

Pieces of Lou, pt. 2

by John Leland

THE LOU-NESS OF THE LOU

Before we get to the disaster of Camper's interview, it is worth recounting some of Lou's greatest hits, as documented in public records. Melville doesn't show readers the White Whale until the final battle, after first establishing its darkness within all men's souls, inseparable from its ghostly beauty. So it is with Lou.

In the white city of Lima, a tribe of critics once hurled themselves to their deaths after Lou refused to answer a list of questions, starting with "How are you today?" A newlywed critic from New Bedford was unable to make love to his bride because of an interview with Lou three years earlier. On Long Island just last year a woman gave birth to a two-headed goat after transcribing a Lou interview for a friend. It was in the Post.

To test the second-hand or "dispersal" effects of Lou contact, researchers from the University of Toronto studied the readerships of two provincial newspapers, one of whose music critics had interviewed Lou. The researchers designated the newspapers as L and Non-L, which local undergrads twisted to L and L-Décor. The critic for L never published his article, but even so the researchers found striking differences between the communities. Readers of L showed higher rates of lethargy, lost libido and poor hair decisions. A young mother was found naked in the municipal fountain, clutching her baby and muttering about Vaclav Havel. Poets refused to study rules of verse; ladies rolled their eyes. At the local diner, reviewers from Zagat's complained that the eggs "tasted funny" and that the waitress's tits "seemed smaller." Readers of Non-L, on the other hand, bought fabulously expensive home furnishings.

Marriages have been sundered, careers wrecked, confidences shattered, boners unsprung. Serbs and Croats? Hutus and Tutsis? The east coast/west coast thing in hip hop? Lou Lou and more Lou. If some of these effects seem like urban legends, it should be noted

that Lou used illicit technology to bring them about. In a January 1976 interview for *New Musical Express* about *Metal Machine Music*, Lou admitted to Lenny Kaye, "There are frequencies in there that are against FCC law to use, they use them in surgery." You want to know why Bo Diddley walked forty thousand miles of barbed wire? Because of Lou.

Bruce Pollock, of the excellently named *Modern Hi-Fi and Music*, came away from a 1975 interview convinced of a Lou cover-up:

It was last August when I got the word from one of the leading ladies on his office staff.

"Lou Reed does not want anyone to know how he writes his songs."

I was momentarily disoriented. "Pardon?"

"He will not give you permission to use his interview in your book."

"Surely you jest?" I remarked.

"I'm not paid to jest," she snapped.

