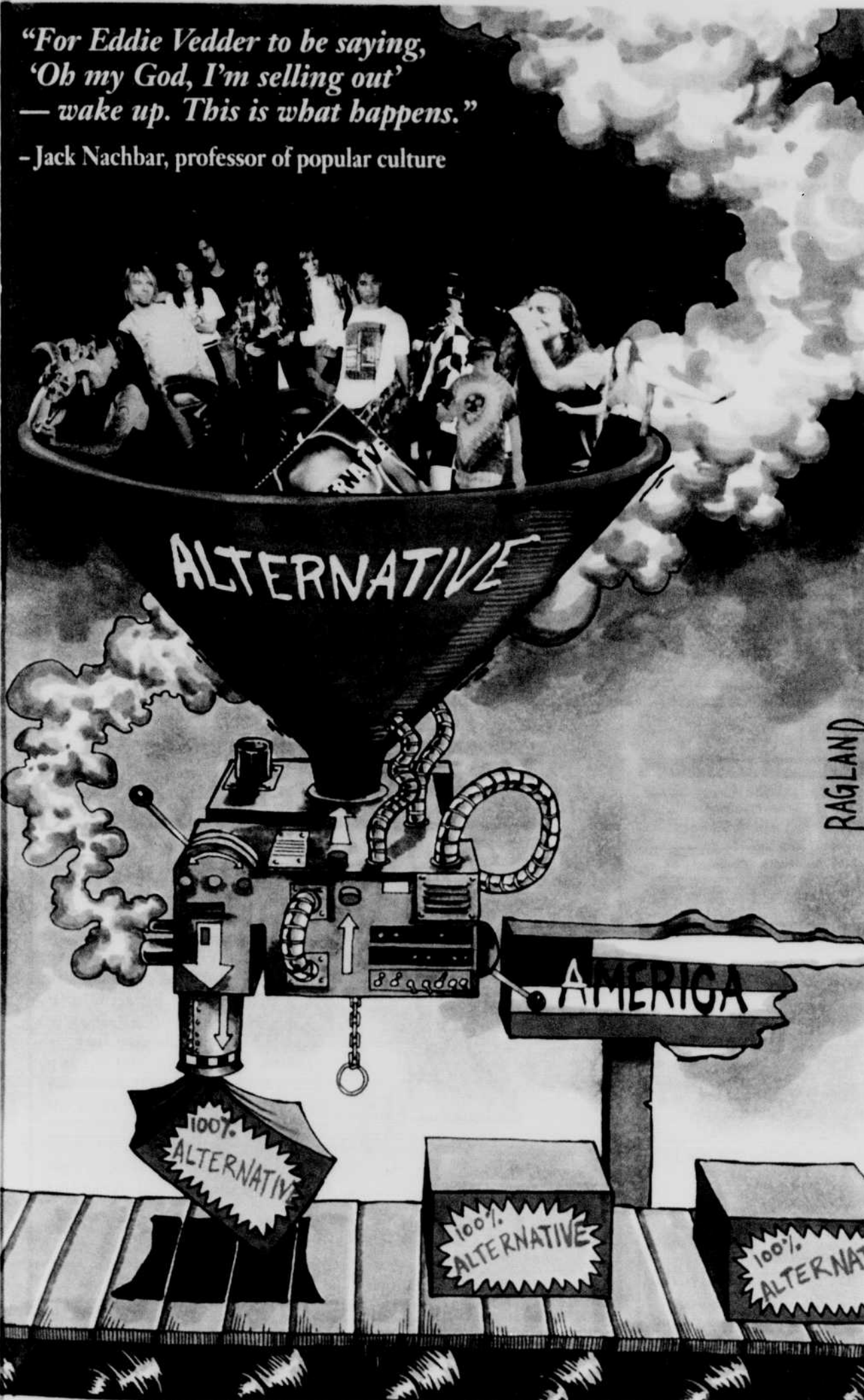


*"For Eddie Vedder to be saying,
'Oh my God, I'm selling out'
— wake up. This is what happens."*

— Jack Nachbar, professor of popular culture



Your guide to the immortally swanky:

Clumsy labels like mainstream and alternative will be forever tossed around like snowballs, but there are some things in this world that (according to me) are objectively, abidingly and forever cool. Conveniently, they're listed below. You might find it ironic, after all this yammering, to provide such a list. But that's okay, because irony is cool, too.

Wraparound sunglasses: Lou Reed, the coolest guy ever to grow old, wore them all the time when he fronted The Velvet Underground, the coolest band ever to die young. Instant hipness.

Aretha Franklin: The undisputed Queen of Soul, Aretha has more cool in F sharp than most people have in an octave.

Bugs Bunny: Especially in that one cartoon where he outsmarted the hillbillies with a square dance song. The smirk. The carrot. The true definition of grace under pressure. Subversive, too.

The beatniks: These cats were all about cool, and everything they touched turned hip. If it weren't for the beats, every coffee-house philosopher you know would be just another morbid-looking poet with a bad goatee.

The Star Wars movies: Everything you ever wanted from escapist entertainment in two hours of filmmaking genius. Bomb-out space battles, scary villains, Harrison Ford and a dash of eastern mysticism.

Ayn Rand: Author of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, this 20th century writer/philosopher made it OK to be cold, calculating and selfish. Plus, she inspired the first three Rush albums. All right!

Nostalgia: In the last 10 years, '60s nostalgia has given way to '70s revival to '80s retrospection. At this rate, we'll be nostalgic about April by May. The Good Old Days may not have always been cool, but reminiscing about them is.

Japanimation: Who remembers *Battle of the Planets*, the coolest weekday cartoon in history? Thank the genius of Japanese animation for that one, along with *Akira*, *Bubblegum Crisis*, *Vampire Hunters* and *Voltron*. Go, Speed Racer, go!

Vaudeville: You'll never find a better example of comic timing than an old Abbott and Costello routine. Vaudeville was cheap, easy entertainment with no pretensions of art and what's more, it's the origin of TV sketch comedy.

Guys named Eddie: Eddie Albert, Eddie Murphy, Eddie Haskell, Eddie Munster, Eddie and the Cruisers, Ed Norton and um, Eddie Vedder.

Surf Music: The Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, and sometimes even The Cramps. Surf music drove Annette and the kids wild at those midnight clam bakes. "C'mon, gang! The waves are super!"

Premature Cynicism: This single phenomenon has fueled everything from punk rock to the Reagan Administration. It's a powerful tool — choose your pose wisely. And remember: When in doubt, pout. ■ Glenn McDonald, *The State News*, Michigan State U.