



Shane, the guy sitting next to me got so hyped during the band's "Charlene" that he spilled two beers down his leg. A Shane original, "Charlene" is a love song to a Holstein dairy cow. No kidding.

For the slightly more mainstream, the dance-till-you-drop Nar Bar, billed as the "Entertainment Mecca of Madtown," is a two-room, one-stage club that screens alternative videos when the bands take breaks (305 W. Johnson, 608-255-5563; cover \$2 to \$7).

If the weather is bearable, the idyllic outdoor stage by the lake at the University of Wisconsin's Memorial Union (800 Langdon St., 608-262-1331) is worth your time. You'll probably find at least one local alternative group (possibly made up of students) playing a set or two here or in the two old German-esque rooms at the union. All three places are free.

Madison's Alternative-Music Must: During a break at O.Cavz., run next door to Essen Haus (514 E. Wilson St., 608-255-4674; usually no cover). A live oompah accordion band playing Julie Andrews's greatest hits isn't something you run into every day.

Before you head home from Madison, check out B-Sides Records (436 State St., 608-255-1977) for every form of music short of classical. Prices range from \$6.99 to \$7.99 for records; CDs are \$11.99. If you're short on lunds, browse through Penny Lane's \$1-to-\$4 used records and \$7.50-to-\$10 CDs, or the comics and novels in the back of the shop (521 State St., 608-255-3229). You'll find such cultural artifacts as Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* (about \$1.50) and an occasional Leonard Nimoy album for \$15.

**S**ince the 1960s, San Francisco has been the classic alternative-music town, for the simple reason that there always have been and always will be more true sickos per inch here than anywhere else in the universe. (We're talking earthquake jokes you wouldn't believe in clubs that are still *tilting*.)

Two of the most charming sickos were my Bay City musician guides, singer/songwriter Doug Orton and Barbara Manning, bassist for World of Pooh. Both are a far cry from "new acoustic," but their music is still oddly inspiring. At 150 decibels (30 decibels over the pain threshold), you certainly can't ignore it. Their music is what Orton calls "44 word music," meaning lots of esoteric lyrics, but you can dance to it. Music in the tradition of the Airplane and the Dead—San Francisco's eternal alternative-music mainstays.

Since that's what these guys play, that's what they took me to see.

Most of San Francisco's best clubs are concentrated in two small areas: the Haight and south of Market, making the alternative scene here energy-efficient almost to a fault—which is a good thing.

here in the Land of the Loud Back, you hardly want to move. I mean, Orton took me first to the Paradise Lounge (1501 Folsom St., 415-861-6906; cover \$5 to \$6), where they have three bands performing on three stages. The bad news is, two out of three bands ate it. ("They both used to be better," Orton apolo-

Sometime Violent Femmes horn and flute player Sigmund Snopek III regularly plays solo at Madison clubs, including Club de Wash. His fish glove is understated compared with the psychedelic backdrop he uses on stage.

## SAN FRANCISCO