

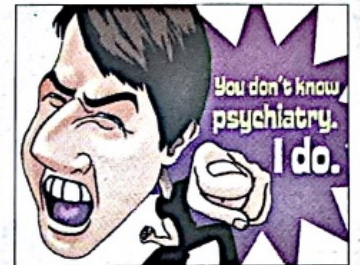
SIN & R

Sacramento News & Review

FREE

**BEAT GENERATION:
WEST SAC COPS
ACCUSED OF BRUTALITY**

See News, page 13.



**ALANIS, REDUX;
TOM CRUISE, NUTS**

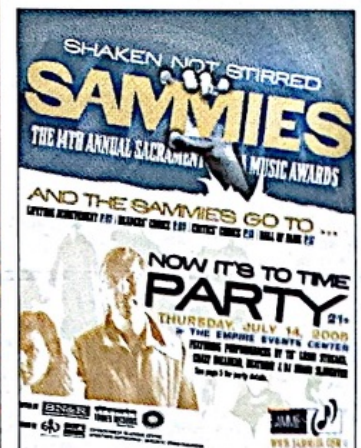
See In the mix, page 55.

**EXERCISE—
IT'S FOR THE BIRD**

See 15 minutes, page 71.

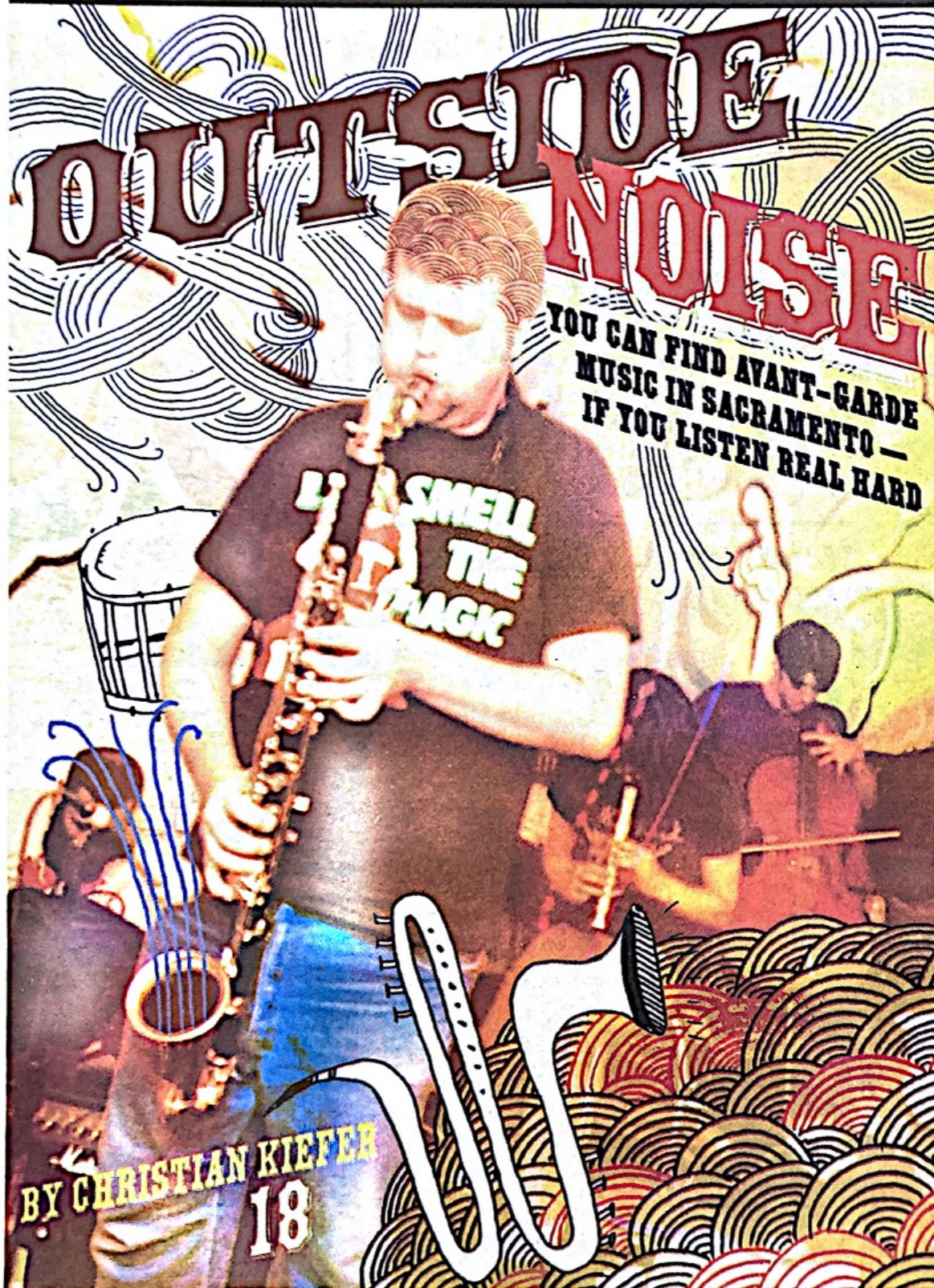
**GREAT
BREAKFAST,
NO WAITING**

See Food stuff, page 37.



**IT'S SAMMIES TIME!
THE PARTY, THE WINNERS
AND THE MUSIC**

See the official program, inserted.



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WORDS

About The Nation

A Matter of Opinion

Victor S. Navasky
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

The best line about opinion magazines in Victor S. Navasky's new memoir, *A Matter of Opinion*, comes not from the author, but from conservative sage William F. Buckley. When asked if his money-losing National Review would ever turn a profit, Buckley replies, "A profit? You don't expect the church to make a profit, do you?"

Navasky, publisher of the liberal-radical The Nation magazine, seems similarly annoyed by the suggestion that ideological publications should live and die by their balance sheets. Indeed, he labors at length in the new book, persuasively for the most part, to argue that the bottom line is a poor barometer by which to measure the worth of The Nation or other journals of opinion, as Navasky calls them.

"The case for the journal of critical opinion," Navasky writes, "... has always been made in social, political, or cultural terms, never in financial ones."

A Matter of Opinion is a sustained argument and defense of The Nation. Still, along the way Navasky tells of his personal history growing up in New York City, attending Swarthmore College, Yale Law School and Harvard Business School. While at Yale, Navasky founded a satirical magazine called the Monocle and later wrote and edited for The New York Times Magazine. He rubbed elbows with the rich and influential. The book drops names left and right, tossing off

lines like "A few months later, [my wife] Annie and I were invited to a small but high-powered dinner at [Wall Street mogul and former Nation publisher] Arthur Carter's country home in Roxbury, Connecticut."

Navasky is a journalist with a developed social conscience and a sense of mission, and *A Matter of Opinion* really shines in showing how the publisher of an ideologically left magazine balances the demands of solvency with those of, well, being an ideologically left magazine. Navasky's glaring blind spot is his failure to reconcile or even seriously address the inherent tension between his mission of sticking it to the man and the fact that The Nation's patrons—those who keep the perpetual money loser afloat with six-figure contributions—are themselves the wealthy elite.

Navasky misses the point again when, on the last page of his book, he asks whether "the fact that these journals [like The Nation] are of, by, and for elites render them inappropriate vehicles for building democratic culture." When he brings Frankfurt School theoretician Theodor Adorno to the defense of The Nation—defending jargon-laden academese

because its impenetrability resists commercialization and appropriation—one almost wonders if Navasky is joking.

But Navasky's writing is refreshingly jargon-free. He writes in a conversational style, skipping around within the narrative when appropriate without losing or confusing the reader. He isn't shy about defending unpopular views The Nation has espoused in the past or admitting mistakes.

And despite Navasky's rich friends and high-powered connections, he doesn't take himself too seriously, it seems. When The Nation hired Calvin Trillin to write a column, he got a "no diddling" clause that allowed him to take shots at then-editor Navasky. Trillin proceeded to characterize his editor as "wily and parsimonious" and his publication as "a pinko magazine printed on very cheap paper."

Navasky writes: "I want to say something about the charge that The Nation, or the journal of opinion as a matter of definition, is ideological. ... I plead guilty. I am a practicing ideologist publishing an ideological magazine."

And with that simple statement, Navasky gives a succinct view of The Nation and his role as a journalist. Certainly, the climate of discourse in America is better with than without Navasky and The Nation. □



POET'S CORNER

Summer Solstice

The sun melts
In overhead bowers

leaks under shrubs
and granite boulders

creates pools
of Midas gold

this summer evening
almost too bright

but time for bodies
to cool, talk of dreams

stars, on the late shift,
scarce in time.

—Jeanine Stevens
Sacramento

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