



Steve Albini

Sticks and stones may break my plexiglass

Hell, I thought it was a simple enough idea. Get a bunch of people together and have them throw things at me for a couple hours. No big deal, but when I tried to explain it to anybody it got real complicated all of a sudden.

"We can't throw rocks, can we?" Sure.
 "Yeah, but can we hit you?" If you want.
 "How about a brick?" Sure, anything.
 "Even, like a big bucket full of pig entrails?" Yeah, no problem.

ONLY A FEW people even asked why I was going to have a bunch of people throw things at me. I guess they just thought it was something I did all the time.

"Hey guys, wanna come over for a couple beers and watch Monday Night Football and throw things at me? Great. See ya."

I was doing it for this art class I'm in. It's one of those art classes where they'll let you call anything art, like dangling horse gonads from the ceiling or shaving your beard to the tune of the Blue Danube. The perfect place to let me get weird.

My original idea was to put up a sheet of this new bulletproof Lexan at a firing range, stand behind it and let anybody who wanted to take a shot at me. That got nixed when I found out that new bulletproof Lexan costs \$100 a square foot. Tough, pal.

The easiest way to downscale the project was to use a thinner sheet of regular plexiglass and just let people throw things.

ON AN OLD KIDDIE show, I saw Sandy Koufax throw a bunch of fastballs at a plexiglass sheet and nothing happened. If Sandy Koufax's fastballs couldn't break a sheet of plexiglass, I was pretty sure a bunch of neurotics with rocks wouldn't do much damage.

People who went to the trouble of throwing things ought to have at least a fighting

chance of being able to hurt me, so I decided I wouldn't fix the plexiglass if it got broken or knocked down, and I wouldn't press charges if I got hurt. That alone should have brought out bloodthirsty ROTCs and fratboys.

I figured that the people who would be most willing to throw things at me would be people who hated me for one reason or another. For that reason, I gave an open invitation to any members of NROTC (Northwestern's equivalent to the Hitler Youth) or Kappa Alpha Theta (Northwestern's equivalent to a whites-only women's bridge club).

Despite these blanket invitations, not a single Theta bitch showed up, and only one babykiller (and he was a friend of mine).

SINCE FRATBOYS ARE at least a couple of steps down from human on the evolutionary ladder, I thought they'd be ecstatic to have a free poke at their leading detractor.

A few days before the whole thing took place, I hand-delivered bundles of three invitations to a bunch of frats on north campus. I explained in detail that anybody who wanted to could come down and throw anything they wanted at me. The fratboys' twisted grins and vicious laughter reaffirmed my belief that money breeds sadism.

Only two fratboys even showed up, and one of them hardly counts as such, being the only human being in the greek system. I kept wondering what I had done wrong. I had given people who have every reason to despise me *carte blanche* to hit me with anything they could throw ten yards, yet only a couple took the bait.

I had 100 invitations printed up, and delivered them to the aforementioned greeks and a lot of friends. I also provided for anyone who might want to throw



Here I am dodging a brick while a crowd of thousands looks on

something at me but didn't have an invitation by allowing a pay-as-you-throw system for a buck a shot.

EVEN IF TOO LITTLE human garbage showed up, the people who did come made up for it. People claiming to be my friends were there spot on time, waiting to throw things at me.

Before the actual throwing started, my best friend on the face of the earth, John Bohnen, helped me test the plexiglass sheet by throwing a bowling pin at it. I had told him earlier about Sandy Koufax, and he said he saw a commercial in which Harmon Killibrew (the only baseball player in Minnesota) and some buddies took a bunch of baseball bats to a big sheet of plexiglass, "and all they got," he said, quoting from that commercial, "was a bunch of broken bats."

We both chuckled about that for under a minute. Despite the greats of baseball, the bowling pin went crashing through the plexiglass like, well, like a bowling pin through plexiglass.

It was much too late to do anything about the screen, so I tried to resign myself to the notion that a large number of people would be throwing things at me, and that I would be relatively unprotected. You try resigning yourself to that sometime—it's not easy.

THE ACRYLIC SCREEN didn't last too long. The first heavy object thrown, a brick covered in Bill Gallivan's spit (really—he'd been saving a jar of the stuff) took out most of one corner, and almost every successive throw knocked out more hunks of plexiglass.

Considering that I was constantly hurling abuse in their direction, I'm surprised the crowd didn't get downright ugly.

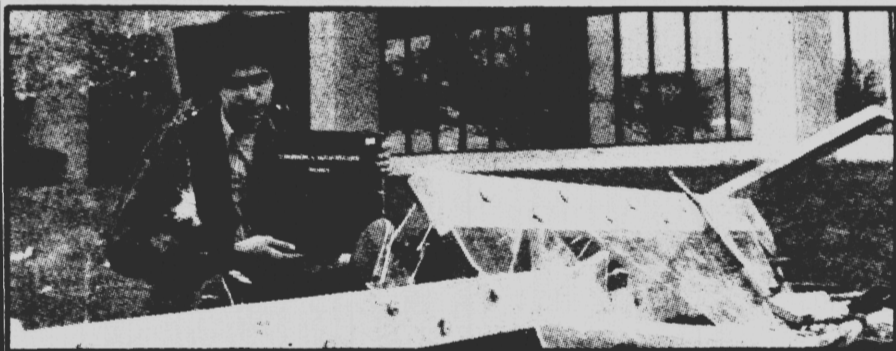
By the time Stefan Rosner threw his paper bag full of shit (which showered everyone but me) there was a gaping hole in the middle of the screen, which let somebody's cup of yogurt splatter my legs.

Other swell things that were thrown included a fried chicken and watermelon boxed dinner, records (both by bands I hate and the band that fired me), dozens of rocks, a bag of smelt, tomatoes, eggs, a hamburger, a can of toiletbowl cleaner (which killed the grass where it landed), a guitar, a urine specimen, a condom filled with mayonnaise, a baggie of spaghetti-ohs, a can of whipped cream, several bottles, lots of yogurt, a shoe and a live baby chick.

THE BABY CHICK was too cool, if you ask me, but all the hippies and poetry majors just about died when Steve Spar stepped up to the firing line with the cute little baby chick. It would have been better, he later told me, if the baby chick had splattered all over the plexiglass. I'd have to agree.

The whole deal only lasted about an hour and a half, I didn't get hurt, and only seven people were willing to pay a buck to throw something at me. I bought lunch for some friends with those seven dollars.

Including the cost of advertising and materials, I'd blown close to \$175 on this project, but seven bucks seemed like an acceptable return. Hey, seven bucks—it's better than being hit with a rock, right?



Here you see the devastation caused by an Emerson Lake & Palmer album.

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