

Special Edition: The Battle in Seattle

At a time of year when Americans should be doing their civic duty by purchasing as many needless items they think they desire, being under the spell of 24/7 marketing saturation, pumped with want then sucked into a state of consumer hunger, till they're ready to fork over, swipe plastic, and engorge their tired souls with Santa's train of merry Xcess -- **something happened**, and the Mr. Joneses don't have the foggiest idea what it is.

Seattle. Up and comer on the Pacific Rim. City of ports and cappuccino. Anchor city for the Microsoft monopoly. Home of grunge. A global city of the 90's.

One suspects that the cronies at the World Trade Organization, along with the Clinton cronies, must have been doing some coy market research. 'Hey -- Seattle is so 90's -- it's a hub of World Trade. It's got the coffee thing going for it too. We're there. It's got just the right symbolic sparkle to lend us the legitimacy we need.'

So what happened? From whence this jack-booted police state in the midst of what should have been an orgy of trading delight and good cheer? What got in the way?

The people got in the way. Finally -- a mass movement worth its salt. Finally, organized labor decided to stand up for itself, and stand alongside the environmentalists, the anarchists, the topless vegan dykes, right-wing populists, animal lovers, socialist academics, and the young and abused -- to say

"That's enough folks. We're shutting you putzes down."

In what has to be regarded as the most successful direct action to take place on American soil since the 70's (correct me if I missed something during the Reagan/Bush years) -- the people, and a good cross-section of people at that -- achieved something tangible. They rained on the WTO parade and created a climate that made carving the gizzards out of voiceless masses unappetizing and indecorous in the spotlight of so much public scrutiny.

Now, for a change, this is some symbolism we can sink OUR teeth into. We just ripped a hole in the fabric of the American ideological cloak. The Emperor is not simply dressed in slave labor produced duds, he's also a closet-freak onanist jacking off to the beat of global rape for the sake of profit. Where's a Madison Avenue jingle to go along with that script?

What the WTO direct action protest proves is that we aint swallowing' the cum-on anymore. We're gathering strength, and we aint going' down without a fight. Take that you well-dressed policy wonks! Prepare to deal with it.

-mort allman



photo parody by ACME collective

Un-TV Coverage

Pretend you're an executive producer at one of the biggie cable news networks and this story suddenly emerges: What starts as another boring round of trade talks that nobody but the investor class would pay much attention to, now turns into a seething boil of social protest. You've got turtle-loving freaks dancing in the streets, you've got colorful street theatre, you've got badass looking longshoremen in baseball jackets looking mean and menacing. You've got college-aged hippie/yippie types stoked to plant flowers in rifle barrels. You've got international trade delegates blocked by non-violent protestors from getting into their meetings. You've got marches, banners, and masked anarchists with spray paint. You've got Seattle riot police firing tear gas canisters into non-violent crowds. You've got beatings and pepper spray. You've got an international, unaccountable organization brought to its knees by protesting masses. You've then got more gas, fires, broken glass, vandalized Banana Republic stores. You've got the President of the United States flying in the next day to talk out of both sides of his mouth. You've got neighborhoods under siege and suspense and tension so thick, you almost don't need theme music to boost it up.

One would think, you'd be wetting your pants with excitement. This truly is a dream story. It has a political dimension, it has an economic dimension (so it's sure to captivate the business crowd), it's got color, drama, fire, rubber bullets. Quick! Call up the graphic designers and have 'em crank out some spin-o-rama title graphics! On the double! Surely, this is a story to RUN with. You can get days of round-the-clock coverage out of this one. People will be glued to their sets wondering what's going to happen. You have eyewitnesses out the wazoo, and it couldn't be easier to have whole armies of reporters on the street getting into the thick of the action. Yes, surely this is a made for TV event to die for. Let the ratings rise like flood waters!

Uh...well...not exactly. Inexplicably (it seems) the WTO agitation didn't receive the attention it deserved. Yes, it did get some

live coverage when the police riot broke out. And yes, there was some cause for alarm when corporate property was endangered and windows got broken. Yes, it did get front page coverage in the newspapers, and full coverage on the Internet. It was too big a story to ignore. But it should have been so much more. Consider this: OJ slits wife's throat; Princess Di dead; Columbine high school killing spree; Heaven's Gate cult suicide; Space Shuttle blows up; Girl falls down well; Post-rodney LA riots. All of these stories, (and plenty of others) received (deserved or undeserved) BLANKET coverage. But not WTO. Why?

Why ask Why? There is, alas, a method to TV News' madness. The WTO fiasco is a story that's too hot to touch. You can't have viewers be potentially energized by something like this. Hell, there's a real risk you'd have riots breaking out in other cities. Look they're already protesting in London, in India, hunger strikes in Canada. People might start thinking about unionizing. Might start asking the anarchist question: just what does "free" trade really mean?

No, a news story, no matter how big and juicy, can't be expected to run roughshod over the free enterprise system, brought to you by General Electric, Ted Turner, and Microsoft. It can't be given the freedom to develop under its own momentum. Instead, we'll have to package this one right from the gitgo. Blame those anarchists for inciting violence. Bemoan the poor city of Seattle and its tarnished public image. Pray fervently that the trade talks can withstand the "annoyance" of a few worthless, lazy sixties wannabees. Contextualize by harping on visual similarities to the sixties, but avoid engaging the real issues at all costs. Tar with epithets: spoiled naysayers, outsiders who should be inside, safe in their living rooms, blowing the naughty bits off each other in the enclosed dungeons of a Playstation game.

That's TV News. It's not about reporting real news stories that have impact on your existence. It's all about softening your head and serving you up on a platter to be stuffed with advertisements, so you can perform your God-given American right to buy stuff.

-mort allman

REVIEWS

Jupiter

various mp3 songs

www.amp3.net/jupiter

A full-bodied retro-60's poprock blend oozes from this Chester, England band. They draw on many influences: groovy spy theme music, gothic, Monkees-style pop with a Brit twist, and progressive hard rock. You're never far from a melody or hook here; the playing is tight, smart and energetic. Occasionally, the lead vocals show flashes of John Lennon's patented shrieking-emotive delivery style.



The set of songs available on their web site is uneven, but the standouts are "Hand or Feathers," "3 steps" and "Maypole". Jupiter is at its best when they're digging deep into the soil where their Brit-rock roots are.

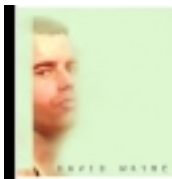
- J. esch

David Wayne

mp3 songs

www.mp3.com/davidwayne

Icy cool synth-rich club music. Put on your dancin' shoes and get ready to stomp the floorboards to this stuff. The music is machine-polished and puts me in the mind of groups like Kraftwerk,



Depeche Mode, and Ultravox. Wayne's frosty glide smoothly overtop the mechanistic surface rhythms.

A brief rundown of some tunes on David's mp3.com site: *If You Feel Like Dancing* has an elemental, tribal dance pop feel to it. *Take Me Back* does indeed take me back...to the 80's. *If You Feel Like Dancing, (Don't Be Shy)* is another icy cool club number. *Halloween (the night has come)* assumes a dark, ambient Gregorian guise. *Wiggle It*, at first seems more anemic than the others, yet it builds to a hypnotic pitch. *The Beat in Your Soul* -- more Kraftwerk-style beat mechanix. *He Can't See* -- nice drivin' rhythm track on this one. *This Fire in Me* -- catchy vocal hook. A good mix too.

- J. esch

Contributors

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Mort Allman sometimes takes a break from the class struggle to file cultural and political criticism.