

Here's a five (5) question 'POP QUIZ' about ME!

by Smiley McGrouphants, Jr-Esq-III

QUESTIONS:

1.) At the over 200-years-old prep school I attended in Albany, NY, there were two (2) well-known, published authors who once graced its hallowed halls as students. One of these, however, took off after only two years to see the world and gain the life experience he used in his writing, and, as such, did not officially graduate. The other completed his degree there, and became an esteemed alumni who had a literary prize named in his honor, which I won for *my* writing, my junior year. If you can guess which author stayed and which one took off, from the two options below, the question is: which award did I win?

- (a.) The Herman Melville Award
- (b.) The Andy Rooney Award
- (c.) What, are you kidding me?

2.) Which of the following three (3) songs, the *very first time I heard it on the radio*, prompted me to make the immediate decision: "Omigod! I *have* to get that album!" (which I then did do, at the next earliest available opportunity)?

- (a.) "Shadowboxer" by Fiona Apple (off *Tidal*)
- (b.) "Waltz #2 (XO)" by Elliott Smith (off *XO*)
- (c.) "The Step and the Walk" by the Duke Spirit (off *Neptune*)

(d.) All of the above.

3.) Which well-known Portland celebrity did I at-first-unwittingly accost at the Aug. 2007 Thermals show, hitting them up for \$0.50 so I could get a slice of pizza [like a dumbass, I thought at the time that it would be obvious to everyone there that I spent my last \$17 just to get to the show, and therefore it would not be annoying to others to bum money for food, in the true "punk rock" spirit]? It wasn't until later, after I walked away after being (not surprisingly) snubbed, that I realized who it was.

This person was wearing a just-this-side-of-linebacker amount of black makeup to downplay their appearance so they could mill "incognito" at the Crystal Ballroom (and be hit up for change by some dickhead, like everyone else, as it turned out . . .).

- (a.) Janet Weiss
- (b.) Sam Adams
- (c.) Gus Van Sant

4.) Which Portland notable was the only famous "local" I ever canvassed in my year-and-a-half of knocking on doors for OSPIRG and The Sierra Club?

(Again, I didn't realize until later. This person was not a "GIVER" [i.e., no financial contribution was made], but a signed "postcard" [i.e., statement of support for bill or proposition, which are compiled and forwarded to legislators to evidence support from the populace,

for negotiation purposes] gave me the clue: "Oh yeah! Punk-bleached blonde, semi-spiky hair; punk rock T-shirt; punk rock posters in the apartment . . . *that's* who that was!")

- (a.) Donna Dresch
- (b.) Sam Adams
- (c.) Gus Van Sant

5.) Who was the first "celebrity contact" I ever made in my life, when I subletted his/her apartment in Chicago in the summer of '96?

- (a.) Major Richard M. Daley
- (b.) Zinestress Lara Cohen
- (c.) Smashing Pumpkin Billy Corgan

ANSWERS:

1.) -- (b.)

Not to pick on the poor guy, or anything [although, as Sarah Vowell mentions in *Radio On*, apparently he made some unkind comments on the occasion of Kurt Cobain's death], but the comparison is just too funny.

I imagine if, instead, I won the "Herman Melville Award" [although, come to think of it, it may have actually been the "Andy Rooney Prize"], I'd still be citing the thing *even now*, and for years to come, with no-one (I'd hope) the wiser . . . ["Yeah, I've only got a couple short stories published in regional, academic journals in my life . . . and my self-published novella sold less than a hundred copies . . . but, I *did* win the Herman Melville Award for Fiction!" "Oh, really? Wow!" (&c.)]

2.) -- (d.)

Duh.

3.) -- (a.)

Great way to make first contact with one of the more notable musicians on the scene, don'tcha think? (And — for the record — Sleater-Kinney, along with Sarah Dougher and the by-now-absent Miranda July, were one of my main inspirations for even *wanting* to move to Portland in the first place, given the sort of community I assumed their presence implied . . . oh well, I'll make it up to her, somehow!)

4.) -- (a.)

Let it be known: a "famous" person looks *really bad* if they don't at least *sign a postcard* (some people — even punk rockers who run small labels — may truly be broke, for whatever reason or another . . . but *show us you care!* Donna Dresch, you pass muster!).

As point of comparison [this may be embarrassing to someone, but I'm sorry: the story is too funny], a certain fellow canvasser while I in the office, Brad W., once found himself at the door with Courtney Taylor-Taylor of the Dandy Warhols [whom Brad instantly

recognized], who came to the door with an irritated: "Uh . . . you *interrupted my nap!*"

(So, for the record: no, Courtney Taylor-Taylor was not a "giver" . . . *that* year, at least [try again next time, Courtney! Organizations like OSPIRG wouldn't exist without the support of concerned Oregonians like you! (&c.)].)

5.) -- (c.)

Lara Cohen actually came to the Univ. of Chicago as a student *after* I graduated . . . and she was *already famous!*

Lara put out a 'zine in the '90s called "Runt." The title came from an experience she had when she was 11 (or so): during one of those obligatory, dreaded-by-the-children excursions to the mall for new clothes for the oncoming school year with the parents, the lady who was assisting Lara and her mother at the store commented on Lara's, uh, *diminutive* stature. (Apparently, even though she was 11 at the time, the only size clothes that would fit her were designed for 8-year-olds.) At this, her mother exclaimed [*publicly*, of course]: "I know! She's always been like this! She's such a runt!"

Thus, a 'zine title was born.

By the time she got to college, however — after having put out however many issues detailing the tour travails of Small Factory, Lara's band Nik-L-Nip, and whatever else musical flotsam she saw fit to document at the time — the need to "out" this nomination had, apparently, passed. In the one phone conversation I had with her [at the end of the summer, as my moving-out details were being

discussed] I asked if her recent decision to discontinue the 'zine had anything to do with the title, and having finally reached college age. "Well, you could say I no longer feel the need to advertise the fact," I recall her saying, in so many words [which, by the way, was the first use of the word "advertise" in this sense, which made an impression on me and has stayed with me still].

I have no idea what she's up to now, although the website for the now-print-defunct 'zine *Chickfactor* lists her as a "tiny intellectual who teaches at Yale." I guess some things die hard, as they say.

