

# The Reviewer

a very short play in one act

by Chris Hunt

Scene opens: A rock concert. About three hundred people cluster around the front of a fairly large stage. A three-man band plays funky bluesy rock and roll. The lead singer and guitar player WILD T is very active. They are playing Wild Thing. Just behind the crowd stands THE REVIEWER. He is a non-descript sort, with just slightly scruffy attire and he stands with his arms folded, a small note pad in his hand, looking interested. Next to him is ARTHUR, a slightly better dressed man. The two look very similar.

ARTHUR: (shouting over the music and leaning close to the REVIEWER) ...I SAID, I'D LIKE TO HEAR MORE OF THE BAND!!!

REVIEWER: (wincing as Arthur shouts unnecessarily loudly into his ear) WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!! - SORRY! (the REVIEWER realizes that the band has come to a lull in the song where WILD T is playing a soft bluesy solo and there is no need to shout anymore) Sorry. What do you mean?

ARTHUR: I mean there's too much of him and not enough of the band.

REVIEWER: Look (pointing at poster on far wall advertising the show) It says "Wild T and the Spirit" - It's like "Buddy Holly and the Crickets" or "Jimi Hendrix and the Experience" - would you go see "The News" without Huey Lewis or "The Slugs" without Doug?

WILD T and the SPIRIT Begin to play again - they are very good.

ARTHUR: (speaks, but we can't hear him over the music)

REVIEWER: WHAT?!

ARTHUR: I SAID, NEVERMIND!!

Both ARTHUR and the REVIEWER stand and watch for a minute in silence. The REVIEWER scribbles in his notepad occasionally. Suddenly he looks up and jabs ARTHUR.

REVIEWER: HOW ABOUT THIS?! - "WILD T CRANKED OUT YET ANOTHER ASTOUNDING DISPLAY OF TALENT AND SHOWMANSHIP, WRITHING WITH HIS GUITAR, SQUEEZING IT'S LITTLE THROAT.. (WILD T finishes his set, telling the cheering crowd he will be back in fifteen minutes just before the Reviewer finishes this, causing two people in front of him to look back confusedly; there is a pregnant pause as the Reviewer smiles sheepishly) .. Ah...Sorry, where was I? (shifts through his notes) oh yeah - "squeezing it's little throat until it spews gibbering streams of electric static in G major"

ARTHUR: You're Kidding, right?

REVIEWER: What do you mean?

ARTHUR: I mean, no one wants to hear that Rollig Stone rhetoric anymore. It's passe.

REVIEWER: So I guess "We all dug for small change to buy just a few more bars of Wild T's warm chocolate fudge topping guitar..."

ARTHUR: Good Lord, you've lost it.

REVIEWER: ...and a few more slivered almonds from the thumping, pumping roots of everything nourishing the thriving blossoms from Wild T's guitar, the bass player's groove...

ARTHUR: I can't believe you can just invent this crap off the top of your head like this..

REVIEWER: Shut up! I think I'm coming to a kind of climax here.. ahh... "the bass player's groove"...ah...had .. "siamese relationship with the drummer's kick." Yeah, there we go..(scribbles furiously in his notebook)

ARTHUR: I thought you didn't review cover bands.

REVIEWER: (looks up startled from his notepad) Huh? Oh, you mean cover bands. No, I don't, why?

ARTHUR: This guy seems to do a lot of covers. And his big hit is a real stinker.

REVIEWER: Yeah, I noticed that - "Midnight Blue"- seemed kind of out of place, don't you think?

ARTHUR: Downright cheesy.

REVIEWER: (has suddenly picked up his notepad again) How do you spell "Pavorotti"?

ARTHUR: P-A-V-O-R-O-T-T-I I think, why?

REVIEWER: (Scribbles for a minute and looks up) How about this - "A low point in the evening, Wild T's performance of his big hit 'Midnight Blue' left this reviewer with the same impression one might get if, in the middle of a recital of Verdi arias, Luciano Pavorotti broke into "Venus, Goddess of Love That You Are"

ARTHUR: Now that one I like. Listen, about this cover band thing...Why is this guy not a cover band?

REVIEWER: Hmm? (looking up from his pad) Oh, because he doesn't do covers.

ARTHUR: What?

From stage left wanders the FAIRY GODMOTHER, dressed in a black body suit and tight black jeans, carrying two large and obviously grotesquely pineapple drinks with little umbrellas in them. She walks up to Arthur, gesturing at unseen friends with her oversized drinks.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Excuse me, could you hold on to one of these for a second? Thanks (as Arthur takes one of the drinks). The FAIRY GODMOTHER, holding one drink precariously in her hand, adjusts her body suit around her shoulders.

ARTHUR: Who the hell are you?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: (as she takes her drink back) I'm his (jerks her head towards the furiously scribbling REVIEWER) fairy godmother. I usually end up resolving his conflicts.

ARTHUR: His what? You do what? You're who?

REVIEWER: (looks up) Oh, hi. What took you so long?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Sorry, I had to visit another guy down at the Lunar Rogue.

ARTHUR: I'm going to get another beer...

FAIRY GODMOTHER: No, wait. I've got to explain cover bands to you. You see, there are basically three definitions of the word 'cover'...

ARTHUR: I'm definitely going for another beer. No. Wait. Okay (straightens himself), why are you telling me this? And, incidentally, who the hell are you? (suddenly looks around in panic) and where did he go? (we realize that the REVIEWER has disappeared)

FAIRY GODMOTHER: I haven't got a lot of time here, so just listen. (the FAIRY GODMOTHER is having a hard time gesturing and keeping her drinks level) The first kind of cover is like Scarecrow or The Back Doors. They try to get as close to the original so that the drunken audience can close their eyes and pretend right? The second one is like someone famous covering some really obscure song, right? like the Dead doing "The Monkey and the Engineer" right? The third one is like...

ARTHUR: The Dead do "The Monkey and The Engineer"?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: ..Don't interrupt me. Now where was I? Shit.

ARTHUR: The third one?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Yeah, thanks. ahh'..

WILD T and THE SPIRIT have taken the stage again and burst into "I Feel Good" with a real funky swing. The crowd cheers wildly.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: The third one (but we can no longer hear her)..

ARTHUR: WHAT?!

The REVIEWER reappears, carrying a double Tom Collins and smoking a cigarette. He pokes Arthur with the straw in his drink. Arthur turns.

REVIEWER: HERE! (shouting and leaning forward offering his drink) HOLD THIS!

ARTHUR takes the drink as the REVIEWER pulls out his pad and drops his cigarette on the floor and steps on it.

REVIEWER: (shouting) WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS? - .."THE MOOD OF WILD T'S SLOW AND SUMPTUOUS BLUES GUITAR, THE WRIGGLING, SILKY-SMOOTH RIFFS PUNCTURING THE EASY GROOVE OF THE BASS AND DRUM, SAILING OFF FOR A BIT TO LAND WITH A SLAP OF A SHARP FULL CHORD CHOP" - PRETTY GOOD, HUH? GOT IT FROM A DRUNK GUY IN THE CAN! (the REVIEWER continues to look at his notes and chuckle to himself)

ARTHUR: I DIDN'T CATCH ALL OF IT! (he turns back to the FAIRY GODMOTHER but she is gone) HEY! WHERE'D YOUR FAIRY GODMOTHER GO?

WILD T has ended "I Feel Good" and is talking about the next tune

REVIEWER: I dunno. Why? Hey, is that my drink?

ARTHUR: Yes. Here (hands the REVIEWER back his Tom Collins - he seems very pleased with this) She was going to tell me what the third kind of cover was.

REVIEWER: (through sipping his drink) What were the first two?

ARTHUR: The Back Doors, and the Grateful Dead singing old Monkey's tunes or something.

REVIEWER: Oh. Too bad, I usually count on her to finish these little arguments.

ARTHUR: So you don't know?

REVIEWER: Know what?

ARTHUR: What the third kind of cover is.

REVIEWER: (craning his neck towards the stage, disinterested) Nope.

There is a long pause, as both men watch the show - things are heating up and the crowd is cheering wildly

ARTHUR: So that's it, then.

REVIEWER: What's it?

ARTHUR: Nevermind.

The show continues, and we see WILD T finish with a big finale of a Jimi Hendrix classic. The crowd screams for more, but the lights come on and the bar begins to close. People file out chatting. The REVIEWER continues scribbling in his notepad. A MAN walks up to him.

MAN: Hey, buddy, have you got a light, man?

REVIEWER: (looks up) What? Oh yeah, sure. (digs in his pocket for matches and lights the MAN's cigarette)

MAN: Great show, huh?

REVIEWER: Yeah, not bad at all.

MAN: (gesturing loosely towards the now empty stage) Ever notice how people can do covers of songs and they really get into the meaning of the song? It's like WILD T's got something he wants to say about the tune, y'know? Something you never thought of before. Awsome.

REVIEWER: (who has been writing furiously and not paying attention) What was that? Sorry, I'm trying to figure something out here.

MAN: Oh, nothing. Thanks for the light, man. (he wanders off, finds the FAIRY GODMOTHER and they walk off arm in arm)

ARTHUR: (pokes the REVIEWER) There's a show next Thursday. Southern Justice, I think. You going?

REVIEWER: Nahh.. I don't review cover bands.

- BLACKOUT -