

Style

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2002

C
The Arts
Television
Comics

Inside

- 2 Fashion: Hip children's wear
- 3 Music: Garrick Ohlsson and the NSO
- 8 Tell Me About It; Family Almanac
- 12 KidsPost: Maryland's dinosaurs

THE NEW SEASON

TV Previews

No Pastel-Packing 'Vice' Cops Here

'Robbery Homicide Division' Aims True

By TOM SHALES
Washington Post Staff Writer

Camel to straw: "You're breakin' my back!"

In other words, and other words are definitely called for, the only thing prime time needs less than another sitcom is another cop show. And yet perhaps room should be found for "Robbery Homicide Division," a new one from CBS, because it has what most cop shows aspire to: palpable visceral impact.

Executive producer Michael Mann, the masterful filmmaker whose ambitious movies ("Ali," "The Insider") are always 20 minutes too long, returns to TV and a

genre he once reinvented with "Miami Vice." Like "Vice," the new show, premiering tonight at 10 on Channel 9, is an exercise in technique, sleek and stylized. But there's much more substance and less affectation to the new show than the old.

"Miami Vice" was candy-coated candy—eye candy wrapped in an ear candy shell. Dismayingly enough, "Robbery Homicide Division" starts out with a hip rap tune and a stylish drive-by shooting and lots of fancy editing and camerawork, and you may feel you are in for "Miami Vice Redux"—one long MTV video.

See TV PREVIEWS, C7, Col. 3

■ ALSO PREVIEWED: ABC's "That Was Then" and CBS's "Hack" | Page C7



Catherine Deneuve leads an eye-popping cast of screen goddesses in the parlor murder mystery.

Movies

'8 Women': Bonbons With a Wicked Center

By ANN HORNADAY
Special to The Washington Post

"8 Women" finds the young French director Francois Ozon whipping up a confectionary pastiche of 1950s melodramas, 1960s musicals and the thrillers of Alfred Hitchcock at their most deeply psychosexual. Which is to say that "8 Women" is a gorgeous, if disjointed, spectacle, made endurable—if not entirely comprehensible—by its eye-popping cast.

Ozon, who paid such sensitive homage to Charlotte Rampling in his 2000 film "Under the Sand,"

continues to genuflect in the direction of actresses of a certain age. Here, a group of veteran screen goddesses led by Catherine Deneuve is given free rein to camp it up and prove that the old broads have still got it.

And make no mistake, they've still got it, even if "8 Women" turns out to be no more than an indulgent cinematic in-joke. Deneuve plays Gaby, the wealthy wife of an industrialist living in a grand mansion in late 1950s France; she's just brought her el-

See 8 WOMEN, C5, Col. 1

■ ALSO PLAYING: "Sweet Home Alabama," "The Tuxedo" and "Skins" | Page C5

Theater

Preachy 'Love and Anger': Comedy as Commentary

By PETER MARKS
Washington Post Staff Writer

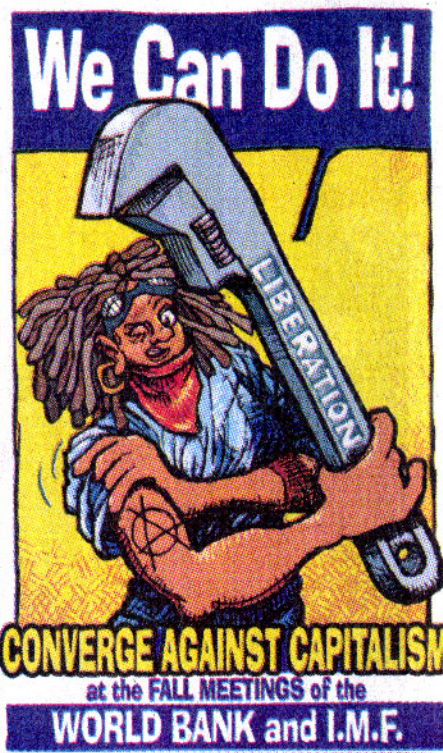
Imagine being trapped in an elevator for 2½ hours with an insurance salesman desperate to make his quota, and you get some idea of the relentless pitch of "Love and Anger," George F. Walker's strident, message-laden comedy about the "system" and all its flaws.

Over and over, the denizens of Walker's screwball world—corrupted lawyers and victimized

poor people, brutal tycoons and soothsaying mental patients—trade accusations, articulate grievances and wrestle over the ways in which the deck is stacked against the downtrodden. In feverish exchanges they take each other on, making points about legal and economic justice with the vehemence of combatants on "Crossfire."

The problem is, "Love and Anger" is never more than a ser-

See THEATER, C5, Col. 1



The Poster Boy of Protest

Mike Flugenock Is an Artist With a Pot of Paste and a Mission

By DAVID MONTGOMERY
Washington Post Staff Writer

Mike Flugenock, postmaker for the revolution, is strolling past the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund at 10:45 on a Tuesday night, feeling almost free.

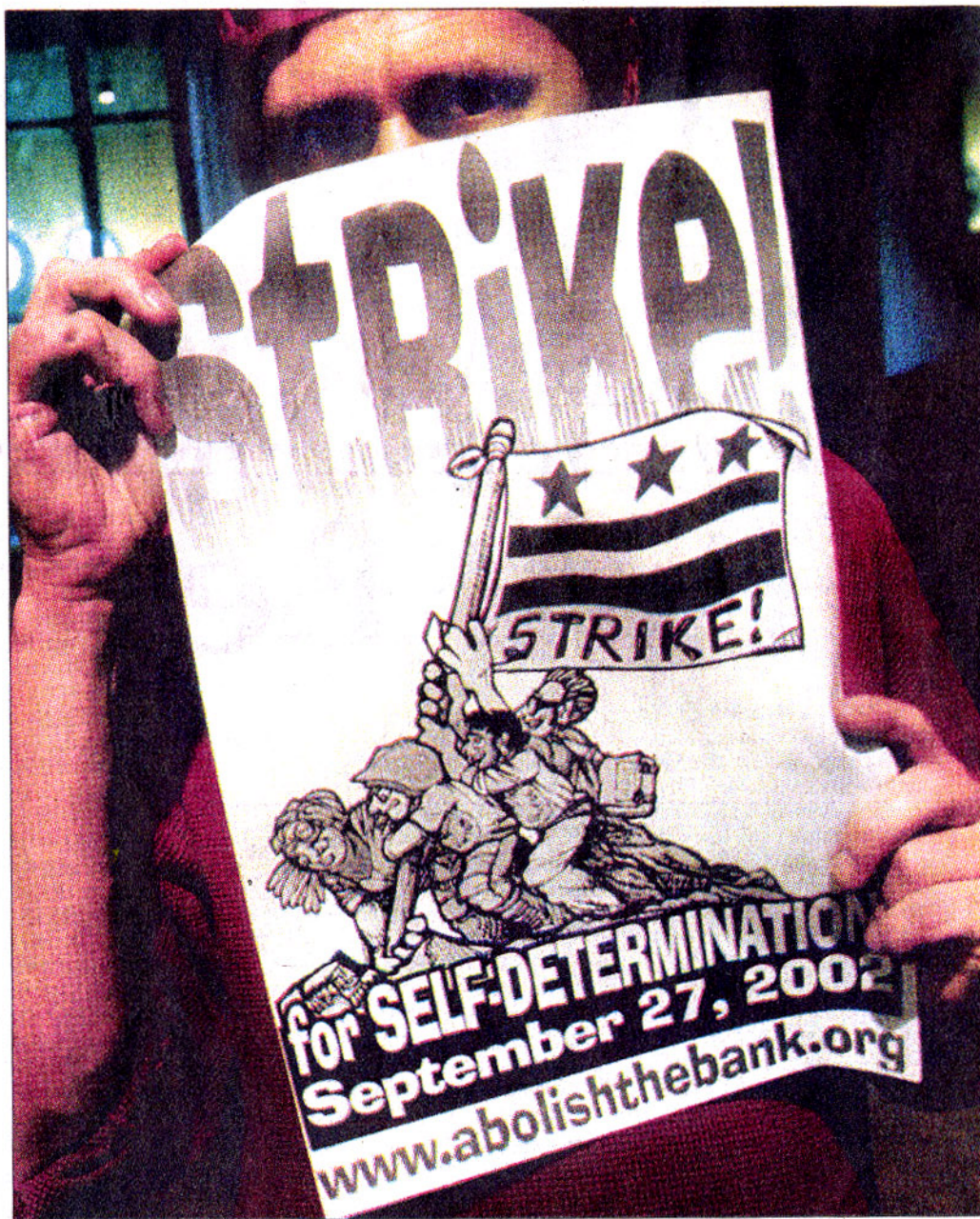
He's carrying a bucketful of watery wheat paste and an armful of his latest 11-by-17-inch creations. The work is cantankerous, unreasonable, shocking, paranoid, brilliant—in the best tradition of an old, in-your-face medium that has never faded despite television and the Internet.

For 11 years, Flugenock's irascible mark has been ubiquitous on the streets of Washington, and increasingly familiar beyond. Ever since the Persian Gulf War in 1991, if you've seen a protest poster around town, there's a good chance it's a Flugenock. He spent the '90s bashing President Clinton for, he says, selling out progressive ideals. Now he is helping to define the look of the local anti-corporate-globalization movement.

"I was thinking of doing more Tony the Rat tonight," the District resident says. That's his giant rodent with a bow tie holding a sandwich, his statement that Mayor Anthony Williams is not hiring enough health inspectors. The poster recommends a vote for the Green Party in November.

He's also thinking about a war against Iraq—he's sure it's coming, he calls it "Persian Gulf War, Version 2.0"—and he wants to post more of his image of the huge "Liberation" monkey wrench smashing a tank. "I'm surprised nobody's gotten on my case about that," he cackles, adding in a mincing voice: "Violent imagery."

See POSTERS, C8, Col. 1



Mike Flugenock has posted his pugnacious calls to action on the lampposts of Washington for 11 years.

Robert Duvall's Role in Real Life

By STEPHEN HUNTER
Washington Post Staff Writer

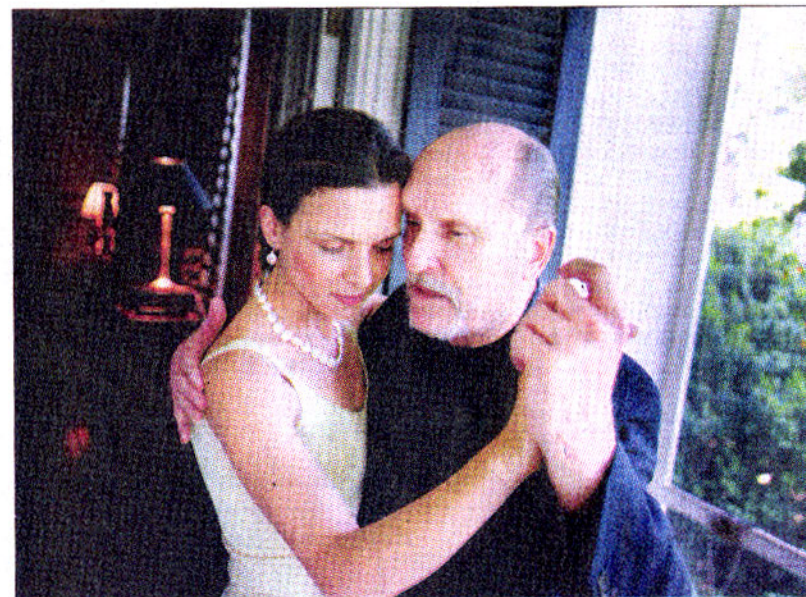
What's your favorite Robert Duvall line? Many favor: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning," from "Apocalypse Now."

But those absorbed by "Lonesome Dove" would probably choose what a man who loves it calls "the best dying scene I ever saw," where old Gus chooses to pass of gangrene rather than have a second leg amputated, and says to his best bud, "By God, Woodrow, it's been quite a party, ain't it?" Breaks your damn heart.

"Why do you hurt me, Michael?" comes out of "Godfather II," and maybe it's not the line itself that works in that particular instance, so much as the look of pain on the man's face, combined with befuddlement, regret and ancient memory, all there in a flash.

My own nomination is far more obscure, from a Clint Eastwood oater called "Joe Kidd," undistinguished but for "Kidd, you're fired. Take his gun, Lamar." It doesn't look like much in print, but delivered with a snarly twang that bespeaks the

See DUVALL, C4, Col. 1



Robert Duvall and Luciana Pedraza, who stars in his new film, "Assassination Tango," will host a hospital benefit tomorrow on their Loudoun County ranch.

Mike Flugennock, Drawn to Protest

POSTERS, From C1

But his main concern on this recent posting mission is the "People's Strike," scheduled for today, when anti-capitalist demonstrators plan to "shut down" the city, their way of calling attention to ills of the economic and political system. The strike is the kickoff of three days of protests against the bank, the fund, the potential war and U.S. foreign policy in general.

Flugennock, 45, sympathizes. As he walks, he selects a poster advertising the strike and gets ready to stick it to a lamppost. His spirits seem to lift, even after thousands of moments just like this. At the dripping-paste instant of dissemination, a master of street agitprop is not unlike a fine artist on the brink of a gallery show, a writer as the presses begin to roll.

But he only feels *almost* free, because here comes a police car.

Flugennock slips into the shadows. Sometimes D.C. police—and residents—confront the artist or his allies. D.C. poster law is more complicated than the First Amendment, and there is disagreement over where one ends and the other begins. Flugennock, however, has never been charged with breaking the law.

The police car passes. Flugennock goes back to work with his partner for tonight's effort, activist Rami Elamine. They affix a strike poster that is classic Flugennock: an iconic patriotic image subverted for a radical cause. In this case, an anarchist, a union member, a college student and an older activist are portrayed in an Iwo Jima pose, erecting a D.C. flag that says "STRIKE!"

"Using Iwo is kind of fun on a lot of levels," Flugennock says. "There's the connotation of heroism. And there's a nice back-of-the-hand to all the 'chicken hawks': Yeah, I'm taking your totem. Take that!"

On the base of another lamppost, Flugennock can see the faded remains of an old one. It's a poster for the first big anti-globalization demonstration in Washington, in April 2000. Another Flugennock.

Mauldin Meets Moebius

Before a somewhat shy and gentle-seeming art student born with the name Michael Swartzbeck became gonzo permanent rebel Mike Flugennock, he was a boy living near Fort Myer while his dad, a career soldier, and two uncles did stints in Vietnam. His grandfather had been an Army master sergeant who, during the Eisenhower administration, was a White House chauffeur.

He describes his father as a Kennedy Democrat who supported the war but "didn't like how it was being run." He proudly recounts how the old man, a noncommissioned officer in logistics, won a medal for clearing a transport ship of putting greens and other amenities ordered by officers so there'd be more room for ordnance.

Family members came home safely from Vietnam. But for the boy, the war, the emerging counterculture and the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kenne-

dy were tumultuous influences. As a foil to all that, he never forgot his amazement at pictures sent back by the Apollo space missions in which the complicated world he was growing into was reduced to a blue disc.

"Suddenly the hate, war, greed, hypocrisy kind of snapped into focus and it's really silly," he says now. "I mean, look how small we are in all this. That kind of iced it for me at that age."

For kicks at Herndon High School, he and friends tried their hand at protest comedy. One routine was a spoof of a political talk show on the energy crisis. One of the fictional pundits was "Mike Flugennock," a made-up nonsense name.

That's the name the artist has worked under ever since he got seriously into protest art. All the activists know him as Flugennock. He introduces himself as Flugennock. "It was almost like I had to move into a new personality to do this stuff," he says.

His father, who died more than a decade ago, supported his son's radical enthusiasms, even if he didn't always agree. He introduced his son to the work of Bill Mauldin, the World War II cartoonist. Although Mauldin was employed by the military, he produced what Flugennock considers great anti-war cartoons because he stuck to a pragmatic grunt's-eye view of absurdities inherent even in a "good" war.

Other stylistic influences were Tex Avery and Chuck Jones, creators of Bugs Bunny and the Road Runner, the Silver Surfer from Marvel Comics, rock-and-roll poster and album art, comic strips by Vaughn Bode in National Lampoon, and the sci-fi images of the French artist Moebius and others in the 1970s comic anthology *Heavy Metal*.

He won student journalism prizes for his editorial cartoons both in high school and at Radford College, in southwest Virginia, where he studied art. When he was 18, the *Reston Times* published some of his editorial cartoons, and during college he began sending harder-edged political work to *Yipster Times* in New York. He also got a gig doing a regular comic strip for *Dead Relix*, a zine for Grateful Dead fans. The strip was like a Bill Mauldin take on Deadhead culture—affectionate but dispassionate enough to point out the absurdities.

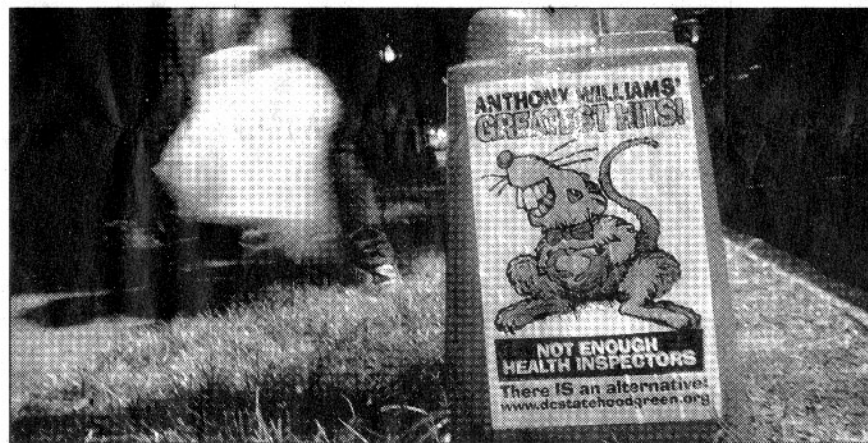
He was suspended from Radford a semester shy of graduation for throwing a cream pie at the president—in protest of various administration sins—and he never went back.

Unable to land a steady job as an editorial cartoonist, he took a series of conventional graphic design jobs, eventually settling into a freelance business that is his living today, while agitprop is his passion.

There was one more detour before Flugennock infiltrated the streets of Washington.

In the mid-1980s, after years of sending graphic rants against Reaganism and related forces to *Yipster Times*, he despaired that America would ever change. He quit political work, taking refuge in his "happy freak" strips for *Dead Relix*.

Five years later, on a cross-country trip



BY ANDREA BRUCE WOODALL—THE WASHINGTON POST

Mike Flugennock's scorn is not limited to multinationals; he depicts Mayor Anthony Williams as a rat in one poster, above, that addresses the issue of health inspectors.

during the buildup to "Persian Gulf War Version 1.0," he was filling his gas tank in the eerie pre-dawn light of a Shell station in Midland, Tex. The Shell sign was festooned with an enormous plastic yellow ribbon. The attendant had a cap with an aircraft carrier logo. The customers either wore desert camouflage or American flag T-shirts.

For many Americans, it would have been an appropriate tableau. But Flugennock detected a nightmarish quality.

He hit the accelerator for D.C. and came up with three ideas. Within days they were on lampposts in Washington. All featured oil colored red like blood.

The Underground Art Scene

Flugennock posters turn up in dormitories, co-ops, bookstores and on lampposts around the country. His Web site (www.sinkers.org) features dozens of them over the years, and he presents them in digital formats so activists can download them for free.

His work is recognized outside the country. "In the days of world censorship, Mr. Flugennock is among the few courageous artists who dares to fight the System," says a Brazilian protest artist known as Latuff, sending an e-mail from Rio de Janeiro.

Flugennock is an admiring student of the patriotic poster art of World War II. Inspired by the "We can do it!" Westinghouse poster showing a woman rolling up her sleeve, he created *Monkey Wrench Girl*, rolling up her sleeve to reveal an anarchist "A" tattoo and holding a wrench labeled "Liberation."

But some Washington residents complain that the posters are a visual clutter marring their neighborhoods. Flugennock replies: "The alternative they present is a neighborhood that's nice, clean and tidy—and there's no evidence of political dissent."

But Flugennock is sometimes lax about following D.C.'s poster law, which requires posters be taken down within 60 days and not be affixed to any surface but lampposts.

"People have a right to express their concern, even with messages people might disagree with, but do it the legal way," says Vince Micone, chairman of the advisory neighborhood commission in Dupont Circle.

Some of Flugennock's work is controversial even in some local activist circles because the images are shocking. After the April 2000 demonstrations, he created a poster showing a D.C. Police motorcycle running over Gandhi, with the caption "Gandhi is dead because he wouldn't strike back!"

After 9/11, another poster poked fun at the Mobilization for Global Justice for back-

ing out of demonstrations scheduled for later that September.

"I think that Mike has a role of tweaking people and prodding and pushing and challenging, and sometimes being outrageous," says Robert Weissman, a Mobilization organizer. "That's healthy for us, as I try to remind myself when he tweaks and pushes and prods and challenges me."

The artist does regret one outrageous work. Over a lunch of cheeseburgers and Guinness, he and a reporter are examining his posters. Up comes one showing a brick flying through the window of a Niketown store with the caption "Life is short. Throw hard."

Flugennock winces. "I'm taking that home," he says. It was included on his Web site but never posted, he says.

He says the work was his way of venting anger after the 2000 Republican convention, when he believed the Philadelphia police were too hard on nonviolent demonstrators.

"My consciousness is almost hard-wired *not* for destruction," he says. "I can appreciate the attitude but I'm not going to do it. I'm incapable."

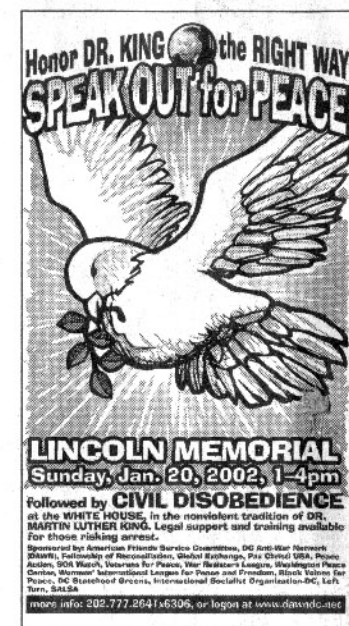
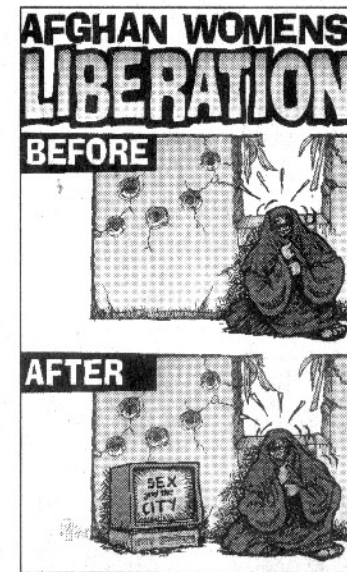
He may be sorry about the brick, but he's not going soft. He produced a series of Black Bloc "recruitment" posters for the controversial posses of black-masked demonstrators at recent protests. Police claim the Blocs are agents of destruction, but Flugennock accurately points out that little or no violence has been tied to them or any other recent demonstrators in the District.

He's also proud of his run-over-Gandhi poster. "I was taking a whack at mindless, dogmatic Gandhism," he says. "I think there's a point where it's perfectly proper for people to strike back."

Despite its misplaced apostrophe, one of his best recent works is titled "Afghan Womens' Liberation," showing a woman still wearing a burqa in a bombed-out building but now able to watch "Sex and the City."

Flugennock's post-9/11 attitude is unsentimental to a fault—though he has family members who still work for the military. After the attacks, "I went right from horror and amazement to cynicism," he says. "I knew what would follow: empty jingoistic exploitive talk." He criticizes what he sees as new curtailments of civil liberties and the government's detention of hundreds of people without saying who they are.

Asked what the nation should have done in response to 9/11, he admits he's not an expert, but says at least the response should have been something "that didn't involve exploiting tragedy for political gain, didn't involve throwing out the Constitution when things got rough . . . and did involve a little



POSTERS BY MIKE FLUGENNOCK

more self-examination of our foreign policy."

For a peace demonstration at the Lincoln Memorial this past Martin Luther King Day, he surprised his fans by producing a big image of a flying dove holding an olive branch.

"I wanted to just be totally sweet and inspiring," Flugennock says almost sheepishly.

Sowing a Seed

Back under the streetlights on Pennsylvania Avenue near the World Bank, Flugennock finishes pasting up a few works he calls "Life." These show *Monkey Wrench Girl*, still with her bandanna and goggles in case of police pepper spray, but now planting a tree.

It's hard work, this species of self-publishing, lamppost by lamppost. That he must turn to the streets of course is a measure of how marginalized Flugennock's message is these days.

"The only way people can hear a point of view that they won't hear on television or in newsmagazines is if I put it out on the street where everybody sees it," he says.

Still, he says he'd like to "graduate from the streets," and he's having some success. Next month he will see his first cover illustration in a national journal, the *Progressive*.

Whether other media decide they're ready for Flugennock, he figures he'll never completely leave the medium he knows best. "I'll still be doing art for the movement," he says, "and I'll probably still wind up on the street here and there."