

Letters from our readers

12 January 2010

On "Children's deaths spark anti-US outrage in Afghanistan"

Cowper was speaking of the suffering of British babies during the Viking raids of the Dark Ages, but of late once again babies "born amid the din of arms/... [Who] sucked breast that panted with alarm". Look around. They are everywhere, even next door to you, children who see the light of day with deadly weapons overhead and heartless men with guns invading their homes.

We no longer need to wonder at least about how it was possible in a civilized and cultured country for another elite counter-insurgency, anti-terror corps, the Xe of its time, the SS, to establish itself.

This is heart-breaking.

AL

Toronto, Canada

8 January 2010

On "Six million in the US with no income but food stamps"

This article expresses in the clearest language possible the dire situation in the United States for working people.

The shadow of the financial crisis looms over all of the workers who have lost their jobs, their health benefits, their homes and their dignity at the expense of the maintenance of the parasitical pigs who created the crisis through their outright thievery. Stuffing their own bank accounts with money stolen from the public, the bankers and speculators, along with the military power that serves them, blithely take home obscene bonuses for creating nothing but disaster. They scorn those whose money they have stolen. They let children starve and old people freeze to death and shrug their shoulders.

This social sickness has turned the United States into the equivalent of a banana republic, with the financial elite partying hearty and congratulating themselves with having got away with highway robbery. As unemployment soars, their stock increases in value and they declare to the masses that the crisis is over and that the economy is "recovering".

Anyone among the working class who believes this to be true is feeding the hand that bites him. It is shameful to be a citizen of this country.

Carolyn

California, USA

7 January 2010

On "US drone missiles slaughtered 700 Pakistani civilians in 2009"

Who's the terrorist now?

Will

6 January 2010

On "The White Ribbon: Michael Haneke's pessimistic study of society"

One comment in the review jumped out at me: "the great majority of people are against war, but the ruling elite increasingly clamour for its expansion."

I think we need to add the caveat that a great many people are quite willing to abandon that ideology as soon as a member of their own family joins the armed forces or obtains gainful employment in the defense industry. At that point they begin to take the anti-war sentiments of others as personal attacks and threats to themselves and their families, and indeed, to the country they live in. I believe that the government is quite willing to destroy jobs in this country in order to leave people without options other than the "all volunteer" armed forces in order to take advantage of this phenomenon.

Troy J

Arkansas, USA

6 January 2010

On "CIA and mercenaries plotted murder of German citizen"

It must be emphasized that the policy of so-called targeted killings, like many of the most violent and immoral policies (illegal too, but who knows what that is anymore), originate in the most prestigious echelons of the US political and intellectual establishment. See this link, for example, to a work recently chaperoned by a Harvard professor arguing in favor of targeted killings, though only in the most "legitimate" circumstances and only according to the most polished legal procedures. Click the link for the Summary of Recommendations and read pp. 10-11: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?type=2&tid=10651&mode=toc>

It is ideology of a piece with the actions of intelligence operatives "in the field."

C Ronk
7 January 2010

You write, "He was also said to have been in contact with the student group in Hamburg that organised the attacks of September 2001. In the summer of 2002, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the CIA had tried to recruit Darkazanli as an agent in Hamburg in 1999. At that time, the preparations for the 9/11 attacks were already underway."

It looks to me like Blackwater and Prince were contracted to tie up the loose ends (or should I say the Loose Change) related to the covert op that took down the trade center on 9-11.

Charles K
7 January 2010

On "Why is Sonic Youth's The Eternal such a disappointment?"

I attended a Sonic Youth concert in NYC's Battery Park on July 4, 2008. During a break in the set, Thurston Moore randomly asked the audience "What do you think of Barack Obama?"

Interestingly, many audience members booed or shouted mocking replies. Not out of Republican sentiment, but rather because they had already recognized Obama as the sell-out he has since proven to be.

"Well, I think he's alright," Moore shouted back.

This marked the end of my hopes for Sonic Youth as a political force. Admittedly, an artist's work could contain elements that are more progressive than his or her conscious political views. Based on Hiram Lee's review of *The Eternal*, though, this no longer seems to be true in Sonic Youth's case.

John M
New York, USA
8 January 2010

Dear Hiram,

Upon reading your review of Sonic Youth's new album, I am compelled to respond. This review in itself shows that the WSWs is committed to an expansion of artistic reviews of different kinds of music, which is important!

I agree with you that given the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, the US-led wars in Iraq/Afghanistan (and including the international restructuring, the attacks on the working class, on democratic rights, on culture...) there must be a "critical engagement with reality" by musical artists.

You will find genuine protest and anger in Lamb Of God's 2004 album "Ashes of the Wake." It is a response to, and against the US-led war in Iraq. No other metal or rock band, as far as I know, dedicated an entire album to this reality. Nor was their work some

kind of mere "anyone but Bush", "rock against Bush" bandwagon like some of the major label endorsed compilation-album crap released a couple of years ago.

Given this criteria, I would say it is the best heavy metal record of the first decade of the 21st century both musically and lyrically.

It is not a rehash of 1980s thrash metal (Metallica, Slayer, Megadeth, Anthrax, Exodus) nor the common denominator of Swedish-metal influenced American metalcore, nor does it suit the petty-bourgeois "radical" label of say such bands like Rage Against The Machine, Public Enemy (one of whose member has his own TV show!). It deserves a listen.

The change in Lamb Of God's "formula" is akin to what you describe in your review, (easily identifiable by critically listening to their recent music, comparing their first 3 albums with their last 2 albums); what we have here, not just by LOG but by metal artists generally particularly those from the so-called "metalcore" genre is a turn towards the internal, the subjective, various "topics" (each band I suppose has their own lyrical/musical approach or "theme") that try to avoid the world, but this approach cannot go on forever.

This is not a matter of pointing fingers, of course, but of exposing that this genre, like film too, is sensitive to social, economic, political processes and these material objective conditions do make themselves felt in the artist's work one way or another.

Explaining the roots of SY's music in the "New Wave" movement is clarifying; it shows that this is the milieu through which this band emerged and remains associated/insulated with, that is a statement in itself. The qualities of the New Wave genre remind me very much of Norwegian and Swedish Black-Metal: a definite close-linked milieu of artists/bands, a lot of anger and hatred, intentionally non-mainstream, a rejection of the world and its institutions like Christianity, but in the final analysis, it fails to make sense of the world through its musically/ideological lenses (listen to 1349's 2005 album "Hellfire" for example).

Lastly, if SY's Vocalist Kim Gordon wants to know what it's like to be a girl in a band, she should talk to Arch Enemy's vocalist Angela Gossow!

Best regards,
Chris R
New Zealand
8 January 2010



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