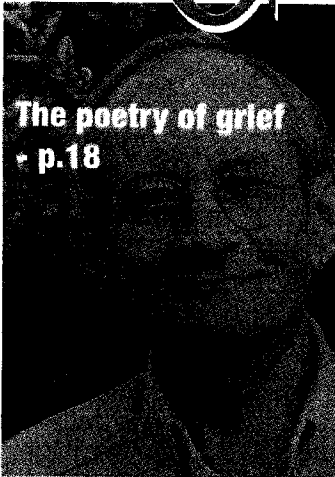


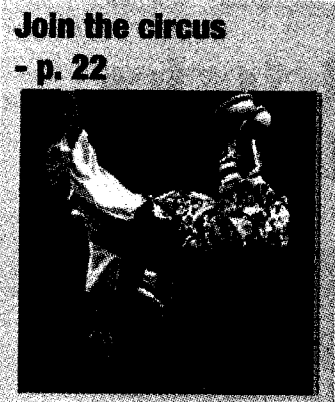
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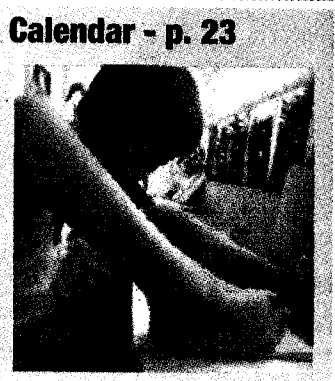
Green Mountain Jukebox



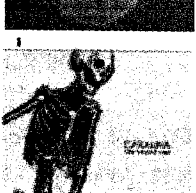
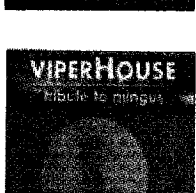
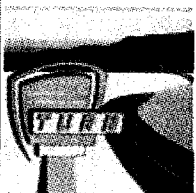
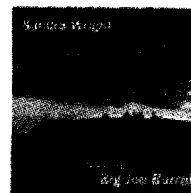
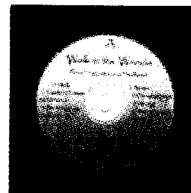
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By Rob Williams
Special to the *Vermont Guardian*

Since 1996, Burlington-based nonprofit Big Heavy World has worked to preserve and promote music originating in the Green Mountain State.

"Vermont's arts are unique and genuine and help define our state's character," explains Jim Lockridge, Big Heavy World's executive director.

During the past nine years, Big Heavy World has catalogued, using student volunteers, more than 1,300 commercial and live recordings in its Vermont Music Library, which is open to the public. Big Heavy World has also involved itself in a wide variety of youth-focused musical endeavors around the greater Burlington area.

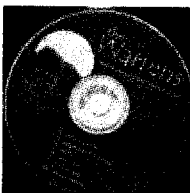
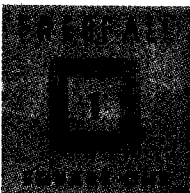
This winter, Big Heavy World launched an ambitious brand-new initiative called the "Jukebox Project," a collaborative endeavor with the Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services to bring Vermont music to tourist information areas all over the state.

Guitarist, vocalist, and drummer Spencer Crispe, 26, who plays in the hardcore band My Revenge, works as Big Heavy World's outreach and marketing coordinator. I asked him about the organization's work and impact on Vermont's music community.

Q: What makes Big Heavy World such a unique musical endeavor?

A: A lot of what makes Big Heavy World unique is that we are really the only entity in this state that is doing what we're doing. Big Heavy World's mission is to promote and preserve Vermont-based musical artistry. No one else is doing this at the level that we are right now. As a nonprofit organization, we have a genuine, vested interest in disseminating the music that originates in this state, because we see its value as an artistic contribution. There are so many artists,

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songs and albums by Vermont artists that we've come across that are truly great works. Our philosophy is that all musicians as artists have inherent value and worth [in] what they produce. Our job is to ensure the preservation and bolster the exposure of these expressive cultural works. Vermont musicians have produced some outstanding songs, and we'll be damned if they get swept under the carpet.

Another aspect that makes Big Heavy World unique is all the auxiliary projects that we take on related to musical preservation. We have crew in our offices five nights a week working on various Big Heavy World musical projects. For instance, we set up all ages, substance-free shows where local up-and-coming bands are afforded the opportunity to play a variety of venues around the region. We maintain an extensive website, which includes an online message board, comprehensive venue guide, band guide, and photographs of local area bands' performances. Our website functions to connect artists around the state and act as a resource, empowering them to maximize their creative output.

Big Heavy World also operates the Vermont Music Shop, which retails over 400 albums by Vermont artists through our website www.vermontmusicshop.com. On a regular basis, we have over a dozen college and high school aged volunteers who participate in operating the label. We release compilation albums of Vermont artists, and our volunteers and interns are integral to the process of getting these things completed.

Q: Why is Big Heavy World's new Jukebox Project so important?

A: The Jukebox Project is important because it furthers our goal of having as many people as possible hear and be exposed to some of the great artists making music in the state of Vermont. Currently, we have jukeboxes at three Vermont rest areas, with many others on the way. This is exciting, because anyone visiting a Vermont state rest area can access a plethora of albums by Vermont artists, via a DVD device that plays the music through the public address system at the welcome center. It's really cool, and also serves to help

out artists because it gives them exposure to people who are likely from out of state to their music.

Q: What evidence do you have that Big Heavy World is making a difference in the lives of Vermont young people?

A: We have an abundance of evidence, and that is very gratifying for us. Over the past nine years, at least 200 people have

ing. The biggest project we have going on is that we just received the permit to construct a radio station. This is exciting because it's something we always wanted to do: have a community access radio station. We are in the process of getting the antenna put on top of our building, and renovating the two rooms for the radio station headquarters. We are intensely excited about all of this, and we

Big Heavy World is an expressive, open door, creative outlet for a lot of kids who have nowhere to go after school.

interned or volunteered at Big Heavy World. A lot of kids who come to Big Heavy World earn college credits for their work during the semester here and we give them an outlet to apply their skills to real projects. These students get to exercise their talents — be it with Photoshop, marketing, design, promotions — in a real world setting, where at the end of the semester they have something meaningful to show for their work.

Many high school students also fill their required community service hours through working at Big Heavy World, which makes a difference to them in the same ways that it does college interns. More importantly, Big Heavy World is an expressive, open door, creative outlet for a lot of kids who have nowhere to go after school, and might otherwise flounder through not being afforded the outlet of getting to contribute the skills they have to offer. A lot of kids spend many hours here after school and consequently are learning and being productive, when they otherwise might not be. Big Heavy World is a resource, not only for musicians, but for the people who volunteer here and get to apply their skills and have something to show for their hard work at the end of the day.

Q: What plans for the future do you see for Big Heavy World?

A: Big Heavy World has so many aspirations and projects in the works. Unfortunately, there is a severe shortage of financing to complete them. However, during the past nine years, we have been able to create so much, with very little resources by way of fund-

feel it will more vastly enable us to reach artists and bands in the community. Plus, having a radio station works to further our goal of promoting Vermont-based music; the more people who can be exposed to the artistry coming out of Vermont, the better, in our minds.

Q: What does BHW need most right now from the Vermont community to succeed?

A: Big Heavy World has managed to exist for nearly a decade with virtually no funding. We generate all the money it takes to undertake projects ourselves. We have fundraisers, benefit shows, and occasionally get grants. However, Big Heavy World has absolutely no regular source of income — we have no benefactor or endowment as means of an operations budget. The people who sweat and toil here are volunteers and do it out of passion. Jim Lockridge and I often fantasize about the magnitude of what we could achieve if we simply had a meager operations budget stemming from regular, annual funding. We have accomplished so much thus far, starting from scratch, and with just under \$90,000 a year we feel we could conquer the world, because that's all the operations funding we need to be self-sustaining. Life would sure be a lot easier if we had a consistent source of revenue to operate. If we had this, the possibilities and degree of achievement would be infinite.

To find out more about Big Heavy World and the Jukebox Project, go to www.bigheavyworld.com.