

Searching for a missing piece.

My correspondence with Alan Horvath. Some notes by Andrew Russ

Alan Horvath was a traditional letter writer, a holdout in the emailing/texting/facebooking/twittering world of today. While most of my correspondence lately has been through email, my interaction with Alan was entirely through the mail. It was always a pleasure to get a letter, even if brief, as each piece came as a piece of art, in a carefully selected colored and stamped envelope. Here are some examples (one of which I had removed the postage stamp for my collection; Alan made sure to select interesting postage stamps):





My correspondence with Alan began in earnest in the aftermath of levyfest at Cleveland State University in 2005. I may have earlier sent a letter asking for a catalog after purchasing a couple of the Kirpan Press volumes of early d.a. levy poetry at Mac's Backs in Cleveland Heights or perhaps Ingrid gave him my address. At levyfest I had picked up a copy of *Booji Boy: My Struggle*, the little red book by Devo. For some reason I mentioned picking it up as well as discussing the books he had published. Alan sent this reply:

andy

thanks for the feedback on the books. nice to know they made it back to ohio.

the devo book:

rjs printed & published that book. burnt the lithograph plates using sunlight. a monster of a project. printed 8 pages per sheet (4 front/4 back); collated into manageable sections & then cut the paper so that it would stack in the correct order. had always wondered why the pages were so ragged. found out later that he had a local church guy cut the paper, but the guy was more interested in getting into a young teenage girl's pants. since rj wasn't paying a lot for the service, he didn't have much say on the quality. the pages are held together with long sharp staples used in assembling bee hives. the leatherette covers came in red or yellow. the rarer copies have a ribbon attached to the inner spine to act as a bookmark. I think my only involvement was an afternoon's worth of collating pages. mark mothersbaugh stopped over rj's house to pick up the chi-chi rodriguez image from the book because it was going to be used on the us release of the first devo album. how much did you pay for it? I still have a box of them (assembled & unassembled).

working on the next 5 or 6 levy books. will let you know.



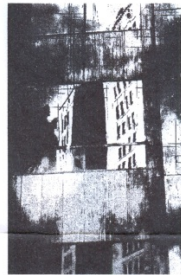
It was interesting to find out that one of the people associated with levy was involved in a project involving the 1970s musical scene in northeast Ohio, which I had been a fan of for many years. Besides Devo, there were Pere Ubu, Rocket from the Tombs, The Electric Eels, Mirrors, The Styrenes, Peter Laughner, Tin Huey, and plenty more I've left out.

Alan did complete several more books of levy's work over the next 4-5 years and I bought those that focused primarily on his visual poetry. Here's a letter that came with one of the advertisement flyers he made for a book entitled *Will Try To Communicate Later*.

ANDREW,

I THOUGHT THIS NEW LEVY BOOK WOULD INTEREST
YOU SINCE IT IS ALL CONCRETE. I'M ASSEMBLING
A BROADCAST SERIES. SEND 4 OR 5 DIFFERENT
SAMPLES OF YOUR CONCRETE PIECES.

Ann Horvath
Kirpan Press
P.O. Box 2943
Vancouver, WA 98668-2943
USA



**WILL TRY TO COMMUNICATE
LATER**

d.a. levy

cover: Jim Clinefelter

This previously unpublished concrete manuscript
was originally sent to david w. harris in 1967.
Also included is levy's note to harris stating
that if harris can't use the concrete pieces,
levy wanted them back for self-publication.
To the best of our research, these pieces
have never been published.

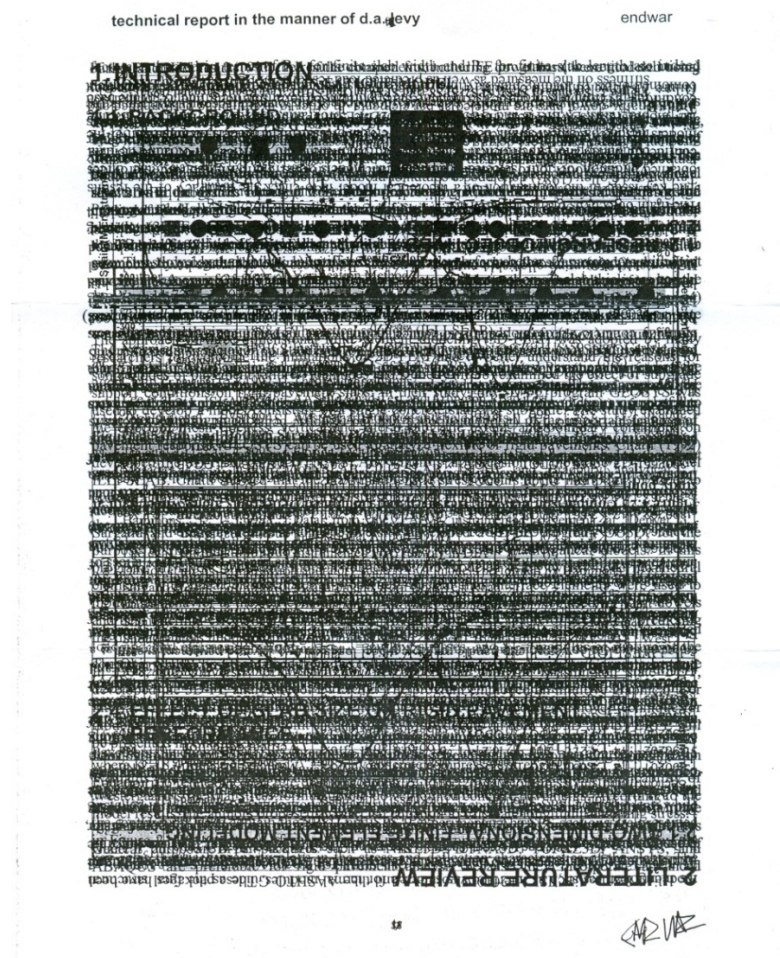
75 copies

16 pages
Glossy cover / Plastic comb bound

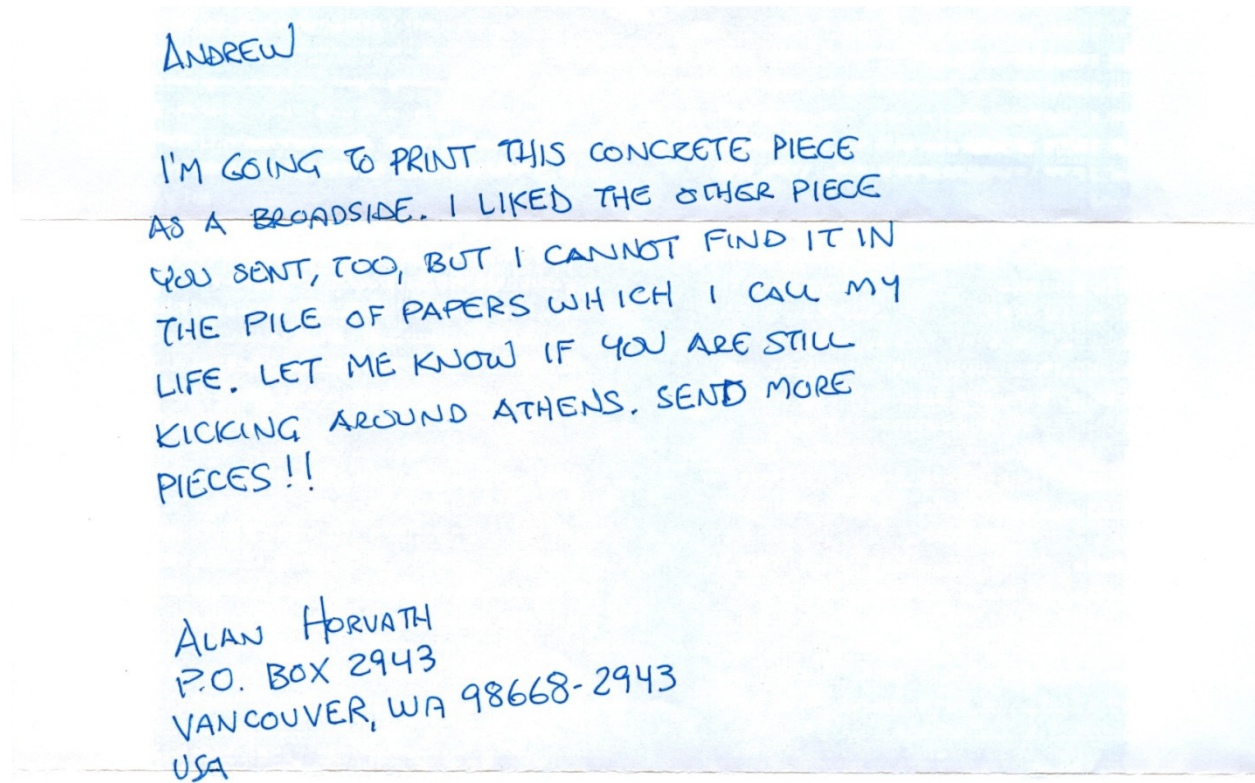
\$13 + \$2 shipping
(Payable to: A. Horvath)

Kirpan Press
P.O. Box 2943
Vancouver, WA 98668-2943
USA

The invitation to send something for a broadside was timely because I had a logical choice I had recently created, “technical report in the manner of d.a. levy”, which was my attempt to do with a laser printer a destroyed text in the spirit of those that levy did on his mimeograph machine. The text being given this treatment was a technical report I had edited at work on finite element modeling of concrete pavement. It was a report contracted by the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the process of creating this piece involved printing about 20 pages of the report onto the same sheet of paper, sometimes inverted, and selecting some pages with elements with visual interest, such as graphs and headings, to include. The piece was originally created for a mail art project curated by Jukka-Pekka Kervinen in Espoo, Finland in autumn 2005. The theme was office art, and the idea was to take materials from/at work and make something with them. I had sent the piece to Finland, but never heard whether the “work” was displayed or even received. I had given out a few copies at levyfest as well, since I figured it would be of interest. As it happened, levyfest was concurrent with the opening of the visual poetry exhibit “(hanging minds :^)” at the Neopolis gallery about two blocks away, at which I was exhibiting and already committed to attend.



Anyway, I sent two pieces to Horvath, and he quickly agreed to use “technical report in the manner of d.a. levy”. It appeared as #31 in the “Stories from ‘*The Flats*’” Broadside Series under the name “Andrew Russ” rather than under the intended identity “endwar”. When he sent me the 15 copies to sign, I signed them all “endwar” anyway. The work is reproduced on violet paper, tipped into a stamped and printed card and sealed in a printed envelope. It’s a very nice presentation. Alan’s letter also mentioned a second piece of mine, however:



A photograph of a handwritten letter on a light blue background. The letter is written in blue ink. At the top, the name 'ANDREW' is written. The main body of the letter expresses appreciation for a 'concrete piece' and mentions looking for another piece in a 'pile of papers'. It ends with a request to 'send more pieces!!'. At the bottom, the sender's name 'ALAN HORVATH' and address 'P.O. BOX 2943, VANCOUVER, WA 98668-2943, USA' are written.

ANDREW

I'M GOING TO PRINT THIS CONCRETE PIECE
AS A BROADSIDE. I LIKED THE OTHER PIECE
YOU SENT, TOO, BUT I CANNOT FIND IT IN
THE PILE OF PAPERS WHICH I CALL MY
LIFE. LET ME KNOW IF YOU ARE STILL
KICKING AROUND ATHENS. SEND MORE
PIECES!!

ALAN HORVATH
P.O. BOX 2943
VANCOUVER, WA 98668-2943
USA

Unfortunately I had not made a record of what I sent to Alan, though I had a good stack of various pieces I could have included. Athens is Athens, Ohio, where I live, and where he had some sort of connection, discussed in another letter that I can no longer locate. Anyway, I made a few attempts to gather items that I might have sent Alan, and ended up copying maybe 50 pages of material (I don’t send originals, at least not initially, so I was sure I still had the piece in question somewhere, I just had to find the right folder or pile of papers). Unfortunately none of the packages I sent contained the missing work. Here is a typical response:

ANDREW

THANKS FOR THE COLLECTION OF YOUR WORK. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE MISSING
PIECE WAS AMONG THE PIECES YOU SENT, BUT IT WAS AN ENJOYABLE "READ"
LOOKING THROUGH THE DISTORTION. IT SHOULD COME OUT AS AN UNCOMPROMISED
BOOK ON GLOSSY PAPER. HAVE YOU TRIED A PUBLISHER IN CANADA? J.W. CURRY
CREATES SIMILAR CONCRETE. MARVIN SACKNER COLLECTS CONCRETE (I SENT HIM
A COPY OF "TECHNICAL REPORT").

YOU GET YOUR CAR FIXED?

HOW ARE THE FALL LEAVES IN ATHENS THIS YEAR?

ALAN

In early 2009, my friend and fellow Mid-1970s Cleveland music obsessive Nick Blakey got a job to work on liner notes for a CD collection of recordings by Peter Laughner that Smog Veil records had started compiling. The project has actually grown from the original scope (a boxed set of CDs) to a series of LPs, the first of which is to be *The Ann Arbor Tapes*, recorded in 1976 and to be released on LP/download sometime in 2011. My primary area of work in this area has been researching mentions of Laughner and his bands in the Cleveland media, including the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, where Jane Scott frequently mentioned Peter's projects in her "Happenings" column, and the Cleveland *Scene*, where he got the occasional mention in the Croc O'Bush column by David Thomas with Mark Kmetzko (and earlier Rick Nelson).

In a letter to Alan I mentioned that I was working on this project, and also offered to email some more works in case one of those might have been that vaunted "missing piece". I got this note in reply:

ANDREW / IZEN / ENDWAR

I had an abcess drained from my back last Thursday in the emergency room. On Friday I received a phone call from the hospital's ER. One of the many vials of blood that they took contained staph in my blood. They asked me to return for more tests - but it was up to me. Around 4 pm, my primary care doctor called me to strongly suggest that I return out of the old wife's idiom "better to be safe than sorry." I went back, they admitted me and I have been in the hospital since Friday night to Tuesday night with a bad strain of staph. The only way to kill it is to take an IV of antibiotic every day for the next two weeks. Since staying in the hospital was not an option and an IV hookup would need to be changed every 3 or 4 days, I finally agreed to have a wire hooked into one of my arm veins and fed to a large vein near my heart. 3 feet of tubing keeps me teathered between my arm to a pump dispensing this antibiotic fluid. I carry my little pump buddy around with me everywhere. It has seen my penis. It has watched me wipe my ass. I need to go everyday to the clinic to have my abcess packed and changed. Will the cab company charge me extra for my little pump buddy? I need to go to a cancer treatment center every third day for a refill. I cannot describe the sadness I felt when I heard the staff singing "happy last chemo day to you" to the tune of "Happy Birthday".

SORRY, I DO NOT HAVE INTERNET ACCESS AT THE HOUSE TO CHECK OUT YOUR SITE. THE ONLY THING I REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR MISSING PIECE WAS THAT YOU SAID YOU DID IT ON A LASERJET WHICH WOULD SEEM LIKE A HARD TRICK, BUT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY TO DO WITH A MUGO & MUGO STENCIL.

SOMETIME IN THE 1990S, I BOUGHT A FEW PETER LAUGHNER CDs FROM SOME GUYS WHO CALLED THEMSELVES "HANDSOME PRODUCTIONS." THEY HAD COPIES (IF NOT CASSETTE MASTERS) OF PETER'S PERSONAL TAPES. FAIRLY BARE-BONES PRODUCTION (NO DISC LABELS / POOR MASTERING / LONG AGUILITY TIME). PETER'S MOTHER SENT ME 7 OR 8 MASTER TAPES WHICH I DUBBED THE BEST 40 MINUTES TO A CASSETTE & RETURNED THE MASTER TAPES TO HER. EVERYTHING I HAVE IS ACOUSTIC. THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING DUETS WITH PETER & LESTER GANES (HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY THE VELVET UNDERGROUND).


Alan

There's the stark anecdote printed out and taped at the top, which I suspect was included with other correspondence, which is the only indication of his state of health in these letters. I think the reference to the Laserjet might have been in regards to "technical report in the manner of d.a. levy", but maybe not. I couldn't locate that letter, either, but it might have been hand written. At the bottom there's Alan mentions copying some of Laughner's music that he borrowed from Peter's mother.

In late March of 2010, I made a trip to the Buffalo Small Press Book Fair (It's March 19 this year (2011)) and followed by spending a week in Cleveland mostly visiting the library and

looking up as much about Laughner as I could in the microfilms of *Scene* issues from the early to mid 1970s. Here's one item I found:

APRIL 25-MAY 1, 1974THE SCENE



HOT WATTS

Microphones; the different kinds and what they do

by Alan Horvath

Have you ever stopped and tried to figure out what kinds of microphones most professionals are using? Some of the brand

are fragile and expensive. Obviously, they are not the type to "take on the road."

All these manufacturers will use terms to describe the ten or so different mikes in their line.

Many times to get enough gain on a voice means to also get a large amount of "bleed" from the rest of the band. Bleed is when the mike is picking up all the rest of the stage noise along

This was the weekly audiophile column in *Scene*, and apparently for this one week only it was guest written by Alan Horvath. Despite the slight difference in spelling, I had to ask if this was the same Alan I had been corresponding with. I also mentioned Athens Musician Attila Horvath's *Bike Rock* CD. Here's the answer:

ENDWAR

NOPE. I'M NONE OF THE PEOPLE YOU MENTIONED. SOMETIMES I AM BARELY MYSELF. I LIVED IN CLEVELAND UNTIL SUMMER 1981, BUT NEVER WROTE FOR THE SCENE. I'VE BEEN PLAYING GUITAR SINCE 1965, BUT HAVE NEVER MADE A RECORD. I'M TOLD THAT IN HUNGARY "HORVATH" IS AS COMMON AS "SMITH" IS IN AMERICA.

PETER LAUGHNER BEFRIENDED JANE SCOTT WHO WROTE FOR THE PLAIN DEALER'S ACTION TAB (USED TO BE IN FRIDAY'S PAPER). I REMEMBER IN THE MID-1970S THERE WAS A FEATURE ON 'ROCKET FROM THE TUMBS' (OR ELSE 'PGRG UBU') WITH PICTURE. ALSO THE WEEK PETER DIED THERE WAS AN OBIT WITH PICTURE OF PETER. ALSO THERE WAS A PHOTO OF PETER IN HIS COFFIN THAT APPEARED IN "CLE" MAGAZINE. NOTHING MUCH IN PRINT THAT I CAN REMEMBER FROM 1978-1981. "GOLDMINE" DID A STORY ON PGRG UBU IN THE 1990 WHERE THEY SAID THAT PETER ENDED HIS LIFE WITH A DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN. "GOLDMINE" PRINTED MY LETTER TO THE EDITOR WHICH DEBUNKED THAT LIE.

ALAN HORVATH
KIRPAN PRESS

Alan's memory is pretty good about the press on Laughner – Jane Scott wrote features on both Rocket From the Tombs (with Mirrors and the Electric Eels) and Pere Ubu, and there were actually two obituaries, one with the other obituaries on Thursday and one the next day in the Action Tab. We're still looking for that issue of *CLE* magazine, though.

So if anybody out there locates (or remembers having been shown) that visual poem in Alan's effects let me know. He said he showed it to some people (which was why it ended up in the wrong pile of stuff), but admittedly the chances are now slim to none anyone will recognize it. I'd still like to know what it was, but some mysteries are destined to stay that way.



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