  
INEVITABILITY AS LONG AS THERE  
IS A WILLINGNESS TO CONTEMPLATE  
WHAT IS HAPPENING.

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# THANKS

for tuning into Next Level Vol. 1 No. 2!

It's been fun coordinating this project, using it as a means to contact bands, artists, and other people of interest and merit.

The magazine will continue to develop, and we'll add more features and content with each issue!

(Additionally, who know what Vol. 2 will bring!?)

If you're at all up for working on Next Level with us, please shoot an email over to

[nik.mercer@gmail.com](mailto:nik.mercer@gmail.com).

Until then ...

# BBBD10

