Oakslander
LAKESIDE GAZETTE

A MONSTER IN LAKE MERRITT / SECRET STAIRWAYS OF THE EAST BAY AREA
OLDSCHOOL WRITER’S BALL / DAN FONTES / LEAH RODERMAN
PROFESSOR CURTIS / FELIX MITCHELL / AFRO>FUTURISM / SUPERSHARK
LATE NIGHT EATS / AND MORE ORIGINAL OAKLAND CHARM

12/02 VOLUME I $4
"Trip it feathly, here and there."

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VOLUME I

Is there an answer here, or are there billions of them everywhere?
Both. And yes, history is our guide. These are localized queries, short hives, breathers, double takes, lost causes, found objects, commodities of disillusions, byproducts of manufactured discontent, contemplations on autonomy from within the mosaic of symbols. History stands, roots expand further, a foundation for casting futures, forward as well as backwards, expanding in as well as out, word from Oakland, California.

ALLEGIANCETO GNN. BARBARA LEE. DAVEY D.
FREDIMAC. HUMBALDOOS. JOECAMELTOE. LENTIL
VILLAGE. OAKTOWN UNDERGROUND. DETONATOR
KEMREXX. REFA ONE. DREAMDK. BASONE. UPSKI.
GOBLINKO. CRAZYTME. DANFONTE. DANILAND,
OHBA. BAAHS. CFA. GSFH. KALX. KPFA. WELL OF
SOULS. VULCAN RADIO. AND OTHER SPACES WE DON'T
MENTION SO AS TO NOT BLOW UP SPOTS.

Shhh... keep it a secret.

editor: Bobby Peru
Again, Nonchalance

contributors: octavio coleman, jhh, and sean of switzerland
CONTENTS

Society Page
A Monster in Lake Merritt
Secret Stairways of the East Bay
Professor Curtis Speaks
Radical Action Figure Set
Dan Fontes- Man About Town
Old School Writer’s Ball
Afro-Futurism
ElRod’s OaktownUnderground
Late Night Eats
The Felix Mitchell Paradox
Reviews: Supershark, Donnel Williams, A Taste of Africa
And a Drawing
It's Baby-Villa! Fresh faces in Oakland: Jacob Hackett, Alma Margado and Leila Proctor. All new in '02. Welcome little people! 
You can take the Oakland out of Oakland, but you can't take the Oakland out of the Oaklander. It's a good thing, too, because it means that every last township on Earth has at least one displaced, palty soul representing the biggity-biggity "O" with all their heart. And in some larger towns, like New York City, there are entire mobs of them. One such mob has recently banded together in said city to create oddball multimedia events for the general public. Calling themselves "The Oakland Embassy", the diverse group of artists and musicians claim that their parties will "rock your face onto the floor. Your face will be smiling up at you from the floor, because the events causing it to be removed from your head will have been very awesome". The Embassy also plans to export their interactive brand of party weirdness to other cities in the very near future. 

"Hello, Cleveland!"

Speaking of mobs of fools, what's up with nouveau biker "gangs" in the East Bay Area? Fronting, that's what. JBH says he's almost done with "Oaklandish" - the video. "It's found footage from the past, and the future". Dusted! (Debuting at the Parkway in '03)

Also, Nonchalance is being recognized with a "Partners in Preservation" Award from the Oakland Heritage Alliance. Big ups, kids! 

Have you read the new Joe Cameltoe book? "Minifraks, tales of anarchistic love" is a series of wry monologues on the depravity of little women. Deadpan and dirty. It gets two squeaks! One thing the attentive may notice around town are the tags of CFA crew: Ogre, Deco, and Unknown. All up in every lil north lake spot. Thieves and Pin-ball Mafia are taking leads, too. Something may be developing here. 

Wow, who knew Talk of the Town was gonna fold? (I wish it were Radio). We will be missing UrbanView, though, and adding insult to injury: now the boxes are filled with San Jose Metros! Here's my "burning" question: how come everybody has to go to the fucking desert to be creative for one week out of the year? It's time to bring it home. THIS is the real playa! One fresh example: I hear someone is organizing an urban capture the flag game downtown on Thursday nights. See, I'm all over this.

Overheard recently in Colonial Donuts: "What the fuck is Moisette?" There was no answer, because the woman was talking to herself. Well, I'm sure I'll have kinder things to say about Society in the next edition, bio-rhythms permitting. In the mean time, don't accept any counterfeit Oakland...
CAKE

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Requires even heat
In baking

A gas range
Gives perfect control

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HEAT COMPANY
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For the finest castings it's
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4401 SAN LEANDRO BLVD. * Oakland 1, California
A Monster in Lake Merritt?

Lake Merritt was originally a wide, tidal estuary or salt marsh known as Laguna Peralta. Oakland mayor Samuel Merritt declared the once popular hunting area a National wildlife refuge in 1869, the first in North America. Merritt had a vision of the muddy estuary as a beautiful, metropolitan lake, the jewel of Oakland. He proposed a dam where 12th St. now runs to reduce the tidal flow. He was not able to stir public interest in his plan so ended up paying for most of the construction himself. The lake was later deepened by dredging, sections were filled in and finally a retaining wall was built around the perimeter to create the lake we now know. Is it possible that by damming the lake, Mayor Merritt had unwittingly sealed in the subject of a rarely told old wives tale?
A little bit of close listening in the darker and smokier bars would have revealed mysterious stories about a terrible lake monster. The Native people of Oakland, who once depended heavily on the lake area for many of the necessities of life, would scan the waters carefully for the 'Devil of the Marsh' before setting out on their expeditions. They would make animal sacrifices in hopes of appeasing the monster and thus protect themselves from attack as they crossed the waters in their reed fishing canoes.

Of course, European traders who arrived in the mid 1800's regarded these tales with skepticism, ignoring all sightings of this monster. The Scottish Highlanders who inhabited the foothills had surely heard it all before. Much like the creature immortalized in Loch Ness, the lake monster of Oakland is believed to have a snake-like body, dark greenish skin and a very large head with small horns. That description is based on the most common reports. Despite doubts about the creature's existence, sightings of the lake monster continue to this day at the risk of ridicule by those who consider the legend bogus, but do you know anyone who will willingly swim in Lake Merritt??

The possibility of some kind of strange marine life in Lake Merritt cannot be discounted, for such a large lake in such a nice location, it is not unreasonable to believe something large and unusual may lurk in the waters. Some of the explanations for the phenomenon are that the Lake Monster is some kind of prehistoric water serpent able to thrive on the plentiful fish stock and hide out in many of the crevices in the lake. Others believe that it is a spirit, tied to the very soil of Oakland. Some researchers have hypothesized that it may live in an underwater cave near Children's Fairy Land, based on the frequency of sightings in that area. It is still believed by many that the creature resurfaces each year on All Hallow's Eve, just after sundown, offering the spirited & the faithful one brief glance at her majestic presence.
When wandering casually, perhaps alone in the autumn - through the Crocker Highlands of Oakland, California - one can sometimes be lured off the surface of the avenues, and into shady hidden passageways. When tempted so, it is wise to follow one's sense of curiosity. Known only to keen pedestrians and local children are a series of hidden stairwells forming a clandestine maze throughout the East Bay hills. These paths, accessible purely to feet, are useful not only as a route; often they become a destination unto themselves.

Local geography explains the historical need for these stairways, as they are a gesture from the time soon before the dominance of auto-cars. Many of the paths lead toward train routes on the once thriving key system, just before it was dismantled through private interest. The hills made it practical to build the passageways, and sometimes fancifully - in a variety of masonic styles. They serve as structural artifacts, highly characterized by underlying topography, the cracks and seams revealing an ever so gradual tectonic drift.

The stairwells are used with less frequency of late, creating a nearly autonomous zone - somewhere between the ordinances of surrounding province. It is a space not quite public, and not quite private. In this context the paths are an ideal location to pause... and perhaps imbibe the illicit smoke, or delicately fondle the nipple of your companion. Also, when planning an escape by foot, knowledge of the hidden stairway offers a most hasty reprieve.

While traversing the paths, curious wayfarers may be drawn to look beyond the fences and into the private worlds of adjacent homes. The exact boundary between the stairways and the yards of neighboring estates are often vague, and therefore who would truly begrudge a minstrel found gradually interloping upon finely manicured private grounds? While ill-advised in recommending such an itinerary to readers, this writer is personally without qualms. He also advocates the leaving of trinkets along the way, for finding of by future others.

And now nonchalance offers you an intimate tour into the headlands of Oakland by foot, the first in our series of walk-a-bouts.
1 4191 Park Blvd, Glenview District
Go west, down the stairwell to the sidewalk. Then follow Fleet Road. Take a quick left and then a right on to Creed Road. Go until it ends.

1 917 Creed Road
Take stairs up to Underhills Road, then take a right. Look for Crocker Highlands Elementary. Follow the school around the block, either way, to Longridge Road.

1 1120 Longridge Road
Stairs to Mandana Circle, then cross Mandana Blvd. to Carlston Ave.
830 Carlton Avenue
Take walkway to crossroads, then go left toward "Hell". This will let you out at the intersection of Carlton, Wallavista, and Balfour. Walk up Balfour.

4120 Balfour
Head East. There will be secret stairways between Balfour, Calmar, Santa Ray and Mandana. Look and you will find them. They are on the map...

852 Mandana Boulevard
is where you'll end up. Head up Mandana toward the hills. Cross the street and cut across the corner lot at Carlton Ave. Walk up the now barricaded stairway, which in our childhood was called...

The Slug Stairs
because of all the banana slugs that came out when it rained. Take a right down Paramount Road, and before "the circle" cross over to...

855 Paramount Road
Take walkway to Longridge Road. Left on Longridge, and back up toward the school. Walk around the school, and at the corner near Sunnyhills look for a small plot of grass and a small gated entrance way to the school. Now enter it.

A Secret Courtyard
This is the joining place between the old and the new buildings. Literally, a meeting of the old school and the new school. It was here in 1978, upon recent completion of the construction - that a time capsule was dedicated. Our 3rd grade class wrote down our hopes for the future of this beloved city, and placed them in a small steel chest, which is now buried beneath the earth. You may rest here for a while and contemplate what you would like to see in our city's hereafter.

When you're ready, head north on Sunnyhills Road around the school. Follow sunnyhills up, up, past Hillwood Place and take a right down Van Sicklen Place. Appreciate the architecture on your way down and keep your eyes open for...

The Van Sicklen Bounce
Which takes you across to Bowles Place, and then to Trestle Glen, whoop-di-whoop. A nice lil stretch. Go across the street and to the left.

1599 Trestle Glen Road
Magnificent, ending up on Elbert Street. Find Edgewood Road and use it to get back to Park Boulevard. Now we're back where we began. Thanks for going the distance. The stairways we've visited today are but a fraction that exist within the expanded trajectory of pedestrian corridors circumnavigating these East Bay Highlands. Keep an eye out and find them for yourselves. It requires walking, which is to be enjoyed.
Odd Dollar Bill - Professor Curtis Speaks!

In the last aisle of the Ashby Flea Market on an almost regular basis you can find a special man operating out of a special van. He's Professor Curtis and he provides a very well needed and under valued service: the distribution of rare and cult videos. This ain't "indie" shit, it's the true blue wild and weird stuff that America needs so desperately right now. Plenty of odd black flicks, political documentary, bootleg funk, exposes on freemasonry and other hidden information, not to mention an inexhaustible library of kung fu and hoochie mama videos. He used to have a store in Berkeley, and now after years of loyal operation, the nutty professor says he may finally call it quits. Dang! There goes another stronghold of weirdness...
Is there a philosophy behind your work?
The whole thing, the entire philosophy is anti-broadcast TV. You can control your mind by controlling what goes into your mind. It's about being able to program your self, instead of being programmed.

When and where did you get started with the videos?
In 1990 I opened the store at 2361 San Pablo Avenue.

How long was it open?
From February 14, 1990 to about Labor Day, 1994. Then we shut down. It was too stressful, and some really odd things were going on including the robbery attempt. There were just a variety of things that took all of the flavor out of it. But, everywhere I went people would ask me about the store. So, in 1997 it opened again at the same location, because the space became open. So, three years later it reappeared, which had a real shock affect. Then it operated from February 1997 until February 1999. This time it was more budget, we had no real money. So, it became almost impossible to do anything.

What were your first titles?
The first ones were mainly commercial. Then, people would ask for particular things. Kung Fu were the first ones they'd ask for. I would pursue them on video, but titles were released under 2 or 3 different titles. I used to watch those movies at the Lux Theater in Downtown Oakland, but under a different name. Like "Kid with the Golden Arm", it wasn't shown under that title. So, one thing led to another. Customers kept asking for things like John Waters film, odd horror flicks, faces of death.

How many videos do you think you've distributed over the years? I've got no idea... no idea.

Can you describe the library?
Well, what's left is the most odd items: death videos, extreme x-rated videos. I had others but they were stolen from the house by a former customer. I know who did it, but the cops, of course, won't do anything. They're no help at all. Now, I've lost a lot of interest in it because of that one action by that guy. It really hit me hard because it was a friend of mine, or at least I thought he was a friend. I still have a lot of odd and hard to find black titles, U.F.O., conspiracy, and political titles.

So, what is the most outstanding title in the political genre? I'd say the Panama Deception. When people see it, it blows their minds.

Oh, yeah. Another one like that is the Waco documentary, where you just couldn't believe what actually went down. Yes. That's why we need to control what were intaking. The media can spin it so many different ways, and there's just so much confusion. That's why I have the anti-brainwashing theme. And, you can see on the photo of the sign outside my store, it says "Free Your Mind, Turn Off Broadcast TV."

Any other political titles?
I also came across the Ron Brown tape recently, on the death of Ron Brown. He was the commerce secretary whose plane went down in Bosnia. It was pretty odd, there was a hole in his head they couldn't explain. The autopsy said it was a gunshot, but the hole was far too big for that, and they never recovered the bullet. The crash was survivable, but no one survived. A woman actually did survive the crash, and walked toward a nearby village. That's where her body was found with her throat slashed. It was very odd. I'll give you a copy, you'll be astonished.

Any efforts to suppress or censor your content?
A guy now has located me on Yahoo who wants to stop me from selling the Shaw Brothers tapes. He sends e-mail after e-mail trying to stop me, but he doesn't even own the titles. There's people out there, but not that many. But when they come out, they really come out.
Any rare musical titles?
That's not my specialty.

How about the funniest tape?
"Don't be a Menace", by the Wayans Brothers. It's a satire, but very well done. It should be more widely distributed. There's a lot of message in there. A lot of message.

How about local love?
I think I know what you mean. There is one, but it's pretty odd. Sun-Ra made it back in the early seventies...

Space is the Place?
Yes. It's very strange.

We show that one at the Drive-In. It's a lot of fun. Anything else?
I used to do 50's and 60's sci-fi. The serials, like Captain America and other stuff from the forties.

Is there any effort to preserve the library?
Not right now. I'm thinking about a greater liquidation, narrowing it down to a thousand pieces and just keeping that.

Where else can someone go for this kind of content?
I recommend Movie Image on Shattuck Avenue. Definitely go down to see Will and Monica at the Parkway Theater. Please go and see Will. I love Will.

As a native son, how do you think Berkeley has changed?
It's been pretty major change. I was born in Berkeley. It's turned into a different place. I feel like an American Indian because the town I was born in doesn't even exist anymore. It's true for Oakland, too, and it's gonna change even more. I've seen the prices of houses go from 25 thousand to 500 thousand.

Has the Flea Market changed much?
The faces change, but also, because of terrorism I've seen a reduction in tourism. Without tourism, business goes down greatly. Now the flea market is a garage sale. Before it was like an event. Now it's more of a business. All things change, that's just part of the deal.

So, besides video, do you have any other major interests?
I'm into writing, and I have some scenarios I'm pursuing. I'm confused because there are less people reading than ever before. So, I'd have no one to sell it to, unless it was formatted as a film.

How is your writing formatted now?
In a thousand different scenarios.

Where did the title 'Professor' come from?
That's been following me around since high school. I don't know why, people just identify me with that. I decided to use it because it fit with the videos. At San Jose State it was the same thing. I studied film there under Charles Chess. He was incredible. If I remember the name 30 years later, the guy has to be incredible.

What happened to the van with all the movie graphics on it?
It's the same van. There was a big storm, a really big one in 95. It blew half of the decorations off the van. After that it wasn't worth it to repair, because I couldn't make them stay.

Should I include contact info with the interview?
You can put my e-mail. Some of those folks I met at the store I really love. You know, we used to do things for each other... I sure miss them. I love those people. If they see it they can contact me at: purefunk@pacbell.net
Dan Fontes  man about town

interview by  Sean of Switzerland

If you spend any amount of real time in Oakland, you’re bound to stumble by some of the murals of Dan Fontes. The murals liven up this city, and there really should be thirty or forty times as many as there are now, we’ve got plenty of grey, flat concrete which doesn’t need to be grey or flat. He’s a native son and has made himself a part of the Oakland legacy. It takes alot of strength to pull yourself out of the muck in Oakland, especially within the city limits. Most people pull themselves up and out, taking their star potential with them to some of the brighter star clusters in the world. Even though he scared the shit out of me with his comment "It’s inevitable that Oakland will wind up like Sausalito did", I think that Dan shimmers his own light onto Oakland, and shares it with the people, and that’s good. Thus, the soapbox gets passed to him. He even wrote his own introduction!
Dan: I want to pay you a compliment on those thoughtful questions. Thank you for spending time on them rather than that fluffy stuff the media usually goes for. It's funny too, your timing, I was thinking about your request for an interview today and was thinking "what would a good question be that was Oakland related?". And I think the answer comes in the form of matchbook covers. Which admittedly, sounds kind of odd. But this is very much related to all the photos of Oakland signage you have posted to your site.

Recently, I found an enormous collection of old matchbooks from all these restaurants and bars from Oakland from the 1940's up through the 1970's. This couple in the hills was moving into a retirement center and getting rid of all their stuff and gave them to me. If you listen, they tell you a story of life in the East Bay.

But getting back to the question...I posed to myself..."What is Oakland soul and how is it distinct from other cities?" I was stumped on it for awhile. Then today I was looking through these match-covers and you see the answer in the type fonts, in the promise, in the hope, in the plainness, in the "trying not to be too fancy" quality, in the translation of an idea into a simple matchbook. Not like "top of the line & elegant" like San Francisco. Or "keep it all lurid and flashy" like Vegas.

An aspect of that Oakland character really is there. And I'm thinking it would be an amazing project to take digital pictures of the hundred or so matchbooks and post them online. I think downtown, like in Oakland City Hall and in the business community there is this...embarrassment...about any business that has gone belly up. It's not stated out loud. But there isn't the same feeling about old Oakland as there is about, say, old Hollywood, old L.A., old San Francisco or old San Diego. Here in Oakland, we just don't talk about it. It has to do with the race issue and the historically conservative/economically conservative attitude of our City fathers. The turn over of businesses over the years is staggering to try to keep track of.

When you see these ephemeral souvenirs...places like Biff's, the Elegant Farmer, the Bow & Bell, Sea Wolf etc...you are talking about the "pre-chain store world" where an individual (who might even be from a minority group) could still dream of making a business for themselves and turn it into something special.

I think it's very closely related to the American Dream. Where anyone from any country can work hard enough and become a success. I know you would really get into a project like this or at least enjoy viewing them. I was sitting there with my 83 year old mom for about an hour today looking at them and she knew all these places. My father owned a couple of bars here in town. They got to know everyone and it's such a delight to hear her talk about all the people and places she's known.

Sean: So, where abouts did you grow up?

Dan: I grew up about a mile from the Grand Lake Theater near Piedmont Avenue. Went to St. Leo's School (K-8) on Howe Street, if you go in the auditorium they still have photos of all the graduating 8th Grade classes. I'm there, just like Jack Nicholson in the photo of the Overlook Hotel in "The Shining", I went back and worked on some giant mural murals at the school with the students about 10 years ago. Kind of strange and gratifying all at once.

Sean: How did art originally get into your blood stream, and how has that brought you to where you are now? Here in Oakland?

Dan: If you could see my life growing up you'd see a person who was constantly doing activities. My parents just kind of cut me loose into the world. I didn't have language skills to ask for what I really wanted (which was more contact) so I just built stuff to get a reaction out of people. When I was about seven I built a scale model of Noah's Ark about four or five feet long filled with hundreds of plastic animals out of scrap wood. I built tons of wooden art objects and would eventually throw them away. I made things like rough musical instruments, light projectors, toys, small cities, and restored things, functional to non-functional stuff. I once constructed a building in my parents backyard that was around twenty five feet tall out of scrap wood, crude but fun. My parents were very cool about giving me the freedom to do what I wanted. I once built a working guillotine with a silver cardboard blade. It worked great.

All this creation led to a ton of work in my teen years out at the Emeryville mudflats. I think I probably spent 3 or 4 summers out there building various structures. My biggest piece was the "lunarlander" which was a three story recognizable rendition of the Apollo 11 moon landing craft. The "lunarlander" and my "Emeryville" sign are in Doug Keister's book called "Mudflat Art".

Throughout my grade school years there were enough arts and crafts activities in the schools that I was able to get some hands-on experience and through slides shows, small mosaics making projects, jewelry making, mask making classes I was able to make the leap.

While attending classes at Merritt Junior College I took some drawing classes that helped me understand basic perspective, shadowing and all that stuff. I transferred to CSU Hayward and wanted to be a geologist, but wasn't very good at math. Then I was going to be a history teacher, I love California history. While taking a painting class with Lew Carson, I painted a mural on the walls of one of the classrooms. I kept getting A's in all my art classes and B's in history. It seemed like everyone in the Art Department wanted to talk about that mural. I saw people talking about it who normally didn't talk to each other. That aspect of mural painting was and still is infectious. I was changing the course of people's daily experience without saying a word! That made me feel a type of power that I'd never had.

One teacher, artist, Raymond Saunders, looked at my work told me that
I'd better find another field to work in because I'd never make it as an artist. Admittedly, I've struggled to remain employed full time as an artist but he shouldn't have verbally pooched on me. Later, I heard he does that with everyone so I didn't feel so bad. I now understand that is a dark part of academia, to try to discourage any competition while covering your ass. It makes sense now, but at the time I was confused. But see that's the thing about choosing a career like this. You can't give yourself a choice NOT to do it.

My family was middle-class and technically speaking I grew up a block inside of Piedmont. We always called it "Baja-Piedmont": Grand Avenue. My parents were raised in the depression and I don't think they ever stopped to consider that they weren't living in the "hood" anymore, it was work, work, work. Two weeks off for summer and then back to work more. I realized at some point that Piedmont is completely surrounded by Oakland and is dependent on Oakland for everything. When I was growing up it wasn't such a big deal to live there, like now.

My Dad sold liquor through a company down in Jack London Square called Julliard-Alphita. It was located around 3rd & Alice (right where all those fucking yuppies lofts are being built). There was an impenetrable seriousness about the people he surrounded himself with, when they weren't serious they drank like fishes. Liquor was a huge part of that world. He was a salesman and was the best at what he did and I respect that completely.

He died in 1979 and I declared myself as an artist not long after that.

I started contacting artists by phone, people whose work I really liked and asked to be a part of their murals. That's how I met muralists like Dan Galvez, Gary Graham and John Wehrle. Cold calls. It just snowballed after that.

Sean: When I think about murals in Oakland, I think Dan Fontes, period. Sort of how if I think about local crazy iron sculpture I think Mark Bunkin... do you think about your legacy while working on your murals?

Dan: That's probably the biggest compliment I've ever received. Thank you! I think I can honestly say that I've never thought about my "legacy". I have been very concerned about the longevity of my work, and have always gravitated toward the best materials I could find at the time. This is especially difficult now that so much of my work has been destroyed. This culture doesn't treasure art.

If I think about my legacy though, here's the one thing that keeps me going: The thought that, if I do some art, and children see it and they see an artist working, then they know that BEING an artist is a viable career option and a legitimate activity to be a part of. I think that alone is enough of a legacy anyone can hope for.

Growing up I never met one artist-ever-not one. Now there are something like 40,000-50,000 working artists just in Oakland. Musicians, playwrights, choreographers, poets, novelists, dancers, singers, sculptors, and digital artists and painters...there are even artists who fall into areas that are un-categorizable...is that a word? And you see all that expression coming to fruition right now in this generation. Oakland's artist community is impacting the planet in a huge way.

Everywhere I look there are artists and it's common now and I think that's wonderful for children to be around.

Sean: What has your relationship with Oakland been like over the years, the city has changed a lot, people's attitudes have changed, the Bay Area has changed, the country has changed...

Dan: By Oakland, I take that to mean "Downtown". Originally, I didn't do ANYTHING to rock the boat. I know that may be hard for people to believe. Someone said, "this is the way the game is played" and there seemed to be a part in the game for me to slot into. I was active, happy to be employed, meeting other artists, meeting important locals.

When I became an artist I was just in it for myself. To express what I wanted, how I wanted, when I wanted. I was going to do murals here no matter what it took. The giraffes took nine months just to do the paper work for the Cal Trans encroachment permit and the Public Works permit. That nine months wait took something out of my soul.

It was months before the Oakland Office of Community Development would consider my request for $8,000 for materials to do the Giraffes. When it came time for my panel interview, they voted it down saying it would cause accidents.

I walked out in the hallway of that hearing room feeling defeated. Somehow, and this was completely out of character for me at the time, I walked back in, interrupted the meeting and asked for half that money ($4,000) to do half the giraffes, meaning seven figures instead of the fourteen I originally proposed. In the ensuing confusion and discussion, they re-voted and I won the money by one vote!

Mind you, there was no budget for a salary, just materials and supplies.

So, I got famous from those giraffes. Or maybe I should say "popular" for awhile. People knew me, and they were excited when I was introduced (for about six months) Othen it was like old news. I knew what it was like to have written a one-hit-wonder. I started having to spell my name again to people on the phone.

Around 1994-96 I noticed I wasn't receiving the RFP's / RFO's from the City of Oakland for public art like my partner at the time, Lana Rose. I would call every six months (not too often, don't want to be a bother) and request to be included on the mailing list. This went on for three years.
I would also send a written request with my current info on a postcard.

Now, off the record, dozens of artists were grumbling about their mistreatment from the Cultural Arts Department. But people REFUSED to make any waves. There was an inherent threat to your career as an artist that if you are outspoken you will pay the price. I saw this later up close. So from 1983 to 1993 I was a part of the "A list" so to speak. Throughout this time I was still doing commercial work, murals with kids, assisting other artists with their projects and community murals here and there, so I was busy and Oakland's treatment of me was of lesser importance.

When the R.M Fischer sculpture/Frank Ogawa Plaza controversy hit in late 1998, it brought up a lot of anger over how power was being misused downtown. About how certain people associated with the arts department at the time were making up rules as they went. About how my fellow artists were being economically assaulted and being de-selected while others were clearly pre-selected for working in Oakland. The injustice of it was disgusting. I felt like, this crime was happening in MY town.

At the same moment many artists thought Jerry Brown had a clue after he did his KPFA / We the People routine. I became a part of his inaugural campaign based on the lies they told. During the inaugural it became clear that no one associated with Jerry Brown gave a rats-ass about art. Now it's clear to everyone that he sees art as a political weapon, a tool for leveraging public opinion, a statistic, a gauge or a justification. Art is woven around the illusion of caring, the mirage of a Mayoral vision, with a good sprinkling of hypnosis, media and hype. In Oakland, art is not art anymore, it is propaganda. That's a serious sickness.

So to sum it up, I was originally very optimistic but politically inexperienced. I think this administration has been responsible for the spread of more cynicism. That will be Brown's legacy.

Sean: Where do you see Oakland going, and how do you fit in with that?

Dan: It's inevitable that Oakland will wind up like Sausalito did. I know that sounds impossible because it's so bad right now with 100 murders. But you have to remember all of Oakland's geographical, aesthetic and climactic advantages over a place like Fresno or Phoenix. It may take another 50 years but that's where we're headed, anyone who has spent time here will tell you the same. In the 1970's those freight-car shaped, one-story shit-hole houses in the Rockridge were selling for $50,000 bucks, now your lucky if they're available at $500,000! My brother bought one and sold it (too early). Sausalito was beautiful when there was an artist houseboat community there. Some art remains, most is gone. Now it's "safe".

This is why I feel frustrated, because art and artists could become Oakland's post-industrial identity. Instead, you still have people downtown, council members, C.E.D.A. trying to build the next big mega-mall or court the next big sporting event, the next big fix. And I'm saying like HEY! Quit lookin' at my sister! I'm ART! I'm right here!!! Art is right here, right now and all you have to do is promote it and the world will come to you. It's our unique identity and it has to be cultivated, funded and nurtured and MARKETED. Oakland refuses to even put photographs of it's public art collection on its web site! I'm estimating that there are 800-1200 pieces of public art in Oakland. Can you imagine? Over the years they've/were paid millions for it! But you'd never know it.

interview continued (towards the end)
THE BAY AREA AEROSOL HERITAGE SOCIETY

presents...

OLD SCHOOL WRITERZ BALL

[Various graffiti and signatures]
AFRO.FUTURISM
Through literature, film, music and visual arts; the future has been a seemingly inexhaustible topic. That is, until recently when actual technology began to catch up with the fantasies imagined by artists and writers in the science fiction genre. But, just as the "space age" started to appear antiquated, artists of African descent the whole world over simultaneously spawned a movement, putting a fresh ingenious spin on the age old questions being pondered through the sci-fi medium. Afro-futurism is that movement, and like the heroine of your favorite forward narrative: it may just be your only hope.

The earliest mention of the phrase "afro-futurism" appears in journalist Mark Dery's book "Flame Wars" in 1993. The theme was being explored by a number of other writers during the same period, including Greg Tate (writing on science fiction and black music), Mark Singer (on black science fiction), and Tricia Rose, author of Black Noise. But the first appearance of futuristic Africans in literature predates this generation of writers, and the civil rights era all together. It was in 1931 that George Schuyler wrote the novel Black No More, in which the protagonist utilizes advanced technologies to emancipate his race. It would take another half a century before other authors were to pick up where he left off. Now many black writers carry the torch, including Steve Barnes, Charles Saunders, Samuel R. Delaney, and the ever popular Octavia Butler.
It was in 1952, though, when another author unwittingly prophesied a musical revolution. In Ralph Ellison's classic novel *Invisible Man*, the title character dreams of using eight separate record players to simultaneously play one Louis Armstrong song, reappropriating a common tool in order to enhance and empower the music. This scene was a bizarre premonition of turntablism, perhaps the farthest reaching element to arise from hip hop culture. This unintended use of technology will prove to be a common thread throughout Afro-Futuristic narratives.

Hip-hop founders seemed to be well aware of the global influence their sonic inventions would eventually have, as they constantly gestured toward the future, evolution, and outerspace in their earliest recordings. Afrikaa Bambataa's "Planet Rock" and Grandmaster Flash's "Adventures on the Wheels of Steel" are clear examples of the presence of science-fiction themes in the formative years of rap. Perhaps they were again taking a lead from the jazz and funk artists of the seventies who had also been pondering the possibilities of life beyond Planet Earth. Lyrically as well as musically, early hip-hoppers were inspired by such creations as Funkadelic's "Mothership Connection", Sun Ra's "Space is the Place", and Lee Scratch Perry's "Black Ark". And, while hip-hop music is deeply rooted in American funk and Jamaican Dancehall, it is just as true that these young urban deejays were inhabiting (and sampling) the "Computer World" created by German electronic pioneers Kraftwerk, and the sound collages of Great Britain's Art of Noise.

![Image](image_url)

**BLACK TO THE FUTURE: GRANDMASTER FLASH, P-FUNK, SUN RA**

Now, over twenty years later, hip-hop has birthed a million sub-genres, and each one includes at least one black artist representing his or her vision of the future. Popular examples include Bobby Digital, Doctor Octagon, DJ Spooky, and Deltron 3030, as well as Oakland techno trippers, Blaktronix. On the broad subject of Afro-futurism in music, Kodwo Eshun's recent book *More Brilliant than the Sun*, is considered the definitive text.

Recently, visual artists and film makers have been redefining the aesthetics of science fiction, infusing blackness into a predominantly white genre. Splicing together elements of graffiti art, manga, and the fantasy of Bode, artists and directors are now visualizing a more diverse future, in which racial politics are reconstructed under entirely different assumptions. Even Hollywood has come to recognize the natural possibility of a futuristic African superhero, one who actually survives beyond the middle of the picture.
Within the universe of abstract art, there is one artist who stands out as the conceptual leader of the pack. He is Ramm:El:Zee, an old school New York graffiti artist who has redefined himself as a cybernetic warrior from another world. Emphasizing linguistic deconstruction, visual fusion, and metaphysical allegory, Ram:El:Zee creates paintings, sculpture, costumes, and performances in the style he's dubbed "Gothic Futurism". At first baffling, his works stand up under deeper investigation to reveal a methodology firmly grounded in tribalism, technology, hip-hop, and the aggressive stance of a demi-God ever ready for deadly battle.

As a genre of artistic expression, and more frequently entertainment, Science Fiction may be an over-saturated field. But when viewed freshly through the African lens, sci-fi themes suddenly inherit a greater depth, a more salient meta-text. Cultures have always looked forward in order to define their present identities, and to exorcise their pasts. So, it is understandable that an African perspective would enhance meaning in this often light-hearted genre. The central fact in Black Science Fiction is an acknowledgement that Apocalypse has already happened, that we're living in the remains of a catastrophic disaster. The history of Africans in America comes into sharp focus through even our most popularized sci-fi narratives...

In Bladerunner an entire race of androids is produced to serve the aristocracy of a future America. These slaves are considered "almost human", and their personal liberty is never allowed. Even harsher than the labor they endure are the questions haunting their consciousness about personal identity, purpose, and value in a society designed to repress them. This theme is reiterated in the Clone Wars, and throughout the Star Wars series, where imperialism threatens the freedom and very existence of all autonomous societies. America's xenophobia and general "fear of a black planet" are subconsciously exploited in films like Alien and Predator, where caucasian protagonists are pitted against mysterious dark beings from other lands.

In the face of a projected extinction, black artists have found it critical to reclaim the genre of science-fiction, and to implant self-generated images of themselves in the future. Rather than assimilate to the images and tools provided by dominant cultural visions, these artists are able to define and invent the societal and technological terms. And like other black artforms, it is inevitable that Planet Earth will continue to feel its reverberations for unseen millennia to come.
Forget the Express... ElRod knows where the party's at!

OAKTOWN

UNDERGROUND

In 2002 the City of Oakland made costly efforts to promote its own art world and nightlife. Then why is Leah Roderman's shoestring website still more reliable than all the "official" entertainment calendars?

Hello Leah. Can you tell us how and when the idea for OaktownUnderground first came about?

For the first few years I lived in Oakland (I moved from S.F.) I took the bus or walked everywhere. As a result, I became really comfortable with parts of Oakland that I went to, walking around in search of things like food or parties. When we spend time at street level, we observe our environment in more detail and explore more of what is around us. Especially in Oakland, it's easy to stay on the freeway and avoid entire neighborhoods, entire communities of people. There's a lot of places and people that make us uncomfortable or that challenge our expectations, and often we build up those perceptions without really knowing who or what we are talking about.

When I got my first truck that changed somewhat -- the truck still broke down everywhere and I'd end up hopping the bus or walking. Then I moved to Montclair, and I became really aware of the differences between the hills and the flatlands. Since I'm a city kid, I really dig the hills because there are woods and trails and hidden places close by; it's very different from being on streets and surrounded by buildings all the time. The hills communities of Oakland have a cultural deficit too, even though there's a lot of history that is closely tied to the development of the city. Urban exploration up here is certainly enriched by nature, but I sense little awareness on the part of hills residents of how vibrant this city is as a whole. I love having trees and views nearby, but there's an isolation that I don't want to be lulled into.

OaktownUnderground emerged as a means of keeping track of all the things to do, and grew parallel to conversations with people who said there is nothing to do in Oakland, so they go to San Francisco all the time. I wanted something on hand to refute that mentality, to say "Oh yeah? Well look at all of this going on tonight." I also wanted to be able to type "Oakland" into search engines and find web pages with something other than crime statistics.

I went looking for events calendars, and at the time there were a lot in print but less online. I wanted something that I could look up when I didn't have the East Bay Express in front of me, and that I could email to people to say, "Hey let's go check this out." I went back and forth on different ways of doing this. One option was a full fledged site with all the reviews and commentary and content that would offer a comprehensive entertainment calendar. Instead, I settled on a very minimal site. I wanted to convey the idea that it is merely a list, that all the recommendations and discussions should occur between people and not be shaped by me (or someone else). All too often, people want a review before they go see something -- why not just go and judge for yourself? I realize this is contradictory in that I am taking advantage of the medium to some extent and yet refusing to fully utilize it; I don't want the technical character to outweigh the simple fact that things are going on in Oakland.
The site existed only as an online list for emailing...and then people began to find it. I met folks, would tell them it was a pet project, and the next thing I knew they would send me their email and that of a friend. Sometimes I contacted promoters or club bookers individually, to let them know they could add me to their pr lists. Other times I would post on Craig's List as a way of "cross-pollinating" with their events listings. Likewise, I would get in touch with similar lists in the Bay Area, such as Squid List and BayBoyzz to see what they had and to publicize our Oakland events.

Where's your favorite place to get listings?
There's actually a lot out there but in different places. I use the local papers for a lot of listings because that's who bookers send their press lists to. There are websites that have music listings posted by event organizers or performers, and I also collect fliers and cards that people are using to advertise their shows. Over time I've made contact with people who handle pr, and so they now send me their calendars directly, which is very useful. One of my favorite places to find unusual events is Craig's List because everyone knows about it, and even if they don't have a clue as to how to send a press announcement to a newspaper, they can get online and post to the list.

How many of the events have you actually gone to?
I'm more likely to go to unique events that catch my eye rather than the regular weekly features. Sometimes I will go by a club during quiet hours to just have a drink, see what it is like inside. Some places I only go to once but others I will find I really like their vibe, so I'll hang out over time. I'm much more likely to go check out an event during the summer because I'm more in that adventurous state of mind — something about winter keeps me close to home. My guess is that I've attended a third of what I post, which isn't much when you consider that there is a LOT going on that I don't even have on the list. I think it would be really fun to be a full time promoter for the Oakland scene and do nothing but go to stuff all the time, but unfortunately I have other commitments to attend to.

Have there been any listings that are just too strange to post?
There's nothing that is too strange to list, but there are a lot of events that are very community specific. For example, I've chosen not to post raves or swingers' parties, even though people have posted information about them elsewhere. I think there's a difference between inviting people from your community (however you define it) and inviting the whole world. While I don't believe that OaktownUnderground alone could flood a private party with random guests, it's just an ethic that I apply when evaluating how people are publicizing their events. It's also why I have a little disclaimer when it comes to the "underground" description, because I think that there are lots of events that are communicated purely on a person to person basis rather than through any media. That's a good thing, in my opinion; it works for those groups.

What is some of the feedback that you have gotten?  
(positive and, if any, negative)
I've received really positive and useful feedback from most people, though there've been some weird negative ones too. Overall people find the calendar to be useful and they like the attitude it conveys about Oakland. There's a substantial user base who would like to see more functionality, like the ability to sort by event type (live music, spoken word, public art, etc.). I always have people telling me that they would like to see reviews or chat boards, and I talk to them about my technical and time constraints. Bookers like having something
convenient to refer people to, and I’ve had bands from all over the U.S. send me press announcements because they are coming through Oakland on their tour. There’s also a lot of feeling that for all the bad press that Oakland gets, it’s nice to have a positive presence that emphasizes the diversity of our people and our creative spirit.

Useful negative feedback is usually something like “There’s just too many listings and I can’t read through them all,” which indicates that as Oaktown Underground expands, information is becoming harder to find. My favorite weird and negative (and eventually funny) feedback was a recent correspondence from these people who came from somewhere over the hill and used the calendar to select some places to go. Their two complaints were that they went to a club that had been closed for renovation, and another club was not “white friendly.” Their attitude was that they expected me to provide them with a service, and I should be ashamed for having failed. I have to admit I wasn’t very apologetic to them, but it did provoke a round of jokes where I tried to envision what kind of graphic icon I could use on the site to indicate that a club is “white friendly.” Maybe some sort of Happy Honky character that could reassure people with that particular concern...

So, is there a nightlife in Oakland?

Yes, I think there is a nightlife in Oakland, but there are problems that prevent it from flourishing. I get the impression that while the city wants to pitch Oakland as a destination, they don’t want to enable people to open new entertainment venues. There is a combined chilling effect and lack of support that not only turn off potential entrepreneurs but also the audience such as us, the residents. It comes in different forms, such as Jerry Brown saying there are no good restaurants in Oakland, or the Oakland Metro being hassled about its liquor license. And who wants to go out and party when cops are going to block off the streets and target black youth who are hanging out? This goes beyond the crime issues that Oakland does have, and promotes an attitude that we should all stay in our houses or head across the bridge to have fun.

So the night life exists between the cracks -- sometimes it seems like a Prohibition era city. When people first move to Oakland, they have no idea of where to find a night scene. Sometimes it’s not so easy as just walking out your door and checking out the first club you come across because so much is centralized downtown. I noticed that when the tech boom was pushing people out of S.F. into Oakland, there were tons of posts to Craig’s List asking where to find clubs in Oakland. Folks aren’t accustomed to having to find places on their own and to introducing themselves to neighborhood spots. I think that when people say there is no night life here, they mean that there are no easily identifiable areas where things are always going on. And then it seems that if you try and make something going on, you get in trouble for it.

We need more performance spaces -- not only for musicians but for other kinds of performers, which is why places like the Blackbox and the Metro should be supported. I’d like to see more big clubs on the scale of Hotel Ibiza and smaller places where you can get a drink and check out a band. Also we need more after hours joints, because once you find stuff to do and you’re out all night, you aren’t ready to call it quits at 2 a.m. The cops need to get some training on how to appropriately identify and control bad situations, but not squash healthy antics. I look at old photos of Oakland and talk to older folks, and it used to be jumping here. People would get dressed up, stroll around looking and being looked at. There was music and dancing, hot cars being shown off, bright lights everywhere. Really, that’s not just the difference between having or not having a night life, it’s about having a healthy city that encourages self expression.

-fin
Late Night Eats

The westcoast doesn't have the "all night long" culture that metropolitan cities of the East are able to afford. There are a number of regulatory, historical and geographic reasons for this, which we'll just ignore for the moment. The current topic is this: where the hell to get a bite to eat in the East Bay after ten o'clock?

Here at nonchalance we have a policy of never blowing up our secret spots. As locals we possess knowledge of many a hidden oasis that most newcomers will never, ever set their eyes upon. See, the real Oakland is hidden, invisible to the ordinary eye.

This article is different, though. We're not really giving anything away here, we're just compiling a list. It is the list of places to get fed after 10pm around Oakland and Berkeley. It is time for East Bay businesses to begin to "think late", and restaurants that lead in this effort should be rewarded with a bit of free promotion. So, here it is, in a variety of styles...

**Funky Food:**
Art's Crab Shack - 4031 Broadway, till 1am
Dark room, good jukebox, secret backroom w/ fireplace & pool table. Full bar! Be ignored by the waitstaff & eventually eat buttery cracked crab or fried oyster po'boys.
KoKo House - Korean Food, 6101 Telegraph Avenue, open till 1am. Party atmosphere - beats, popcorn, beer, hot soups. BBQ.

**Mexican Food:**
Mexicali Rose Restaurant - 701 Clay St, open till 3am.
Greasy hotplates in massive doses. Be prepared.
Mazatlan Taco Truck - corner of Fruitvale & Foothill, 2am, 3am on weekends. Veggie burritos or tacos al pastor (spicy pork), w/ all the fixins.
Plus lots of other taco trucks on East International or Fruitvale.

**Upscale Tapas:**
A' cote- tapas/full bar 5478 College Avenue, till midnight. Closed Mondays.
Cesar- tapas/fullbar 1515 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, till midnight

**Sushi:**
Koryo Sushi- 4390 Telegraph Ave, till 1:30am, 3am Fri & Sat

**BBQ:**
Flint's - 6609 Shattuck Avenue, till 11 p.m.
2 a.m. Fri - Sat.

**Burgers n Dogs**
Smokehouse - 3115 Telegraph Ave. Open until 1:20 am. Veggie burger w/ cheese, grilled onions & curly fries.
Top Dog - 2534 Durant Ave. 3am. Variety of dogs, veggie too.
Giant Burger, Telegraph around 20th, till at least 3am. You love big fries AND... the one on telly has a fish filet.

**Diner Style**
(w/ counter service & breakfast round the clock)
Merrit Restaurant - 203 East 18th Street near the lake, 24 hours. Fried chicken, waffles, pies, ok?
Jack London Inn Restaurant- 444 Embarcadero West @ Broadway, 24 hours. At 4 am I know you aint trippin' on the service. Just take in the fluorescence & chill.
Nikko's- 340 23rd Ave. 24 hours. On the edge of alemeda, so this place is naturally a little strange.

**Etc.**
Colonial Donuts - 3318 Lakeshore Ave. 24 hours
Don't ever hate on a buttermilk old fash. They'll make you a sandwich too.

*Bon Appetit!*
They nailed him,
jailed him,
killed him -
but the player
wouldn't go away.

Federal Prosecutors had sent him away for good, all
appeals had been denied, and religious leaders were
heralding a new day for the youth of Oakland.
Nevertheless, just after his 32nd birthday, Felix Mitchell
Jr. was about to take one last ride through the neighbor-
hood. Lying in a bronze casket inside a gold-plated horse
drawn carriage followed by 14 Rolls Royce limousines,
Felix Mitchell Jr. would be memorialized in the dramatic
tradition of gangland funeral processions from the prohi-
bition era. For Felix, it was only natural to go out in style.
The event was attended by celebrities, and received news coverage internationally. An untold thousands of onlookers lined the streets to pay their last respects to the fallen kingpin, or to simply catch a glimpse of the spectacle. The cortege began at Mitchell's home, the San Antonio Villas – better known as 69th Street Projects, and led all the way to Bethel Baptist Church at San Pablo and Powell Streets in West Oakland. Inside, lavish floral arrangements crowded the altar; one was a five foot dollar sign formed out of silver carnations, another was black and white roses in the shape of a smiling cat. After he had been respectfully eulogized and the coffin closed, Sade's 'Smooth Operator' played through the church P.A.

Some civic leaders and a certain amount of citizens were appalled that the services were allowed to take place at all. All the proper permits were filed, though, and nothing could be done to stop it. There had also been much pontificating about the "right" and the "wrong" types of role models we should be upholding before the young people of our inner cities. All the news reports made certain to air the opinions of those who felt a distinct outrage around the funeral. The reality that these reports attempted desperately to avoid was that to a huge number of poor people in East Oakland and beyond, Felix Mitchell Jr. was (and still is) a hero.
A high school dropout raised in housing projects, Mitchell had aimed to escape poverty by the age of twenty. His incredible success was due to a keen networking ability and a host of lucrative contracts in the Bay, south to Los Angeles and east to Detroit where heroin sales allowed him and several associates to attain the status of ghetto superstars. For a decade he led his 69 Mob in a ruthless battle against Mickey Moore’s Family and the Funktown USA gang of Harvey Whisenhunt for the stakes of total control over the Bay Area’s drug traffic. His no-holds-barred approach insured victory, and during the years before his death Mitchell’s crew brought in an estimated $400,000 in monthly business.

Despite the efforts of many to characterize Mitchell simply as a murderous predator, he left behind a legacy of spirited community service. He sponsored local athletic programs for youths, financing their equipment and uniforms, and regularly held bar-b-ques for the entire neighborhood. On one occasion Mitchell reportedly hosted a busload of children on a field trip to Marine World Africa U.S.A. Whatever his crimes, Felix Mitchell was able to secure the ongoing respect of his partners and clients, and was spoken very highly of by all who knew him.

The notoriety of Mitchell’s empire drew the ire of local and national law enforcement who finally put him away in 1985. Sentenced to life in prison, Felix was shipped off to Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, where he was fatally stabbed within a few short months.

Such a fate is designed by the Justice System in part to punish and incapacitate traders in illicit substances, but more so to deter others from following in their footsteps. Unfortunately, such policies are undermined by the realities of the black market, and Mitchell’s sentence and early demise did not deter drug sellers in the Bay Area at all. On the contrary, drug sales continued and, with Mitchell’s monopolistic pricing eliminated, competition reduced the price of crack and heroin. The main effect of Mitchell’s imprisonment was to destabilize the market, lower drug prices, and increase violence as rival gang members challenged each other for market share. Drug-related drive-by shootings, street homicides, and felonious assaults increased dramatically. This unintended consequence is still referred to by academics as the “Felix Mitchell Paradox”.

Ironically, a few years after his death, Felix Mitchell’s criminal convictions were overturned by a federal judge on technicalities. Since this time the legends surrounding Mitchell have only grown in stature; the character Nino Brown from the film New Jack City was based on his story, and he remains the subject of gangsta-rap lyrics nation wide. Second and third hand reports from his memorial service now claim that inside his casket, Mitchell was lying on a bed of crisp thousand dollar bills. Efforts will continue to be made to downplay his influence on Oakland and ghetto culture abroad, but whatever else can be said about Felix Mitchell Jr. and his legacy, it is true throughout history that lesser men have been celebrated, and greater ones persecuted.

He is buried at Rolling Hills Memorial Park, in Richmond, CA.
**reviews**

**Super Shark, Kungphooey Comics**
A free one page photo-copied comic out of Albany, Super Shark is the raw-dog execution of a peculiar adolescent vision. Whatever lacks here in skill or talent is well made up for in straight gumption. Creator Robert Medeiros claims inspiration from Randy Rhoads, Kids Are People Too, the USFL, and Black Panther Party. Super Shark is a message to you from the other side. Look for it at: Amoeba (Berkeley and SF), Comic Relief and Comics and Comix (Berkeley), Movie Image (Berkeley), Into Video (SF), Axis Records (Alameda), Mills College (Oakland), A Different Light Bookstore (SF) and Mission Records (SF). More info: //www.supershark.net (JBH)

**L. Donnell Williams**
He plagues Oakland's bus benches from sea to shining sea, his wicked grin and sleazy eyes penetrate every corner of the city, encouraging you to enjoy his services shortly after your death. It does make me appreciate things like devil horns and vampire teeth artfully added to his smiling face. Remember to give L. Donnell Williams something special when you see him around town. Let no bus bench be untouched! Let Mr. Donnell Williams know what we think about his bus benches! Keep Oakland tidy, yes, but also, keep Oakland covered with ink and paint. (SOS)
A Taste of Africa, Cameroon Food

You drive by it all the time— that little hut on Adeline near Ashby. Well, go in there and eat. Eat a beautiful home style meal created with love and plenty of spice. Enjoy the homey environment, and converse with the charismatic proprietor and chef, Malon, who makes every dish from traditional recipes he learned from his mother. The tastes here are completely different than any other cuisine you’ve tried, and served in huge portions, either meat or veggie. Koki Corn (ohmygawd), a nutty Ndole, occassional salmon specials, and a hot sauce that will make a Vietnamese sweat bullets, so don’t front. I usually bring in a soda or something from the nearby Liquor Store, because even the ginger-lemonade at Tasta of Africa can be overwhelming to the palette. On the weekends they operate out of a truck at the Ashby Flea Market across the street. Helsa fuckin good. (BP)

Paradise Club
American and Chinese Dishes
Dancing Nedly to Eddie Reynolds' Orchestra
Featuring The Four Aces
Every Sunday Afternoon
Luncheon 60c • Dinner $1.00
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Distinctive French and Italian Cuisine
Served in Seclusion and Ouatent Provincial Atmosphere
Cocktails Dinner from 4 p.m. Dinner Music
Oakland 6th & Alice Sts.
# History Posters

B&W 2'x 3' - $5 each
(DISPLAYED ON OAKLANDISH.ORG)

#1A: JULIA MORGAN
#1B: CALVIN SIMMONS
#1C: JOE FONG GUEY
#1D: ROSIE THE RIVETER
#1E: JIM OTTO
#1F: SONNY BARGER
#1G: BOBBY HUTTON
#1H: CLINT EASTWOOD
#1I: BRUCE LEE/MIKE DREAM
#1J: LARRY GRAHAM
#1K: ISADORA DUNCAN

# Drive-in Poster $5

“GODDESS OF NONCHALANCE”
FULL COLOR PRINT
BY SEAN THE SEAN

# T-Shirts $15

#4A - Ladies Mini (S, M, L)
BLACK ON WHITE - WHITE ON PINK - BLUE ON LIGHT BLUE

#4B - Men's (M, L, XXL)
WHITE ON BLACK - DARK BLUE ON LIGHT BLUE - BROWN ON TAN

#3A Promopack $5

3 STICKERS, 1 TATTOO & A BUTTON

#3B Oakslander Zine $4/each

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COMMENTS?

SUBTOTAL
($2/ITEM) SHIPPING
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SEND CHECK, CASH, OR MONEY ORDER TO:
NONCHALANCE - PO BOX 3635 - OAKLAND CA - 94609-0635
Dan Fontes Interview Continued...

A few years ago, when I spoke about the idea of the Crafts and Cultural Art Department having a web site that promotes the arts department people looked at me and said it isn't going to happen. Now it's an indispensable tool of the Department. When I said the CAC meetings ought to be televised there was a sense of palpable outrage because the department had grown comfortable operating in the dark. Now I can't imagine the meetings being private the way they were.

I say consider Oakland's artists and arts community as an asset and the world will beat a path to our door. Make postcards, posters, ad campaigns, encourage more open studios, create billboards, take out ads in nationwide magazines...but let the artists have some say in the creation of this campaign. Otherwise it's just another slick, cheesy McDonald's advertisement / MANIPULATION! Don't you think people already know when they're being manipulated? I'm not like passionate about this subject or anything you tell?

Do I fit in with that Sausalitoed artless Oakland? No. Do art or die.

Sean: There haven't really been any major art movements in America since Pop, let's imagine that such an art movement is creeping from the cracks of Oakland, what does it look like? What is it trying to do?

Dan: I'm pretty certain that a real movement IS taking place. It hasn't been officially declared, but I think it has a lot to do with recycling, and Burning Man, the Crucible, the East Bay Depot culture. I think it includes the party/rave/event scene and multiple artists doing their thing at events where everyone is a participant and where people are sharing their resources and their lives freely and helping each other. This is an actual movement as opposed to what the art world wants you to believe is a movement like pop-art or impressionism, or Dada or surrealism or deconstructionism or whatever. In those movements only certain individuals could qualify to be a part of the party. In this "burn movement-burn culture" it's like everyone gets to be a player on the ball team. No audience.

Sure some people like David Best hit home runs consistently within this new culture, but if you read between the lines, he orchestrates entire teams of artists and architects with his vision. Now THAT'S cool!

Art is trying to fulfill on its own promise. To bring everyone into the party and have people feel good about themselves as creators, as participants! Like in Bora Bora where there is no word for art=just a life so immersed in art, in dance, in song, in ritual, in color that it is inseparable from breathing.

Sean: Your zebras and giraffes have come to life and are terrorizing the neighborhoods of Oakland, are you going to stop them?

Dan: I like that imagery. Wouldn't you want to live in a world like that? I'm not going to stop them.

Sean: Oakland is torn between it's white flight rustbelt history and the renewed caucasian interest in cities, what are some ways to reconcile between these currents, keeping the legacy of the city intact, not stepping on too many people's toes, but getting some green flowing through the cities coffers again.

Dan: This question reminds me of the three minute "South Park" style cartoon in Michael Moore's "Bowling for Columbine" Where you see whites fleeing to the suburbs in the 40's & 50's and arming themselves to the teeth. And now they sheepishly returning to the "hood". Now that most people work alongside people of different races and genders. It's OK folks. Nobody gonna bite chu. America is supposed to be about teamwork.

Teamwork.

In the early 1980's I wanted people to move back into the warehouses that form a boomerang shaped district throughout Oakland, North to South. You could see miles of unused buildings sitting idle. Brown's 10K plan could have been just what the arts community needed, an arts district.

Art is an economic powerhouse, an engine just waiting for the people to turn the key to the ignition switch. It's funny. I've gotten this reputation downtown for being Mr. Negative. But I feel so invigorated just talking about it, so positive. They're lost; we the artists need to show the way and that's why I've devoted the last four years of my life to attending CAC meetings, learning, suggesting, irritating, lobbying etc...

There are things that will help Oakland's arts community immeasurably like my 100 historic murals for Oakland proposal. It would have created jobs for artists while drawing attention to Oakland's neglected history. My written proposal was gutted by the Brown administration and disposed of like yesterdays fish bones. Then they claimed the new project as their own creation. This micro-mural program was based on my suggestions. My proposal allowed for a spectrum of voices to be heard. Jerry's is under-funded, misguided and to date is nearly unknown.

Sean: What sorts of jobs would you like to come flowing your way in the future?

Dan: Alongside the mural work, I've worked with a fiber optic artist who refuses to see what he does as art. He sees it as strictly business, which is frustrating for me because he brings a fine-arts edge to all these projects. Among other things, we did the swirl floor at Sony's Metreon in SF. I see more work with the fiber. I'd like to do illustration work and get back into the tight photo-realistic cityscape work I used to do. I'd like to do more animals around town but haven't met a partner who understands that I need a Medici with a knowing smile. I want to work with other artist teams doing projects, public art, events and eventually create an Oakland, and then a World, where the word art disappears.

you can check out Dan's work on the streets of Oakland, or sit and look at it on a screen like a nerd at www.danfontes.com
“Keep the Jive out the Hive”

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