LEAN ON ME

AKA Pump Up the Volume

extended treatment by

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#6

Night-1

ECU of a radio dial. Male teenagers in voice-over.

TEEN #1
Wanna hear something really raw?

TEEN #2
Always.

TEEN #1
There's this freak who has his own radio show.

Snatches from the scanned stations. It is shortly after 10 PM in middle America.

TEEN #2
Whad'ya mean?

Widen to reveal Holden Chu. He's a lanky, effeminate Oriental. He has the face of a doll and a harelip. He searches the FM bands but can't find the show.

HOLDEN
He broadcasts from his basement. Every night at 10.

Gordon Ballecki wears his waist high and his shoulders low. Part punk, part nerd. He scoffs.

GORDON
Another Holden Chu discovery.

HOLDEN
Seriously, he probably built a little transmitter from a Radio Shack kit. And he simply uses an FM band that nobody else using.

GORDON
How far can he reach?

HOLDEN
I estimate a 5 mile radius. Kids in Edina barely pick him up.

Holden coaxes an intimate voice from the static.

That's him. That's his voice!

The radio voice is ironic and unhurried. A slight tremor.

VOICE
...I dunno, ever have one of those days where everything seems twisted?

You sit and you wonder. Is there anyone out there? In this triggen universe. As twisted as me.

The voice seems driven by a lurching energy.

A silence. The man on the radio heaves a huge sigh. Simultaneously he adds reverb to the sigh-sound to give it texture and pace.

Holden hangs on every word. Gordon is merely intrigued. We hear the sound of a soda being popped.

HOLDEN
(calling it)
That's his Diet Pepsi!

A match is struck.

He smokes cigars.

GORDON
So who is he?

HOLDEN
Nobody knows. He calls himself Mister Happiness.

Note. When on-camera (listening) characters speak, Mark's parallel dialogue fades down but remains coherent. Much of the shooting script should contain parallel dialogue.

VOICE
People ask me, 'How come yer so uncheerful' and I say, look. This place is dead, my school sucks, I have no friends, I'm ugly, the plague is here, the president is an actor, and you ask me?

He burps elaborately. He alertly samples the sound and plays it back enhanced and looped. Yet another obnoxious sound for his FX library.

MARK VO
So anyway here we are on roughly 100 FM which feels like a nice clean little band so far.

GORDON
How old is he? He sounds old.

HOLDEN
All we know is he goes to highschool somewhere here in The Valley and that he's obsessed with sex and death and anything nasty.

GORDON
So who listens to him?

HOLDEN
(grinning)
Probably nobody!

Cut to a montage of Mister Happiness' listeners. They are a mixed bag of teenage loners, freaks, fatties, fairies, poets and punks- in short, the sensitive and the disaffected.

MARK VO
So stay tuned for the all-new "Teen Terrorism Kit". A feature that listeners seem to enjoy.

Helpful Hints on how to brain damage your parents.

And tonight we have number 24 in our ever popular long serie, "100 Interesting Ways To Kill Yorself".

He is wry, tongue in cheek. We hear rustling paper.

And, let's see. We have an out-standing "First Sexual Experience".

Oh and it seems one of my all time fave vice principals, Mr Robert "Smiling Bob" Collgood, over at dear old Hubert Humphrey High, expelled a certain Cheryl Biggs for being pregnant.

More on that later.

And over at Fairfax, they outlawed heavy metal at the dances. Seems metal is the Devil's Music.

He fades up a metal song, to come, perhaps something like Teenage Suicide by ***.

Stay tuned for two hours of listless listening. I'm Mister Happiness and the show is "Straight To Hell".

Opening Titles.

Montage continues under titles. Introduce vignettes of the principal characters. All listening.

Cut to Aaron Berk. He is the Jewish genius, zealot-collector type. He is recording the show while talking on the phone, watching TV and snacking in his affluent bedroom.

VOICE
I dunno about this music but I can see why a lot of kids think the Devil is cool. He's not some hypocrical scumbag.

Cut to Paige Woodward in her den. She is the waspy, athletic tall blond type. She toys with her hair and does her homework. She hides behind a mask of impassivity.

VOICE
Thing is. He's not boring.

Cut to Mazz Mazzilli sitting in a destroyed automobile in a destroyed backyard nursing a beer and sad thoughts. He repeatedly stabs his knife into the dashboard.

VOICE
He understands a teenager's needs.

Cut to an upper-middle-class suburban house. Normal except for the rather large TV antenna.

Crawl into a blackened basement window.

Dissolve to the basement. We see a darkroom. The sign says

KEEP OUT - BEWARE
CHEMICAL BOOBY TRAP

Dissolve into the darkroom. Revealed is a tiny amateur radio studio.

Mark Hunt is a willowy teenager with a prominent brow and angular features. Something about the way he carries his body gives him an awkward but noble aspect. He is a rare creature.

He plays air-guitar to Keith Richard's solo. He knows every note. He is a suburban soulman. The studio is decorated with eclectic hero posters.

In performance ecstacy, Mark falls into the turntable. The song screeches off.

MARK
Hmm. Interesting fade.

He experiments with the effect of the screeching needle and the screeching guitar.

He shrugs, sits, sulks, brightens. Is he slightly crazy?

Okay, down to business. I got my food.

(sips soda)

I got my Garcia Vega.

(puffs cigar)

And I got that feeling.

(sniffs air)
I got that familiar feeling that
something rank is going down out there.

He feels the air.

I can smell it. I can taste it.
Mr Happiness Is Happening.

He plays a clip of wolves howling in the distance and Dracula saying "Leesten to them...

MARK
(joining)
What <u>muuusic</u> they make.

He slumps moodily. He's in no hurry. He is effortlessly deadpan, almost sadly so.

MARK
I can't help thinking about Collgood expelling a senior just because she doesn't fit in his idea of the rah-rah, gung-ho, junior exec type.

Guys like that really make me puke. Y'know, hanging around with Do-goods, letting them call him by his first name when not on school property.

I dunno. Maybe some teachers are okay. But the plague of their profession are the ambitious one who climb up in the world and become vice principals.

He is a baby Jack Nicholson. His amazement somehow renders his indignation sweet, even adorable.

Ever think about that?

Think about it.

Really.

Any person that would elect to stay in highschool after he graduated has gotta defective. And to want to be a cop in highschool is doubly defective.

Cut back to Holden's room. Gordon giggles. A fan is born.

GORDON
So he just rants and raves for two solid hours?

HOLDEN
It's cool. He can't stand anything.

Cut back to Mark. He warms up to a new target.

MARK
The only thing I hate as much as Vice Principals is Guidance Counselors.

I happen to have in my hands a clandestine copy of a memo that was written by one mister Keith Deaver,

guidance counselor, at the very same school that kicked out Miss Biggs.

He consults an official letter from his clutter.

(reading)
'I find Cheryl is un-remorseful about her unfortunate condition and unwilling to conceal it or minimize its effect on the morale of the student population'.

Hmm. A lot of assumptions packed into one sentence. I don't appreciate assumptions, do you?

Cut a pregnant black girl, Cheryl Biggs, sitting unhappily in her room. Her little sister enters carrying an extension phone.

SISTER
Cheryl! 'Lissa says you're on the radio.

The caller informs Cheryl of Mark's show. She tunes her radio. She finds Mark's rambling dissertation.

MARK VO
Think of this. If they knew <u>anything</u> about the tactics of happiness and success; would they have ended up as guidance counselors?

He inserts a sound effect. To come.

Imagine a creep like Deaver trying to inspire Restless Youth with the soul of a Failed Bureaucrat.

So I say simply. <u>Death</u> to all Guidance Counselors!

CHERYL
A'right!

Cut back to Mark.

MARK
Whad'ya say we call him up? See "remourseful" he is.

He consults a print-out directory of phone numbers.

MARK
Mister Happiness just happens to have the home phone numbers of every employee of the Valley School Board.

He dials Deaver happily.

Dum de dum de dah.

DEAVER VO
Deaver Residence.

MARK
Hi, Mr Deaver? You're on the air sir, with Radio WSTH and we're doing a piece on high school kids and I understand you're a guidance counselor?

DEAVER VO
(off guard)
Yes, um, I'm, I'm head of guidance at Hurbert Humphrey High here in

MARK
(interrupting)
Could you tell us a little bit about what you do?

DEAVER
Well, I, I run a comprehensive American values program in which we discuss uh, ethical.

Mark cuts him off.

MARK
What do you say to Young People who look around and see that America has become like, a <u>sleazy</u> country?

DEAVER
Well, I wouldn't ah, say, ahh...

MARK
(rising anger)
Y'know? A country you can't trust. Lotta kids think America has become kind of a shifty, lying, brain-damaged country.

DEAVER
Oh <u>well</u>, I wouldn't go that uh far, certainly this, ahem, country is still a very wonderful

MARK
(interrupts)
My listeners are wondering about your participation in the decision to expel Cheryl Biggs.

DEAVER VO
(uneasily)
Well, I really don't know what you're referring to.

MARK
That's not true, sir.

DEAVER
Well, I had nothing to do with that unfortunate decision.

MARK
I have a copy of your report to Mister Farquason, the principal.

Cut to Keith Deaver in his kitchen. Eyes bugging.

Keith Deaver is the classic liberal bureaucrat confusing his own fears and ambitions for conventional ideals.

MARK VO
(reading)
'Cheryl refuses to voluntarily curtail her education while she carries out the pregnancy. I find no alternative to suspension'.

Deaver sweats. He's too timid to hang up.

DEAVER
Who is this? It's awfully late to be

MARK VO
(interrupts)
It <u>is</u> awfully late, Keith.

DEAVER VO
How did you get this number?

Cut back to Mark. He is utterly calm, enjoying himself.

MARK
So. Do you deny it?

DEAVER VO

What radio station is this?

MARK
We here at WSTH kinda wonder who's side you're on?

DEAVER VO
Please answer my question!

MARK
I did. Y'see, if you interview a student and then rat on her- then you betray her trust, right?

Deaver becomes silent.

By the way, is true that the children of most professional types like yourself grow up mentally mangled?

We hear Deaver's labored breathing.

Would you care to refute that allegation, sir?

Silence.

It's theory I can personally vounch for.

He consults a file.

Okay if it wouldn't be too much of a bother, would you put one of your children in the line?

Let's say, Jeremy, your 12 year old? Who goes to Upland?

Deaver finally hangs up. Mark is pleased with his work.

Well. As you can see. These guys are played out. Society has mutated so rapidly in the last 10 years, anyone over the age of 30 really has no idea.

He rummages through his mail.

MARK
Here's a letter from someone who calls herself "Screwed Up."

(reading)
"Dear Mr Happiness. Every word of this is true".

Well of course, Dear. We insist on it.

(reading)
"Dear Mister Happiness. Every word of this is true. My older brother never wastes any time with romancing. He just gets into bed with me and gives me a few arm nuggies and maybe a head nuggie and pushes me on my stomach and spits on my butt and without further ado, just pushes it in.

Mark looks up, his eyes gleaming, his voice laconic.

MARK
Without further ado, eh?

(thoughtfully)
Hmm. Pink paper, nice handwriting.

(reading)
"Almost every single night until last year when we moved into a bigger house and I got my own room. I locked the door. But he never said anything. Now he's got a girlfriend. She's really great. She sticks up for me. He's going away to Michigan to be a bigwheel in law enforcement. God knows what's going to happen to me".

It's signed, 'Screwed Up'.

MARK
Dear Screwed Up.

God doesn't know what's going to happen to you because if he exists, he's out to lunch.

And I, unfortunately, don't know much.

Cut to Nora in her bedroom. Stern posture, translucent, luminous skin, glistening dark eyes. She possesses an off-beat, masculine, anti-beauty.

MARK VO
But I can tell you one thing. You're <u>not</u> screwed up. You're a logical reaction to a screwed up situation.

She listens, all functions stopped.

You're a sane reaction to an insane world. Like me.

Feeling screwed up in a screwed up little suburb in a screwed up little era does not mean you're screwed up- if you get my drift.

Cut back to Mark. While he rambles, he erases the blot covering her name on her personalized stationery.

MARK
The world is strange and unfair and boring.

So be it.

He flips on a home-made commercial. Cheerful voice

VOICE
Depressed? Worried? Sick and tired? Sick and tired of being sick and tired?

Join Mister Happiness right here on Straight To Hell!

He dials.

MARK
Uunfortunately, Dear Listeners, you cannot call me. But if you enclose your number- I may call you.

It rings.

NORA VO
Hello.

MARK
This is Mister Happiness ca

NORA VO
(interrupts)
I know.

MARK
You're on the air. Do you want me to put your voice on the disguiser?

NORA VO
That's okay.

Mark puts his feet up, smiles.

MARK
So how big is it?

Silence.

Cut to Nora in her room. She smiles ruefully.

NORA
I knew you were gonna to ask me that.

Her gruff voice and demeanor belie thin neck and wrists. She is a teenage bohemian, a future artist.

MARK VO
But doesn't it hurt?

NORA
Not that much.

MARK VO
So my listeners would like to know, uh, what's it feel like?

She hesitates. Is she making this all up?

NORA
That's for me to know and you to find out.

She leaves her bed to get a cigarette. She wears tee-shirt and panties. Mark sniffs her out.

MARK VO
Hmm. You ever think of telling on him?

NORA
Not really.

MARK VO
You sound like you kinda like him.

NORA
Well, he's my brother and everything and he never really hurt me.

She senses his intelligence surrounding her.

MARK VO
What else did he make you do?

NORA
OH, he ordered to scratch his back

and lick nipples. And he made me lie on my back while he jerked off in my face and other refinements.

Cut to Mark. He loves this person.

MARK VO
(deadpan)
It's about time we got some refinements on this show.

She giggles, whispers.

NORA VO
I gotta go.

She hangs up. Mark considers.

MARK
Well, who isn't screwed up, when you think of it.

He stretches pleasurably like a cat, like a psychic Sherlock Holmes. Softly,

Anyway, Dear, thank you. We send you our... love.

(brightly)
In case you just tuned in, this is Straight To Hell with Mister Happiness on Bogus Band 100.

Send me a detailed account of the worst moment in your life. The most scary, the most sexy. Box 3312.

How it happened, the date, the hour, the place. You can leave out the names but I want the size, the shape, the feel, the smell.

A montage sequence to indicate the passing of Mark's two hour show. A pastiche of letters, songs, calls and ruminations on dark themes.

MARK
I guess we have time for one more letter.

He rips open a letter and reads.

Dear Mister Happiness. Do you think

I should kill myself?

He reads no further.

Dear Serious. If you're asking Mister Happiness for advice then you've got the wrong Mr. Happiness.

He peruses the letter, he frowns, he grimaces.

There's a number here.

He dials. It rings. A shattered, adolescent voice answers.

MALCOLM VO
Hello?

MARK
Hi. How're you gonna do it?

MALCOLM VO
Shoot myself. I guess.

MARK
Well do you have a gun?

MALCOLM VO
Oh yeah.

MARK
What kind is it?

No answer.

Where is it?

No answer.

When are you gonna do it?

No answer. Mark realizes that this kid is not serious.

Did you at least write a note?

MALCOLM VO
Oh, they'll get the picture.

MARK
But why haven't you? You have a <u>reason</u> for dying, don't you?

Silence.

They won't get the true picture unless you tell 'em. Your gesture

will be wasted.

Malcolm hangs up. Mark shrugs. He mimicks a promo.

MARK
Death! The ultimate trip. Cheap and easy to arrange. All you need is your life and a tall building.

Cut to Malcolm in his room. He does have a gun. He clutches it.

Cut to Mark. He doesn't know that Malcolm is on the brink. He is diffident, almost amused.

MARK
The thing I like most about the idea of death is how uncomplicated it seems. All the stuff that's swarming in your head and here's one simple, incredibly simple, option.

He slowly fades up the Beatles song, Happiness Is A Warm Gun.

Anyway. Time to go.

He is exhausted but reluctant to go off the air.

People ask me who I am.

Cut to Nora. She lies in her bed. She writes on a pad. A new letter? She has a crush on him.

MARK VO
I could be that guy next to you in that biology lab. That guy looking at you and when you look back...

I look away.

Cut to Aaron. He meticulously slates the box he will store this Mister Happiness episode in.

MARK VO
Write to me. Shock me. Send me your facts and your fantasies.

Cut to Malcolm. He prepares to shoot himself.

MARK VO
Good night everybody. Sleep loose.

Be strong.

Cut to Mark. He stands in his studio and dances to the song. His dance is private, unusual, as if he is looking for something underwater.

Cut to Mora. She also dances. Her dance reflects her equally strong desire to experience the deep end.

SONG
Happiness is a warm gun.
Happiness is a warm gun.
Bang-bang. Shoot-shoot.

Day-2

Morning. Mark's school, Hubert Humphrey High, is large. About 3,000 students. Mark enters. He notices a spray painted graffito on the wall.

SO BE IT!

He blinks and moves on. Subdued, hair combed, he carefully negotiates the halls in an effort not to brush or bump another student.

He notices a couple of kids moving to the Beatles song on a ghetto blaster. Are they Mister Happiness fans? Perhaps they are signaling this fact to others?

Mark smiles privately and moves on.

Mark sits in Biology Lab. He cannot concentrate when people, especially females, are so close. His pretty lab partner asks him about her experiment and he stutters awkwardly.

On class break, Mark observes more signs of Mister Happiness' influence. Aaron Berk is trading Straight To Hell tapes.

AARON
I have all the shows since february
But I still need some of the early
ones.

Mark cruises. His invisibility dance is subtle and intricate.

He glides past the Guidance Offices. Keith Deaver stands primly in the hall. He is supervising the removal of a graffito from his wall.

DEATH TO ALL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS.

Deaver is falsely gregarious and falsely liberal.

DEAVER
A disturbed student will often choose an unusual way to reach out, heh-heh.

The vice principal, Collgood, enters angrily.

COLLGOOD
This has gone on long enough. From now on anyone caught defacing school property is automatically suspended.

Collgood is the classic short bully. The kiss above- kick below type. He is crew cut and bow tied.

Cut to English class. Mark daydreams. His teacher busts him.

MRS JAMES
Mark? Are you with us?

He blushes violently.

Cut to after the class. Mark attempts to slip out but Mrs James catches him.

MRS JAMES
(affectionately)
You know you're talented, Mark. You should take yourself more seriously.

MARK
Apparently.

He scwls. He is is wry reticence masking emotional chaos.

On class break Mark checks the envelope Nora's letter came in. He enters the school office.

MARK
Is there a student in this school called Nora Hen-something? I found one of her notebooks.

SECRETARY
(consults list)
That must be Nora Henley.

MARK
Can you give me her locker number?
I'll just leave her a note.

Mark stakes out a spot near Nora's locker. It happens to be next to a stairwell landing where the hall widens to create an alcove.

The alcove. An informal lunch-time sock hop is in progress. Music. (something menacing like Fogerty's Eye Of The Zombie)

The students monopolizing the dance are the handsome, confident blond clique.

SONG
Come join the dance of the Zombie
The terror is at hand
You can't kill a dead man.

Deaver walks by and ingratiates himself with the kids by dancing a little. They tolerate him. They are happy enough to be the in-crowd.

Mark leans against the wall and ponders the scene. A rap forms his brain and we hear it.

MARK VO
That smug, casual laugh. That smug way of wearing clothes.

The smuggies!

One of the key smuggies is the tall, beautiful Paige. She doesn't dance or smile but she has obscure inner power.

MARK VO
To say we secretly want to be like you is to say too little. The truth is we worship you. That's what makes hating you so complicated.

Mark is jolted from his revery by the sound of his own voice on the sockhop speakers. He freezes.

They are playing a tape of last night's phone conversation with Deaver. For a moment he thinks he has been exposed. But no one is looking at him.

Some smuggies resent the interruption, others listen with growing curiosity.

A passing teacher, Mr Johnson, is drawn to the the mischievous energy.

JOHNSON
What's this?

The smuggie DJ, Chip Hansen, claims innocence.

CHIP
I dunno what happened, sir. I looked around and someone had slipped this on.

He hands the unlabled cassette to Johnson, who confiscates it.

JOHNSON
(exiting)
These dances are a privilege that will be withdrawn if they're abused.

Nora arrives at her locker. She wears an eccentric black wool ensemble of her own design.

Mark drinks her in. She glances in Mark's direction. He twists and exits briskly. She raises an eyebrow.

Johnson enters the teacher's lounge and flips the cassette onto the table.

JOHNSON
I confiscated another Mr Happiness thing today. They were playing it at the sock hop.

TEACHER #1
The griffiti artist?

TEACHER #2
Who <u>is</u> this guy anyway?

JOHNSON
Apparently he runs some kind of pirate radio station and he claims to be a student.

TEACHER #3
Well, it's getting out of hand, I heard he's been trying to have a teacher at Upland stripped of her liscence.

TEACHER #4
And last week he (to come)

Johnson puts the cassette into a deck.

JOHNSON
Hmmm. Apparently he called up Keith at home.

They gather around to listen. Deaver is not loved but their faces darken when they see how brutally their side is mauled.

Cut to the halls. The grapevine is passing shocking news.

KID #1
He shot his brains out. Right in his bedroom. His parents were watching David Letterman and bah-rooom!

The kids are spooked. Mark overcomes his shyness.

MARK
Wh-wh-who?

KID #1
Malcolm Kaiser. He went to Fairfax. His father's a cop.

KID #2
Alot of guys knew him. He's a real normal guy.

MARK
When is Letterman on?

KID #2
Are you kidding? Twelve thirty.

Mark wanders away, wondering if Malcolm wasn't his last letter. He sits as if clubbed. Music up. Something by the fine Young Cannibals.

After school. Mark walks home alone. Music.

Mark arrives at the local post office. He slips on a disguise, hat and shades, before entering.

He reconoiters. The private mail boxes take up a semi-exposed full wall. He kneels, unlocks his box and removes his mail. About ten letters.

Mark eats dinner with his parents. Ken and Martha Hunt. They are cultured, caring people. No siblings.

MARTHA
Did you know the Kaiser boy, Mark?

MARK
(reluctant)
Not really.

KEN
It's so senseless! He had so much to live for.

(pointed)
He was a class monitor, you know.

MARK
(evenly)
There's nothing more squalid than a student politician.

Martha and Ken share a concerned look. They love and respect their moody son but they also worry about him.

KEN
Son, ahem, have you applied for any colleges yet?

Heavy silence.

MARK
No.

Mark stands, smiles briefly, radiantly to disarm them and leaves the table. They don't know what to make of him.

Night-2

Mark fidgets while waiting for 10:00 to go on the air. He begins his internal transformation from shy stiffness to mercurial chameleon.

Mister Happiness comes through. Gruffly,

MARK
You read some kid did something stupid. Something desperate.

People say it's senseless.

(mimicking)
Tsk, tsk. How could he do such a senseless thing? What possessed him?

Heavy pause. He perspires with intensity.

I say simple.

Boredom. Anger. Frustration.

Consider the "job" of a teenager.

Cut to a cross section of his teenage audience again. The mood tonight is sober, mythic. The regular listeners are all tuned in as well as several new faces.

Mr Johnson, the teacher, listens for the first time.

MARK VO
You're in a high school. You have teachers telling you what to do. You have parents doing the same. You have no money and no freedom.

Your job is to get accepted. To get a girlfriend, especially a cute one. To think up something you can imagine doing for the rest of your goddamn life. To pass a million tests and get into a good university.

Cut to Deaver listening for the first time.

MARK VO
All this while going through hormonal chaos. While getting nagged by people like guidance counselors to be happy, out-going, popular members of society.

He sighs.

I'm just surprised there aren't more teen suicides.

Cut to the exterior of a funeral parlor. The press are waiting outside hoping to get an interview or a picture.

Inside the parlor Malcolm Kaiser is laid out. His relatives sit around, mourning, killing time.

In a corner, his parents are bent over a transistor radio

with a young friend of malcolm's who is introducing them to Mister Happiness.

MARK VO
Last night Mister Happiness said suicide seems simple. Only problem is. Like everything else. It isn't.

You gotta read the fine print.

First of all. Who would ever want to go to heaven? I mean think about it. You're sitting up there on a cloud. You got your own little cloud. It's very nice. No aggravation. No high school. But guess what?

There's nothing to do. You're an angel. All you do is sing hymns all day. It's boring!

It's like detention when you're not allowed to do your homework. You just sit there. But detention is easier because you know when you're getting out.

Heaven makes Hell look like a place where you could at least not go out of your goddamn mind.

Cut back to Mark. He leans back, eyes closed, riffing effortlessly.

MARK
Hey. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe when you die you go someplace fun but the Experts aren't saying that.

Maybe it's just black. Check this out.

He cups his palms over his eyes.

Just put your hands over your eyes for like, ten minutes. No, do it. I'm doing it. Try it.

Seconds tick by.

Let's do this thing for ten minutes. And just imagine doing it for like, ten thousand years.

Cut to Mazz doing it. He gives up after 5 seconds, shaking his head.

MARK VO
Tedious, right?

So I dunno about you but the way I look at it Life is less boring than Death.

Stay tuned, 'cause we've got a hot topic tonight. "Is Life Worth Living?"

He sighs moodily, seemingly barely interested.

Yo, Miss Refinements? You here tonight?

Cut to Nora in her room. She is waiting for her mention.

MARK VO
What do you think of current events?

Yes, you. You of the arrowhead mouth and the reproachful glance?

(Or some actual description of the actress playing the part.)

Nora is freaked that he knows her physical appearance.

MARK VO
How are you tonight?

NORA
(croaks)
Okay.

MARK VO
Good. Thinking about me?

NORA
Uh, yeah.

MARK VO
Or are you still thinking about that brother?

Cut back to Mark. He paces his studio carrying his mic. He cocks his ears. He seems to sense his listeners.

MARK
Any new listeners tonight?

Mister Deaver?

Cut to Deaver. He is listening grimly with pad and paper.

MARK VO
Hey, Keith? You there?

Deaver freezes.

I thought so.

I hear you're working on some kind of call-in center for Suicidal Youth.

Deaver is surprised, angry that Mark knows.

DEAVER
How does he know that?

MARK VO
But what can a fart like you say anything that's believable?

I'd rather be dead than you, Mr Deaver. Honestly.

Deaver fumes. Mark plays an edit of his phone call with Deaver. He has juggled Deaver's comments to make him look comically timid and retarded.

DEAVER EDIT
I'm uh-uh-uh Keith Deaver and I really don't know anything, ah, yes, I'm ah-ah-aha, a, a, a, a, What is it? A guidance counselor in-in, yes, I'm Keith uh Deaver...

It's like the hilarious Reagan tape made from speech fragments.

Deaver's wife watches Deaver's face with alarm.

Camera moves down the hall. Deaver's own kid, Jeremy, giggles in his own bedroom.

MARK VO
Oh, things are heating up over at Hubert Humphrey. The cover-up memos are flying regarding the Cheryl Biggs blunder.

I know the school commissioner has read the file.

Cut to Mark in his studio. He has the file in his hands.

MARK
People ask me where I get these documents. They don't realize how many moles I have out there sending things to me.

For example, I have good information that Bob "The Bully" Collgood has privately vowed to "beat the pants off" old Mister Happiness.

Cut to Collgood in bed. He is being awakened by his wife to listen.

MARK VO
Now that's an interesting phrase.

Revealing. Especially in the light of an episode on March 1st, four years ago in St Paul.

Collgood is fully awake, appalled.

Apparently this rather beautiful boy was caught stealing a basketball and Collgood was forced to inflict some punishment.

COLLGOOD
What <u>is</u> this!

MARK VO
I guess things just got a little out of hand. Anyway, the lad was found bleeding from bite marks on his ass.

COLLGOOD
What! Oh my god!

MARK VO
They covered it up, of course but if you read the report you can put the pieces together.

COLLGOOD
(to wife)
That's not true!

WIFE
I know, Dear, but how does he know about the report?

Cut to Cheryl. She exults.

CHERYL
Taste that medicine!

Cut Aaron and friend.

AARON
You think it's true?

FRIEND
Who cares?

Cut to Holden and friend.

HOLDEN
A thing doesn't have to be factual to be true.

Cut to Paige alone. She cheers the good guys.

MARK VO
Yes, write to me. Talk to me. Your pain is my food. Feed me. Feed old Mister Happiness.

Remember, if it's not painful, can it be true? And if it's not embarrassing, can it be real?

Cut to the Kaisers. They are shocked and angered by their first taste of Straight To Hell.

MRS KAISER
He's, he's encouraging them!

MARK VO
The truth is the biggest turn-on.

Cut to Nora. She studies a map of her neighborhood on which she has circled the three schools mentioned by Mister Happiness. Herbert Humphrey High is surrounded by more hieroglyph than the others.

MARK VO

The truth can never be pornographic. It's got a purity of its own and basic right to be told.

Nora flushes and rubs her face and chest.

Cut to Mark. It is ten o'clock. He hates to sign off. He fades up a song.

MARK
Yes, it's that time again here on bandit band 100.

This is Mister Happiness saying we are the disgusted, the dejected, the rejected and the subjected.

So be it. We have nothing to be ashamed of.

The song soars. Something like Imagine by Lennon.

This is for you, Malcolm. Too bad you split the incarn.

As I said, anyone who knew him and has something true to say about him can send it in to me and I'll read it on the air.

Cut to a Mrs Kaiser in the parlor. She is looking at the body of her son. She has decided something.

MRS KAISER
He did this to you, Malcolm.

Day-3

Mark walks to school. A newsapaper headline screams "TEEN DEATH LINKED TO PIRATE RADIO STATION".

He is shaken, afraid to buy the paper and read the article.

He arrives at school. The rear door has been defaced with a new graffito.

MISTER HAPPINESS - THE ANTIDOTE!

Mark stares. Johnson and Murdock brush by him. They have been counting graffiti.

MURDOCK
Damn. Five new ones.

Cut to Johnson and Murdock reporting to the principal, Farquason. Farquason is a befuddled bureaucrat.

JOHNSON
This new policy of threatening the kids is not working.

COLLGOOD
It's not the kids, it's one person! Him! Here. In this school.

JOHNSON
But the other Valley schools have the same problem.

FARQUASON
Can we assume this Mister Happiness is really a student?

JOHNSON
Well, he knows an uncanny amount about what happens at Upland, Fairfax and especially here.

FARQUASON
Is he actually telling people to write these things?

JOHNSON
No. They do it spontaneously.

COLLGOOD
Yes. He tells them.

My God, he amused himself calling all over the country looking for a student who knows how to make atomic bombs!

FARQUASON
Well, we must nip this in the bud.

COLLGOOD
Oh, I'm sure we can "induce" some student to tell us who he is.

Outside, Nora walks to class. She looks sharply at all the boys she thinks could be Mister Happiness.

A BOY
Whatchew looking at?

NORA
Just noticing how ugly you are.

Cut to a press conference in the yard of Malcolm's bereaved parents. The Kaisers are tearful.

PRESS
Was there any indication he was unhappy.

MRS KAISER
I've asked myself a hundred times, and the answer is no.

PRESS
What about your nephew's statement that Malcolm was influenced by a radio program?

MRS KAISER
(carefully)
We have heard that on the night of his death, Malcolm was called by this person.

PRESS
What happened?

MRS KAISER
We don't yet know exactly what was said but we do know this person never once said, "Don't do it!"

Cut to the halls of Hurbert Humphrey High. It is lunch hour.

A newspaper is passed around. The headline.

ANONYMOUS DJ CALLS ON
TEENS TO COMMIT SUICIDE

Clusters of kids discuss the obscure radio show that is suddenly propelled into the spotlight.

KIDS
It's on FM right between WNYX and WPOR. I think every night.

On the school public address system comes the announcement of the time and place of the memorial service for Malcolm Kaiser.

Aaron sells copies of tapes to news reporters on the sidewalk in front of the school.

The smuggie's sock hop is subdued. The sockhop DJ approaches Paige.

CHIP
I heard he basically told the Kaiser kid to off himself. He said just go ahead.

PAIGE
That's not true.

CHIP
How do you know?

She is reluctant to admit she's a fan. Chip is also a secret listener.

Paige, you listen to that guy?

PAIGE
Sometimes. Why not?

Cut to Aaron suddenly presses and popular. Everyone wants copies of the tapes.

AARON
I'm willing to trade 4 to 1 for vintage shows.

Cut to Holden and his nerdy friends.

GORDON
It is a federal offense. If you don't have a license the FCC can arrest you, fine you, confiscate everything you own.

HOLDEN
(sarcastic)
Yeah, it's a theft of a valuable government resource. The air.

Cut to Nora overhearing two giggling girls.

GIRL #1
It isn't his real voice you know. He deepens it electronically.

GIRL #2
That's why he sounds so sexy.

Another PA announcement encourages kids to call the recently formed hot-line under the direction of Deaver. 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. It is staffed by teachers.

Cut to Chip scoffing.

CHIP
Great. Hey, Mister Deaver, It's like 9 in the morning so I really feel like killing myself.

But Paige doesn't laugh. She nourishes deep thoughts.

Murdock and Johnson bust Aaron's little trading post. They confiscate all his Straight To Hell tapes.

AARON
You have no right to take my personal property.

JOHNSON
Ever hear about the Japanese-Jewish restaurant?

It's called So-Sue-Me.

Collgood's office. In the background, Johnson sits with walkman, earphones, pen and paper. He is delegated to analyse the tapes.

In the foreground, Collgood pressures Aaron.

COLLGOOD
Come on, Berk, we know you know who he is.

He shakes Aaro.

AARON
I honestly don't know.

COLLGOOD
Where does he go to school? Here?

AARON
I told you, he's very paranoid.

Suddenly Johnson laughs out loud. They all look askance. Johnson is sheepish.

Cut to Mark as he furtively slips a piece of paper in the vent slit of Nora's locker. He exits briskly.

Aaron is released. He joins his friends.

AARON
Don't worry I have back-up copies of everything.

He swaggers slightly. He quotes the show.

'The world is strange and unfair.'

He plans revenge.

Cut to Nora's locker. She finds and reads Mark's note.

MARK VO
Who am I?

I am not what I am.
I am not what I seem.
I am not Mister Happiness.

My body lurches at your psychic touch.

She looks up, flushed. She twists around but no one is watching. She puts the note away as if a treasure.

At the sockhop, the DJ, Chip does an impromtu rap version of the Deaver edit. The kids who listen to Mister Happiness laugh. The others are intrigued.

Collgood approaches angrily.

COLLGOOD
That's enough, Chip.

CHIP
Am I doing something wrong sir?
What am I doing wrong?

COLLGOOD
You just watch it.

Collgood stalks off. His beloved control is threatened. The little man bristles for a fight.

Mark sits, pretending to read, a distance away. He notices everything. The suppressed energy in the alcove both thrills

and frightens him.

Paige hangs out but looks upset. A spray paint can falls from her purse. She recovers it. Mark notices.

A PA announcement (Collgood's voice) warns the student population of new, even harsher penalties for graffiti.

The kids hiss, even the the smuggies hate Collgood.

Mark feels someone's eyes on him. He carefully turns. It is Nora. He freezes. She smiles wryly. He looks away.

After a tense moment he gets up and walks away. She begins to suspect Mark is Mister Happiness.

A meeting of the frustrated team in Collgood's office.

FARQUASON
What do you mean? Kids brag. This person must have friends.

JOHNSON
They honestly don't know.

COLLGOOD
(darkly)
Oh, they know alright. They always do.

Deaver draws their attention out the window to the sidewalk where the Press wait.

DEAVER
Those kids will say anything to get on TV.

They are interrupted by the sound of the Deaver edit being played throughout the whole school on the intercom.

They all run to the office. They find chaos. The perpetrator has somehow by-passed the office amplifier. They shout and attempt to locate the feed. They cannot.

The tape is looped so it plays again, growing more and more funny. Deaver runs along the halls, freaked, ruined.

Finally they shut off the electrical power to the entire floor.

Aaron smiles and quietly removes the device that he has

built for this occasion.

Afternoon. Classes are in. Cut to Mazz openly writing a slogan on the side of the school.

FM 100 = STRAIGHT TO HELL

The tiny tough is being photographed by the press. His pride goeth before his fall. He is collared by Mudock and dragged into the school.

Mazz is brought before Collgood who laughs meanly.

COLLGOOD
You're expelled, son.

MAZZ
No way, Hose.

COLLGOOD
Pardon me?

MAZZ
I'm already expelled. From Fairfax.

COLLGOOD
Then what are you doing here?

MAZZ
Hanging out.

Mazz is surly. Collgood slaps his face.

COLLGOOD
Then I'm having you arrested, Lowlife.

Mazz smiles. This is his plan.

MAZZ
Okay. I told them cameras to wait.

Collgood changes his mind.

COLLGOOD
Throw this trash out of my school.

Cut to outside. Poor bragging Mazz can't get the press to take him seriously. He tries to get interviewed.

Cut to after school. The kids stream from school and the Press wait like vultures in the sidewalks.

Some kids improvise the Deaver edit in a rap tempo. Mark slinks out of school. Nora watches.

Cut to the local post office. Mark reconnoiters. The coast is clear. He picks up his mail. Twice as many letters today.

Cut to the dinner with Mark and his parents. They watch the Kaiser news while eating. His mother is sly.

MARTHA
I think I know something about our Mister Mopey.

Mark freezes.

He listens to that show they're all talking about.

He exhales in relief. Ken is concerned.

KEN
(gently)
Mark, maybe it's time for you to see Dr. Everet again.

MARK
Don't worry, Dad, I'm not insane.

He is sarcastic.

Hey, I promise not to kill myself. What more do you want?

MARTHA
One day you're going to outsmart yourself, young man.

Night-3

Mark is on the air. He defends himself against the Kaiser accusations.

MARK
First of all, I never told anyone to give up. I was just saying that despair is nothing to be ashamed of.

It's normal. It's American.

And I'm not here to tell everyone that everything is great. That's not true.

He flips angrily through the newspapers.

The Kaisers say I introduced the idea of suicide into the brain of their kid. But any kid who hasn't thought of suicide at least once has to be either blind or stupid.

They say I'm angry and frustrated and depressing.

Maybe I am. Why shouldn't I be? Aren't you? Isn't this incredible mix of blandness and violence and prejudice and blindness we have here in America making you the same?

Cut to a montage of new listeners. Concerned Parents, alerted by all the media, are starting to listen to the show.

MARK VO
I'm not promoting perversions and paranoia. I just happen to follow those subjects. Like other people follow sports.

If those subjects don't interest you, then be my guest to tune out. Do yourself as favor and tune out.

The new listeners comment over his ramblings.

PARENT #1
My god, he's glorifying death! He's telling the kids it's alright to have depressing thoughts.

MARK VO
Maybe something's wrong with me and maybe I'm perverted but I find something thrilling about the bare naked truth.

PARENT #2
His mind is in the gutter. He just wants to say dirty things on the air.

MARK VO
Hit me. Hit me hard with your hard stories.

PARENT #3

Good grief, he's obscene!

MARK VO

I'm not here to help anyone or hurt anyone. I aint no missionary. I aint no leader.

PARENT #4

They should bring charges of manslaughter or homocidal negligence.

MARK VO

My reasons for being here are my own. Maybe I'm just killing time.

Or maybe I'm just picking at some scab in my brain.

Cut to Paige in her bedroom. With ritual care, she listens while attaching little name tags on certain of her possessions.

She considers. She puts a Mister Happiness tag on her diary.

MARK VO

Send me your true stories. No need to explain. No need to justify or analyze. Just the facts.

I wanna know what color underware you were wearing when they called you fairy faggot fatso frump. Was it his left or right hand that pushed your head down?

Leave the reasons out of it. I'm sick of reasons, aren't you?

PAIGE

Yeah.

Cut back to Mark. He extemporizes dreamily.

MARK

I'm sick of reasons and reasonable reactions and reasonable people like guidance counselors!

Y'see, on the surface of it, they don't seem so bad. They talk, they walk, they

Y'see, on the surface of it, they don't seem so bad. They talk, they walk, they lull you into thinking they're merely irritating fools.

Cut to Deaver listening helplessly in his home.

MARK VO
But the scary thing is, they are ill and they're making us ill. You can't see a virus while it's infecting you.

You could say Guidance Counselors are like AIDES. They screw up your immune system for bullshit.

Deaver can't take it any more. He dials 911.

DEAVER
Hello Police? I'm calling to report a crime in progress.

Cut to Deaver admitting two uniformed cops to his house.

He leads them to his radio and points at it. On the air Mark is talking to a kid who is depressed.

MARK VO
Hey, maybe you're gonna wake up one day and realize that your fate was to never feel good in a straight, suburban setting.

So, dig it, you're not depressed- you're exceptional!

DEAVER
See? The man is inciting school children to vandalism, violence and insubordination.

COP
Sounds like just some kid to me.

DEAVER
Yes, but he's flaunting the law.

(explaining)
His His illegal use of the air is a lesson in breaking the law and getting away with it.

(excitedly)
Hear that? He's completely unsupervised. Nobody can stop him!

(hysterically)
He's malicious and, and, and he's saying anything he wants!

The cops roll their eyes.

Cut back to Mark.

MARK
The news tonight is that little Nazi Collgood wants to give every kid in his school a lie detector test.

He really stepped in his own doo with this idea.

He plays clip (lifted from the sound track of a movie) of a female hysterically demanding an apology.

That was Collgood demanding an apology from Mister dappiness.

Cut to Collgood's office at school. He is listening grimly with his team. They are taking notes.

MARK VO
He should be glad I didn't mention the nervous breakdown. Yeah, it seems Mister Collgood had to leave Jefferson High in Seattle in '83 because he flipped out.

Uh-huh. Received ECT therapy. Aka electro-convulsive therapy. Aka shock.

If you don't believe me just check out the little scars on the sides of his head.

Johnson snickers.

COLLGOOD
There was no such thing. I had medical leave for exhaustion.

(shaken)
But hows does he know I was at Jefferson?

Cut back to Mark.

MARK
Remember Miss Refinements? She sent in a poem today. It's called "Fantasy".

(reading)
A prisoner. A prisoner is a failed criminal. He's no failure. He's hot. He escapes. He comes. In my bedroom.

Cut to Nora. She sits intensely next to her radio. She perspires.

NORA
(voice over)
He says I'm gonna blow your brains out. Too bad your damn sexy Susie. Nozzle facing my face. Say goodbye to my head.

Cut back to Mark. His voice rasps with excitement.

MARK
(reading)
Then he thinks again. He says on your back bitch.

Cut back to Nora. She crouches slightly.

NORA
(voice over)
I crouch down. He shoves the whole barrel up my cunt. Cocks the lever. Pulls the trigger. Blows his load.

(c) Patti Smith

Cut back to Mark. He blushes violently and clears his throat. He has found his equal. Nora has out-outraged Mister Happiness.

MARK
Got alot of letters today. Got alot of new listeners.

Parents all over town are listening outside teen bedroom doors and poking their heads into teen bedrooms.

MR CHU
Do you listen every night?

HOLDEN
(reluctant)
Most nights.

MR CHU
Why? Aren't you happy, son?

HOLDEN
Oh God, what do I have to do to show I'm happy.

MR CHU
Why don't you come out and watch television with your family?

Holden's father is sincere but hopeless.

Cut to another parent. He knocks. Nora furtively turns off the radio, Too late, her mother enters.

MRS HENLEY
How can you listen to that guy?

NORA
I dunno. He's funny.

NORA
God, you call that funny? Your father and I have been listening.

Nora freezes.

God almighty. He's pathetic.

The mother blows her a kiss and exits.

Another parent knocks on another kid's door. A phony, cheerful false casual greeting.

PARENT
Hi, Dave, what's happening?

KID
(dourly)
Don't worry, Dad, we don't get him over here. We're too far away.

The parent is relieved.

Some kids drive over to The Valley just to listen.

Cut to a group of cars parked in a highschool parking lot next to a vending machine.

MARK VO
The word is out for kids with cars that the lot at Uplands is good.

I dunno, I disapprove of groups myself.

Cut to Mark. He dials a number.

MATT
Hullo?

MARK
Hi, this is Mr Happiness calling. We're on the air.

MATT
Oh, really? I was

MARK
(interrupting)
Before you say anything, I'll put you on the voice disguiser if you like.

Silence.

MATT
I don't care.

MARK
I want you to tell my listeners what you told me in this letter.

Silence.

Can you do that?

Silence.

What really happened in those woods?

Cut to Matt in his room. He is a pimply adolescent who is clearly moved by being called on.

MATT

Some kids invited me up to the woods and I didn't want to but they made me.

MARK VO
How old were you?

MATT
I was 12. Now I'm fifteen.

MARK VO
Go ahead.

MATT
They made me undress and threw my clothes in the trees. They made me get down on my knees and one of them, this guy I previously really liked, made me put his penis in my mouth.

MARK VO
(matter of fact)
Uh-huh.

MATT
I didn't know what to do. He warned me not to hurt him so I just tried to keep my teeth out of the way.

MARK VO
What were the others doing?

MATT
They were watching and calling me a homo and everything they could think of.

MARK VO
Then what?

MATT
That's it. He came in my mouth and told me to swallow it so I did. I didn't want him to be mad at me.

MARK VO
How big was his cock?

MATT
Pretty big. I could just about get my mouth over the end and about two inches down.

MARK VO
What did it smell like?

MATT

It smelled okay. It smelled good.

Beat.

I think about it all the time.

Cut back to Mark. He is an amateur archeologist at a find. .

MARK
Okay, we're going to go through it again. From the very beginning to the end. Minute by minute. Second by second.

MATT VO
Okay, I, I was on my bike going to the 7-11...

Cut to assorted new listeners. In parallel dialogue they comment among themselves. They are scandalized or delighted (or both) as the case may be.

A newsroom.

REPORTER #1
I don't <u>believe</u> this!

REPORTER #2
Why not? It's show biz. This kid'll say anything to get on the air.

A living room.

A FATHER
Don't worry, Dear, it's all made up.

A MOTHER
Even so it's disgusting.

The police station.

DETECTIVE #1
It's gotta be a set-up. He has some friend call in with a story they've concocted.

DETECTIVE #2
No, I think it's for real. Listen.

Cut to Mazz and a skeptical friend.

MAZZ
(vehement)
You'd better believe it's real.

I had this friend, see, who send in a story and Mister Happiness didn't change one word.

It was Mazz who sent it in. His one moment of fame.

Cut to Paige. She has carried her radio into the bathroom and locked the door. She stares at her face with unusual care. She runs a tub.

Cut back to Mark. It is time to sign off for the night.

MARK
Well, time to go.

Time flies when you're biting bum.

He plays a groaning sound effect. He fades up a sad teen classic like Teen Angel or The Tracks Of My Tears.

People say I'm disturbed, demented, deranged, and de-nuts.

Well, I have something to say about that. I am. And I'm proud of it.

Cut to Paige again. She undresses and gets into the tub.

MARK VO
It's like one day I woke up and realized that I was never going to be normal. That I was never going to be happy like those kids in those jeans ads.

So I said to myself. So be it.

Goodnight everybody.

He fades up the song.

As he talks, Paige cuts her wrists carefully with a razor. She watches the bathwater swirl red.

Cut back to Mark. Another show is over and he crashes.

He stands, he sways to the music. He seems to sense Paige's act. He rubs his head with dread.

MARK
Nora? Are you okay?

Cut to Nora. She is sending him a message of love with her heart.

Cut to Paige. She is smiling and singing to the song.

Day-4

Morning. The graffiti out in the student's parking lot is worse than ever. A huge SO BE IT! is painted on the side of tne school.

Another breakfast debriefing of Farquason by his team of anti-Mister Happiness commandos.

MURDOCK
The graffiti is getting worse since we threatened expulsion.

Collgood's mean little punnative mind can't grasp the reasons behind the Mister Happiness phenomenon.

COLLGOOD
***

And we need lie detector tests for anyone with access to school commission records.

FARQUASON
I'm disappointed in your progress.

Perhaps we should start something to draw attention away from him. Perhaps a new show at the same time. A more positive show.

DEAVER
Exactly!

FARQUASON
Something on the lines of the 700 club. Or the PTL club.

The savvier teachers (Collgood and Johnson) realize this won't work but Farquason is a fussy, old fashioned frump and Deaver is an enthusiast.

Mark walks past a newsstand and checks out the local news headlines. There are several in the mode of,

PIRATE RADIO STATION LINKED TO TRAGIC SUICIDE

Outside the school. The press hang around on the sidewalks like vultures.

Montage of press interviews.

Most of the kids didn't know Mister Happiness existed until now but they are more than happy to put down Hurbert Humphrey High as one of the worst, most fascistic, schools. Ie Kids getting suspended for graffiti.

They ask the kids about some of Mister Happiness' accusations. Ie Was Cheryl Biggs expelled unfairly?

Deaver sets up a banner outside his office. It says BIONIC. It is the slogan for his new campaign.

"Believe It Or Not I Care".

The idea is a walk-in crisis center manned by guidance counselors. It is liberal and well-meaning and totally lame.

A couple of kids snicker at the hours; 9 to 3.

KID
The problem is I don't usually feel like offing myself at 9 in the morning.

Out in the halls the graffiti has taken on defiant new slants and homage to Mister Happiness.

SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF PERVERSION, HOPELESSNESS AND PARANOIA MEETS HERE.

This is where the blue-collar types meet outside the school

to smoke cigarettes.

Insert several graffiti examples here. ***

Collgood and Farquason elect to change their policy. They declare that cardboard signs that don't damage the walls will be allowed to stay up, providing they are not obscene.

AARON
Legal vandalism!

Aaron gleefully creates placard by tearing off the back cover of a notebook. In large letters, he writes "Mister Happiness is perspicacious!"

My personal theory is that Mister Happiness goes to this school.

He puts up his sign on the large bulletin board in the alcove. It is a symbolic act of defiance that creates a buzz of energy. Kids rush to put up similar signs.

Insert montage of messages some to and some about Mister Happiness here. Most of the school's students are not involved, but those that are greatly amused.

Collgood fumes at the profusion of anonymous signs.

COLLGOOD
Luckily I don't curse.

But his ugly expression is a curse. He will have revenge.

He calls the FCC and screams that they do something about Mr Happiness.

COLLGOOD
We're gonna have a suburban Jonestown here if you don't do something.

The sock-hop is subdued. Tension and expectation reverberates under the surface. Nora looks for Mark but he is missing.

Deaver has organized and publicized a series of lunch hour "chats" actually lectures community leaders, ministers, junior rabbis, child psychiatrists, etc.

Farquason is angry at Deaver because only about ten kids have showed up for the first lecture.

He introduces the first speaker. She is Mrs Grange, a lady youth community worker. She tells the kids that the devil works in mysterious ways. Farquason cringes and exits.

GRANGE

This is the path the devil takes nowadays. He inserts himself into the body's of our children through the instrument of drugs. He injects them with his poison.

Mark peeks in the rear entrance but is too timid to expose himself openly. He notices Aaron who he suspects is a fan.

Aaron sits with a secret smile. He is taping Grange's silly speech.

Mark wanders to the sock hop. The big news is hitting. The sock hop DJ, Kevan makes an announcement.

KEVAN

Uh, the sock-hop is dropped for today, uh, Paige Woodward was uh, rescued by her family from a suicide attempt. She's okay, though.

Mark is shattered. He sits.

Malcolm's parents manage to bring criminal charges against Mark (and his parents) of manslaughter, criminal neglect etc. They are doing it to make the point.

Mark is staggered again. He wanders to a corner to reflect, alone. He is alone in every way.

The Press goes crazy trying to get information. They are talking suicide epidemic. cluster deaths, copy cat deaths,

Mark feels devastated. The press has put him on trial.

Cut to school secretaries making call after call informing parents of an emergency meeting of the Hurbert Humphrey High's PTA.

After school, Mark drags himself to Malcolm's memorial

service. It is crowded. Classic postures of grief, disbelief and confusion.

Mark lurks timidly at the periphery. He sees Deaver talking urgently to the Kaisers. Nora is there, alone, across the room.

Mark mourns deeply. He forces himself to walk by the open casket. He stares at Malcolm, his face somehow perfectly reconstructed.

The artist (or ghoul or stoned scholar or whatever) in Mark is transported by this sight.

Later, Mark sits in the back and reflects while the adults do their talking in the front. There are several veiled references to Mister Happiness.

MRS KAISER
There was no reason for this to happen. None. Nothing in my house led to this.

She is a blaming, hateful person.

Cut to Mr Kaiser talking.

MR KAISER
Malcolm believed what he was told to believe. He was brought up that way. But he was a succeptible boy, a searching boy. And he followed the wrong path.

Paige's distraught parents arrive. In the current mood of community crisis, they are invited to speak.

MR WOODWARD
She had everything to live for. We knew she was sensitive and head strong but we have no earthly idea why she would suddenly decide to do this.

Mark is on the ropes. He grieves privately. Nora edges closer, watching him. He notices her watching him. She signals him sympathetically, obliquely. He turns away rudely and exits.

As he exits, he kicks himself. Nora follows at a distance. He manages to lose her as he approaches the post office.

At the post office he is surprised to find his mail box staked out by a TV camera crew. He is forced to abandon his mail.

Nora watches from a distance.

Cont

p 54 does not exist.

Night-4

Mark moodily eats dinner with his parents. They watch TV coverage of the scandal. To come.

MARTHA
Boy, this Mister Happiness sounds like he has a chip on his shoulder.

MARK
(deadpan)
Yeah, it must be a drag.

He smiles obliquely.

For his parents.

They realizes, helplessly, that they have been zinged. Ken stands fussily, nervously.

KEN
Let's get going. We should be there early.

Mark moans. He wears a suit.

And you're coming whether you like it or not.

Martha combs Mark's hair.

MARTHA
Now, Mark, you know very well you represent your father.

MARK
(dourly)
And he represents me.

Cut to the emergency PTA meeting at Hubert Humphrey High. The auditorium is packed with concerned parents.

Farquason introduces the figures on the podium. The mayor, Deaver, Collgood and Mark's father!

Ken is introduced as the school commissioner. Mark cringes in his seat in the front row.

An upset parent interrupts from the floor.

PARENT #1
I'd like to know what you're planning to do to prevent copy-cat suicides?

DEAVER
Well, we have a 24 hot-line set up. We have a walk-in guidance...

The parent interrupts.

PARENT #1
Yes, but the most disturbed kids, the druggies and dropouts and so on, don't turn out for stuff like that.

PARENT #2
Face it! The whole problem is this show called Straight To You-know-what!

PARENT #3
He's encouraging our children to have an unhealthy attitude.

PARENT #4
I know kids! They just wanna grow up happy! Why are we allowing this show to be heard by them?

Mark listens with a sly frown.

The fervent Mrs Grange stands up bible in hand.

MRS GRANGE
Now I'm not saying all heavy metal music is inspired by the devil but some of it definately is.

Someone laughs.

I've seen it with my own eyes. Playing that music is an early warning sign of possession.

Poor Farquason tries to shut her up. Hubert Humphrey High is a liberal school and most of the parents there prefer to think of the devil as a metaphore.

A silver haired genteleman is ushered to the podium with some pomp. He is introduced forthwith.

FARQUASON
Ladies and gentleman, I'm happy to introduce the chairman of the President's Commission on Teenage Suicide, Dr Norman Levine. Who has come out from Washington to be with us tonight.

Applause. Levine is slick.

LEVINE
Fact! Over 400,000 American teenagers attempt suicide every year.

One gesture! One cry for help every 11 seconds.

He postures like a TV preacher.

And every 80 minutes one of them succeeds.

He feeds into the anxious and confused mood of the parents.

I've studied teenagers for 20 years. I see these problems every day. I have degrees in their psychology. I have children of my own.

(dramatically)
And yet I find it so very hard.

MARK
(mutters)
What a slick phoney!

MARTHA
Shhh.

LEVINE
Now I've heard there is an illness in this community. A sickness, calling attention to itself in a horrifying way.

I've seen this before, many times. And I say tonight, tomorrow, for the next 24 hours I shall devote myself to a deep study of this community.

And when I return here tomorrow night, I will heal, if I can, this hurt.

Cut to Johnson

JOHNSON
Oh Christ, he's worse than Mister Happiness.

LEVINE
And with your help, I'll put an end to this bad dream.

Cut to Mark.

MARK
(muttering)
Can't wait.

Cut to Mark opening his show with the song cited earlier by Mrs Grange.

MARK
They say this music drives kids to suicide but I don't really see it.

*** Aggressive heavy metal to come.

It probably drives parents to suicide.

He listens.

They say Heavy Metal is destructive. The fact is, the world is destructive and Metal only reflects the world.

It's more relevant than happy music.

He fades down the song and plays his intro clip.

Well, the big news tonight is the PTA meeting which just ended over at Humpy High. I heard every freak in the universe was there.

Apparently some slick federal Expert on Teen Problems who should be tarred and feathered, is gonna fix my hash tomorrow night.
It's fascinating. I always find that the most normal things, like sex and music are the things that make those people crazy.

Why don't they get crazy over stuff like war and religion which are really crazy when you look at them.

I dunno, maybe something is wrong with me. Everywhere I look I see something unjust, unfair, insane. They say I'm wrong to point it out.

They say I should put on a happy face.

He fade up the song, Put On A Happy Face from Bye Bye Birdie.

If you really think about it you end up screaming. You scream or you freak out some way and the Thought Police come running in and say What's Wrong With You?

(building anger)
I say, Hey! Not what's wrong with me. What's wrong with you!

He slams his fist.

Nothing is wrong with me! Pain is real. What do people in pain do? They scream.

He screams. He blasts up the music.

I say what's wrong with any goddamn people who're not freaking out?

Damn you! It's bad! It's insane!

He screams. He is half going mad, half gleefully living up to his reputation.

Cut to his most rabid fans. They cheer. Mister Happiness is on a roll.

Cut to Nora. She is worried for him. She thinks he's flipping out.

MARK VO
Adults have forgotten simple things.

They've forgotten the simple fact that when you are young, the smallest setback can destroy you.

Like sometimes someone will get up the nerve to smile at a person.

Nora senses he is talking about her.

And sometimes that person, at that moment, doesn't have the grace to smile back. And the person who smiled at the other person- is destroyed.

And often the person who didn't smile is destroyed too. He turned away, lets

say. And now he hates himself.

Because he was afraid.

Cut to Paige.

MARK VO
And sometimes, Dear Devoted Listeners, a person will say something they didn't mean to say.

And something truly bad will happen.

Even Mister Happiness. Y'see, Mister Happiness is not the answer to anybody's real problems. If you people only knew how screwed up Mister Happiness really is, you wouldn't listen.

Silence.

Paige? Are you listening?

If I encouraged you to take that final step, then I was wrong. If I did, I didn't mean to and I apologize.

Cut back to Mark.

MARK
You are too valuable to lose. Even though you are my enemy- a big blond smuggie, you are so valuable to me.

Pause. He snorts.

The funny thing is, they're right. If anyone should be put out of his misery, it's Mister Happiness himself.

He's getting cruel now that too many people are listening.

Paige. Malcolm. The truth is, Mister Happiness is just a lonely gooner who sends out this feeble signal because I have nothing better to do.

I'm just throwing out thoughts that no one else seems to want. I thought it wasn't hurting anybody.

He suddenly brightens. He dials.

I think I need advice. Let's call up the hotline.

A woman's voice answers. Cheerfully,

VOICE
Believe it or not we care.

MARK
Good evening, I'm thinking of ending my existence.

Beat.

VOICE
Pardon me?

MARK
I'm considering pulling the plug.

VOICE
(by rote)
Well, would you like to talk about it?

MARK
What is this? A computer?

Is Mister Deaver there? I'd like to unload on him.

VOICE
Just a moment please.

Cut to Deaver in his office. He has been listening on the radio so he knows the caller is Mister Happiness. He takes a deep breath and steels himself to come on the line.

The housewife knocks on the door.

HOUSEWIFE
It's for you.

Deaver nods and come out to her booth to take the call.

DEAVER
Call Captain Webster and tell him tell him this is the call we've been waiting for.

She hurries off. Deaver sits heavily and picks up the phone.

This is Mister Deaver.

MARK VO
I need some advice, Sir.

DEAVER
(guardedly)
Yes?

MARK VO
How are you? I hear you've been kind of low.

Deaver is silent.

You looked kind of shaky at the meeting.

DEAVER
I don't think this is funny.

MARK
No this is dead serious. Should Mister Happiness live or die?

Cut to the police. They were fully prepared and are tracing the call.

Cut to Mark.

MARK
At the beginning I always imagined about a dozen souls out there. People just like me. People who were... suspended.

So maybe this is the end. I don't think I can live without my mail.

The teacher enters to gesture that the police have successfully traced the call.

TEACHER
(whispering)
The police are on the way!

DEAVER
You break my heart, Mister Happiness.

I happy to inform you that this call has been traced and the police are on their way to see you.

Mark clicks off.

Cut to Mark. He smiles.

MARK
Well, so be it.

He clicks off the air.

Cut to his most loyal listeners as they stare in disbelief at their radios. Is this really the end of Mister Happiness?

The police cars scream up to a quiet house. They bang on the door, hands on their guns. A little old lady answers.

Mark walks up the street from his own house three doors away. Aparently he was using this old lady's line.

Day-5

In the morning, Mark sits in his bed half dressed.

MARTHA
Hey, gonna suit up this morning?

MARK
Why bother?

She laughs, thinks he is joking.

Cut to Nora arriving at school. She is overwhelmed by the outpouring of messages of support taped to the walls of the alcove. They are covered with hand-drawn placards, notes and typed letters, everything.

Dozens of kids are busily putting up more.

Nora grins. She examines them. Some are earnest, some are obscene, obscure or bellicose. A montage. ***

Nora takes her own message from her bag, tapes it to the wall and quickly walks away.

Her pink stationery blends in with the chaos.

Collgood walks around ruing the decision to allow messages. He snatches down the odd card.

KID

Hey, Sir, you said we could put up things.

COLLGOOD
Not obscene things.

He observes a group of kids mass producing their messages on the student xerox machine. He pulls out the plug.

This machine is out of service.

With a hush, beautiful Paige enters the area. She looks pale but determined. A fellow smuggie approaches, falsely sweet.

GIRL
Oh, Paige, how are you? We've all been so worried about you.

Paige ignores her. She walks up to the bulletin board and tacks a card to it.

MISTER HAPPINESS.
CALL ME.
PAIGE. 554-5412

She turns and exits the school.

As she reaches the street, a television crew recognizes her and persures her. She ignores their questions, but turns to the camera.

PAIGE
Dear Mister Happiness.

Her voice is tremulous but her look is direct.

Stay on the air. You are the only person I believe in around here.

End of statement. She walks home. The crew clamors after her.

REPORTER #1
Wait! Are saying he didn't influence you?

PAIGE
(walking)
Look, it's simple. Some kids are unhappy. Everything else is bull.

REPORTER #2
So do you feel he's correct to be discussing suicide.

PAIGE
Maybe discussing it is better than doing it.

REPORTER #3
When do you expect to return to school?

PAIGE
I don't.

She breaks into a run and outdistances them.

Meanwhile poor Deaver's walk-in, talk-in center is a flop. Someone has tampered with his banner. Instead of BELIEVE IT OR NOT WE CARE, it now reads BELIEVE IT OR NOT WE COPULATE.

Deaver is upset, his staff is forelorn.

The principal, Farquason, calls a press conference. He brags that the FBI and the FCC are on the way. The press question him. Their questions are more hostile than he anticipated. He is routed and hides in his office.

Mark arrives for school in mid morning. He wanders past the alcove and stares, amazed, at massive outpouring of good will and encourgement.

He is still. He can barely look. Deaver wanders into the area and observes him.

The bell rings and kids pour out of the classrooms. Mark goes into his invisible mode.

The sock hop starts up.

Increasing numbers of kids hang out in the sock-hop alcove. Clusters of Mister Happiness fans, old and new, sense that this is the spot to find the action.

A girl shows up in sneakers and a wedding dress and a sign that says, MISTER HAPPINESS, I WANT TO MARRY YOU. She wins applause.

Kevan, the smuggie DJ, is a convert. He defiantly plays Mark's version of Put On a Happy Face".

Meanwhile, in the auditorium, Deaver's second Youth Expert speaks to an even smaller gathering of kids. He is an aging hippie.

HIPPIE
It's important for all you kids to realize that it's okay to fail every once in a while. It's okay.

Farquason and Deaver are gloomy. Suddenly the ubiquitous Mrs Grange, barges in. She muscles aside the speaker.

GRANGE
I have something more to say.

She has revised her opinion. She declares that Mister Happiness is the devil himself.

They try to shut her up. It is awkward. They decide to call it a bust.

Sitting in the audience, Aaron grins. He is taping the show again. He enjoys being a trooper in The Mister Happiness Irregulars.

Aaron joins his friends. He has put the tape in an envelope and plans to mail it to Mister Happiness' post box.

FRIEND
Aaron, didn't you hear that that his mail was enjoined.

AARON
What? They can't do that.

They show him a newspaper article.

FRIEND
The FBI is in on this now.

Aaron has an idea. He tapes the package to the wall. He stands back proudly.

GORDON
They're just gonna take it down.

AARON
Then I'll put up another. And another.

The weasely Murdock sidles over to check it. Hisses from the rear of the crowd. Murdock hesitates, refrains from pulling it down, exits. Applause.

Aaron's gesture starts a craze of offbeat and defiant gifts for Mister Happiness taped to the walls of the alcove.

The Public Address System announces that the PTA is offering a reward of $1,000 to anyone that will anonymously devulge the identity of Mister Happiness.

This draws catcalls.

Mark wanders around slightly shellshocked, serrupticiously trying to study the messages. He looks exhausted.

Nora watches him from a distance. He slowly works his way towards her note. Finally he stands before her distinctive, level, pink stationery.

I WILL DO ANYTHING
FOR YOU, MARK.

He stares, looks over his shoulder slowly. Nora moves behind a wall. Mark moves on slowly, his posture changed.

Suddenly Mazz enters the alcove stalking menacingly. He carries a bed sheet. On it, he has painted a skull and cross bones with crude letters.

MAZZ MAZZILLI = UNOFFICIAL
BODYGUARD 4 MISTER HAPPINE.

He is heroic-comic as he struggles to display it.

MAZZ
(explaining)
Y'see, anyone messes with him
they'll hafta mess with me."

Murdock approaches Mazz and asks him to leave. Mazz ignores the teacher. Another teacher approachs. Mazz holds them both off with a half crazy kung-fu threat.

MAZZ
Where's little Mister Bow Tie.

Mazz looks like he might be armed or crazy.

I aint leaving 'till I see the
little fart.

Kevan mischievously puts up the song, Don't Mess With Me. The

kids love it, they clap and some sing. Mazz, wild eyed in his sheet, loves the recognition.

Collgood arrives, furious. Hoots and mock applause.

COLLGOOD
People like you don't belong in schools. You belong in jails.

MAZZ
I'm puttin' you on notice. This thing is bigger than all of youse.

Collgood's veins bulge.

Go ahead, hit me. I got witnesses this time.

(taunting)
Bumbite.

Collgood attacks with both fists. Mazz becomes tangled in his banner and takes vicious pummeling before the students and staff surge forward to pull Collgood from him.

Mark shrinks from the scene. The teachers carry Mazz to the door and throw him out. Suddenly, in the swirl of action, Mark is face to face with Nora. They lock eyes for a moment.

She smiles, flushed with adrenalin. Mark manages a strangled smile and turns away. She is convinced he is Mister Happiness.

Out on the street, the bleeding Mazz is thrilled to find himself a celebrity. The press crowd around.

MAZZ
I'll just lettin' people know where I stand.

(explaining)
I don't care anymore. I got nothin' to live for.

Meanwhile, Deaver is acting erratically. He rips down the ravaged banner and closes the hot-line and walk-in center.

The bell calls everyone to class. Nora hangs back. In the empty alcove she quietly collects several missives addressed to Mister Happiness.

After school Mark walks home slowly. The weight of the world on his narrow shoulders.

Nora follows, this time at a greater distance.

Also following is a figure in an old raincoat, hat and sunglasses.

Mark enters the Post Office but a brief glance tells him that his box is still watched by the media.

Nora approaches.

NORA
You want me to go in and get your mail?

He stares.

They might not suspect a girl.

MARK
I d-d-don't know what you're t-talking about.

He walks away. Nora decides not to push it.

Mark shortcuts through the parking lot behind the post office. The raincoated figure leaps out at him and smashes him with his umbrella.

The blow knocks Mark to the pavement. The figure swings again. The umbrella flies open, revealling a small baseball bat. The figure takes a huge wind-up, obviously aiming to bash Mark's brains out.

Nora approaches on the run and throws herself at the assailant. He flails at her. She kicks him in the crotch and he bends, dropping his bat and glasses.

It is Keith Deaver!

He reaches for his glasses. Nora grabs the bat and clubs him once, hard, a glancing blow that strikes his head and shoulder. He goes down.

She gathers up Mark and they stagger away together. He is disoriented, freaked.

NORA
Jesus, that was friggen Deaver!

MARK
Oh God, oh God, oh God.

He is recovered except for a growing bruise on his forehead.

NORA
How did he know it's you?

MARK
How did you know?

She shrugs and grins warmly.

It's a good thing I never heard you speak or I woulda revised my list.

Mark recovers some hurt dignity.

MARK
Alot of st-stammerers lose their impediment under certain circumstances.

They walk in silence.

What are you going to do?

He is confused, passive, so unlike Mister Happiness.

Are you going to expose me?

NORA
Naw, man. I'm gonna help you.

MARK
I don't need any help, thank you.

NORA
Are you going on the air tonight?

He is silent. Probably not. He hasn't decided.

Hey, man, didn't you see the support you got today?

He frowns.

MARK
I'm, I'm very cautious in real life.

NORA
Want me to tape the PTA thing for you tonight?

MARK
They won't let you in. They're

keeping unescorted kids out.

She jutts her lip. He turns, stops walking.

MARK
I, I can't invite you to my house.

NORA
Hey, man, I don't wanna go to your house!

(hurt)
I just wanted to make sure you're okay.

She stalks away. Mark wants to call her back but he can't.

Mark eats dinner with his parents. On the TV news is an item about Deaver. Apparently he is claiming he was mugged by an unknown person at the post office. Mark frowns. He expects to be arrested any minute.

His father fusses about Mark's beat-up appearance.

KEN
I said what happened to you?

MARK
I'd rather not say.

Ken fusses helplessly.

KEN
Look at you! What are people supposed to think? A respected school official who's son fights.

MARK
Does that mean I don't hafta go to the PTA meeting?

Ken glowers. Mark smirks to himself.

Martha squints. She knows her son has a big secret.

Nora's bedroom. She looks up Mark's face in her yearbook and learns his name. Mark Hunt.

Night-5

The second PTA meeting it is held in the gym to accomodate more people. At the front door, Collgood's henchmen are keeping the Press and students out.

Nora is accompanied by Holden. They cleverly find a way (to come) to sneak in. (Perhaps Holden has some electronic skeleton key.)

They enter the audio-visual room and Holden proceeds to tap a feed from the mics. They tape the event and listen.

In the gym Farquason, Ken Hunt and other school and community dignitaries sit up on the stage. Mark is absent.

Meanwhile Mazz has broken a window and entered the building unknown to Nora and Aaron. He has a plan.

Doctor Levine comes to the lecturn self importantly.

LEVINE
Ladies and gentlemen, I can tell you unequivicably that this 'Mister Happiness' is no teenager. I can also tell you, catagorically, he is not a rational person.

In fact this person in a very sick adult impersonating a teenager.

Gasps from the audience.

You ask me then how does he come to know so much about school business?

Because, I believe, this person is a teacher in this very school!

The audience is shocked.

That would explain his extensive vocabulary. And his access to private documents.

The Mrs Grange interrupts to insist that Mark is the devil. They usher her out.

In the commotion Mazz edges to the balcony that hangs over the stage where Levine is speaking.

LEVINE OC
There is no question in my mind he is an adult. And, when he is apprehended, I'm going to see to it that he is charged with child abuse.

Mazz dons a ski mask, stands and pours two cans STP oil down on Levine. A direct hit. While Levine cringes in shock, a pillowcase full of goose down floats down on him.

Mazz waves to the crowd, bows and escapes. Levine frantically babbles and fends off attempts to help him. He is revealed as a hysteric.

After the meeting. Nora walks around Mark's house. She knocks on the basement window.

NORA
It's me, Nora.

Silence from inside.

I know you're in there. I got a tape for you. And great news.

Mark opens the window and beckons for her to come around.

He reluctantly opens his private, side entrance and she enters coolly.

MARK
How did you find me?

NORA
Easy.

He goes back to stuffing papers into garbage bags. Nora hands him the tape she and Aaron made.

NORA
Here's the tape of the meeting.

He ignores it.

Some idiot from Washington got oiled and feathered.

He looks up, upset.

You said someone should do it.

Mark is not pleased. She hands him the handful of letters she took from the walls the alcove.

NORA
I thought you might want these urgent messages.

He takes them gingerly, then bruskly puts them into the garbage bag. He seems to be throwing out his files and packing up.

NORA
Whachew doing?

MARK
Getting rid of confidential letters.

NORA
But why?

MARK
Deaver could turn me in any minute.

NORA
But he hasn't.

MARK
Why not?

(emotionally)
Look, anything could happen!

NORA
That's right. Anything could happen! This is the pinnacle of your life. They're gonna re-broadcast you all over the city.

She spins him around to look at her. Quietly, rapid fire, she quotes his angry outburst from the previous night.

NORA
I say hey, not what's wrong with me, what's wrong with you. Nothing is wrong with me. Pain is real. What do people in pain do. They scream.

Partly to shut her up he sits at his console, clicks on the power and goes on the air.

MARK

Well, we're still here, somehow.

Once on the air, he starts to transform. He loosens and flexes his psychic muscles.

MARK
Got a twisted show coming up for you. I got that feeling.

He is lean and mean. As if he wants to go-out in a burst.

I'd say the Mister Happiness Irregulars are beating the Redcoats.

He is secretly proud to have Nora watching. He plays a pre-recorded clip and turns to Nora as if to say I can be as combative as you.

She has pulled the wall messages from the garbage. She hands him the one from Paige. While he reads it, she dials the number and hands him the phone.

He shrugs, takes the phone.

MARK
Yo Paige? This Mr and Mrs Happiness. What can we do for you.

PAIGE
I have something to say to the people listening.

MARK
Go ahead.

Cut to Paige in her room. This is her manifesto.

PAIGE
Okay. People. The way I see it is this is the worst. High school is the worst.

But the good news is it doesn't get any worse. I see this now.

In other words, wait it out. Hang out. Things can only get better.

Pause.

End of big speech.

Cut back to Mark and Nora. He has been skimming the pile of urgent wall messages.

MARK
Paige. I don't know how long I'm gonna last here. Things are kinda piling up. I got a pile of people to call.

The thing is you just did this thing, so you call them for me if I can't.

PAIGE
But what would I tell them.

MARK
Don't tell them anything. Ask them things. And agree.

PAIGE
Agree on what?

MARK
Accept what they have to say no matter what.

PAIGE
But what advice do I give?

MARK
Stay away from advice. Just appreciate the person and be yourself.

Nora is circling the phone numbers on the letters so Mark can read them to Paige.

Upstairs, Ken and Martha are listening to the show for the first time. They have a queasy sensation.

MARTHA
It's uncanny. He talks just like...

KEN
But he doesn't sound like Mark. Besides, Mark stutters.

MARTHA
Not always. Let's go down.

They hesitate.

Cut to Mark and Nora downstairs. Mark is energized. He sings Don't Mess With Me. He lights a cigar, offers one to Nora.

She accepts and lights up.

MARK
Okay, we're on a roll. I have an associate here with me tonight. She just got back from secretly taping the PTA meeting.

I can't tell you her real name so we'll just call her Miss Happiness.

He offers her the mic. She recoils from it. He gestures 'Say something.' Barely audibly, huskily.

NORA
Hi, everybody. Be cool.

MARK
Oh well perhaps we'll have more from her later. She aint usually this retiring.

He winks. He has a wicked idea. To Nora.

Miss Happiness, would you please look up the number for the Battered Wives Hotline.

She does so. Mark explains to his listeners.

My collegue here is going to play Collgood's wife and report the bastard.

He starts to dial. Nora protests silently. He smiles, giving her no choice. He hands her the phone. The hotline answers.

VOICE
Good evening, hotline.

NORA
Uh.

To Mark, hand over the receiver.

What's her first name?

Mark looks it up in his Collgood file.

(into phone)
Hello? Uh, I'm nervous about calling.

VOICE
That's perfectly understandable.

Mark whispers 'Elizabeth'.

NORA
Well, my name is Elizabeth Collgood. and I want to report that my husband beats me.

Her acting is good.

Cut to Martha and Ken upstairs.

KEN
It can't be Mark. He has a girl with him.

Martha has to agree although she still has doubts. They don't go down stairs. Martha is rivited to the show.

MARTHA
I can't believe he's doing this.

Cut to the hot-line lady taking the information down seriously.

Cut to Collgood listening at home with disbelief and helpless rage.

NORA VO
I know he's gonna deny the whole thing. He'll go into this whole conspiracy theory but before you listen, you just look at the scrapes on his knuckles.

Collgood looks at his scraped hands from his fight with Mazz.

Cut to Paige in her room talking on the phone with a Mister Happiness referral. She leans into the phone giving her caller all she's got.

PAIGE
Uh-huh.

Uh-huh.

Right, the world sucks.

I don't know you but I can tell you one thing. You're okay.

Cut to a montage of show fragments to show the passage of two hours. Mark involves Nora increasingly and they take the show to new heights.

Fragment.

MARK
I'm offering a prize for the best theory of what really happened to old Deaver behind that post office.

NORA
It seems the police are confused. The bat he was assaulted with belongs to Deaver's son, Jeremy.

MARK
Hmm. You figure it out.

Cut to Deaver in bed. His head is bandaged and nis arm is in a sling. He listens bleakly.

MARK VO
Put your entries on the walls of Humpty High tomorrow and I'll judge them personally.

DEAVER
(realizing)
He wants it. He wants to be caught and punished!

Fragment.

Mark plays selected sections from the recent PTA meeting.

LEVINE VO
(impassioned)
The man is sick in his soul and heart and body. He is reaching out, as it were, for help.

Mark and Nora join Levine.

ALL
Asking, I might say begging, to be stopped.

They laugh.

Fragment.

Nora dials a number.

MARK
Time to talk to the lady who thinks I'm the Devil.

She answers. She has been listening.

GRANGE VO
Hello?

MARK
Hi, Mrs Grange? Guess who?

He plays an effect lifted from The Exorcist.

I'm coming over tonight.

She gasps.

I'm going to make love to you tonight while you're asleep.

He fades up Paul Anka's <u>You're Having My Baby</u>

You'll know I've been there if you wake up tomorrow and you feel kinda funny.

Cut to shots of the vastly increased audience. Young and old, bent and straight, all over the city.

Cut back to Mark. It is midnight.

MARK
Well, we made it to the end. Amazing. The FBI, the FCC, the MPD and the PTA are all after me.

The good news is that we all have that one most important thing. The ability to recover from bad shit.

So when we're down let's consider the advice of our friend Paige.

Any change we make will be for the better.

You're gonna be dead for a long time so why not give this thing

one more try?

He is moved. Nora watches him with love in her eyes.

Time to go. I wish I could stay with you, I wish I could take your calls. I wish, I wish.

Goodnight.

He holds the mic to Nora.

NORA
G'dnight.

He puts on a song. (to come)

Music seques. Mark walks Nora home after the show. He is tongue tied.

MARK
See? I have nothing to say when I'm not on my power trip.

NORA
I don't care.

MARK
(apologetic)
All that stuff I say... all that smutty stuff. That's Mister Happiness talking.

NORA
I don't mind.

They walk silently in sexually charged embarrassment.

NORA
You know that letter I wrote you about what my bother made me do?

I made it all up. I don't have any brothers or sisters.

He stares. She grins. They walk, they reach her house. They stare at their feet.

Finally she grasps his face and kisses it. She runs into her house. She is amazing.

Day-6

Breakfast at the Hunt house. Ken reads the newspaper.

KEN
Unbelievable! Collgood is personally suing Mister Happiness for ten million dollars. Defamation of character.

MARTHA
How can you someone who doesn't exist?

KEN
You sue John Doe to put the guilty party on notice and the courts decide who's responsible.

MARTHA
If he's a minor the parents take the blame.

Mark is still. She still harbors some suspicion.

Mark walks to school. Banners supporting the show have sprung up on windows across the street from the school. A huge MISTER HAPPINESS has been burned into the school lawn by a herbicide.

Deaver returns to school in his arm sling. He is acting erratically. He does something misguided. ***

Farquason gently sends him home. Deaver goes, instead, to his office. He is planning something.

The sock hop. The DJ plans a defiant tune. Something like Billy Joel's It's My Life.

Mark and Nora cruise around in a state that is somewhere between first date and partners in crime. They read the funny entries for Deaver contest.

Paige suddenly appears at the hop. She has aggressively short hair and a subdued but determined look. Her smuggie friends shy away from her. She looks slightly crazy.

She puts up a placard. It reads,

"Mister Happiness. If you want more help, I have a car money and plenty of free time. I quit school. Paige"

School officials are on red alert. Fraquason fusses, paralyzed. Collgood buzzes on 100 cups of coffee.

COLLGOOD
We'll give a lie detector test to every male in the school!

JOHNSON
The press will us alive on that.

COLLGOOD
Nobody will know it. We'll get em in and question them and the machine will be in the other room.

He was on the phone.

Hello? Lieutenant Maran? What happened to the protection you promised us?

Outside the school, the police troops are arriving and being interviewed by the press.

PRESS
Exactly who is guarding who from what?

POLICE
(unsure)
Uh, it's a volatile scene and we're not taking any chances.

PRESS
But Mister Happiness is already inside, right?

The FCC trucks arrive in Minneapolis. They are observed by some kids on bicycles who network the news until it appears on the walls of Mark's school.

Mark reads the bad news. He frowns. Nearby, Holden explains the problem to Gordon.

HOLDEN
These vehicles have rotating receivers on their roofs. They take readings and narrow down the source of a broadcast by triangulation.

Aaron takes the pro Straight To Hell demonstrators to a new high. (to come)

Collgood is provoked. He argues with Aaron who stands his ground. He loses his temper and pushes Aaron.

NORA
Back off, asshole!

COLLGOOD
Who said that! I heard that!

The kids in the back rows of the crowd openly taunt Collgood. Collgood's henchmen push in to muscle the crowd down. Kevan is pushed. He falls.

KEVAN
Ow! Help!

The students surge forward. A melee develops. Some kids on the outside are laughing. Those on the inside are getting hurt. Collgood is knocked down. He flails in a panic.

Mark tries to pull Nora away from the tumult. He is appalled. She is excited, thrilled.

Deaver rushes out of his office where he has been hiding. He carries a gun. He screams for order. No one responds. He fires the gun into the ceiling.

Pandimonium as people flee- running, crouching, crawling. In moments the alcove is cleared.

DEAVER
That's more like it.

He walks out of the school.

On the stairs, the police rush in past him. Followed by the press.

Arthur Watts, the head of the FCC, arrives from Washington to take credit when the mission is accomplished.

He lectures the FCC operators on the public relations importance of the mission.

The press photographs the trucks. They have already been hit with the Mister Happiness graffiti artists.

Aft-6

School is dismissed early. Nora finds Mark studying a wall bulletin on the FC.

MARK
Well, this is it. It was fun while it lasted.

I guess it's time to put old Mister Happiness out of his misery.

NORA
Too bad because WKIX is gonna rebroadcast you to the whole city.

MARK
If I only had one or two more days.

NORA
Guess what? You do.

She smiles knowingly and leads him to the student parking lot. She indicates a van.

NORA
We'll put your equipment in this and drive around while you broadcast. We'll screw 'em up.

The van already equipped with battery, antenna. Mark looks around, paranoid.

Don't worry. The guy that's providing all this doesn't know who you are.

MARK
But, if we get caught it'll be confiscated and traced to him.

NORA
No it won't.

MARK
It's stolen?

NORA
Better. It's rented with Deaver's credit card. It fell out of his pocket when he got mugged.

Mark is amazed, pleased, terrified.

MARK
This is so dangerous. I'm going to jail for sure.

NORA
Better than highschool.

She points to another car, a VW Rabbit.

This is my mother's car. Look what's in it.

He is afraid to. He peeks. It is a hi-tech phone system.

It's a cellular relaying system. We can borrow existing phone numbers, broadcast them and then your listeners can call you direct on the air.

MARK
Who gave us all this?

NORA
Holden Chu. He goes to our school. His father is an electronics retailer. He has a whole warehouse of this stuff.

You'll drive around in the van and I'll follow you in the car relaying phone calls to you.

She hands him the keys to the van.

Come on.

MARK
I can't drive.

Night-6

It is 9:30. Nora introduces mark to Mazz and Holden.

NORA
Holden and Mazz, this is Mister Happiness.

Mark wears a ski-hood to prevent identity. He is very nervous, embarrassed. They shake hands.

MARK
Thank you for helping, I, I...

NORA
I'll drive the van with Mister happiness. Mazz, you'll drive the Rabbit with Holden.

MAZZ
We'll follow 100 yards back.

They drive slowly through the suburbs. Mark opens the show. The mobile broadcaster works fine. Once on the air, Mark's confidence grows.

MARK
I dunno. Things are getting out of control. Collgood is running amuck. But so am I.

He fades up Don't Mess With Me.

During the song, he announces the phone number that he can be reached at. He encourages anyone who is considering suicide to call in.

MARK
This is Radio Death. Tonight I want to hear from all the kids that think life isn't worth living.

A hundred yards behind the van, Mazz drives and Holden mans the incoming calls. Holden speaks briefly to each caller, ascertains their condition and then relays them to Mark.

A montage of calls.

MARK
Okay, your mother is a monster so you're gonna to kill yourself- is that it?

KID VO
Roughly.

MARK
So why don't you kill her?

Why not since your planning to die anyway. Or better still, shoot her in the leg. Do a year in prison. Meet some new people, get out of the house. Hell, I'd rather be in jail than in high school. At least you're learning a profession.

Anyway, shooting yourself because your mother is screwed up does not make sense.

Cut to another.

MARK
If you try to hurt your parents by killing yourself, you're missing the point. The point is to taste the results of your action.

Cut to another.

MARK
(disbelief)
You're bored. Is that a good enough reason to kill yourself?

Cut to another.

MARK
Go ahead. Kill yourself. But kill the old you. The obsolete you that has, in the past, had a rocky road.

The real you is something else again. Like me and this show.

Meanwhile, intercut with the FCC trucks vainly trying to triangulate. They cannot because the target is moving.

Watts has called a news conference anticipating success. The press are there but the good news isn't. Watts fumes.

They are tuned to Mark who gloats that he is still broadcasting. He rips into the FCC. (to come).

Mark's parents listen again. They realize that Mister Happiness must be Mark. Reluctantly they go downstairs.

They discover no broadcasting equipment and no Mark. They are somewhat relieved.

Mark is deluged with calls. While he talks with one caller, Nora gestures that call she is holding is urgent. He gestures that she should handle it herself. She gulps and plunges.

NORA
Hi, Mister Happiness can't come to the phone right now but my name is Nora and maybe you could talk to me for a second.

Cut to the perplexed operators of the FCC trucks. They confer at the side of the road.

OPERATOR #1
It's almost as if he's moving.

OPERATOR #2
That's it. Let's ***

They revise their technique.

Cut to Deaver driving around the same neighborhoods with his car radio on and the gun on the seat beside him. He plans to kill Mister Happiness.

Cut to Nora successfully talking.

NORA
I can't give you any advice but I can you one thing. You are a very deep person who's in alot of pain right now.

Maybe we can't fight back against some shit but we can refuse to take the blame.

Holden complains that the calls are piling up.

MARK
Then talk to people while they're waiting.

HOLDEN
I, I, can't.

MARK
Do it. Just do it.

(on the air)
I never realized there were so many people out there.

Is there anyone listening who is a teenager who has had experience with facing Mister D in the face who would be willing to talk to strangers on the phone?

He starts appointing callers to handle the overload.

Meanwhile, unknown to the exhilarated team, the FCC trucks are managing to come close.

At his headquarters, the frustrated Watt orders every spare FBI vehicle and police car into the area.

WATTS
Look for a van! A slow moving van. Pull over everything on wheels.

The Radio Death crew take a snack break in the parking lot of a 7-11. They are in a celebratory mood.

Mark reveals his face and reintroduces himself gratefully to Mazz and Holden. He is moved. They are all moved.

MARK
Hey, you guys? How do you feel about extending the show a few hours?

HOLDEN
Hey, let's never stop.

MAZZ
We'll drop some speed and stay up for a week.

They all laugh. They start up again. As they exit the FCC trucks converge on the 7-11.

They travel.

Holden calls Mark.

HOLDEN
Hey, Boss, do we take calls from parents?

MARK
Why not?

He takes the call.

PARENT
(despairing)
We've done everything we could think of- given him everything, allowed him anything, and yet still he's not happy.

What more can we do?

MARK
Accept and love and wait. Beyond that- it's not your responsibility.

If some intense kid falls in love and the love goes bad, that kid will feel that his life is ruined.

It's natural. Don't worry about it.

He hangs up and immediately picks up another caller.

PARENT
It's Doctor Levine's opinion that you are unrealistic.

MARK
Hey, mothers and fathers of demented teenagers! Listen to me!

Aren't you getting a little tired of <u>opinions</u>?

Don't you sometimes long for courage imagination or chaos or even just a little <u>fact</u>?

The FCC trucks narrow in. Capture looks immanent.

Cut to Aaron spying at the Watts headquarters. He runs to a pay phone and calls the number. The line is busy. He gets though.

AARON
It's Aaron Berk, I'm calling from the FCC center. You hafta widen your pattern!

Cut to the van speeding up and heading up an alley.

Cut to the inside of the van.

AARON VO
Oh, and I just heard that Deaver blew his brains out. In his home.

Mark grabs the phone.

MARK
Is this a joke?

Pause. Apparently not. Mark goes ashen.

Nora. Go to 103 Lee Lane.

She speeds to the address. Mark mourns deeply.

Oh, God!. Oh no!

Poor old Deaver. It wasn't his fault he was a jerk.

He has an epiphany.

We are all in this together, no matter what age.

Everyone who is unhappy.

Mark is devastated.

Oh God, oh god, oh god.

They cruise slowly up to Deaver's house. The lights are all on. The ambulance and police cars are still there.

MARK
Stop here, Nora.

NORA

Are you crazy?

He weeps. Nora leaves the driver's seat to comfort him. She tries to convince him to move but he wants to stare at the house.

NORA

Well, I'm moving us.

He lurches past her and grabs the keys. She stares. He is near tears.

MARK

I'm sorry I blew it. I was so arrogant. I wanted to be someone.

I wanted to be God or something.

He can't talk. He puts on a song, We All Need Someone We can Lean On.

I wanted people to depend on me.

He sings along ruefully.

We all need. Someone. To lean on.

Nora whispers, exhorts.

NORA

Come on, we've got to keep moving.

MARK

Nora, I'm staying. I want you to run back to my house and prepare my parents.

NORA

We're not gonna get caught if we keep moving.

She tries to tear the keys from him but cannot. She sees he is determined to get caught.

NORA

They're all around us!

MARK

Go.

He kisses her passionately and then pushes her from the van. She turns but he has locked the door. She runs into the night.

Mark sits waiting. The song soars.

Lean on me.
We are not strong.
I'll be your friend.
It won't be long.
Before I'm gonna need.
A friend to lean on.

An armada of vehicles descend on the van. Officers smash the windows and yank Mark from the van. They push him face down in the street.

Cut to the Rabbit 100 yards away. Holden finds himself on the open mike via his phone hook-up.

HOLDEN
All I can see is van surrounded by trucks. I think Mister Happiness has been pulled out.

Shouts in the background.

Somehow, we're still on the air.

Oh God, I guess this is the end.

My name is Holden Chu and I'm proud to have been a part of this. Maybe, somehow, we keep the spirit going.

Mazz shouts from the driver's seat.

MAZZ
My name is Mazz Mazzilli and I promise you that!

HOLDEN
Oh God, they're hitting him!

Mazz guns the Rabbit and drives right at the cluster of officers surrounding Mark.

No, Mazz! You're crazy.

Mazz attempts a rescue. It fails utterly. He is beaten down.

Oh wow. Now they're pounding Mazz.

Poor Holden is left in the car, still broadcasting.

Well, Mazz is still fighting even though he's got three men sitting on him.

Holden is growing defiant.

Now they've seen me. I don't care. Long live Mister Happiness.

They roughly pull Holden from the car and he fights as hard as he can.

The show goes silent except for muffled shouts and curses. Then it clunks off.

Cut to Aaron listening.

AARON

Rest In Peace.

Cut to Paige.

PAIGE

So be it.

The street next to the van. The officers rough up Mark but he refuses to say who he is.

JOHNSON
(shocked)
I recognize him. He's Ken Hunt's son.

Cut to Ken Hunt. Nora is telling him and Martha what happened. They are staggered.

Their first concern is for Mark.

The police and FCC arrive. They barge into the house. They refuse to answer Ken and Martha's anxious questions about Mark's whereabouts.

They start to dismantle and remove everything electrical. They carry out the TV.

MARTHA
Why are you taking that?

OFFICER

We have orders to strip the house.

A neighbor pokes her head in, tsk-tsking.

NEIGHBOR
He was such a quiet boy, such a nice boy.

MARTHA
Oh shut up!

Martha is rather proud of her son. Ken is angry at the officers for being so grim.

Day-7

The next day at the sock hop. The mood is subdued. The teachers are gloating. The walls are clean.

Nora makes a placard.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR MISTER
HAPPINESS. TODAY. AFTER SCHOOL.
122 MAPLE AVENUE.

She is not allowed to put it up. She fights her embarrassment and carries it through the halls.

TEACHER
Put it way, Nora. That's all over with now.

She walks ahead of the teacher. And leaves the school.

I forbid you to leave school!

Nora walks straight to the one remaining TV crew.

After school. The kids trickle over to the Hunt house. They gather unpurposefully. Nora is silent. Martha peeks out her window. Aaron plays his favorite "Straight To Hell" selections to his friends.

More and more kids show up. Some from other schools. A kid holds a sign identifying his school. Another kid quietly plays "It's My Life" on his blaster.

The gathering becomes a vigil. Pregant Cheryl Biggs arrives. Chip, the wiseguy arrives sobered. Paige arrives disguised

and disgusted. They mill aimlessly.

Holden and Mazz arrive together. They are excited.

MAZZ
(proudly)
They charged us with every count in the book.

HOLDEN
They released us without bail but they took Mark somewhere else.

Martha appears on the front porch. She is amazed and secretly pleased by the size of the crowd.

MARTHA
Thank you all for coming but Mark is not here. They've set his bail at $500,000 which is more than his father father and I can afford.

Uh, please go home now.

Nora joins Martha on the porch.

NORA
I wanna say something.

Martha steps aside. Nora's anger evaporates her shyness.

Mark Hunt had a Fetish for truth. And now he's in jail for it.

He might say, "So be it." But I say the hell with that! Straight to hell with that!

She is cheered. She finds herself embarrassed.

Uh, anyone else wanna speak?

Mazz jumps up on the porch. He loves the spotlight.

MAZZ
I dunno much but I figure he was like a friggen saint who was treated by the world as a nut except for a few other nuts.

Meaning himself. Laughter. Mazz cheers himself.

Let's hear it for Mister Happiness.

Cheers. He pulls the reluctant Holden from the crowd.

Come on, Holden, you tell 'em.

HOLDEN
(shyly, obscurely)
It is well known that the uh, dark areas of existence, the troubled areas, are ultimately, hopefully, the most enriching.

Someone has to talk about that uh, area. And perhaps he did.

Mazz leads the cheers for this unhappy epistle. He beckons Aaron to the porch. Aaron resists. Nora tugs him up.

AARON
Mark Hunt was tough. He called a spade a spade. He was always rude but never insensitive.

He was an exceptional person.

Paige calls angrily from the audience.

PAIGE
What are you talking about! He's not dead yet!

She is pushed up to the porch. She is militant.

Voltaire said that mankind will not be free until the last king is strangled with the guts of the last priest. I like the sound of that.

Laughter, cheers.

Let's do something about this. Let's get Mark out.

She exhorts the crowd. Chip plays Don't Mess With Me. They chant and clap.

Meanwhile Max gathers Aaron by the shirt and pairs him with the reluctant Holden.

MAZZ
Look, why don't you techies fix me up with one of them little tiny mics and I'll commit some crime and get thrown in there. I know where they're

keeping him.

He could broadcast from jail!

They stare.

I'll shove it up my ass like that guy in that movie.

Aaron is having an idea. He motions for quiet.

AARON
Please. I am having a phenomenal idea.

He gasps speechlessly. Mazz slaps him on the back.

Thank you. My mother's boyfriend works at Metro Media I could borrow their spare uplink generator if only we could sneak in there.

MAX
Done! Now what's an uplink generator?

AARON
It's what beams a TV signal from the earth to a satellite.

(darkening)
Damn, then we'd need the software to break into an empty transponder.

HOLDEN
I think I know someone who can do that.

MAZZ
Who?

HOLDEN
(shyly)
Me.

Mazz collars Paige.

MAZZ
What can you provide?

Cut to an inner city area. Paige leads Holden, Aaron, Mazz and Nora to a small industrial building. They are acting furtive. Paige produces a key.

PAIGE
It's my father's building so no one will bother us in here.

NORA
But what about your father?

PAIGE
I told him if he didn't cooperate-
I didn't know what I'd do.

She grins. They enter an empty, factory-like area. At the far it has a lunch and rest area. Small stove, refrigerator, even a couple of sofas.

PAIGE
All we need is food.

They check out the roof.

AARON
We can put the uplink up here.

(explaining)
We're shooting the signal up so
they've no way of triangulating us.

NORA
Come on then, we've only got
four hours.

Montage sequence. They prepare. They carry "borrowed" video cameras into building. They bring in phones. They stockpile food and blankets.

10 o'clock exactly. They have set up a rough TV studio. Three one-inch cameras on tripods. A mixing console.

Holden sits at a mic and transmitter similar to Mark's confiscated set-up. Nora cues him. He gulps and fades up Mark's new theme song, Lean On Me.

HOLDEN
Okay, Ladies and gentelemen. This is
Holden Chu on FM 100 for Mister
Happiness who is in jail.

I'm here to inform you that we're
going to try to pick up where he
left off and carry on til Mister
Happiness gets out or as long as
we can.

I want everybody to turn on your TV dishes or cable access boxes to channel 31.

(excited)
Because we are on TV! Yes, hard to believe but true.

Cut to Nora and Paige sitting a few feet away at a table and facing two cameras on tripods.

NORA
Ladies and gentlemen of the western hemisphere.

PAIGE
Welcome to Lean On Me TV!

She introduces everyone on the crew by name.

Cut to Aaron monitoring an extravagant radio telephone hookup.

Cut to Holden at the radio. He is still telling people to switch to TV.

HOLDEN
Spread the word. I can't stay on here long. We can't take the chance they'll find us.

Cut to Mazz who operates the roving camera. (At his intro, he shows himself by walking behind a fixed camera)

NORA
The deal is is you call us and tell us what's happening. We're here 24 hours a day until they bust us.

PAIGE
Spread the word. Call your friends, call your local straight media. Call everybody. This is it.

NORA
Call. Call us right now.

The numbers they have borrowed super over her face.

Call us collect. We're not paying for these calls.

PAIGE
This event is dedicated to Mark Hunt. formerly Mister Happiness. We're here to hear you.

NORA
This is Lean-On-Me TV so lean on us. We guarantee your call will not be answered by a minister, priest, rabbi or teacher.

We guarantee no advice. We guarantee no opinions.

PAIGE
We guarantee no guarantees.

Meanwhile cut to Watts being appraised of what is happning. He is shocked.

WATTS
No. This not possible. This is not technically possible.

Cut back to the studio. The Lean On Me crew gain momentum.

NORA
We are making ourselves up. We have no idea how this is going to turn out. We believe we are innocent. We believe we will not hold back in any way.

PAIGE
If our language offends you, if our subject matter is innapprobriate, if our attitude is rude then...

Mazz has made a CU of The Finger.

Please tune out.

The show is taking on the feeling of a kids cable show. A mix of professionalism and goofyness.

Cut to Watts as he ushered into a room with a TV set tuned to the show.

TECHNICIAN
Apparently, they've have somehow gained access to a satelite.

WATTS

Apparently!

His eyes bug.

Find out how! Get the owners of the unit on the phone! Get them off the air!

TECHNICIAN

It can't be done remotely. Otherwise anyone could disrupt programming.

We need to find the earth source.

WATTS

Then do it!

The technician is not hopeful.

Cut back to the Lean On Me TV studio.

PAIGE

We don't advocate the overthrow of the government. The President already did that.

We're just a call-in service for kids who are pissed off or freaked out or otherwise annoyed.

NORA

Right. If you feel helpless or hopeless then try leaning on us. Why not try? Because once you're gone or we're gone- it's too late.

Cut to Watts and his associates frantically trying to form a technical strategy.

TECHNICIAN

The signal goes up so we can't ***

Cut to a montage of the show actually working. It is an amateur David Letterman format. All five crew members perform all the functions, cameraman, technician, phone operator, Vee Jay, producer, jester, cook.

The three cameras face different areas where any number of

odd things are occurring and the switcher simply picks the most (or least) approbriate image.

The members take turns doing the main work- TV counseling.

Montage. Each veejay has his or her own style.

Cut to Aaron. He tends to be pedantic.

AARON
You say you're a loser but logically that's an impossible position to defend and I'll show you why.

You can legitimately say, "I have lost in the last." You can say, "I have found myself in losing situations in the past." You can even say, "I have called myself a loser." But you can't technically say, "I am a loser." The evidence indicates the contrary.

Cut to Paige. She tends to be intense.

PAIGE
If you are in such extreme pain that the situation calls for extreme action, then take extreme action. Be in pain. Express your pain.

But don't kill yourself to do it.

That doesn't make sense. Because then you're not around to do it again!

Cut to Mazz. He tends to ramble in a Yogi Berra mode.

MAZZ
Just because life aint worth living is no reason not to live it.

It's like drugs, see? And I know what I'm talking about. They mess you up. Your body and your mind. But so what? Doesn't make you unique.

But in the same way it don't make you worthless. See what I mean?

Cut to Holden. He tends to be sensitive and oblique.

HOLDEN

Maybe you're going to wake up tomorrow and realize that you're destined to never feel comfortable in a suburban environement. You're going to realize that you're exceptional.

The calls pour in. Holden continues to find new phone numbers as the authorities take away the ones they are using. The new numbers are flashed on the screen.

Watts calls in the FBI. He tries to get the army to contribute helicoptors to scan the rooftops.

The show is an immediate success. A montage of listeners in American cities.

New York.

KIDS
It's real. It's more live than Saturday Nite Live.

Seattle

KIDS
It's better than MTV. More unusual.

The regular media attempt to analyse the phenomenon. A news reporter does a man-in-the-street.

REPORTER
What do you like about the show?

KID #1
It's just an attitude. Like, y'know.

TV REPORTER
(smug)
No, I don't know.

KID #2
An attitude, man. As in "You got an attitude, dude!"

REPORTER
Which kind of attitude?

KID #3
If ya hafta ask you'll never know.

The reporter turns to her camera to close. The kids gleefully jump around behind her shouting "Free Mister Happiness!"

Cut to Watts standing in a gleaming TV studio. Mark is ushered in. His hand-cuffs are taken off.

WATTS
Do you like what you see?

This could be your studio. You could broadcast your own radio show legally. All the charges will be dropped.

All you have to do is repudiate this madness.

Mark smiles. He enjoys Watts position. He shakes his head.

Cut to the studio. Nora is on the air. She is clearly groggy. Mazz is slumped at the phones. The others are napping.

NORA
Send your postcards and letters to any federal official you've heard of.

The bad guy is Arthur Watts. A real pig. Everyone knows it.

Just write "Oink oink!"

Cut to hours later. Paige is at the mic. She looks very tired but fullfilled. Holden mans the board. Aaron makes a macaroni dinner. Mazz sleeps. Nora dozes.

PAIGE
Okay, we've had enough. If they don't release Mark Hunt within two days, let's say Thursday, then Friday will be a day they'll regret.

Yeah, Friday the 13th.

Cut to Aaron at the mic.

AARON

We shall call some kind of uprising
by all the kids in this country.

Cut to Mazz at the mic. The Beatles Revolution plays in the background.

MAZZ
Yeah, that's our demand.

Release Mister Happiness or Friday
will bring a torrent of foul surprises,
a rainstorn of ugliness that will make
this show look like a light mist.

Cut to Holden. Even sensitive Holden is threatening.

HOLDEN
We are ready. The kids are ready.

(menacing)
I can't wait.

Cut to a TV REPORTER interviewing a group of KIDS who are picketing the prison where Mark is held.

REPORTER
So what do you think will happen
if Mark is not released?

KID #1
I dunno. Maybe everybody's gonna
go to school dead.

He snickers.

KID #2
Whatever happens, happens, man.

They mug to the camera.

Friday the 13th! So be it!

Montage showing the growing popularity of the show.

It is an event. Adults are staying home from work to participate in this moment of history.

ADULT
This is better than Watergate.

Debate rages on the possible damage. The shows defenders point out that daily number of teen suicide attempts has dropped.

The sky over the area is thick with helicopters as they try to interrupt the beam and locate the feed.

Mazz sneaks out, disguised, to buy food. He cannot help bragging a little. He is followed back to the building.

The police surround the building.

The crew barricade themselves inside. One day remains before the Friday deadline.

Watts urges the full use of force to beat the deadline. Saner voices agrue that Mark should be released.

Meanwhile the police prepare to assault the building. The trapped crew call on fans to disrupt the assault.

AARON
Drag your mothers and little brother and sisters down here and swarm over this building.

Cut to the exterior of the building as it is inundated by fans of the show. The police are forced to delay.

A MOTHER
(to cop)
You'd better be cool, young man.

COP
Yes, ma'am.

The police cut off the electrical power. But Aaron has anticipated this. Within seconds, a generator has them back on the air.

The police cut off their water. No problem, they have soda.

The police gradually rid the area of civilians. They again prepare to attack. This time with smoke.

At the eleventh hour, Mark is released. He escorted to the site and allowed to pass through the police barriers.

He knocks on the door.

MARK
It's me, Mark. Let me in. It's not a trick.

They warily let him in.

MARK
They dropped the charges dropped me off here.

AARON
What conditions.

MARK
None. They think with me out you'll call off tomorrow.

They are happy to have him free but Paige and Mazz are disappointed that chaos will not reign.

Nora is shy. Mark kisses her without shame.

They urge him to go on the air right away. He demurs. He seems changed, more serene. He just wants to stare at Nora and hold her hand.

MAZZ
Come on, what about the fight? We have a chance to do something amazing.

MARK
Well, I've been thinking.

I have an idea that is cheap, fast, it'll make them crazy and...

(shyly)
it could change the world.

Mazz whoops.

Cut to Mark on the air. He explains.

MARK
It's simple. Any dissatisfied teenager who wants to become a Straight To Hell franchise just calls in and informs us.

Let's say Jane in the Tampa Florida

area. She has a clean phone and a garage but no transmitter and no money.

We'll put out the call for somebody in her area who can provide the rest. Poof. A radio show is born.

Cut to Watts, listening, astounded.

WATTS
Oh my god, this could be 1000 times bigger than Citizens Band.

He realizes how powerful the idea is.

There's no way we can police something like this.

Cut to the studio. They are busily porcessing the deluge of requests. Aaron, on the phone, turns to Mark.

AARON
They want to know what they should talk about.

MARK
Anything. It's up to them. If it's not interesting nobody will listen.

AARON
(covering phone)
But shouldn't we try to insure they maintain some standards?

MARK
They'll invent their own.

Suddenly they notice the smell of smoke. The police have started the process of smoking them out.

They hurry to block the vents and open windows.

Cut to later. Smoke slowly fills studio but they continue to set up Straight To Hell franchises.

Paige mans a phone, taking down info.

PAIGE
Okay, John and Derek. Looks good. What code name are you gonna use?

The Fresno Farts?

She grimaces.

Okay, it's <u>your</u> show. Have fun, gotta go. Bye.

She hangs up, takes another call.

Cut to montage of hundreds of clones of Mister Happiness getting set up all around the country.

Outside the building, kids and mothers attempt to impede the police progress.

Mark and his crew are finally forced, coughing, weeping, from the building. As they are led to the paddy wagons they are cheered by the crowd and press.

Mark and Nora are holding hands.

Ending to come. Perhaps Paige gets a job as a TV commentatot. Nazz gets a job as a man-in-the-streets reporter. Holden and Aaron get a Ebert and Siskel type show.

Mark and Nora end up back on radio. Illegal?

MARK
This is Mr and Mrs Happiness and the show is "Calling All Martians"

If you are not human, please call in.