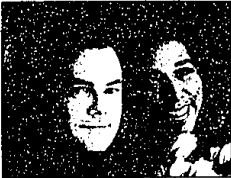


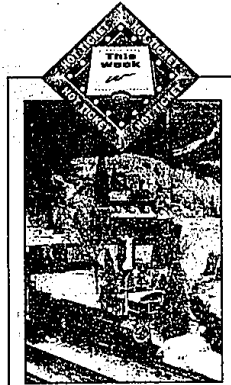
Kevin M. Burrows as "Al" and Rebecca Sherman as "Kristine" perform "Sing" in "A Chorus Line," at the Detroit Opera House, (313) 645-6666.



Celebrate "Winter Solstice" with the jazzy Turtle Island String Quartet, pop vocalists Tuck & Patti, and contemporary pianist Philip Aaberg at Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall, Detroit, (313) 833-3700.



Lauren Hutchinson and Lane Judge discover how a hummingbird uses its beak to gather food at "You Are What You Eat" at Cranbrook Institute of Science, 1221 N. Woodward, Bloomfield Hills, (810) 645-3200.



Hot Tip: World's largest mobile model train display chugs into Novi Display Center, (1-96 at Novi Road, exit 162) Dec. 27-29. The Toy and Hobby Expo '96 features toy and model electric trains. For more information, call (313) 455-2110.

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

WHAT TO DO, WHERE TO GO

KEELY WYGONIK, EDITOR • 313-953-2105

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Band of the Year

Who: The Suicide Machines
What/When: The 1996 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers' Band of the Year performs with Split and Suburban Delinquents Friday, Dec. 27; Earth Mover and Gutter Punk Saturday, Dec. 28; and special guests Sunday, Dec. 29. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. for the all-ages show.
Where: The Magic Stick in the Majestic complex, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit.
How: \$6 in advance. For more information, call (313) 833-9700.



Band of the Year:

The punk/ska outfit The Suicide Machines have been chosen The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers' Band of the Year in part because of its super-charged live shows. Above, well-inked bassist Royce Nunley and guitarist/vocalist Dan Lukacinsky back singer Jason Navarro (partially blocked by Nunley) during a show at Emerald City in Santa Barbara, Calif., in mid-November.

THE SUICIDE MACHINES: A band of the year TO DIE FOR

By CHRISTINA FUOCO
 Staff Writer

In a sea of grim alternative rock and heart-breaking love ballads, The Suicide Machines have injected fun back into music.

Combative humor, a three-chord crunch, Adrenalin-charged energy and scream-along lyrics made the power-punk band's debut album "Destruction by Definition" (Hollywood) one of 1996's best.

For the Detroit band, however, 1996 meant a lot more than putting out an album. Through relentlessly touring the United States and making a stop in Japan, The Suicide Machines built up a grassroots following before releasing any singles or videos. Seven months after the release of "Destruction by Definition," Hollywood Records released the single "No Face" to radio. The week of Dec. 2 "No Face" was the second most added song at alternative radio.

The band was introduced to a nationwide audience Friday, Aug. 23-Sunday, Aug. 25, when an MTV Sports! episode featured The Suicide Machines' live performance taped July 4 in Phoenix.

When they're not on the road, the members of The Suicide Machines keep busy with their own projects. Bassist Royce Nunley has Broken Spoke Records which released two 7" CDs by Midwest bands this year. Singer Jason Navarro performs with the emotional hard core band Cleans Down. Drummer Derek Grant has run Sluggo's Old Skool Records for five years selling CDs by bands like

The Exceptions, One Eye Open, the Parke Kings and old demos by The Suicide Machines on the road.

The Suicide Machines' never-say-die attitude, fun-filled album, and hard work has earned the band The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers' 1996 Band of the Year award.

Critical praise has been following The Suicide Machines since the release "Destruction by Definition" in May. Cleveland-based Alternative Press magazine said "The Suicide Machines have gone and released one of the best American pop albums of 1996." Rip said with "the ska-punk uprising gaining momentum, this might be the burgeoning second-generation's best group yet." Huh magazine raved "The Suicide Machines are definitely a new force to be reckoned with."

Formed in March 1991 by Navarro formerly of Liviano and Redford, and guitarist/vocalist Dan Lukacinsky of Redford, The Suicide Machines originally billed itself Jack Kevorkian and The Suicide Machines. The band subsequently shortened the name due to confusion and obvious other legal problems.

Following a debut gig in a friend's basement, the group opened for the Mighty Mighty Bosstones in 1992. The next year, The Suicide Machines opened Rancid's first Detroit show at Grounds Coffeehouse at the University of Detroit Mercy. In the fall of 1994, the band rejoined Rancid on stage in front of 900 people at St. Andrew's Hall.

Inspired, The Suicide Machines set up their own tours, including a

1994 west coast stint and last year's nationwide trek with fellow ska punks Buck-O-Nine.

In the meantime, The Suicide Machines released two demos "Green World" and "The Essential" along with a 7". The band's big break came in 1995 when The Suicide Machines released a split CD "Skank for Brains" with San Francisco's Rudiments on Dill Records. A song from the album, "New Girl" waseled its way onto

Detroit radio creating a buzz in the city. The Walt Disney-owned label Hollywood Records sniffed around and swept up the band.

Sticking with his punk ethic, Grant was skeptical about signing a label deal. He agreed after hearing Hollywood's plan to break The Suicide Machines through a grassroots campaign which included the delay in releasing the first single.

"I was brought up in the punk scene where major labels are evil. It took a lot of convincing to get me to even sign the contract. When we did the deal, the worst thing we can do is go straight to radio and video and be a flash in the pan like countless other bands have done," he said.

The first single, "No Face" wasn't The Suicide Machines' first choice. The band would have liked to have seen "S.O.S." as the first single.

"It's not even a song that we play live. It's the one song on the record I think we might have done a little too much studio work on with the keyboards and the whole nine yards. We thought it was kind of a bad choice, but we'll come up with an idea or

some way to sort of make the best of the situation."

Speaking of making the best of a situation, The Suicide Machines have agreed to do their first video—something they are not necessarily thrilled about.

"I'm not too hip on MTV," Grant said.

The band compromised with its record label and will not appear in the video.

"Basically the video is going to show the contrast between city life—people going into work and going home and I guess the majority of the population pretending like everything's peachy—and the other side. The homeless people, people who get shot. City life just goes by. They want to keep that other side hidden so it doesn't ruin their day."

Besides the new video, the new year will bring yet another tour. It's bring, Grant said, but fun. The Suicide Machines have hit the road with the likes of Rancid, Social Distortion, The Descendents and Face to Face, and as part of The Vans Warped Tour.

"Of all the tours we've had, the most surprising tour was the Specials' tour. They were one of the main influences on pretty much everybody. That's how everybody got into ska. When I was like real young and The Specials were still kicking in the early '80s, I got into them and Madness and stuff like that," he said.

Someday soon, kids will be citing The Suicide Machines as an influence.



MOVIES

In 1996 films worked best in small doses

By JOHN MONAGHAN
 SPECIAL WRITER

Many of my favorite moments in the movies this year were just that: parts of not-always-cohesive wholes. When I think back, images more than entire movies flash across my memory.

There was Frances McDormand's very pregnant Northern Minnesota sheriff in "Fargo," checking out a grisly crime scene or politely grilling a suspect. In "Bansquat," the young artist looking above Manhattan highrises to the sea-boarder hanging ten. Or in "Shine," the intense composer whose concert debut is so fierce and passionate that it leaves him sprawled on the floor.

How about the two big science fiction movies,

"Mars Attacks!" and "Independence Day," where most of our national monuments were blasted to smithereens?

Then there were those movies which combined those moments to make something entirely satisfying. In no particular order:

"Vertigo." Many call this 1956 romantic thriller Alfred Hitchcock's most personal film, a dark exploration of obsessive love and makeover starring Jimmy Stewart and Kim Novak. The 40th anniversary restoration boosted the sound and color to breathtaking effect, highlighted by what may be Bernard Herrmann's best-loved musical score.

"Secrets and Lies." A working class family learn to communicate after years of the title maladies in this typically insightful drama from

British director Mike Leigh. Hands down the best performances of the year, the kind of ensemble acting that looks so effortless but comes from months of rehearsal.

"Dead Man Walking." Though it opened elsewhere at the end of 1995, Detroit didn't get Tim Robbins' profound treatise on modern crime and punishment until mid-January. Susan Sarandon deservedly won an Oscar for her nun counseling a death row inmate while Sean Penn proved once again why he should remain in front of the camera instead of making his own ponderous films behind it.

"Lone Star." Most folks preferred "Fargo," but I was more enamored with John Sayles' look into

See FILMS, E2



GRACEY PETER

Drama: Sean Penn (left) is comforted by Sister Helen (Susan Sarandon) in the Tim Robbins film "Dead Man Walking."